

## A Visit to Farmers Market



Historically, tobacco has been the foundation for many of rural Kentucky's farm profits. Recent challenges have prompted farmers to explore avenues for broadening their market opportunities. These markets offer quality products and on-farm experiences. They include greenhouses, garden centers, agriculture tourism, festivals, pick-your-own, wholesale, roadside stands, community supported agriculture, and farmers markets. These places are becoming destinations that provide fun for the whole family. Local farmers markets allow farmers additional economic profits while strengthening community and farm-to-table concepts.

Farmers markets have two key roles in the community. Farmers provide fresh, safe, high-quality foods and a chance for the community to mingle with farmers to learn more about their way of life. A visit to the farmers market is all about the experience. The emphasis on more fruits and vegetables in the diet is another way to link consumers with the farm. The tie-in with local restaurants, schools, and supermarkets can also strengthen the farmer's position with the community.

We all have a social responsibility to make a connection with the land and understand how the ecological and economical impacts affect our communities. Basically, sustainable agriculture is a method of agriculture that meets the needs of the current generation while conserving natural resources for future generations to use. A farmer following sustainable agriculture methods uses environmentally friendly methods to preserve the soil, water, and other natural resources of the land. Being able to make a living off the farm also promotes economic viability within a rural community.

The trend to visit farmers markets is on the rise. It seems to be fueled by consumer interest, the farmers' desire to make more money, and growing community awareness of the role of farming, and local food systems. Farmers markets are perfect for small farm producers, who are unable to participate or compete effectively in larger wholesale channels. As consumers learn to incorporate more fruits and vegetables into their diet, the farmers market will increase the probability of repeat sales.

Legislation in Kentucky also allows farmers to add value to their products to sell at farmers market. Adding value simply means using locally grown produce in baked or canned goods, processed in their own home. The effort provides a distinctive niche for farmers to share a proud Kentucky heritage of producing fine-quality food products. Local citizenry and Kentucky tourists alike now have the opportunity to acquire value-added products derived from locally grown, harvested, and processed foods.

**Super Star Chef** is a joint effort of the University of Kentucky Cooperative Extension Service Family and Consumer Sciences and 4-H Youth Development.



Sandra Bastin, PhD, RD, LD, CCE

Extension Food and Nutrition Specialist

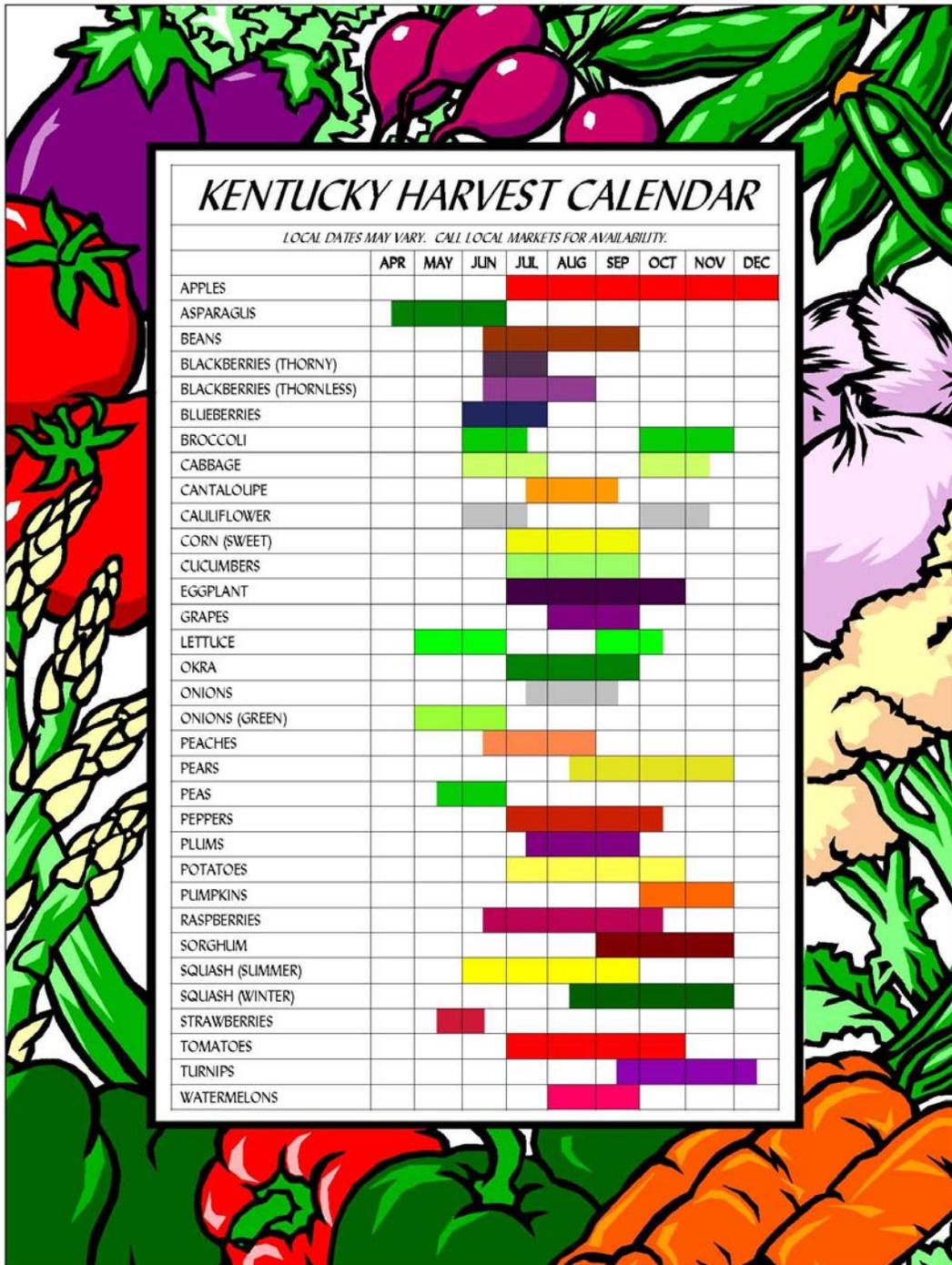
Teresa Ford, BSBA  
Project Associate

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