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GREEN MATTERS

GETTIN' FRESH

Fruit market offers Michigan produce

By MIRIAM MOELLER

ARQUETTE - Tom Brian, owner of Farmer Q's Market in Marquette, thinks it's important to know where your food comes from.

"I just want accurate food information,"

he said. That's why he and his wife Susan pay at-

tention to where they buy the produce that they sell in their store in downtown Mar-

"Our main focus on the produce is getting

in season, Michigan grown produce, direct-ly off the farms," he said. "Our produce is from the Keweenaw to just about Indiana.

We buy direct and truck it ourselves. Brian picks up fruit and vegetables from his family farm in downstate Frankfort as well as other farms such as Northern Natural Organics in Kaleva and Oak Hills Farms in Eau Claire. Farmer Q's sells both organ-

ic and conventional produce, Brian said. "I'm committed to the process and that commitment reduces the food fraud of misrepresenting of what the food product is,"

Brian added that direct contact with the farmers is important to him and to the farm-

"It creates cash flow for the grower," he said. "It's critical for their overall expenses. These types of fruit markets throughout Michigan, they make farming farmable, so people can make a living off of it."

This June, the store offers Michigan asparagus, strawberries, rhubarb, snap peas, radishes and other produce.

"We're really just getting going," Brian said. "Everything is a little late this year because of the cold.

When Michigan products are not in sea-

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son, Farmer Q's converts to fresh produce from other countries and areas in the nation that they buy from a downstate family distributor, Susan Brian said.

Farmer Q's also pays attention to recycling by charging a deposit for certain fruit containers, so customers are encouraged to bring them back to the store.

'Blueberries, I get those in reusable plastic 'lugs' containers," he said. "We reuse the plastic 'lugs.'

Peaches come in wooden baskets and strawberries in cardboard flats. All these containers are either reused or recycled.

'During the summer, our dumpster gets less and less garbage," Brian said. Brian has also experimented with running

his produce truck on biodiesel. However, he said it was not cost-effective and biodiesel gas stations are still few and far

"In lower Michigan I can get away with it," he said, adding that in other areas it's hard to find biodiesel gas stations. "It's too much of a risk.'

In the future, the Brians hope to move the store to a building where they can install so-

"It's good energy," he said. The store is located at 219 W. Washing-

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Tom Brian, owner of Farmer Q s Market in downtown Marquette, holds up strawberries, asparagus and rhubarb purchased from Michigan farmers that he currently sells at his store. (Journal photo by Miriam Moeller)















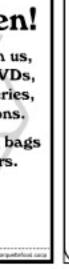
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