



Fact Sheet

Shopping Safely at Farmers Markets

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Introduction

Farmers markets continue to grow in popularity across the United States and across Missouri. They are a great place to 1) purchase healthy local produce and other foods, 2) meet and support local farmers, and 3) enjoy shopping in a fun environment. However, it is important that consumers pay attention to food safety when buying and using foods purchased in such venues.

Safety tips at the market

Although you can never have 100 percent assurance that a food product purchased anywhere will not cause foodborne illness, the table on page 2 shows certain clues to help you determine the product's safety. Although some are specific to farmers markets, many of these tips are applicable to buying foods in any venue.



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Safety tips at the market

Food Type / Category:	Food Safety clues to look for:
Fresh produce	Should be clean, look fresh, no cuts or nicks. Displayed off the ground/floor.
Cut or peeled produce	Displayed on/surrounded by ice. Look fresh and cold.
Meats, eggs, cheeses	Package must feel cold; product in cooler/on ice. Eggs - carton and eggs should be clean, not cracked.
Milk	Should be pasteurized for safety - ask vendor to confirm.
Juice, cider	Pasteurized is safest.
Hot prepared foods	Would like to see vendor using thermometer. Should have a lid, see steam rising from pan.
Home-canned foods	Ask how food was prepared (boiling water bath or other). Ask if product should be refrigerated at your home. Vendors selling canned pickles, meats, vegetables, sauerkraut must have proper licensing.
Samples	Servers should keep a barrier between hands and food. Samples offered so that shoppers only touch one sample.
Handwashing	See vendors washing their hands. See a handwashing station in booth (particularly prepared foods).
Booth, personal cleanliness	Surfaces of booth, knives, other utensils clean. Clean clothes, hands, no wiping nose, etc.
Certifications	Look for any posted food safety certifications/ trainings attended.
All products	Ask vendors about their food safety practices.

Safety tips on the way home

- Keep raw meat separate from other foods to prevent cross-contamination.
- Make the market your last stop before going home.
- Use a cooler/insulated bag, especially on hot days or if more than 1 hour to get home. Store the cooler in the passenger part of the car, rather than the trunk.
 - Do not allow perishable foods to be in the temperature danger zone (40°F to 140°F) for more than 2 hours because pathogens (organisms such as viruses or bacteria that can cause disease) grow rapidly in this zone.
- Reusable grocery bags should be washed often and stored dry.
 - Cloth bags should be washed in a washing machine with laundry detergent and dried in the dryer or air-dried.
 - Plastic lined and insulated bags should be scrubbed using hot water and soap and air-dried.
 - Do not use reusable grocery bags for other purposes, such as carrying gym clothes or children's toys.



Safety tips at home:

No matter where you get your foods — whether at a farmers market, grocery store, you raise it yourself, or from another source — there are certain food safety rules at home that you should always follow to reduce your risk of getting a foodborne illness. They can generally be divided into the following four categories:

Clean:

Always wash hands before and after handling any food.

Keep surfaces and utensils clean — before and after use.

Wash produce under running water before eating or cooking.

- No need to use soap or produce washes.
- Wash even if peeling the produce as you otherwise could transfer “dirt” from outside to the inside.
- Wash cantaloupe, potatoes, and rough-skinned items with a produce brush

Separate:

Keep raw and ready-to-eat foods separate to prevent cross-contamination.

- Use different cutting boards, plates, and utensils for raw meat, poultry, and seafood than for fresh produce or cooked meat.
- Keep raw meat, poultry, and eggs separate from all other foods in the refrigerator.
- Place these raw items in sealed plastic bags or other containers.
- Keep eggs in their original carton and store them in the main compartment of the refrigerator, not the door, to keep them cooler.



Cook:

All foods should be cooked thoroughly to kill pathogens.

The internal temperature of meats and other protein foods in particular should be checked with a food thermometer.

- Beef, pork, lamb, and veal steaks, chops, and roasts; seafood: 145°F with a 3-minute rest time after cooking.
- Ground beef, pork, lamb, and veal; egg dishes (quiches, etc.): 160°F.
- All poultry products, all reheated foods: 165°F.



Chill:

Refrigerate cut or peeled produce, meats and other perishables at least within 2 hours of when you bought it to prevent pathogen growth.

- If air temperature is above 90°F, refrigerate within 1 hour.

Next Steps

Based on the previous tips, develop a list of key practices that you plan to implement the next time you are shopping at a farmers market, on the way home, and/or once at home.

Key practices I plan to use:

- 1) _____
- 2) _____
- 3) _____
- 4) _____

Frequently Asked Questions

Answers to some common questions about food safety when shopping at farmers markets:

1. Should I use soap or produce washes when washing fresh produce?

No — running water and friction from your hands or a produce brush (for rough-skinned items such as cantaloupe) has been shown to remove the same or even more contaminants than produce washes. Further, soap is not designed for washing produce and the safety of produce washes' residues has not been well evaluated.

2. Should I wash produce before putting it in the refrigerator or other storage place?

In order to maintain produce quality and ensure safety, it is best to wash it just before eating or cooking, rather than when it is first purchased.

3. Can I carry meat in a reusable grocery bag?

Yes, but the meat should be put into a disposable plastic bag first and then into the reusable bag. Throw away the disposable bag the meat was in after use to prevent contamination of other products.

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