



Shopping Tipsheet

Before:

Take along a shopping bag – A fabric bag (like the complimentary canvas tote bag from the University’s Employee Wellness Program), a string bag or paper bag to slip the plastic bags of produce into. If you have one, an insulated carrier kept in your car is ideal for bringing produce home.

Money – A wad of one dollar bills is a good idea so that shoppers can pay the farmer or gardener in the exact amount.

Shopping list – Check the refrigerator to see what you might need in the way of staples such as lettuce greens, carrots, potatoes, tomatoes and onions. A workable plan is to toss a big salad the night you shop, make a stir-fry the next night and a vegetable soup later in the week so that you use these fresh veggies at the peak of their flavor.

Umbrella – To protect yourself from the hot sun or to bounce off the raindrops. Don’t spoil your shopping trip by getting overheated or getting soaked.

During:

Browse first – The University’s market is small enough to walk through once, so look over the veggies and herbs.

Ask about unfamiliar produce – The farmers are proud of the variety of their produce. Don’t hesitate to ask about the name and uses of an unusual vegetable that intrigues you. For some of the farmers, English is a second language. Therefore, don’t hesitate to ask one of the younger vendors to help you. Don’t be surprised to find that what you thought was a beet was a radish!

Buy what you need – When all the vegetables look so fresh and inviting, it’s easy to overdo it. When that happens, it’s great to share with friends and neighbors, passing around locally grown quality produce. Once you get into the swing of shopping at the farmers market on a weekly basis, you’ll be able to gauge the right amount to purchase.

After:

Keep produce cool – If possible, stash your bag full of produce in a cool dark corner of your workplace until it’s time to carry it home. Once at home, refrigerate immediately. Wait to wash fruits and vegetables until just before use.

Add a fresh touch to your bag lunch – Nothing like a vine-ripened tomato or just-pulled carrot, a juicy cucumber or little zucchini to augment your sack lunch. Enjoy.

This tipsheet was prepared for the University of Minnesota Farmers Market by author and food writer Ann L. Burckhardt, retired editor of the popular Taste section of the Star Tribune newspaper. Look for recipes and cooking tips that will be appearing online soon at: www.farmersmarket.umn.edu