

Go Local, Virginia

A Consumer's Guide to Buying Healthful, Locally Produced Foods in Virginia

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Why Go Local?

Buying and eating locally grown foods – foods that are produced near you or in Virginia – offer numerous benefits for you and your community.

- Locally produced foods often *taste* better since they are fresh.
- Some studies suggest that fresh produce has higher levels of anti-oxidants, so they may offer *more protection against disease* than produce that has been stored longer.
- Locally produced food does not have to travel as far to get to your plate. So, it typically *costs less* because there are fewer transportation costs. This also can minimize environmental impacts, like pollution.
- Buying locally produced or processed food can help to *boost your local economy*. Local, small farmers and producers can directly profit from your purchases rather than businesses that may have owners living far away.
- Helping support small farmers can help *safeguard green areas* – and, in some cases, prevent the urbanization of rural areas. Many farms



around the country are being sold and converted into housing developments because farmers cannot afford to stay on the land.

- Many small farmers also help preserve and produce heirloom or old-fashioned *varieties* of produce – like tomatoes or potatoes – that are often not produced by large farmers or sold by big food chains.

When Do I Buy Local Foods?

Outside of a few winter months, typically you can buy Virginia fruits and vegetables throughout the year. Look at the chart at the end of this publication to see the growing and harvest seasons for different produce. Of course, nonperishable foods that are processed in Virginia

– like grains and specialty items – as well as meat and dairy products are available year-round.

Where Do I Find Local Foods?

There are many places in Virginia where you can find locally produced foods. Many of these places are listed here, including farmers markets, grocery stores, and small farms. There are many other ways to find local foods such as purchasing food from farmers at roadside stands, or even growing your own food in your back-

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yard. Contact your local Extension agent for information on which locally produced foods are available in your area, where you can find them, and (if interested) about Master Gardener programs. Your local grocery store, farmers markets, and the websites such as the Virginia Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services website for consumer services, <http://www.vdacs.virginia.gov/consumer/index.html>, are also good resources.

Farmers markets: Get to know the people behind the food – the farmers! Farmers markets offer consumers the opportunity to buy fresh foods directly from farmers, talk with the food producers about the actual foods, and often acquire recipes or suggestions on preparation techniques. Since there is no “middleman,” produce from farmers markets usually cost significantly less than produce from grocery stores. To find a farmers market near you, go to: <http://www.ams.usda.gov/farmersmarkets/States/Virginia.htm>

Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) programs: Help fund a farm! Buy a membership in a local farm, and receive weekly boxes of freshly picked fruits, vegetables, and/or herbs. There are more than 25 CSA programs throughout Virginia. Each one offers different packages and varieties of food. To find one near you, go to <http://www.vdacs.virginia.gov/va-grown-july/csa.html>.

Select-your-own/Pick-your-own fresh produce (U-Picks): Visit a Virginia farm and pick your own fresh produce right off the tree (or bush). Many farms also have pre-picked foods for you to select as well. Some of the foods available at “U-Picks” include peaches, apples, strawberries, asparagus, and pumpkins. To find a farm to visit, look through “Virginia Grown: Guide to Pick-Your-Own and Select-Your-Own Farm Product” online at <http://www.vdacs.virginia.gov/vagrown/>.

Food festivals: Attend a festival centered on food. Food festivals offer you the opportunity to learn about different foods, where they come from, how they are produced, and numerous ways to eat them. Festivals also allow you to celebrate the bounty of food produced right here in Virginia. Food festivals vary by region. There are food festivals celebrating strawberries, peaches, pork, garlic, wine, and even maple syrup. To find what some of Virginia’s food festivals are, go to <http://www.vdacs.virginia.gov/news/festival.html>.

Other Sources for Local Foods

Restaurants: Many great restaurants in Virginia serve locally produced foods. Ask the manager of your favorite restaurant if they serve any local foods.

Virginia’s Finest®: You can find foods with the Virginia’s Finest trademark at many grocery stores, markets, and other retail outlets. These foods are produced or processed in Virginia and include peanuts, ham, honey, grits, tortilla chips, salsa, jams, jellies, pickles, mustards, and soups. Virginia Cooperative Extension has helped develop several food products throughout the state and continues to look for other opportunities to support Virginia agriculture. Look for the Virginia’s Finest logo to help support Virginia producers, processors, and businesses whenever possible. You can learn more about the Virginia’s Finest Program and where to purchase some of the items at the VDACS website, <http://www.vdacs.virginia.gov/vafinest/index.html>.

Wineries/Vineyards: Virginia ranks 11th among farm wine and commercial grape growing states with nearly 250 wineries around the state. More than 20 grape varieties are grown in Virginia, resulting in a wide variety of wines.

Supermarkets/Grocery stores: Some grocery stores carry Virginia-grown produce and Virginia’s finest products. Also, many small health-food stores purchase locally produced foods from small farmers. Ask the produce manager where you shop if they can carry Virginia-grown products if they don’t already do so.



Virginia's Finest

How Can Local Foods Fit into a Healthy Diet?

Combined with physical activity, Virginia products can be part of a healthy lifestyle. See examples here of foods that fit into the different food groups of MyPyramid at <http://www.mypyramid.gov>.

Here are some examples of Virginia-grown foods that fit into MyPyramid:

Grains: grits, cornmeal, buckwheat, flour, pancake mixes, fresh bread

Vegetables: corn, squash, potatoes, tomatoes, onions, garlic, salad greens, spinach, collard greens, asparagus, bell peppers, cucumbers, green beans, okra, cabbage, ramps, pumpkin

Fruit: strawberries, raspberries, blueberries, apples, peaches, cherries, melons, cider

Meat and beans: eggs, peanuts, pork, beef, oysters, fish, crabs

Milk: milk, fresh cheeses, butter

Other: honey, jams, jellies, apple butter, salsa, maple syrup, molasses, wines

Support local farmers and producers and you'll not only enjoy fresh, tasty food that fits into a healthy diet, but feel good about your purchases.

Go Local, Virginia!

Sample Menu Items from Virginia

Breakfast:

Buckwheat pancakes with maple syrup
Eggs
Grits
Fresh bread with strawberry preserves

Lunch:

Virginia ham sandwich
Green beans
Corn on the cob
Peach ice cream

Snacks:

Tortilla chips with salsa
Roasted peanuts
Fresh watermelon

Dinner:

Fresh seafood, ham, or crab
Mixed-greens salad with Vidalia onion dressing
Mashed or roasted potatoes
Virginia wine
Blackberry cobbler



VIRGINIA FRUIT AND VEGETABLE AVAILABILITY CALENDAR*

	JAN	FEB	MAR	APR	MAY	JUNE	JULY	AUG	SEPT	OCT	NOV	DEC
APPLES							█	█	█	█	█	
ASPARAGUS				█	█	█						
BLACKBERRIES							█	█				
BLUEBERRIES						█	█	█				
BROCCOLI									█	█	█	
CANTALOPES							█	█				
CUCUMBERS						█	█	█	█	█		
GRAPES								█	█	█		
GREEN BEANS						█	█	█	█	█		
GREEN PEPPERS							█	█	█	█	█	
GREENS/SPINACH			█	█	█	█				█	█	█
NECTARINES							█	█				
PEACHES							█	█				
PUMPKINS									█	█		
RASPBERRIES							█		█	█	█	
SQUASH						█	█	█	█	█		
STRAWBERRIES					█	█						
SWEET CORN							█	█				
TOMATOES							█	█	█	█		
WATERMELONS							█	█	█			

•Virginia vegetable/fruit chart from Virginia Grown, <http://www.virginiagrown.com>