



Missouri Crunch Off Toolkit

Missouri Farm to School is a collaborative effort between:



CONTENTS

What is the Missouri Crunch Off?.....	2
When is the Missouri Crunch Off?	2
Steps to Get Started.....	3
How Can I Find Local Products?.....	3
Tips for Success.....	4
Resources.....	5
Simple Crunch Time Activity Ideas.....	5
Press Release Template.....	6
Promotional Email.....	6
Social Media Post Templates.....	7
Contact Information.....	7

What is the Missouri Crunch Off?

The Missouri Crunch Off is a statewide event to celebrate local produce and farm to school by crunching into any Missouri grown food.

In celebration of Farm to School Month, States throughout the USDA’s Mountain Plains Region (CO, MT, MO, KS, NE, ND, SD, WY) are competing in the Mountain Plains Crunch Off to see which State can get the most “crunches” into a local produce per capita. Nebraska has defended its title of the Crunch Off Champions for the past four years.

As a Missouri Crunch Off participant, you will join students, teachers, farmers, parents, community members, and local food enthusiasts in celebrating the wonderful produce Missouri has to offer. Your Crunch efforts will encourage healthy eating, support local agriculture, celebrate Farm to School Month, and highlight community strength gained from farmer-school partnerships.

When is the Missouri Crunch Off?

The Missouri Crunch Off is held every year through the entire month of October. Individual Crunch Off events may occur anytime between October 1st through October 31st.



Steps to Get Started

1. **Create a Crunch Team!** Find a group of individuals who are excited about Farm to School and local food. Consider including students, teachers, food service staff, administrators, the PTA, and community members to help you plan and promote your event.
2. **Decide what you will crunch and where you will get it from!** Apples are a great option and are readily available in Missouri throughout October. Any local produce items count as “crunchable.” Items “crunched” into in past years include apples, popcorn, okra, sweet potatoes, carrots, radishes, and more.
3. **Create your Crunch plan!** Create a plan that works best for your group. You may choose to have a school-wide Crunch in a large assembly, individual classrooms, community events, with individuals at different locations all at the same time, or at some other time and place.
4. **Promote your Crunch event!** Share your event on social media, print media, school announcements, newsletters, etc. There are template press releases and social media posts at the end of this guide for your use.
5. **Celebrate your Crunch event!** Share your photos and stories on social media using #MOCrunchOff and #MountainPlainsCrunch. Tag the [Missouri Farm to School](#) Facebook page to have your post shared.
6. **Register!** After your event remember to register your Crunch Off, register your event here: <http://muext.us/MOCrunchOff>. You must register your event to be counted!

How Can I Find Local Products?

- Find local farmers and farmer’s markets at [Show Me Food](#) and [Missouri Grown USA](#).
- Source fruits or vegetables from a food hub. (KC Food Hub)
- Have a school or community garden or orchard? Source directly from there.
- Know a Master Gardener in your area? Ask if they have a connection to local crunchable produce.
- Have a garden or apple trees or know someone who does? Donate to a crunch event!
- School Food Nutrition Professionals
 - Ask your distributor if they carry local apples or other local produce.
 - Visit the MU Extension website or reference the Missouri Farm to School Guide for School Food Nutrition Professionals for information on sourcing local.

Tips for Success

1. **Get as many people involved as you can!** Once you have decided on where your Crunch will take place, start to spread the word! Get students, parents, food service staff, teachers, administrators, and community members excited about your Crunch through social media, newsletters, press releases, PTA announcements, and any other way you typically interact with the community.
2. **Look for strategic partnerships!** Head Start, State Government, 4-H, FFA, FCS/Home Economics classes, Snap Ed Regional Leads, CACFP providers, WIC programs, Senior Farmers Markets, local farmers markets, Extension offices, etc.
3. **Be conscious of waste!** For younger audiences, consider portioning your local produce to reduce the amount of delicious local food that is wasted.
4. **Consider incorporating lessons!** Consider incorporating lessons on farming, soil, the water cycle, photosynthesis, or other relevant topics into the curriculum during the week or day of the Crunch. There are sample learning activities below, in this guide, for your use.
5. **Consider a field trip!** Farm field trips are a great way to help students get excited about local produce, learn more about the food system, and have a successful Crunch! If a field trip isn't feasible, consider inviting farmers to classrooms and events to talk about their farm and local produce.
6. **Determine how much you plan to spend!** Missouri Grown is providing up to \$1,000 reimbursement to registered Missouri schools and Early Childcare Education Centers to cover the purchase of specialty crops from a Missouri farmer. To learn more, check it out on their website at <https://agriculture.mo.gov/abd/financial/promotespecialtycrops.php>.
7. **Share your success!** Consider inviting local media or have a point person to capture the event to share on social media and other outlets.
8. **Be a great communicator!** Communicate early and clearly about when your Crunch is taking place, how people can participate, and why you are crunching.
9. **Consider Remote Crunching!** Encourage kids/parents/community members to crunch at home. Consider a Zoom or other technology platform for everyone to crunch together virtually.



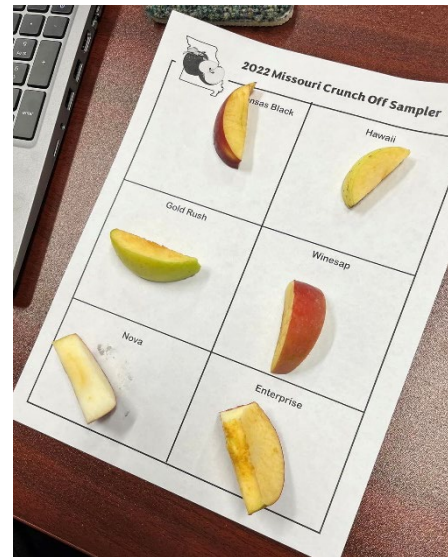
Resources

Missouri Crunch Off Website

The website has various resources and activity sheets that can be printed off and used/handed out during crunch off activities. <https://health.mo.gov/living/wellness/nutrition/farmtopreschool/>

Crunch Time Activities

- Conduct taste tests with apple (or other produce) varieties.
- Host a cooking contest, class, or demo using local produce.
- Set up a produce-themed photo booth for the Crunch event.
- Read farm or fruit/vegetable themed books.
- Ask students to describe verbally or in writing how their produce looks, feels, tastes, and smells.
- Research the path local produce takes to get from the farm to your plate.
- Host a talk with a local farmer about their operation.
- Have apples, radishes, carrots or other local produce as a snack at a meeting or event.
- Work with local grocery stores/producers to promote the Crunch Off and point folks to locally grown produce.
- Set up a booth a at a local Trunk or Treat or Fall Festival.



Press Release Template

{NAME}

{SCHOOL/ORGANIZATION}

{PHONE}

{EMAIL}

{DATE}

{SCHOOL/ORGANIZATION} is joining schools, preschools, nonprofits, and local food enthusiasts in celebrating Farm to School Month by competing in a eight-State Crunch Off competition! {STATE} is competing against {ALL OTHER STATES} to determine who will be crowned the Mountain Plains Region Crunch Champion through having the most crunches into local apples or produce per capita.

{INCLUDE SPECIFICS ON YOUR EVENT AND HOW TO BE INVOLVED}

This Crunch event encourages healthy eating, supports local agriculture, and helps students and community members gain a deeper understanding of the food system. {INCLUDE DETAILS ON ACTIVITIES YOU ARE DOING FOR THE CRUNCH}

Help Missouri win the Crunch crown by joining our Crunch event! For more information, or to participate in the Crunch, please contact {CONTACT NAME} at {PHONE} or {EMAIL}.

Sample Promotional Email

October is National Farm to School Month! We are celebrating by crunching into local Missouri produce and participating in the Mountain Plains Region Crunch Off. Check out [this 2 minute video](#) to see how other states are planning to celebrate.

Gather you students, coworkers, community members and local food enthusiasts to crunch into local Missouri produce during the month of October.

Register your 2023 Crunch Off event at muext.us/MOCrunchOff and for more information, visit the [2023 Missouri Crunch Off website](#).

Happy Crunching!

Social Media Post

- In Missouri, we produce about 1 million bushels of apples a year! Enjoy a Missouri apple today! Don't forget to register your event at <http://muext.us/MOCrunchOff>
- The Jonathan apple has been grown in Missouri for more than 150 years and is the most widely grown apple in the state. Harvest season for Jonathan apples usually starts at the beginning of September. Find a local orchard to visit today! Don't forget to register your events at <http://muext.us/MOCrunchOff>
- Have you tried purple, red, yellow, white, and the traditional orange carrot? Crunch into local carrots this year as part of your Crunch Off event. Don't forget to register your event at <http://muext.us/MOCrunchOff>
- Share with us your favorite local produce to "crunch" during your local Crunch Off event. Don't forget to register your event at <http://muext.us/MOCrunchOff>
- October is almost to a close and that means time is running out to participate in the Missouri Crunch Off. Don't forget to register your event at <http://muext.us/MOCrunchOff>
- Create your own post and use these hashtags **#MountainPlainsCrunch** and **#MissouriCrunchOff**.

Missouri Crunch Co-Leads

Lexi Jose

Ag Business Development
Missouri Department of Agriculture
573-301-0568 | alexis.jose@mda.mo.gov

Lisa Lauer

Senior Nutritionist
Missouri Department of Health and Senior Services
816-521-7740 | Lisa.Lauer@health.mo.gov

Tracy Minnis

Farm-to-Institution Local Foods Coordinator
University of Missouri Extension
660-646-8670 | minnist@missouri.edu