

Let's Go to the Farmers' Market!



FAQs for early care & education sites interested in visiting farmers' markets



Farmers' markets provide the opportunity for food producers and consumers to interact with each other directly in a local community setting. At farmers' markets you can purchase fresh and local food directly from the person who grew or raised it. Read below to feel confident while visiting a farmers' market with the children in your care.

Why is it important for my ECE site to experience a farmers' market?

Farmers' markets provide great opportunities to both purchase local ingredients for use at your site in meals, snacks, and taste-tests and to enrich the learning environment of your children. Children can explore new fruits and vegetables, ask the farmers about their farms, learn about the wide variety of foods grown in Wisconsin, and find every color of the rainbow on farmer tables.

What does 'in-season' mean?

Many farmers' markets (but not all) feature locally grown products. This means that farmers planted, cared for, and harvested fruits and vegetables in accordance with the area's climate and soil conditions. Eating 'in-season' means that you are getting the freshest and most flavorful fruits and vegetables around. Check out the Wisconsin food seasonality chart for more information: <https://www.cias.wisc.edu/foodservtools/2-Get-started/wisconsin-produce-calendar.pdf>.

When should our site visit the market?

Anytime is the best time to visit a farmers' market! Go early to ensure you have access to the largest selection possible — many popular items sell out early. Go near the end of market for potentially lower prices.

Did you know?

Handwritten receipts for items purchased at farmers' markets serve as acceptable documentation for **CACFP reimbursement** as long as the receipt includes the **date of purchase, name of vendor/farmer, item cost, amount, and total cost**.

Reminder: CACFP funds cannot be used to purchase non-creditable items.

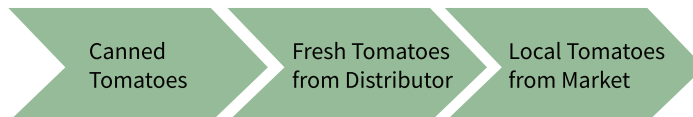


Are there only fruits and vegetables at farmers' markets?

You can source food for the whole plate from a farmers' market, with many featuring dairy¹, bakery², eggs³, and meat⁴ in addition to fruits and vegetables. You can also often find plant starts.

How do I know what to buy?

What you buy is dependent on your site or classroom nutritional goals. Do you want to substitute a local ingredient in a recipe you already make or do you want the children to taste-test two different types of vegetables? As always, the farmer behind the stand is the best source of information and inspiration. **Unsure how you are going to transition your site to buying local? Start small and visualize the process using this example pathway!**



Our food budget is tight! How can our site purchase local?

When you approach farmer stands, items will be marked with a price. The norm is for farmers' market visitors to pay the set price without bargaining. However, you can maximize your budget by doing the following:

- **Purchase larger quantities to get 'bulk' discounts that farmers often offer** (e.g. one bunch carrots for \$4 vs. three bunches for \$10).
- **Shop near the end of the market day** when farmers may mark down prices.
- If your site will be processing the item (e.g. making a tomato sauce from tomatoes), **purchase 'Cosmetically Imperfect Seconds'** or 'seconds' informally. These slightly bruised fruits and vegetables have the same quality and taste, but may not look as beautiful. They make an excellent sauce, stir-fry, or soup and cost much less.



Beets in all shades: perfect for a taste-test!

How do I find a farmers' market near me?

Check out the **Wisconsin Farm Fresh Atlas**: <http://farmfreshatlas.org/> to find a market near you.

1. Milk purchased from a local source must be pasteurized and fortified with Vitamins A & D.
2. Any bread purchased has to be made from enriched flour to be creditable for CACFP.
3. Licensed providers must ensure that farm eggs were processed in a licensed facility. If eggs were not processed in licensed facility, obtain written permission from parents/guardians to use farm eggs.
4. Local meat must be slaughtered and processed in a state or federally inspected facility.

Questions? Get in touch!

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Thanks to Emily Doblár and Brittany Zerbe for their review of this piece.

This project is funded by the W.K. Kellogg Foundation of Battle Creek, Michigan.

