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Food Safety at the Farmer's Market

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Shopping at a farmer's market is a great way to get locally-grown, fresh fruit, vegetables, and other foods for you and your family. As these markets have grown more popular, we've been getting questions about the safety of the foods purchased there. Many markets have their own food safety rules, and vendors must comply with them, as well as any applicable government regulations. But, there are also basic guidelines that you should follow to ensure that the farm-fresh food is safe.

Produce

- Before and after preparing fresh produce, wash your hands for 20 seconds with warm water and soap.
- Wash fruits and vegetables thoroughly under running water just before eating, cutting or cooking. We don't recommend washing fruits and vegetables with soap or detergent or using commercial produce washes.
- Even if you plan to peel the produce before eating, it is still important to wash it first. Any bacteria present on the outside of items like melons can be transferred to the inside when you cut or peel them.
- Be sure to refrigerate cut or peeled fruits and vegetables within two hours after preparation.

Juices and Cider

Check to see whether the juice or cider has been treated (pasteurized) to kill harmful bacteria. Pregnant women, children, older adults, and people with weakened immune systems should drink only pasteurized or treated juice. For more information, see [Two Simple Steps to Juice Safety](#).

Milk and Cheeses

- Don't buy milk at a farmer's market unless you can confirm that it has been pasteurized. Raw milk can harbor dangerous microorganisms, such as *Salmonella*, *E. coli*, and *Listeria*, that can pose serious health risks to you and your family. See [Myths about Raw Milk](#) for details.
- Pregnant women, older adults, and people with weakened immune systems are at higher risk for illness caused by *Listeria*. One source for this bacteria is soft cheese made from unpasteurized milk. If you buy soft cheese (including feta, Brie, Camembert, blue-veined cheeses, queso blanco, queso fresco, and panela), check the label to make sure that it's made from pasteurized or treated milk.

Eggs

- Make sure that eggs are properly chilled at the market. FDA requires that untreated shell eggs must be stored and displayed at 45°F.
- Before buying eggs, open the carton and make sure that the eggs are clean and the shells are not cracked.

Meat

- Make sure that the meat is properly chilled at the market. Meat should be kept in closed coolers with adequate amounts of ice to maintain cool temperatures.
- Bring an insulated bag or cooler with you to the market to keep meat cool on the way home.
- Be sure to keep meat separate from your other purchases, so that the juices from raw meat (which may contain harmful bacteria) do not come in contact with produce and other foods.

If you have comments about food safety at the farmer's market, feel free to submit them here. If you have a question and need an answer quickly, check the [Ask the Experts](#) page.