

Meet the Farmers: Ben Paine

Paine Family Farms

Fulton N.Y.



Above: Ben Paine, with his produce at the Downtown Farmers Market. Below: The famous Plain and Cinnamon Sugar Donuts that delight Market visitors!

Downtown Farmers Market visitors can smell the fresh donuts wafting through the open-air market. They follow their nose to Paine Family Farms, located on the North Clinton Street entrance, in front of the fountain. Should they get distracted, a sign also points them in the right direction.

“The people and their smiles, it’s funny to watch them,” says Ben Paine, who is known as “The Donut Man” at both the Downtown Farmers Market and the Regional Market. People travel far and wide to purchase the Plain and Cinnamon Sugar flavored treats. “We’ve heard all kinds of stories.”

One week, a woman brought her brother and sister-in-law. The couple owns a business that requires them to travel frequently to Europe and all across the world. One of their travel traditions brings them to little pastry shops in each town they visit.

“That’s their thing,” Ben shrugs. “So their relative brought them down to The Market to taste the donuts, and they came back and said, ‘We’ve tasted pastries all over the world and your donuts have topped everything we’ve tasted.’ They came back and bought more.”

The recipe is homemade, passed down from Ben’s grandmother who used to serve them at a roadstand, when hayrides were offered at the Fulton farmstead.



Ben Paine represents the fifth generation in the family of farmers. “We’ve had our farm since the War of 1812,” he says. “We got it as a land grant. They [the government] couldn’t pay the officers, so they gave them land if they wanted it.”

If he is known *worldwide* for his donuts, he is known *statewide* for his rhubarb. With 15 acres of rhubarb fields, Paine Family Farms is the largest rhubarb grower in New York. At one point, the farm supplied rhubarb for the supermarket chain, P&C.

Rhubarb and asparagus are among the first things Ben brings to the Downtown Farmers Market each and every spring. Market visitors will also find cucumbers, green onions and tomatoes during the warm months. Fall sees the debut of cauliflower, cabbage and brussell sprouts. At Christmas time, Paine Family Farms creates wreaths.

“Then we take about a month and a half off, and start right back in the greenhouses in February,” Ben explains. “But there’s no real downtime. There’s always next year, that’s the thing with farms. There’s always next year.”

Right now, as his three sons are in school, Ben is a one-man-show. He encourages his boys – ages 23, 21, and the youngest, a senior in high school, respectively – to have a career to fall back on, should they not want to pursue farming.

Still, it’s a business Ben wouldn’t trade for the world. “It’s very rewarding, to grow the stuff, harvest it, and then sell it. That’s what it’s all about,” he says. “I love the people, too – especially when they come back and say how good everything is!”



Make sure to say hello to Ben at the Downtown Farmers Market every Tuesday!