

Making Farmers Markets Sparkle at Holiday Time

By Helen Nielsen



Sustainable Santa shows Dr. Vandana Shiva, world renowned food activist, the “3 Food Rules” cards the Santas give the parents and kids at the Farmers Markets.

For the third year in a row Sustainable Santa was at the National Heirloom Expo in Santa Rosa, California, where he reviewed again with those in attendance the exploits of the “Real Santas United to End Childhood Obesity”—a group of mostly former Mall Santas who deploy themselves into Farmers Markets throughout California, to not only promote healthy eating but to make those markets an even greater holiday destination for parents and kids. Key to the effort is the collaboration between the Healthy, Happy Santas and the healthy food and product vendors.

At the markets, after the picture is taken by the parents with their own camera, the Santa sends the kids into the market on a “treasure hunt” seeking out “Santa’s Garden Bites”—tastes of whole foods, fresh, raw or fermented which are made available at the different stalls. “The parents go nuts when they see their child eating fermented cabbage, drinking Kombucha, eating a dehydrated Star Fruit—which is just like candy—or eating a raw beach-button mushroom,” says Sustainable Santa. They realize there is hope for a healthy life beyond Cheetos and McDonalds for their kids.

It’s all part of the “culture change” Sustainable Santa and the Real Santas United are promoting in collaboration with many groups concerned about the future health of America’s youth. These include the Moms Across America, a group of anti-GMO activist moms who recognize Glyphosate—the active ingredient in Monsanto’s Roundup—as a carcinogen creating major damage to U.S. children’s health; and the Institute for Responsible Nutrition, founded by Dr. Robert Lustig, head

of Pediatric Endocrinology at UC San Francisco, whose work has documented the evils of added sugar and the serious pitfalls of a processed food diet.

Sustainable Santa has been successful in obtaining the support of the largest of the “real bearded” Santa organizations in the USA. The International Brotherhood of Real Bearded Santas this year will be supplying all of their members with “Santa’s 3 Food Rules” cards—rules designed to get the children OFF the junk, fast and processed foods. Santa gives every family a card after the picture is taken. “The idea of visiting Santa at the markets has caught hold with over two dozen Santas lined up for San Diego and Riverside counties and spreading like a ‘healthy fire’ throughout the state. This year California, next year the rest of the USA” says Santa.

“I now have more markets interested in having a ‘Healthy, Happy Santa’ than I have Santas who fit the modern Santa mold,” says Santa. Thus, in response to proposals from some very health conscious ladies at the Expo, we will have “Lady Santas” at several Northern California Markets—and perhaps many other locations this year. ♦

Helen Nielsen, with her son, owns Carlsbad Ranch Market, a produce market in Carlsbad, Calif., which since 1984 has offered locally grown produce. Active in the Slow Food and nutrition movements, she has twice been nominated for a Pulitzer Prize. Her “Savvy Seniors, Frugal and Active” column is carried in a variety of publications.