

Farmers' Market Success: 5 Tips for the Best Trips

Submitted by: Beverly Burke, Marais des Cygnes Extension District Master Food Volunteer

Farmers' market season is in full swing! Farmers' markets offer tons of resources for making healthful and delicious meals, but sometimes getting started at the market can be a bit daunting. You're in luck, though, because a few simple tips and tricks can turn the experience from overwhelming to downright fun!

Tip #1: Look for your favorite foods, but also seek opportunities to try something new. A true farmer's market will change as the growing season evolves. Check out what's new each week, and feel free to talk to the vendors about ways to prepare each food. Free samples are often abundant -- they can be your best friend when it comes to trying something new. If you're feeling too shy to ask the people working at the farm stands, or if they're swamped with customers, there are other ways to learn about new foods. For example, try taking a photo of a mystery food. Post the photo to Facebook and ask your friends about it. Is the food tasty? What's their favorite way to prepare it? Why? As an alternative, you could write down the name of the mysterious ingredient and do a little research online.

Tip #2: Watch out for baked goods! Most farmer's markets have a few stands that sell huge baked goods. Remember that any baked good the size of your hand is going to have an average of 400-500 calories. If baked goods are even bigger than that, watch out! They're probably calorie bombs.

Tip #3: Enjoy the walk. Strolling the farmers' market can be good exercise, especially if you make a few laps around the stalls and park your car farther from the stands.

Tip #4: Pack smart! It's a great idea to bring your own bags to the farmers' market, and it's an even better idea to bring along a few cooler packs or a bottle of frozen water. This will help you keep your greens (and other delicate purchases) cool as you shop. Plus, you can take sips out of the frozen water bottle as the ice melts. Refreshing! A hat and sunscreen are also farmers' market musts. Having cash handy is helpful too -- with it, you can buy a few things from many stands.

Tip #5: Don't judge a book by its cover. Many of the foods that you'll find at a farmers' market won't be as uniform as the foods you're used to seeing at the grocery store. Often, these less perfect looking foods are packed with the most unbelievable flavor. So don't let a funny lump or lone worm hole dissuade you from picking up a tasty new food or two.

Use these tips to help you make the most of summer's bounty-it will be a memory all too soon. Summer is a good time to try new food and recipes and improve your health along the way.

Article from *Food and Health.com*

For more information on this topic and other food and nutrition related information contact K-State Research and Extension, Marais des Cygnes District at 913-294-4306 or write to Diane Burnett, FCS Agent at

dburnett@ksu.edu