

TO MARKET, TO MARKET

Farmers' markets are an integral part of the foodie scene throughout Kent and East Sussex, and many of them have been key W&H supporters over the years. We chat to Benjamin Dent, Market Manager at Penshurst Farmers' Market, to find out a bit more about what their stalls have on offer

TELL US HOW IT ALL BEGAN

The market will be 10 years old this June and was set up by volunteers. When we were planning it, our breakthrough was when Lord and Lady De L'Isle offered to host the market at Penshurst Place. It provides a wonderful backdrop and offers shoppers ample free parking right next door. They don't charge us any rent, so we can keep the pitch fee down, which is good news for our stallholders. Plus, they're among our most loyal shoppers – Lady De L'Isle taught at the Cordon Bleu Cookery School, so she knows the importance of high-quality ingredients.

HOW MANY STALLS DO YOU HAVE?

We started with 11 and have grown gradually to now offer 35 to 40, depending on the season. The market is held on the first Saturday of every month, from 9.30am to 12pm at Penshurst Place, with free parking and no entrance fee.

WHAT ARE SOME OF YOUR BESTSELLERS?

Our most popular is Arcade Fisheries. Owner Paul Saxby sells fish mostly caught by day boats out of Hastings, so they're usually only a day old. It's exactly this kind of product that you can't find in supermarkets, which attracts our shoppers. We also have a wonderful game stall offering venison, pheasant and partridge (in season), pigeon and even rabbit, which is becoming popular again.

ANY OTHER FAVOURITES FOR CUSTOMERS?

There's a huge range of bread from Rusbridge Bakery in Southborough, rare breed, free-range pork and Dulce's Patisserie's salted caramel slice, which would surpass any Parisian patisserie. There are hot barbecue sausages for breakfast, as well as tea, coffee and cakes from the refreshment stall, which is run by local community groups to raise funds.

Then there's the wide range of chutneys and jams, pies, smoked meats, Scotch eggs, sausage rolls, eggs, honey, fresh fruit, vegetables and herbs, nuts, beer and three cheese stalls – there's just so much...

IS EVERYTHING LOCAL?

We only sell food and drink from Kent, Surrey and Sussex and also have one plant stall, where we give expert advice on growing them. We don't have any craft stalls, but Penshurst Place Gift Shop offers lots of present ideas and cards.

IN WHAT WAYS DO YOU HELP PROMOTE THE LOCAL FARMERS' MARKET COMMUNITY?

The stallholders are wonderful, we're in a beautiful setting and, of course, after visiting the market, shoppers can go on to The Little Brown Jug in Chiddingstone Causeway for lunch! However, we see ourselves as part of a network with other local markets, not in competition with them. After all, people need to shop more than once a month, so we encourage everyone to visit the markets in Tonbridge, Tunbridge Wells, Hildenborough and Shipbourne (every Thursday, next door to The Chaser Inn) – so long as they come back to us too!

PENSHURST FARMERS' MARKET

Penshurst Place Car Park,
Penshurst Place,
Penshurst,
Kent TN11 8DG

Opening times:

First Saturday of every month
from 9.30am to 12pm

Stallholders: 39 (36 Food, three Home and Garden)

Web: www.kfma.org.uk/Penshurst

Email: penshurstfmmrkt@gmail.com

Facebook: www.facebook.com/PenshurstFarmersMarket

Twitter: [@PenshurstFmMrkt](https://twitter.com/PenshurstFmMrkt)

