

Country Sampler

35+ DIY Projects

# Farmhouse

*Style*

**EASY BREEZY**  
*Living*

**Pretty Up Your Porch,  
Garage Sale Makeovers,  
Rustic Barn Parties & More**



**WIN**  
**\$500**  
VISA GIFT CARD  
See page 37



*Plus*  
Grandma's  
Favorite Pies



# Farmers Markets & Food Exchanges

When it comes to healthy foods, the closer you are to the source, the better. Local farmers markets and food exchanges provide some of the best shopping— if you know what to look for.



During peak growing season, you'll find a variety of fresh vegetables and fruits just picked from the earth.

PHOTOGRAPH COURTESY OF NASHVILLE FARMERS' MARKET.



It seems farmers markets are sprouting up nearly everywhere. Indeed, at FarmersMarket.net, one article noted that according to the USDA Farmers Market Directory, the number of total markets in the United States grew from about 2,000 in 1994 to more than 8,600 in 2017, and that number is likely even higher now. What makes farmers markets so appealing, and how can you get the most from your trip? And what about food exchanges and CSAs? We've got some tips to help you navigate these possibly-new-to-you ways of purchasing fresh produce, meats, baked goods and other artisanal items.

Start by reading the market's rules. Some allow only vendors within a certain area to keep it truly local. That way, you know the items are the freshest they can be and haven't spent hours (or days) on a truck. Plus, you know you're supporting your local community.

Remember that foods are seasonal. Don't expect to find berries in the middle of winter or corn in early spring (and if you do, know the items might have been sitting in a freezer for months). Take advantage of the seasonality of the fruits and vegetables, as you'll find those picked and eaten at the peak of ripeness will be much tastier than those you find in a grocery store or those offered off-season.

Don't mind the dirt; most produce comes from the ground after all. You can clean up your veggies when you get home. And if there's a choice, opt for the entire vegetable, stalks and all. Often the greens are just as nutritious as the root vegetable itself and they may stay fresher intact. And learn how to pick the best—how a ripe melon thumps, which green beans are the snappiest, what the tastiest asparagus stalks look



like. Also, keep your mind open to trying new items, like zucchini blossoms for salads or different types of squash. The farmers can tell you how to prepare them.

Be aware that prices will likely be more than a chain grocery store. That's because farmers can set their own prices, and they're not producing in bulk as large farms do. And definitely do a walk-through first to compare the offerings. Many times, markets will have more than one vendor selling the same type of berries or tomatoes, for example. Look for the freshest offering at the best value.

Just because it's locally grown doesn't mean it's organic. Ask if the farmers use pesticides or herbicides, even if they are natural. And while you're at it, feel free to ask any other questions you might have, such as when the next harvest of a specific item will be, what the farmer will be producing next year, etc.

When it's gone, it's gone. Because these are individual vendors working within a limited growing season and with a set number of plants, expect that when all the produce is sold, it's done. That's why you want to hit the markets early in the morning to get the best selection, and don't expect to find just as much produce or goods late in the season.

Bring your own reusable tote bag. Yes, farmers might have plastic bags for you, but you'll find heavy produce will tear those easily. Besides, if you're shopping a farmers market

because you're socially or environmentally conscious, you'll want to avoid throwaway plastic anyway.

At many markets, vendors offer more than just fruits and vegetables. You can find locally raised meats, handmade ethnic specialties, baked goods, cut flowers, soaps and lotions, and much more. If you like buying local, consider frequenting these booths in addition to the produce stands.

Look for farmers markets in more affluent areas or near universities. Younger, more educated consumers seem to be leading the wave of farmers market attendees, but visitors come from all walks of life. You might find parents who want to feed their young children a variety of healthy foods, individuals looking to avoid pesticides and GMO foods, people who love the idea of garden-fresh veggies but don't have time or space for a garden of their own, the older generation that might have once grown all these foods themselves, and of course the people who just love the atmosphere and community spirit.

**Check online for farmers markets in your area, or see our list of 7 Standout Farmers Markets on page 23.**

**ABOVE:** Try something new! If you don't know how to prepare a vegetable, ask the vendor. They can often give you cooking tips.

PHOTOGRAPHED BY BUFF STRICKLAND, COURTESY OF SFC FARMERS' MARKET.



**ABOVE LEFT:** Look for more than just fruits and vegetables. Some markets will have spices, like these turmeric roots.

PHOTOGRAPHED BY JASON BAXLEY, COURTESY OF CHARLESTON FARMERS MARKET.

**ABOVE:** Purchase whole vegetables with the tops intact. Those greens are often tasty!

PHOTOGRAPHED BY ERIKA VERNON, COURTESY OF GREEN CITY MARKET.

**LEFT:** One of the joys of shopping at farmers markets is the variety of harvested goods that changes with the season.

PHOTOGRAPH COURTESY OF NASHVILLE FARMERS' MARKET.

**RIGHT:** Crowds can get large later in the morning. Go early to find the best selection.

PHOTOGRAPH COURTESY OF GREATER DES MOINES PARTNERSHIP.

**BELOW:** Vendors will often have plastic bags available, but bring your own reusable tote bag and help save the planet.

PHOTOGRAPH COURTESY OF NASHVILLE FARMERS' MARKET.

**OPPOSITE:** Learn how to judge the best fruits and vegetables by color, firmness and smell.

TOMATOES PHOTOGRAPH BY ERIKA VERNON, COURTESY OF GREEN CITY MARKET. BERRIES PHOTOGRAPH BY BARBIE HULL, COURTESY OF PIKE PLACE MARKET. WATERMELONS AND PEPPERS PHOTOGRAPHS COURTESY OF GREEN CITY MARKET.



# 7 Standout Farmers Markets

Visit these unique farmers markets and discover what goodies each local community has to offer.

## 1 PIKE PLACE MARKET SEATTLE, WA

Pike Place Market was founded in 1907 to provide Seattle citizens direct access to local producers. The Meet the Producer tradition continues today, with Washington farmers selling their fresh produce and specialty farm products to shoppers all year round.

[www.pikeplacemarket.org/farmers-market](http://www.pikeplacemarket.org/farmers-market)

## 2 DOWNTOWN FARMERS' MARKET DES MOINES, IA

Produced by the Greater Des Moines Partnership, this market supports nearly 300 vendors from across the state every Saturday from May through October. Find diverse products, from locally grown produce and Iowa-raised meat, to seasonal flowers, locally produced wine, farm-fresh eggs and cheese, baked goods, and arts and crafts.

[www.dsmpartnership.com/desmoinesfarmersmarket](http://www.dsmpartnership.com/desmoinesfarmersmarket)

## 3 CHARLESTON FARMERS MARKET CHARLESTON, SC

Every Saturday, April through December, vendors gather in the Downtown Historic District to offer local produce, fresh baked breads, raw milk, eggs, honey and more. Visitors can enjoy delicious sweet and savory brunch options, fun activities for the kids, and live music.

[www.charlestonfarmersmarket.com](http://www.charlestonfarmersmarket.com)

## 4 COPLEY SQUARE FARMERS MARKET BOSTON, MA

Hosted by Mass Farmers Markets, Copley Square Farmers Market is Boston's biggest farmers market. On Tuesdays and Fridays, May through November, over two dozen local farmers

offer a vibrant selection of delicious produce, vegan and gluten-free snacks, fresh-caught fish and more.

[www.massfarmersmarkets.org/copley](http://www.massfarmersmarkets.org/copley)

## 5 GREEN CITY MARKET CHICAGO, IL

Chicago's largest and first year-round farmers market, Green City Market offers sustainably grown food and connects local producers directly to chefs and the people of the greater Chicago community. The market also hosts fun educational programs and chef demos.

[www.greencitymarket.org](http://www.greencitymarket.org)

## 6 SFC FARMERS' MARKET AUSTIN, TX

A project of Sustainable Food Center, SFC Farmers' Market is producer-only, meaning the more than 100 farmers and vendors may only sell what they grow or produce. The weekly market showcases local fruits and vegetables, cheeses, meat, eggs, flowers, herbs, soaps, jams, honey and more.

[www.sustainablefoodcenter.org/programs/sfc-farmers-market](http://www.sustainablefoodcenter.org/programs/sfc-farmers-market)

## 7 NASHVILLE FARMERS' MARKET NASHVILLE, TN

Find fresh produce, artisanal food, restaurants, shops, crafts, classes and chef demos at the year-round Nashville Farmers' Market. It dates back to the 1800s when farmers traded their goods where the Davidson County Courthouse now stands. Twelve acres host more than 120 farmers, food entrepreneurs, artisans, small businesses and start-ups for visitors to explore and taste all the diverse community has to offer.

[www.nashvillefarmersmarket.org](http://www.nashvillefarmersmarket.org)





Finish off your shopping trip with a special something. Many markets offer small-batch honey or locally grown flowers.

ABOVE: PHOTOGRAPHED BY JASON BAXLEY, COURTESY OF CHARLESTON FARMERS MARKET. BELOW: PHOTOGRAPH COURTESY OF NASHVILLE FARMERS' MARKET.

## What About Food Exchanges and CSAs?

A food exchange is different from a farmers market in that it is mainly online and set up as a way for farmers and consumers to buy and sell foods as needed. In some cases, farmers list their available inventory and buyers will place orders. The farmers can fill those orders and deliver the food to a central physical location where the buyer can pick up the purchase.

In a CSA (community supported agriculture) program, farmers sign up members to share in the harvest of the upcoming growing season. People pay for a specific time period and then receive regular deliveries of produce or other items. (See “A Ranch Home Reborn” on page 50 for our featured farmer-homeowner who participates in a CSA.)

