

# FARMER'S MARKET PRODUCE



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## NEWS YOU CAN USE

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### Challenge:

It is important to get a variety of fruits and vegetables in your diet. Try a piece of fruit or vegetable you have not tried before or that you have not had in a long time.

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We are half-way through farmer's market season. If you have not checked out your local farmer's market yet, try this Web site, <http://search.ams.usda.gov/farmersmarkets/>, to locate one nearby you.

### WHY FARMER'S MARKETS?

There are many reasons to shop at your local farmer's market. When you buy from a local farmer you are supporting the local agriculture and economy, which means the food does not require being shipped long distances. At farmer's markets you are often purchasing organic crops for prices lower than the grocery stores'. You also get a great variety of seasonal, perfectly ripe fruits and vegetables. Plus, you will taste the difference!

### PICKING SEASONAL PRODUCE

There are many fruits and vegetables still in season from now through early November; including, apples, beets, brussels sprouts, cantaloupe, grapes, mushrooms, onions, peppers, lettuce, potatoes, pumpkins, spinach, squash, corn, watermelon and tomatoes. Choose a variety of fruits and vegetables to take home. Pick one from each color in the rainbow if you can. A great aspect of farmer's markets is that there is no guessing game with the produce. Everything available is in season and at its peak ripeness.

Produce at the farmer's market is picked at its prime, usually shortly before appearing on the market stands, but one test you can try to be sure it is ripe is to smell the fruit close to the stem. If it smells sweet and fragrant then it is ripe, if there is little fragrance then it is not ready to eat. Also, do not be afraid to ask the farmer about the produce. They can be a wealth of information in terms of how to store the fruit, how long it will keep and what features to look for in that particular item.

### CLEAN AND STORE

- Store perishable produce in a clean refrigerator at 40° F or below.
- Wash your hands before and after handling your produce, even if you plan to peel the skin or outside layers away. Wash the produce thoroughly under running water before eating, cutting or cooking. Do not use soaps or commercial produce washes. Dry with a clean towel.
- Scrub firm produce, such as; melons, cucumbers and potatoes with a clean produce brush.
- Never store your produce next to raw meat, poultry or seafood to prevent contamination. Likewise, keep produce away from kitchen utensils that were used for those products. Wash cutting boards, knives and countertops between preparation of raw meat, poultry and seafood and the preparation of produce.