



FRIENDLY CITY

FOOD CO-OP

150 E. Wolfe Street
Harrisonburg, VA 22802

www.friendlycity.coop
540.801.8882

Vendor Guide

Friendly City Food Co-op is a consumer cooperative owned by over 2700 of our shoppers. On a day-to-day level you may find us to be the same as any other business - we must be efficient and serve the customer as well as our bottom line, but we operate with a mission to ensure “that the Shenandoah Valley has a vibrant, local economy; fair and friendly relationships; healthy informed consumers and producers; and a healthy environment.” Accordingly, our goal is to create relationships/agreements that are equally good for our customers, the co-op, and our vendors.

Our product selection guidelines were created to coincide with these goals. These guidelines are included at the end of this vendor guide.

Standards and Risk Management

Today’s consumer expects top quality fruits, vegetables, meats and other perishable products at the height of freshness. As a consumer cooperative created to serve the needs of the community, Friendly City Food Co-op must apply those same standards when purchasing from all of our vendors. In order for us to sell your product, it must meet those standards consistently and over time. Therefore, we may not accept products that are not top-quality, including bruised, mis-shapen, “smalls,” “B’s,” or lesser quality items; and definitely not for premium prices. Produce should be washed, graded, and ready for retail sale. For some types of products, we may ask for proof of liability insurance.

Submitting Products for Consideration

Determine who the appropriate Friendly City Buyer is for your product(s). The Customer Service staff should be able to give you the contact info for that person although sometimes we may need to contact you later with that information.

- For local, processed food products your kitchen must be inspected and certified for food production by VDACS (Virginia Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services.)

Submit product and packaging samples along with a wholesale price list and contact information to that Buyer by mail or at our Customer Service desk. Please give us at least two weeks to sample and consider.

Please understand that we are frequently solicited for new products and suppliers, and we are busy running a store. Not all solicitations may receive a response. If you would like to follow up with us on your product(s) status, please do one of the following:

- Email us.
- Send us a letter via U.S. mail.
- Please drop by, if we are available, we'd love to say hello. If not, please leave a note, the personal follow through is appreciated.

Labeling

All labels must be in accordance with Virginia Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services regulations and requirements as follows:

- Company name, address and phone number must appear prominently on the label. This allows consumers to contact you in case of tampering or illness related to use of your product.
- All ingredients must be listed in descending order of quantity in product.
- Sub-ingredients within ingredients must also be included in ingredients listing in parentheses. (i.e. if mayonnaise is an ingredient, you must include all of the ingredients in the mayonnaise)
- Product weight in standard and metric units (lbs. /oz. and grams) is required.
- Expiration/Sell by dates must appear on label.
- If product is labeled as Organic, every ingredient must be certified organic and you will need to present us with a copy of your certification papers. If your product contains organic ingredients, those must be specifically identified, and you will also need to present us with certification trail for ingredients.
 - For produce your certifiers' company name and identification number should appear on your labels.
- UPC barcodes must be scannable and unique. There is software available for purchase that vendors can utilize to produce labels with UPCs. It is our preference that all products display a UPC barcode on the label, but in special situations we will accept non-UPC labeled items from local vendors while they build up to a volume that justifies investing in the UPC software. Please have us verify that your UPC is not a duplicate of any already in our POS system.
- PLUs are numbers that we assign that correspond to individual products. They can be included on the printed label, but are usually added by our staff.
- Nutrition facts are required for all products for human consumption, including beverages, herbal remedies, vitamins and supplements.
- We cannot permit any claims on a product's label that cannot be third-party verified.

The Virginia Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services can answer any additional questions. You can also check their website for more information

<http://www.vdacs.virginia.gov/>

Invoices and Payment

Payment terms must be established, as we prefer not to pay COD (Cash on Delivery) beyond the initial orders. For small, local vendors we ask for 14 days or longer, as that is the minimum needed to allow us to process and issue a check on time or better. Checks are generally processed and mailed once a week. **All checks will be mailed** unless prior arrangements have been made. One week's notice is required for check pick-up by vendor. Occasionally an invoice will be lost. If that happens please fax us a copy and follow up with call to the Buyer. We will process it right away. A tip is to use large invoices, even for small orders! The closer an invoice is to 8.5 by 11 inches the less likely it is that it will be lost. Please have your invoice completed when you arrive with the delivery.

Pricing and Margins

Our goal is to come to agreement on a wholesale cost that works for all parties. This may not be possible in all cases, and some vendors may be better positioned to sell directly to consumers, rather than for wholesaling to a retailer. In order for us to offer fair prices to our shoppers, we are unable to pay farmers market prices for items brought to us. Our mark-ups and margins are standard within a section or category. The Buyer will let you know what they are for particular items. For local food vendors a lower margin will be applied if all sales are guaranteed, meaning you will issue a credit for items unsold by sell by date.

Average freight and fuel allowances will be figured in as part of the cost of goods. We urge all vendors to give temporary promotional discounts to increase sales both long term and short term. Generally, we will operate on a lower margin as well. These sale prices need to be pre-arranged so that the department is ready to enact them and there are increased stock levels. We also encourage you to provide us with samples so that we can create awareness of your products while they are on promo.

Orders

The Buyer will work with you on how to best determine the quantity of product needed. There are several basic approaches:

- **We place orders.** In most cases, this is preferable because we are in the store on a daily basis seeing how well products are staying in stock. If you think we need more, please let the Buyer know, but the quantities are to be taken literally. A few vendors will have extra product that is needed but won't fit on the shelf (back stock). This is OK, if the Buyer agrees it is necessary and there is a schedule for stocking it.
- **The vendor services the product themselves.** This has been the traditional approach for many fresh food vendors as well as some supplement and body care companies. Even with this approach the vendor needs to work with the Buyer to make sure that stock levels are appropriate.
- **The vendor calls or e-mails us early in the week with an availability list** for the week, so that we can determine whether or not we need to order items from our distributors, or if there is enough local supply to meet our needs for the week.
- **Please be aware that our preference is that you let us know in advance what products you have available,** rather than showing up at the co-op with your items. On rare occasions, we may be in need of the fruits or vegetables you bring to us, but we need to ensure that we have our shelves stocked with essential items on a regular basis. It is unlikely that we will purchase produce arriving without our prior knowledge.

Delivery Schedules

All deliveries from local vendors need to be on an established basis. It reflects poorly on our business in the eyes of our customers when we are out of stock. They rarely consider or accept that it may be the result of a late or missed delivery. In an emergency, if you need to adjust your delivery schedule, please call to let us know so that we can plan and schedule accordingly.

- For occasional non-perishable orders we will order as needed with an established lead-time. Larger selling vendors will often be put on a schedule (i.e. weekly or monthly) for more consistent orders.

- Local baked goods and prepared food vendors should have a clear delivery schedule that can be posted for the customers. While some ups and downs in our in-stock rates are to be expected, deliveries must be often enough to keep short-dated products generally available 7 days a week.

Delivery hours by department are as follows:

- Grocery 7:30 a.m. to 5 p.m. Monday-Friday
- and 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. Saturday & Sunday;
- Wellness, Deli and Produce 8 to 5 daily.

All deliveries (with a few *pre-arranged* exceptions) are to come in the back door. We do have some carts and hand trucks, but we encourage you to bring your own wheels - ours are often in use. Customer shopping carts should not be used for deliveries.

We expect regular delivery people who know the routine for a particular order. Product is to come in organized and pre-marked with PLUs and dates (if applicable). Invoices are also expected to be mostly filled out and ready to go. Please have your product checked in and your invoice signed by a Friendly City team member.

Returns are to be clearly marked on an invoice and, unless it is pre-arranged, the vendor should take them away.

Co-op Membership

Please be aware that we do not expect our vendors to join our consumer co-op, although we always welcome new member-owners. Also, we would like for you to know that we treat all vendors with equal respect, and our vendors who are member-owners receive no special benefits or exclusive purchasing agreements.



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Product Selection Guidelines

Friendly City Food Co-op acquires and distributes food and related goods and services on a cooperative basis for the benefit of its members and other patrons. The co-op is committed to providing quality products at reasonable prices and to operating at all times in a manner that is fair and equitable to Friendly City members, staff, vendors and to the community.

Selection Criteria

Friendly City's priority is to provide:

1. quality products at fair prices;
2. products with high nutritional value;
3. local and regional products (grown, raised and produced in the Shenandoah Valley or within Virginia);
4. organically and sustainably grown products whenever available;
5. products available from other cooperative producers whenever possible and practical;
6. whole foods and foods processed with a minimum of chemical additives and sweeteners;
7. bulk food in preference to prepackaged products whenever available;
8. products which are produced using environmentally sound practices with consideration for fair labor practices and the overall effect on people and animal welfare (fair-trade);

9. products which are honestly labeled and packaged, including presence or avoidance of GMOs (genetically modified organisms.)
10. health and beauty care products produced without testing on animals.

Friendly City Food Co-op endeavors to adhere to the product selection guidelines set out above, simultaneously affirming its commitment to being responsive to the needs of its members and customers. Sometimes, due to customer demand, seasonal fluctuations or market pressures, we may carry products which do not meet the standards set out above.

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