

VISIT LOCAL FARMERS MARKETS FOR TOP LEVEL NUTRITION

What's your biggest obstacle to healthful eating? Perhaps you think fruits and vegetables are too expensive or don't like the way they taste. Your local farmer's markets can help you overcome these barriers. Food at the farmer's market is often more affordable, locally grown, and naturally ripened. Taste is a key deciding factor in our food choices, and delicious, fresh produce can help us eat the recommended amounts of fruits and vegetables.

Talk to the Farmer

Farmers' markets are excellent places to find ideal specimens of your favorite summer foods, such as tomatoes, berries, beets, and herbs, but market-goers will find joy in discovering new foods as well. And when you encounter a unique fruit variety or heirloom vegetable you've never seen before, you're in the right place to find out more about it — you can ask the farmer who grew it! Ask them for recommendations on preparing and serving the food.

Talking to the farmers is also an excellent idea if you want to buy locally or organically-grown foods. Some farmers say they use organic methods but choose not to submit to the process required to use the term legally; some farmers use a mixture of organic and conventional methods; some farmers make no claim to being organic; and some small organic farmers are permitted to call themselves "organic" but are not "certified organic." If these are important, ask farmers how they grow their food.

How to Shop

While many markets have sellers offering free-range eggs, fresh bread and pastries, local honey, grass-fed beef, and fresh-cut flowers, be sure to stock up on produce. Also, be mindful of food safety and observe the vendors' safety practices as you shop. For example, all meat and dairy products should be in a cooler with ice.

Depending on your purpose, there are a couple of strategies to get the best results out of farmers' markets. You must arrive before the crowds if you want your pick of the most beautiful, photo-quality produce imaginable. If you like deals, however, go ahead and sleep in. Sometimes sellers offer discounts for produce remaining at the end of the day.

What's in Season?

To find your local markets and learn what your local farmers are harvesting right now, consider using websites such as LocalHarvest.org and [Local Food Directories](http://LocalFoodDirectories.com). Even experienced farmers' market patrons will benefit from these resources.

Wisconsin boasts a later harvest, a shorter growing season, and more dependence on calm weather and storage crops. Of course, exact crop availability and harvest times vary from year to year, but this summary will help you make sense of Wisconsin markets near you.

- Apples, July through October
- Blueberries, July and August
- Broccoli, June through October
- Brussels sprouts, September through December
- Cabbage, June through November
- Carrots, June through early December
- Cauliflower, July through November
- Cucumbers, July through mid-October
- Green beans, July through September
- Greens (various), June through October
- Melons, July and August
- Onions, August through October
- Peas, July through August
- Peppers (sweet), July through mid-October
- Potatoes, July through October
- Raspberries, June through September
- Summer squash, July through September
- Tomatoes, July through September
- Watermelons, August through September
- Zucchini, July through October

