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SELLING YOUR EXTRA HARVESTS

by Jacob Martin

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Ever grow too many vegetables and herbs and not know what to do with them?

While it may seem daunting, selling your excess produce to local restaurants can be a great way to earn extra cash and cut back on waste. Chefs want the freshest produce possible, but few grow their own. That means many will seek local growers with quality produce.

After starting Old School Produce my senior year of college, I quickly learned that growing high-demand, low-maintenance produce can lead to a more successful gardening business.

Some of the most valuable herbs and vegetables are usually the most labor intensive and require specific growing conditions. It's best to pick something you have experience growing, whether it's basil, carrots, tomatoes, peppers, or even edible flowers. Also, choosing to grow something in season will require less work and yield produce that looks and tastes better.

Once you settle on a crop, plant enough to stay consistent. Restaurants plan menus based on available fresh produce. Having enough in stock to last at least a week will help you build relationships with buyers and may lead to referrals for new restaurants.

Know your product. Find out what complements your crop, its flavor profiles, and how others have used it. When it's easy to envision potential menu items, chefs will more likely purchase your products and ask about other ingredients they may be considering.

Packaging matters when it comes to selling your product. Pre-wash your product and choose a type of packaging that stows easily. Restaurants love convenience, so make sure your product is easy to access and use.

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Now that you have your product picked and packaged, you're ready to sell. Choose restaurants known for buying locally, that aren't large chains. Approach potential buyers either early in the morning or between the lunch and dinner rush. Chefs will be more willing to talk to you during slower business hours.

So next time you have extra homegrown vegetables, don't let them go to waste. Perhaps you'll see them on your favorite restaurant's menu one day.

For more information, visit <http://www.oldschoolproduce.com/>.