



# Shopping on a Budget at Your **Farmers' Market**

Your farmers' market is a great place to find fresh, healthy fruits and vegetables. Shopping and saving at the farmers' market is fun, and just takes a bit of planning. Follow these steps to help you plan and prepare low cost, delicious meals and snacks to enjoy with your friends and family.



## Plan Ahead

**Shop local.** A farmers' market may be closer than you think. Save time and gas money by finding the North Carolina market closest to you at [MyEatSmartMoveMore.com](http://MyEatSmartMoveMore.com).

**Shop early.** Farmers tend to wake up before the sun rises, especially in the summer months, and farmers' markets also often open early. Shop early in the morning for the freshest foods and best selection.

**Make a list.** To avoid impulse buying, make a list of the items you would like to buy before heading to the farmers' market. Consider taking a small, set amount of money for unexpected foods that appeal to you that day at the market.

**Carry a pen and paper.** As you are exploring the market, make sure to write down what you have already purchased and what you need. This also may be a great time to write down the farmer's name and the name of the farm, so later you can remember where that fruit or vegetable was grown.



## Explore the Market

**Use shopping strategies.** Get to the farmers' market early for the greatest variety and best selection of produce. There may also be a benefit to waiting until later if you are unable to go first thing in the morning. Sometimes vendors will give the best price to the late customers, around 30 minutes before closing, to reduce the amount of food they will have to haul back and forth.

**Buy in bulk.** Don't be afraid to ask the farmer for discounted rates when buying in bulk. If you know you will be purchasing many items at once, ask the farmer ahead of time and he/she may be willing to work with you on the price.



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## **Explore the Market, continued**

**Ask for seconds.** Seconds are the items that are bruised or blemished and may cost less. They aren't often displayed but may be available by some farmers.

**Shop for seasonal foods.** Fruits and vegetables are more plentiful and less expensive when they are in season. The **What's in Season** document available at **MyEatSmartMoveMore.com** will help you figure out what produce your farmers' market is likely to have.



## **Save While You Shop**

**Cash verses cards.** Make sure that when you go to your market, you have a variety of payment methods. Some vendors will only take cash; some will take check, debit or credit; and some markets are beginning to accept SNAP/EBT payments. Don't let your payment method sway you from getting the produce you really want.

**Buy what you need.** Though the colorful variety of produce may make it tempting to buy more than you need, make sure you are shopping smart. Most markets are open throughout the week, so buying less but on a regular basis can be helpful. If you happen to buy more than you need, freeze the leftovers to use later.



## **Prepare What You Bought**

**Wash, store and use.** Make sure that you know how to prepare the food you purchase in a way that you will enjoy. Ask the farmers about different ways to prepare their produce. Also use the **USDA website** and **Cooking Matters website** for recipes and creative ways to prepare healthy dishes.