



Navigating your local farmers market

We all know that summer is one of the best times for eating fresh vegetables and fruits which is so important for good health. One of the best places to find them is at your local farmers market. You can't get produce that's much fresher—it's coming direct from the farm to you, rather than being picked before ripening and then shipped long distance to your local grocery store. Prices can be cheaper than grocery stores, too. But don't think that just because you live in the city or the suburbs you can't find a farmers market near you, Farmers markets can be found almost everywhere and are becoming more and more popular, To find one in your area, visit localharvest.org.

When planning a trip to the farmers market, go early in the morning for the best selection, or later in the day if you're looking for a bargain. Some vendors may lower their prices if there are only a few of an item left so they don't have to pack it up when the market

closes. Another way to get a good deal is to buy in bulk, as many vendors offer bulk discounts.

While browsing, be sure to talk to the farmers—they're a wealth of information! Don't be intimidated; they're usually more than happy to talk about their harvest. Ask them about their produce, such as what to look for in a particular type of fruit, which fruits and vegetables are in season and ways of preparing certain vegetables. You might think you have no idea what to do with cauliflower except boiling it, for example, but the farmer may have some ideas on how to cook it that you've never thought of before. If eating organic produce is important to you, ask if a certain type of produce is organic if there isn't a sign stating so.

When you're shopping for heart-healthy fruits and vegetables, remember to look for color. The best way to get all of the various nutrients that can help prevent heart disease is to eat a balanced diet with a wide variety of fruits, vegetables and whole-grain products. To encourage variety, think colorfully. Look for **red** (tomatoes, watermelons, strawberries, cherries, pomegranates, apples, raspberries, grapes), **orange/yellow** (carrots, pumpkin, mangoes, apricots, cantaloupes, tangerines, grapefruits, peaches, papaya, pineapple, nectarines, apples), **green** (broccoli, cabbage, bok choy, brussels sprouts, collard greens, avocado, spinach, kale, green beans, peppers, kiwi, mustard greens, grapes) and **blue/purple** (blueberries, blackberries, grapes, plums, prunes, figs, eggplant).

Look for produce that you've never tried before. Many of the farmers markets have demonstrations, tastings and recipes available so you can try before you buy. You just might find a new fruit or veggie to love!

Think about shopping at a local farmers market before you make the trip to the grocery store. You can't go wrong with super fresh fruits and vegetables at reasonable prices.

