

FARMERS' MARKET TOURS

A Guide for Nutrition Educators



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A Farmers' Market Tour is a great way to introduce your participants to an abundant source of local fruits and vegetables. It can also reinforce messaging about healthy eating and local foods. This guide was designed to be used as part of a regular series of nutrition education classes, such as those offered through SNAP-Ed, the Expanded Food and Nutrition Education Program (EFNEP), Faithful Families Thriving Communities, or other community nutrition education programs. It's important to take time to plan your farmers' market tour in advance in order to be sure that participants get the most from the market experience. Before you get started with a farmers' market tour, here are some things to consider:



WHO should come? We recommend farmers' market tours be part of an existing nutrition education class, rather than a one-time activity. We have found that the tours work best when scheduled as part of a regular series of nutrition education classes, such as SNAP-Ed, EFNEP, Faithful Families, or other community nutrition education programs. Participants are more likely to attend the tours if they already know you and are a part of an ongoing class series. This also gives you the chance to integrate messages about healthy eating and local food throughout the series of classes so that participants get the most from the tour.

WHAT should you cover? There are lots of topics you could cover in a farmers' market tour, from an introduction to local foods to an overview of the nutrients found in produce at the market. Ask your class or group. What are they interested in learning? What questions do they have about farmers' markets?

WHERE do you host the tour? Your county or community might be home to several markets or large farm stands. Consider transportation for your participants, and select a market that meets their needs. Is there a market on the bus line? Or one that's within walking distance to their home or community organization?

WHEN to host the tour? Although a variety of fruits and vegetables grow in all seasons in North Carolina, your market might have more produce during certain seasons. Talk with the market manager or the Extension local foods coordinator for your county about when the best time to visit might be.

WHY hold a tour? A farmers' market tour is a good way to help people learn about the market, talk with vendors, and enhance their access to fresh, local foods.



Find local partners

Farmers' market tours work well when they are a collaboration of several local partners. These partners might include:

- County Extension educators, for example: Family and Consumer Science, Agriculture or Horticulture agents, and/or Local Food Coordinators
- Health educators from the local health department
- Nutrition educators, from SNAP-Ed, EFNEP, Faithful Families, or another program
- Farmers' market managers
- Local farmers who sell at the market
- Other partners from non-profit or community groups that work with local foods or farmers

To find a listing of local Extension staff in North Carolina, visit this link:
www.ces.ncsu.edu/local-county-center

Once you have a team on board to work with you on the farmers' market tour, talk through the questions above, including the *who*, *what*, *when*, and *where* questions. As your team makes a plan, you might work through the following TEN steps to implement your tour:

1. Think about how to integrate the tour into your regular class series.

Farmers' market tours should be the middle lesson of your series of classes. For example, if you are teaching nine classes, then the tour would work best as class four or five. This gives you enough time before the tour to help participants learn about the market and local foods, and after the tour you can encourage them to visit the market again.

2. Locate the market where you will host the tour. If you are working with families with limited incomes, it is important to find a market that accepts SNAP/EBT (formerly known as food stamps) benefits or that participates in the Women, Infant and Children (WIC) farmers' market nutrition program. The USDA farmers market directory provides a list of farmers markets, and includes forms of payment accepted: <http://www.ams.usda.gov/local-food-directories/farmersmarkets>

3. Find out about any incentives that might be offered through your local farmers' market. Does the market offer a "double bucks program" for SNAP recipients to double their money at the market? Do they accept WIC farmers' market coupons for families who receive WIC? This will be important information to share with participants on your tour. To learn more about these issues, visit: <https://localfood.ces.ncsu.edu/local-food-marketing-markets/local-food-farmers-markets/localfood-farmers-markets-and-food-access>

4. Talk with your farmers' market tour partners, including the farmers' market manager. Discuss the best dates and times for the tour, and start to think about roles and responsibilities for the tour (see #6 below).

5. Visit the market. It's important for you to have a sense of the market before you take your class participants. Talk with vendors and the market manager to let them know about your plans. Get their advice about what they suggest you include on the tour. If there are special procedures for using SNAP/EBT or WIC benefits at the market, ask the market manager to explain these to you. If he or she is available, ask him or her to provide an overview of this information during your tour as well! Remember that market managers and vendors will be working at the farmers' market and may not have time to meet or talk with you during busy market hours. You might need to schedule time to meet with them after hours.



6. Plan the farmers' market tour, working with your partners. Determine who will do what during the tour. What information will you cover? Who will lead the tour? Be sure to have a solid plan in place before you carry out your tour.

7. Teach your lessons! In the classes that lead up to the farmers' market tour, be sure to let participants know that you will be taking a tour of the local market as part of your class. Look through your lessons and recipes, and find places where you can provide information about local foods or the importance of fruits and vegetables as part of a healthy diet. Include some of the produce they will see at the market as part of your recipes during classes.

8. Carry out the tour. Work with your local partners to take your participants on a tour of the market. Depending on the dates/times of the market, your tour might not be at the same time as your regular nutrition classes. For example, if your farmers' market is only open on Saturdays and your classes are usually on Tuesdays, you will need to meet your participants at the market on Saturday. Talk with participants about transportation options to make sure they can attend. Check out some tips in the next section to learn about the type of information or activities you might want to share or do on the market tour.

9. Cook from the market. There may be the possibility to do a food demonstration on site. If not, consider purchasing some food from the market to make a healthy recipe after the tour or during your next lesson. Use the farmers' market tour recipe cards as your inspiration.

10. Celebrate your success. Take photos of your tour. Talk with participants in the following lessons, or after your classes have ended, about whether or not they visited the market again. Respond to any questions they have, or help them connect with people who can answer their questions.

REMEMBER: Consider location and transportation when deciding which class would benefit most from a farmers' market tour. Do the participants have access to transportation to get to the market? Is the market close to their neighborhood or home?



Two North Carolina curricula, EFNEP's *Families Eating Smart and Moving More* and *Faithful Families*, include "Look for Local" prompts in each lesson to help you emphasize the importance of local fruits and vegetables. These messages are great teaching tools, and can be used for the classes that accompany the farmers' market tours!



Tips for your tour

Here are some activities that other nutrition educators have included in their farmers' market tours. You will not be able to cover all of these elements in one tour! However, you can select a few that fit the needs and interests of your class participants.

Hold a food demonstration. Sample a healthy recipe that uses produce from the market. Use the farmers' market tour recipe cards for ideas!

FARMERS' MARKET RECIPES
Souful Greens
from the farmers' market tour
Ingredients:

- 1/2 cup reduced sodium chicken broth
- 3/4 cup water
- 2 pounds collard greens, washed, stems removed and chopped
- 1/2 cup red onions, sliced
- 1 clove of garlic, minced
- 1/2 cup orange juice
- 1/2 teaspoon dried red pepper flakes

Directions:

1. Put chicken broth and water in a large pot. Bring to a boil. Add collards. Cook uncovered at medium-high for 15 minutes. Drain the collards.
2. Add garlic and onions for 5 minutes in a large skillet. Add orange juice and red pepper flakes.
3. Stir and well coated. Stirrer uncovered at medium-low for 10 to 15 minutes.
4. Sprinkle with red pepper flakes and serve.





Butternut Squash
an oddly, divided
to slice

Partner up. Ask the market manager or a local Extension agent to provide an overview of the market and a tour to introduce the vendors. The market manager can also provide an overview of the types of payment (including SNAP/EBT) that are accepted at the market. Check ahead of time to see if there are any incentives or coupons that participants would qualify for so that they can use them during the tour.

Engage children. Determine whether or not children will be participating in the tour in advance. If you have children joining their parents on the tour, it is a good idea to recruit volunteers to help. Encourage your participants to involve their children in preparing fruits and vegetables for family meals and snacks once they get home. Even young children can tear salad greens.

Create a scavenger hunt. Make healthy eating into a game to help children and adults learn about fruits and vegetables. They can find different colors of fruits or vegetables, or have a contest to see who can try the most new fruits or vegetables. This can be a fun activity that your participants can continue to do with their children when they return to the market as well!

Explore! Encourage participants to explore the market on their own, and model how they might talk with vendors by using some of the questions included below. Leave some time during the tour for participants to enjoy the market and make their purchases.



Questions for vendors

One of the most important parts of your tour is encouraging conversation between the market vendors and your participants. This helps build relationships, a key success factor for farmers markets. Prior to your tour, be sure to visit the market to talk with vendors. Let the vendors know you will be bringing a group to tour the market.

During the tour, you can help participants feel at ease by modeling the types of questions they might want to ask vendors. Here's a list of questions that you might consider:

What kind of fruit or vegetable is that?

Participants might not know what the different fruits and vegetables are, so vendors can help them to identify the types of produce that they are offering.

Do you mind if I try this? Ask if you can sample the produce. Food items provided for sampling should be easily identified; however, remind participants that they should ask the vendor before sampling any food at a stand. They should not assume that any food can be sampled.

How do you prepare it? Talk with vendors about their suggestions for preparing the fruits and vegetables they sell. Is it best peeled, whole, chopped, raw, or cooked? They might have some great suggestions for healthy, delicious recipes!

What other produce would you suggest?

Sometimes vendors can help you to learn about which fruits and vegetables go well together. For example, they might suggest that participants select an onion to sauté with the squash they purchase.

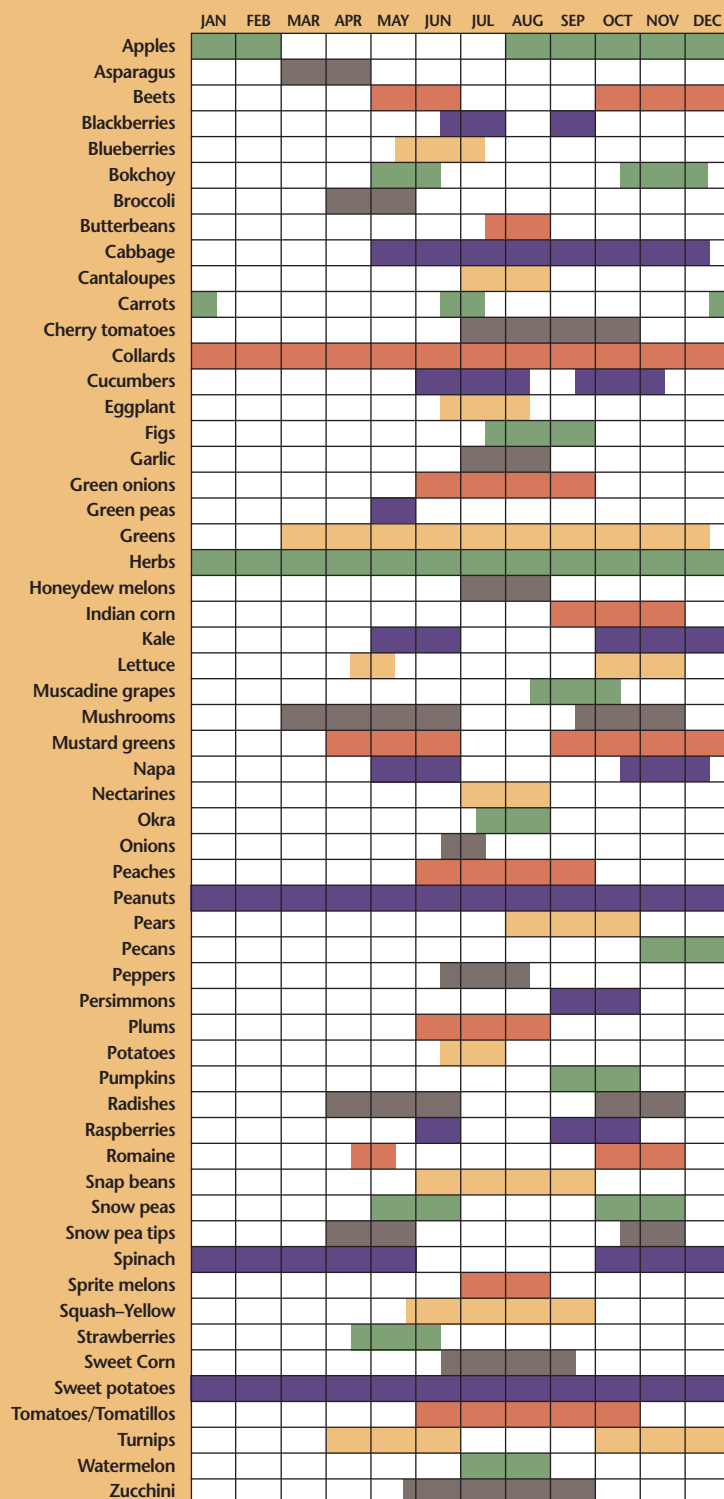
Tell me about how this was grown. Talk with vendors about the practices they use to grow their fruits and vegetables. Learn about where they are from and where their farm is located.

How much is this? Produce might not always have a price on it, so encourage participants to talk with vendors about how much their produce costs, including any deals or specials they might offer.

WHAT'S IN SEASON?

North Carolina Fruit and Vegetable Availability

You can use this guide to choose the freshest, best tasting produce obtainable in North Carolina.



For directories and more information about NC produce, visit www.ncdamarkets.org.

Agriculture is NC's # 1 industry. When you see the Goodness Grows in North Carolina logo on food products, you are contributing to the economic growth of North Carolina and to our farmers.

Additional Resources

As you are planning your Farmers Market Tour, here are some additional resources that can help you to learn about other topics or issues you might want to consider:

- **Extension at NC State Food Safety at the Market:**
<https://foodsafety.ces.ncsu.edu/tags/Food-Market>
- **Extension at NC State Local Foods:**
<https://localfood.ces.ncsu.edu/local-food-marketing-markets/local-food-farmers-markets/farmers-market-tour-resources>
- **My Eat Smart Move More:**
myeatsmartmovemore.com/FarmersMarkets
- **NC Availability Chart:**
www.ncagr.gov/markets/chart.htm



United States Department of Agriculture
National Institute of Food and Agriculture



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EAT SMART, MOVE MORE NORTH CAROLINA

