

Farmers' Market Tips and Tricks

The Senior Farmers' Market Nutrition Program

Do you find your food budget running low? Does this make it hard to purchase fresh produce? You may benefit from the Senior Farmers' Market Nutrition Program (SFMNP), which provides access to local fruits, vegetables, honey, and herbs. The SFMNP gives vouchers to older adults so they can go to their local farmers' market to shop for fresh produce.

The United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) funds the SFMNP, but each state manages and administers the program differently. Not all farmers' markets participate in the SFMNP. Check with your state program and local market before going if you want to use your benefits. Find local farmers' markets using the [USDA National Farmers' Market Directory](#).

How to Apply

If you are age 60 or older and meet income requirements – for example, a one-person household with an annual income of \$13,590 or a two-person household with an annual income of \$18,310 – you can qualify. Your local [Cooperative Extension Agency](#) may be able to help you learn more about eating healthy and help to apply for the SFMNP. USDA also has [SFMNP State Agency contact information](#), and you can see if you qualify at [Benefits.Gov](#). Contact your local Area Agency on Aging for help finding resources you may need using the [Eldercare Locator](#).

Farmers' Market Shopping Tips

- Purchase produce that is in season. Some farmers even have produce available in the winter.
- Talk with vendors at the farmers' market and find out what will be available the next time you come. Use this information to plan your purchases.
- Buy only what you need for that week, so produce does not go to waste.
- Consider canning or freezing produce if you purchase more than you can eat in a short time.

- Plan to prepare or store produce safely, so it will be available when you need it. Use the City of Seattle's [Fruit & Vegetable Storage Guide](#) to learn how to properly store produce.

Produce Tips & Tricks

Fresh fruits and vegetables are important to a healthy diet. However, every food item has the potential to be harmful if not stored or prepared properly. Bacteria or germs can affect produce during growth, harvest, storage, and preparation. Make sure you are following safe steps with produce to decrease the chances for a foodborne illness.

Buying Produce

- Keep produce separate from meat, poultry, and seafood when packing them to take home.
- When buying pre-cut produce, make sure it is stored in a cold environment or on ice at the market.
- Inspect produce for quality – choose produce that is not bruised or damaged.

Storing Produce

- Store produce properly. Produce that requires refrigeration should be stored at 40 degrees Fahrenheit. Some produce must be stored in a dry, cool location.
- Refrigerate all pre-cut produce at home.

Preparing Produce

- Cut away any damaged areas on the produce before preparing or eating.
- Wash all produce under running water before preparing or eating. Do not use soap or detergents.
- Even if you do not plan to eat the skin, wash the produce before you peel so no bacteria get under the skin when peeling.
- Use a produce brush on firm produce.
- After washing produce, dry with a clean cloth or paper towel to avoid contamination with bacteria.