



A Trip to the Market

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With summer upon us, local farmers markets and produce stands are setting up shop.

If you are a parent or caregiver, you may pause at the idea of visiting a farmers' market with your young child. Perhaps you envision him running off in the open-air market, thinking it is a place to play and explore the outdoors. You may be concerned that your child will misbehave or knock over items from stands.

Yes, a visit to the farmers' market is different from a trip to a grocery store, and may seem to require more effort than it is worth.

From one parent to another – **it is worth a try**. I was a little nervous the first time I brought my then 2½ year old to an open-air market (without a stroller). It was such fun and she now asks about going to the farmers' market again. Remember, the farmers market is for everyone!

With some planning, a trip to the market can become a beloved family tradition that your child remembers far into adulthood, and one that could increase his or her acceptance of a variety of healthy foods.

Here are some strategies that made our visit to the farmers market more pleasant and enjoyable:

Have a plan. Prepare yourself as you would for any outing (bring him or her to the bathroom before you leave for the market, bring snacks, go at a time when they are rested and fed, etc.).

Make the first visit brief. Brief experiences can be valuable in exposing your child to new foods, whether a

spur-of-the-moment stop at a roadside stand, or a planned visit. Research shows that children benefit from repeated exposures to a variety of healthy foods. Looking, touching, smelling (even without tasting) make children more familiar with the foods, and can make them more likely to try (and like) a variety of healthy foods over time.

Prepare your child ahead of time for behavioral expectations. According to Learning Child Extension Educator Katie Krause, an outing to the market is an important opportunity to outline your expectations and hold your child to them. I told my daughter we were taking an adventure to the farmers' market, and that she needed to use her ears to listen and hold my hand to be safe. Next time, I'll give her the choice to hold my right hand or my left hand. Our young toddlers and preschoolers may need frequent reminders of these expectations. Without getting upset or irritated, calmly remind your child what you expect them to do. Krause says that young children are learning how to make decisions and figuring out where the boundaries are. By giving simple choices that are 'parent approved,' we give them chances to learn to make decisions, but within developmentally appropriate boundaries that help them feel safe and help us as parents feel a lot better, too!

Be consistent and follow-through. Krause emphasizes, "Don't say something you aren't willing to follow through on. For example, if you tell your child that you will leave if they won't hold your hand, you need to be willing to do that, even if you aren't done shopping."

Your child really does want to please you. Acknowledge appropriate behavior with immediate verbal statements like *"I like the way you are using your ears and following*

the rules!" Tell your child what you want them to be doing, instead of telling them to stop what they are doing, such as "Please walk" rather than "Stop running." Young children don't always know, or remember, what appropriate behaviors are, especially when they get someplace as fun as the farmers market, Krause says.

Build anticipation... Prepare your child for an upcoming visit to the market in the hours, days, even weeks ahead by reading books about how food is grown. A few recommendations are "Fresh Delicious: Poems from the Farmers' Market" by Irene Latham, "Before We Eat: From Farm to Table" by Pat Brisson and "A Day at the Market" by Sara Anderson. My daughter's preschool recently had a unit on seed planting, and learned about the parts of a plant. Connecting these concepts from school to home to the market helps her begin to understand where food comes from.

Involve your child. Try doing a scavenger hunt where your child spots vegetables or fruits he or she has tried, or those he or she has yet to try. Games like "I spy with my little eye" are a great choice at a stimulating and content-rich place like an outdoor market to help the child focus their attention, and practice identifying colors, shapes and people.

Use the market visit as an opportunity to talk with your child about the names of fruits and vegetables, and where and how it might be grown (on a tree, under the ground, on a plant). Children can make connections to unfamiliar foods and learn about where their food comes from in this way.

Important note: If you receive SNAP, your EBT cards can be used at some of the farmer's markets.

Farmers markets in Nebraska that accept SNAP EBT cards are:

- Aurora – Aurora Community Farmers' Market, 208 16th St.
- Bridgeport – Bridgeport Farmers' Market, 409 N. Main St.
- Dwight – Pekarek's Produce, 2447 Road O
- Fremont – Grandview Farm, 1050 County Road X
- Lincoln – F Street Farmers' Market, 13th and F St.
- Lincoln – Fallbrook Farmers' Market, 570 Fallbrook Blvd.
- Lincoln – Sunday Farmers' Market at College View, 48th and Prescott. (formerly the Old Cheney Road Farmers Market, Inc.)
- Nebraska City – Nebraska City Farmers Market, 800 1st Ave.
- Omaha – Benson Farmers Market, Inc., Military Ave. at Maple St.
- Omaha – City Sprouts Community Garden, 4002 Seward St.
- Omaha – Gifford Park Neighborhood Market, 525 N. 33rd St.
- Omaha – No More Empty Pots, 1127 N. 20th St.
- Omaha – Omaha Farmers Market, 519 S. 11th St.
- Omaha – Omaha Farmers Market - Aksarben Village 67th & Center Street

Krause suggests that you might also consider having your child help by bringing a bag that they can carry themselves. Let your child pick his or her own fruit or vegetable to explore and try together at home.

Another way to involve your child is to practice social skills. As an example, we have plans to visit the market this Saturday. I will practice involving my daughter in the social interactions of greeting vendors, asking a question, and making a payment. I'm sure she will be excited to hand over a market token or dollar bill.

Slow down! Try not to rush -- take in the experience through all your senses. Imagine experiencing the market through the lens of your child. Even better, talk with your child about what you see, hear, smell, touch and encourage them to verbalize their observations, too.

Model openness to new foods and experiences. Food neophobia, literally the fear of new foods, is common in young children. We all want our children to accept fruits and vegetables. That means we have the responsibility to model an open attitude toward trying new foods to get them started. Breathe, smile, and try something new!

Involve your children in learning the importance of community. Going to the farmers market is also a great way to begin fostering a sense of community and supporting local businesses. Children can meet the farmers and you can model asking questions about where the food came from and how they came to be at the market.

- Omaha – Omaha Farmers Market – Charles Drew Health Center 30th and Grant Streets
- Omaha – Tomato Tomato, 2634 S. 156th Cir.
- South Sioux City – South Sioux City Farmers Market, 1501 Dakota Ave.
- Thedford – Thomas County Farmers Market, Highways 2 and 83 South

You can even double your buying power through the Double Your Food Dollars program at the following locations:

Six Lincoln locations:

- Sunday Farmers' Market at College View, 48th and Prescott Streets
- Fallbrook Farmers Market, 570 Fallbrook Blvd
- Community Crops Veggie Van, 2301 O St
- F Street Market, 1302 F St
- Leon's Gourmet Grocer, 2200 Winthrop Rd
- Open Harvest Co-op Grocery, 1618 South St

Three Omaha locations:

- Old Market, 11th and Jackson Streets
- Aksarben Village, 67th and Center Streets
- Charles Drew Health Center, 30th and Grant Streets

One Beatrice locations:

- Heartland Foods, 1300 Court St

For more information on the Double Up Food Bucks, visit www.omahafarmersmarket.com/preparing-for-the-market/paying-at-market/

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