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5 Reasons to Support Your Farmers Market



With a couple months of social distancing under our belts, this farmers market season couldn't come at a better time. Whether you're looking for a change of scenery on your weekly shopping trip or you're wanting to support small businesses, local markets have you covered.

Due to the essential nature of their products and the ability to maintain proper social distancing, markets can continue to serve their communities under the governor's directed health measures. With the guidance of local health authorities, markets are taking steps to keep you safe. As you shop, you may notice tents spread further apart, vendors wearing protective gear, ground markers encouraging six feet of distance and no product samples on the tables.

As patrons, you're encouraged to shop with your eyes during this 2020 market season. You're also encouraged to wear a cloth mask, shop by yourself, keep your distance from others and leave your reusable bags at home. Done responsibly, shopping at your local market comes with some pretty great benefits—both now, and when life gets back to normal.

1. **Supporting your local farmers strengthens your community and local economy.** On average, only 10 cents of each food dollar returns to the farmer. The other 90 cents goes to corporations for packaging, marketing and transportation. Farmers who sell direct to consumers receive 80 cents of each food dollar—a needed economic boost during this time in our lives.
2. **Freshly picked, in season produce is at peak flavor and nutrition.** Not only is buying locally an economic win for your community, but you benefit by getting to know your neighbors and eating fresher, healthier food. Win, win!
3. **Farmers markets offer foods that align with a healthy eating pattern.** Guidelines for a healthy eating pattern recommend getting a variety of food from all five food groups. These food groups include fruits, vegetables, grains, protein and dairy (or dairy alternatives). Visit different booths for seasonal fruits and vegetables, as well as local grain, protein and dairy products so you can build a healthy plate. Don't forget, though, that a healthy relationship with food means enjoying treats. Whether they be sweet, salty or savory, these foods are especially delicious when you don't have to prepare them yourself.
4. **Farmers often have recommendations for preparing their products.** If you're grabbing something fresh that requires preparation on your part, don't be afraid to chat with the vendor. Ask questions and share ideas for best cooking methods and favorite recipes. These little inquiries can be extra helpful when buying a product with which you're less familiar.
5. **You can try a new fruit or vegetable!** Speaking of the more novel products one can find at a local market, be sure to approach each booth with a sense of adventure. They don't say variety is the spice of life for no reason.