Buying Local? Here’s What is in Season and When

The impact of COVID-19 has had a significant effect on the agriculture industry and consumers alike. One major change is a surge in demand for local farm products. Consumers are finding it increasingly more difficult to find select products in stock on supermarket shelves due to bottlenecks in our supply chain that deliver food from the farm to the store. As a result, there is high demand for purchasing food directly from local farmers.

As we move into the start of Maryland’s growing season, it can be helpful to understand what types of food are in season at local farms and when. Right now you’re probably starting to get anxious for some fresh, local produce. For a better understanding, let’s break the crops down into cool and warm seasons.

Maryland’s growing season extends from approximately mid-April up until the first freeze in the fall, which is approximately mid to late October. As we move through April and into mid-June, you can expect cool-season crops to come in season, such as asparagus, broccoli, cabbage, cauliflower, collards, kale, lettuce, onion, peas, potatoes, raddish, spinach, turnip, swiss chard, and strawberries.

Transitioning into the warmer months of the growing season, from approximately mid-June through mid-September, you will see cool-season crops tailing off and warm-season crops coming into season. These include: beans (green, snap, limas), beets, cabbage, carrots, collards, sweet corn, cucumbers, eggplant, garlic, kale, onion, peppers, potatoes, squash, tomatoes, berries (blackberry, blueberry, raspberry), cantelope, cherries, honeydew, watermelon, peaches, pears, and plums.

Later in September through late fall, you may find more cool-season crops, such as broccoli, brussel sprouts, cabbage, carrots, cauliflower, swiss chard, collards, cucumber, eggplant, kale, lettuce, onion, pea, raddish, pumpkin, spinach, winter squash, sweet potato, turnip, tomato, apple, and pears.

Additionally, you may find local produce outside of Maryland’s growing season during the winter months that are in cold storage or grown in greenhouses. These include apples, cucumber, garlic, lettuce, potatoes, winter squash, sweet potatoes, and tomatoes.

Local farm products that you may find year-round include beef, poultry, pork, lamb, seafood, milk, other dairy products, and eggs (although production drops off in the winter). Preserved products such as jams, jellies, and honey may also be found year-round.

To find local farms and farmers markets in your area visit, marylandsbest.maryland.gov or marylandfma.org.

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