



Formerly located at Moore Square, the Raleigh Downtown Farmers Market is a vibrant new addition to City Plaza and is downtown Raleigh's premier venue for locally grown produce and artisan food.

## Opera at the Market

*Opera About Town Performs Wednesday May 12 at 12:30 pm*

The [Raleigh Downtown Farmers Market](#) welcomes *Opera About Town* to the market on Wednesday, May 12. Market goers will enjoy a special performance from 12:30pm to 1:30pm featuring the North Carolina Opera's most promising young artists. This performance will preview the North Carolina Opera's June 12 debut showcasing operas of Puccini, Verdi, and Tchaikovsky. Shoppers visiting earlier in the day will enjoy a performance by local musician Pete Frederick beginning at 10:30am. While enjoying the entertainment, market customers can savor the sweet strawberries at the peak of their season. Downtown's favorite venue for mid-week fresh produce is located at City Plaza on the 400 block of Fayetteville Street, every Wednesday, rain or shine, from 10am-2pm through October 27.

*Opera About Town* is one of the North Carolina Opera's many community programs and features promising singers—perhaps tomorrow's opera stars—as well as stars of major opera houses around the globe. They will be performing highlights from the upcoming season, other opera favorites, familiar American standards and hits from Broadway. This is the first of the soon-to-be-announced, monthly opera series at the market.

## Meet Our Farmers

*Roger Ball, Ball's Berries and Produce*



With threats of drought, hungry deer, and record heat, Strawberry Season in North Carolina is a tense time for Roger Ball. These six weeks are his busiest and most stressful, but can also be his most rewarding.

While Roger grows a wide variety of produce (squash, cabbage, tomatoes, corn, watermelon, cucumbers, and cantaloupe to name a few) on his farm, strawberries are Ball's Berries and Produce's biggest crop. He harvests strawberries when most of us are just going to bed. He weighs and packs them before the sun comes up, and even then, his day is not even half over. Roger still has to load his truck, drive to the farmers market, and sell his strawberries. Then, after an afternoon of sampling and selling, he goes back to the farm to treat and water the plants before calling it a day.

Since 1960, the Ball family has owned this farm. It was a tobacco farm with a small section dedicated to growing produce for the family to consume. It was where Roger grew up, but times change and he was smart enough to realize it. So, a little over eight years ago, Ball switched the bulk of the farm's focus to strawberries. The rest, as they say, is history.

Ball's Berries and Produce is strictly a retail business. Roger relies on markets like this for his livelihood. Due to the delicate nature of his strawberries, all of Roger's strawberries are sold locally. Roger's farm is represented at least five farmers markets per week plus he has stands at Raleigh's legislative buildings as well as on his farm. "You see, there's a trade off. You can grow sweet, juicy strawberries that have only a few days shelf life or can grow blander 'berries that will last a few weeks," explains Mr. Ball. "I will only grow them one way, sweet. So, I pick them early in the morning and sell them later that day. If I have any left, I put them in my freezer so I can make strawberry preserves or cider when things get a little slower. Selling those in the winter really helps keep me going."

Roger may only know one way of doing things, the right and honest way, but not necessarily the old-fashioned way. Roger is continuously attending classes, conferences, and seminars to stay up to date on the newest and safest fertilizers, pesticides, and irrigation techniques. He has been granted his own pesticide license by the North Carolina Board of Agriculture (and only he applies them to his crops). He is a member of the Golden Leaf Foundation and is a major participant on the state's "Got to be NC" and "Goodness Grows" programs. Ball's Berries and Produce is also a Certified Roadside Farm Market and a member of the NC Strawberry Association.

## Strawberry Bruschetta with Honeyed Goat Cheese

8-10 slices of a French baguette  
1 T honey  
4 oz goat cheese, room temperature  
Salt to taste  
1 pint strawberries, hulled and sliced

Toast baguette slices. Combine goat cheese, honey and salt in a small bowl until smooth. When slices have cooled completely, smear goat cheese mixture onto each slice. Top each with sliced strawberries. Serve.

*Recipe and "Meet Our Farmer" article by Brian Adornetto. Brian Adornetto is a market volunteer, professional chef, culinary instructor, freelance food writer, and food editor for the Raleigh Downtowner. For more information on Brian, please visit his website, [www.loveatfirstbite.net](http://www.loveatfirstbite.net).*

For more information, visit [RaleighEatLocal.com](http://RaleighEatLocal.com).