# Local Color: Reasons to visit your local Farmers' Market

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MANSFIELD, OH: Almost every city in Mid-Ohio has their own local farmers' market. A farmers' market is typically an outdoor gathering held periodically where local farmers can sell their freshest produce to the general population.



*Cook Road Trinity Farmers Market | © James Pennington*

At some farmers markets vendors also sell fresh home made food products. The local bakery may set up and sell their freshly baked breads. Dairy farmers may set up a booth and sell their freshly made dairy products such as butters and cheeses. Yet still, at some farmers markets you can even find locally made crafts like soaps and jewelry. There are many reasons to shop at your local farmers' market, here are a few of them:

**Live Local - Buy Local; Go Local!**
By shopping locally, you can keep money in your own community. When you purchase from a non-locally owned business more than half, about 60% of your money, leaves your local economy. By purchasing locally you can keep almost 3/4ths, about 73%, of that money in your community! Money that helps stimulate the local economy, grow small businesses, and the local tax base. Farmers' markets are a wonderful way to contribute to sustainability of the local economy.

**Know where your food comes from:**
Shopping at the Farmers' Market allows you to get to know the farmers who produce your food. If you have any questions about where or how the food is grown, the person who grew it is right in front of you! By supporting local farmers instead of corporations you make your dollars your vote. By shopping from family farms you help them stay in business by giving your money to

hard working people who care about growing healthy products instead of corporations counting dollars and seeds.

**Stay free of pesticides, chemicals, and GMO's:**
Local family farmers usually don't use any pesticides, chemicals, or genetically modified organisms in producing their food. Many farmers use organic growing practices. In fact Mid-Ohio is blessed to have several local farmers that are Certified Organic and visit some of the area markets. While still, many other farmers can't afford to pay the exorbitant fees required to give their food the highly sought after Organic label but you can still get quality unlabeled organic food for a great price.


*Strawberries | © Public Domain*

**Enjoy better tasting and healthier food**
Produce bought at farmers markets usually taste much better because they are allowed to ripen on the tree. Large producers of produce have to ship long distances so they typically pick their fruit before it is ripe and it ripens either in the delivery truck or on the store shelves. Fruit that is picked ripe has much more flavor than ones that are picked before they are ready. Shopping at the Farmers' Market is healthier for your family because there isn't tons of processed junk food on every aisle. By shopping at the Farmers' Market you can get the highest quality chemical free produce for your family. Many local vendors also sell breads, healthier snacks, and other prepared foods that are much better options than conventional prepackaged foods.

**Benefit the environment:**
Reduce your carbon footprint! On average, non-locally grown food travels more than 3000 miles to get to us here in the Mid-Ohio area. Much of it comes from Mexico, Chili, Brazil and other tropical locations. This travel uses large amounts of fossil fuels and creates pollution and extra trash from shipping and handling. Conventional farms can also use toxic pesticides that pollute the environment. Worse yet, overseas farmers are not necessarily bound to US safety laws for growing food. By shopping at the Farmers' Market, you can avoid all of this and reduce your carbon footprint while doing your part to preserve mother earth.

**Family friendly and Educational atmospheres**
Farmer's markets are a great place to bring your kids to learn about healthy eating habits and how food is grown. Many vendors are local farmers who have children themselves and are more than willing to explain to your children how they grow certain vegetables and why they are good for you. It may even encourage your children to want to start a family garden.

**Shop seasonally with a healthy experience**
Some Farmers' markets are held in rural locations that allow you to reconnect with nature by shopping outdoors in the open air while buying your produce in season. Shopping in the open air and open sunlight, instead of the filtered air and artificial light of supermarkets, exposes you to a more healthy experience. Everyone knows vitamin D is produced while your skin is in the sun.

Different vegetables and fruits are available during different times of the year (Click here for list). Shopping outdoors helps you reconnect with the changing seasons and with the nature around you. This is further aided by consuming the local foods of your area and by using those seasonal ingredients in your home recipes. Some doctors have even suggested that eating seasonal local fruits and vegetables helps reduce seasonal allergies. It may even inspire you to try a new seasonal dish!

Click Here for a list of Ohio's growing season produce types and harvest times.

Click here for a list of the Farmers' Market's in the Mid-Ohio Area.

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