

Missouri Crunch Off

What is the Missouri Crunch Off?

The Missouri Crunch Off is a statewide event to celebrate Farm to School Month by crunching into any Missouri grown food anytime between October 1 through October 31.

States throughout the USDA's Mountain Plains Region (CO, MT, MO, KS, NE, ND, SD, WY) compete to see which state can get the most "crunches" into a local food per capita.

As a Missouri Crunch Off participant, you will join students, teachers, farmers, parents and community members 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.

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 and popcorn are a great option and are readily available in Missouri throughout October. Any locally grown food counts as a "crunchable" item.
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 or individual classrooms; at a large community event; or a virtual event.
4. **Promote your Crunch event!** Share your event on social media, print media, school announcements and newsletters. Let local media know about your event.
5. **Celebrate your Crunch event!** Share your photos and stories on social media using #MOCrunchOff and #MountainPlainsCrunch.
6. **Register!** After your event remember to register your Crunch Off. Register your event at muext.us/MOCrunchOff. You must register your event for it to be counted!

How Can I Find Local Products?

- Find local farmers and farmers markets at showmefood.org, seasonalandsimple.info, or missourigrownusa.com
- Source fruits, vegetables and other Missouri grown products from a food hub (KC Food Hub).
- Have a school or community garden? Source directly from there.
- 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.

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!
2. **Look for strategic partnerships!** Head Start, state government, 4-H, FFA, FCS/Home Economics classes, SNAP-Ed regional leads, Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP) providers, WIC programs, local farmers markets, Extension offices, etc.
3. **Be conscious of waste!** For younger audiences, consider portioning your local produce to reduce the amount of food that is wasted.
4. **Consider incorporating lessons!** Consider incorporating lessons on farming, nutrition, soil, the water cycle, photosynthesis, or other relevant topics into the curriculum during the week or day of the Crunch. You can find resources at health.mo.gov/living/wellness/nutrition/farmtopreschool/
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, visit 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.

We are here to help! Reach out with any questions on how to organize a Crunch Off.

Lexi Jose

Missouri Department of Agriculture
573-301-0568
alexis.jose@mda.mo.gov

Tracy Minnis

University of Missouri Extension
660-646-8670
minnist@missouri.edu