

Farmers' Market for All to Enjoy

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Jeff Smith writes about farmers' markets happening across Wisconsin and all one can enjoy by visiting a local market.

BRUNSWICK, WI - As Wisconsinites, we know we have something special that many of our neighboring states envy—and, no, I'm not just talking about our Green Bay Packers. We're fortunate to live in a state with strong agricultural roots and a deep appreciation for farm-fresh goods.

There's no better way to support our farmers and enjoy some fresh finds than by visiting a farmers' market in your area. A farmers' market is a community staple for so many all over the state, bringing together local vendors, families, and even local artists.

This week is National Farmers' Market Week, and with over 300 farmers' markets regularly held in Wisconsin, I can think of just the way to celebrate.

Farmers' markets only happen because of our family farmers. They work hard every day to grow healthy fruits and vegetables that you can find at the market. You can also discover fresh cheeses and meats they've helped produce. It's rewarding to spend time talking with farmers and learning about their business, family history, farming practices, and exactly where your food is coming from.

Farmers' markets help Wisconsinites access fresh, quality products to feed their families. It's important that fruits, vegetables and other healthy foods are available to the community. I'm glad to see there have been steps taken to improve accessibility for Wisconsinites while also benefiting our farmers.

There are many farmers' markets in our state that accept Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) benefits to make sure Wisconsin families have a quality source of fresh, healthy foods. In our region, the downtown Eau Claire Farmers' Market, the St. Croix Farmers' Market and West CAP Farm Market Program in Menomonie accept SNAP benefits. A full list of participating markets and vendors can be found at fns.usda.gov.



The size of Wisconsin's farmers' markets ranges throughout the state. Did you know the largest producer-only farmers' market in the country is right here in Wisconsin? That's something to be proud of.

This is one of the best times of year to head to a farmers' market, and there are plenty of opportunities to do so. Travel Wisconsin compiled a list of farmers' markets around the state to make it easy to find a market in your community or help plan a trip to a market you haven't been

to yet.

No matter your location, your age or reason for showing up at a farmers' market, there's always something there for you!

Many people are on a mission at the farmers' market to find ingredients to try a new recipe or create a family favorite. Some folks enjoy leisurely walking around the market with a friend and checking out all that's available. You'll typically find kids on the look-out for a delicious treat, or fresh, squeaky cheese curd. At some markets in the state, you'll see vendors selling beautiful handmade artwork and unique home goods.



I've had the chance to stop by many farmers' markets in western Wisconsin over the years and I've never been disappointed in what I've found. Be sure to stop in Trempealeau for fresh vegetables, beautiful flowers in River Falls, delicious baked goods in Whitehall or tasty cheese in Ellsworth. And that's just the beginning!

The Wisconsin Farmers Market Association is a great organization that shares the dates, times and locations of your local markets. They also have helpful food facts on their website, wifarmersmarket.org, which can help you learn when fruits and vegetables are in season, when they're ripe and how to best store them. Consider checking this website out before stocking up on fresh food and after you've made it home.

This summer, I've had the chance to stop at the Whitehall market and the Eau Claire farmers' market in Phoenix Park and I've enjoyed every minute of it. I'm happy to see the community coming together to support our farmers, artists and entrepreneurs in such a fun, welcoming environment.

Don't forget, there are farmers' markets happening year-round. Enjoy your stops this National Farmers' Market Week, and thank a local agricultural producer for their contribution to our community's health the next time you drop by a farmers' market!

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