

Shopping at the Farmers Market

Did you know that shopping a farmer market helps support local farmers; offers fresh seasonal produce, stimulate local economies; offers opportunity to connect with your community and promote sustainability. To get the most out of a farmers' market, check out these helpful tips.

Before You Go:

- ✓ Plan Your Meals: Knowing what you'll be making help you choose what to buy.
- ✓ Bring a List: To stay focused and avoid impulse buys, create a list of what you need.
- ✓ Know What's in Season: Buy produce in seasons to ensure you're buying at peak freshness.
- ✓ Bring Cash: Many vendors, especially smaller ones, prefer cash.
- ✓ Bring Reusable Bags: Sturdy canvas or nylon bags are best. Consider bringing produce bags too!

At the Market:

- ✓ Walk Around: Take a lap to get an overview of what vendors have and compare prices.
- ✓ Talk to the Vendors: Farmers and other vendors are a wealth of knowledge about their products and can offer tips and suggestions.
- ✓ Don't Be Afraid to Ask Questions: Ask about growing practices, how to cook, and how to store your purchases.
- ✓ Be Open to "Ugly Produce": Farmers often sell produce with minor imperfections, which can be a great deal.
- ✓ Sample and Try New Things: Don't hesitate to ask for samples and try new items you haven't seen or tasted before.
- ✓ Arrive Early or Late: Both can have their advantages, depending on your goals (early for best selection, late for potential deals).

While at the Market:

- ✓ Ask about EBT/SNAP: If you use these benefits, inquire about which vendors accept them.
- ✓ Don't Bargain: Farmers' markets are generally priced competitively, so haggling is not typically expected.
- ✓ Enjoy the Experience: Take your time, browse, and savor the atmosphere of a local market.

Produce is Home: How and where to store everything?

- Most need to be refrigerated at 45 degree or colder: apples, pears, berries, cantaloupe, honeydew, beets, broccoli, celery, carrots, cucumber, mushrooms etc.
- Counter storage, defined as keep produce away from sunlight, heat and moisture and once ripen, move to the fridge. These produces include citrus fruits, kiwi, nectarines, peaches, plums, avocado, watermelon, and bananas.
- Tomatoes do not refrigerate unless cut.

- Pantry storage, defined as keep away from sunlight, heat and moisture. These produces include hard squash, onions, garlic, shallots, white potatoes, and yams.

More Produce Storage Tips:

- Remove greens from beets, turnips, carrots, and parsnips.
- Keep berries, cherries, grapes, and mushrooms dry and unwashed until ready to use.
- Wash and pat dry lettuce or leafy greens, then wrap loosely in paper towels and store in mesh vegetable bag or clean, dry plastic bag.
- Store cucumbers, eggplant, and peppers on the upper shelf of your fridge.
- Apples, bananas, and pears give off ethylene gas that causes other produce to ripen faster. Keep away from other produce.
- Store fruits and vegetables separately as some fruits absorb odors.
- Once fruits and vegetables are cut or sliced, cover, and refrigerate them!

Wow, that was a lot of information, time for a recipe!

Grilled Zucchini and Tomato Salad (3 to 5 servings)

3 small zucchinis, sliced into ¼ inch slices

3 tablespoons olive oil

½ teaspoon salt

½ teaspoon pepper

1 lemon zested and juiced

1 clove garlic or ¼ teaspoon garlic powder

1 teaspoon sugar

¼ teaspoon crushed red pepper- optional

1 cup quartered Campari or your favorite tomato

½ cup kalamata olives, pitted and cut lengthwise- or use black or green olives- all optional

¼ cup of chopped fresh basil

Garnish with fresh chopped basil, crumbled Feta cheese- if desired

Either grill or sauté the zucchini on the stove with 1 tablespoon oil, ¼ teaspoon salt and pepper. Cook until tender, about 3 to 5 minutes per side. Let cool completely.

Whisk together in a large bowl lemon zest, juice, garlic, red and black pepper, and salt. Stir in zucchini, tomatoes, olives and basil. Garnish with basil and feta if desired. Enjoy!

References: <https://www.eatright.org>, <https://www.heart.org>, <https://hgic.clemson.edu/>; <https://www.aces.edu/blog/topics/food-safety/buying-storing-preparing-fresh-vegetables/>, cuisineathome.com/issue163/summer 2025.

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