



GET LOCAL

Check out your local farmers' market

Shopping at a farmers' market is a great way to get fresh, seasonal, locally grown fruits and vegetables. The market can seem overwhelming at first, but here are a few tips to make sure that your trips are successful and fun.

BYOB.

Bring a couple of durable, reusable bags to carry all of your delicious farm-fresh fruits and vegetables. You can also bring storage containers for the more delicate fruits and vegetables like blackberries and cherry tomatoes. Bring your own bags to the grocery store too. By doing so, you can save a few cents each time you shop.

Don't let the crowds overwhelm you.

Farmers' markets can get crowded and busy. Be patient, and take your time checking out each vendor's produce.

Arrive early.

For the best selection, go to the farmers' market early. The best goods are often the first to go.

Stop at each vendor's stand before making a purchase.

Prices and selection can vary from farmer to farmer; so, make sure you "comparison shop" before making any purchases.

Talk to the growers.

Try the samples, especially if they are something new. If something is unfamiliar, ask the growers how it tastes and how they like to prepare it. If you don't see something that you especially like, ask the growers where to find it.

Join a farm community through community-supported agriculture

Community-supported agriculture (CSA) is a community of individuals who pledge support to a farm where growers and consumers share the risks and benefits of food production. The members, also referred to as shareholders, pay a set price to receive shares from the farm's bounty for the entire growing season, typically 20 to 25 weeks, depending on the farm.

Belonging to a CSA community is a great way to connect to where your food comes from and to enjoy fresh, local produce. CSAs vary. Some allow you to pick up your share. Others bring the share to you, a common practice in urban areas. Some farms have a "pick your own" section where you can also cut fresh herbs and flowers. Being a CSA member is also a great way to get kids excited about food and encourage them to eat more fruits and veggies.

For more information about CSAs, visit <http://www.nal.usda.gov/afsic/pubs/csa/csa.shtml>.