

## Hints for Your Farmers Market Travels

If you are like us, we love to go to our local Farmers Market just to enjoy seeing all the interesting products and fresh produce. Walking along, just being with all the other people and enjoying a beautiful spring, summer, or autumn day is refreshing and soul satisfying. It's a real fun activity.

Some Farmers Markets are low key, without any hustle or bustle, but others are very large and at times overwhelming. Personally, we select the smaller community farmers markets that feature "farm to the table" products. The other available food might be an excellent buy, but they are not being produced locally. For example, if they are selling Atlantic salmon and you live in the middle of the United States, you just know it's not local.

There are those times when you are just stopping to pick up a few items, and we thought you might like to know some of the helpful hints we discovered.

1. We always walk around the market first, just to see what is available, a little "stop and shop" around that helps us determine what you want to buy.
2. Be flexible and creative – If you were planning to make our potatoes and ramps for supper and you can't find any ramps, think about what other product you could use. For example, leeks, green onions, or chives would be great substitutions to use in our potato recipe. Give it a try!
3. Carry along your own sturdy shopping bags. Some farmers will offer saved plastic bags, but having your own will just make it easier.
4. Ask questions. The best part about shopping here is the person really knows about the product. It is amazing how much I have learned about using various herbs and vegetables. Best of all are the stories. Last week, I found out that my rhubarb originally came from a old plant on an Amish farm and the young farmer's son said, "I don't know its real old name, but my mom just makes the best rhubarb jam with it." Without a doubt, it went home and did make the best rhubarb crisp for dinner that night.
5. Ask if there are any special buys. It might be fresh bacon or baked products.
6. Don't forget to bring some small change with you as many farmers accept only cash payments. .
7. If you want to purchase a product that needs refrigeration, make sure you buy it right before you leave the market.
8. Ask for samples. This week, we found a farmer's wife selling the best blackberry scones. After a few nibbles, we couldn't resist buying a few for breakfast the next day.

9. Be adventurous and buy a few new herbs or products. Did you know that honey can taste different since it depends what those bees were enjoying as they buzzed around.
10. Do yourself a favor when you come home by cleaning and storing away your fresh foods. For example, those herbs will last longer being tucked away standing in a bottle of water loosely covered with a plastic cover and stored in your refrigerator.

MOST OF ALL.....SMILE, LAUGH, AND HAVE A REALLY GREAT TIME!

Inspired by the wonderful Chicago Farmers Market: For more information:

<http://socialpowerhour.com/navigating-chicagos-farmers-market/>

Also see:

[http://www.cityofchicago.org/city/en/depts/dca/supp\\_info/farmers\\_market.html](http://www.cityofchicago.org/city/en/depts/dca/supp_info/farmers_market.html)