

# Eating Locally, Seasonally & Sustainably

*Your food choices affect not only your health but also that of the planet. Whenever possible, opt for nutritious, locally produced, in-season foods. This is a more environmentally sustainable way to eat.*

## HEALTH BENEFITS OF EATING LOCALLY AND SEASONALLY

- **Higher nutritional value:** The less distance plant foods travel and the less time they sit in stores, the more likely they are to retain quality and nutrients. One study found mixed salad greens refrigerated for 10 days lost 59% of their vitamin C.
- **Greater phytonutrient diversity:** Eating a variety of local and seasonal produce takes in a broader array of healthful phytonutrients.
- **More flavor:** In-season produce is typically more flavorful. Compare a fresh summer tomato with one purchased in winter—no contest.

## EATING SEASONALLY AND LOCALLY COULD SAVE YOU MONEY

Out-of-season fruits and vegetables often cost more due to transportation and storage, and prices rise when supply is limited. In-season food is usually in high supply, so stores have a short window to sell it—meaning you can often find it on sale or reasonably priced.

Buying directly from farmers has grown in popularity. This may save money compared to stores, but prices vary. In one U.S. study, cucumbers cost 24% less at the farmers market than at the grocery store, but farmers-market strawberries cost more than twice as much. Comparison shop—different vendors' prices vary, and some work with food assistance programs to help low-income shoppers.

### TERMS TO KNOW

**Local foods:** Those eaten near where they were produced—in your city, state, or region.

**Seasonal eating:** Consuming fruits and vegetables at the same time of year they are harvested in your area.

**Food sustainability:** Meeting our food and nutrition needs without harming the ability of future generations to meet theirs.

Growing food yourself generally costs the least. If you don't have garden space, check for a community garden. In some areas, you may be able to pick fruit from trees on public land.

## **SUPPORT YOUR LOCAL ECONOMY AND THE ENVIRONMENT**

Making local, sustainable food choices supports farmers in your community and puts money back into your local economy. Besides farmers markets, look for farm shops, pick-your-own farms, roadside stands, mobile markets, and urban rooftop farms.

Another way to support local growers is Community Supported Agriculture (CSA), which allows consumers and farmers to share the risks and benefits of growing food. Though CSAs look different worldwide, members (shareholders) generally:

- Pay a fee to help meet a farm's operating expenses—in a lump sum or installments. Some farms offer discounted (cost-offset) shares to those with limited income.
- Receive a portion of the farm's produce each week during the growing season. Some farms also offer honey, eggs, and milk, with pick-up at the farm or city sites.
- Get to know the farmers and how food is grown, through field days, newsletters, recipes, and classes.

The CSA model is growing across the globe. It encourages eco-friendly farming and can minimize food waste by basing production on the number of members. Your choices will vary based on where you live and your dietary needs—check what is available in your area and choose what works for you.

### **RESOURCES**

**fallingfruit.org** — Locate public fruit trees and edible plants across the globe.

**pickyourown.org** — Search pick-your-own farms in the U.S. and many other countries.

**localharvest.org** — Lists CSAs across the U.S.

**urgenci.net** — International network showcasing CSA activities around the world.