News Journal file/ROBERT CRAIG

The New Castle Farmers Market is located at Hares Corner (U.S. 13 and Del. 273), and is open 9 a.m. to 9 p.m. Fridays and Saturdays and 10 a.m. to 6 p.m. Sundays. For more information, call 328-4101 or visit newcastlefarmersmarket.com.

A modern-day treasure hunt

By JUSTIN WILLIAMS
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Next time you want to buy a bike, sit for a family portrait, hit the dollar store, pick up a saddlebag for your Harley and fresh-cut flowers for mom, get a haircut, drop by the hardware store, cruise the thrift shop, and cap it all off with a beer and live music, you could spend all day and a tank of gas driving around Delaware.

Or you could kill 10 birds with one stone at the New Castle Farmers Market.

At Hares Corner since 1954, the indoor-outdoor bazaar isn't for everyone. But for those who like good food and great deals and don't need the squeaky-clean surroundings of a typical mall, it's the place to be on Fridays, Saturdays and Sundays.

At sun-up, the outdoor flea market begins. You won't find weapons, animals or anything new, but there's no telling what you'll stumble upon. Some vendors specialize – vintage watches, bicycles, video games, and strollers. Others offer a free-for-all – boxes full of this and that, much of it borderline worthless, but there could be a treasure lurking under the surface.

You'll find the best bargains in the dirt lot on the east end, where almost everything is negotiable. It's worth asking.

And if you have a garage full of junk, set up a stand yourself. Fridays are $14, and Saturdays and Sundays are $18.

Inside, you'll find new stuff cheap.

On each end of the building is a busy produce stand. Don't be intimidated by the long lines. The women at the registers are the fastest baggers around.

About a year and a half ago, a new wing opened in the south corner of the building that houses prepared foods. Don't miss Stolzfus Sausage Sandwiches, where a busy crew cranks out hot or milds for $3.75. A popular new addition is Soup R Wraps. The crab bisque – made at Country Gardens in Chester County, Pa. – is the top seller there.

From there, do a loop around the building. Among the highlights:

- Soft pretzels – Dutchland for Amish style, Pretzel Factory for Philly style.
- Alex's Seafood & Clam Bar – Seafood from near and far, including Maryland blue crabs, Chincoteague oysters, escargot, shrimp, scallops and clams. Drop by the bar for a beer and some sports on TV.
- Roger's – Men's haircuts are $10. The chairs are frequently full, but the line moves quickly. Pass the time by reading the collage of clever signs.
- Fast Feet – Who the heck uses a cobbler these days? You could ask at the counter, but they're usually too busy filling orders. Get a few more years out of your favorite pair.
- Sticky Bunz Bakery – "The King of Bunz" will satisfy your sweet tooth.
- Market Stage – Pull up a folding chair and catch pop-rock duos, one-man bands and old-time favorites.
- Jo-Joe's Army & Navy – Cheap military gear and clothes, as well as paintball guns, work wear, sweat suits and uniforms.
- Mamma Gina Pizza – New York-style slices. Enough said.
- B.P.S. Studio – Get a family portrait or a passport photo while you wait. They also convert VHS to DVD.
- Between the Pages – Marked-down paperbacks and magazines.

So stretch your legs. Stay awhile. You probably find a bargain, and you certainly won't leave hungry.

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