

Tips for Shopping Your Farmers' Market

It's that time of the season to prepare shopping at the local farmers markets. If you start out with a basic knowledge of seasonal produce, you'll know what kind of fruits and vegetables to expect when you arrive at the farmers market. Since you know what you're likely to find at the farmers market, you can do a bit of meal planning and shop accordingly, much as you would at the grocery store. Make a list and note the amounts you'll need of each item. Because the farmers market is subject to seasonality, and vendors may run out of items or simply not have them that week, maintain some flexibility. No asparagus this week? Try substituting broccoli.

Essential Shopping Tips:

Bring Cash: It's extremely rare for farmers market vendors to take credit card purchases, so you'll need to bring cash. Purchases will go quicker if you have smaller bills and exact (or close to exact) change.

Bring Your Own Bags/Wagon: Don't rely on vendors for bags. Sturdy totes, backpacks, or even a child's stroller or wagon to make transporting heavy items easier.

Do a First Lap: Browse all stalls before purchasing to check for the freshest items and best prices.

Bring a Cooler: If you are buying meats, dairy, or frozen items, keep them cold with an insulated bag, say experienced shoppers on Forks in the Dirt.

When to Shop:

Early: Best for the widest selection, especially for popular items that sell out quickly.

Late: Best discounts, as farmers often lower prices in the last hour to avoid taking produce back home.

Product and Vendor Tips: Chat with Farmers: Ask them for recipes, storage advice, and overall recommendations.

Choose Whole Vegetables/Fruits: Opt to purchase the entire fruit or vegetable when possible. It might be more work to prepare the produce to eat but get more for your money. Whole fruits and vegetables generally will store longer in your fridge. You can often use the entire vegetable. Try sautéing beet or radish tops as a vegetable or a side dish. Carrot tops

can be added when making soup stocks. Getting creative helps you get more for your money and reduce amount of waste that you have from your produce.

Almost time for New York State Farmers Market coupons through Oneida County Office for the Aging. Coupon will be available in July. Information on distribution locations, please call **315-798-5456 extension 4**. When you receive coupons, remember to bring your identification verifying you are aged 60 or older.

Swiss Chard with Garbanzo Beans & Fresh Tomatoes

Serves 4 from allrecipes

Ingredients:

2 tablespoons olive oil

1 medium shallot, chopped

2 green onions, chopped

½ cup garbanzo beans, drained (option any legume from small white beans, kidney beans to black eye peas)

1 bunch any color Swiss chard, rinsed and chopped (Other options- Spinach or Escarole)

1 medium to large tomato, chopped

½ lemon, juiced

Salt and pepper to taste

Directions:

-Heat oil in large skillet. Stir in shallots and green onions; cook for 3 to 5 minutes, or until soft and fragrant.

-Stir in beans of your choice, heat through.

-Add Swiss chard, cooked until wilted.

-Add tomato, squeeze lemon juice over the greens.

-Heat thoroughly. Season with Salt and pepper to taste.

References: thespruceeats.com/farmers-market-shopping-tips, seniorhelpers.com, allrecipes.com.

Written by Laurie Zirilli, registered dietitian, contract RD for Oneida County Office for the Aging. Oneida County OFA provides nutrition counseling and education for the aging. Questions about services and programs for older adults and caregivers, including the Senior Nutrition Program, should call Oneida County Office for the Aging at (315) 798-5456.