

IT'S ENJOYABLE

By DEBORAH JONES

# Farmer's Market excels

It is mid-morning on Saturday. The parking lot at Craig and Underwood is filling up, and the drivers hurry to join the melee of Farmers Market bargain hunters before the produce is picked over.

Many of the shoppers are the converted — those who forego sleeping in each week to take advantage of the cheaper prices and fresher produce of the market. Others are the passers-by who stop out of curiosity, and some come periodically to pick up items not available at local supermarkets. But one thing is consistent — market merchants are doing more and more business each week.

There are none of the traditional supermarket conveniences — no air conditioning, orderly aisles or soft muzak in the background. On hot days shoppers sweeter as they bat at wasps. On grey, wet days they suddenly huddle under the shelter. In winter they don warm jackets and rush through the offerings. But the produce is usually cheaper than at a supermarket, and once in a while a thrifty consumer can get a real deal.

However the main drawing card of the farmers market appears to be its atmosphere. Shoppers mill around loaded tables set up under a rough wood shelter, meet with their neighbors, chat with vendors and choose from a wide array of fruit, vegetables and herbs.

A visit to the local farmers market is a lot more fun than a visit to a sterile supermarket.

The merchants seem to enjoy themselves also.

Mike Langtry, an electrician on weekdays, rented a booth in July for Mid-Island Produce, a business he runs on the side with a partner.

Each Saturday, Langtry can be seen approaching customers, encouraging them to buy more, pushing choice items, extolling the virtues of the potatoes that "were just dug up last night."

Although Langtry noted he "tries to stick 100 percent with B.C. grown, because people demand B.C. grown," he admitted some things just are not available in the north and have to be imported from California. But most of his produce comes from local Indian farms, Victoria, Vancouver or the Okanagan Valley.

Doreen Pastula, of Pastula Farms, rents one small booth and is the only vendor who sells only local produce. Although the goods can also be bought from her farm on Richard Trail,

she has found that more customers prefer to shop in town as the price of gas rises.

Pastula and Tom Brooks, whose stall extends along one-half of the market, are the only original merchants from when the market started two years ago. Week after week, said Brooks, they brought in their produce and waited for customers to show up. And waited, and waited. This year, finally, the market has begun to catch on.

"A year ago we didn't do \$100 worth of business a day. Now we do several

October 1, 1981

times that," said Brooks cheerfully.

Mar. 6, 1982

## INVITATION TO ALL OUR FRIENDS-

The crew from your "Local Farm" will be back at the Farmers Market at the Mound Parking Lot in Downtown Duncan on March 6, 1982.

-The finest in fresh fruits and vegetables. Get your special on fresh local mushrooms.

**COWICHAN VALLEY  
PRODUCE LTD.**

749-1225