

# The Columbus Dispatch

HURRICANE RECOVERY

## Markets bring fresh food to New Orleans

By Stacey Plaisance ASSOCIATED PRESS Sunday June 29, 2008  
6:10 A

NEW ORLEANS --Temporary farm markets deployed in parts of New Orleans recovering from Hurricane Katrina have given residents access to fresh fruit, vegetables, meat and seafood.

In the Lower 9th, they don't just shop. They talk about food, their families, the rebuilding of their homes and how frustrating life after Katrina can be.

"It's rough," said Vibiana Thomas, who had just attended church one recent Sunday and walked to the nearby farm market in the parking lot of a derelict KFC/Long John Silver's restaurant.

"It's rough," said Vibiana Thomas, who had just attended church one recent Sunday and walked to the nearby farm market in the parking lot of a derelict KFC/Long John Silver's restaurant.

"It's a big inconvenience to not have a grocery store or a drugstore," she said, holding a bag of zucchini, which she said she would saute in tomato sauce and garlic and top with parmesan cheese. "These markets are wonderful. It's a big help."

Thomas is living in nearby St. Bernard Parish while renovating her home in the Lower 9th, which flooded when levees broke in the August 2005 storm.

As she told a fellow church member how she likes to cook white summer squash -- one of an array of vegetables spread on a table and in crates under a tent -- other market patrons scooped up green beans, okra, Creole tomatoes and cabbage.

"I need 5 pounds of okra," said Deloras Cager, in the same breath telling a friend and the market volunteer bagging her produce that she went to a grocery store several miles away, only to find it was sold out of okra.

Karen Celious said she has brought her mother, 75-year-old Annie Ferbos, to the market every Sunday this month.

"Mom loves coming here," Celious said, as her mother picked out squash and asked baker Sye Ellis to bag her some cinnamon rolls. "This is her outing," Celious said.

Ellis, who runs a bakery in suburban Gretna, offered a spread of sweet potato pies, apple pies, Italian bread and coffee cake. A vendor from St. Charles Parish also was selling fresh herbs such as basil and parsley and small trees and shrubs.

"We hope to expand," said Jenga Mwendo, a Lower 9th Ward resident who helps run the market and secures vendors.

"People have been asking for seafood, and they've been asking for prepared foods," Mwendo said. "They want something they can just grab and go."



BILL HABERASSOCIATED PRESS

Jenga Mwendo manages a weekly market that provides access to fresh food for residents of New Orleans' Lower 9th Ward.

City officials launched the temporary markets recently using \$120,000 in Community Development Block Grants designated for hurricane recovery. Their operations are coordinated by the French Market Corp., which manages the city's open-air market in the French Quarter that is more than 200 years old.

One day a week for several hours, the five markets are open in hard-hit neighborhoods such as eastern New Orleans, Lakeview and the Lower 9th.

The Lower 9th's market opened June 1.

"This is all about the community," Mwendo said. "It even feels like a community because it's in the perfect place."