

Banking on a killing: spit roast on display as open-air market enjoys 'fabulous' trade



A hog on a spit at the farmers' market held at the Bank of Ireland in College Green, Dublin, yesterday. Photograph: Eamonn Farrell/Photocall Ireland

Stallholders bring in €40,000 as bank opens gates to farmers' market

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IRISH BANKERS are not the most popular people at present, but it was smiles all round for staff at the Bank of Ireland's flagship branch on Dublin's College Green yesterday after the bank opened its imposing wrought iron gates to an eclectic farmers' market.

Underneath the awnings of the former House of Lords, the first Irish strawberries of the season, picked the previous night in Co Meath, competed with Cretan olives, French crepes and Aran

Islands fudge for shoppers' attention. An estimated €40,000 was spent over the course of the day. Irish Farmers Markets was given the green light to organise the once-off event, featuring 20 stalls selling food and jewellery, as part of Bank of Ireland's National Enterprise Week and co-ordinator Seán McArdle expressed the hope the market would become a permanent fixture in the city.

"It is one of the best locations in Ireland for a market like this and it is certainly the most beautiful. It's like a market in an Italian piazza," he told *The Irish*

Times. "The stallholders had a fabulous day - it was so busy at times that you could hardly walk through the throng."

As roasting hogs turned on a spit at the centre of the forecourt, Mr McArdle said the feedback had been universally positive. "I would love to do a Friday market here. Tourists would love it, the local people would love it. I've bent the ears of every director I've met. I've been asking them to give the go-ahead for a market here."

A spokeswoman for the bank said it would give serious consideration to establishing a

regular market on the site.

The general public certainly seemed to buy into the idea, and some of the stalls were so popular that their stock was gone before the last of the lunchtime crowd had returned to their office desks.

Cupcakes made by Paula Coyne and her husband Ger, a carpenter who turned his hand to baking after losing his job last year, were the first to go. The Coynes sold 1,000 buns in three hours before going home to bake a thousand more for a second market at Bank of Ireland's headquarters on Baggot Street this morning.