

# Farmers Market moves steadily through 2020 season

By Jarrett Whitener  
North Georgia News  
Staff Writer

With three months of the 2020 season now in the rearview, the Union County Farmers Market continues to bring in customers and vendors alike.

Food vendors at the Farmers Market have been popular this year, with lines of people waiting to get a fast snack.

Greg Rubin of Mountain Kettle Corn brings his treats to the market every Tuesday and Saturday, helping people cool off on a hot summer day.

"I have kettle corn and lemon shakers," Rubin said. "We have been doing this for about eight years, and we are out of Blue Ridge. It is sweet and salty, and we have about six months of research and development – I call it eating. We got the right combination of sweet and salty.

"A lemon shaker is a hand-crafted lemonade. You take the whole lemon and dice it and press it. We add sugar, water and ice, and then people can add flavors if they want them. It is popular.

"When it is hot, I have cramps in my arms because it is so busy. We are here every week and on Tuesday afternoons as well."

Attendees of the market such as Sidney Lawson are happy to have a venue like the market in the area, as it allows for various local vendors to sell their homegrown and hand-made products.

"Despite COVID, the Farmers Market has turned out great this year," Lawson said. "I usually come a few times a year, and every time I have been this year it has been wonderful.

"The vendors are wearing their masks and people are social distancing like they should be doing. I think this is something that people should be supporting. The craft vendors might be my favorite part about the market.

"I love the fresh fruits and stuff, which is what I come here for, but it is always nice to see new vendors here selling their crafts. You see a lot of woodworking come through here, and they are all so talented."

Craft vendors have also enjoyed high customer traffic during the market, with attendees interested in the art of their craft and the process.

Gail Stewart with Spiritwood sells wooden bowls, jars and other containers handcrafted out of old wood by her husband. The name of the business comes from the sound



Greg Rubin of Mountain Kettle Corn brings his treats to the Farmers Market every Tuesday and Saturday.

Photo by Jarrett Whitener



Gail Stewart with Spiritwood sells wooden bowls, jars and other handcrafted containers at the market. Photo by Jarrett Whitener

some of the bowls make when placed near the ear, reminiscent of seashells and the ocean.

"We use the natural resources of wood that has died or come down, and somebody has to take that wood out," Stewart said. "My husband dries it and gets it all ready. We don't buy wood; we get it all naturally. He has self-taught himself how to make all of this stuff.

"Where the Spiritwood piece comes in is, my son told us that we need to sell some stuff, considering we can't live with all this wood around.

"My part as a former science teacher, I research all the wood and find out the former history of it and the lore and interesting facts about it, and all of these cards have something about the wood."

The biggest seller for Spiritwood is wooden honey-pots lined with beeswax to preserve the honey people may buy at the Farmers Market.

For more information on the market, which takes place Saturdays from 7 a.m.-1 p.m. and Tuesdays 2-5 p.m., visit [UCFarmersMarket.com](http://UCFarmersMarket.com).

## COVID...from Page 1A

people are taking sides.

"On top of that, they are taking sides with groups of people who want to be in office. They want power; those people aren't going to care about you. They want the vote. We listen to them, though, and we choose the sides.

"Despite our differences, we need to come together as a country and learn to accept one another. People have different opinions and ideas. If we didn't, then we wouldn't be in this country. Everyone wants free speech until someone they

don't like starts talking."

Louis Smith of Fannin County warns that the economy will take more time and effort than anything else to recover after the pandemic is officially declared over.

"The economy is going to have the most long-lasting hit," Smith said on a trip to Meeks Park on Aug. 29. "COVID can go away and the numbers can go down and the election will be over in November, but the economy will not recover immediately.

"It hasn't even seen a full

crash yet, and I don't think it will until later this year or early next year. Whoever wins this election better have it in their agenda to get this country back on track and get people their jobs back.

"Unemployment rates are higher than I have seen, and I know too many people who are out of a job right now. Those that do have a job are lucky, and they better hold onto it, because this isn't over yet. Businesses are still shutting down."

## Grubbs...from Page 1A

Team.

"I have been cooking up here for more than 20 years," Grubbs said. "I do the Relay For Life over at the Farmers Market. It is always important for me to cook and raise money to fight cancer, because I have family members that have fought that battle.

"It is just a big thing to my heart, so it was my charitable thing and the only charitable thing I do every year. I have some private parties and I sell butts and stuff on the side. I just love to barbecue, and I have been doing it since I was 14 years old."

"The American Barbecue Showdown" differs from other cooking contests, Grubbs said, as it has more of a friendly and lighthearted feel. Grubbs would know, too, because this isn't his first television rodeo – he was an alternate on the Travel Channel's "American Grilled."

"This show was not a cutthroat competition like (BBQ) Pitmasters or something like that," Grubbs said. "It is a friendly competition that more or less tells a story of barbecue in America. The competitors come from all over the country, and there are different styles."

Before the contest, Grubbs had appeared in two other TV shows – "Hatched" on

The CW, and "She's In Charge" with TLC. In terms of cooking competitions, however, he's mainly participated in the local Relay For Life contest, which differs significantly from a large-scale production.

"It was very labor-intensive to get on the show," Grubbs said. "You had to do psychological evaluations, background checks, endless videos, and they paid a pitmaster to come to my house and taste my barbecue. It started in May of last year, and we filmed in September (2019)."

Added Grubbs, "I went down there on a Saturday thinking I'd only be there for a few days, but it was a job. I think the show will tell over time how this changed my barbecue. I'm 58 years old, but I am never too old to learn something.

"I just bought a pellet grill in March, and I have never used a pellet grill in my life until I went down to be on that show. I've been wearing it out since I got it."

Having learned new ways to hone his craft, Grubbs said he is happy to bring his experiences back to his home of Union County to continue sharing the joy of barbecue with others.

"I'm proud to be here, and I love living up here,"

Grubbs said. "I was asked a question in post-production, because I am from Louisiana, but have been up here since 1996 full time.

"They asked me what town I wanted to put (in my bio), and I told them they had to put Blairsville, Georgia, on there because that is where Grub-ba-que became Grub-ba-que."

Grubbs was a volunteer firefighter at Station 4 for two years about 20 years back, and he will be hosting a cookout soon for the Fire Department to show his appreciation for what they do.

"The little thing I am doing for the firemen is what I call 'Community Unity,'" Grubbs said. "If everyone did a little part to make their community better, there's nothing that we couldn't accomplish.

"I used to volunteer at station 4, but since I have a bad back, I physically can't do that anymore. That doesn't mean that I can't support the firefighters."

The local pitmaster enjoys area residents will enjoy watching the competition that premieres on Netflix Sept. 18, so be sure to check it out when it debuts later this month.