

SUSTAINABILITY

CONNECT TO COMMUNITY, SHOP LOCALLY

In addition to providing the season's freshest fruits and vegetables, farmer's markets provide the community with resources to promote a sustainable food system, supporting health and wellbeing. These markets allow access to quality food at the lowest cost possible—shown to be an important determinant of health through population studies—while connecting farmers with their customers directly, allowing them to keep 100% of the retail value of the crops. In addition to providing practical, sustainable, and cost-effective solutions to healthier eating, farmer's markets are a unique opportunity to engage with the community and learn about the foods grown in your local region. Here are some of the most compelling reasons to get out to your local market this week:

- **Encourages greater variety and quantity of produce in your diet.** Markets expose us to a greater variety of produce outside of mainstream crops, which leads to a greater variety of nutrients. Also, fresh produce picked at the peak of ripeness and consumed soon after tastes better, so we are likely to eat it more frequently.
- **Greater quality, freshness, and value.** When following the growing season and eating crops that are most abundant, we get the freshest food possible at the peak of its nutritional value, and at the lowest cost.
- **Smaller environmental impact.** Limiting travel from farm to table reduces the carbon footprint of foods. Also, most small farmers' techniques promote sustainable agricultural practices, not only resulting in less pesticide use, but also maintaining the land for future harvests.
- **Supports small businesses and encourages personal connections.** The market is an opportunity for talented individuals who produce unique, handmade product and specialty foods. In many cases, the farmers and purveyors are also present and willing to answer questions for customers regarding their foods and how to prepare them. Farmer's markets create a sense of community for all involved.
- **Learn how to eat "in season."** You won't find "out of season" produce at the market. Consider what it takes for strawberries to be available at a supermarket in the northeast in the dead of winter. Anytime we eat produce that isn't grown locally, the crops, in many cases, are picked early and stored, reducing the quality of the product and increasing its environmental burden. Our purchase choices matter!
- **Become an active participant in your community.** Shopping with neighborhood farmers is a fun way to connect with other individuals and families in your area in an outdoor environment – a wonderful social opportunity that can benefit mental and physical health.

If you have access to local food sources, buying as much of your food as you can from them is an easy way to increase the quality of food you eat, while also saving money and contributing to a more sustainable food system.

From July to September in the Northeast, look for these nutritious, delicious foods!

Tomatoes • Corn • Leafy Greens • Squash • Raspberries • Sweet Peppers