



## **STEP ONE: GETTING YOUR FOOT IN THE DOOR**

- Develop your price sheet and product list
- Make a list of likely restaurants (start with the HDEFA Directory) and set up meetings with the chef - be persistent!
- Tell your story and showcase your products to the chef

## **STEP TWO: QUALITY AND CONSISTENCY**

- Outline your product quality and safety practices
- Ask about packaging and certification requirements
- Know how much volume you can handle
- Ask for feedback on your products and adjust accordingly

## **STEP THREE: ORDERING, DELIVERY, AND PAYMENT**

- Consider whether you want to use a distributor
- Set up order, delivery, and payment schedules
- Ask for regular feedback on your process and adjust accordingly

## **STEP FOUR: GETTING RECOGNIZED AND GOING FURTHER**

- Ask for your farm or ranch to be named on the menu/specials board
- Use your HDEFA Producer Profile, available on request from HDEFA
- Don't forget to like, follow, and tag the restaurant on social media
- Consider developing a forward contract to grow specific crops for the business

## BEST PRACTICES FOR GETTING YOUR PRODUCT TO THE PLATE

Getting your product into a new market is important for your business to help gain brand recognition and to increase local food into the restaurant food system. However, there can be obstacles along the way and the High Desert Food & Farm Alliance (HDIFFA) we want to help you overcome those obstacles and get your product into the hands of some new customers! Below are tips about selling to restaurants large and small.

*A special thank you to Chris Casad of Casad Family Farms and James Berntson of Radicle Roots Farm for giving feedback into what's worked and what hasn't when selling to chefs and restaurants.*

### Why sell to restaurants?

**Increase Your Farm's Visibility:** Selling to restaurants can be a great way to advertise your farm and the products you have. If the restaurant is using your name to promote the dishes they are creating, then you will automatically be reaching a new group of customers who might not know about your business.

**Larger Volume, One Customer:** There is value in selling a larger amount of products with minimal packaging. If you specialize in a few crops that are more profitable and successful for your farm, you can work out a relationship and sell those directly versus needing to grow everything for a CSA or market stand.

## Step One: Getting Your Foot in the Door

### Finding Restaurants

Identifying restaurants that will be interested in your product is an important first step. Think about seeking out those that are already using local food or have a community, sustainability or environmental mission.

When you find restaurants that you want to meet with, ask to talk to the Chef. Chefs run the kitchen and normally do the food ordering, an owner may be on board with using local food but the chef is the one ordering each week and will most likely be your contact.

*"Developing a good relationship with a chef is key, and it's important for both parties to understand the demands and logistics of each other's operations for proper service to happen with minimal friction." – Juniper Jungle Farm*

## Setting up a meeting

Setting up a meeting with the chef to present your product is a good opportunity to showcase your product and give information about your growing practices. Letting chefs taste what you have to offer is a great way to showcase why they should choose yours over conventional. It's not always easy to schedule an appointment with a chef, but keep trying. Calling when the Chef is not busy is a good way to ensure contact, between 2-4pm is typically a good time. This is your opportunity to build a relationship, share information and showcase some of your products.

## Preparation for your meeting

**Showcasing your product:** When you meet with a chef, bring a sampling of your product that is representative of what you typically grow or raise. Make sure to include any product that you love growing, you think would be a great fit for the restaurant, or are particularly excited about.

**Price List:** Setting your price can be difficult. Finding a balance between how much your products cost you to produce and the current market value for the product is key. Take a look at [this article](#) for a start to your research.

**Delivery and payment logistics:** Think about how often and on what days you can deliver, given your harvest schedule and other deliveries or farmers markets. Decide how you want the chef to order (online? via text?) and when, and how you will bill and receive payment. If you decide to work with a distributor, these details will be taken care of. If you deliver on your own, know your plans and know where you can be flexible.

**Produce Sheets:** Projections for what you have available throughout the season as well as an example of week by week availability. How often do you harvest and deliver? If you sell meat, how often do you butcher and what do you typically have on hand?

## Step Two: Quality and Consistency

*"I encourage any feedback both negative and positive from chefs. This is usually discussed when I deliver to them each week, but can be over emails or texts. I have changed the size I harvest certain crops, or waited until tomatoes are extremely ripe for some chefs or increased watering*

*on certain crops to prevent bitterness.”*

–Radicle Roots

## Expectations for Product Quality & Consistency

At HDEFA we receive a lot of feedback from buyers about quality and consistency of farm fresh products. As any small to medium scale producer knows, everything doesn't always come out of the ground or off of the vine as the perfect shape, size, and color as big box stores. However, it probably tastes better than most conventional products: using taste is an advantage, but keeping track of aesthetic quality is important too.

**Consistency is something that you have complete control over.** It might mean more sorting through your product, but if a chef wants carrots that are all small to medium in size, then it's your responsibility to sift through and take out extra small and large ones. If you make the chef pay for a product they didn't ask for they won't be very happy - they manage their budgets carefully and this is extra work for them.

**Set up standards** - You can present your product in a high-quality way that will keep buyers asking for more. Ask the buyer how they want the product presented. Double-washed, bagged, boxed, bunched, tops cut etc. Giving them the highest quality will help keep them as a customer.

**Follow Through** - If a Chef asks for 15 lbs. of carrots washed and bagged, make sure that they're clean before bagging. Most Chefs want to pull out the product and give it a quick rinse before using it. Giving dirty vegetables gives a bad impression and costs them more in labor than they planned for.

## Ask for feedback

**Follow Up** - At each delivery, check in with the way the product was delivered the week before. Does that delivery and ordering schedule work? Were they happy with the order? You may want to share happenings on your farm that the chef may find interesting. Generating dialog is a good way to develop the relationship.

**Adjust Accordingly** – When following up with chefs, it is a good idea to get specific feedback and that makes it easier to adjust your practices accordingly. Was that the correct size they were looking for? Was it clean enough? Were there any issues with appearance?

*“Mainly it's washing or packaging issues initially, quality control comes down to the farmer and you have to adjust when you get feedback, always please the customer to the best of your ability.” – Casad Family Farms*

## CERTIFICATIONS AND REGULATORY CONSIDERATIONS

Not all restaurants require GAP/GHP (Good Agricultural Practices/Good Handling Practices) Certification but It is good to have a conversation about expectations for produce safety management. GAP and GHP are voluntary certifications using systems-based approaches to minimizing risk of microbial contamination of fresh fruits and vegetables on the farm. For more information visit:

[www.oregon.gov/ODA/programs/MarketAccess/MACertification/Pages/GAPGHP.aspx](http://www.oregon.gov/ODA/programs/MarketAccess/MACertification/Pages/GAPGHP.aspx)  
<https://agsci.oregonstate.edu/wrcefs/fda-updates>

### Eggs

A producer is required to have an egg handler's license from the ODA Food Safety Division if the producer sells graded eggs to retailers, cafes, bakeries, hospitals, schools, or institutions.

### Meats and Poultry

All slaughtered and processed meat and poultry sold in Oregon must be inspected by the USDA and slaughtered in USDA-inspected plants. For a list of USDA inspected plants, contact the Food Safety Division at the Oregon Department of Agriculture, 503-986-4720. There is a small flock exemption for producers that sell fewer than 2,000 birds annually. This exemption must be applied for with the USDA.

## Step Three: Ordering, Delivery and Payment

### Setting up schedules

*"I find email is best for me, because it's nice to have a clear record of what they ordered but texts work well too if you have an established relationship, because you still have a written record of the order. Order over the phone can be hard because you don't have that written record and miscommunications are more likely." - Radicle Roots*

**Product Availability-** Send a weekly product availability list so chefs can order the freshest ingredients and pick and choose what they'd like to feature. Send them out on a consistent day with the order deadline and amount available clearly stated.

**Ease of Ordering-** What is the best way for someone to order from you? Email, text, phone? Set a schedule and order deadlines so for ease and consistency.

**Delivery Schedule-** Set your delivery day. No one likes to be caught off guard, set a schedule and stick to it. For example, orders placed on Monday will be delivered on Wednesday.

**Billing –** Have a hard copy invoice ready when you drop produce off and an easy way for chefs to pay. As a professional business owner, it is important to present yourself that way.

<b>Selling through a Third Party (for example, a distributor):</b>	
If you prefer to not develop and maintain one-on-one relationships with multiple restaurants there are options to sell through distributors like Agricultural Connections.	
<i>Pros</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Ease of product order &amp; delivery to restaurants</i></li> <li>• <i>No need to set up one-on-one relationships</i></li> <li>• <i>Middle business takes care of logistics</i></li> </ul>
<i>Cons</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Less profit (3rd party business takes %)</i></li> <li>• <i>Can't always get direct feedback from the business</i></li> <li>• <i>Don't always receive name recognition</i></li> </ul>

## Step Four: Getting Recognized and Going Further

Getting your product in the restaurant not only is a good way to diversify your consumer base and operations, but also is another great marketing avenue. Selling to restaurants is beneficial for farmers and restaurants alike. Farmers have another avenue through which to sell their product and increase their sales and the relationship is good marketing for the local food system as a whole.

- Ask them to have your information on hand
- Make sure your name is displayed on their specials or menu
- Ask about getting your Farmer Profile (provided by HDFFA) displayed at the restaurant

## Grown to Order

*"There are two sides to selling to a restaurant from a farm's perspective, setting up a contract for growth and use of product, or use of excess product grown from other focuses like market and CSA." – Casad Family Farms*

Creating a contract and growing specifically for a restaurant is a great next step to take if you want to continue to expand with a restaurant. Growing specifically for someone is a great way to ensure that your product is sold before you grow it and will help you pinpoint which products you'd like to grow and sell in Central Oregon.

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