

# Kettle Corn Business



# Journal

# **Kettle Corn Business Journal**

**By**

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# 2006

## Our First Day!

*Wednesday, June 14th, 2006*

Ok, so we had to start somewhere, so here it is. Springfield farmers market, Springfield, MA - June 14th, 2006. How did we get into the kettle corn biz yer wonderin'..right? A few years back Velma and I had gone to a craft show in Sudbury, MA. There was a tent called "Grandpa's Kettle Corn" selling the stuff and we went apeshit over it. We would come back year after year to buy a couple of bags. Of course we had tried in vain to make the stuff ourselves with no luck. We always noticed that the kettle corn tent had a line of people, waiting. I ran the numbers in my head and thought "I'd like to do that! It's a portable biz too!" (Velma and I had always wanted to travel around the country in an RV. Why not sell kettle corn to support ourselves? That was the dream/delusion anyways.) :-P

I ended up buying a kettle from somebody on ebay around 2005. Slowly started to pop a few test batches to see how I'd do. (Terrible. It's actually more trickier than it looks!) I gave loads of it away to my co-workers at my corporate video editing job. THEY started to go nuts over the stuff and demanded that I bring my "tests" more often.



Eric and Steve's first day

Steve worked there as a video producer. The stuff got to him while munching on a bag when he was driving home one day. I told HIM about the numbers and showed him how "easy" it was to make. He mentioned that there was a farmers market down the street from him and we should give it a whirl. Why not?

We weren't sure how people would respond to this stuff. I assumed anyone who went to a farmers market was a tree-hugging, earthy-crunchy vegetarian who went there for the organic produce. We sold about 50 bags that day. It was ok. Certainly didn't make the same as my corporate job, but we had fun doing it and it paid for the beer and the meal afterwards.

Farmers markets usually charge about \$15 to set up a tent. Craft shows usually want something around \$200 to set up. At 15 bucks, how were we gonna lose?

2015 update: I had purchased all the equipment up till now and was only practicing popping in my garage. Steve is the guy who pushed me to schlep all the stuff out to Springfield and pop at this farmers market. As I had mentioned, I didn't think this was going to work out very well, I was thinking I had to get into giant events. This spot has ended up the most consistent place to make money with popping kettle corn - we just didn't know it at the time. You'll see that I eventually moved and Steve

bought his own kettle and is kicking my ass with this location on a regular basis. You'll read how it develops as this journal goes along.

Many people have written to me about the unknown and how scary the thought is of investing a ton of money into something like this with no assurances that it will work. I definitely felt the same way at the time. Most people have a problem with the entrepreneurial spirit - it what separates the exceptionals from the heard. I've tried to give you as much of a blue print as I've could with all my training material.

That being said - kettle corn sells itself. You just have to not screw it up. There will always be a demand for yummy food. I've told many people that the economy has no bearing on my business. Six bucks is not a financial strain on anyone and for many, this is their one weekly joy. You'll see that location is the biggest factor. Nail that down and you can easily pay for this equipment within a season.

## **Jees, They're Buyin' This Stuff!**

*Tuesday, July 25th, 2006*



Springfield Farmers Market 2006

So the stuff is selling like....kettle corn! We're starting to see the same faces each week. It seems we've now become a staple food for the people of Springfield. We've been selling more bags each week. (We're now up to 125 bags per week!) Most people don't even want the free sample we give out, they just go: "seal the bag up and let me get out of here."



"I went to Wellesley College for THIS?"



What usually happens is someone will walk up and go: "what's in kettle corn? Sugar? I don't know if I'll like it." [crunch] [crunch] [crunch] They're hooked. A little evil trick we've learned is to make it a point of giving free samples to every little kid in the parking lot. What kid ISN'T going to like kettle corn? "MOMMY! MOMMY! WE WANT SOME KETTLE CORN!" Out comes the money. :-D



Eric with his white overalls. (that didn't last)

I've painted a sign that says 'kettle corn' with a big arrow pointing into the farmers market and have now started leaving that on the street. I call it our "kettle corn hot light" after the Krispy Kreme donut hot light. Definately getting the hang of popping the stuff. It's weird when the weather changes or a storm is starting to come in, you can tell that the barometer has dropped because the batches don't pop as vigorously. Weird.

**2015 update:** It's cool when you first see the whole process work!

## **Puerto Rican Festival, Springfield, MA**

*Sunday, August 6th, 2006*

OK, we were getting cocky. This stuff sells itself, right? Steve learns of an ethnic festival that happens every year in Springfield. Since he knows everybody at the town hall, he gets to schmooze with the person setting it up. The deal was: pay upfront and get a good spot at the Puerto Rican Festival. It's a 3 day event with music and perhaps a couple thousand people each day. How much? \$250 a day. (Quick! Do the math: 2,000 people x \$4 a bag = WOO HOO!) The guy runnin' the festival tells us that they'll love our product! Can't lose.



Puerto Rican Festival spot 2006

This is gotta work, right? We maybe have a couple hundred people at the farmers market each day and easily sell 125 bags. Who doesn't like kettle corn? One slight problem: we need \$750 upfront. We haven't saved that much yet. My bank account is kinda slim after buying the tent and trailer. Steve has it in his bank account, so no problem. (Hell, we'll make that back in the first day, we tell his wife to just think of it as a temporary loan.)

They supply us with a large tent pretty close to the stage. (This is good, right? The crowd will be RIGHT HERE. Funny that the other vendors grabbed all the spots way over there.) Off we go. We pop up our first batch...let's get ready to start grabbing the money. Look at all these people here!

Nada.

Here's how it's supposed to work: you put your hand out, we give you a sample, you eat it, you give us \$4. They were waving off the free samples! How do you NOT take free stuff?!? JUST EAT IT!! We were totally perplexed. We popped maybe half a 50lb. bag that night. We couldn't GIVE the stuff away! We start to drop our prices: \$6....\$5....\$4...\$3. Barely any sales. The next morning Steve tracks down the guy and asks what's going on. Nobody wants to even try the stuff. The guy says something to the effect that it might be a cultural thing, they don't like taking free stuff, it might feel like it puts an obligation on them. Steve makes a joke that it's like selling fried plantains at the Irish day parade.

Oh crap. We're screwed. Time for drastic action. We noticed that since we're so close to the stage, the crowd doesn't really turn over that much. We end up with a packed bunch of humanity in front of us. Nobody could get to us even if they wanted some kettle corn. We pull our banner down and slap it onto another table and set it up behind the crowd towards the exits and other amusements. 2 bucks a bag. I continue to pop and sell it for 2 bags at the tent. We're now double teaming. We break even plus make up for last night.



Steve desperately tries to drum up business

The next day the same thing. Steve is relentlessly giving the stuff away. We break even again. \*Whew\* Steve gets his "loan" back. We basically killed ourselves for 3 whole days and made nothing. At least we didn't lose any money. Wow. There's more to this kettle corn "scam" than I thought. We can't wait until next Tuesday when we can go back to the farmers market. :-P

2015 update: Here was our first big lesson. We always thought we had to be in the BIG events to make money. You'll see that the person running the event will always tell you how great you'll do, etc. etc. We were lucky that had some success with the farmers market, because if this were our first event, we'd be having major concerns if this kettle corn business could work.

As I had mentioned, there seemed to have been a weird cultural thing going on. They just wouldn't

take the samples, no matter how much we pushed. I've never seen this anywhere else.

## **We hit the bigtime - Brimfield Antique Show**

*Sunday, September 10th, 2006*

Anyone who knows anything knows that the biggest antique show in the whole country is the Brimfield Antique Festival. It's held 3 times a year and it's huge. The town of Brimfield, MA gets gridlocked while over 500,000 people look for old, smelly, expensive crap. They got money, they get hungry. Get yourself a spot and you can retire in Florida once it's done. (Do the math! [uh-oh, we've screwed up before] Let's be reasonable this time, say..only 50,000 people buy a \$4 bag = WOO HOO!)

Problem is, Brimfield spots are highly desirable. Apparently people have held onto food spots for their entire lives. How do you get in? I shoot off a email to all the people in charge of their areas. (It's that big, no one person runs it.) A guy by the name of Ed calls me back. He runs the FOOD COURT (it's smack dab in the middle of everything) and says that his kettle corn guy won't be there in the fall, do I want the spot? [HOLY CRAP] DO I???



2006 Brimfield Antique Festival spot

We make it down there for the summer event to say hello to Ed and check out the spot. There's someone selling "Maple Kettle Corn" at the moment, and we ply the guy for all sorts of information. We try some of his maple kettle corn. Eh, it's alright. You kinda get overwhelmed with the maple flavor. It's not as snarfable as good ol' regular kettle corn. Ed gives us the spiel. It's \$2,200 for all 6 days of the event. They supply water and electricity AND an RV spot. We don't need any of that, but what the hell. OK, let's do the math again: we're \$360 in the hole BEFORE we make a dime.....EACH DAY. "About how much do the other vendors make?" I ask Ed. "Those guys (selling pizzas and subs) can make anywhere to about 14 grand a week here."

OK, more math:  $\$14,000 - \$2,200 = \$12,000$  profit for one weeks worth of work. WOO HOO! Ed wants someone who wants to do all three shows a year! ( $\$12,000 \times 3 = \$36,000$  Holy double crap!) OK, we're in! By this point we've saved up about 2 grand from our farmers market gigs. It's like the stock market...we're not spending our money, we're INVESTING IT.

We scramble to get all the permits in with the health department. I figure if it rains, we might need another tent to keep everything dry. We noticed that it got kinda cramped in our little tent when it pours. I also bought a huge 10' banner that says KETTLE CORN. Now we look legit. How are we gonna spend our 12 grand at the end of the week?

The first few days were alright. We had Velma, Steve and I working at the same time. Steve would do

his thing and give out free samples and schmooze with the crowd. We were right in the middle of everything, and also right in the middle of the food court. Tons of people all around us. We also noticed that there were TWO other kettle corn vendors, just up and down the street from us. OK, fine. We also noticed that people didn't really want kettle corn when they're looking for lunch. We noticed that sales picked up a lot at the end of the day when the crowd was heading back to their cars. We make our money back each day and then another \$300-\$400. (Hmmm...the math says we each made about \$100 a day. I've had an easier time making that amount sweeping floors.) :-)



Steve gives out samples while Eric photobombs

That Saturday was nuts. Velma was cursing that I ever got her into this "scam". Shoveling kettle corn the entire day non stop. Steve hardly gave out any samples, they just lined up. (This was how it was supposed to be, right?) Sunday ends up being a short day 'cause everyone wants to clear out of there.

All total? We spent 2 grand to make 2 grand. Divide that up by 3 people and you get what? An average wage? I've certainly found easier ways to make that amount. Definitely think that the other kettle corn vendors had something to do with it. I saw plenty of people walking past us already holding a bag of kettle corn. I find out after the fact (from the other vendors) that MANY kettle corn vendors have gone through that same spot and basically did what we did. That was probably the reason why Ed was looking for someone to be there all year.

OK, so the big time wasn't that lucrative. At least we weren't in the hole for our efforts. Boy, paying \$15 for a spot at a farmers market and having loyal customers come up to you isn't too bad after all. :-)

**2015 update:** Again, if we didn't have some sort of success with the smaller Springfield farmers market, we might've been out of the biz if we thought all events would turn out like this, lots of effort and investment, just for a so-so reward.

We had scouted out this spot a year before and noticed a maple kettle corn vendor here. The only reason we got the spot was because they didn't come back. That should tell you something very important! We were swayed by the crowds and all the activity. If you look behind the tent in the photo, those are all FOOD vendors. There were at least two other kettle corn vendors at this location. When you have that much competition, your sales will suffer.

# 2007

## Another year starts up...

*Tuesday, May 1st, 2007*

..at the Springfield farmers market. We had a bunch of sad-looking faces last year when we finished up at the end of October. "Where are we gonna get kettle corn during the winter?" Steve had tried to start up some stores in Springfield, but that never got off the ground. (We did continue selling with Bolton Orchards and Colella's Market in Hopinkton, MA. We did about a case a week, somebody had to continue their kettle corn fix during winter.)

Total bags the first day back: 112! It was almost like we never left. If you compare that to our first week a year ago, it was only a lousy 40-50 bags. We got the usual "OOOH! You guys are here! I'm coming back every day!" Since this seems to be working out...let's see if we can find some other farmers markets and recreate the magic.

**2015 update:** You'll notice we tried some retail sales over the winter. When people say "I would buy your kettle corn if it were in a store" - they're lying. There's a whole different dynamic doing on.

## Framingham Farmers Market

*Thursday, June 14th, 2007*

Since we've done so well on Tuesdays at the Springfield farmers market, we decided to add Thursdays to our schedule and try the same thing at the Framingham Farmers Market. (Located at the Common/Green or something like that.) I should know this stuff because I went to middle school, high school and college in Framingham. (It's like you can't escape your past. Get me out of here...PLEASE.)



Velma harangues drivers in Framingham

It was kind of small, 6 tents/vendors. The woman who runs the event (Heidi) thinks there will be more vendors coming as the season progresses. I had one surprise - my old movie theater co-worker (from 1983) Mike Sanders was there working for the Sudbury Valley Trustees. We keep crossing paths every 10 years. I can only imagine who else I'll be running into at this event. (Old high school girlfriends?)

Since we were kinda hurting for customers, the "cheese done slid off of Velma's cracker" - she went nuts giving away samples to the people in cars who were waiting for the light to change. Got a couple of drive by customers who spotted the good ol' "kettle corn hot light" sign. Total bags sold: 35. Hopefully it'll pick up, let's see what happens in the next few months.

**2015 update:** I grew up in Framingham, so this location seemed like a nice fit. Framingham Massachusetts should've been a city with a population of 68,300. You'll see that we grew very steadily over the next few years.

## Shooting the first video

*Wednesday, June 27th, 2007*

OK, we're video production guys by nature. This is what we do. (B.K.C. - Before kettle corn) Of course we're gonna shoot commercials and other silly crap for Velma's Kettle Corn. We can't help it. Steve was mostly a sound guy, I did plenty of shooting in my early days and ended up an editor/graphics guy. (I created everything you see on this website.) We get paid plenty of money to do video production. Why are we now making kettle corn? I tend to blame it on a mid-life crisis. :-)



"OK kid, one more take"

Of course we pick a 95 degree day in Springfield to shoot this thing in. Some people needed a little prodding with a large bag "upgrade" to get them on camera. Some people just went for it. (We like the type who just go for it. Not that we're losing any big money on upgrading to a large bag, just they tend to be more spontaneous.) Today reminded me of the OTHER 95 degree day we had last year. Not only is the kettle radiating blazing heat, but even the kettle corn is once you dump it in the sifter. I got heat stroke by the end of the day last year and couldn't even help load the trailer. This was before we got these super duper blower fans that fire a torrent of air into your face. A couple of people asked me what are those for, I call them our "life support system."



Steve says "watch the birdie"

We should be shooting some more testimonials during the summer and will post all the new versions as we go along. I'm planning on doing some weird "story" things with kettle corn too. To see what we did for a video, just go to the buy some now page: [Buy some kettle corn online page](#)

Note: yes, it is the ol' "go to the BUY SOME KETTLE CORN page to see what we did" ploy. Feel free to ignore the BUY SOME button.

## **So it's starting again...**

*Thursday, June 28th, 2007*

..in Framingham. After three farmers markets, we're getting many repeat customers. On our second day there we sold 90 bags, and just recently on our third trip we moved about 80.



Velma speaking with customers

We've had a bunch of drive-bys, where someone will spot the tent and pull right over and get out and buy a bag. One woman said she had her windows down while waiting for the light and could smell it. 2 hours later she comes back and gets a bag. Still pretty decent for only 4 vendors with tents. (Not including the Federation of Farmers' Markets tent - the people who run the show.)

Johnny Macleod My buddy "Johnny" MacLeod lives near by and has been showing up and hanging out. I've known him since freshman year in high school (1976). He was the main actor in my big obscure indie film project called "alt.sex".



Johnny's easily amazed.

I may be sucking him into this "scam" and make him pop kettle corn. Don't you hate it when someone writes about someone else in a blog that has no relevance to the reader? Tough noogies. :-)

**2015 update:** I don't have the final grosses for the years 2006 and 2007 because I wasn't keeping very good records at the time. I wasn't sure if I would continue doing this in the future, this was all very much a side project.

## Refrigerator Magnets?

*Saturday, July 7th, 2007*

Yup. "Aren't those kinda cheesy for a promotional item?" I guess. Here's my dilemma: I want people to know about this website. We've got the URL on a banner underneath our table and it's on the tent panel behind the kettle. It doesn't exactly jump out at you and force you to memorize it. I also want to create a sort of Pavlovian response to our name-once you've tried our kettle corn and have come to like it. I want a reminder of our name and URL at home for some of our biggest fans. Think Homer Simpson: "Hmmmm....kettle corn...must have some Velma's kettle corn."

I figure every time you open your refrigerator (you're hungry, that's why you're opening it in the first place, right?), you see the name and have that reminder that you liked Velma's kettle corn. There's the website address, I could order some now! Hunger=food=refrigerator=magnet=URL=sale.

That's the theory anyway.



Eric with his white overalls. (that didn't last)

I ordered up 500 refrigerator magnets from [magnets-4-less.com](http://magnets-4-less.com) at 25 cents a piece. I guess if I print up thousands of them, I can get the price down to something like 15 cents a piece. I started to give a bunch away at the latest Springfield farmers' market. Wasn't sure how'd they go over, but everyone's face lit up when I offered them this little token "chotchke". A couple of people saw 'em and asked to have one. I'm relieved that I can now offer a token reminder with an online sale. (Hey that was GOOD, lemme order some more.)

The next project I will be working on is a Velma's t-shirt. I've got a couple of ideas and hopefully I can at least break even with them. Keep you posted when that happens.

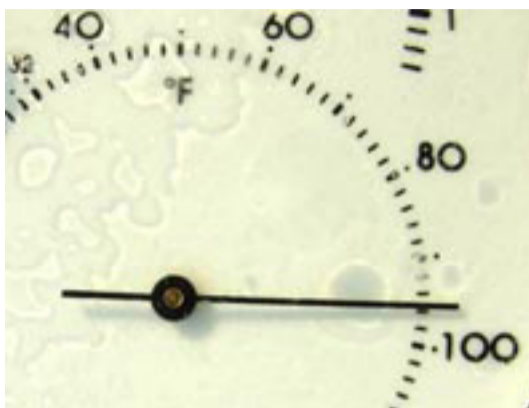
**2015 update:** I've had a few people come up to me years later and mention that they still have their Velma's magnet on their refrigerator. I never saw an increase in repeat business from all our efforts with this.



## Cripes is it hot!

Tuesday, July 10th, 2007

These days are killer. Apparently Springfield, MA, has the most screwed-up weather, and I end up popping it it. Steve tells me because the whole thing is in a valley, all sorts of screwy cloud formations "fall" into the hole and dump their misery on us.



Last year we got a hail attack and at least one hundred degree day. This year we've already done (2) hundred degree days. Don't forget, the damn kettle heats up to some crazy amount (glowing red hot), so add that temperature to the ambient 98 degrees IN THE SHADE. Oh yeah, I bought a little barometer/thermometer doo-hickey on eBay this week. I want to see if a change in barometric pressure affects kettle corn popping.



Another "fan" of Velma's

We've now got ourselves some "life support", a pair of industrial fans which spit out a torrent of air. Last year on that hundred degree day, I was popping with nothing. No fans, not even that native guy who was sitting on the porch of Col. Saito's office, pulling that flap in the ceiling in the film "Bridge On The River Kwai". I was \*THIS\* close to fainting from heat stroke by the end of the day. Steve had to basically load the trailer by himself. I couldn't even stand up. With these blowers, it's at least manageable. We're working on getting the super-duper "Kettle Corn Express" popper which allows you to stand NEXT to the kettle and crank a little handle, sorta like a kettle popping organ grinder. More on that later when it arrives.



Johnny isn't easily cooled off

As predicted, my buddy "Johnny" Macleod pulled a whole stint with us today. Steve was getting his "hand chopped off" and was showing up later in the day. [What really happened: he had carpal tunnel surgery on his wrists and had the cast removed.] I feel bad that I had insisted that Steve learn how to touch type when he was working with me at the corporate job. I still want to know how you get carpal tunnel by typing with two fingers. There are a whole bunch of other jokes you can make with the "repetitive stress" aspect of the injury and let's just say that Steve had it worse on his RIGHT hand. ;-)

**2015 update:** By this time we've added the generator to our set up so we could seal the bags with a heat sealer - and keeping us cool with some fans. Those things are still running 8 years later! They're especially nice to dry out any wet spots on your carpets at home.

## Velma's eases backflow problems!

*Tuesday, July 17th, 2007*

These three people are part of the happy geeks of Tokay Software in Framingham, MA. They are the current title-holder of Most Addicted Consumers of Velma's Kettle Corn! Every week they faithfully show up at our tent on the Village Green, pupils dilated, palms moist, nostrils trembling. They refuse to leave until we've popped at least 10 bags to feed their habit.



The gang from Tokay software

Now that's devotion. We love it.

P.S. On the day this photo was taken, there was a fourth geek present, but he refused to have his photo taken, embarrassed, no doubt, to have his addiction discovered. The three women, you'll note, have no such shame.

**2015 update:** I'm looking at these women and thinking "oh yea, they USED to be our customers." They still come by the market, they just don't buy any more bags. It seems everyone seems to go through passionate phase, then they get it out of their system. Long term customers will come by once a month for years.

## **Pass the ammo and a bag of Velma's**

*Sunday, July 29th, 2007*

SPC James Parham (of the 1st CAV Warhorse out of Ft. Lewis, WA) is one lucky guy. He's now stationed in Iraq. His mother-in-law Cynthia sent him a couple of bags a few weeks ago. Apparently James' team/squad/platoon got a taste of the stuff and got addicted immediately. (Classified ingredient: "agent yellow") Everyone demanded a bag so Cynthia sent over 2 cases of the stuff. 24 bags total!

SPC James Parham is the guy on the right with the "doo rag". Never thought I'd ever see a bag of Velma's next to an M-16. Wasn't this how Spam got it's start? (The meat product, not the crappy e-mail.) The military gave it to the troops during WWII and they ended up liking it and continued eating it when they got home. You'd think the French cuisine would've stuck during WWII...but Spam? Maybe it's a myth started by the Hawaiians. (who love the stuff)





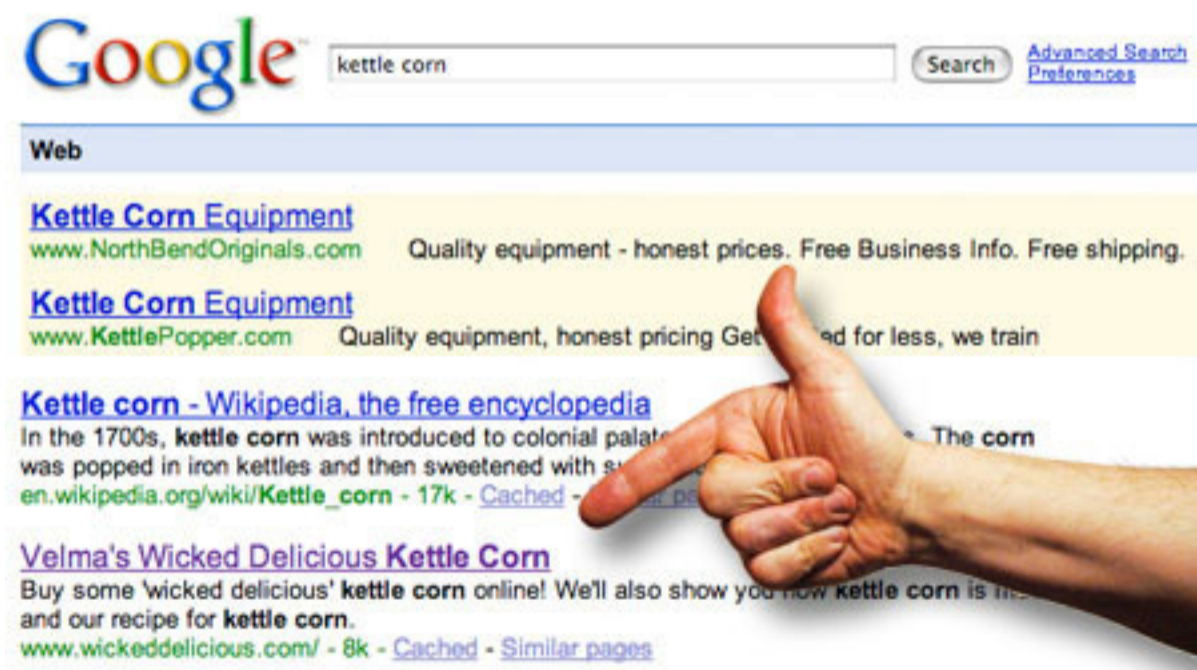
Maybe we can get a contract from Haliburton to sell kettle corn to the military. What would you think they would sell this stuff for? \$20 a bag? :-P

**2015 update:** If you ever do sell online, shipping to anyone in the military isn't a problem. All the mail goes to one central location in our country, then they military takes it over seas from there.

## #2 on Google!

Thursday, August 9th, 2007

Hey! I guess S.E.O. (Search Engine Optimization) works! We finally worked our way up to the #2 spot on Google for the key word "kettle corn". Now we just have to push past wikipedia. So what's the big deal you ask? Plenty.



I got the big idea to start selling kettle corn online about a year ago. The easy way is to just list an item on ebay and rake in the money. (How many people buy stuff on ebay? Millions. We're gonna be rich-SOMEBODY wants kettle corn out there..right? Wrong. Hardly anyone bothered to look at the listing. The posting fees were also kinda steep just for a \$4 item.

I noticed that thousands of people a month were searching on Google for kettle corn. How do I know this? Certain websites like Seobook will tell you how often a search term or keyword is entered in Goo-

gle. As an example: the keyword "kettle corn" normally gets 5,280 searches a month. That's cool. Not as much as say...the keywords "online gambling", but an OK amount.

You've probably noticed that it's tough to get a high listing on Google. Sure, if you know exactly WHO you want, their web page will appear on top of your search, but if you're not sure of WHAT you want for something like kettle corn, there are many people wanting to sell you it on the web. Right now it says that there are 1,240,000 web pages with the words "kettle corn" on them. Since most people don't bother to click beyond the first few links, you must get "up there" to be noticed.

How do you get a good listing on Google? Two ways: pay for a good spot (i.e. the Sponsored links) or have a popular website. Certain S.E.O. Websites will tell you what the going rate is to have the top spot on Google for you keyword. I know that [North Bend Originals](#) (the same kettle I have) is paying over \$2 A CLICK to be listed as the top one. There is now way I'm going to pay \$2 a click to sell a \$4 bag of kettle corn.

What makes a website seem popular to Google? Links! If other people are linking to your website, Google thinks that you must be important. Especially if they are putting your keyword in their link back to you. This is when I started giving out free sample bags of kettle corn to anyone who would give me a link. I've now sent out almost 300 sample bags of kettle corn for the same amount of links. The best spot on a Google search page is not the area where the paid spots are but the top of the free Google suggestions. We're right now at the second best spot AND we are above all the other vendors! Woo hoo!

At this point online sales is OK. I'd say we do about 12-16 bags a week. (3-4 orders) I've noticed certain people across America are REALLY into kettle corn and have started to re-order on an almost weekly basis. I figure once I've attracted the attention of enough of them, I'll be all set!

**2015 update:** Well, I USED to be big on Google, until they changed their algorithm and messed with my standings.

## T-shirts

*Friday, August 24th, 2007*

So we gotta have t-shirts, right? Everybody wants a t-shirt, right? OK, I guess we'll see.



Eric's muppet smile face

Years ago, when I was playing in an obnoxious rock band, I had created a cute logo for our band

name: Smoking Cow. It was a cartoon of a cow smoking (go figure). We had printed up a couple dozen t-shirts and sold them all. It seemed more people enjoyed our cute t-shirts more than our loud music.

When the time came to create a logo for Velma's Wicked Delicious Kettle Corn, I wanted to work in a funny cartoon of something, just so it would look good on a t-shirt. My early prototypes can be seen here, here and here. I liked the concept of a Velma as a witch (kettle/witch), but I didn't want people to think it was a Halloween only treat. I was never was totally happy with what I came up with, so I've dumped it for now.

In my mind, I'll be selling a million of these things. Why pay \$300 to have a bunch of shirts made when for the same amount, I can buy everything I need to MAKE the damn things myself. (I will be making hundreds of these things, right?) Bought a silk screening starter kit from silkscreeningsupplies.com.

The website LOOKS professional and their videos were helpful, but it took 'em ONE SOLID MONTH to get me everything after a bunch of emails and phone calls. SIGH Went with the one color press since I was just going to do the logo (red) on a yellow shirt. Normally you can spend a pile of more money doing multiple colors, but since I don't have a cute Velma character to worry about, one color outta do it.



The moment Eric slipped a disk

Bought a bunch of blank t-shirts from a Michaels art supply store. Banged out a logo on an acetate, burned the screens and printed up a couple dozen. They give you a nice 'n detailed DVD that shows you all the steps, so it wasn't too much of a biggie to pound these things out. The only wrinkle I discovered was that the inks in t-shirt silk screening don't just air dry, you've got to heat cure the ink to about 350 degrees or else it'll come apart in the wash. You get a cheapy Wagner paint remover heat gun with the kit, but it's a pain in the ass to wave it over each shirt for about a minute to do its thing. I've got a two sided shirt (logo on the front, web address on the back), so multiply the drying time by two. We ended up tossing everything into our kitchen oven for a minute to finish off the curing. You've got to cough up another 300 bucks for the flash dryer if you want to bang these things out in any reasonable time. (I'll have to get one of them too 'cause these babies are gonna sell like kettle corn.)

I eagerly hung them up for sale in our tent and waited for the rush. They've been on sale at our 2 farmers market locations all this week.

Total t-shirt sales so far: 0

Maybe they'll sell better online. :- ( Steve and his kids certainly loved 'em. Gee, maybe I do need a cute cartoon character. Everybody still loves getting the stupid refrigerator magnets. I'll have to re-order some of them soon. Oh well.



"Leave the gun, but take the kettle corn"

Farmers market updates: They both hit a record number of sales this week! Framingham, which only has 4 other tents, has started to approach what we do in Springfield. Many people have told us that their friend insisted they come down and try it. Mostly repeat customers too.

**2015 update:** OK, this was a complete failure. If any small business owner goes on about their **BRANDING**, just tell them to shut up. They'll pay for your KETTLE CORN, nobody wants a t-shirt unless you give it to them. They're also a major pain in the butt to haul around while preventing them from getting wet and/or dirty. There is way more profit in just selling more kettle corn.

Still - it is kind of cool to have a t-shirt with your name on it. Steve's kids loved wearing them. Having them as a kind of uniform is nice, just don't expect anyone to increase PROFITS with stuff like this.

## 8 bags to Fritolay

Wednesday, August 29th, 2007

So I'm banging out the online orders, entering them into my database when I notice a person with @fritolay.com in their email address. I google their shipping address: 7701 Legacy Drive, Plano, TX. It's the headquarters of Fritolay! This is cool...I'm sending 8 bags of Velma's Wicked Delicious Kettle Corn to someone at Fritolay! Here's what I wrote in my email:

*Ya know, if you guys could figure out how to make this stuff for real on an industrial scale, you'd make a killing. I certainly got some ideas.*

*I'm planning on making a silly flash movie where I bash all the other "major" versions of kettle corn. (Popcorn Indiana, etc.) Nobody knows how to do it right. They think if you air-pop come popcorn and squirt some flavoring on it and call it "kettle corn", no one will notice.*

Getting no reply, I sent a follow up email:

*OK, popped up a batch yesterday and will be shipping your order out today. (August 29th)*

*Noticing that it's going to the corporate headquarters of Fritolay...I can only imagine...*

*..someone at their desk going, "GOD, if they make me eat another bag of Doritos I'm gonna quit!"*

*..after much web surfing..*

*"oh, what's this?"*

*:-) :-)*

*Thanks for the order!*

*Eric*

*(I would love to know if my kettle corn magnet is up someplace in Fritolay.) :-)*

I basically got this for a reply:

*Eric, Thank you so very much for the update. I appreciate your prompt response to my purchase and really enjoy your great humor!!*

Hmmm...wadda ya think? We're going to be seeing giant bags of Fritolay kettle corn in our supermarkets soon? I'm certainly not big enough to be bought out by these guys. Hell, I've put the recipe up on this website in a big, stupid flash movie. Oh well, I guess this will have to be my only brush with greatness. Back to the tent.



## **Mattoon St. Arts Festival, Springfield, MA**

*Tuesday, September 11th, 2007*

We recently popped for two days at the Mattoon Street Arts Festival in Springfield, Massachusetts. We haven't done too many of these kinds of shows. Normally they're kind of tricky to get into, there's usually the "regular kettle corn guy" who's been doing these events for years. I always thought that kettle corn was a staple at these events. We discovered Grandpa's Kettle Corn (our favorite OTHER kettle corn vendor) at the Wayside Inn's arts and crafts festival in Sudbury, Massachusetts.



Mattoon Street Arts Festival

I guess last years event was better. We had a little drizzly rain during Saturday while our kettle refused to light. (There was a leak in the gas hose to the pilot light.) We frantically drove around Springfield looking for a replacement part and lost the first half of the day. We were also kinda stuck way in the back. The food court was off of a side street to the main event, and our tent was stuck in a drive-



way off of that side street.

Here's what we've noticed between our regular Farmers markets gigs and these single events: our weekly farmers markets customers tend to buy multiple bags per visit and tend to stock up for the week. We hardly got any double orders during this arts and crafts show. We were also surprised to find a bunch of people who had no idea what kettle corn was. We had to do a lot more selling (giving away of free samples) to get the sales.



Steve gives the tin man some oil

After two days we did just a little more business than our best single day at the Springfield Farmers market. If you subtract the \$150 fee we paid to get into this event, we did below average for both days. Don't forget, we only pay about \$15 for a farmers market spot. Boy do we like our regular customers!

**2015 update:** I can remember the spot killing our sales. If you need to be a jerk about having a more noticeable spot, then you should be a jerk. :-)

## **Metrowest Humane Society Craft Fair, Framingham, MA**

*Saturday, September 15th, 2007*

So the Metrowest Human Society was hosting a craft fair in the same spot we normally do our Framingham farmers market. They only wanted 60 bucks to set up, so we jumped on it. (The health department certificate was all set.) We hoped that we would get enough of our regular customers in Framingham to make this worth while. We were a little wary of doing Arts and Craft festivals from our struggles at last weeks Mattoon Arts and Crafts festival in Springfield.

We get there. It's overcast and starting to drizzle. It doesn't look good. We manage to sell a few bags before it's starts to legitimately rain. We're going, "Oh boy, this is gonna suck." Velma and I are sitting there, getting annoyed with each other and our predicament. We had bailed on a recent Springfield farmers market because it was pouring before we even left. Now we're thinking: "4 more hours of this?"

Wadda ya know...it stops raining, the sun comes out and bunches of people descend on our tent! We got close to a record day! I notice that I can "play" the crowd with my kettle. If I keep popping small batches, the smell and noise attracts customers. It seems when I lines forms, this entices others to cue up. Give `em some of the just popped, hot and sticky stuff and you've got yourself a sale.



Velma working the crowd in Framingham

## Daffy woman wields bumper sticker...

*Thursday, September 20th, 2007*

..remains nameless. Yup. No idea who this woman was. She had this magnetic "I brake for kettle corn" bumper sticker which we all thought was cool. This person had a vivacious personality and was very fun and outgoing the 5 minutes she was there. She *\*SAID\** that she would come to this site and send some email. Hopefully this guilt trip will get her to respond. ;-)



'Daffy' woman with a sweaty pervert

She did get the "personality discount". Anyone exhibiting a strong personality will automatically get extra kettle corn for free. If anyone reading this blog would like to apply for a "personality discount", feel free to apply at the front office of our tent.

I'm looking at myself in this photo. Cripes, I look like a sweaty pervert. My expression reminds me of the Beatles on the "butcher cover". [Note: yes, I've dated myself. I'm an old guy. Remember kids: Paul McCartney was in a band BEFORE Wings. Now get the hell off of my lawn.]



Quick update on things - I think Springfield farmers market had a record day last Thursday. We thought our record day was going to be that nice day in August before the kids went back to school. The customers keep coming!

**10/18/07 Update:** OK, she showed up again! Here's what I learned:

- Her name is Erica
- She used to be a stand up comic
- She's a writer of some sort (for NPR?) and also a Realtor
- She hasn't seen this post about herself.
- Her husband looks like he could kick my ass.

This is what we have in common:

- We both basically have the same name.
- We both used to flip from Howard Stern to NPR.

What kills is our first conversation was interrupted when a long lost friend arrived and she scampered off. During our second meeting ANOTHER long lost friend arrived, got her complete attention and I was abandoned yet again. This reminds me of what it was like during my early 20's when I was trying to be charming to women. More updates as they happen.

## **Russell's Garden Center in Wayland, Massachusetts**

*Saturday, September 29th, 2007*

A person approached me at the Framingham Farmers market about selling kettle corn at the Russell's Garden Center Farmers Market in Wayland, Massachusetts. They were all torqued up about our product and thought it would be a really good idea to pop there on Wednesdays. (I guess it would be easier if they didn't have to schlep all the way over to Framingham if they wanted to snarf kettle corn in

Wayland) :-)



Wayland Farmers Market

I contacted Peg, the event coordinator at Russell's and was able to get in on the last day of the season. I wanted to see how it would feel and what the layout was like. It ended up a grey, drizzly day and I wasn't expecting too much of an outcome.

Whole bunch of cool people there, they weren't selling the same ol' veggies. I normally give out plenty of freeby bags to the poor people who end up parked next to me. There's a descent amount of smoke and freshly popped kettle corn "stench" blowing around the place, so I like to placate everyone with a bag. I noticed a "kettle corn cloud" was drifting onto Route 20. Cars would drive through this, get a good whiff of the "stench", stop, turn around and come back just to get a bag of kettle corn. Normally you've got to get the fresh stuff into their mouths before you can make a sale. (It's what I call my "hard sell" tactic.)

It was a pretty descent day...seeing that no one knew I was there and with the weather threatening to turn it into a crappy day. Did more than the first day at Springfield or Framingham. Lemme see..do I want to sit in an office next year on Wednesdays or come here? Hmmmmm....

## **Everyone's a critic**

*Tuesday, October 23rd, 2007*

I get this in my email recently:

*Your video was cute...BUT, as a fellow kettle corn vendor, I'm not quite sure what you were thinking when you handed out the recipe to anyone and everyone. The recipe is what sets us apart from the others. Keeps 'em coming back for the better corn. Heck, NorthBend doesn't even give it out for nothing. You have to buy their equipment to get it.*

I reply:

So how do you keep the secret from the people who are watching you make it? Do you pop behind a curtain perhaps? When someone asks you what is inside your product, do you reply with "it's a trade secret"?

Let's list in necessary ingredients for well made kettle corn:

\* Popcorn \* Sugar \* Corn Oil \* Salt \* \$6,000 15,000 BTU blast furnace kettle.

The point of my video was you COULD attempt to make it at home, but it's not going to be very good. (thus, buy mine) When giving out samples, do you just drop one kernel into a customers hand, or do they get a whole 3 or 4?

They send this back:

*Having customers "watch" you pop is different then handing out the recipe world wide. Like I said....Northbend doesn't even hand it out. Doesn't that tell you something. When someone asks, of course we say corn, oil, sugar and salt. And why would anyone give out just one kernel of corn as a sample?. I guess the vending business is much more competitive here then it is in your part of the country. Good luck with your business....*

Exacerbated, I reply with:

Let's go over the NECESSARY ingredients one more time...

\* Popcorn \* Sugar \* Corn Oil \* Salt \* \$6,000 15,000 BTU blast furnace kettle

Now let's go over the ingredients for making cotton candy:

\* sugar \* \$6,000 cotton candy machine

Did ya notice the one ingredient which isn't readily available to everyone worldwide in both these cases? Look really hard...it pains me if I have to type it out for you.

*When someone asks, of course we say corn, oil, sugar and salt.*

My God you've giving away the recipe! How do you know a terrorist wasn't buying a bag from you? They could've posted it all over the internet. CHILDREN could've gotten their hands on it.



Terrorist kettle corn customer

*And why would anyone give out just one kernel of corn as a sample?*

It's called sarcasm.

*I guess the vending business is much more competitive here then it is in your part of the country. Good luck with your business....*

I guess you're from down south. [\*] Good luck with your business....

I get this bundle of joy back:

*Thats right....you make popcorn during the day, and to make ends meet, your a comedian at night. I should have known by your last name. Poor guy, you must have been teased a lot as a child. That explains everything. Nice chatting with you.*

I retort with:

LOL! OK, let's review our relationship so far:

You contact me first to scold me on giving away the precious secret of kettle corn to the masses.

I then attempt to point out that it's impractical to make kettle corn at home, thus..having just the recipe is useless. I then imply that you're perhaps anal retentive about all this.

You miss that point and my second point. You then imply that I must not be as skilled at making kettle corn as you are because of my location.

I reiterate my original point then clarify my second point. I then take a wild guess at your location.

You now postulate if I'm a comedian, make fun of my last name and attempt to draw out any guilt from my childhood.

Why did you start our correspondence again?

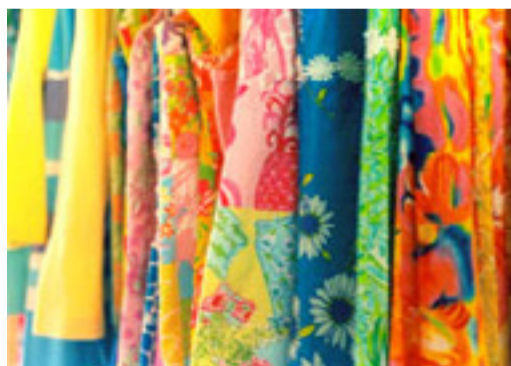
[\* I apologize to everyone down south. Some of you guys work at NASA.]

## **Behavioral Modification Experiments (on customers)**

*Thursday, October 25th, 2007*

There is this one woman in Springfield who has been buying our kettle corn all summer long. I've always called her the colorful lady because she only wears bright, colorful clothing and has sections of her hair colored with big chunks of bright color. You would think I'm talking about an 18 year old, but I would put her around Velma's age. At this point, I have no idea what her name is.

I've started to compliment her about her funky choice in colors and I've looked forward to seeing this one person arrive each Tuesday. I've learned that she's a creative type person and she's very sharp and "with it". One day she even had her daughter with her and SHE had chunks of color in her hair. The joke as told: she inherited her mothers hair color. (Bright pink)



As I've gotten to know her over the summer I've decided to push my boundaries a little and started to "taunt" her that if she REALLY was a colorful person, she'd wear something Day-Glo for me and I would reward her with a free bag of kettle corn. She found this intriguing and seemed up to the challenge.

Over the course of a few weeks, she never arrived with any day glow and I expressed my disappoint-

ment. She said she thought she had something with Day-Glo (not just a trinket or scarf, but either a full top or bottom) but couldn't come up with the goods at this time. I then gave her another challenge: how about if you wear ALL BLACK one day? This would be completely opposite of what she normally does and it may even disrupt the "fabric" of things around the market. She thought that it might be too cliché for an artsy person like herself to wear around town. I dared her again and pulled out the big guns: 3 FREE LARGE BAGSS OF KETTLE CORN if she does.

Next week arrives; she did it! We had a laugh and I said that she shall now be know as "the lady in black" (even when wearing a polka dot dress). She agreed that by getting kettle corn for wearing black, she fell into a Pavlovian experiment where she will now associate a yummy and content feeling with the color black. From now on, she may actually salivate when she thinks of a little black dress. All these conflicting feelings when she now looks at her colorful wardrobe! I find this pretty cool that I can now influence people with my sinister tools of power...large bags of kettle corn! [insert evil laughter here]



Not Pavlov's dog

## **Rehab starts in 1 week!**

*Tuesday, October 30th, 2007*

OK, that's it...the year's over for Springfield and Framingham Farmers markets! The line we were giving out all this week and last was "kettle corn rehab starts in 1 week!". Last year we were huddled next to the kettle trying to keep warm and hoping to move a few bags, this year we've been running out of supplies at the end of the day. I'm pretty sure this last day at the market was the busiest day we had all year. (People stocking up for winter?) I was starting to recognize our customers from the amount they buy - woman from dentist office across the street: 4-5 large bags. Heavy set man that I addressed as "THAT guy": 4 small bags. It was kind of amazing that business picked up near the end of the year. I know everyone else at the market was having a hard time just selling year-end pumpkins and potatoes. Steve and I joked that we could've set up next week by ourselves in the parking lot and attracted our usual crowd.

The lady in black came back!! (See the previous blog post to get all the details) She brought me a present...a DAY GLO scarf! (knew she was a hot shit) I asked her if her family thought it was odd that she was wearing all black that day. She said that they were too busy clawing at all the free kettle corn to notice. Will we ever know her name? Not this time, she still wanted to be known as only the "lady in black". Velma has now been wearing it and getting compliments. At least I got this picture I've posted below.



Woman in black caught wearing Day Glo

## Florida here we come!

*Thursday, December 6th, 2007*

OK, here's the plan: get the hell out of this cold New England weather. (Velma and I have done this sort of thing before.) I pull the 5th wheel RV trailer with our giant pickup truck while Velma pulls the kettle corn trailer with our Ford Escape. We plunk ourselves down in a few spots in Florida and attempt to sell kettle corn at a few farmers markets. We'll be in St. Augustine for 10 days, 1 month in Naples and 1 month in St. Petersburg/Tampa. There was a reason why I never had kids and I am my own boss. Freedom to do exactly this.



Benefits of not having to pay for children

We're considering doing this on a regular basis. Summer up north, winter down south. We're going to focus on finding an area that we really like and maybe finding some property there. It always bothered me that your job usually dictates where you live. Damn it, I want to find a place that I like..THEN find a job. With kettle corn I hope to create my own job at this new spot.

We did a Florida trip a couple of years ago. We moved about on a weekly basis, trying to get a good overview of the whole state. We had created these silly flash movies of our exploits, you can see them



all at: [On The Road With The Dacrons](#).

We're taking 5 days to get down there. The first stop will be St. Augustine. We really liked it the first time down there. We probably won't be popping any kettle corn. We managed to reserve the same spot as the first time! Here's a youtube version of what we did:

The Dacrons do St. Augustine, Florida (Part 2 of 10) - <http://youtu.be/wCGZTEGxH68>

Next spot will be Naples for 1 month. We like what we see for climate stats - warm all winter. We also like all the wildlife in the everglades. There's a couple of farmers markets in that area and I've already contacted them about popping there. Here's what happened last time:

The Dacrons do Naples, Florida (part 7 of 10) - <http://youtu.be/DbQzrBazPSo>

Then it's off to St. Petersburg near Tampa for 1 month. There's some farmers markets through there. We would also be in striking distance of the Orlando area, so I'll have to see what's available for popping locations. We only took a peek at Tampa last time through Florida. It seems to be closer to more stuff, thus more opportunities to find sales. If anyone reading this has any suggestions on where to make kettle corn in these areas, let us know!

**2015 update:** Velma and I had been thinking of moving to Florida. Why not take our business there? We would've brought our jobs with us. Florida definitely had a different vibe than New England. First off, it gets hot past noon time, so most markets aren't open past 1 o'clock. Kettle corn isn't a morning type of food product.

# 2008

## Down the East Coast AGAIN

Wednesday, January 23rd, 2008

Off we go! Watch the video for all the gory details up till now:

Down the East Coast AGAIN - <http://youtu.be/8fSVvnLFL9w>

In summary: we took 5 days to get to Florida and stayed in St. Augustine for about a week. We never intended to pop kettle corn in St. Augustine, but we scouted it out to see if it could be a possibility...if or whenever we decide to move or "winter" in Florida. We land in Naples and the story stops here for now.



Eric and Velma report from inside their 5th wheel

## Popping Kettle Corn in Naples, Florida 1

Wednesday, January 30th, 2008

Naples, Florida, 1- <http://youtu.be/7rBHLSfmaCQ>

Here's our first week of actually popping kettle corn in Florida. We check out a couple of places to live and discover that the demographics of this area might be wrong for our product.

Gross: \$200

Lucky Cole's website: [naturesexoticbeauty.com](http://naturesexoticbeauty.com) - [Miami New Times article](#) about Lucky

Some dirt on the Golden Gate Estates can be found [here](#).

Gross: \$100 (Ft Myers Beach)

**2015 update:** OK, this one sucked. I booked the gig online, before I ever drove down there, so I had no idea what I was getting into. The spot was an hour + something away from our camping spot in Naples, so we had to get up at something like 5:00 am just to get there and make a lousy hundred bucks. Florida has a weird method of getting health department permits - there's one central agency that you have to contact and they send local inspectors to check you out. Something about the Ft

Myers Beach location got us linked up with one of their people. This is the only gig that was required to have hot and cold running water for hand washing, thus, I had to buy an entire sink unit and lug it down the east coast. The stupid sink is still out in my tool shed to this day.



Popping in Ft Myers Beach Farmers Market

## **More Kettle Corn in Naples, Florida 2**

*Tuesday, February 5th, 2008*

Naples, Florida 2 - <http://youtu.be/ZbYm2OihG48>

We check out Everglades City, Chokoloskee Island and the Fakahatchee strand while our kettle corn continues to be ignored by the senior citizens of Naples.



Velma lost in the Fakahatchee swamp

Gross: \$225

## **Even more kettle corn popping in Naples, FL 3**

*Tuesday, February 12th, 2008*

Naples, Florida 3 - <http://youtu.be/6J26v0zNJ9U>

We hang out at the Everglades Seafood Festival, do the last day of kettle corn popping at the St. Paul's Farmers Market then give our smelly opinion of the Kountree Kampinn RV Resort.

To learn how to “beat the bottle midway game”, go [here](#).



Early foggy morning at the Naples Farmers Market, FL

Gross: \$300

**2015 update:** So notice how our sales increased, even after only 3 weeks. I think we might’ve been able to push the gross up to the \$500 mark after popping there for an entire season. I feel the main problem for kettle corn with Florida week day farmers markets are the early start times. Because it starts to get so hot after noon time, nobody is even in a sampling mood first thing in the morning.

## No kettle corn in Orlando/Tampa, Florida

Monday, February 18th, 2008

Orlando/Tampa, Florida - <http://youtu.be/Z1uZJsp150o>

We track down Velma’s brother Matt who was vacationing in Orlando, Florida. We waste a perfectly good day going to the Universal Studio theme park, then choke down some food at the Hard Rock Cafe. Seeking some culture, we visit the Salvador Dali museum in St. Petersburg, Florida. Out of despair, we visit the Florida state fair.



Velma’s brother Matt (slightly sober)

## Springfield starts again!

Tuesday, May 6th, 2008

Well, here goes another year at the Springfield Farmer's Market at the X. I look forward to this because we do well and Steve and I get to bang back a few beers and rummage through the liquor store with our loot later that night. We also buy dinner for Steve's family with some of the loot and I get a chance to play his kids off of Steve's parenting skills. (Me: "Hey kids, tell your dad it's SAFER if you have your own cell phone." Steve's kids: "IT'S SAFER IF WE ALL HAVE OUR OWN CELL PHONES!" Note: Steve has 3 kids.)



Velma at the Springfield Farmers Market at the X

So wow...we weren't expecting this to happen. It's a rule that the first day of the market is the slowest day. None of the veggie vendors are even here, so we're only about at half capacity. This farmers market is one of the earliest ones in this area to get started. We were figuring we would make enough for the beer and food for tonight. The first half of the day with Velma was OK, but no great shakes. About what we were expecting. Steve tends to arrive after his teaching job around 3 o'clock and takes over from there. That's when the kids and their parents arrived. We had a huge rush starting around 4 o'clock and didn't stop till closing time and beyond. We've been in this spot for a few years now, so apparently we've created a nice, deep "groove" of addiction for this stuff. All of our repeat customers just started up where they left off from last year. This day would've been a record day in our first year there, but it wasn't slow compared to anytime during last year's market. We're thinking, "if this is the FIRST day...we're gonna get murdered with business as the year goes along." We were still popping after all the other tents were packed up and had left. It's kind of embarrassing.

To keep track of how much product we're moving, we count the amount of empty oil containers that are accumulating. (Counting the money is kind of tough when it's all small bills and a couple of people are making change at the same time.) Four oil containers are normally enough to pop (1) 50 lb. bag of popcorn. I think the most oil containers we've used in Springfield was 11. A normal day we use 9. Today we almost finished the 8th. We did pop a whole bunch extra to give away to friends and family though, so the sales weren't as equal.

I've noticed a bunch of people who are getting into the kettle corn business read this blog. Here's something we stole from a vendor down in Florida. Use a tall Tupperware container with a pour spout for storing and giving out samples. In the past we've poured samples from a scoop directly into the hands of our customers. It was kind of fumbly as we tried to get the kettlecorn into their hands without them touching the scoop. (The health department frowns on having the public put their mitts all over the serving utensils.) With the pour spout, you just gotta shake the kettle corn into their paws. I guess they were originally designed to hold a box of cereal.



You can pick your friends, you can pick your nose....

Gross: \$490

**2015 update:** \$500 seems to be the default gross amount on any established market. By this time we've accumulated enough regular customers that they were practically waiting by our spot when the market first opened for the season.

## Hey man...let's do some drugs

*Tuesday, May 20th, 2008*

It's the third day of the season in Springfield and the sale are still holding up! Even though the weather was kinda iffy we still went through 7 1/2 corn oil jugs. This would've been a very fine day anytime last year, but it's only the beginning of this season. As mentioned previously, we're still missing a bunch of of the vegetable vendors and they'll show up once something has had time to grow out of the ground. At this rate, we should get a record day sometime in July.



Springfield Farmers Market

I still find it fascinating monitoring the drug habits of our patrons. (Oh, did I say DRUG habit? I meant kettle corn buying habits.) Above is a typical view of the farmers market this time of the year. It's not exactly swarming with people.



A line forms

Now here's a view of our tent around 4:30 pm. This was our "big rush" around that time. You wouldn't notice from just driving by, but it's the steady stream of just one person buying a bag, then someone else appearing 3 minutes later wanting the same. You do this for 5 hours straight and that's how we end up going through 7 jugs of oil. A small farmers market usually wants \$20 a day for us to be there. Many craft festivals easily want \$200 out of you before you sell one kernel. I guess the trick is to build up a following of loyal customers who want their fix. Apparently this is how real drug dealers get caught selling out of their homes. There's never a crowd, but a steady stream of cars coming by all the time. At some point the neighbors notice what's going on and call the cops. What's nice about our biz is we sell our "drugs" to the cops.

Pages-URL (Top 10) * Full list * Entry * Exit					
52 different pages-url	Viewed	Average size	Entry	Exit	
/blog/	3516	14.46 KB	1845	1872	
/how_to_make_kettle_corn_recipe.php	1720	7.87 KB	894	997	
/	1308	10.15 KB	1111	600	
/forum/login.php	952	13.21 KB	36	101	
/forum/profile.php	710	17.70 KB	86	118	
/buy_kettle_corn_online.php	657	10.00 KB	129	133	

Another thing that surprised me was the web stats on this website. You people have been visiting this stupid blog big time! As you'll notice on the chart for April of this year, the blog page gets over 3,500 views, way more than the "buy kettle corn" or the main index page. My main purpose of this blog was to just generate crap about kettle corn so Google would rank our webpage higher in it's rankings if you searched for "kettle corn". I mean...c'mon, it's about a guy in a tent hocking "drugs". :-)

The Framingham Farmers market will be starting back up in June, so I'll be yammering on about that. I've got an idea to help market ourselves and hopefully we can bring those numbers up to what we're doing in Springfield. Oh yea, and we've started to sell kettle corn online again. Within 24 hours of setting up the webpage, we had 2 orders. I think they were customers who had bought a bag online in the past. Let's see how online sales pan out this year.

Gross: \$740

## Mushroom vs. butterfly popcorn

Friday, May 23rd, 2008

I started getting some emails from a concession supply distributor a few weeks ago and the guy wanted me to buy some popcorn from him. He sold a variety of popcorn known as "mushroom". It pops into little round balls and is mainly used in making caramel corn. Because the caramel is mixed into already popped popcorn and is stirred by putting it into a giant rotating machine, the kernels tend to take a beating and will break apart if it's not tightly held together, as in a little ball of popcorn. Many other kettle corn makers use this variety. We here at Velma's use the movie theatre style "butterfly" popcorn from ACT II. Two reasons; I can find it easily at SAM's club and it's supposed to taste better. The concession guy appears in front of my tent wielding a 50 lb. bag of Pop Weaver mushroom style popcorn. I'm very paranoid about changing anything in my recipe 'cause people go nuts over my kettle corn as it is. I buy and bag and figure "what the hell, let's see how this crap stacks up."

I popped up a few batches with the exact same proportions as a I usually use in my recipe. You'll notice that the kernels look exactly the same before you pop them. No big surprise here. (Click on the pictures to get a larger image.)

Well the stuff looks interesting. There wasn't as many corner bits flaking off as I was cooling and stirring it in the bin. Take a look at the sides of this website to compare what I now pop to this. Mushroom style popcorn close up Thing is, it didn't pop to the same volume as my regular "butterfly" kettle corn. I would guess about 1 bag short than the usual load.

We started doing taste tests with a few of the customers. We called the Pop Weaver stuff "brand X". Some of the comments I got back were my original butterfly style was more crunchy. A couple of people requested some of the mushroom style bags we made. I'll be giving some of these new bags to some of my kettle corn connoisseur friends and see what they think. I'll keep everyone posted.



**2015 update:** I'm sold on the mushroom style of popcorn. Many customers notice the difference. Even though they can get bags of cheap butterfly style at any SAMS/Costco, paying the extra is a break even deal, because mushroom pops out to a little more total volume. Overall it's a better product and people respond to that.

## Stop the presses!

*Tuesday, May 27th, 2008*

I guess it was time for the obligatory newspaper photo. I'm not even sure what local rag this was in, but here it is. A couple of people have come up to me while popping kettle corn and mentioned they saw it. I suppose this can only help the biz. It kills me that there will always be an error in whatever newspaper article I'm mentioned in. I even gave the guy our magnet which has our name clearly identified as WICKED delicious. Sigh.

I'm also a professional videographer when I'm not making this stuff, so I had a good repertoire going with the newspaper photographer. If you notice during a broadcasted baseball game, there is basically only one good spot to catch most of the action, it's behind the pitcher zoomed way in so you can see the batter and catcher all in one shot. As with kettle corn, there is only one good spot to catch the "action"; in front of the kettle, opposite side of the popper.

So when this photographer arrived, he immediately got behind me and close to the kettle. I point out to him the universally accepted spot to take the photo; which is in front. He just kind of waves my comment off and continues to crouch behind me. At this point the load of kettle corn I was making goes off and starts to splatter hot oil and kernels in his direction. He makes a yelping sound and scampers off. I start doing Kevin Costner from the J.F.K. movie; "front..and to the side, front...and to the side." I should mount a little plaque that says "picture spot" onto the side of the sifting bin.





## **Framingham Farmers Market starts again!**

*Thursday, June 12th, 2008*



Framingham Farmers Market

The Framingham Farmers Market never ignited like Springfield did for us. We did consistent but not great business last year. It picked up a little in the summer months, but tapered off as the market drew to a close. (Unlike Springfield where we kept getting more customers as the year went on.) Velma and I like the location, we get to sync up with a bunch of our buddies who live in this area every Thursday. I had gone to high school in Framingham, so I occasionally meet up with someone who I

knew from this area.

At the moment, the market only has 6 vendors (including us.) We had a bunch of repeat customers from last year, so at least sales weren't completely dismal. The years market is run by Elizabeth Aurilio. She seems like a hot shit, so this year outta be fun. I've got a plan to help promote this location and try to ignite some business. My best customers are from office buildings where they buy multiple bags for everyone in the office. I figure by targeting these types of locations with flyers, I can remind these people that someone should make the trip to the farmers market and buy their weekly supply of "kettle crack". I'll be posting more on this once I get the marketing material created. I'm also wondering if I can promote this event online with myspace or facebook. I thought you can do a search for myspace members via their location, so I might try to do a little "spam" reminder to these people of our farmers market. We'll see how that pans out.

Framingham Farmers Market - June 12th - <http://youtu.be/Ddn24wgoxb8>

Gross: \$352

**2015 update:** Wow. I forgot we only had 6 vendors back in the day. Other than a complete rainy day, your first day will be the worst of the season. The Framingham market has since filled in much more with additional vendors and the traffic has certainly increased since 2008.

## 6 bucks for THAT crap?

*Thursday, June 19th, 2008*

So how do you like that, they remembered us! (Either that, or the mental kettle corn groove we dug into their minds.) We had a pretty busy day at the Framingham Farmers Market - 5 oils sold. We use jugs of corn oil as a measurement of how much we popped, since we always start with unopened containers. I guess sticking with this farmers market all last year is starting to pay off this year. (Note to anyone who is reading this and is in the kettle corn biz. There's money to be made by building slow and steady at these smaller weekly events.)

**KETTLE  
CORN**  
at the **Framingham  
Farmers' Market**  
Every  
**Thursday**  
12:30 - 5:30 pm  
at the  
Framingham Village Green  
along EDGELL ROAD

**FREE  
SAMPLE  
BAG!**

We had done some online marketing this past week, and even though it didn't impact our sales that much, it shows that it works and that it takes time. I had made this poster earlier in the week and we intended on finding all the bulletin boards within a 3 mile radius of this farmers market and slapping them up there. Craigslist.org has a section on local events, so I posted one there in the Massachusetts Metrowest section. I had tried sticking on into the FREE section, but they don't allow "promotional" items. Eh, I tried.

Since we're actually GIVING something away, I thought we should take a crack at sending an email to anyone on Myspace.com who were local to the Framingham Farmers Market. Velma thought we were entering the world of "spam", but I thought that it fell into the category of "news", PLUS we were giving something tangible away for free, no strings attached. Who wouldn't want to know about that?

So how do you find people on Myspace.com who are only local to you? Simple. Go to Google and enter exactly this:

"female - framingham" site:myspace.com

(Show omitted results) This means I'm looking for any female who has a profile page that says that they're from Framingham ONLY on the website Myspace.com. Do the same thing for males and pick the town you want. Obviously you already need a page on Myspace to send a message to someone on there. I think we found about 80 people, got 12 or so positive emails back from them and one person showed up and claimed a free sample bag. Foolishly she started eating the bag there, compelling her to BUY a bag when she was done. Normally when marketing stuff, 1 percent return on a mailing is expected, 3 percent is good. It didn't take us 100 "spams" to get a sale, and many people said that they'd be coming down at some point.

Speaking of sales - we were moved out from under our nice shady spot and were stuck at the end of the row of tents. I guess some DPW guy was obsessed with the new trees they had planted next to the road and they didn't want us anywhere near them. OK fine. We were next to the frozen beef tent that sells high quality meats. Velma got the impression that they were getting annoyed that no one wanted to pay \$6 a pound for high quality beef, yet MANY people were willing to shell out 6 bucks for a bag of our crap. (My words.) I guess I would be annoyed with mankind too. :-)

Framingham Farmers Market June 19, 2008 - <https://youtu.be/vVoFnkIKwbE>

Gross: \$397

## **First day the Wayland Farmers Market**

*Thursday, June 26th, 2008*

## **Springfield Farmers Market, June 24th**

So weather.com said there will be thunderstorms in Springfield starting at 9 am, more at 12 noon, again at 3 pm and getting worse by 6 pm. OK fine, we'll go anyways and sell some soggy kettle corn to the hardcore. I bring enough supplies to have a record day of sales during a typhoon.

We get there and setup. No rain, it's a perfect day. Lines are starting to form every few minutes, Steve and I can't even stop to get a bite to eat. I start hoping that it'll rain so we can take a break. They continue to buy the stuff, I'm paddling like crazy to keep up.

We run out at 5 o'clock, an hour before closing. Not a drop of precipitation anywhere. We would've had a record day if I had brought more oil. (We ran through 9 jugs.) Now we're seeing a lot of sad faces.

Some kid even started to cry that he didn't get this weeks kettle corn. God I hate weather.com.

Gross: \$934



Steve found this cartoon in the newspaper.



### Wayland Farmers Market, June 25th

We had popped here last year on the last day of the market. Peg, the market manager was all psyched to have us back and hopefully be there this year. I had explained that I also had a corporate job where I sat in traffic for an hour and a half just to GET into Boston, stayed in a windowless basement room and edited insurance videos for 8 hours, then got back into traffic and sat there for another hour and a half just to get home. Thus, I couldn't make kettle corn on EVERY Wednesday because I need to maintain my other income. She wanted to know what was wrong with me. She also had used a sign for our spot with read "Velma's Wicked Good Kettle Corn". I pointed out her error and she felt bad for the screw up, even though "wicked good" is correct improper Bostonian usage.



Velma's "Wicked Good" Kettle Corn at the Wayland Farmers Market

So this Farmers Market is about the same size as the Framingham one. It's nestled right next to a busy street and is located in an upscale area. It's associated with the Russells' Garden center in Wayland, Massachusetts. I didn't realize it at first, but there's about 50 employees who work there, and once they started breathing in the kettle corn "fumes", they all had to have a bag.

Eh...we did barely OK. (2 and a half jugs of oil) The Framingham Farmers market was like this before we got known in the area. I'm sure if we stuck with it, we could get a pretty loyal following for this area. Thing is, it would probably take a years worth of popping for it to really start to pay off. If I cross off Tuesdays, Wednesdays and Thursdays off my corporate schedule, I'll have nothing to fall back on when winter comes.

Gross: \$232

2015 update: We were hoping we could emulate the Framingham Farmers market with this new location in Wayland, MA. New markets are very tricky because you are totally relying on the market managers skill in marketing. I was prepared to make \$232. I kept thinking "but Wayland is a MONEY town". I'll talk about that when we get to the Newton Farmers market entry.

### **Framingham Farmers Market, June 26th**

Another grey and kind of rainy day. (I didn't even bother to look at weather.com) The interesting news was last night we got 2 emails. Somebody from the Boston Globe wants to do a food story on us. Another person in San Francisco wants to do a another kettle corn story. I guess kettle corn is the latest trend in food. I thought it's been a "trend" for the past 10 years.

The Boston Globe photographer showed up today and took a bunch of "snaps" of us doing our thing. I guess we'll be speaking with the Globe reporter tomorrow. I should be speaking with the San Francisco reporter later tonight. I'll definitely post the articles here once I get 'em. Fox news was also here shooting some footage of one of the vegetable guys. I'm convinced there's a big news agency somewhere that notifies all the other news outlets on June 25th that Farmers Market season started, thus, they should do something on it.

We did alright for a drizzly day. (almost 5 oils sold.) We're getting solid customer feedback. Many people are now buying a couple of bags at a time. This is the same buying curve we experienced with Springfield when that started to pick up on us last year.

Framingham Farmers Market 6-26-08 - <http://youtu.be/IREmkYaQUQ8>

Gross: \$387

### **Another hot one**

*Thursday, July 10th, 2008*

Not too much to report, just that it's been hot and sales have been steady. We're selling near record amounts of bags in Springfield constantly, so I hardly have time to sit down and have lunch. This goes on for 6 hours straight. At this point we physically can't pop much more unless we get a third person to help. I'm gonna start looking into making a motorized kettle cover which can stir the stuff while I bag. I guess we're now the victims of our success. The days are starting to feel like a grind. I barely have time to shoot any silly video.

I seem to be turning into the Internet kettle corn answer man. Because we have such high rankings on Google, everyone finds us first. A bunch of people who've started their own kettle corn biz have



Velmas ponders her decisions in life

been asking me all sorts of questions on how to do it. One guy in California got access to a large event of 23,000 people. Apparently he buys a kettle from North Bend Originals and asks me how much supplies he would need to make 25,000 bags of kettle corn. I tell him that 100 bags an hour is a full throttle, flat out amount of kettle corn that is almost humanly possible to make. I also tell him that after 8 hours of this, you'd want to put a bullet in your head.

KY Jelly smallI then get an email from him saying that he NOW got the specifics of the event and he probably won't be doing it. They want \$400 per day AND 25% of the net. (I was wondering if they at least paid for the anal lubricant.) I explained the math to him and he agreed that it wasn't worth doing it. A typical farmers market only wants \$15 out of you. I've recently gotten offers from some "big" events in my area and I just laugh when I see the entry fees.

Farmers Markets Early July - [http://youtu.be/f93tTgZF\\_fg](http://youtu.be/f93tTgZF_fg)

Gross: \$390

**2015 update:** I'm reading this now in 2015 and going "only \$390 in Framingham for a July?" We've easily doubled that after being established for so long. I've charted all my income over the years and the first week in August is usually the best week for all markets. I can only guess as to why that is.

## **(Lemme try) Another T-shirt**

*Sunday, July 20th, 2008*

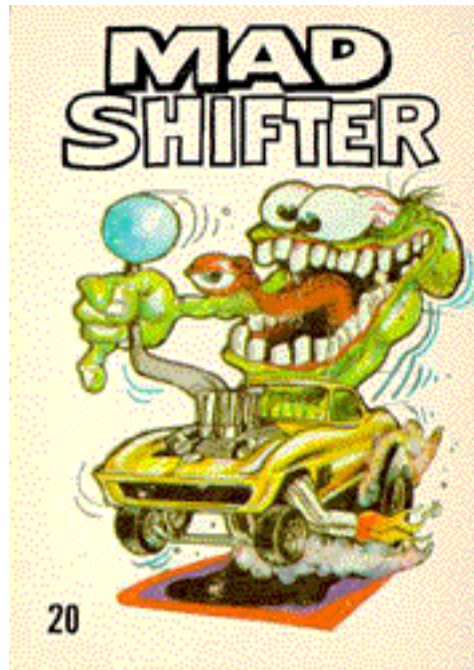
We thought we had a record day at Springfield this week, but it turns out we were \$75 short of that goal. (We went through 8 1/2 oils this week.) What's amazing is that this amount of sales matches what we made ON THE BEST DAY at the Brimfield Antique Festival. This was a spot where we had to pay more than \$300 per day to set up there, and we now sell the same amount on a daily basis in Springfield for \$15.

If you've been reading his blog, you would have seen that I made some t-shirts about a year ago. They just had the Velma's logo on the front and this website address on the back. I think I sold about 3 of 'em and gave away the rest. I just sold all the silk screening supplies to someone on craigslist.org. I found a new t-shirt method and another idea I want to try.

First off, the silk screening method works great if you want to print on many things with few colors for the cheapest price. It doesn't print details and subtle colors very well and it's a major pain in the ass

to clean up after you've done a run of shirts. There are other methods of printing on a shirt.

Heat press transfers and dye sublimation seem to be the way to go if you want to print a photo or colorful design on a shirt on a short production. Once you have the stuff to do this, you can bang out single shirts and change the design as you go along, or even try different designs each time.



Odd Rods cartoon

I had originally wanted to do a goofy cartoon design for my first T-shirt, but never decided on what a cartoon Velma should look like. I was an art student back in high school and always loved MAD magazine and the style of those drawings. (I especially loved Basil Wolverton.) I also remember seeing these trading cards called Odd Rods, drawn by the artist BK Taylor. Odd Rods are these oversized, grotesque monsters driving automobiles. The cards and T-shirts of the same designs were kinda popular back in the 70's. Since everyone is calling our product "kettle crack", I want to do a design of an actual kettle crack addict eating the stuff while having the words KETTLE CRACK right on there, and maybe toss our name and website on there too.

I like the idea of having it in the style of the original Odd Rods style. Then I thought it would be really cool if I could get BK Taylor to do the drawing. I found his agent online and shot out an email to her to see how much it would cost to commission BK Taylor to do it, figuring it would be too expensive to get the ORIGINAL guy to do this. She said that \$750 will get me an electronic file of the final drawing. Apparently BK Taylor keeps the original drawing; I won't own the copyright.

I dunno. \$750 is kinda steep to shell out for an uncertain idea of mine. I still need to buy the heat press and printer to actually make the T-shirts, and I'll only be making \$7 - \$8 per shirt. I need to move 90 shirts before I even start making a profit? Hoo boy...I dunno. I may take a crack at doing the design myself and see what's left of my high school drawing skills.

Framingham/Springfield July 15 & 17, 2008 - <http://youtu.be/yINExIm6BGA>

## **The Russian**

*Friday, August 1st, 2008*

So this old Russian guy came by last year and really got Velma's panties in a twist. I guess he was expecting to trade some little plastic toys for kettle corn. Apparently the guy just took a bag of kettle corn off our table and left the crap in it's place. We suspected he was just playing the role of "ignorant foreign guy" who figured he could do and get what he wanted. Velma was having none of it. The guy came by again this year and was hocking cheap jewelry, so Steve and I went for it. See the video

below for all the details.



Boris and Natasha

We've been doing very steady business at both our locations. Steve and I joke that we USED to take a book with us, just in case it got slow. I barely have time to eat lunch and take a drink during Springfield. I've got an idea on a motorized lid for the kettle. Not sure when I can build the thing, but it would increase productivity if it works.

We've also had some weird things happen with our BUY KETTLE CORN page. We've received some emails in the past which look like a "phishing" scam. We've been ignoring them up till now, except when I decided to ream the spammer a new asshole. Come to find out that it WASN'T a spammer, but a legit customer who ended up filling out the wrong order cart. Not sure how it happened, but we're looking into it big time.

The Russian - <http://youtu.be/cXLSmBx6vhY>

## **Kettle Corn at Fenway Park**

*Sunday, August 10th, 2008*



Kettle corn kiosk at Fenway Park, Boston

Velma and I went to Boston's Fenway Park not to see the Red Sox, but their triple A affiliate the Pawsox at the Futures of Fenway day this week. I heard that they sell kettle corn at Fenway Park and I finally found it, behind the bleacher section in the Big Concourse food area. A bunch of people had said that it's really good, but it's not. Lemme explain:

First, the guy is stirring the kettle with a baseball bat. At first glance this is cool and obviously ties in



with the whole baseball park theme. But if you want to properly mix the oil and sugar together while it's heating, you need something with a little more "push". Also, the guy was just stirring it with one hand while standing behind a screen.

Second, their sign said they use a mix of soybean oil and corn oil but they're using vegetable oil as you can see in the photo. I've tested this particular oil and have come to conclusion that it's not as tasty as regular corn oil. Of course it's a lot cheaper than corn oil, but what do they care?

Third, their kettle temperature isn't hot enough to make the popcorn really explode and fluff up enough to our taste. You can tell this by how the kettle corn looks and feels. I've tried making kettle corn with an industrial electric popper and it had the same texture to it. Not having enough heat makes the corn come out like movie style popcorn, crunchy but not fluffy. This is why the guy was able to make kettle corn with one hand while hiding behind a screen. He's SLOWLY cooking it so nothing burns.



Batting up another batch

They were using the same brand of popcorn (Act II) and sugar (Domino) as we use. You would figure it would taste pretty much the same, but alas...it doesn't. Still, the other option at Fenway was to buy the pre-packaged Popcorn Indiana crap. Did I mention that I wouldn't even feed that stuff to the squirrels that come to my porch?

We are now the victims of our own success. We just had a record day at the Springfield farmers' market. The days are now turning into a grind and we no longer have time to chat with each other or interact with the customers or other vendors. We just spend 5 hours constantly stirring, popping, scooping, sealing and selling



A pooped Eric and Steve

We went through 10 jugs of oil. Each 1 gallon jug of oil produces 5 batches or kettlefuls of kettle corn. Approx total for the day: 50 "loads" of kettle corn. That's about 1 batch every 6 minutes for 5 hours straight. I know I was popping as hard as I could for the first 2 hours and Steve was going nuts bagging the stuff. This easily beats the best day we had at the Brimfield Antique Show where we paid

more than \$300 EACH DAY to have the privilege of popping there.

Gross: \$1,187 (Springfield August 5, 2008)

**2015 update:** Good ol' first week of August. Told ya.



I recently got email from someone who makes kettle corn at the huge Hershey Amusement Park in Pennsylvania. They were wondering why I wore so much protective gear when I pop, because their kettle doesn't get hot enough to send second degree burn causing little missiles at them. They guy said he doesn't even wear a face mask. (I would bet good money that his kettle corn tastes a lot like the kettle corn at Fenway Park.) He also mentioned that they do about 50 loads of kettle corn a day at their busiest spot. This was news to me, since that's what I'm doing now at a little farmers' market in Springfield. Boy do I need to come up with a motorized cover to keep up with demand and keep myself out of the heat.

I just went back and took a look at our first blog entry. We first did this Springfield spot almost 3 years ago and we had sold only 50 bags that first day. Who knew it would come to this?

On the other end of the spectrum, our other location in Framingham got pretty much rained out this week. Veggies do fine in a rainstorm, but water and popcorn really don't mix well. So if anyone is doing the numbers in their head and thinking they can make a killing selling kettle corn, make sure you add in rain days where profits almost drop to zero. Did I mention it sucks to be breaking down and loading up a trailer and getting drenched in the rain AFTER you've made no money?

Gross: \$296 (Framingham 8/7/08)

I'm hysterical and I'm WET! - <http://youtu.be/OWKfyI1TtoM>

### **8/11/08 Update:**

So Velma and I are going into Sam's Club to get our supplies for the week. We see this guy loading up his pickup truck with bags of popcorn, sugar and salt. I asked him if he's doing kettle corn and he told me that his main location is at Fenway Park! We chat for a while and he says that he has the same set up at Harvard Stadium. I explain that we do quite well with farmers markets in this area, but fail to mention this website to him. Hopefully he won't find this website and find out that we're kettle corn back-stabbing assholes. :-P

### **The Rabbi**

*Saturday, August 23rd, 2008*

OK, this got MY panties in a twist. Velma and I are popping away in Springfield, having a good day when this little man walks up to me with a petulant look on his face. He doesn't identify himself or tell me his name. "I understand you've been telling people that your product is kosher," he says. I tell him that we've never told anyone that our kettle corn is kosher. In fact, when someone ASKS, we've always done a long-winded spiel about how rabbis have come by and told us that we COULD be kosher with the ingredients we're using, but need to cough up some money and get certified. So we've always told anyone who asks, that our product is NOT kosher.



He then fires off a tirade about how this could lead to legal action against us and lawyers will be involved. At this point I assume this little nettlesome character is a rabbi. I tried to repeat what I had just told him...more slowly this time. He abruptly cuts me off and says that TWO people have told him that we've been telling people that it's kosher, and we better stop saying it and that's IT. (Including a curt little hand gesture.)

At this point I'm thinking how could anyone have thought that we told them this? Then it occurs to me-Steve has a funny satirical riff where he explains what our kettle corn ISN'T. (Free range, organic, low-fat, boneless, dolphin-safe, fair trade, kosher.) Click on the graphic on the main page called "Steve's not quite true sales pitch" to hear his spiel.

You'll notice on our website we blatantly spell out that what you're hearing is NOT TRUE. Anyone with a flake of gray matter would realize that kettle corn CAN'T be free range, nor can something made with white sugar be organic or low-fat, there are no BONES in kettle corn. It has NOTHING to do with dolphins and nothing to do with imports, fair trade or otherwise. Therefore, it isn't kosher either.

We thought Steve was being painfully obvious in his intent. It's kind of like being sarcastic to someone, but they take what you're saying to be literally true. Apparently, when some nitwit online listened to Steve's silly riff, their little brains filtered out the part where we mention our kettle corn has no BONES or DOLPHINS in it and just heard the word "kosher." Ah ha, now I think I got it. I start to explain all this to my diminutive antagonist. He doesn't want to hear any of it, reiterates his threat, and gives me the curt hand gesture one last time, driving his point home.

When I told Steve all this, he couldn't believe people could be so thick. He agreed that he'll alter his spiel for the completely dim out there. It pains me to no end that I now have to put another "Velma sign" up saying our kettle corn is NOT KOSHER. What's a "Velma sign"? Little notices that we hang from our tent telling the public FUCKING OBVIOUS things, just so we can't be held liable. (There are un-popped kernels in it. Our stuff has sugar in it. It is made fresh.) I kind of scoffed at Velma for putting them up, figuring people in general can't be THAT stupid. \*HEAVY SIGH\*

Velma here: Ha! I told him so!

Didn't get a change to shoot any video this week. Both Springfield and Framingham turned into a record days so I was going nuts on both days.

Gross: \$1,246 (Springfield 8/18/08)

Gross: \$665 (Framingham 8/21/08)

## Secret Kettle Corn Weapon!

Monday, September 1st, 2008

Here's some news I can't actually tell you about, but I can allude to it. I've found somebody on the Internet who took a keen interest in my daily "plight" and has decided to help me make my life easier! (Or should I say, he found ME on the Internet.) I like to call it my new "kettle corn vengeance weapon". We've got a crack team of German scientists working on it now and hopefully we'll be testing it out at the Palmdale Skunk Works location. If it actually works, I think a lot of other kettle corn poppers can benefit from it. Preliminary tests of "the gadget" says that it does. I hopefully will be getting my sweaty little hands on it within a week or two.



Kettle corn vengeance weapon

So the start of the school year has tempered the feeding frenzy at our tent. Sales have slightly dropped off at both our locations because of this. Still didn't have time to shoot any silly video these past few weeks. I got a couple of ideas to try out.

A funny thing happened when we were setting up our tent in Framingham this week. We get there early and start dragging our crap out of the trailer and start setting up. We notice this woman with a notepad was hovering around our tent and was sort of watching us set up. Uh oh, this can't be good I'm thinking, only health department officials take interest in what you're doing before you start popping. Surprisingly, the Framingham health department inspector never showed up this year to check us out.



Eric and Velma wait for the health department inspector

I approach her and go, "OK, you've got a notepad, are you a reporter or a health department official?" She looks at me with a surprised expression and told us she was under orders to from her boss to get a kettle corn vendor for her event. She lived nearby, so she wanted to come down early and plead her case to us. I guess the Olde Manse in Concord, Massachusetts is having a new fair and wanted to get some vendors to sell food there. I guess the guy who runs the place is mad about kettle corn and was determined to get some there for this year.

So how do you like that? Who knew we would be the recipients of special treatment. I bet the bread guy doesn't get courted for anything like this! I felt like giving her the rock star treatment and demanding a dressing room so we could put our aprons on. Anyhoo...we agreed and we're popping there early in October.

There's a whole bunch of stuff happening on the weekends during September. I'll be updating more on that when it happens.

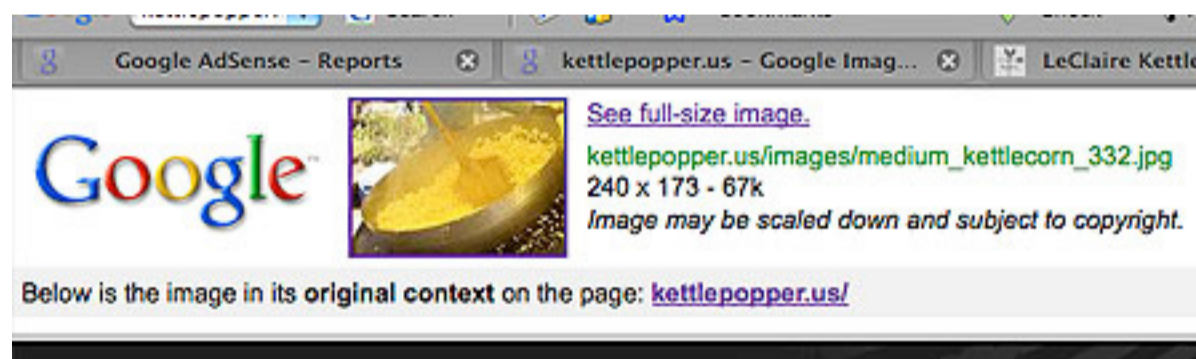
Gross: \$660 (Framingham 8/28/08)

**2015 update:** This is a huge benefit of establishing yourself in one spot. People remember where you are, so when they have an event they want kettle corn to be there, they know exactly where to find you. It's nice when people offer you a gig while you're working. The woman who showed up from the Old Manse that day was Joni - we've become good friends since then and have done many gigs together with her operation: a hot dog truck.

## **Iowa: Land of James T. Kirk**

*Friday, September 12th, 2008*

OK, this was very silly. I was cruising around the internet, looking for more pictures of kettles for my kettle corn popper machines page. Since I've done a ton of research on this, I might as well toss it all onto one page and hopefully get some Google AdSense clicks. (Yes, I've sold out, I've now started putting AdSense ads on this blog. Aren't they annoying?) I discover this shot:



I'm thinking, "boy that sure looks like MY Northbend kettle..and MY blue long sleeve t-shirt with dark gloves...and MY blue cooler...and MY yellow tent." The image was prominently displayed in the center of [www.kettlepopper.us](http://www.kettlepopper.us). I grab the image and do a screen capture of everything. The photo looked very familiar, but I couldn't figure out who took it. I fire out this email to them:

And I couldn't help noticing in the photo you have shown - that \*I\* too have a North Bend Originals popper, pop under a yellow tent (you can see it in the corner and by the color balance of the photo), use dark gloves with a blue shirt, BOLTED A PIZZA SERVER TO A POLE to stir kettle corn, and have the same color ice cooler.

Wow! Small world isn't it?

Eric Bickernicks Velma's "Wicked Delicious" Kettle Corn

Iowa kettle corn website Later that night I'm arguing with Velma. I tell her that's me and our tent in their photo. She thinks maybe it's not. No, I tell her, that's definitely me in that shot. I explain (once more to her) that I'm a guy and I'm a VISUAL creature...I can recognize my greasy torso and gloves anywhere. Maybe you're wrong she says. It then hits me. I go searching for this newspaper article that Steve had mounted on a plaque. That was it! The Springfield Republican newspaper had done a little article on us for their September 13, 2006 issue. It matched perfectly! I quickly run upstairs and fling the now moldy plaque onto our bed while Velma was reading. Everyone please take note: I clearly WON that argument with my girlfriend on the night of September 11th, 2008. Next case your honor.

Steve got the same email and sent this out to them:

*On Wed, Sep 10, 2008 at 2:30 PM, steve-somewhere.net wrote: Time for a cooler inspection.... if the same drinks are in there, this is getting freaky, Man.*

We get this back for a reply:

*From: "Dan Somebody" kettlepopper-somewhere.com HELLO ALL! LOOKS LIKE YOU NEED MORE BUSINESS IF ALL YOU WORRY ABOUT ARE OTHER PEOPLES WEBSITES!*

That's pretty funny. Now...wouldn't you be concerned if you saw yourself on the front page of a competitors website? What kills me is somebody in Iowa needs to steal a shot from an East Coast newspaper to put on their website. They obviously MAKE kettle corn. How hard is it to pull a camera out and take a lousy shot of themselves making it? On top of that, I went back and found the embedded text info within their picture. It had my name in it! (I could've won my argument even sooner if I had known.) I guess they only recently got computers out in Iowa, since they haven't figure out how to turn off the ALL CAPS button. And why are their votes considered so important every 4 years? What gives?



## Metrowest Humane Society Craft Fair, Framingham, MA

Sunday, September 14th, 2008

We were invited to come back to this craft fair again this year on Saturday, September 13th, so here we are. The festival seems to be growing, there were more tents and you'll notice from the photo, we ended up on the other side of the flagpole. You can see last year's blog entry here. This is not our normal type of gig, we tend to focus on weekday farmers markets and strive to get a loyal following. Shows like these are basically once per year and we are exposed to all new people for every show. This is kind of an exception because it's in Framingham, and it's in the same location as our weekly Farmers market. It's interesting to compare and contrast the differences.



Metrowest Humane Society Craft Fair

We did a pretty decent day of popping. (8 oils) This is comparable to a good day at our Springfield location, but we had to pay more to be here in this spot. We probably had more customers on average, but only sold a single small bag to most of them. It's VERY common to sell large bags or multiple bags at our usual spots. Obviously we haven't turned these people into mindless, kettle corn junkie zombies...yet.

I thought for sure we would be hardly sealing the bags, just selling open bags so people could munch on them at the event. We found many people buying them as they were leaving, wanting their bag sealed up tight. It's faster for us to just shove the kettle corn into a bag and hand it to them. The heat sealer we use takes a little more time to fiddle with the bag and close it. We offer twist ties to anyone who wants them, but we found that it's slower and more tedious to twist a twist tie one very bag you make. We've also found that we hardly give out samples to our usual customers at farmers markets, even if I insist on giving them a handful.

I just noticed this as I was making the blog entry. Because wickeddelicious.com has a high ranking on Google, when I did a search for "Metrowest Humane Society Craft Fair" on Google, we came up 2nd, right under the Metrowest Humane Society webpage. We were still way up there for a search of just "Metrowest Humane Society". Cool.

Framingham Humane Society Craft Fair 9-13-2008 - <http://youtu.be/KqrJXoqJIU>

Gross: \$1,052

**2015 update:** These weekend events held at our regular farmers market spot are always great. Plenty of repeat customers remember us from the farmers market and make a bee line for our tent. We've been going to this event now for years.

## The Sudbury Colonial Faire

Saturday, September 27th, 2008

We haven't had a chance to do an event like this, so this was interesting. Jim Doherty had contacted us via email a while ago about popping at the Sudbury Colonial Faire in Sudbury, Massachusetts. Everyone gets dressed up in period costumes from the revolutionary war and reenacts chasing the British out Sudbury...or Massachusetts..or whatever. Their normal kettle corn vendor couldn't make it this year, so they had contacted us.



Eric at the Subdbury Colonial Faire

I KNEW our bright yellow tent would be an issue with somebody someday. They try to get everything to blend in with the ambiance of the event so you can delude yourself into thinking you had lived in that era, for a short while anyway. I'm not too sure if they used yellow dye #9 back in the 1700's. I had sent him photos of our setup and after some head scratching, they decided to go with us. I kind of promised that if this event were lucrative, we could scrap together the 200 bucks to get a plain white tent and fit in better next time.

Of course it rained like [insert funny analogy here]. Normally on a weekday farmers market, if it rains we don't make the trip because it's VERY tricky to make kettle corn in a downpour. If you don't bag everything within a few minutes you end up with a bin of mush. Jim had mentioned that MANY people come JUST FOR THE KETTLE CORN, so we were concerned about not disappointing the crowd that will "soldier through" this event, come rain or shine. We couldn't just blow them off even when the forecast predicted "suck".

The event went off as planned, we went through 5 oils which isn't too bad of a day. We normally do that on a regular day at the Framingham Farmers market. The rain held off pretty much during the day, but waited for us to start loading the trailer before it really turned on the faucet. Of course an hour later, when we're sitting in our cars, ready to pull out of there is when it stopped completely. I think the kettle corn Gods were giving us the finger for our incongruous tent color.

What is also notable (to us anyways) is that THIS field, which is located next to the Wayside Inn, was the location of another kettle corn vendor which inspired us to get into this business. For years, "Grand Pa's Kettle Corn" has popped here at their yearly craft festival which Velma and I would always visit, just to get their kettle corn. Many people were wondering if we were the same people who pop there every year. I took that as a compliment since I've always loved "Grand Pa's Kettle Corn".





“Who wants som corn porridge?”

Sudbury Colonial Faire, Massachusetts - <http://youtu.be/bRzhMc8IRQw>

Gross: \$425

**2015 update:** You’ll see that we made crazy amounts of money at this event in other years. This is usually the highlight of the year for total gross for one day. This is percisely why you want to pay a percentage of your gross to the event planners verses shelling out a larger flat rate. On a normal day, I would’ve paid \$300 to be here and would’ve certainly made money. Because it rained and we only got \$425, we still make money by only paying something like \$100 for the spot, because it was based a percentage deal.

## The Old Manse Fall Festival, Concord, MA

*Sunday, October 12th, 2008*

Our big gig this week was The Fall Festival at the Old Manse in Concord, MA. It was a Saturday gig, first time they’ve held it, so who knew what was going to happen. As I mentioned in my previous blog



Eric and Velma popping at the Old Manse Fall Festival

entry, I thought Joni was a health department official looking to shake us down out at our Framingham location when she courted us to make an appearance.

The significance of The Old Manse is that it's located next to the Old North Bridge which was the location of the start of the Revolutionary War. Velma has more details in the video. Wadda ya know, another New England event with people dressed up in period costumes! It's almost like us Yankees normally dress like this.

I didn't realize that buses of tourists would be pulling up and dumping loads of foreigners amongst our midst. (Many were disappointed that we weren't selling corn on the cob, boiled right in a kettle. Jeez.) Who knew there were that many people interested in a look-a-like bridge with only rock walls and trees to see. There seemed to be many British tourists coming through. I wonder if they were thinking, "Damn, if only our soldiers kicked their asses back then, this could've still been OURS."



Robert and Heather

Back at the Framingham Farmers Market this week, we crossed paths with Robert McCarthy and Heather Kent of Castle Kettle Corn in Oregon. They had sent me an email a couple of months ago saying they loved this site and had all sort of stories to tell, then never really told them - until now. They had some fascinating things to say about popping in Mexico and how they managed to pull it off. They were doing something like our Florida trip, pop some of the time and enjoy the rest of the time. I guess they'll be giving me updates as they go along and hopefully I'll be posting them here.

Old Manse Fall Festival, Concord, MA - <http://youtu.be/dFeKRvtXpvs>

Gross: \$767 (Old Manse 10/11/08)

**2015 update:** This event only lasted a few years because new management came in and starting messing around with the event. I think they wanted their own food sold, etc. As I keep hammering in my videos, you can't go wrong with "ye olde" events.

## **Velma Kaczynski**

*Saturday, October 25th, 2008*

Well, we're wrapping up the kettle corn season here in New England. Startin' to get colder but people still want their kettle corn damn it. People love to huddle around the tent NOW, unlike those 98 degree days we had this summer. Steve and a few other people have tried to line up gigs for November. Like I want to make this stuff in the snow. We'll see.

Next week is the final week for both our Framingham and Springfield locations. I've had people get bitchy on us if we miss a popping day due to illness or rain. Let's see how they handle cold turkey kettle corn with drawl this year.



Ted and Velma Kaczynski

Framingham Farmers Market 16th & 23rd 2008 - <http://youtu.be/pjTQn7wGiBc>

Gross: \$478

## **Final day of the season!**

*Friday, November 7th, 2008*

We got rained out on our last day of the season at Springfield. There must've been a bunch of sad faces down there - but hey, the mortal enemy of fluffy, dry kettle corn are buckets of water pouring constantly on to the operation.



Guess what was the busiest day of the season at the Framingham Farmers market? Yup, it was this last day! We popped more on our final day than any other day during the entire year. People were loading up. Not sure how you would get a couple of bags to last 6 months.

We've now been popping here for 2 years, and it's following the same pattern we discovered at the Springfield Farmers Market. The crowd slowly builds and becomes loyal customers. It doesn't become lucrative until after the 2nd year.

We'll continue to pop at home and will be selling the stuff online at least until January. We had a pretty good run last year before Christmas for online orders as presents. We've got to explain to our customers that the stuff doesn't keep too long, so ordering early and leaving it under a tree is not the best

way to spread kettle corn joy.

Steve has potentially lined up one last popping gig at his teaching job in November. We'll see if it happens and you'll get to see what went down here at this blog.

I've also been getting a bunch of email from people who are interested in getting into the kettle corn biz and want free advice from me. I've been thinking of doing a complete "inside scoop on the kettle corn biz" manual. How much does it cost to set up, what's the profit margin, etc. Somebody did a crappy .pdf like this and sold it on ebay a while ago. It was the only thing I could find before I got started in all this. It would be something that would lay it all out for you if you're considering getting into the biz.

Next adventure: we're going to Hawaii for the entire month of February. We'll be checking out the farmers markets and see who's making kettle corn out there. I found somebody online who was doing it on Oahu. I'll be doing another blog post here on where we're staying and what will be happening.

Framingham Farmers Market, Final day 2008 - <http://youtu.be/hhQTCpoiOMY>

Gross: \$715

**2015 update:** You'll notice that the gross at the end of the season is way different from the start.

## Feedback from Fenway Park

*Tuesday, December 2nd, 2008*

*On 11/25/08 5:32 PM, "s\*\*\*.p\*\*\*\*\*@yahoo.com" wrote: I did find your website and although that may be what I am thinking I have nothing to gain by saying either way. If you think writing this stuff helps you sell then good luck.*

LOL! Hey look..ya found me! Well yes, in fact writing this stuff \*DOES\* help me sell kettle corn. Did you notice that I'm the top non-sponsored link on Google for the keyword "kettle corn"? Or did you search for "Fenway Park kettle corn"?

[after checking with Google and typing in "Fenway Park kettle corn"]

Doh!! I show up at the top, right after the company that makes your popper. You're [Palumbo Kettle Corn](#), right? Down near the middle of the page.

*The next time you are at Sam's club have a look at the ingredients label on the "vegetable oil". You can type so I assume you can read- it says 100% soy.*

Aaahhh...OK. I guess soy oil is more appetizing than vegetable oil.

*After selling over 45,000 bags at Fenway this year and another 20,000 - 30,000 at our other events/ locations I tend not to concern myself with what other people think. Happy Popping.*

Now...if you're not concerned what others or what \*I\* think, then why did you send this email?

[going back and re-reading what I wrote in the blog]



Kettle corn kiosk at Fenway Park

Now, the comment "I wouldn't feed this stuff to the squirrels that come to my porch" was referring to the Popcorn Indiana crap, right? I hope we both can agree on that.

I've tried making kettle corn with the oil you're using. \*In my opinion\*, it isn't as good as corn oil. It certainly costs less. I'm sure some drunk in the bleachers would never know the difference.

I also thought your popper wasn't making kettle corn as fluffy as I like. \*In my opinion\* I'm sure the Boston fire department would have something to say if you had upped the temperature with propane.

In fact, I'm jealous that your sales numbers kick my ass \*AND\* you got other people to make the stuff (like as dope, I personally make every bag that I've sold) I think you've got a great operation. If I see you at SAM's club again, I'll make it a point to hide behind the wide screen TV's.

**Update: 11/27/08** - Steve wrote back! Here's what he had to say. (He seems like a good guy about all this.)

*The reason I responded to your comments was, as you noted, I actually met you. If you check on the web for blogs and other comments, you can find an endless amount of "stuff". Yours was the first that I read from someone I actually knew or met which is why I decided to write.*

*I agree about the Indiana Kettle Korn (Dale and Thomas). It is a company that has way too much money and is using it to push their way around. Good for them. It is obviously working for them as they sell despite of their quality. At least there is still room for guys like us.*

*You are right about the temp. Being indoors, I had no option at Fenway. Electric was the only way they would let us go. You have to admit- the bat was a pretty clever idea...*

*We get, like I am sure you do, some people that want the kettle korn more salty, some want more sugar, some less... we stuck with what works. The whole Fenway experience helps sell anything, not that I think we put out a bad product.*

*This was all in good fun. I have thick skin and do not get excited about what other people think (as I mentioned). Being at Fenway for the last 3 years has been fantastic. Our contract ended at the end of last season. We will see what the future brings. Good luck with your business and if you do see me again at Sams, you should hide.... kidding. It would be nice to say hello again after having this exchange.*

*Good luck.*

## ood-Fay annel-Chay Kettle Corn segment

Tuesday, December 16th, 2008

Velma spotted this segment on kettle corn last night. Thought I'd toss it up here so everyone could see it. Here's what I thought:

The cooker looks certainly well built. (I'd say even better than my North Bend. It's by the [Ye Old Kettle Cooker](#) guys.) I'm not crazy about the big brass bucket concept. I certainly LOOKS nice. I've never used one, but from what I can tell, you're dumping very hot kettle corn on top of ready to bag kettle corn. With the North Bend trough, you can push the cooler stuff down and away from the popper and bag it while you're dumping the hot stuff at the other end. I've considered using an even bigger one, that way you can easily have two people bagging while you're popping.

What the hell gives with that foot pedal whistle? Popping a load of kettle corn already makes a ton of racket, why would you need to make even MORE noise after all that? Steve was doing a similar thing with a pair of scoops. He would bang them together and scream KETTLE CORN after a fresh load. I had to throw scalding corn oil on him to make him stop.

I make these sort of lifestyle video segments during my other job. I was snickering to myself when they showed those two jamokes eating the stuff and giving their feedback. They're probably the sound guy and an assistant producer. You can tell they weren't actually selling the stuff at an event, but just dragged a popper and a tent out into the parking lot for demonstration purposes only.

Coming soon: The "How To Start Your Own Kettle Corn Business" online training course! I've been researching online affiliate marketing, and I think we're qualified to make a "how to" guide on kettle corn. With affiliate marketing, YOU can sell this course on your website and you'll basically get half of the proceeds! More on this to come.

Other news: OK, we're getting tons of orders online for the Christmas rush and we're popping a fresh round every time we get about 10 orders. Normally we get a lousy 2 orders a week during the rest of the year, so it's weird getting so much demand all at once. This happened last year too. Once Christmas is over, we'll stopping and getting ready for:

The Hawaiian trip for the month of February! As you might've seen last year, we did a month long tour of Florida, attempting to make kettle corn for the geriatric crowd. This time we won't be popping kettle corn in Hawaii, but checking out the farmers markets out there and doing a few reports about the possibilities. More on this in the next post.

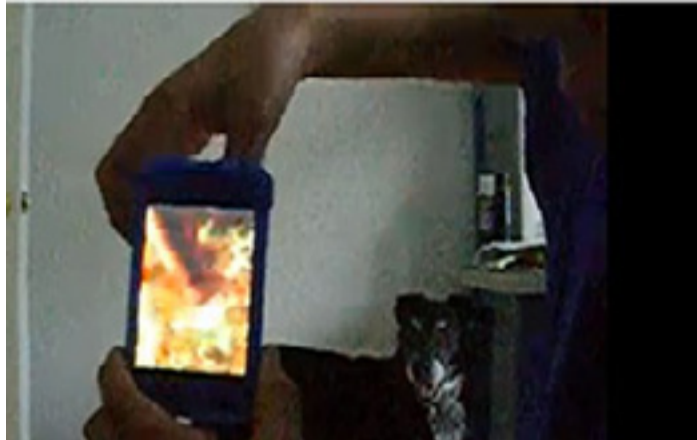
Food Channel Kettle Corn segment - <http://youtu.be/bfykbqzpoEo>

# 2009

## **iPhone popcorn popper**

*Friday, January 2nd, 2009*

I thought this was pretty silly. Now I gotta get me an iphone.



iPhone magic - <http://youtu.be/2y6K1iTvmp0>

While we're on the subject of the iphone, I found this and this to be pretty silly too!

## **Hawaii here we come**

*Friday, January 9th, 2009*

So the next big expedition is to go out to the Hawaiian islands for the month of February. We're sort've going out there with the idea of moving out there someday. Preferably sooner than later. I know there are a bunch of farmers markets on each island and they are a big part of the economy for each little community. While searching online, I found somebody selling kettle corn at one of them in Oahu. Hopefully we can track them down and see what's up.

The plan is this: Get off the plane after a mother of God plane trip and crash on a beach on Oahu. (Island #1). We're signed up for 3 days at a beach house/condo type of thing that is right next to the ocean. Velma is all torqued up on visiting "Lost" locations. Lost is a big network TV show that's on right now. There is a huge flea market on this island near Peal Harbor, so we'll be going there with "kettle corn eyes".

Stay on Maui (Island #2) for the month of February. We found this studio apartment type thing that isn't right on the ocean, but near enough to stuff for our tastes. \$50 a night. The catch is you have to stay for a month. I guess we'll have to tough it out. How can I do this? I'm self employed with no children. (I KNEW there was a reason why I didn't have kids.)

We'll be visiting the big island of Hawaii (Island #3) for about 4 days. There's this funky place called Uncle Billy's in Hilo where we will be staying. It's the epitome of cheesy Hawaiian culture and we



adore it. Everything is covered with bamboo, plenty of Japanese fish ponds, pathetic hula shows at night at the bar. It's perfect and inexpensive.

There is a huge farmers market in Hilo that we're ready to check out. Not sure what the logistics of making kettle corn are on the Big Island, but this would be the spot to try. We're also very interested in the Kona side of the island. We've discovered that you can get a whole farm with tons of acreage for very reasonable money. The deal is you've got to maintain the farm and you lease the land from the Hawaiians. What the hell, we'll switch to selling macadamia nuts instead of kettle corn and live happily ever after. We leave on the 28th of January.

Check out our [Dacrons travel guide website](#). We'll be doing tons of posting and pictures of what we find there.

**2015 update:** I'm considering moving to Hawaii for a retirement type of thing, and I was wondering if there was a market for kettle corn. I've found plenty of farmers markets, but getting the supplies out to there seems tricky.

## **Kihei Farmers Market - Maui, Hawaii**

*Tuesday, February 10th, 2009*

We found this farmers market on Maui on one of our first days here. Seems like they call any sort of open air store a "farmers market".



Kihei Farmers Market, Maui

Kihei Farmers Market - Maui, Hawaii - <http://youtu.be/2qRJ1GpOI2E>

## **Maui Swap Meet - Maui, Hawaii**

*Saturday, February 14th, 2009*

This is the biggest farmers market on Maui. I had seen a photo of a kettle corn tent that was here a while ago, no kettle corn now. We've been snarfing on fresh fruit the whole time we've been here, and this is a great place to find all different kinds.





Real Hawaiian music at the Maui Swap Meet

Maui Swap Meet - Maui, Hawaii - <http://youtu.be/IU4IU6NVmAk>

## Maui Kazowie Kettle Corn - Maui, Hawaii

*Sunday, February 22nd, 2009*

We were trying to find groceries and we stumble upon the [Pukalani Superette](#) near Makawao in Maui, Hawaii. We notice that they were selling kettle corn next to all the other cool Asian foods that they had. This has got to be the most crappy bag of kettle corn I've ever seen. I would've thrown out this load if I had made it. Velma insisted that I buy the bag so here is our review.



Velma and Eric review Maui Kazowie kettle corn

Maui Kazowie kettle corn - Maui, Hawaii - <http://youtu.be/tGlcRFR34eY>

## More Hawaii Videos

*Velma and Eric run amok on Hawaii*

Waterfall off of the Hana Highway - Maui, Hi - <http://youtu.be/qYx2vl0wKMA>

Polipoli disk golf course - Maui, Hi - <http://youtu.be/FU3WqfJWW-o>

Aloha Chef in Kahuku - Oahu, Hawaii - [http://youtu.be/pXEhtBLhh\\_M](http://youtu.be/pXEhtBLhh_M)

Kualoa Park, Oahu, Hawaii - <http://youtu.be/Rw3DQGSZZz8>

Kualoa Ranch - Oahu, Hawaii - <http://youtu.be/kfbWRcK1FFI>

Lava Graffiti, Queen Kaahumanu Highway, Big Island, Hi - <http://youtu.be/JsrgHMrcyMQ>

## Kettle Corn Business ebook is up!

Tuesday, March 24th, 2009

OK, so I went nuts and created an ebook that I'm selling online called "[Start Your Own Kettle Corn Business](#)". I've been getting so many questions from people over the years asking about starting a kettle corn business. Most of the questions are exactly the same, so I made it easier on myself to just put all the answers in a book they can download. (There's also \$30 involved - but hey, we sweated our butts off to figure this stuff out.)

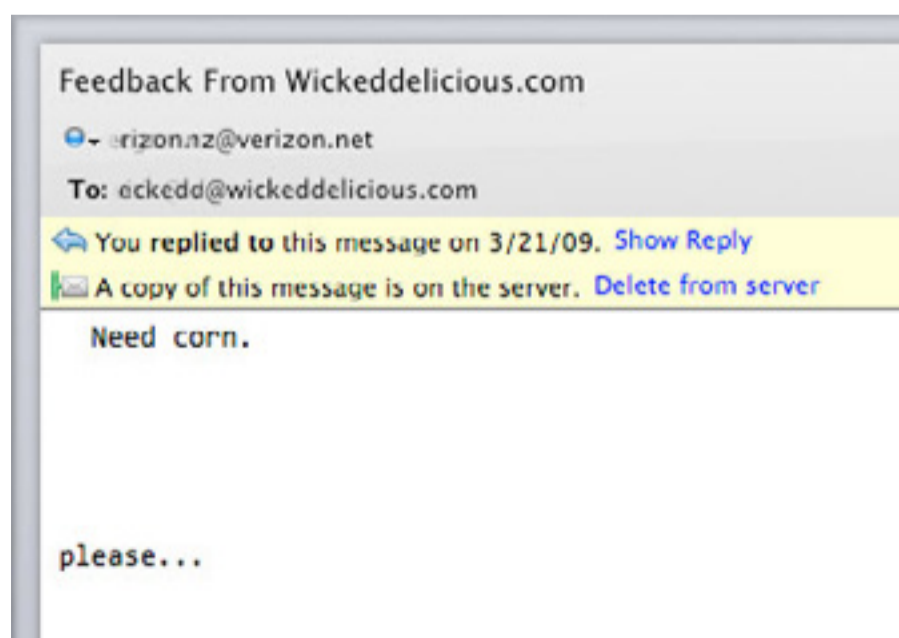


I've been doing a lot of research about online marketing and the ins and outs of promoting stupid products like this. Mostly it's about bullshit weight loss products or some other thing which will appeal to the vanity of the great unwashed masses. At least I can say that what I'm selling is legit and I can personally vouch for everything I claim. I sure wish I had a book like this when I got started.

Start Your Own Kettle Corn Business - <http://youtu.be/7WI9LaYmWwo>

Been back from Hawaii for a couple of weeks and trying to get my head around the now novel concept of extreme cold. Never ran across anyone selling kettle corn from a tent out there. The woman at the car rental place on Oahu filled us in on the kettle corn status of that island. Occasionally someone will pop at a special event, but no one is popping at the giant swap meet at Aloha Stadium. We got into kettle corn because I handed her my Velma's business credit card and she went "KETTLE CORN?? YOU GUYS DO KETTLE CORN?!"

I got this email from someone recently - I found it very funny.



I like the idea of someone being talked down from the ledge because they haven't gotten their kettle corn fix. Instead of cash, maybe we can fence stolen goods for bags of kettle corn so the addicts can get their fix.

So kettle corn season will start up again for us in Springfield during the first week of May. Framingham should start up in June.

**2015 update:** I'm surprised how well this ebook has done. Some people have even asked me how they would set up a kettle corn tent in Africa! I've had a bunch of people go through with their plans on starting a business, and have thanked me for this guide. The biggest stumbling block for most people is the unknown of starting your own business. They've never had a job where there are no guarantees, so it makes them uncomfortable. It seems some people just don't have it in them to make the leap of faith. In my other guide I stress how it's important to research where you'll be popping and what requirements you need.

## One week to go!

*Sunday, April 26th, 2009*

(...and we start popping again on Tuesdays in Springfield, MA!) I'll be spending this week cleaning everything up and preparing for the first day of this season. A month from now we'll be popping on Thursdays in Framingham, MA.

I just got back from Savannah, GA. I had a video editing job for a week down there and met with Jeff Grob of the Savannah Kettle Corn Company. He had purchased my kettle corn start-up ebook and had wanted to say hi when I went down there. He's got a very cool spot in which to sell kettle corn, right on River Street on the waterfront of historic Savannah. He agreed to do a little interview with me on how he got into the kettle corn business. This will be included with my original ebook sales.

The ebook has been selling remarkably well. I figure I might be selling a dozen or so over the course of a year, but at this moment I've sold 34 after only 3 weeks. As I mentioned above, I will be adding more stuff like video training to the package, so we'll see how long I leave the price at \$30. I'll be starting a Google adwords advertising campaign shortly, so that ought to drive some more traffic and sales.

I guess I'm turning into all thing kettle corn. I just got this email today:

*I can see that you guys are kettle corn NUTS, so here is a song that you might like. It's by The Pleasant Family Old Time String Band, it called The Kettle Corn Addiction Song.*

*My wife and I are this close to going over the deep end and getting a kettle corn trailer to fix our addiction?!\*#\$\$@%^^.*

Now..being a northern Yankee that was bummed when Kurt Cobain died, I have to say that normally this sort of thing isn't my thing. But, I would be a hypocrite if I said that because I've already played stand up bass in a jug band called "Commodore Dutch and his Shanghaied Sidemen." (That's me in the right of this photo) This is what happens to your rock band from your 20's when the children and wives arrive and you're told not to have too much fun. The website link has all sorts of recordings we managed to do between martini's.

I got another big idea for this website - a kettle corn poppers directory. I want to list everyone in the United States who makes kettle corn and break it down by state. Anyone would be able to upload their link to their company and website. This way no matter where you are, you'll be able to locate someone

who could pop at your event or where you could find kettle corn locally. As I mentioned on my ebook sale page, kettle corn is strictly a local thing, I'm not going to pop beyond the borders of Massachusetts much.

And this is just nuts: <http://youtu.be/0BctN3Y2IJc>

Randy of Cranking Kettle Corn had sent me this link to the Chinese You Tube site. I've never seen popcorn made like that. I'm not even sure if they use any oil in the process. I've heard that the popcorn comes out with a smoky flavor and is kind of over done. Here's a couple of other links on the same thing:

<http://youtu.be/BrOTZoy9uNA> - <http://youtu.be/mlviGLKwNCK>

## **First Day Back at the Springfield Farmers Market**

*Sunday, May 10th, 2009*

Pretty much a drizzly day, normally we would blow off the farmers market with weather like this, but it was the big opening. We did OK actually. A bunch of regulars showed up and bought multiple bags. (We did 6 oils if anyone is still tracking this.) Since this should be the slowest day of the year AND it was raining, this is pretty much the worst case scenario. This means we WOULD make this amount if we did show up on a totally lousy day during the busy season. Our next big expense should be an extendable canopy that sticks out from the front of the tent. This should keep our front table sorta dry along with the customers. EZ-UP doesn't make this sort of thing and it's kind of tricky finding something that fits my professional model tent. Speaking of expenses, it looks like we've got to replace anything made of plastic in our tent. After 4 seasons of this, the hot sugar and oil sticks to everything and no amount of scrubbing with chemicals and wire brushes can remove this "glue".



Springfield Opening Day 2009

Keeping with the kettle corn theme: NPR (National Public Radio) recently did a spot on a kettle corn vendor in Kansas City. You can listen to it [here](#). I guess more people are trying to make additional income in this economy and are considering doing this. Of course I laid all this out in my ebook "Start Your Own Kettle Corn Business".

05-05-09 springfield - [http://youtu.be/isD5uv1pl\\_0](http://youtu.be/isD5uv1pl_0)

Gross: \$750

**2015 update:** What's cool is we STILL made \$750 and it wasn't a perfect opening day.

## Velma gets snarky

Monday, May 18th, 2009

..after only one day of popping. (see video) The weather held up and business was back to normal. I didn't think we would have THAT many people so early in the season - we ran out of sugar so a couple of people at the very end didn't get any kettle corn. We sold 8 oils worth of supplies. This would've been a very good day last year but it is shaping up to be a typical day from now on. Steve mentioned that he might've found some cheap help, so I might take him up on that. I don't think the oarsmen on slave ships had to keep up this kind of pace.



Finally get a nice day in Springfield

Springfield Farmers Market - May 12, 2009 - <http://youtu.be/ABD-K-N-mKk>

Gross: \$960

Now we're cookin'

Tuesday, May 19th, 2009 Nice day for us. Steve bags out on us because of his "real" job. We speak with the "Cookie Doctor" who is next to us and meet a few of the regular customers.

This woman cleaned us out every week.

Springfield Farmers Market - May 19, 2009 - <http://youtu.be/EV-fUJ93Oqq>

Gross: \$1,397

2015 update: Do I have to mention that power of regular customers again? It took 3 years to get here, but the spot only cost us \$20 a day.

## JMC Jamboree, Johnson Memorial Hospital, CT

Monday, May 25th, 2009

We decided to try another spot and see what happens. This gig came about from our Springfield farmers market location. A person who had bought our kettle corn wanted us to pop at their hospital employee event. We were kind of skeptical because we've done events like this and you don't get the kind of traffic you need to make it a worthwhile day. I guess we weren't skeptical enough.



We're gonna need sherpas to get people out to us.

The people running it were certainly nice, but this was their first time doing it. When I first arrived, the woman in the video just pointed me to the far end of the parking lot. I'm standing there in the middle of all this asphalt, wondering exactly where I'm supposed to pitch my tent. I'm looking at this large group of tents all bunched together, figuring I'll be on the end of them, but she then PLACES me on the outer edge of everything. I'm thinking, "wow, this event must be huge, since I need to leave all this room in front of me." I then get crap from a bike guy who thought I was cutting into the motorcycle parking. He was trying to get me to move into the dirt. Cripes.

JMC Jamboree - June 6, 2009 - <http://youtu.be/gYOIXaqauTc>

Gross: \$352

**2015 update:** OK, these people were idiots. When they saw this video of us criticizing the spot they put us in, they started to get bitchy. The other weird thing we discovered was Connecticut has this weird obsession with FLAMABLE TENTS. The state inspector wanted to know if our tent was made from non-flammable materials. We kind of shook our shoulders and went "this is the same tent that everyone else on the planet is using for this sort of thing." I've never even heard of an INFLAMMABLE tent, I mean EVERY tent will catch fire, right? (Except those silver fire blankets - do they even make tents with that material?) The best I can figure is a nit-wit in Connecticut somewhere got their EZ-UP tent on fire at some event and now the authorities feel compelled to do something about it. We haven't been back to Connecticut since, but bring an aluminum tent with you if you do.

## When you're sliding into first...

Sunday, May 31st, 2009

I got this email yesterday:

*Dear Velma's, Way back in the day, I was a recipient of your free sample. BEST FREE SAMPLE EVER! It was big, it was more delicious than anyone could ever anticipate. So, this year I went to Africa to study and they suggest you pack snacks, so for christmas I received four large bags of your delicious treat. I left on my trip the 8th of January and 1.5 bags had already been consumed... you do the math :-P ! Anyway, I tied a knot in that leftover half bag and left it in my apartment, figuring someone would find it and eat it, as I packed the other 2 for my long excursion. When I got back mid-May, I found that half bag still sitting on my shelf, and that Velma's craving took me. I opened the 5 month old bag of Velma's and upon consumption discovered... it was not stale. Holy wow. I fricking love you people and your nomcious nomming popcorn. Thank you for the best welcome home ever. Autumn*

My reply:

ACK! You ate a 5 month old bag?! I should notify my health department and point that out to them. (This stuff won't kill you no matter what spots I miss cleaning up.) Most health department treat me like I'm selling Sushi from my tent. I think my partner Steve found a 1 month old bag in his car and choked that down. But FIVE months? Wow. Maybe I should advertise that my product has a longer shelf life than Twinkies. At least we'll be eating kettle corn after "the big one" drops. Thanks for the feedback! Eric



Velma's handshake

Springfield Farmers Market, May 26, 2009 - <http://youtu.be/Hds8H1XW2QA>

Gross: \$1,315

## **Framingham Farmers Market - First day back!**

*Thursday, June 11th, 2009*

Well, another year starts up again. This time we're armed with my high-def camera, so we'll be giving you video updates for no good reason. We're slowly acquiring loyal customers. This was the best opening day we've had yet. People have been "jonesing" over the winter for their kettle corn fix and they've now descended on us. Velma brought a book to read and she never cracked it open. I'm trying to figure out how to advertise locally on the internet to help promote this event. Google can let you target a certain area of the country and that's what I've started to do. It lets you pick a radius of say 7 miles from where we are and it'll stick your ad on everybody's computer. We'll see how that goes.



"What the hell is that?"

Framingham Farmers Market Kettle Corn - <http://youtu.be/oL-NrXCQgQ8>

Gross: \$530

**2015 update:** So what was last years opening gross? \$352? It's nice when you see your efforts pay off.

## **EZ UP Canopy By Fred**

*Thursday, June 18th, 2009*

I normally don't gush over a product, but this is such a necessary thing if you're selling stuff from under a tent. [www.canopiesbyfred.com](http://www.canopiesbyfred.com) sells EZUP awnings, EZUP canopies and other things for your craft fair, farmers market tent. Someone on this site turned me on to them and I immediately bought one. They are the greatest thing. (see video) You get an extra 2 feet of overhang with your tent without going beyond your allotted 10'x10 space.



Canopies by Fred

But I have to give some crap to Freds website.

His website optimization (SEO) stinks. I LOOKED REALLY HARD to find a canopy for my EZ UP tent. I knew these things existed but couldn't find one online. This is why I got excited when I finally located one. If you do a search for "EZUP Awning" or "EZUP Canopy" Freds site doesn't show up at all on Google. I think he's listed as #37 on Yahoo. Fred is losing sales bigtime. In fact, because I've labeled this blog entry "EZ UP Canopy By Fred", I'll bet my video or this blog entry will appear first before his website.

Next day update: OK, I found Fred's website. He's on page 6 for the search term "EZ UP Awning", this stupid little video on Youtube now shows up on page 4 for the search term "EZUP Awning" (no space). The point of all this is you've got to be explicit on your spellings and cover all the variations if you want to be found by Google. I would've bought one of Fred's awnings years ago.

While we're on the subject of SEO. In my book, "How To Start A Kettle Corn Business" I go into proper web optimization for your website. I had stated that if you want your kettle corn business to be found in your state, include your state in your URL. (i.e. [kettlecornkentucky.com](http://kettlecornkentucky.com)) Go ahead, do a search for "kettle corn kentucky" on Google. Guess who? Yup, that's me on the first page.

Since I set up my Kettle Corn Directory page, Google is now listing me way up there for any search that goes by "kettle corn + state name" for all 50 states. This was never my intention, but this certainly explains why I'm getting people going to my website FROM my kettle corn directory page. OK,



fine you guys, DON'T listen to me. :-P

A few days later: I get this email:

*Hey Eric! What can I say???? I just received some orders and one of the customers said he heard about our canopy awnings from you. He was in California. The next customer called me and he also follows you. He was in Washington. I understand you have a following. So I checked out your sight and was sent to You Tube to see the video. Thanks so much!! It looked great. The best of luck with your business! Thanks, Marv*

EZUP Awning | EZUP Canopy By Fred - <http://youtu.be/npsnXTnrqns>

**2015 update:** These guys are really great. 5 years later I mentioned my canopy was starting to get 'ratty' and they sent me another one! The other trick I've learned is to let them hang vertically without the side support bars and they work great as a end of the day sun shade.

## **Kettle Corn Business Time Lapse**

*Tuesday, June 30th, 2009*

This is what a typical Tuesday looks like for us that the Springfield Farmers Market. We now mainly do repeat customers who want multiple bags. I now have to bring more than 100 lbs of popcorn, more than 50 lbs of sugar and at least 9 oils. If it rains and we don't make it, certain customers get bitchy that they didn't get their corn for that week.

Take a look at our first blog post from June 2006. Our first day in business was at this market. Notice it says: "we sold about 50 bags that day". :-P

OK, the William Tell Overture music was an obvious steal from Stanley Kubricks film "A Clockwork Orange". When I hear this music, I immediately think of Alex and the two girls scene. Rent the film if you have no idea what I mean. ;-)



Kettle corn time lapse still

Kettle Corn Business Time Lapse - <http://youtu.be/JSWDRcGmKLI>

Gross: \$1,142

## Velma's Maple Kettle Corn

Sunday, July 12th, 2009

OK, we try a new spin on kettle corn at the Springfield Farmers Market. As I mentioned in the video, somebody had come by our Framingham Farmers Market location and was selling maple syrup on that day. I told the vendor that I've seen a few people who make maple syrup also make maple kettle corn. They have access to the primary resource, which is maple syrup and it doesn't cost that much more for the popcorn and oil. I've tried maple kettle corn from other vendors and I certainly like it, but after you've stuffed your face with an entire bag, it starts to end up being note one kind of flavor. I must have dumped at least \$4 worth of maple syrup into the kettle for this batch, so financially one would take a hit if you did this on a regular basis.



NOT goat sausage

Velma's Maple Kettle Corn - <http://youtu.be/rDhyMQZkrsE>

Gross: \$1,065

**2015 update:** I've seen some other kettle corn vendors market this stuff. It sure is yummy but damn, it's expensive to make!

## Penelope The Pig Loves Velma's

Tuesday, July 14th, 2009

Watch the scoop where we make another addict out of an almost plate of spare ribs. So far we've given away our "droppings" to a pig farm and a homeless guy. We knew the stuff went off to some farm somewhere, but we never had a face to go with our new fan. It's kind of nice that we can get rid of a



Penelope the pig

large garbage bag full of this stuff `cause it's a pain finding room for it in the car. We look forward in keeping Penelope and the chickens happy.

Penelope The Pig Loves Velma's - <http://youtu.be/KaHzCjj9UgE>

Gross: \$530

**2015 update:** You'll almost always find a farmer at one of these types of markets who has barn yard animals back at their place. You also always end up with a big bag of the unpopped dreggs from your sifting bin, so it's nice to know that somebody will be enjoying what's left over (verses just throwing it out).

## Despair at the Framingham Farmers Market

*Saturday, August 1st, 2009*

Latest news is the [framinghamfarmersmarket.com](http://framinghamfarmersmarket.com) website. I banged this out last week. A couple of customers were hoping they could find out what veggies were being sold at the market so they could plan their food shopping for that day. I suggested to Elizabeth (the market mistress) that if we had a wordpress blog going, you can make posts to it via email through a secret account. By using Velma's iphone, we can do updates right at the market while it's going. Everything works like a charm. We're desperate to get the word out for our little farmers market and any sort of marketing helps. I tried posting links to a bunch of websites that are associated with the town of Framingham, Massachusetts but they all seem indifferent to mentioning us.



Johnny shows despair while Eric feigns concern

I finally discovered a mailing list called framcom that goes out to only residents of Framingham would be interested in local things. Mailing lists are kind of old school, so I was surprised that one was still going. I asked a few questions to the moderator and he seemed kind of anal about running it. (Remember the old SNL skit with Jimmy Fallon called [Nick Burns, Your Company's Computer Guy?](#)) I notice that people are posting mundane stuff like finding a pair of boat oars in the town of Framingham. I'm thinking, "Oh, then telling people about the farmers market in their town run by LOCAL FARMERS should be right on the money." I send out a post mentioning the market. I get a reply from the moderator that I didn't post the email to his specifications and now I'm only allowed one more mention of the farmers market. Oh great - finding a pair of boat oars is critical news, but a local farmers market which is enjoyed by many is something that needs to be suppressed. Jimmy Fallon is a genius, just watch the video to the link above to get an idea on what kind of people run these types of things.

Despair at the Framingham Farmers Market - [http://youtu.be/KPf2\\_gOZ\\_9M](http://youtu.be/KPf2_gOZ_9M)

Gross: \$842

## Boy is it HOT

Tuesday, August 18th, 2009

Yup, popping in 96 degree weather sure is tough. I've been shooting mostly video for my kettle corn business site, so you haven't seen much lately in this blog. I pretty much have enough footage to create a DVD, so that should be going online soon. It's interesting that business has slacked off in Springfield for the past 3 weeks, but has kept steady at the Framingham location. I remember from last year that it picked up as the year went along.



Steve and Eric wilt from the heat

Boy Is It HOT - <http://youtu.be/dxO6mEcsyYY>

Gross: \$1,085

## Typical craft fair excerpt

Monday, September 21st, 2009

Popping again at the Framingham Humane Society craft fair. This video is an excerpt from the video that is part of my How To Start A Kettle Corn Business guide. The event basically got rained out, so there wasn't a lot happening.



Lots of painted wooden crap

Excerpt from how to make kettle corn - Typical craft fair - [http://youtu.be/t3\\_dq8FDtcM](http://youtu.be/t3_dq8FDtcM)

Gross: \$684

**2015 update:** This should've been a \$1,000 day, but the rain kicked everyone's butt. At least our die hard regulars made the trip and bought a bag. Because we paid the entrance fee up front months

ago, you're compelled to go no matter what. If this were a regular \$20 a spot farmers market day, we would've blown it off.

## Halloween Kettle Corn

*Tuesday, October 31, 2009*

Steve is "that" guy from your neighborhood - always friendly and all the kids hang out at his house. He wanted to set a precedent this year by giving away a little bag of kettle corn to each kid that came to his house. The video shows what happened.



Free kettle corn at Steve's house

Halloween Kettle Corn - <http://youtu.be/WjYMi9Lk-KU>

# 2010

## First day of the 2010 season

*Saturday, June 12th, 2010*

Some serious wind picks up on opening day.



Where'd our tent go?

Start Of Kettle Corn Season - [http://youtu.be/4jehO\\_rG6iY](http://youtu.be/4jehO_rG6iY)

Gross: \$510

**2015 update:** Springfield, MA is located in some weird geography - there was a full blown tornado that blew past this very spot a few years later. Crazy, windy rain storms aren't too uncommon around here. Because our spot is located on concrete, you can't drive stacks into the ground as you typically would. Sure enough, a large gust started to topple the tent, even with weights anchoring it down.

## Velma's Free Kettle Corn Offer!

*Friday, July 2nd, 2010*

We try like hell to get people to pay attention by giving away kettle corn to people who want to appear online in these videos.



"It's free range, organic, low fat, boneless etc."

Velma's Free Kettle Corn Offer! - [http://youtu.be/\\_NOpSDtKWw8](http://youtu.be/_NOpSDtKWw8)

Gross: \$949

## Free Kettle Corn Bag Winners! (#1)

Saturday, July 17th, 2010

We have a our first winner for our 'kettle corn challenge'!



Steve with Patrick (our first winner)

Free Kettle Corn Bag Winners! (#1) - <http://youtu.be/e-6PwAmTvUs>

Gross: \$844

## Baeolophus-Bicolor

Saturday, July 24th, 2010

I get called a corporate whore by Wendy. (Framingham challenge)



Wendy calls Eric and Johnny a corporate whote

Framingham-July22-Baeolophus-bicolor - <http://youtu.be/JaQnOsVRjxI>

Gross: \$850

## Another challenge winner in Springfield

Monday, August 2nd, 2010



Michael wins a bag of kettle corn

July 27 Springfield - <http://youtu.be/K8P2yqDAhb4>

Gross: \$839

## Wild Flowers

Monday, August 2nd, 2010

More secret words being uttered in Framingham plus the new challenge.



Wendy wins yet another bag of kettle corn

July 29 Wild Flowers - <http://youtu.be/SGgg6hEQ6fw>

Gross: \$773

## Shih Tzu's in Framingham

Wednesday, August 11th, 2010

Wendy wins last weeks challenge ...AGAIN





Wendy takes advantage of us at this point

Aug 5 Shih Tzu Framingham - <http://youtu.be/vTpP-rS9tU4>

Gross: \$631

### **Susan the cow makes an appearance**

*Wednesday, August 18th, 2010*

A customer does one better with his reply. Wendy comes up with next weeks challenge.



Susan the cow munches on Velma's popcorn dreggs

Aug 12 Cow Framingham Farmers Market - <http://youtu.be/9B3fpPwzoqg>

Gross: \$851

### **The Kettle Corn Queens of Framingham**

*Thursday, September 9th, 2010*

An original kettle corn song by belted out by 3 girls from Framingham.



The 'Kettle Corn Queens' sing their original song

The Kettle Corn Queens - Framingham - <http://youtu.be/r9cYerSo6TU>

Gross: \$753

## Velma's New Disclaimer

*Sunday, September 19th, 2010*

Wendy comes up with a few additions to Steve's kettle corn disclaimer.



Wendy adds a few more disclaimers to Steve's bit

Velma's New Disclaimer - <http://youtu.be/DW3AtH4CyEE>

Gross: \$550

**2015 update:** None of these silly online promotions we tried really did us any good. People just want their kettle corn, and really weren't into paying attention to our website. Giving discounts on a \$6 bag of kettle corn isn't much of an incentive, since they're going to buy it anyways at that price.

# 2011

## Opening day 2011

Wednesday, May 4th, 2011

Local news station covers the opening day of Springfield, MA



Steve 'The Kettle Corn Guy'

Opening day 2011 - [http://youtu.be/1oF4ze\\_-uoQ](http://youtu.be/1oF4ze_-uoQ)

Gross: \$636

**2015 update:** By this point I was tired of trying to make entertaining videos for the website - and it shows in the 2011 entries.

## Drama Studio Cabaret

Wednesday, August 10th, 2011

These kids really know how to plug it.



Drama Studio Cabaret in Springfield

Drama Studio Cabaret - Springfield Farmers Market - <http://youtu.be/Mq8boIauXnc>

Gross: \$569 (wimp out day)


# Wicked Local - Billerica Farmers Market

Friday, September 23rd, 2011


I started popping at the Billerica Farmers Market half way through the season. Got a listing in the [Wicked Local Billerica](#) listing. So that's what the top of my head looks like. :-P

**New things are popping in Billerica**

Photos 



By Max Bowen/Staff Writer  
**Wicked Local**  
Posted Sep 30, 2011 @ 08:06 AM  
Last update Oct 06, 2011 @ 09:03 AM

 Recommend  Be the first of your friends to recommend this.   

Billerica, Mass. — **WHAT IT IS** Yelma's Wicked Delicious Kettle Corn, a staple at several farmers markets, has been a familiar sight at the Billerica market for weeks, offering bags of freshly made popcorn, sometimes for a discount if customers remember the secret phrase.

Eric Bickernick, who runs the kettle corn stand at the Springfield, Framingham and Billerica markets, said those venues are the only sales venues for his product. He used to sell the corn online, but found shipping costs nearly doubled the price, though he may try it again.

"They contacted me, they drove a hard bargain," said Bickernick of the organizers of the Billerica Farmers Market. "I could tell that those guys were

Photo by Max Bowen

Eric Bickernick, who runs the Yelma's Kettle Corn stand at the Billerica Farmers Market, dumps fresh kettle corn into a sifting bin.

Wicke Local Billerica - Sep. 30, 2011

Gross: \$420 (1st day)

**2015 update:** I ended up doing this event because the woman running it kept emailing me and insisting that I try her new market. When I spoke to her on the phone, she sounded like a real go-getter, so I said what the hell. If she's that into it, she'll certainly push the market everywhere. I came in half way through their first season, so there already was a descent group of clients that came by. The market wasn't huge, but it wasn't dismal either. I ended up popping there ten times in 2011. The average gross income for ten days was \$314. I just want to show you that even in new, untried locations, SOMEBODY is going to buy your kettle corn. Typically markets start to drop off after the first week in August, and by the time October comes around, you're down to about half that amount. I probably could've done better if I started the season and caught the summer rush.

## Ashley's Kettle Corn Song

Saturday, September 24th, 2011

Filmed at the Sudbury Wayside Inn Revolutionary War re-enactment.



Ashley sings her kettle corn song

Velmas Kettle Corn Song - <http://youtu.be/YAtAxNr2k-8>

Gross: \$1,582

**2015 update:** It's amazing what you can get people to do with a bag of kettle corn.

# 2012

**2015 update:** In 2012 I moved to the Buzzards Bay area. Springfield would've been a two hour drive EACH WAY, so I wasn't going to be doing too many of those gigs. Steve ended up buying an entire kettle corn kettle/tent/trailer package for himself. His kids have been helping him out for the longest time, so now that they were older, he could rely on them much more for help. Steve didn't need me to keep this great spot going on his own. You've seen the incomes we've been getting in Springfield, investing \$8,000 for a whole setup was a no brainer for him.



Framingham was an hour drive each way, so I knew I wanted to maintain that. The trick was to find new locations that could match Springfield or Framingham. As you'll see, I now had to try out as many different new locations as possible. For additional help, I ended up using my old friend Dan from my cable TV days. He lived in Assonet, which was only 45 minutes from me. He basically had no life, so he was looking for something to do. Since Buzzards Bay is close to Cape Cod, a big tourist area, so I was hoping I could find something in that direction. If not, there were plenty of farmers markets all along the southern coast of Massachusetts.

## Start of the 2012 season! Earth Day Festival

*Monday, April 30th, 2012*

Off we go - the start of the 2012 season! The big news is I bought a house in the [Buzzards Bay area](#), right next to Cape Cod. (I like the fact that I have a BUZZARD in the name!) The appeal is I'm 1,000 feet from the ocean and a mile long beach. Since I don't have kids and all the baggage, I wanted to move to where I would like to live, and not have my job dictate where I end up. I'm still in Massachusetts, but I'm going to start looking for new popping locations, closer to my home turf. I feel pretty confident that I can find some spots to make kettle corn on the Cape, the place is a mad house during the summer. I'll be posting updates on how my search goes for all you people who are here to learn about the kettle corn business. I'll also be pursuing kettle corn much more harder this year since my other forms of income have started to dry up.

I'm still within striking distance to Framingham, so I'll be popping there over the summer. The first event of the season was at the Framingham common - the [Earth Day festival](#) on April 28, 2012. We were invited back from last year and this years event was nuts. The weather was perfect for April and customers were ready to go when we first fired up the kettle. We got hammered with customers the entire 4 hours we were there. This crowd was even more "earthy-crunchy" than a typical craft fair. The

whole point of the festival was to celebrate being green, recycling and basically being a modern hippie. They even gave us crap about selling the kettle corn in a plastic bag.

Since I'll be establishing new stomping grounds, I needed to find someone who was closer to my new location who could do this on a full time basis. My buddy Dan Bridges fit the bill perfectly. He's a real hot shot sales type of guy who used to be the #1 guy at Sears when he sold refrigerators. I've known him for a very long time. He helped me with my indie movie that I shot that I create about 10 years ago. He seemed kind of skeptical when I said kettle corn was like selling drugs. People go mental over the stuff, it's become known as "kettle crack". After getting hammered for 4 intense hours, he's now a believer. Our long range plans are to find a central popping location and push it further than just the tent. Let's see how that goes.



Dan and Eric's first day

First day of season 2012 - Framingham Earth Day - <http://youtu.be/Z6RGKWUtKbI>

Gross: \$1,490

## **Springfield Opening Day 2012**

*Tuesday, May 1st, 2012*

Well, we've been going to the Springfield Farmers market for 7 years. Our first day popping anywhere was in Springfield on June 14, 2006. If you read that blog entry, you'll notice we were worried that we would be able to sell anything! For the longest time we were next to a church on a very busy street. It was a great spot that had a ton of traffic, since then we've moved inside a forested park next to a hockey rink. The crowds haven't been the same and on a rainy day like today, we really take a hit. It's nice that we had some regulars show up and were excited that we were popping again.

Springfield is pretty far from my new Buzzards Bay house. It's a 2 and a half hour drive so I'm not sure how long I can show up on a weekly basis. The good news is Steve is getting the money together for his own kettle. He'll be running "Velma's West" and I'll be doing "Velma's South". He lives just two streets away from the market and he certainly doesn't want to lose the income. I've got a video editing job for a big insurance company coming up in the middle of May. They'll be sending me to Maui for 2 weeks on their nickel, so I won't be able to move to the new digs until the beginning of June. I may post some weird videos from Maui on this blog just for the heck of it.



Forest Park 1st day 2012 - Springfield

Springfield Opening Day 2012 - <http://youtu.be/OpGBB0gTwAk>

Gross: \$272

**2015 update:** By this time, we weren't at all freaked out by the lousy day. Add rain to the opening day and you get \$272, even in a spot like Springfield. We knew the \$1,000 days were coming. Steve hadn't taken delivery of his kettle and yellow tent, so we were still using mine.

## Civil War Encampment - Framingham

*Monday, May 7th, 2012*

This gig came about because one of our Framingham farmers market customers had their own event, and wanted us to pop there. After you've watched humanity walk past your tent, you find certain people that have a fun, sort of spark in their presence. You look forward to talking to these people and hope they come by. Jennifer Toth is one of those people. The first time I saw her, she was wearing a medieval wench costume for some event. I would tease her when she would come by wearing regular street clothes and I would go "that's a lousy costume". She's the person in the video who was running this event.

We've had a pretty good start of the year with these past two events at the Framingham common. We've been popping flat out the entire time. Typically these early events are kind of sketchy, since we're not really into the prime popping season, which is the first week of August. We also had an offer to pop at a Brazilian festival in Brockton later this year. We've learned that food festivals aren't really that perfect of a match, since kettle corn isn't lunch. Typically the hot dog truck kicks our ass during lunch time.



Honest Abe gives a testimonial



Civil War Encampment Framingham 05-05-12 - <http://youtu.be/QgRftdw63JM>

Gross: \$1,500

**2015 update:** We were kind of surprised at how well we did, this early in the season. Again, 'ye olde' anywhere is great.

## Curse this weather

*Wednesday, May 30th, 2012*

So I had disappeared for the past few weeks from Springfield popping. My other job is to do video editing for a huge company in Boston. They had sent me to Maui to edit their corporate awards presentation at the Ritz Carlton. I basically sat in a room editing video on a laptop for a week. At least I managed to fly there early and spend 4 days roaming around the island with my buddy Johnny, who you've seen featured in some of these videos for my Framingham location.



Steve cools off

Apparently in my absence, the weather has been consistently crappy at the Springfield farmers market. Steve was trying to maintain our presence, but it really hard to get a crowd to form when it's sprinkling through out the day. It also screws up the kettle corn popping process with so much moisture in the air. Today was the first "good" day we've had - the temperature reached in the 90's but it wasn't a killer day to work in. We've popped in temperatures near 100 degrees and it really takes a toll on you. The heat from the kettle can really raise your core body temperature until you feel like passing out. Fortunately there are showers in the hockey rink located next to us, so a good hose down in the middle of the day really hits the spot.

Curse this weather - Springfield - [http://youtu.be/C9rSEGV\\_zXE](http://youtu.be/C9rSEGV_zXE)

Gross: \$610

## Paws In The Park 2012, Sudbury MA

*Monday, June 4th, 2012*

Boy do we like doggies! I've got a Shih-tzu and Steve is a die hard Golden Retriever fan. This gig was a joy to do because of all the critters that were walking up to the tent. It was the [Save A Dog's 12th Annual Dog Walk Paws in the Park](#). Basically all the dog shelters in the area come down and pitch a tent for the cause. Plenty of doggies were on display that needed to be adopted. Last year was an incredibly hot day and we did alright. The weather looked iffy earlier in the day, so that might've kept somebody away. Typically the area in front of our tent is covered in kettle corn from all the spills, but

today was weird - it was pretty clear of any extra kernels. This spot was been pretty good to us, we're been doing the Sudbury Colonial Fair every year and we'll be doing it again this year.



Doggies galore

Paws In The Park 2012 - <http://youtu.be/jdCZ8-IQjcA>

Gross: \$721

**2015 update:** By this point, we've established ourselves in the town of Sudbury, so we could rely on a bunch of regular customers showing up.

## **Framingham Farmers Market 2012**

*Saturday, June 9th, 2012*

Off we go with another season at the [Framingham Farmers market](#). We started in 2007 and I think this is our 6th year here. Where you are located is important in the kettle corn biz. This market is nestled up next to a Edgell Road in Framingham, a nice and busy road with tons of traffic. Because of some construction last year, we were on the other side of the town common and that bit into our customer traffic. This year we're back on the busy side and already sales seems to have increased. One person remarked that they smelled us popping while they drove by and had to stop and get a bag.



Facebook challenge winners

I've got a new person helping me out - Dan Bridges. He's an old friend of mine from way back when I used to work at the Norwood cable station, producing local origination programming for the town. He helped me produce my great artist folly "alt.sex", an indie film that I wrote and directed back in the year 2000. He's a real hot-shot sales guy who used to be the top appliance salesman for Sears. Because I'm moving my base of operations down to the Buzzards Bay area, we need to find new places

to pop and he's hammering at this big time. Beyond farmers markets, we're looking to find a store front and start selling retail and online.

Framingham Start Of Season 2012 - <http://youtu.be/OrzFPQaAnh4>

Gross: \$834

**2015 update:** Not a shabby first day of the season at all.

## **We try out the Thursday Plymouth Farmers Market**

*Thursday, June 14th, 2012*

We've been at our Framingham Farmers Market location every Thursday for 5 years now and have collected a ton rabid kettle corn fans. Because I've moved to the Buzzards Bay area, that location is now almost an hour and a half away. The cruel irony here is I stopped going to my corporate job in Boston to do kettle corn full time. That drive was an hour and a half, each way and every day, in rush hour traffic. The plan is to find closer farmers markets to my area just so I can have a little sanity.

Dan tracked down the [Plymouth farmers market](#), which unfortunately happens every Thursday. Plymouth is an easy drive from me and is a very big tourist town. Dan was all torqued up, because this Thursday market had a descent amount of vendors and would shave his commute down too. The location is very pretty, it's right on the water as you can see in the video. I pointed out that we had a huge, loyal customer base in Framingham and it would take a very long time to replicate that in a brand new location. Dan was adamant that we try out a new spot.



Plymouth Farmers Market 2012

So we took a crack at it and played hooky at our Framingham location. Boy did we screw ourselves. We did pretty good business on our first day of the season at Framingham last week. This week we made 60 dollars a piece in Plymouth. There basically was no traffic in Plymouth this time of the year. To make matters worse, some nit wit from ANOTHER Plymouth farmers market was papering the cars in the parking lot for THEIR market on that day! Even though there isn't a huge stream of people at our Framingham location and fewer vendors, many people show up just for the kettle corn. They come looking for us. We've also noticed that our loyal fans will buy one or two large bags, verses new customers will stick to the smaller bag - until they've become addicted. I guess I'm stuck with my typical commute for now! :-P

Plymouth Farmers Market 06-14-12 - [http://youtu.be/X7IrD\\_Ehifw](http://youtu.be/X7IrD_Ehifw)

Gross: \$191

**2015 update:** We both liked the CONVIENCE of this location. Only about a half hour away for the both of us. Plymouth is a pretty touristy town and gets plenty of traffic in the summer months. Were we going to give up our proven spot in Framingham for something closer? Jackie, the market manager in Framingham, became ashen-faced when we said we weren't doing this day at her market and trying somewhere else. She's come to rely on us to draw in people that normally wouldn't go to a farmers market. In fact, most of the other vendors have noticed that we've always done well, when nobody wants to buy their specialty food. I'm not sure what the two farmers are making selling veggies, but I wouldn't be surprised that we're pulling in the most cash from ANY vendor. Jackie didn't have to worry, this place just didn't work out for us at all.

## Assonet Strawberry Festival

*Sunday, June 17th, 2012*

Since Dan lives in Assonet, Massachusetts, he originally wanted to do the [Assonet Strawberry Festival](#), but all the spaces were filled. Fortunately something opened up at the last minute and we squeaked in. (At least he can't bitch about the commute, he lives only a few minutes from the location.) This gig ended up being the perfect kettle corn event. The cost to join was only like 30 bucks. The event has been around for a very long time, so the locals are very familiar with it. The actual location is next to the busiest street in Assonet, so you get plenty of people discovering it on their own. Space was not unlimited, so everyone was pretty close together and we were situated right in the middle of everyone. You couldn't escape the smell coming from our tent - this is either something very appealing or could be considered asshole behavior, depending on who you speak to. J We sold almost a hundred pounds of kernels that day. My next objective is to make Dan stop doing the sales guy approach to the camera and make him speak normally. Not sure if it can be done, let's see what happens.



Assonet Strawberry Festival 2012

Assonet Strawberry Festival - June 17 2012 - [http://youtu.be/n\\_9-E4Vo5pI](http://youtu.be/n_9-E4Vo5pI)

Gross: \$1,000

**2015 update:** Since Dan lives in Assonet, he's known about this event for years, so he was insisted on doing it. Perfect spot - there weren't too many other food items. I think there was one tent selling hot dogs and another selling pastries. The field wasn't very large, so they packed everyone in nice and tight, which is great because you couldn't escape the smell from the kettle. Perfect, perfect, perfect!

## Carver Farmers Market - 1st time

*Sunday, June 24th, 2012*

In our thrashing about to find new markets, we've stumbled upon the Carver Farmers Market. We did our first day there and it has some good things going for it. The market has been going for 8 years and it has a built in following. The market is near a busy road, so it has good visibility. The market is basically in the woods, so the sun and heat isn't hammering you as if you were in an open parking lot somewhere. The person running it is a very descent person who isn't on a power trip. He is enthusiastic about his market and has added many "attractions" like music and a goofy kids "train" ride. The unfortunate part is it's located in Carver Massachusetts - a town with a population of 11,000. Compared to a town like Framingham which has a population of 68,000 or a place like Springfield with 153,000, it's pretty small and spread out. In the kettle corn biz, you really need the volume of people to make the entire thing worthwhile. You need to pay for two people sitting in a tent, not just one. We would've loved to have the Thursday Plymouth Farmers Market work out (population 56,000), but we've already built up 5 years worth of loyal addicts in Framingham on the same day.



Carver Farmers Market 2012

Carver Farmers Market - June 24, 2012 - <http://youtu.be/PEQQcPyLPgQ>

Gross: \$268

**2015 update:** Another market which we chose because of convenience. This was also close to both of us, and it was on a day we were trying to fill. You could tell in the first two hours that it was just going to suck. Even though the old guy running it was trying to sell the benefits of what he's been doing for the market, you could tell the volume of traffic just wasn't there. We ended up popping here three more times before we bailed. I don't think we made more than \$300 on any given day.

## Assonet Fireworks

*Tuesday, July 3rd, 2012*

We've always wanted to pop at a town's fireworks display, but there's usually too many hoops to jump through to get in. Dan knew that there was going to be a fireworks display in his town of Assonet, Massachusetts and wanted the chance to be able to pop there. When he contacted the town hall, they immediately told him that only non-profit organizations can only be in the main viewing area. This has always stopped us cold in the past, but not Dan. He knew that the Assonet Lions Club has 2 tent spaces at the event, and they typically don't make too much money selling their corn chips and chili. He convinced them that if we set up our kettle corn operation in one of their spots, we'd attract a crowd and would share the proceeds with them. Well, it worked. He was able to get into the main area along side the Lions Club tent. Other vendors had to set up outside the main viewing area, along a side street. We had good feedback from other Assonet citizens who had been at the Strawberry festival we

had popped at a few weeks back.



Dan and Eric vs. the line

The night was nuts. Everyone had crowded into an area the size of a football field, and we were set up right next to them. We were able to attract a huge crowd with the smell of the kettle corn as it came out of our kettle. At one point we had a line of maybe 30-40 people. I've never popped so much kettle corn in a 3 hour period. We only got to stop when they turned the lights off during the fireworks display and we were told to shut down. Joining forces with a non-profit organization like the Lions really opens the doors for other events that we typically wouldn't be allowed to join by ourselves.

Assonet Fireworks - <http://youtu.be/bdl-91tG7cg>

Gross: \$1,654

**2015 update:** Holy crap, this day was something else. We made that \$1,654 in pretty much 4 hours. Absolutely perfect spot to do a lot of 'damage' to a crowd. Everyone was corralled into a pretty small field to watch the fireworks. When we started popping for real around 7 pm, it didn't stop until they turned the lights off at 10 pm to watch the fireworks. We then got a little more in after that. It's was friggin' nuts.

The flip side is we were a victim of our own success. We were never allowed to come back ever again! The deal was you were supposed to be a non profit organization from the town, then you were allowed to set up inside this cordoned off baseball field. As mentioned above, we got in only because Dan got us associated with the Lions club. The Lions club was selling something stupid like pasta or something, and there was one other tent selling hot dogs. It started to get embarrassing - there were 6 guys in the Lions Club tent all doing nothing, while the two guys next to them were raking in wads of cash by the minute. They were all watching us, shaking their heads at how well we were doing. We told them that they'd be getting their cut, but obviously it wasn't enough. (Dan negotiated a ridiculous amount like \$125) You can tell that word got back to the town's mucky-mucks and weren't going to be taken advantage of again. When we heard that we weren't invited back, we offered up to \$300, but they still wouldn't do it.

## 26th Annual Middleboro Craft Fair

*Saturday, July 7th, 2012*

Continuing our search for more places to pop, we try out the 26th Annual Middleboro Craft Fair in Middleboro Massachusetts. Typically craft fairs are the bread and butter of kettle corn popping. We've done really well with the craft fairs hosted on the Framingham common, but this one kind of pooped out around 1 o'clock. Typically after lunch is when we go nuts and people descend on our tent. Not today. Weird. We were invited to do some other events in Middleboro later in August, so the day wasn't

a total wash. There's some kind of street fair going on along Main street and a Jazz festival in some field. They look promising so we'll keep you posted when we're officially signed up.



Middleboro Craft Fair 2012

26th Annual Middleboro Craft Fair - <http://youtu.be/StFBkFgAPh4>

Gross: \$450

**2015 update:** Eh, we had good visibility, but the traffic wasn't there.

## **Fairhaven Farmers Market 1st Time**

*Sunday, July 8th, 2012*

We've been doing the Carver farmers market on Sunday for the past 2 weeks. As I mentioned previously, it's a great market run by a fine gentleman, but our sales have been pretty dismal. We've been exploring other options for popping on Sunday and one of them was the [Fairhaven Farmers Market](#). We decided to take a whack at it on July 8th and we did alright for our first time. Fairhaven has a decent size population and it's literally a bridge crossing from New Bedford, an even bigger city. We've been refining our formula for choosing popping locations:

1. Location visibility - Is the market visible from a busy street? How will people know if it even exists? Sure the market manager will say they do marketing, but it seems most NEW customers will pull over on an impulse.
2. Age of market - A market will acquire regular customers as it goes along. It's certainly easier to tap into an existing customer base than scrounging for your own.
3. Nearby population - Where are the customers going to come from? There seems a definite travel radius from the market people will drive to get veggies and kettle corn.

Fairhaven seems to fit the bill better for our Sunday popping location. It's at the intersection of a busy street, right next to a bridge to an even bigger population of people in New Bedford. The Carver farmers market has great age and visibility, but nobody really lives in Carver Massachusetts. There are certainly people going to the market on a regular basis (because of age), just not that many, and I don't see how that will substantially increase as we stay there. Our Springfield and Framingham locations increased in traffic over the years because there were that many more people to spread the word.



Tight spot at the Fairhaven Farmers Market

Fairhaven Farmers Market 1st time - <http://youtu.be/WZa9giHKnL0>

Gross: \$550

**2015 update:** I don't think we ever matched this amount for the time we were at Fairhaven. I think the only reason why we did OK was from the fact that a parade was scheduled to come by the market location. We did do the rest of the season, just because we ran out of popping locations to try on Sundays. An average day was closer to \$450, but as the season wore down, we had to make due with a lousy \$250.

## **Onset Farmers Market - first time!**

*Wednesday, July 25th, 2012*

I recently moved to Onset, Massachusetts so it makes sense that I pop at the Onset Farmers Market, just down the street from where I live. The town holds a music concert series for the summer, and it's also held at the same spot on as the farmers market on Wednesdays. I was hoping with both of these events that I'm able to pop at, this spot would be crazy lucrative from the get go. Not so. I sold a decent amount of popcorn at the farmers market, but everyone would showed up for the music event was carrying dinner with them! There is a yummy pizza joint called Marc Anthonys right next to the concert stage. It seemed like everyone had a pizza on their lap while listening to the music. We didn't sell that much kettle corn at this night time event. Weird.



Onset Farmers Market



We've now done two weeks here and have started to see a build up of some repeat customers. We heard from one woman who was sitting miles from Onset next to the Cape Cod canal. She spots another woman munching on a bag of our kettle corn. She asks where it came from and drove all the way to our farmers market just to buy a bag. We're also seeing tons of people who are just visiting for the week and made it down to the market. There's also a canal cruise which dumps a boat load of people at the dock in Onset harbor every few hours. Even though this farmers market just started this year, we feel like it has potential to pan out in the long run. It may take a year of selling, but it fits the pattern which we've seen in other towns. Once we've "burned in" the thought of kettle corn on a certain day, people will come down stock up for the week.

Onset Farmers Market - 07-25-12 - <http://youtu.be/hS35LpcoPmg>

Gross: \$495

**2015 update:** Again, convenience was the big motivating factor in choosing this. Brand new market, I could literally walk home. We were hoping to get more tourist traffic since you could actually see the ocean from our spot, but we only ended up selling to the trailer trash locals. (Hey, I live here, I'm practically one of them.) We were more interested in the big touristy events that happen in this town, and this farmers market was run by the same people. As you'll see, those didn't go too well either.

## Velma Visits A Big Mountain

*Thursday, August 9th, 2012*

I've illustrated the power of kettle corn to influence people with my story on how I got a very colorful woman to dress all in black for a day just by wielding a bag of kettle corn. (This happened back in 2007 at our Springfield location.) I've been told I like to instigate things, or maybe I'm just an asshole in general. At our Framingham location, there is an artist who likes to paint landscapes and sells them at the market. I constantly ask him how the painting biz is going and he typically replies in the negative. I imagine there isn't a lot of demand for original oil paintings at the farmers market. I thought I would "help".



Crofton Bergheister

I asked him if he has ever painted on velvet. Never. I asked him how much would it cost to commission an original piece of artwork - a velvet Elvis. (Velma and I thrive on filling our house with tacky shit.) He said he doesn't do portraits, only landscapes - no thanks. Fine. Since I was "commissioning" this artwork, I wanted the ultimate landscape. I wanted to see: a mountain with a waterfall and stream next to a cabin with deer in the foreground all leading to a beach with waves, palm trees, a boat, jumping dolphins and a setting moon. (I thought the black velvet would work nicely as a night-time scene.) Oh yea, and throw in a UFO someplace.

I thought I had the perfect offer. I would pay to see this created, then I'd offer to put my painting on commission inside his tent, so if/when it sold he'd get paid TWICE. I was trying my damndest to get him to see my logic - if MY painting were to be the only one sold inside his tent, he'd have to completely reconsider his artist thrust. This could be where the money is! He didn't see my logic and declined the entire proposition.



Velma Visits A Big Mountain (Oil on velvet rag)

A week later he brings me "Velma Visits A Big Mountain"! (By Crofton Bergheister) A stunning piece of artwork done on a DKNY (size 12) velvet camisole. Certainly velvet doesn't demand the slightest respect, and draping the "canvas" over another used canvas is definitely apropos. You'll notice the eagle carrying away a sheep in the right corner with the little yellow splotch ON the mountain represents our tent. Bravo. Crofton got a free bag of kettle corn. Here's what he had to say via a recent email:

*The DKNY pelt for the painting was captured at the St. Vincent de Paul thrift shop in Framingham, Massachusetts, after a brief but dangerous struggle with that shop,s sequestered (but not tamed) herd of miscellaneous fabrics.*

*Escaping from the fabrics, I ran headlong into the DKNY hanging in the Women,s Tops section. A glance told me its velvety pelt was just right for "Velma Climbs a Big Mountain", a painting I had envisaged years before.*

*The painting first crept into my creative endeavors in a dream, of a tall man incessantly urging me to 'paint on velvet, paint on velvet.'*

*But until now, I never found quite the right taxidermy to express it. The capture was bloodless. This particular DKNY (blue tagged at 99 cents) might be of the velveteen species ~ it was taken close to a much heavier, true velvet concoction that would have set me back \$3.99, more ammunition than I wanted to expend.*

*Little known outside its native China, DKNYs usually reach American shores as stowaways in general cargo ships. Most are captured at the dock and incarcerated in high-end women,s shops, destined to become the pets of wealthy patrons.*

*It is unknown how this little pelt came to the St. Vincent de Paul thrift shop. We,ll never know whether its mistress grew tired of it and simply discarded it, or whether it was a (rejected) gift from an unwelcome admirer, or any of a hundred different grim scenarios. Fortunately, the DKNY is generally a placid animal and was not intent on revenge.*

*Certainly St. Vincent would not have had any direct contact with the original owner, as he hobnobbed exclusively with those in poverty and distress.*

*If you'd like to pursue similar pelts (for not much gelt), Society of St. Vincent de Paul thrift store, 444 Franklin Street, Framingham, MA 01702, Phone: 508-879-7873, Hours Mon-Sat: 10am-6pm; Sunday: 11am-5pm*

*- Crofton Bergheister*

Ben & Becks Spell Out Velma's - <http://youtu.be/NiAJjGapLMY>

Gross: \$786

## **So much for the Blues (festivals)**

*Saturday, August 25th, 2012*

Boy did we get hammered in the month of August for Saturday special events. Sometimes we will book a "one off" event on a Saturday like a craft show or food festival. These type of events are usually expensive to enter which can run anywhere from \$150 to \$300 per day. As long as the crowds are willing and ready to buy kettle corn, you can certainly coupe your cost. We had a pair of music festivals appear this month and decided to cough up the money and go for it. We should've taken the warning we got from sticking around past the Onset Farmers Market and continuing to pop for the Onset Summer Of Love concert series that takes place on the same night and location. We hardly sold anything to this crowd because "real" food was just a few steps away at a pizza joint.

### **August 4, 2012 - Onset Blues Festival**

This event takes place on a Saturday right on the same spot as the farmers market on Wednesdays. We we're figuring "oh, we've already got some customers in Onset, they'll just come by for this event." Nope. First off, it cost something like 20 bucks to get in. Most locals weren't going to cough up 20 bucks for music when they get it for free every Wednesday night at the concert series. Next, they stuck ALL the food vendors WAY in the corner. All the food vendors where bitching about their low sales that day. We're talking about a 7 hour event, so with set up and break down, we were there for 12 hours. They also charged us \$100 for the event fee and we needed another \$50 to give to the health department, and this was after Dan negotiated the price down a bit. Oh yea, it was humid as hell that day. Total profit per person:

Gross: \$392 - Eric: \$38 / Dan: \$38



Song for the day: I Got The Kettle Corn Blues

The cruel irony here was that we made much more at the farmers market on Wednesdays because we didn't have to pay the fees. Typically a farmers market only wants 20 bucks out of you, and Onset was even cheaper because they were trying to get started.

**2015 update:** As I had mentioned, I think the \$20 entrance fee killed the chances of any large crowds forming. Onset/Wareham is filled with 7 trailer parks - it's sort of like the poor mans version of Cape Cod. The locals weren't going to cough up twenty bucks to hear the same old stuff they got for free earlier in the week. At least we could console ourselves with the fact that all the other food vendors were doing just as poorly.

### **August 25, 2012 - Middleborough Blues Festival**

This event was supposed to have taken place on August 18th, but it got rained out and everything was moved to the next weekend. There were red flags lying around all over the place, which I didn't spot until it was too late. Again we thought, "the people will be TRAPPED inside of this event and we HAVE to get food from either us or the Lions club hotdog hamburger trailer." The cost of this one was only 50 bucks to enter. Another full day event, bands were lined up through out the day. We couldn't miss and we needed a descent event to make up for the abortion of the Onset Blues Festival. Total profit per person:

Gross: \$178 - Eric: \$33 / Dan: \$33



Tumble weeds were just off camera

NOBODY, I mean NOBODY was at the event. It was surreal. I think there might've been 25 tickets sold? The day looked like it was going to go great. The promoters got all sorts of vendors to line the outside of this football field with their tents. There was room for a couple thousand people to watch the show. We started chatting with other vendors, "were you here last year?" No. Uh-oh. I'm thinking that's not a good sign. The event has been going for 5 years now and nobody came back from last year's event? You never walk away from a profitable event. The only people who were there last year were the Lions club trailer. 1 o'clock rolls around and I ask them how was the crowd last year at this time, since there was NO crowd forming now. "Much bigger", they said. Not good. By this point we're thinking the rain date screwed us because everyone had planned on arriving a week ago, and nothing was there. The only reason we made ANY money was because Dan sold kettle corn to all the other vendors. It was sad. Since this day was going to go down as the worst event of my kettle corn career, I was determined NOT to miss the Illumination Night back at the Onset Bay harbor. We bailed a half hour early, ran back to my boat and witnessed this:

Onset Illumination Night 2012 - <http://youtu.be/iVCanpera-k>

## **Picking Locations To Pop**

*Friday, September 7th, 2012*

I wanted to post my video that I created of the Fairhaven Farmers Market which happens every Sunday in Fairhaven, Massachusetts. I shot this video to basically help the market attract more customers along with touting ourselves. I recently moved to the Buzzards Bay area and I'm going through the process of finding new markets to pop at. I'm also hoping to find markets which are near by and will cut down my commute. There's a lot of you guys who have bought my online course "Start Your Own Kettle Corn Business" and I wanted to go over some of the things that I've been discovering as this move has forced me out of my comfort zone and I have to almost "start over again" in locating places to sell kettle corn. We've come up with a formula in choosing new locations (like farmers markets) to sell kettle corn. It's basically this:

1. How long has the event been in existence?
2. How is its visibility?
3. What is the nearby population density?
4. Does it cater to kids/families?

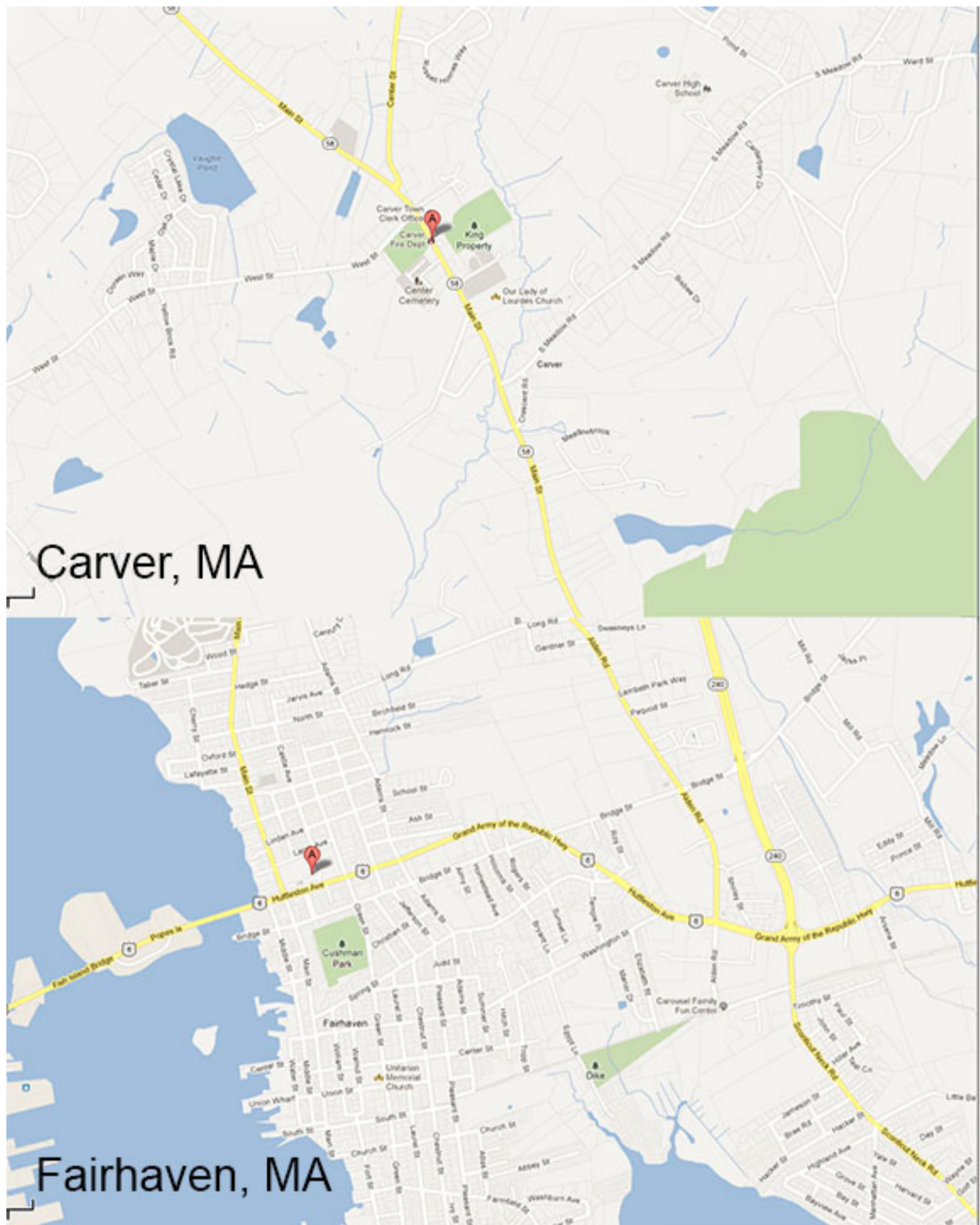
If you can find an event which scores high in all of these, you'll more likely have a winner. Lemme go over each of them.

**1. How long has the event been in existence?** - Obviously something that's been around for a while will more likely be known by everyone who lives anywhere near it. Word of mouth is huge in any marketing, and this just takes time. I can remember my Framingham Farmers market only having me and 5 other tents back in the day. Now the market has grown substantially (along with my customers) and it's very lucrative. It's very hard to have people appear with just a newspaper ad and a couple of flyers around town.

**2. How is its visibility?** - If their marketing sucks, how will people find the event? If it's located right next to a busy street, this will work. Nothing attracts a crowd like a crowd, right? Most of the events that have failed were the ones WAY back from the road, behind some buildings. If people can't see it, it's hard getting everyone to remember and even find it. Our Springfield Farmers market was going crazy for us before it was forced to move off of a busy street and just a quarter mile away, set back into a park. We lost a third of our business the next year and still hasn't recovered to where it was 3 years ago.

**3. What is the nearby population density?** - If the event is huge enough, then it'll need to be away from everything, but if we're talking about something like a weekly farmers market, you're going to rely on locals to keep you in business. Most people aren't going to drive very far just to get vegetables and kettle corn, it isn't convenient. Recently we switched from popping at the Carver Farmers Market to the Fairhaven Farmers Market. We doubled our business the moment we started. Let me show you the Google maps for each spot. Kind of obvious where we would do better, right?

**4. Does it cater to kids/families?** - Certainly ANYONE will eat kettle corn, but we've noticed that if you get the kids into the picture, everyone will be happier. We see this every day when school let out at all of our farmers markets. We recently had two blues festivals which were a major bust for us. Nobody was thinking of taking their kids to something like that. We did a 4th of July fireworks festival in Assonet, MA which was absolutely nuts. Families galore there. A craft festival is certainly a family event, not so sure of a car show. Again, you'll always sell something (even at a car show), but the bigger money happens when you have all sorts of mouths to feed.



Fairhaven Farmers Market 2012 - [http://youtu.be/THAL8s900\\_c](http://youtu.be/THAL8s900_c)

## **We've NOT Doing The Hyannis Farmers Market**

*Saturday, October 6th, 2012*

OK, so we're NOT doing the [Hyannis Farmers Market](#). (But boy, did we get close.) This year I've been looking for new markets to pop since I've recently moved to the Buzzards Bay area. We've been hearing all sorts of great things about the Hyannis Farmers Market. Hyannis is basically the hub of Cape Cod, a real tourist magnet in the summer and probably the town with the most businesses on the Cape. The farmers market itself is on the main drag and just down the street from a tourist hotspot. The vendors we've spoken to all said that it's a jumping place, we should try to do it.



Hyannis Farmers Market

Cynthia, the market manager was very enthusiastic about having us pop there. We were all set to go, the final hurdle was getting the OK from the board of health since we prepare food onsite. They need to give us a temporary food permit, sort of along the lines of what a catering company does. The word came back that they won't issue a permit for someone who will come back every week, they will only issue a permit for someone who will do an event once. (!) As I've mentioned in my kettle corn training course, health departments are never consistent. We never really got a clear answer as to why popping 4 times a month is unacceptable verses just once. Apparently a previous pizza guy was trying to cook at the market and they had an issue with him.

## **Newton Farmers Market - 1st Day!**

*Tuesday, October 9th, 2012*

Holy crap. We lucked out. We just go into the [Newton Farmers Market](#) every Tuesday for the rest of October and should be there next year (and hopefully forever). This market is nuts. There's 37 vendors, been around for 30 years and gets approximately 1,500-2000 people per day. This is what you'd expect at a weekend type of event that you would pay hundreds of dollars for. Newton is JUST outside of Boston proper, but you wouldn't know it. It also has outrageous real estate prices, so if you can afford a house in Newton, you can certainly afford fresh veggies at the market.



Newton Farmers Market 2012



We lucked out, normally the market is full up - nobody is getting in and there's a waiting list. Hanson's Farm, one of the vendors at our Framingham market, has been going there for a while. They couldn't compete with some many other veggie vendors there and didn't think they would be coming back. This is fabulous for customers, but kind of sucks for the farmers. How many different kind of zucchini can you choose from? Since a spot was opening up, they put in a good word for us with the market manager - and giving her a bag of kettle certainly helped! We were in just like that. Judy, the Newton market manager has been extremely helpful in getting us settled into our new digs. After slogging through a whole bunch of under performing gigs this year, it looks like we've finally hit the jackpot.

Newton Farmers Market - 1st Day! - <http://youtu.be/Hiw0BNqe7A0>

Gross: \$613

**2015 update:** More facts about Newton: In August 2012, Money magazine named Newton fourth best small city among places to live in America. Can you say MONEY? We thought we died and went to kettle corn heaven when we got this gig. These people could AFFORD to buy as much kettle corn as they could stuff in their rich little faces! We came in late in the season, so we only had a few weeks to pop here. Because it was this late in the season, we knew sales would be dropping as the colder weather came in. No biggie, we knew they had an indoor winter market, so we were determined to continue there and impress everyone with our enthusiasm.

## Hanson's Farm Haunted Hayride

*Saturday, October 20th, 2012*

[Hanson's Farm](#) has been next to us at the Framingham Farmers Market for years. We noticed that they host a haunted hayride during October and we wanted to try and sell some kettle corn to their customers. It would be kind of a "mutual destruction" type of thing, hopefully we both would benefit. We also wanted to see the what the actual farm was like.



Dan with Hanson father and son

The video above basically explains what was going on. Dan and I were able to take the tour and got to experience the whole she-bang. It was fun. Both of us are from a film and lighting background, so we were designing all sorts of enhanced layouts of the ride and agreed it would be fun to work on something like this. There was a descent enough crowd that night and we sold an OK amount of kettle corn. There's never a crazy amount of people here because the event takes place over the course of a few weeks, so it really wasn't as lucrative as we hoped. We just did this one experiment of popping for the night and had a great time doing it.

Hanson's Farm Haunted Hayride 2012 - <http://youtu.be/dyb2zzZ015tQ>

Gross: \$308

## Newton Indoor Farmers Market - 1st day!

*Tuesday, November 13th, 2012*

This is completely, totally new - the Newton Indoor Farmers Market. Indoor farmers markets are kind of a weird thing. Farmers typically don't have a lot to sell during the winter, but the other vendors can certainly keep going. Plenty of people are still looking for the OTHER things like breads, meats, fish and sweet stuff (like ourselves). Since we can't pop inside the venue, we've had to pop everything at my house first and bring the product down there. We're very interested in seeing how this pans out, because it will be a lot like selling and moving product to stores. We also realize that the smell won't be tormenting people when we pop, so will just the product itself get the same reaction?



Newton Indoor Farmers Market

Steve had tried bringing some pre-popped bags to the Springfield Indoor Farmers Market last year. It was only a once a month thing, so the turn out was as crazy as our regular season. Judy, the market manager at the Newton farmers market, wants to do this every week all the way up to June, when we'll turn around and go straight back to the outdoor market. Our first day was kind of rainy and Judy said we had around 300 people who up (compared to 2,000 for a normal, busy outdoor Newton market). It will be interesting to see how many regulars from the outdoor market show up here.

Gross: \$181

**2015 update:** Well they didn't. (the people from the outdoor market) This was another experiment in selling in a sort of retail environment. The stuff is already popped, we could give out samples, but no one was being hit by the smell. They also weren't getting the crazy FRESH stuff straight out of the kettle. We made an effort to pop earlier that day and get it here as fresh as possible, but it's still not the same. Damn it, this was Newton, we were determined to make it work.

## Newton Indoor Farmers Market Video

*Tuesday, November 27th, 2012*

We're dedicated to making the new Newton Indoor Farmers Market a success, if this place doesn't work, nothing will. Newton is a very upscale town and is practically part of Boston, so there's a crazy amount of people within walking distance to this market. We've never done an indoor farmers market so this is basically one giant experiment. Our biggest concern is if kettle corn sales would work if we didn't have our kettle stinking up the neighborhood for miles. There's also the entertainment factor of making the stuff, but since I've been using a cover with a motor to stir everything, that really isn't

much of a factor anymore. Starting a new market is always tough since you rely on habits forming with people's schedules. An indoor market is really tough because it's not as noticeable when you drive past it.



Dan mans the table

We've now done 3 weeks and it's going better than I thought. We've been selling about 50 bags for the entire day, which isn't much - seeing that we can do that in an hour at a busy location. The fact is people are buying it like they would any other produce item. It's too bad we didn't get a chance to create any hardcore addicts with our product at the summer market. We only had a chance to pop there for 4 weeks before it ended, people were only starting to form their habits. There's only about 200 people showing up at the actual indoor market, so we're doing pretty good with our customers to sales ratio. We just need to promote this event and get people to come on down, thus this video was created. The hard part is finding websites that are specific to Newton that have people bothering to go to them. We did get a write up on the Newton Patch, a website that caters to specific local towns.

Newton Indoor Farmers Market 2012 - <http://youtu.be/KWOCHxzUG14>

Gross: \$195

**2013**

**Press, press....PULL!**

*Wednesday, February 6th, 2013*

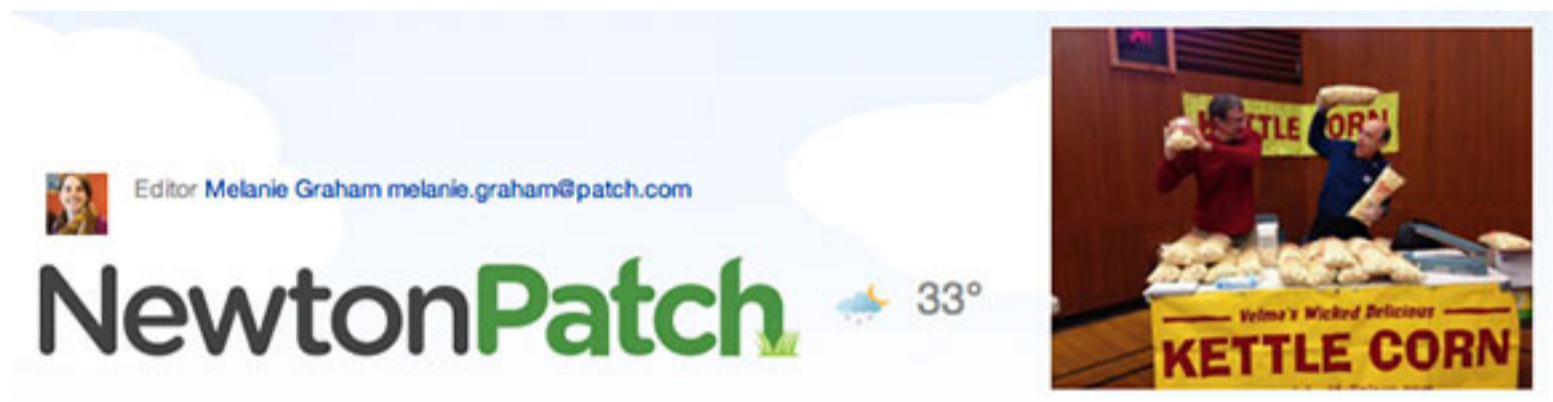
# The Boston Globe

## Food & dining

### Kernels of gourmet goodness are popping up all over

By Peggy Hernandez | GLOBE CORRESPONDENT JANUARY 01, 2013

We've recently had some press focused on us at the Newton Indoor Farmers Market. The big news is we got into The Boston Globe. You can read the whole article [here](#).



Next we got a mention in the Newton Patch. Melanie said that she liked taking that silly photo of us beating each other with the product. You can read that one [here](#).



Then Michelle, from the Economical Eater website had come by (upon my request) and checked out the market. She did a write up on us [at her website](#). I had found her link at the [Boston Food Bloggers](#) website. There's a crazy list of everybody here. Who knew there was a whole "foodie" network of blog in and around Boston.

## **Framingham Indoor Farmers Market 2013**

*Monday, March 4th, 2013*

Jackie Menino, the market manager from the Framingham summer market went nuts and started

an indoor winter market. It's located at 24 Vernon Street, Framingham, MA. First thursday of every month during winter. March 7, April 4, May 2nd 2013. What's cool is Jackie found a few of the vendors from our Newton Farmers Market video. We though we weren't going to be doing much popping over the winter, but we've found a who series of winter markets and we're approaching them now.



At least we don't get hot/cold/wet doing these

Framingham Indoor Farmers Market 2013 - <http://youtu.be/7HAHKaKM0wo>

Gross: \$289

**2015 update:** We kept hearing from eveyone during the summer months, "where can I get this during the winter?" We schlepped all the way out here, notified everyone on our mailing list and basically nothing happened. I mean SOME of our die-hard showed up, you can see that in our gross, we almost made it to \$300.

## 1st Day - Easton Indoor Farmers Market

*Saturday, March 9th, 2013*

In my search for winter farmers market, I had stumbled upon the [Easton Indoor Farmers Market](#). What I didn't realize is that there are plenty of OTHER farmers markets in a town called Easton, so I got all sorts of mixed signals when I went to "their" website. After figuring out I was looking at the Pennsylvania Easton Market (which was friggin' HUGE), I finally got my story straight. They're located inside the [Simpson Spring bottling company](#). They sell all sorts of yummy flavors of sodas and bottled spring water. Apparently they are the oldest bottling plant in the country. The company started in the 1800's and has changed hands many times over the years.



Easton Indoor Farmers Market

Dan noticed that Chris, the market manager and owner of the plant was very forthcoming when he contacted her. She immediately figured out that kettle corn and yummy sodas would make a good combination. She was very helpful in getting us into the market and helping us do the necessary paperwork with the town. The plant is really cool. It's in an old mill building and has tons of space for everybody. We're looking forward to doing business with these guys in the future.

Easton Indoor Farmers Market 2013 - <http://youtu.be/Jxie49Zw7w8>

Gross: \$200

**2015 update:** We were trying to establish a winter schedule, and this place was available on Saturdays. At the time we were considering trying retail sales again, and this place seemed to have plenty of room to set up a permanent location to pop - it was a giant, old mill building with room galore. For a while we were selling from (3) winter locations. We would pop in my garage the day before, load up our cars and drive down there with a table and a banner.

This whole winter excursion failed miserably. The traffic wasn't there and selling kettle corn without the smells and sounds doesn't cut it. This got us as close to selling retail as possible, without having to cough up 40% to give to a store as a commission. You'll hear people say things like "you should sell your kettle corn in stores." What they don't realize is this thing called SCALE - if you go retail, you've got to pay for manufacturing and distribution. You're in the hole a bunch of money on the first bag you make, and you've got to clear all those costs before you start to make money. In my tent, I start making money after clearing the first \$20 at any farmers market.

## **Start of the season! Framingham Earth Day 2013**

*Saturday, April 27th, 2013*

Yay! We're back out in the tent for the start of the 2013 season! This Earth Day event started only recently, I think last year was its first time. We were skeptical it would work so early in the season, but it's been busy every year for us. It's almost like everyone is dying to get out of the house from the winter and get a good dose of fresh air. This location is the same spot where the Framingham Farmers Market is located, so we have bunches of returning customers who are excited to re-ignite their kettle corn fix.

Apparently many towns are into this "Earth Day" type of event. We're doing one in Jamaica Plain in Boston on May 4th and I know of a few others. They wanted us to use paper bags to serve our kettle corn in, but we balked at this big time - many people take their bags home and our product will be ruined by the time they would have eaten it. Yup, we're just like those giant conglomerates: save the Earth? But what about our PROFITS? I think if we also sold booze and guns we could've covered all the politically incorrect bases. Buy your Velma's Single Malt Whiskey and Velma's AR-15 ammo here today!

Gross: \$1,428

**2015 update:** Dan and I breathed a big sigh of relief once we got back on track with these outdoor events. We spent all winter trying to make the indoor events work and were not really making any money.



Framingham Earth Day

## Save A Dog 2013 - Sudbury, MA

*Sunday, May 5th, 2013*

We've done the Sudbury's Save A Dog event at the Wayside Inn for a few years now and it's always fun. The place is over run with poochies and since Dan and I are dog owners, we really have a fun time. The weather was perfect, the crowd came out and we did alright for event this size. I started to shoot a video which would've been only of dogs eating kettle corn, but got too busy to really make it unique. We'll be back to this location in September when the Colonial Re-enactment people do their thing here.



Sudbury Save A Dog



Poochies galore

Gross: \$970

## 1st Day! Natick Farmers Market

*Saturday, May 11th, 2013*

OK, so this wasn't the FIRST day our product was there, but it was the first time \*I\* was able to come out and sell to the crowd. We've been selling our product at the Natick Indoor Winter Market for about a month. They recently started the Natick Outdoor Farmers Market last week, and Dan from the Easton Simpson Spring Beverages had our product on their table. I was able to hammer the crowd hard with our samples and I was able to sell twice as much.



While the cherry blossoms go up your nose..



So let's see how we do WITHOUT our kettle! The Natick health department forbade us from popping live at this event, which is just as good because we've got other events we're covering on Saturdays. The big concern is can we move product without the smell and noise that the kettle generates? As it stands now, we pop at my home location and drive the product and tent out to these new events. We'll be doing the same at the Jamaica Plain Farmers Market in Boston in about a month. We're also selling pre-popped kettle corn at the Easton Farmers Market on Saturdays too. That'll be 3 events we're covering without a kettle! The big experiment is can we continue to scale this type of thing of pre-popped product to other events? We can only pop live on some many days of the week.



Gross: \$190

**2015 update:** This was a strange hybrid of an event. Natick had a winter market which we tentatively sold a few bags at. Since we had the in, we parlayed that into getting us into the outdoor farmers market. Here's the caveat: the town wouldn't allow us to pop live. We figured, "Natick is a money town, they'll but it anyways." They didn't. This basically proves that without the kettle attracting attention and playing on your senses, you're just another vendor. I think I did two more of these events before I noticed the market manager was a rules nazi and stopped the whole adventure. I don't think I cleared \$300 on any day without my kettle.

## **Newton Highlands Village Day 2013**

*Sunday, June 9th, 2013*

We've been banging away at the Newton Indoor Farmers Market all season, so when we saw this outdoor event, we figured we'd jump on it. We've got 2 more weeks to go before the Newton Outdoor Farmers Market starts. We've been waiting all year to for this market to start up. It's weird in that it starts in July, verses most farmers markets will start in June. The winter market never really caught on with the residents, but we know we'll be doing fabulous once we get outside.



Newton Highlands Village Day 2013

The Newton Highlands Village Day is basically a small street fair. The businesses within Newton Highlands could set up a table outside their store front and promote what they've got. They had a few kiddie rides and a smattering of different foods. It gave us a chance to see how many people recognized us from the winter market and how many remembered us from the tail end of last years outdoor market. We sold basically 4 gallons of corn oil, or 50 lbs of popcorn. Nothing to get excited about, but we've certainly gone through the trouble of setting up at other events, just to sell much less. We're hoping after selling at the summer farmers market for an entire year, we'll have many more customers and friends showing up at this event next year. The same thing happens at events at the Framingham Common. We've popped there at the farmers market for a few years, so when something like the Earth Day shows up, we always have plenty of friendly customers who remember us.

Gross: \$591

**2015 update:** We thought we were going to do better at this event. We've sweated it out at the winter market and thought we had acquired some regulars. We had only popped a few times at the summer market before they shut down last year, so we really didn't have the following to carry us, like we do in Framingham. There were MANY other interesting food vendors here, so the competition cut into what we could've sold.

### **Assonet Strawberry Festival 2013**

*Sunday, June 16th, 2013*

This is like the perfect kettle corn gig, even though the Assonet Strawberry Festival isn't that huge of a deal and not a crazy amount of people come here. It's basically an arts and crafts festival with a smattering of food. There's a couple of things going for us: We're smack dab right in the middle of all the tents AND next to the band stand. There's a C&W band that plays and a bunch of people end up sitting there listening to the music and watching us pop. We fed a couple of bags to the band and it was pretty funny during the breaks where the entertainment was them eating bags of kettle corn and saying how wonderful it is into the mics. Kettle corn business hint: if there is a band, give them free kettle corn, it's the best damn publicity you'll get at the gig.



Assonet Strawberry Festival 2013

Because the other tents were surrounding us and so close, you couldn't avoid the stink we were creating. It's like shooting a barrel in a school of fish. There weren't a lot of food options. The best food draw was the fresh strawberry shortcake bowls, I had one and they were yummy. Other than someone making some hamburgers on a grill, that was it for food options. We've noticed that if there are too many food options at an event, our sales suffer. On top of everything it only cost like 30 bucks to enter and we didn't have to pay off any health department inspectors. Perfect weather, we sold about 150 bags. Life was good under the yellow tent today.



Gross: \$847

**2015 update:** Again, we were the victims of our of success. This was the last year we were invited back to this event. Apparently people wanted to pay \$6 for a bag of kettle corn instead of a piece of strawberry shortcake. At least that's what the event coordinators thought. Their sales were off this year and they ended up blaming us. I'm guessing the word got back through the grapevine on what was happening at the Assonet fireworks festival with the Lions club debacle.

Bark In The Park  
Sunday, June 23rd, 2013

[Bark In The Park](#) was another doggie event held at the Hopkinton State Park. Apparently this was their 13th year at this spot. Since we had such a great time at the Save A Dog in Sudbury this year, why not keep the doggie theme going? Hoo boy, not all doggie events are created equal - from a kettle corn selling stand point. We made like 30 bucks at this event total.



Two Great Danes and Dan

What kills me is the person setting it up did such a great job getting our logo into their literature. The people running it were all very nice - heck, even the health department guy was great (he took his 30 bucks, which killed half of our profits!). If you just want to go with your dog, don't let my review stop you. The problem was there weren't that many people compared to the Sudbury event. Because the location was within the Hopkinton State Park, you couldn't spot it doing a drive by, you had to know the fields location before you entered the park. This reminded me of another event we did which ended up being an abortion for sales - the Middleborough Blues Festival last year. This event was also set back from a main road and you had to know exactly where it was to find it. Both of these events we sold more bags of kettle corn to the other vendors than regular attendees. Here's a major clue when booking events:

***If there's hardly any vendors coming back from last year - you might be getting into trouble!***

Gross: \$127

**2015 update:** We were very surprised at how awful the turn out was for this event. Hopkinton State Park is way, way off the beaten path. You have to drive into a state park and go down some long winding roads through the woods to find it. All the food vendors got killed this day. As I mentioned above, NONE of the previous food vendors were there from last year. Don't believe what the event coordina-

tors tell you. It's in their interest to get you to show up, no matter how many customers will actually appear that day.

## Start of the Newton Farmers Market 2013

*Tuesday, July 2nd, 2013*

Yay! It's the start of this years Newton (Outdoor) Farmers Market! We've been waiting all year for July to come around so we can match our income at the Framingham Farmers Market on Thursdays. The [Newton farmers market](#) is every Tuesday from 1:30-6pm at the Cold Springs Park in Newton, MA. The market has been around for ever and has a really nice selection of veggies and other goodies. We waited all year for this.



Our trusty corner spot in Newton

The Newton winter market was kind of iffy. We suspected it was because we didn't have ANY bakers there selling yummy, fresh baked goods. We confirmed this at the opening of the summer market. We asked just about everybody if they went to the winter market and many didn't even know it existed. The few people who did go down there confirmed that they were disappointed that there were no baked goods. Many people just showed up on the first day and never came back. Since there aren't that many fresh veggies during the winter, baked goods seem to be the "anchor" table at these winter markets. As an example, the Easton Indoor Farmers Market had 5 baked goods tables and that place was hopping back in March.

Gross: \$587

**2015 update:** We thought we had everything covered - we slogged through the entire winter season here making crap for money. Certainly we've got a customer base now established. Check. Money magazine says it's the 4th best small town in American to live in (if you have the money). Check. Last year we made \$600 a day at the END of the season. This first day starts at \$587. We're going to be kicking ass when August comes around. Woo hoo!

**Let's jump to August 6, 2013** - Gross for that day: \$692

Uh oh...we know that the first week in August will be the high point of the season for any location. \$692 isn't a crazy money - Framingham can easily do that on a regular day. Traffic wasn't a problem, throngs of nicely dressed, rich people were walking by our tent, all taking samples while moving over to the arugula tent. Newton wanted \$40 out of all the vendors just because, well..it's Newton.

They were the most expensive farmers market we were doing. From this point forward, Framingham grosses all beat Newton's. By the time October 22nd arrived, we were doing \$424 in Newton for a gross.

**Let's jump to July 1, 2014** (opening day) - Gross: \$322

WTF. Framingham was doing 3 times that amount.

**Finally, August 5, 2014** - Gross: \$446

At this point we admitted defeat. Newton didn't want kettle corn. Why?

***Rich people are healthy! Rich people are skinny!  
They KNOW they shouldn't be eating bags of this stuff!***

That's the conclusion we came to. Traffic wasn't a problem (even though it was down from previous years). Many (skinny) people took their weekly sample and never bought a bag. While we were popping on Thursdays in Newton, I would call Steve in Springfield to see how he was doing. Same answer each time: "rolling in it". There are a TON of "lower socioeconomic" people in Springfield. They look nothing like the upper middle class people of Newton. (read: NOT skinny) I can't tell you how surprised we were that Newton "failed" for us.

I can remember a few times some farmers would trade us cash for the food coupons that are given away to people on food stamps. (It was money to them either way.) On those days we moved a lot more kettle corn. **That is your target customer. Remember that.**

## **BYO Family article - Steve in Springfield**

*Wednesday, July 31st, 2013*



'Velma's West' at the Springfield Farmers Market

SPRINGFIELD—Walking into the [Farmers' Market at Forest Park](#) on any given Tuesday this summer it's hard not to notice a bright yellow tent protecting the delightful popping sounds and hard-to-miss smells of freshly made salty-sweet popcorn.

Velma's Wicked Delicious Kettle Corn of Springfield, owned by Steve Cary, has been a fixture at the farmers' market (including its previous location at the X in Springfield) for the past eight years. Steve

along with his three children have been serving up hot, fresh kettle corn—and having a blast along the way. His wife, Kelly, a mental health nurse, pitches in when needed.

Steve’s banter with customers is as much a part of the experience as popping the corn. He will often have fun with children who come to the booth to order by first asking, “Did you eat your vegetables, clean your room, listen to your mother and during the school year do your homework?” He also likes to tell customers unfamiliar with kettle corn that it’s “free-range, organic, low-fat, boneless, dolphin-safe, fair-trade, gourmet, microbrew- and chardonnay-compatible kettle corn.” Photos by Jennifer Garutti.

**\*\* [READ THE REST OF THE ARTICLE HERE!](#) \*\***



Steve popping with his son Nolan

## **Kat’s Food Adventures Review!**

*Friday, September 13th, 2013*

We got a review on [Kat’s Food Adventures blog!](#) Woo hoo! I was talking with Kat about online marketing and crap at our tent at the Newton Farmers Market and learned that she’s basically a foodie blogger. I dunno - what’s more interesting, making kettle corn or doing online marketing? It’s kind of nice having someone make a video about me, since I’ve been making videos about my customers for years.



How to Make Kettle Corn with Velma’s Kettle Corn - <http://youtu.be/HZE2gtneaDI>

# 2014

## Framingham Earth Day Festival 2014

*Saturday, April 26th, 2014*

It's the start of our 2014 season! We speak to Vivian and Raquel, a pair of super fans who have been buying from us for years at the Framingham Farmers Market. The last few years this has been a very good event, but this years rain has been a major damper on attendance and profits.



Dan interviews Vivian and Raquel

Framingham Earth Day 2014 - <http://youtu.be/yFAC28bitJw>

Gross: \$472

**2015 update:** I think the biggest dent in our gross happened when they moved the event from the centrally located field location in Framingham to the school - which is much more out of the way.

## Paws In The Park 2014

*Sunday, May 4th, 2014*

Again - boy do we love doggies! Fun event - good crowd. We did very well this year - so early in the year too. This is the same spot where we do our best business, the Sudbury Wayside Inn. Later in September we'll be back for the colonial event. That's when we go nuts!



Paws In The Park 2014



Gross: \$1,516

## Sharon Farmers Market First Day!

*Saturday, June 14th, 2014*

Here's a new spot for the 2014 season - the [Sharon Farmers Market](#) at the Crescent Ridge Dairy (in Sharon, MA). We'll be here every Saturday from 10 am - 2 pm, all the way till the end of October. We were looking to rework our popping schedule last year and tried a bunch of different farmers markets. We discovered this market at the end of the season and gave it a whirl for the last 3 weeks in October. It was a brand new market that started that year and we weren't sure how well it would pan out. We did decent traffic for an end of the season market so we're back this year to see what happens. At the moment it's keeping pace with our Framingham location, and we've been there for 7 years. We've noticed a sort of sales curve for the season - our best week is usually the first week of August in all of our locations. If Sharon fits this curve, we should be doing pretty well later in the year.



Sharon Farmers Market 2014

The layout looks pretty good. It's on a main road with good visibility. The Crescent Ridge Dairy has been selling ice cream from this location for years, so plenty of people naturally come here. Groups of people were still showing up at 2 o'clock to get ice cream when we started to break down. The owner agreed to sell some bags inside their store during the rest of the week, we ended up selling 2 of them before we left the parking lot because we were out of stock.

You'll find some farmers markets tucked away in obscure spots and it's totally up to the market manager to drive traffic. Many of these types of places can end up doing poorly. The Sharon farmers market has a ton of things going for it. They also have a marketing team promoting the farmers market itself. Haven't seen that anywhere else, so we're impressed with the effort they've put into making it work.

In addition, you can pet some cows and goats out back. It's a whole legit dairy farm operation so it's kind of a neat place to explore, hang out and get some crazy yummy ice cream.

Gross: \$579

**2015 update:** Since we bailed on Newton, we tried this spot in Sharon. Because this was a Saturday market, we knew it would have to miss a few because of other established events.



Crescent Ridge Dairy

## Corporate Gig - Fontaine Outpatient Center

*Saturday, June 21st, 2014*

These corporate gigs are nice, when they happen. We got bought out for the day by the [Fontaine Outpatient Center](#) in Harwich, MA. They had a grand "re-opening" picnic event where they basically coerced people to show up with free hamburgers/hot dogs, ice creams and kettle corn. The event ran for 3 hours.



We got to sit at the kids table

They did a postcard mailing to around 20,000 people on Cape Cod. They were expecting about 300 people, but it's almost impossible to make that amount of full size bags in 3 hours. Instead we cut the bags in half and made (300) 3 oz. bags (see the photo below). This worked out great because we got mostly older people coming by and a regular big bag would've been too much for them. They basically paid us ahead of time to make that amount - we just popped and gave away bags to anyone who wanted one. We hit it right on the money, when 4 o'clock rolled around we had a few bags on the table and a couple of employees grabbed that last few. We also got to stuff our faces with a bunch of hamburgers and ice creams bars for free. Not a bad gig when you can get them.



Fontaine Outpatient Center - Harwich, MA

Gross: \$900 (invoiced)

## **Olde Time Fair - Sudbury, MA**

*Saturday, August 23rd, 2014*

Boy do we love Sudbury, Massachusetts. We've been doing the Colonial Faire at the Wayside Inn for a few years now and have built up a pretty good following. The town of Sudbury is having their 375 celebration and one of the events is this Olde Time Fair which was held on August 23rd. Apparently someone from the town knew our of kettle corn from the Wayside Inn event and asked us to be here. We jumped all over the chance. We've got a bunch of people who are loyal followers of our product from the other Sudbury events, and they didn't disappoint.

The location was sort of in a weird spot - it was centered around the small town common, which is at the crossroads of two busy streets. It was a pain in the butt to get our trailer in it's final spot. Tons of people were there for the day to see the pony rides and other critters. We sold 8 oils worth of kettle corn - the same amount we did last week at the Framingham Farmers Market (which is just down the street). These types of events where you have people who have already tried your product tend to do really well. Typically we don't sell many large bags if nobody knows who you are, but the regulars were really gobbling everything up.



Guess what we ate later that day...

We're really getting torqued up for the Sudbury Field Day event on September 6th. There's gonna be concerts and fireworks that day, all 10 hours of it. We're going to be exhausted and hopefully this will be our record day of the season. We learned that the Colonial Faire will have extra people this year because of the 375 celebration, so it should be close between the two events.



Does this look like New England or what?

Gross: \$1,166

## **Sudbury 375th Celebration**

*Saturday, September 6th, 2014*

The town of Sudbury went all out to celebrate it's 375th anniversary. They combined a large craft fair, tons of music and a fireworks show all in one day at their high school. We got invited because we've been doing plenty of other events in Sudbury like the Paws In The Park and The Colonial Faire. We were popping in Sudbury 2 weeks ago at their Olde Time Fair - this event was basically a warm up to this 375th celebration. Needless to say, Sudbury loves us and we love Sudbury.



The calm before the storm

Some of our most intense popping days are right before fireworks displays. It's past dinner, it's getting dark and everyone wants to a bag of kettle corn to munch on while they watch the show. We sold a crazy amount of kettle corn at the Assonet Fireworks back in 2012. If you can be right next to the spot where the crowd forms and get the wind to blow your cooking aroma across them, the whole thing feeds on itself and you end up getting murdered with ravenous customers. Today we ended up planting our tent right across the bandstand and were armed for bear. I took (5) 50 lb bags of popcorn with me that day. There was no way I was going to run out.

The day starts fine, but we didn't get a crazy amount of business. They had asked a ton of other food vendors to be there, typically we can't compete with real food like BBQ stuff when lunch time rolls around. They also had two ice cream trucks hammering the kids. By the time 4 o'clock rolled around, we were only up a hundred bucks each. Not a biggie, we thought the real killing was to be had when it got dark. All of a sudden a massive thunder storm front came through with tornado watches and everything. Gale force winds picked up, drenched everyone and the customers scattered. So much for our big day. We thought today would've been our biggest day of the year, but the weather screwed us.

Gross: \$413

## **Everett Cityfest 2014 - Another corporate gig!**

*Saturday, September 13th, 2014*

The city of Everett has a yearly celebration where they close off Norwood street and fill it with music and vendors. It's kind of like the Newton Highlands Village Day we did last year.



Everett Cityfest 2014

A national hotel chain wants to build a casino in Everett and is trying to finalize the plans with the town. They had a tent set up at this event and wanted to illustrate what their plans looked like. They also wanted to give something away to the crowd to attract more interest in their tent. Their event manager thought kettle corn would attract a lot of people since we tend to stink up the joint when we pop. They liked what they saw on our website and thought our colors matched their casino theme. They hired us to make 300 half-size bags and give them away to the crowd. It's not every day you get pre-paid to pop, but when it happens it makes a really fun day.



The price was NOT facing the wrong way!

I knew once the word got out that there was free kettle corn was to be had, 300 bags wouldn't cut it. It can turn into a shark feeding frenzy when you just hand the stuff out. Sure enough, our smell went down the street, a line formed that went out side their tent and we hit 300 bags by 2 o'clock. Ultimately we ended up giving away 700 bags. Normally we like to seal everything up so people can take it home, but at this rate you just scoop and toss the stuff out. The day went off really well, everyone was happy and it looks like they want us back next year



Smaller, single serving bags

Gross: \$1,500 (invoiced)

**2015 update:** Dan had scheduled all of this. I THOUGHT we were hired by the town of Everett to do this event, but it turns out we were ultimately working for the casino. This is why they didn't wince at the \$1,500 invoice.

## Metrowest Craft Fair 2014

Saturday, September 20th, 2014

We've been doing this one for a while - I did a video for this event as a "typical craft fair" in my "How to start your own kettle corn business" ebook. Here are my blog entries for this event in 2007 and 2008 plus a silly video I did back in 2008. Did I mention I've been doing this event for a while?

This event is held by the [Metrowest Humane Society](#), an organization that specializes in homeless kitties, but they're friendly to dogs too. There were tons of critters running so it was an enjoyable day. This event is held in the same spot as the Framingham Farmers market. What's really weird was I ended up in EXACTLY the same place for both events. (see animated GIF above) I only pay 20 bucks a day for the farmers market, but had to shell out \$150 for literally the same spot in the same field. I had plenty of return farmers market customers and it ended up a pretty good profitable day - we sold over 200 bags at this event.



Craft Fair/Farmers Market spot

The big concern was the Framingham Food Truck Festival that was being held just a couple of miles down the street. They also had crafts but obviously featured more food. We were worried that that event would divert most of our customers from our field to theirs. I didn't really notice a drop in attendance where we were. In fact, because the only "competition" was an ice cream truck and a person selling hot dogs and canoli's, we felt that we sold more throughout the day. A bunch of people just went to this event to get kettle corn, then went to the [food truck festival](#) to get their real lunch.

I've mentioned this in my ebook, nobody considers kettle corn a meal, so sales typically drop off around noon. Many people keep telling me that I should sell kettle corn at the "such and such" food festival. You certainly will sell something at an event like that, but the real money happens when you've got the market cornered and there ISN'T too many food choices.



Canolies, hot dogs and pizza.

Gross: \$1,310

## Velma's on PBS!

Monday, October 27th, 2014

The [Connecting Point show](#) on the PBS station WGBY in Springfield did a segment on Steve's operation at the Springfield farmers market! I went out that day to help pop and hang with him and see his offspring. Steve got his own kettle corn tent when I moved to Onset 2 years ago and has been doing extremely well for himself. His fetish is to go to ski resorts, set up the tent there and pop in the snow and the cold. Go nuts Steve! Personally - I'd rather move to Maui and pop under a palm tree. He's been calling himself "Velma's West". I pretend to show up from time to time from the 'corporate' office and give him a performance review.



Owner of 'Velma's West'

Velma's Kettle Corn | Connecting Point | Web Premiere - <http://youtu.be/JgmgGJVIBBU>

**2015 update:** Steve knew he was going to be interviewed, so I made the drive out to Springfield to help him out.

**2015 end of journal update:** Well, you should have a pretty good idea what kind of money you can be doing with kettle corn - the good and the bad days. Let me know if you've been inspired by my ebooks to start your own kettle corn business. [eric@wickeddelicious.com](mailto:eric@wickeddelicious.com)