



Using SNAP/WIC Benefits at the Farmers Market

Did you know that SNAP and WIC benefits can be used at the farmers market? As long as the market is an approved location, then yes they can! And eating more fruits and vegetables from the farmers market will make you and your family healthier, and help farmers sell their produce in your local community. Each year, more and more people use these benefits to purchase nutritious produce for their families as the number of farmers markets that accept these benefits increases. Check out some of the benefits of using your SNAP/WIC benefits at farmers markets:

- **Fresh:** Farmers markets offer the freshest produce. Often it's harvested the same day of the market! Colorful fruit and vegetables are full of antioxidants and phytonutrients; and the freshest food, typically, is the most nutritious, especially if you eat it raw or minimally cooked.
- **Support Your Local Farmers and Economy:** Buying produce at your farmers market helps local farmers become successful and can help save farmland in your area.
- **Affordable:** Fruits, vegetables and herbs are more affordable when they are in-season. So farmers markets are a great place to get more affordable produce, especially if your farmers market accepts double SNAP/WIC benefits (see below).
- **Family-centered Fun:** Farmers markets are a great place for the whole family to visit together to jointly decide what fruits, vegetables and herbs may be good to buy for a family-prepared meal! Encourage kids to think of a favorite vegetable dish and see if the produce is available at your farmers market.
- **Free Education about Nutritious Foods:** Many farmers markets provide fun, free educational opportunities about foods — look for food preparation, cooking demonstrations, food tastings, and don't forget to ask the farmer about any produce you want to learn about. Ask how to grow it, care for it, and cook/prepare it! Also, while you are there, try to find colorful foods.

So you've decided you want to use some of your SNAP/WIC benefits at a farmers market, but how do you do it? To find farmers markets near you that accept SNAP, WIC, and/or the Senior Farmers Market Nutrition Program (SFMNP), follow these simple steps:

1. Visit bit.ly/whereFarmers
2. Put in your ZIP code and the distance you are willing to travel
3. Click "Payment Accepted" and click on the boxes next to the benefit you are interested in using at a farmers market



A woman buys produce from a vendor at a farmers market. Photo by Megan Markham via Unsplash



Market produce on a table. Photo by Shelley Pauls via Unsplash

Safe Handling of Farmers Market Produce

Once you've brought home your fresh produce from the farmers market, what are you going to do to make sure the produce is handled safely to help protect yourself and your family? We've all heard that eating contaminated produce can lead to foodborne illness, often called "food poisoning." As you enjoy your farmers market bounty, follow these safe handling tips from the Food and Drug Administration ([fda.gov/food/buy-store-serve-safe-food/selecting-and-serving-produce-safely](https://www.fda.gov/food/buy-store-serve-safe-food/selecting-and-serving-produce-safely)) to help protect you and your family.

When buying fresh produce, remember:

- Choose produce that is not bruised or damaged.
- When buying pre-cut, bagged or packaged produce — such as half of a watermelon or bagged salad greens — choose only those items that are refrigerated or surrounded by ice.
- Bag fresh fruits and vegetables separately from raw meat, poultry and seafood when packing them to take home from the market

When you get home, remember to store your farmers market items safely:

- Store perishable fresh fruits and vegetables (like strawberries, lettuce, herbs and mushrooms) in a clean refrigerator at a temperature of 40° F or below. Use a refrigerator thermometer to check! If you're not



Some farmers markets have programs that allow you to double the amount of produce you can buy with your SNAP “dollars.” These often are called “double up” or “double match.” For example, the Fair Food Network has a “Double Up Food Bucks” program (doubleupfoodbucks.org) that operates in nearly 30 states. Ask your local farmers market if they are affiliated with any of these programs to extend your SNAP/WIC benefits! Finally, check out the recipe below that includes lots of nutritious produce you can find at your local farmers market.

Check out this farmers market recipe that includes **6 types of produce** and **2 types of herbs** that can be found at most farmers markets during the summer! (Consider making it vegan/vegetarian by leaving out the chicken!)

Farmers’ Market Vegetable, Chicken, and Pasta Salad

Before cutting, wash all produce with water (not soap).

- 2 cups halved cherry or grape tomatoes
 - 2 small zucchini, thinly sliced into half moons
 - 1 small red bell pepper, remove the seeds and cut into thin strips
 - 1 cup fresh corn kernels (or canned, drained)
 - 1 cup diced firm, ripe fresh peaches (about 2 medium)
 - 1/2 cup thinly sliced green onions
 - Balsamic vinaigrette or Italian dressing
 - 1 (8 oz.) package whole wheat pasta
 - 2 cups cooked, shredded/chopped chicken breast (about 10 oz.; optional)
 - 1/3 cup chopped fresh basil
 - 1/3 cup chopped fresh cilantro (optional)
1. Toss together first 6 ingredients in a large bowl. Drizzle with vinaigrette or Italian dressing to coat produce, then let stand for 10 minutes.
 2. Meanwhile, prepare the pasta according to package directions (Cook the pasta al dente, 1 or 2 minutes shorter than package directions specify, so it holds its shape when tossed with the vegetables and vinaigrette/dressing).
 3. Add hot cooked pasta and chicken to produce mixture; toss gently to coat.
 4. Season with salt and pepper to taste.
 5. Transfer to a serving dish, and then top with basil and cilantro (if using).



A bowl of pasta salad. Photo via myrecipes.com

Photo from and recipe adapted from: www.myrecipes.com/recipe/farmers-market-pasta-salad

sure if an item should be refrigerated to keep its quality, do a quick internet search or ask a professional.

- Refrigerate all produce that is purchased pre-cut or packaged.

When you are ready to prepare your farmers market produce, remember:

- Wash your hands for at least 20 seconds with soap and warm water before you begin, and after each step of preparation of the food if necessary (especially if you handle raw meat or rotten fruit/vegetables during your food preparation).
- Cut away any damaged or bruised areas on fresh fruits and vegetables before preparing and/or eating. Throw away any produce that looks rotten.
- Wash all produce thoroughly under running water (not soap!) before preparing and/or eating, including produce grown at home or bought from a grocery store or farmers market. Washing fruits and vegetables with soap, detergent, or commercial produce wash is not recommended. If the package of produce says it has been pre-washed and is ready-to-eat, you can use the produce without further washing.
- Even if you do not plan to eat the skin, it is still important to wash produce first so dirt and bacteria are not transferred from the surface when peeling or cutting produce.
- Scrub firm produce, such as potatoes, melons and cucumbers, with a clean produce brush.
- After washing, dry produce with a clean cloth towel or paper towel to further reduce bacteria that may be present on the surface from transferring to other items.