As we move into the summer season and are surrounded by farmer’s markets and local produce stands, it is important to learn how to navigate our way around to get the best experience possible. The best food is what’s grown close to you. There are almost two million farms in the USA. About 80% of those are small farms, and a large percentage is family owned. More and more of these farmers are now selling their products directly to the public. They do this via CSA programs, Farmers Markets, Food Co-ops, u-picks, farm stands, and other direct marketing channels.

Using Your Farmers' Market Coupons

**What Are Farmers’ Market Coupons?** These are WIC coupons that can be used to purchase fresh picked vegetables and fruits grown and sold by local farmers at farmers’ markets. The coupons cannot be used at the grocery store.

**What Can You Buy With the Coupons?** You can use your WIC coupons to buy fresh, locally grown fruits and vegetables, and fresh cut herbs. Other items available for sale at the market cannot be purchased with WIC farmers’ market coupons.

**How Do I Use Them?** WIC Coupons can only be accepted by participating farmers at farmers’ markets or farm stands. Check the opening and closing dates for the markets at our searchable map. Each coupon is worth $2.50 and no change can be given. It is recommended that you bring small bills and change. In the event that you go over the amount, you will need to pay the difference.

*Coupons expire October 31st. You cannot use last year's coupons.

**Look for the Signs** Look for the green and white signs that say Farmers Market Coupons Accepted. Many farmers’ markets also accept SNAP benefits (Food Stamps). Some may even double the value! WIC staff can answer your questions. 413-528-0457
Navigating the Farmers Market

Go early or go late.
Get to the market as soon as it opens. Visit each vendor to find out what they’re selling and at what price. You might find a great deal at the end of the day from a farmer eager to get rid of their leftover produce, or its best to go early because items might be sold out by the time you show up.

Bring reusable bags.
Bring glass containers or mesh produce bags to safely store loose berries and leafy greens. Save an old egg carton to fill up on your next dozen, as sometimes you can choose your own eggs. And if you have a longer drive, keep a cooler in the car to transport items that need to stay chilled, such as meats and fish.

Become friendly with your farmer.
Ask your farmer questions about how to prepare an unfamiliar vegetable, what types of recipes work best, or how to preserve the produce. If you buy items in bulk when they’re in season and learn from your farmer how to can or pickle, you’ll be able to enjoy the tastes of summer all year long.

Try samples.
One of the best reasons to shop at the farmers market is the ability to try foods before buying. Head to a stand with four different varieties of peaches and pick the most perfect piece for you!

Know when to buy organic.
Buying organic produce is one of the best ways to avoid unwanted chemical sprays and preservatives. There are 12 fruits and vegetables, known as the Dirty Dozen, which should be purchased as organic whenever possible. https://www.ewg.org/foodnews/dirty-dozen.php

Be patient on pricing.
Wait for the third or fourth week that the item is in season, by which time the prices will have dropped. You may be able to buy in bulk as well.

Learn what types of payments are accepted.
Cash and farmer’s market checks are the easiest form of payments. Use the websites https://www.localharvest.org/farmers-markets/ or http://www.farmersmarketonline.com/Openair.htm to find markets close to you.

REGISTERED DIETITIAN NUTRITIONIST OPTIONS AT CHP
https://www.chpberkshires.org/chp-nutrition/

CHP encourages you to seek out the expert advice of a Registered Dietitian Nutritionist & a behavioral support specialist for help with recommendations to support long-term success & lasting lifestyle changes.