Detroit's Eastern Market

Lois Johnson and Margaret Thomas
Photographs by Bruce Harkness

Since 1887, Detroit’s Eastern Market, the largest open-air market of its kind in the United States, has been home to an amazing community of farmers, merchants, and food lovers. Specialty shops, bakeries, spice companies, meat and poultry markets, restaurants, jazz cafés, old-time saloons, produce firms, gourmet shops, and cold-storage warehouses cover Eastern Market’s three square miles. Its many streets and vendors reflect the varied cultures and ethnicities that have shaped the city of Detroit.

In this third edition of Detroit’s Eastern Market, authors Lois Johnson and Margaret Thomas recount the history of the market with additional stories and personal accounts of families who have worked and shopped there for as many as four generations. The authors have updated store information and added new restaurants and businesses to their original listings, reflecting the changes and additions that have taken place in Eastern Market since the previous edition in 2005. Richly illustrated with all new photos, Detroit’s Eastern Market features more than a hundred pages of delightful recipes (including 17 new ones) from market retailers, farmers, chefs, and customers.

Lois Johnson is an obsessive cook, always planning a menu, and Eastern Market has been her grocery store for forty years. After experiencing the pleasures of open-air shopping all over France and utilizing the wonderful and oldest market in England at Norwich, where else in Detroit could she go but Eastern Market?

Margaret Thomas moved to Detroit from Florida in 1994 and quickly fell in love with Eastern Market. Although not an obsessive cook, she swoons at the sights and smells of a fine meal. Living in the market area, she shops there several days a week, calling a greeting to everyone in the market, most by name, often stopping to chat about their families. A city person through and through, she thrives on the color and ambiance the market exudes.

Bruce Harkness received his BFA in photography from the Center for Creative Studies in 1979 and his MFA in photography from Wayne State University in 1982. He is the recipient of numerous grants including a 1987 Creative Artists Grant from the Michigan Council for the Arts and a 1978 Regional National Endowment for the Arts Grant.