

Eat Local

Farmers markets are working hard to offer you the freshest produce available. Eating foods grown locally has many benefits, including nutritional value.

Local crops tend to have the highest flavor profiles because they are picked at peak ripeness and are immediately available to the local consumer. In comparison, foods grown elsewhere need to be picked early in order to accommodate for transportation time. Additionally, the long transportation required to get foods across the country and even beyond increases the amount of energy used which is not environmentally friendly.

Local foods are seasonal foods. The world's food supply makes it possible to eat all kinds of foods all year long. Strawberries, for example, are grown in warm climates and shipped thousands of miles internationally but the flavor of a locally-grown strawberry, especially one you picked yourself, is second to none. And there's no mistaking the flavor of a locally-grown tomato compared to one bought in a grocery store during the winter months.

Nutritionally, local foods score high. The shorter the time between harvest and your plate, the more nutrients are preserved. Additionally local foods tend to pose a lower risk with regards to food safety. The fewer hands that handle the foods between farmer and the consumer, the less opportunity for harmful pathogens to contaminate our food supply.

Dollars spent on local businesses, including local farms, benefits the entire community and environment. Clean, well-maintained open spaces make your local area more attractive and create a viable community in which to live and raise a family. Local farms also provide educational opportunities for area schools and jobs. Money spent locally, stays locally longer which strengthens the economy in your own community.

There's nothing more local than your own backyard. Consider starting your own vegetable garden. If you already have one, try expanding it this year to include a bigger variety of delicious and nutritious foods. Try growing strawberries in window boxes. Plant a blueberry shrub and reap the benefits year after year. Indoor herb gardens are easy to start and maintain and they add a wealth of flavor and nutrition to your meals.

For a list of local farmers markets visit the National Farmers Market Directory website at nfmd.org