



Food Stamps and Farmers Markets: A Shopper's Advice For Buying Local with SNAP

In the last few years, more and more farmers markets have started accepting SNAP dollars, which are loaded onto EBT cards, formerly called the food stamp program. And while this is crucial in the role of creating more access to high quality food, not many people on SNAP are utilizing this. The following is a tutorial on how to use your SNAP/EBT/Food stamps at the farmer's market:

1. Decide to go.

This is the hardest step to overcome.

2. Make sure the market accepts SNAP.

If you are interested in spending your SNAP dollars at the market, try to make sure that whatever market you go to actually does accept SNAP. Just Google "your city" + "farmers market" + "SNAP"/"EBT". Usually you can find their website or Facebook page that may or may not have information. If you can't find information this way, email or privately message the farmers market and ask directly. "Can EBT be used at this market? If so, how can a person do that?"

3. Find the booth called "the market tent" or ask where you can find the market manager.

Once you have found a market that accepts SNAP, it's time to find some delicious food! How do you do that? Most farmers markets work this way: You actually buy tokens/farm dollars from the market, then spend them at each individual stand.

4. Decide how much you want to spend.

Once you find the right person, they will ask how much of your SNAP you'd like to use. They will run your card through the machine, just like at the grocery store. You will type in your pin, just like at the grocery store. Money will be taken out of your account so that you can buy food, just like at the grocery store.

5. Get informed. The market manager will let you know how to use the program.

If your market uses the above mentioned token/dollar system, each token/dollar is typically worth \$1. Like a regular SNAP dollar, you can use it to buy fruits, veggies, nuts, meat, bread, cheese, and vegetable starts/seeds for your garden if you are so inclined. Unlike a regular dollar bill, you cannot get change back for your purchases. Try to round your purchases to the nearest dollar. Farmers at their stands are very helpful with this. Say I only bought \$2.50 worth of tomatoes, they might throw in a generous handful of green beans to round it up to \$3.

Another thing to keep in mind when using the tokens/dollars, be sure to find out if they can be used any other time or place. Some markets may happen twice a week, or in multiple locations. Some markets are connected and use the same tokens/dollars, others use different tokens/dollars.

6. Spend your money at the market!

You made it this far baby! Now get to shopping! If your market uses the tokens/dollars, most vendors will accept them. Besides the change thing I explained in the above step, your tokens are basically cash. Buy whatever lovely food you want! Stick with produce that you know and love, and only occasionally buy something new. Look for vendors that offer samples of their products. This way you can taste it to see if you like it, and you can also talk to the vendor about how they like to cook it. Feeling brave enough to purchase beets but have no idea what to do with them once you get home? No better person to ask than the one who grew the beets in the first place! The farmer will likely be very happy to share their ideas with you. Sometimes they even have free recipe printouts they can give you.



Grilled Green Beans & Cherry Tomatoes with Jalapeno Feta

By Micki Brown
Serves 4

Ingredients:

- 1 pound fresh green beans, stem end trimmed
- 1 basket cherry tomatoes
- 1 container jalapeno feta cheese
- 1/4 cup extra virgin olive oil
- 1 tsp garlic, minced
- 1/2 tsp sea salt
- 1/4 tsp black pepper

Directions:

Preheat grill to medium heat. In a small bowl, mix together the olive oil, garlic, salt and pepper. Place the green beans and tomatoes on a plate and brush with the olive oil mixture. Place the green beans and tomatoes on the preheated grill and cook to desired tenderness, turning occasionally. Remove from the grill and place on a serving plate. Dot with desired amount of jalapeno feta (very tasty, but can be spicy). Serve and enjoy!



Events

**Get to Know
Your
Customers
Day
July 21**

**National
Honey Bee
Day
August 15**

