Summer and early fall are prime time for farmer's markets. If you have never visited a farmer's market, now is the time! Farmer's markets are famous for their variety and quality of produce, meats, eggs, artisan prepared foods and handmade products.

I can spend hours browsing through markets, and here are some tips to help you get the most out of our markets.

**Hints and Tips for Farmer's Markets Shopping**

* **Take Your Time**
Have fun browsing! I like to make a slow loop around the market, making note of stands of special interest, before I begin buying. Of course, that doesn't mean I don't buy a fresh filled croissant, breakfast taco or a peach to munch on as I stroll around!
* **Bring Cash**
Cash is the easiest currency but our vendors accept checks and we have our own personal ATM machine. Some of our vendors accept credit cards (not many of those are farmers!)
* **Bring Containers and Shopping Bags (BYOSB)**
Although some farmer's market vendors have bags and boxes, it's easiest if you bring your own reusable bags. You are contributing to the most basic recycling and environmental causes by using cloth and string bags, besides buying local, and sustainably grown produce.
* **Ask Questions**
Make sure to ask questions of the vendors when you see unfamiliar produce. I learned about black Spanish radishes last year and they have become a favorite addition to my meals in springtime. Vendors and farmers love to share their knowledge and can even give you recipes and cooking tips.
* **Dress Comfortably**
Wear walking shoes and dress appropriately for the weather. Our markets are open rain or shine, so be prepared with sunscreen and collapsible umbrellas; and watch the weather! If you bring your children, make sure you have supplies, a stroller, and drinks for them. Involve them in the process too, and they will become more interested in fresh produce and meal preparation.
* **If you bring your pets**
It’s always fun to include the canine member of your family in your market trip but please remember the asphalt in our parking lots heats up 15 or more degrees than the ambient air. A dog's paw pads are susceptible to burns. Slip off your shoes and stand on the pavement with bare feet first; If it's not comfortable for you, it's not going to be comfortable for your dog either. **Don’t leave your dog in the car.** Don’t use human sunscreen on your pets; it may be toxic to your dog. Pet stores sell sunscreens formulated especially for dogs. And, please make sure your dog does not use our market as its restroom. If it does, come prepared to clean up.
* **Go Early**
There's nothing better than strolling through a fragrant and colorful farmer's market early in the morning. The sights, smells, and sounds are incredibly beautiful. You'll find the best selection if you show up early too.
* **Go Late**
Just before closing time, you may find some of the best deals, because vendors don't want to take their wares back home. But remember that the selection will be limited at this time, and some vendors may be sold out.
* **Bring Coolers**
Make sure to have coolers with ice packs in your car, or take your market goodies straight home to keep it fresh and at its peak.
* **Experiment!**
Don't be afraid to try something new. Have fun! You'll probably discover a new favorite fruit, vegetable, plant, flower, bread or cheese that will make your summer even richer and sweeter.

Shopping at our farmer's market means that you will get the best, freshest produce available, while at the same time you are supporting small local farmers. You can find produce that is too delicate to ship, heirloom varieties of produce, and learn something new too. Often the vendors farm organically and if not sustainably and farmer’s markets are their primary source of income. Cherish our market communities and they will thrive!