

FARM TO
SUMMER
EATS

FREE MEALS FOR KIDS & TEENS

TOOLKIT

HOW TO BRING LOCAL FOODS INTO SUMMER EATS



WHAT IS FARM TO SUMMER EATS?

Farm to Summer Eats is an initiative to incorporate local foods and activities into the Summer Eats program.

The summer is a great time to serve local products as Massachusetts is bursting with fresh, local foods. By incorporating meals and offering activities that highlight locally-grown ingredients, sponsors and sites can help kids and teens build healthy habits for life.



This toolkit is designed to be a resource as you get started with Farm to Summer Eats. Inside, you'll find the tools you need to build a successful program, incorporate local foods into your menu, and plan activities that will engage kids and teens.



GET INVOLVED



ASSEMBLE A TEAM

Gather together stakeholders including kitchen staff, purchasing staff, site supervisors, community partners, and parents to help plan for your program.



THINK SEASONALLY

As you plan your menu, consider what produce will be available during the summer months. Plan your meals around these fruits and vegetables.



INVOLVE KIDS & TEENS

The more engaged kids and teens are with local foods, the more likely they are to eat them! Ask their opinions on new foods or hold activities that relate to local products.



START SMALL

You don't need to incorporate local foods in all aspects of your meal to be part of Farm to Summer Eats. Start with something simple like serving a whole, local fruit or veggie.



PROMOTE YOUR PROGRAM

Let your community know about your great work! Promote your use of local foods with promotional materials and social media. Make sure site staff know which items are local so they can promote them at sites.

MENU IDEAS

When you plan your menu by what's in season, you have access to the freshest foods and can create tasty meals that kids and teens will love! And remember—local doesn't just mean produce! There are many other ways you can include local foods in the summer meals you provide, from yogurt to fish. Add in one or two of the ideas below or mix and match to create a fully local, reimbursable meal!



VEGGIES

cut carrots & red pepper strips,
sweet corn & tomato salad, local
greens salad with cucumber slices



FRUIT

watermelon or cantaloupe
slices, whole peach, sliced
strawberries, peach &
blueberry smoothie



MEAT & MEAT ALTERNATIVES

local yogurt, local fish,
local cheese



Find more menu ideas and recipes on
projectbread.org/recipes or massfarmtoschool.org.

HOW TO GET LOCAL FOOD

There are many different ways to purchase local foods. Follow the process below to ensure seamless integration of locally sourced food into Summer Eats!

1

Work with your team to decide what local foods you would like. Are you looking for specific products each week or do you want whatever is in season? If possible, plan your menu around seasonal items.

2

Reach out to your existing vendor(s) to see if they offer any local products during the summer. Request any local items that you would like to purchase.

3

During the summer, you can purchase directly from farms or through distributors. See our Procuring Local Foods sheet for more details for following proper procurement rules.

4

Make sure your staff are aware of the new local products and trained on how to prepare them.

5

Communicate local items on the menu to your site staff and communities.



Find the Procuring Local Foods sheet, a list of seasonal availability, and more information on procuring local foods at meals4kids.org/farmtosummereats

ACTIVITIES

Farm to Summer Eats isn't just about providing healthy, local meals. It's also a way to broaden kids' and teens' connection to the food they eat and help build their interest in fresh, healthy foods for life. Providing activities that correspond with the food being served is a great way to engage kids and teens with local foods and can lead to increased participation in your Summer Eats program.

- **Hold taste-tests** of fresh, local fruits, vegetables, or a new dish made with local ingredients. Give participants an "I tried it" sticker and ask what they thought.
- **Take a field trip** to a farmer's market, community garden, or farm and talk to the farmers to learn more about where food comes from.
- **Hand out activity sheets** with fun facts and games about a local food being served.
- **Invite a farmer** to join your meal and talk with kids and teens about their farm.
- **Plant seeds** for participants to take home or connect with a community garden to teach kids and teens about how the food on their plate grows.
- **Host a hands-on cooking activity** to let kids and teens have an active role in preparing the food they eat.



FAQ

Q: What is local food?

A: There is no one set definition of “local” food. Often, local is defined as within 100-200 miles or within the same state or region. However, sponsors can decide what local means to them and source accordingly. Pick a definition that works for you and convey this to your distributors and the public.

Q: Is it more difficult to source food locally? What if there are no farms near me?

A: While it may take more advance planning to procure local foods, the purchasing process can be similar to the process for purchasing non-local foods. Because Massachusetts is full of local producers, there are plenty of options to choose from in all areas of the state. Many distributors can source local products for you. See our Procuring Local Foods Sheet for more information.

Q: Will kids try new fruits and vegetables?

A: Yes! While testing out new foods with kids and teens may seem tricky, many sponsors find that kids and teens are open to trying something new. Offering smaller samples first or giving kids and teens a chance to give feedback can help increase success when introducing new or unfamiliar foods.

Q: I’m a sponsor. How can I engage my sites with Farm to Summer Eats?

A: Site staff can be great partners in Farm to Summer Eats. Provide them with information about the local foods you serve that they can share with participants. You can also work with site staff to coordinate activities with the foods you serve.

Q: I’m a site. How can I get involved if my sponsor does not participate?

A: First, be an advocate for the program! Reach out to your sponsor and encourage them to introduce local food. You can also lead activities that bring a local component to the program.

MORE INFORMATION & RESOURCES



[MEALS4KIDS.ORG](https://meals4kids.org)



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