

Shopping at Farmers' Markets

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The Farmers' Market season is upon us! Nothing beats walking through the local farmers' market and buying some fresh, in season, locally grown produce.

If you're new to shopping at farmers' markets, here are some helpful tips and resources for you.

- Know your seasons. If you know a bit of what to expect when you get there, making decisions at each stall is much easier. Learn what's grown in your area and when, and talk to the growers about what will be coming to market in upcoming weeks.
- Go Early or Go Late. For best selection, go early. Often the most popular items are gone within the first hour or so in some markets. For the best deals, go late. Oftentimes, a vendor/farmer is willing to sell for less so that produce doesn't have to be taken back to the farm.
- Bring big bags and small change. A backpack or a sturdy canvas/nylon bag is best to carry home your produce. Purchases go faster if you have exact (or close to exact) change.
- Plan for spontaneity. Trying new things is part of the farmers' market experience.
- Work in Volume. The best deals at the market are had when you buy in bulk. Freezing, canning, and drying are some ways to preserve your purchases.
- Get advice. If you find a food that you're unfamiliar with, ask the farmer/vendor how *they* like to eat it.

Want to learn more about farmers' markets and using local foods? Here are some websites of interest:

- MN Department of Agriculture mngrown@mda.state.mn.us
- Minnesota Grown Directory 2007-2008 www.minnesotagrown.com
- Food Routes Network www.foodroutes.org
- Community Food Security Coalition www.foodsecurity.org

Take Home Messages:

- Go early for best selection, go late for best prices
- Start with familiar foods and ask the vendors their thoughts on preparation
- Get children involved in attending markets, selecting foods and preparing them!

Source: foodroutes.org

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