# 10 Reasons to Buy Local Food • *adapted from Growing For Market Newsletter*

Child nutrition programs are supporting local farmers and producers all over the country. Buying local supports your community, the local economy and keeps our land open. Here are ten reasons why.

## 1 Local food tastes and looks better.

Crops are picked at peak ripeness, and farmstead products like cheeses are handcrafted for best flavor. Livestock products are processed in nearby facilities and typically the farmer has a direct relationship with processors and can oversee quality, unlike farmers whose animals are processed in large industrial facilities.

## 2 Local food is better for you.

The shorter the time between the farm and your school cafeteria, the less likely that nutrients will be lost. Food imported from far away is older and has traveled on trucks or planes and sat in warehouses before it gets to you.

## 3 Local food preserves genetic diversity.

In the modern agricultural system, plant varieties are chosen for their ability to ripen uniformly, withstand harvesting, survive packing and last a long time on the shelf, so there is limited genetic diversity in large-scale production. Smaller local farms, in contrast, often grow many different varieties of crops to provide a long harvest season, an array of colors and the best flavors. Livestock diversity is also higher where there are many small farms rather than few large farms.

## 4 Local food is safe.

There's a unique kind of assurance that comes from looking a farmer in the eye at a farmers' market or driving by the fields where your food comes from. Local farmers aren't anonymous, and they take their responsibility to the consumer seriously.

## 5 Local food supports local families.

The wholesale prices that farmers get for their products are low, often near the cost of production. Local farmers who sell direct to consumers cut out the middleman and get full retail price for their food, which helps farm families stay on the land.

## 6 Local food builds community.

When you buy directly from a farmer, you're engaging in a time-honored connection between eater and grower. Knowing farmers gives you insight into the seasons, the land and your food. In many cases, it gives you access to a place where your children and grandchildren can go to learn about nature and agriculture.

## 7 Local food preserves open space.

When you buy locally grown food, you're indirectly preserving our working landscape. Farmers who get paid more for their products by marketing locally

are less likely to sell farmland for development. That landscape is an essential ingredient to other economic activity in the state, such as tourism and recreation.

## 8 Local food keeps taxes down.

According to several studies by the American Farmland Trust, farms contribute more in taxes than they require in services, whereas most development contributes less in taxes than the cost of required services. Cows don't go to school; tomatoes don't dial 911.

## 9 Local food benefits the environment and wildlife.

Well-managed farms provide ecosystem services: they conserve fertile soil, protect water sources and sequester carbon from the atmosphere. The farm environment is a patchwork of fields, meadows, woods, ponds and buildings that provide habitat for wildlife in our communities.

## 10 Local food is an investment in the future.

By supporting local farmers today, you are helping to ensure that there will be farms in your community tomorrow. That is a matter of importance for food security, especially in light of an uncertain energy future and our current reliance on fossil fuels to produce, package, distribute and store food.

"It is my hope that local/regional purchasing will become a reliable expectation for institutional food systems in the near future."

— MOLLIE SILVER

# 14 Tips for a Successful Farm to School Program

Buying directly from local farmers can be more work than purchasing from your distributor, but it can be educational and rewarding as well. You will learn more about where the food you serve comes from and how it is grown or produced. You may even benefit from extra products when in abundance. Here are some tips to get you started.

### 1 Set up business appointments with farmers.

Try contacting farmers in the early morning or evening, as many farmers are working in their fields or marketing their crops during the day. Throughout Vermont's fruit and vegetable growing season, you can also connect with farmers at farmers' markets, roadside stands, U-pick farms and even with neighbors who may plant more than they need. Don't be shy about following up on the connections you make. You may end up calling right when they're wondering what to do about their bumper crop of kale!

### 2 Visit farmers at their farms.

Observing local farm businesses in action will give you a better idea about food safety, availability, pricing and logistics and will demonstrate your sincere interest in their products. Farm visits also give you the chance to speak directly to a farmer about what you want and need in the unique context of your farm to school program. You can then develop menus that accommodate what grows seasonally in your region.

### 3 Request free samples.

When you meet a farmer interested in working with you, ask if he or she can provide free samples so you can see if it will meet your school's needs and requirements.

### 4 Start small and have partners.

Rather than buying a large variety of products or setting up relationships with a slew of farmers all at once, start with one or two farms and three to six products that you are familiar with and use regularly. Once you start incorporating them into your menu, make sure that your local products do not go unnoticed! Partner with teachers and parents to help advertise them in school newsletters, on menus and on posters in the cafeteria.

### 5 Talk to farmers as early in the season as possible so they can plan accordingly.

Hold meetings in the winter when farmers are planning what to plant the following season. Compile a list by school season of approximately how much product you order and when. This allows them to plan accordingly and you may also get a discount because it is an assured sale. A farmer may also plant a crop that he doesn't usually grow if he knows that you'd like it and would be a market for it. And don't forget about storage crops. Their growing season may be short, but many farmers grow and store winter vegetables you can purchase in cold-weather months. Some may even grow greens in greenhouses during the winter.

### 6 Develop a purchasing strategy that offers a variety of ways farmers can accommodate you.

Consider the labor and product costs associated with local purchasing to make sure your program is sustainable in the long run. Since not all farmers have experience selling to schools, be clear about how you would like products packed and what size packaging you can transport and store. To develop a reputation as a reliable customer, commit to a realistic purchasing volume and develop a realistic delivery schedule that suits your and the growers' needs.

### 7 Be aware of farm liability insurance coverage.

Most farmers carry it but it's a good idea to check before entering into contracts that may require it.

### 8 Request products that are difficult to obtain from long-distance shippers.

There are certain foods, particularly produce, that may not be on your distributors' trucks because they are unusual (like ground cherries) or difficult to transport (like small plums). Be sure to ask your farmers if they have interesting or unusual products that you can try out in your program.

### 9 Invite local farmers to have lunch at your school and sample the foods you prepare.

Seeing what you are doing may inspire them to participate in your program.

### 10 Work with farmers to devise a system for making substitutions.

Sometimes the weather does not cooperate and planned produce is unavailable—be sure to discuss this possibility with your farmer and how they plan to accommodate you. Often they can substitute another variety of produce, however, it is good to have a back up of frozen vegetables just in case.

### 11 Clearly establish a payment schedule.

Farmers are often accustomed to presenting an invoice and receiving payment upon delivery. School districts often have a payment cycle of 30 to 90 days. Discuss this with the farmer in advance so you're both on the same page.

### 12 Look for growers who show a real willingness to work with you—and be willing to work with them.

The school food procurement system does not naturally lend itself to buying directly from farmers. In developing a system that works for farmers and schools, both sides will have issues and concerns. Being open to dialogue and negotiation is the first step toward building lasting, viable partnerships.

### 13 Ask farmers to develop a weekly availability sheet.

Having up-to-date information about availability, the size of food items, quality descriptions, estimated quantity and price per unit will make it easier for you to make good purchasing decisions.

### 14 Keep talking.

As you develop your farm to school relationships a school food committee can be your biggest advocate. Let them help facilitate taste tests of new foods, market your program and new recipes, and support you in the changes you want to make. Keep farmers in the loop when there are upcoming meetings discussing the farm to school program and invite them to participate.

# 9 Ways to Make Local Food Affordable

Common themes emerge when discussing the costs of school food. It is critical to account for actual food costs in relation to labor and benefit costs, participation rates and reimbursements. In addition, budgeting becomes an important tool when planning for purchasing changes. Hidden costs and benefits can be left out of a pure economic analysis, but must be considered when documenting or planning for purchasing changes in a school food program. Calculations of local purchasing costs must include ease or difficulty in ordering, distribution costs, preparation time, and the complexities of procurement and distribution strategies.

"My school district has a food buying cooperative so we have better buying power than if we were doing this alone. We negotiate purchasing contracts in the winter for the following growing season. This both helps the farmer secure a market for their produce and helps us because we are able to plan and anticipate local foods for the following school year."

— CHRISTA GOWEN

When local food becomes a treasured part of the school environment, it is simply invaluable in helping students make healthier food choices. Countless experiences nationwide demonstrate that connecting schools with local farms and sourcing more food locally contribute to this positive shift. Serving fresh, healthy meals on a tight budget is the universal mission of food service staff. With school food program budgets expected to break even or generate a profit, the task is particularly challenging. So how do schools purchase locally when local food products can be more expensive?

### 1 Use USDA commodity foods to your advantage.

Combining local foods with commodity allotments has worked well in some schools. For example, add seasonal vegetables to rice pilaf made with USDA brown rice. Make tacos with local beef, USDA shredded cheese, beans and salsa.

### 2 Start slowly.

Begin by sourcing a few products that you know your program can afford. Pick a food that you can use consistently, such as broccoli or salad greens. Or cook a meal once a week or month that features local foods. Make sure to publicize these meals and invite your school officials to taste them.

### 3 Look for competitively priced foods.

While local products can sometimes cost more, you may be surprised to find that many others are competitively priced. Compare costs for storage crops like potatoes, carrots and squash. Often there is less waste from local produce because it is fresher, which saves money.

### 4 Bring community members into local food plans.

Beyond your school staff, administration and parents, invite community members such as local farmers, restaurants and other businesses and organizations to enjoy your local meals and be part of your farm to school program. Involving them takes more time, but will help them appreciate and understand the costs and nutrition requirements of your program. They can also help you raise money.

### 5 Try storage.

Purchasing, processing and storing produce in bulk at the height of the growing season will save money in the long run because all produce is priced to

move at that time. Decades ago every school had a root cellar at its disposal. If you have storage room, take advantage of that space. Or see if a farmer you partner with can store produce for you. Root crops can last through the winter if kept in a cool, dark place. Other options include freezing and processing local foods. Fresh berries can be frozen at the peak of the season. Other vegetables, like cauliflower and squash, can be roasted and frozen for future use.

### 6 Take advantage of low prices on bumper crops.

During the harvest season, farmers and gardeners often have tomatoes, zucchini and corn up to their ears. Some may even donate produce if you offer to organize volunteers to pick it for them, particularly if a big storm is coming that may damage their crops. With a little community help in processing the product, you can save money and enjoy those vegetables later in the year. One school had many bushels of fresh sweet corn delivered one day. It had one of its classes peel the corn during lunch, then had volunteers come in after school to cut the corn off the cobs and freeze it for later use.

### 7 Get volunteer food prep help.

Fresh fruits and vegetables require labor to clean and prepare. Getting consistent volunteers can be a challenge. However, you may be able to find high school or college students who want to earn extra credit or perform community service. Post a sign in student areas looking for kitchen volunteers. You can also partner with a few teachers who may be interested in getting their students in the kitchen for special projects. Is there a culinary vocational training program at your school or nearby with students who could help on a regular basis? Or perhaps there is a health class talking about nutrients in fruits and vegetables or a social studies class learning about the cuisine of a particular country.

**8 Buy seconds.** Ask a local farmer if they sell seconds—produce that has a blemish or is dented or broken—at reduced prices. Food that is going to be cut up and cooked doesn't need to be picture perfect, think vegetables for chili or broccoli for a stir-fry.

> "When a local farmer offers a 'deal' on surplus produce I recommend asking more questions like, 'What will happen to the produce if we don't take it?' If it is destined for the compost pile because of overstock rather than quality, then you have some wiggle room to negotiate the price to a more affordable price point."
>
> — LINDA WHEELOCK

### 9 Entice teachers and staff to buy adult meals.

If you sell more adult meals, you will have more money for your program. Try offering a back-to-school free lunch at the beginning of the school year to entice teachers to try the new foods you are serving. Conduct a teacher survey with choices of dishes they can request, or provide teachers with grab-and-go premade salads or sandwiches that they can order the same day.

# Incorporating USDA Foods Into Scratch Cooking

Many of the recipes in this book use ingredients that are available through the USDA Foods Program. Some staples, such as diced tomatoes, flours, oil and cheddar cheese, are widely utilized. In addition, recipes highlight foods required by the USDA meal pattern and that are available through the USDA Foods Program—specifically legumes (kidney beans, black beans, garbanzo beans and white beans), dark leafy greens (broccoli) and red/orange vegetables (tomatoes, sweet potato and pumpkin) in fresh, canned and frozen form.

While fresh and local products are most desirable, availability and price can be limiting factors. The USDA Foods Program offers a wide array of ingredients that can be used to produce high-quality, homemade recipes like those contained in this cookbook. Many schools use USDA foods for processing (sending the item to a food processor to transform it into a "ready to eat" product). We emphasize using these foods to enhance and support scratch cooking opportunities.

Using these foods wisely in your school meals program can free up funds to purchase fresh, local foods that are not available as commodities. Creating meals in schools is a balancing act. In order to meet the nutritional and financial challenges, all available resources are needed. Balancing the benefits of these resources will allow you to get the most out of all of them.

The USDA Foods Program offers a wide variety of ingredients — like black beans — that can be used to produce high quality, homemade dishes, like this sweet potato black bean salad.

"Look at your ingredients and think of transforming that boring can of commodity beans into something beautiful."

— KORTNEE BUSH

# Scaling & Adapting Recipes for School Meals

Inspiration for new recipes can come from many sources but is most likely to come from outside the school food service environment. It may come from a recipe you've tried at home or enjoyed in a restaurant. Perhaps from something you've seen on television or in a cookbook or food blog. A recipe that works for a family meal or in a restaurant may not translate directly into a school meal, which has to be prepared and cooked in large quantities and may be served in a variety of ways such as self-service buffet-style, pre-packaged à la carte or individually plated. The goal of scaling and adapting is to develop a standardized recipe that anyone can follow, and that will ensure quality while meeting the nutritional, production and cost requirements for school food service.

Scaling recipes requires basic math skills and knowledge of common weights and measures. Adapting recipes to your specific kitchen environment requires knowledge of ingredient availability and cost (including local and seasonal options), equipment availability and how the food might be served. There are several methods of scaling recipes, including using special computer software. However, the easiest way to scale a recipe is to take the individual ingredient amounts and multiply them by a number that will yield the amount of servings you plan to serve. This is called the Factor Method and can be used with any recipe.

## The Factor Method

**Step 1** - Determine the factor to be used.
**Step 2** - Multiply each ingredient quantity by the factor.
**Step 3** - Change the new ingredient amounts to more manageable or common measurements.

To determine the factor, use the following formula:

Desired Yield ÷ Current Yield = FACTOR

*Example:* A given recipe for Broccoli Salad yields 50 servings. You need 150 servings.

Desired yield = 150 servings
Current yield = 50 servings

150 ÷ 50 = **3** (FACTOR)

## Broccoli Salad • Yield: 50 ½-cup servings

| INGREDIENT | AMOUNT | MEASURE | METHOD |
|---|---|---|---|
| Mayonnaise, reduced-fat | 1 | qt | Whisk mayonnaise, vinegar and sugar in a large bowl. |
| Cider vinegar | ½ | cup | |
| Granulated sugar | ¼ | cup | |
| Broccoli, cut into bite-sized pieces | 6 | lb | Stir in broccoli, raisins and diced onion. |
| Raisins | 1.5 | qt | |
| Red onion, small dice | 1 | medium | |
| | | | Refrigerate until ready to serve. |

This recipe yields 50 servings. To scale this recipe up to 150 servings, multiply each ingredient amount by a factor of 3.

## Broccoli Salad • New Yield: 150 ½-cup servings

| INGREDIENT | ORIGINAL AMOUNT | NEW AMOUNT (3X) | MEASURE | METHOD |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Mayonnaise, reduced-fat | 1 | 3 | qt | Whisk mayonnaise, vinegar and sugar in a large bowl. |
| Cider vinegar | ½ | 1½ | cup | |
| Granulated sugar | ¼ | ¾ | cup | |
| Broccoli, cut into bite-sized pieces | 6 | 18 | lb | Stir in broccoli, raisins and diced onion. |
| Raisins | 1.5 | 4.5 | qt | |
| Red onion, small dice | 1 | 3 | medium | |
| | | | | Refrigerate until ready to serve. |

It's important to note that when dealing with large-volume recipes, scaling and adapting may not produce a foolproof recipe on the first try. It will give you a baseline recipe that you can test for feasibility in your school. While most recipes are still reliable when doubled, anything more than that should be tested before you create a final recipe.

### When scaling recipes, there are a few things to remember:

- Scaling a recipe up to feed more people may change the time it takes to prepare it and the equipment used to cook and serve it. It could even affect the space you need to store the raw ingredients or finished product. It's helpful to be aware of these potential issues before adding a new recipe to your menu. For example, the size pot you would prepare soup for 50 in is quite a bit smaller than one in which you would prepare soup for 150. The cooking times may also be different so give yourself a little extra time when scaling up a recipe for the first time.

- Some ingredients don't scale proportionally, especially salt and spices. When testing a scaled-up recipe, you may want to add half the amount of salt and spices to start, taste and adjust the seasoning as needed. Once you have added an ingredient, you can't take it out, so taste early and often.

- You may also find that if you triple a recipe, you may not need to triple the amount of sauce or dressing. Using the Broccoli Salad as an example, the scaled-up recipe calls for 3 quarts of mayonnaise. You may want to mix the dressing in a separate bowl from the salad, then gradually mix in the dressing to taste. Any leftover dressing can be tossed with another salad.

- If you substitute an ingredient, think about how it would change how you prepare the recipe and how the final recipe tastes. Eighteen pounds of broccoli florets isn't the same as 18 pounds of whole broccoli heads. Prepping whole broccoli heads will take longer than using already cut-up broccoli florets. Another substitution might be using balsamic vinegar instead of cider vinegar, which would affect the flavor, appearance and cost. Balsamic vinegar is sweeter than cider

vinegar, with other distinctive flavors, so you may find you don't need to use as much sugar. It's also more expensive and considerably darker in color, which will affect how the salad looks.

- Keep detailed notes during your recipe test, especially if you add or change any ingredients or amounts. Note how ingredients look, smell, taste or feel during various stages of the process.

- The newly-scaled recipe now gives you an idea of how much product to purchase and what kind of equipment you might need to use. It also helps you to determine, before you spend any money or time, if the recipe might need to be altered in some way to be successful in your kitchen environment.

## After scaling a recipe, it should be analyzed for the following situations to see if any changes need to be made:

- **Ingredient substitutions**
  Note the type of ingredients used in the recipe: raw, cooked, dried, frozen, canned, etc. How would changing the type of ingredient change the process?

- **Equipment availability**
  - How much food will be prepared (in volume) and can it be done with the equipment available?
  - Consider your serving environment and make sure you have the equipment needed to hold and serve the new recipe.

- **Alternative techniques**
  - What type of instruction is given? Are the instructions or techniques compatible with your kitchen environment? For example, pan-frying chicken breasts for 150 servings should be done in a large tilt-skillet or on a griddle. If that equipment isn't available, an alternative technique might be to bake them on sheet pans in a convection oven.
  - Can a technique or instruction be altered without negative effects on taste or quality?

- **Production time & procedures**
  - How much time does it take to prepare the ingredients? If the recipe calls for ten pounds of diced potatoes, consider the time it takes to wash and cut enough potatoes to give you ten pounds of diced product. An alternative might be to use a food processor or to purchase already diced, raw potatoes.
  - How much time does it take to cook the recipe? If the recipe is for lunch, can it be completed in the hours before lunch service? Can it be separated into a multi-day process where some ingredients are prepared or cooked the day before?

Weighing ingredients carefully helps make recipes fool proof!

- **Skill-level requirements**

• Are the techniques "common knowledge" or easy to explain?
• If changes are made, do they affect the skill-level needed to prepare the recipe?
• Are the instructions specific enough for anyone to understand, regardless of culinary or food service background?

- **Cost**

Changing the ingredients, techniques, process, etc. can have an up or down effect on the cost of a recipe. For example, dried beans are usually less expensive than canned beans, but they require additional time and skill (soaking, cooking, cooling, etc.) to use in a recipe. On the other hand, canned beans are consistent in taste and texture and are ready-to-use. Depending on your environment, either could be the more cost-effective choice.

Looking at the Broccoli Salad recipe in the example, ask yourself the following questions:

- Is broccoli available to you given the current season and the cost? Can it be omitted or can another ingredient be substituted for it without sacrificing quality?

- 150 4-ounce portions equals 75 cups or approximately 4.6 gallons. Do you have the equipment—mixing bowls, stirrers, pitchers, serving bowls, scoops, etc.—large enough to make and serve this amount?

- The recipe calls for broccoli cut into bite-sized pieces and diced onions. Will this be done with a food processor, by hand or purchased already cut?

- The recipe calls for reduced-fat mayonnaise, cider vinegar and granulated sugar. What would you need to adjust to use non-fat yogurt, balsamic vinegar or honey?

The recipes in this book focus on using seasonal ingredients and are scaled to provide about 50 servings. Many schools serve more than 50 students or may need to adjust the serving size depending on grade-specific nutritional requirements. These recipes may need to be scaled up and adjusted to meet your kitchen's needs. These tips will help make this process smoother. Any recipe can be adapted to feed more kids without sacrificing quality or taste.

"There is a lot more to writing a recipe than scribbling down the ingredients on a piece of paper, and expecting the general public to understand what to do with those ingredients."

— LINDA WHEELOCK

# Why You Should Use *Mise en Place*

*Mise en place* (pronounced "*meez on plas*") is a French phrase which roughly means "put in place." It is a preparation technique widely used in professional kitchens to save time and often extend the life of products. *Mise en place* can benefit your program by increasing efficiency and saving time, maintaining quality and consistency in food production, decreasing errors when executing recipes and consequently decreasing waste as well. *Mise en place* is simply the organizing, arranging and preparation of ingredients in a recipe prior to preparing the recipe. The steps are as follows:

**1 Read the entire recipe**

**2 Gather all the necessary ingredients in one place.**

**3 Assemble all the necessary equipment** (cutting boards, sharpened knives, whisks, bowls, spatulas, measuring tools, etc.) in one place and preheat ovens as necessary.

**4 Prep and measure each ingredient one at a time.** Wash all vegetables and fruits, prep produce and meat, measure dry and liquid ingredients using the appropriate measuring tools. Place each ingredient in an individual bowl or container—do not combine ingredients.

**5 Begin combining prepped and measured ingredients according to recipe directions.** Do not begin this process until all ingredients are in their prepped state and equipment is ready and available. For example, when making muffins, before combining ingredients make sure you have: two bowls (one for wet ingredients and one for dry ingredients); muffin tins prepped with paper liners in each cup; the proper scoop for portioning muffins into the cups; and the oven preheated. Once this is all ready, start combining pre-measured ingredients.

*Mise on place* for Gingered Cabbage Salad (see recipe p. 38)

**6 Clean as you go.**

**7 Start cooking!**

Steps 1 through 4 can often be done in part or in total one or more days ahead of time as many ingredients can be held in their prepped state. Read through recipes a day or two in advance to make sure that the ingredients you need are available. *Mise en place* is more than just a term, it is a concept and a practice that requires some measure of discipline. Over time, however, this technique will yield all the stated benefits and infuse your program with a high standard of professionalism and quality.

# Vermont Harvest Calendar

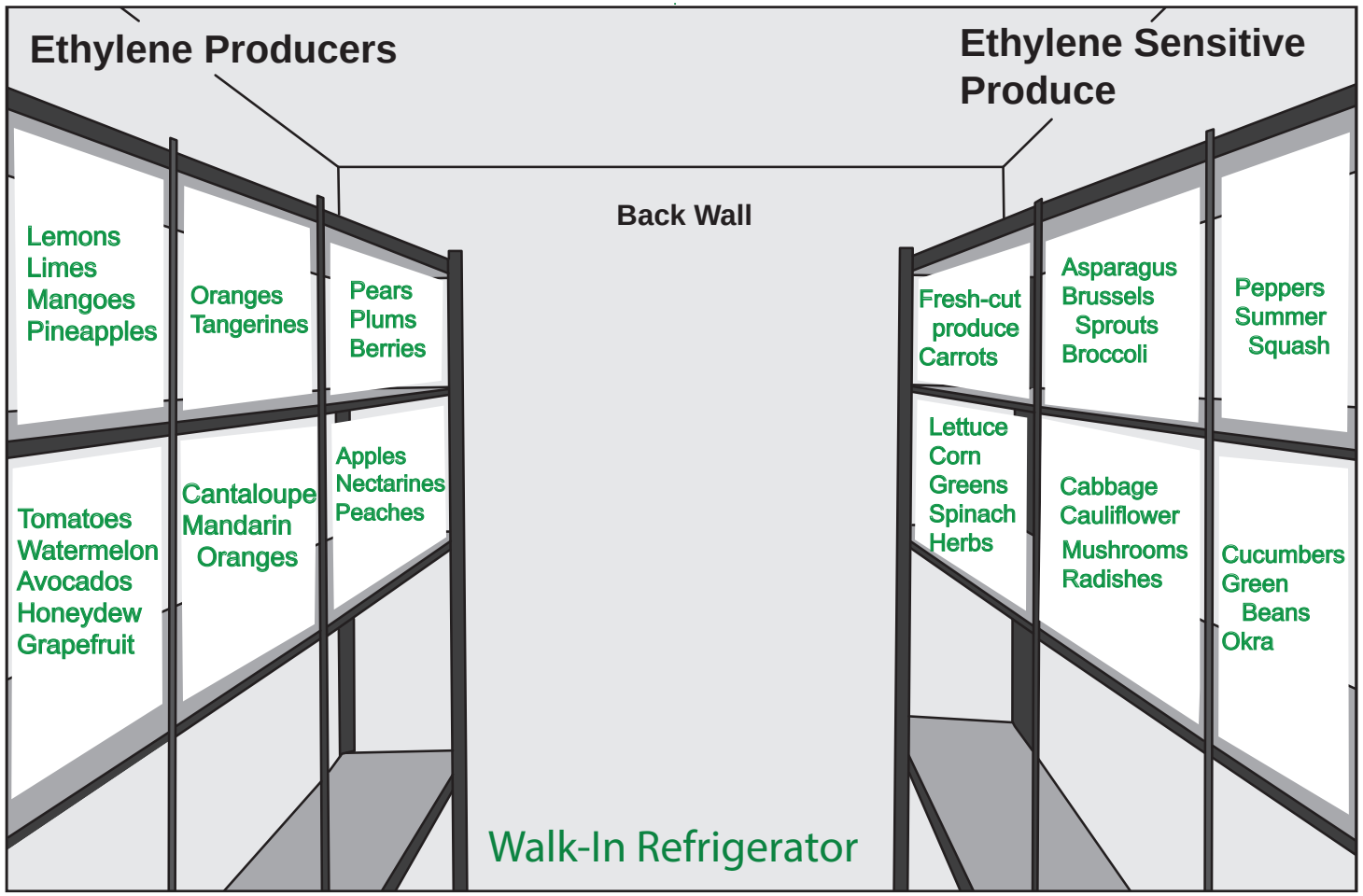
Eat with the seasons! This calendar presents the diverse array of farm products that are available throughout the seasons at local farmers markets, farm stands and retail stores. Eating food when it's in season means flavor and nutritional value are at their peak and cost is often at its lowest. Find out when your favorite fruits and veggies are freshest and which products are in season now.

| JANUARY | FEBRUARY | MARCH | APRIL | MAY | JUNE | JULY | AUGUST | SEPTEMBER | OCTOBER | NOVEMBER | DECEMBER |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Apples | Apples | Apples | Apples | Asparagus | Asparagus | Beans | Apples | Apples | Apples | Apples | Apples |
| Beets | Beets | Beets | Carrots | Greens | Chard | Beets | Beans | Beans | Beans | Beets | Beets |
| Cabbage | Cabbage | Carrots | Parsnips | Parsnips | Greens | Broccoli | Beets | Beets | Beets | Broccoli | Brussels Sprouts |
| Carrots | Carrots | Onions | Potatoes | Radishes | Peas | Carrots | Blackberries | Blueberries | Blueberries | Brussels Sprouts | Cabbage |
| Celeriac | Onions | Parsnips | Turnips | Rhubarb | Radishes | Cauliflower | Blueberries | Broccoli | Broccoli | Cabbage | Carrots |
| Garlic | Parsnips | Potatoes | | Scallions | Rhubarb | Fennel | Broccoli | Brussels Sprouts | Brussels Sprouts | Carrots | Celeriac |
| Parsnips | Potatoes | Rutabaga | | Spinach | Scallions | Greens | Cabbage | Cabbage | Cabbage | Cauliflower | Garlic |
| Potatoes | Rutabaga | Turnips | | | Spinach | Kale | Carrots | Carrots | Carrots | Celeriac | Kale |
| Rutabaga | Turnips | Winter Squash | | | Strawberries | Lettuce | Cauliflower | Cauliflower | Cauliflower | Celery | Onions |
| Turnips | Winter Squash | | | | | Melons | Celery | Celery | Celeriac | Chard | Parsnips |
| Winter Squash | | | | | | Peas | Chard | Chard | Celery | Kale | Potatoes |
| | | | | | | Potatoes | Corn | Corn | Chard | Leeks | Pumpkins |
| | | | | | | Radishes | Cucumbers | Cucumbers | Cucumbers | Onions | Radishes |
| | | | | | | Raspberries | Eggplant | Eggplant | Eggplant | Parsnips | Rutabaga |
| | | | | | | Rhubarb | Fennel | Fennel | Greens | Potatoes | Turnips |
| | | | | | | Scallions | Garlic | Greens | Kale | Pumpkins | Watermelon |
| | | | | | | Spinach | Greens | Kale | Leeks | Radishes | Winter Squash |
| | | | | | | Summer Squash | Kale | Leeks | Lettuce | Rutabaga | |
| | | | | | | Tomatoes | Leeks | Lettuce | Onions | Turnips | |
| | | | | | | Turnips | Lettuce | Onions | Parsnips | Watermelon | |
| | | | | | | | Melons | Parsnips | Peppers | Winter Squash | |
| | | | | | | | Onions | Peppers | Potatoes | | |
| | | | | | | | Peas | Potatoes | Pumpkins | | |
| | | | | | | | Peppers | Pumpkins | Radishes | | |
| | | | | | | | Potatoes | Radishes | Rutabaga | | |
| | | | | | | | Radishes | Raspberries | Scallions | | |
| | | | | | | | Raspberries | Scallions | Spinach | | |
| | | | | | | | Rhubarb | Spinach | Summer Squash | | |
| | | | | | | | Scallions | Summer Squash | Turnips | | |
| | | | | | | | Spinach | Tomatoes | Watermelon | | |
| | | | | | | | Summer Squash | Turnips | Winter Squash | | |
| | | | | | | | Tomatoes | Watermelon | | | |
| | | | | | | | Turnips | Winter Squash | | | |

***Source: VT FEED, Green Mountain Farm-to-School, and Vermont Department of Education. VT FEED is a partnership of Shelburne Farms, NOFA-VT, and Food Works at Two Rivers Center.*** ***Fruit or vegetable comes into season this month.***

# Proper Produce Storage • *from the National Food Management Institute*

Proper storage is essential to keep foods fresh as long as possible, particularly when it comes to fruits and vegetables. Refrigerators should maintain a temperature of 41°F or less, but temperatures inside a refrigerator can range from colder (32°F) to warmer (41°F), depending on the location. Colder temperatures are found in the back and warmer temperatures in the front, near the door. Some kinds of produce should be stored at warmer temperatures near the door for best quality. Location of fruits and vegetables is important because fruits, in general, produce ethylene gas, which fosters natural ripening, but it also can cause most vegetables and a few non-ethylene producing fruits to deteriorate more quickly and develop undesirable characteristics. Ideally, ethylene-producing fruits should be stored in the refrigerator as far from ethylene-sensitive fruits and vegetables as possible.



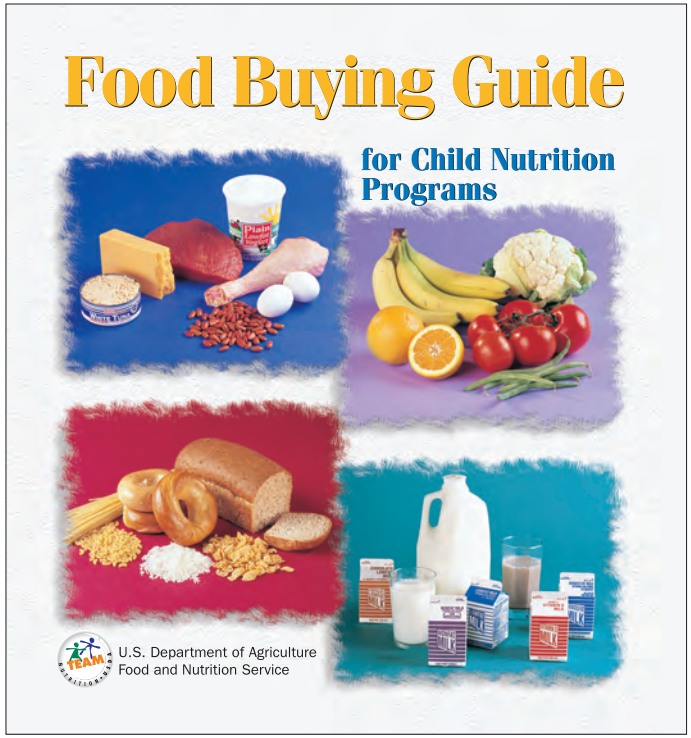

These items should not be refrigerated. Store ideally between 60°F and 70°F:

- Bananas
- Sweet potatoes
- Potatoes
- Dry onions

# The Nutrient Analysis behind Our Recipes

Recipes were analyzed using *Nutrikids Nutritional Analysis* software. The USDA's *Food Buying Guide* was used to determine key nutrients and their contributions toward the USDA meal pattern components. School nutritionists are now responsible for not only knowing how a meal contributes toward the five different components of the meal pattern (Fruits, Vegetables, Grains, Meat/Meat Alternate, Milk) but also how many calories, grams of saturated fat and milligrams of sodium are in that meal.

When the meal pattern was first released there was great concern that schools would be inclined to move toward more packaged foods and away from scratch cooking because it's much easier to look at a nutrition fact label or a Child Nutrition label to determine the nutrients and crediting than it is to put all the ingredients into a nutrient analyzer and convert all the raw ingredients into chopped, shredded, peeled and cooked ingredients to determine the serving size. Our goal for this cookbook was not only to provide you with kid-tested, school-chef-created, local, seasonal recipes, but also to do this time-consuming work for you so you can spend your time doing what's most important — feeding kids!



# Guide to Knife Cuts

When preparing your ingredients for cooking, it's important to read the recipe and note how they should be cut. It not only can affect the cooking time, but the look and taste of the finished product. Onion cut into 1-inch pieces takes much longer to cook than minced onion. Here is a visual description of common knife cuts found in this cookbook.

# Sample Menus, Grades K–8

| * = Cookbook recipes<br><br>*Additional menu items were added to meet requirements* | Cheesy Noodles with Beef*<br>Delicata Smiles*<br>Baked Beans<br>Braised Greens & Beans*<br>Kiwi Wedges<br>Milk | Falafel Nuggets *<br>WW Pita Pocket<br>Cucumber Yogurt Sauce<br>Confetti Corn Salad*<br>Creamy Tomato Soup*<br>Tossed Green Salad<br>Melon Medley<br>Milk | Chicken Vegetable Curry*<br>Fluffy Whole Wheat Buttermilk Biscuit*<br>Sesame Roasted Green Beans*<br>Apple Slices<br>Milk | Peanut Butter Apple Wraps*<br>Lentil Soup*<br>Kale Chips*<br>Cucumber Slices with Ranch<br>Banana<br>Milk | Oatmeal Pancakes (2)* with Maple Syrup<br>Honey Glazed Ham Slice<br>Cheesy Twice-Baked Sweet Potato*<br>Spinach Salad with Strawberries*<br>Pineapple Slices<br>Milk |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **MEAT/MEAT ALT**<br>9.25 oz eq | **Cheesy Noodles w/Beef:** Beef: 1.25 oz<br>Baked Beans: 1 oz | **Falafel Nuggets:** Chick Peas: 1.5 oz<br>⅓ cup Yogurt Sauce: .5 oz | **Chicken Vegetable Curry:** Chicken: 1 oz | **Peanut Butter Apple Wraps:** Peanut Butter: 2 oz | Ham Slice: 2 oz |
| **BREAD/GRAIN**<br>†= WGR Grain<br>8.5 oz eq | **Cheesy Noodles w/Beef:** Noodles: 2 oz eq† | **Falafel Nuggets:** .25 oz eq<br>WW Pita Pocket: 2 oz eq† | **Fluffy Whole Wheat Buttermilk Biscuit:** 1.25 oz eq† | **Peanut Butter Apple Wraps:** 6" WW Wrap: 1 oz eq† | **Oatmeal Pancakes (2):** 2 oz eq† |
| **VEGETABLE** | | | | | |
| *Red/Orange,* 1⅜ cup | | **Creamy Tomato Soup:** ⅜ cup | **Chicken Vegetable Curry:** Tomato: ½ cup<br>Sweet Potato: ¼ cup | | **Cheesy Twice-Baked Sweet Potato:** ¼ cup |
| *Dark Green,* 1 cup | **Braised Greens & Beans:** ¼ cup | 1 cup Romaine lettuce: ½ cup | | **Kale Chips:** ¼ cup | **Spinach Salad with Strawberries:** ½ cup |
| *Starchy,* ½ cup | | **Confetti Corn Salad:** Corn: ¼ cup | Potatoes: ¼ cup | | |
| *Beans, Peas, Legumes* ⅝ cup | **Braised Greens & Beans:** ⅛ cup | | | **Lentil Soup:** ½ cup | |
| *Other,* 1⅝ cups | **Delicata Smiles**: ½ cup | Cucumber: ⅛ cup | **Chicken Vegetable Curry:** ⅓ cup<br>**Sesame Roasted Green Beans:** ½ cup | Cucumber Slices: ½ cup | |
| **FRUIT** | Kiwi Wedges: ½ cup | Melon Medley: ½ cup | Apple Slices: ½ cup | Banana: ½ cup<br>**Peanut Butter Apple Wraps:** ⅓ cup | Pineapple Slices: ½ cup |
| **MILK** | 8 oz | 8 oz | 8 oz | 8 oz | 8 oz |