

TO MARKET, TO MARKET



Your vegetables just seem to taste better when you grow them, or you buy them from a local farmers' market. That's because they're fresher and contain more of the "good stuff" (vitamins and minerals) than those that are grown hundreds of miles away.



So what are you likely to find at a farmers' market? Here are just a few examples:

- Apples
- Beets
- Blackberries
- Blueberries
- Cabbage
- Cantaloupe
- Sweet corn
- Cucumbers
- Eggplant
- Okra
- White and green onions
- Paw Paws
- Peaches
- Pears
- Peppers
- Plums
- Potatoes
- Pumpkins
- Raspberries
- Summer squash
- Watermelons

IN KENTUCKY, we don't have as long a growing season as our neighbors to the south. We get a lot of food from Florida, Southern California, and Mexico because they can grow fruits and vegetables nearly 12 months a year. However, it takes time to get the food grown in Florida or California here to Kentucky. Think about it. A farmer has to pick it, box it up and take it to market. Then the food has to be shipped an average of 1,500 miles to get to supermarkets in Kentucky. While that food is still good for you, some of the "good stuff" is lost in the days it takes to get the vegetables from the field to the market here. And since food can spoil in just a few days, growing your own or buying from a local farmers' market should mean your food is fresher longer.

Farmers' markets are typically open from June through September, depending on when certain fruits and vegetables are ready. You're always going to find something good. Look for one, visit and see for yourself!

Other places to get food:

In addition to your own garden, there are other places where you can find fresh, locally grown food:

Farmers' Markets – These are becoming more popular in Kentucky. You'll see them organized weekly at various places around your community. Pickup trucks come full with vegetables just picked and ready for you to purchase and eat.

Urban or Community Gardens – If you don't have land to grow a garden, many communities offer a large piece of land in which many people may grow individual gardens. Check with officials in your own community for details.

School Gardens – Gardening has become a "class project" for many. Students take turns working in a school garden and then share the vegetables or donate them to a worthy cause. Many schools are using the food they grow to feed the students in the cafeteria. For more information, check out Kentucky Department of Agriculture's Farm to School Program.

Community Supported Agriculture programs (CSA) - A CSA is a commitment between a farm and a group of people in which the farm provides food to this group throughout the growing season. Each week, the farm may provide different fruits and vegetables. The people in the group agree to pay the farm a certain fee to grow the food and the farm agrees to provide food to this group on a regular basis.

If you can't find a place to purchase locally grown food in your area, call the County Extension Office in your community and ask for details.

Why buy local food?

There are several reasons why we should try first to find locally grown food:

- As we mentioned earlier, fruits and vegetables don't stay fresh a long time. If these items have to be trucked to you from hundreds of miles away, that takes several days and that makes them less fresh. Fresh food tastes better.
- There are more vitamins and minerals in locally grown fresh food. Large growers hundreds of miles away have to pick food before it is completely ripe and process it before shipping. When that happens, some of the nutrients are lost. Locally grown fruits and vegetables are picked and sold when ripe, so you get the best!
- When you buy locally, you help Kentucky farmers. They use the money to take care of their own families and buy other things in your community. That keeps more people working and makes your community stronger.
- It is also good for the environment. The farther food has to travel, the more resources are used. Buying local or growing your own food reduces fuel costs and carbon emissions that can harm the environment.