

HEALTHY HABITS



**What makes Farmers' Markets
so healthy?**

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Farmers' markets are pathways to building a framework of values and skills that lead to healthy eating habits, positively affecting the health of shoppers, the community and the environment.

Healthy Diets:

- Shopping at farmers' markets leads to consuming both higher volumes of vegetables and fruit and a wider variety of them, and two thirds of shoppers say this habit continues year-round.
- The majority of market shoppers say they experiment more with produce bought at the market, which results in eating healthier meals. They also tell us that they are more likely to find information related to healthy diets at markets than at supermarkets.
- Market shopping encourages more cooking 'from scratch' based on market inspired recipes and increased confidence in food preparation skills. The happy outcome is that half of shoppers are sharing more meals with friends and loved ones.
- Most market shoppers (80%) are choosing to buy unprocessed food. Allocating more of their total food budget to market items means that customers are more inclined to reject processed food products and focus on healthy ones.
- Shoppers self-describe their health status as higher than the Canadian average (Statistics Canada Study).

	% of 'Yes'
• Increased interest in where food comes from	81
• Buying less processed food	80
• Eating wider variety of fresh produce.....	77
• Eating more servings of fresh produce	76
• Cooking more from scratch	63
• Increased confidence in cooking skills	62
• Sharing more homemade meals	53
• Increased cooking knowledge	51

Markets and the next generation of eaters

Parents are more likely to 'always' attend markets with their children than to bring them on a shopping trip to the supermarket. The motivation is to expose their children to healthy, local food and the people who grow it. The majority (63%) of parents say that this experience not only shapes positive attitudes towards healthy, locally grown food, but results in their children eating more fresh market produce, and in half of cases, children are more willing to try new food items.



A Healthier Environment: Learning Local

- Markets are positive contributors to quality of life. They not only benefit shoppers and their community, but they have a positive impact on the planet.
- Markets have significant environmental benefits. As a consequence of focusing on local food, shoppers are deliberately favouring local over imports. Most shoppers (85%) are inspired to eat seasonally, which leads to different buying and cooking patterns. They now seek out locally grown regardless of the season (fresh in season, frozen off season) and in winter are eating more vegetables that store well.

	% of 'Yes'
• Avoid buying imported if local grown available.....	76
• Adjust cooking for seasonal /local grown /processed	74
• Buy/eat more storage veg now	70
• I buy produce in season or not	59
• Can/freeze local in season.....	57
• Buy more local frozen/canned not imported.....	32

Yes..... 85%
No 11%
Don't know4%

Buying More Seasonally

Reducing Waste

Shoppers appreciate the low/no packaging market approach. They are motivated to waste less market produce; its freshness and origin identification are contributing factors. Freshly harvested produce results in less waste than imported foods that are far from their source.

	% of 'Yes'
• Less packaging waste when I shop at farmers' markets.....	92
• Less food waste if I can buy only as much as I need	83
• Try harder not to waste market-purchased food	72
• Fresher market produce means less food waste.....	63
• Buy more and waste more with cheap supermarket items	39
• Less waste because markets offer storage and preparation tips	32
• Prepared/ready made foods means less food waste.....	12
• Not really aware of volume of our food waste	7
• Wasted more food when trying new market food.....	5

Comparing Markets and Supermarkets

- The winter 2012 survey revealed that 'shop local' lessons learned at markets have set standards that most shoppers demand from supermarkets. In addition to seeking out locally grown food at supermarkets, shoppers compare the quality, taste, perceived nutritional benefits and appearance of market produce, and find farmers' markets superior on all four factors.
- Organic produce buyers(53%) report that they buy more of it from markets.
- Shoppers appreciate that market produce delivers important economic benefits for the community and is better for the environment.

Shoppers who are turning to local farmers for more of their food have come to appreciate the benefits of having a local, sustainable agricultural sector that deserves to be supported.

The 2012 Greenbelt Farmers' Market Network Research Study was conducted by Informa Market Research (www.informaresearch.com) with funding provided by the Friends of the Greenbelt Foundation.

386 shoppers from 58 farmers' markets in and around the Greater Golden Horseshoe completed the online study in winter 2012.

To read the full study visit the Resource Listing page at www.tfmn.ca
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