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Living healthy at the Fair Grove Farmers' Market

Yes, you might have to remember to stop and take a few precious extra minutes out of your day on the way home or make a note to yourself to be sure and make it part of your schedule, but a stop at a farmers' market is well worth the time and effort.

By Peggy Schletty
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Yes, I would like it to be the Fair Grove Farmers' Market, but recognizing the value of any farmers' market is of great importance in this day and time.

We are into instant gratification nowadays, which includes the activity of feeding our family and ourselves. Open that can, take out the frozen dinner; whip up that box of whatamacallit; run thru the local drive-up. However, in the process we are filling our bodies with empty calories, fewer vitamins and minerals, more chemicals, and I feel, depriving ourselves of the wonderful taste of what good food really tastes like. It truly does not take that much time or talent to cook fresh corn-on-the-cob, slice up fresh tomatoes, cut up a melon or make a cucumber salad to go with dinner than it does to open a can and heat the contents. Even adding fresh fruits or vegetable to an instant dinner turns it into something extra special and good for us.

Yep, I'm on a campaign. Why? Because this first week of August is Missouri Farmers' Market Week, and all of August is National Farmers' Market Month. It's meant to raise the awareness of folks to the wholesome goodness of food available from local farmers, the backbone of our state and nation. There are many good reasons to buy locally grown food. You'll get exceptional taste and freshness.

Local food is fresher and tastes better than food shipped long distances from other states or countries. Local farmers can offer produce varieties bred for taste and freshness rather than for shipping and long shelf life. You'll strengthen your local economy.



Buying local food keeps your dollars circulating in your community. Getting to know the farmers who grow your food builds relationships based on understanding and trust, the foundation of strong communities. You'll support endangered family farms.

There's never been a more critical time to support your farming neighbors. With each local food purchase, you ensure that more of your money spent on food goes to the farmer.

You'll safeguard your family's health. Knowing where your food comes from and how it is grown or raised enables you to choose safe food from farmers who avoid or reduce their use of chemicals, pesticides, hormones, antibiotics, or genetically modified seed in their operations. Buy food from local farmers you trust.

You'll protect the environment. Local food doesn't have to travel far. This reduces carbon dioxide emissions and packing materials. Buying local food also helps to make farming more profitable and selling farmland for development less attractive.

When you buy local food, you vote with your food dollar. This ensures that family farms in your community will continue to thrive and that healthy, flavorful, plentiful food will be available for future generations. Remember, every little bit helps: A recent study in Maine shows that shifting just 1 percent of consumer expenditures to direct purchasing of local food products would increase farmers' income by 5 percent. Maine Organic Farmers and Gardeners Association (MOFGA) estimates that encouraging Maine residents to spend just \$10/week on local food will invest \$100,000,000 back into farmers' pockets and the Maine economy each growing season. Think how many local communities would benefit if everyone in the United States spent just \$10 a week on local food. Shop at your local farmers' market for the freshest, best tasting food



available. It's easy to find local food. There are over 3,100 farmers' markets in the United States. Encourage your local grocery stores and area restaurants to purchase more of their products from local farmers.

I am aware of how hard the local vendors at the market work to produce exceptional quality produce, fruits and products, and to bring it to our consumers. There certainly has to be an easier way to make a living, but if farming is something that you love, it's what makes your life complete and you can't help yourself. But remember that if we had no farmers, no food, it would be a terrible plight. Now days we all don't have to grow that garden to provide food for our tables, but we must support those that do, especially our local farmers.

I heard the story of a casual young shopper at a farmers' market, who when told why it was to her benefit to support the farmers, replied, "I don't care about farmers; I buy my food at the grocery store." I hope this is not an indication of the mentality of the younger generation; if so we are all in trouble. If the grocery stores were unable to get deliveries from all across the country, where would your food come from? That's why it's so important to support your local family farms so they will continue to survive against the large conglomerate farms. The smaller farmers and dairies are being pushed out at a very fast alarming rate.

OK, I'll get off my soapbox now and relay news about the Kid's Farm Camp. Several weeks ago, the kids got to build their own trellis out of vines and feasted on tacos provided by Ray Hackett and O'Bannon Bank. Last week they got the opportunity to see demonstrations of how to wood burn decorations in gourds and then do their own painting and decorating of a gourd they took home. Today's workshop will take place from 5:30 p.m. until 7 p.m., with the kids choosing fresh products from vendors which will then be prepared for dinner. For the next two weeks in a row, there will be workshops at the same time each Wednesday, with dinner provided. If you



or someone you know would like to teach the kids a hands-on activity associated with gardening, please feel free to contact me. We encourage folks to share their talents with our young people.

To kick off Farmers' Market Month, today for everyone's enjoyment will be a bluegrass jam session led by John Brayfield of Elkland. It's open to all musicians to join in and for us listeners to sit and enjoy the great music, which will start at 5 p.m. Be sure and join us for fun and food.

See you at the Fair Grove Farmers' Market each Wednesday, from 4 p.m. until 8 p.m., rain or shine, under the Pavilion at the corner of Mo. 125 and Main Street, east of U.S. 65 in Fair Grove. Barbecued dinner and loads of fresh melons, sweet corn, tomatoes, peaches, vegetables and farm products are available. For information call Peggy, (417) 759-7277, member of AgriMO and the Missouri Farmers' Market Association, WIC Approved.

