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Farmers' Markets

Did you know that if you bought the food for last night's supper at a conventional grocery store, it's likely that many of the ingredients traveled at least 15 to 20 times further than your commute to the cottage?

While this certainly puts a new perspective on a grocer's idea of "garden fresh," there's a bigger issue to consider. And that's what the shipping of all this food is doing to the environment. The greater distances food needs to travel to get to your plate means that more fuel is consumed and more ozone-depleting carbon dioxide emissions are created.

The logical solution to this problem is to buy locally produced food as much as possible. During the winter months this may not be a realistic option. Local food selection, especially in Manitoba and northern Ontario, is limited. As Dr. William Rees, a professor at the University of British Columbia's School of Community and Regional Planning says, "Most people would not find turnips to be a satisfactory substitute for grapefruit and bananas."

But with summer upon us, our options have greatly increased in the form of farmers' markets. "Farmers' markets," says Dr. Rees who specializes in global environmental trends and the ecological conditions for sustainable socioeconomic development, "can have a reducing effect on our food footprints by reducing the energy and material costs of food processing, packaging, refrigeration, preserving and transportation."

Of course, many of the benefits of buying your food at farmers' markets will be canceled out if you have to drive long distances to get to one. The good news is that there are plenty of farmers' markets nearby in the heart of cottage country, or on the way to the cottage, that'll offer you a variety of local fruits, vegetables and meats.

The Lac du Bonnet Farmer's Market, for example, has on average 30 vendors who sell in-season vegetables, honey and honey products, and homemade jams and jellies. There's also local beef sold by Norm Lussier, a Lac du Bonnet farmer who sells his meat under the name Beef on Wheels.

“They bring a health-inspected trailer with a generator and freezer,” says Angie Arthur, president of the farmer’s market, “and the meat is sold right out of the freezer.” The same holds true for the elk meat sold by Stonewood Elk Ranch.

The Lac du Bonnet Farmer’s Market has been in operation since 1990 and strives to make shopping there a fun experience. “We’re very friendly and willing to get what the customers want,” says Arthur. “Every Saturday there’s a free draw and one Saturday in August is a customer appreciation day with free cake and draws.”

Another farmer’s market in cottage territory that heavily promotes locally grown food is the Gimli Farmer’s Market. “The only things we sell are what people can grow themselves or make themselves,” says Peter Unger, the market’s coordinator and president.

The Gimli market, which has been around since 1997, typically has between 20 and 25 vendors who sell vegetables, honey, apples, strawberries and non-food items. Some of the fees the vendors pay for their tables is given to charity. “We donate to different organizations in Gimli like palliative care and animal shelters,” says Unger.

When you buy food at farmers’ markets, you not only help reduce greenhouse gas emissions from vehicle pollution, but you also support the local economy and help smaller farms thrive. “Farmers’ markets can increase farm income because they eliminate the middlemen,” say Dr. Rees.

Local food often tastes fresher and is healthier for you too since it hasn’t sat on a shelf or freezer for weeks losing valuable nutrients. But keep in mind that just because food is from a farmer’s market doesn’t necessarily mean it’s organic.

In order for food to be considered organic by the Canadian General Standards Board, it must meet a comprehensive set of rules including being free of commercial fertilizers and herbicides for at least three years. To be a certified organic grower, a farmer must pay several hundreds of dollars a year.

This is too expensive for the majority of people who sell their food at farmer’s markets, so don’t expect certified organic goods at most markets. That said, many local farmers follow organic or near organic practices even if they aren’t certified.

If you’ve decided to make eating organic food part of your life and want to know what’s organically grown and what isn’t at a farmer’s market, all you need to do is ask the vendors how they grow their food. Farmers’ markets, especially in

cottage country, are fun and relaxed affairs and most vendors are personable and more than willing to answer your questions.

POSSIBLE SIDEBAR

Farmers' Markets in Cottage Country and Beyond

Market	Day	Time	Start-Up	Shut-Down	Location
Bird's Hill Park (South Side)	Saturday	9:00 am - 1:00 pm	June 30	Sept 15	Off Garven Rd on Heatherdale Rd
Brandon - Town Centre	Saturday	9:00 am - noon	June 23	Sept 29	Town Centre - Parkade on Rosser Avenue
Brandon - Riverbank Discovery Centre	Saturday	10:00 am - 1:00 pm	June 30	Sept 29	Riverbank Discovery Centre
	Thursday	6:00 pm - 8:00 pm	July 5	Sept 27	
Carberry	Thursday	9:00 am - 11:00 pm	July 5	Aug 30	CVM parking lot on south end of Main Street
Carman	Friday	4:00 pm - 6:30 pm	June 22	Sept 14	Parking lot at Syl's Drive Inn on Hwy 3E
Cypress River	Saturday	10:00 am - 11:30 am	July 7	Sept 1	Railway Avenue, across from Post Office

Dauphin	Friday	5:00 pm - 6:30 pm	July 6	Sept 28	Rotary Arena
Gimli	Saturday	9:30 am - 2:00 pm	June 16	Sept 22	Harbour area off 1st Ave
Glenboro	Saturday	10:00 am - 11:30 am	July 7	Sept 8	Railway Ave - across from drugstore
Holland	Saturday	11:30 am - 2:00 pm	July 7	Sept 29	Windmill Park on Hwy 2
Killarney	Saturday	9:00 am - 11:00 am	June 30	Sept 8	Erin Park
Lac du Bonnet	Saturday	10:00 am - 1:00 pm	May 19	Sept 15	Arena parking lot
Lorette	Thursday	3:00 pm - 8:00 pm	July 19	Sept 13	C&S Country Garden Centre grounds
Lundar	Tuesday	4:00 pm - 6:00 pm	Mid July	Early Sept	Off Hwy 6 behind the Goose
	Friday	4:00 pm - 7:00 pm			
Minnedosa	Friday	4:00 pm - 6:00 pm	June 29	Sept 28	Parking lot of Legion Club Rooms, 34-

					2nd St SW
Morden	Thursday	4:00 pm - 7:00 pm	June 14	Mid Oct	Parking lot at the corner of Stephen & 8th Street
Morden - Prairie Marketplace	Friday	9:00 am - 9:00 pm	June 1		1 mile west of Hwy's 3 & 14 intersection
Neepawa	Saturday	9:00 am - 11:00 am	July 21	Sept 15	County Courthouse parking lot
Ninette	Sunday	11:00 am - 12:30 pm	July 8	Aug 26	Ag Grounds (Hwy 23)
Portage la Prairie	Saturday	9:00 am - noon	July 7	Oct 13	Heritage Square, Royal Road North (west side of Glesby Center)
	Wednesday	3:30 pm - 5:30 pm	July 11	Oct 10	
Roblin	Tuesday	10:00 am - 2:00 pm	June 12	End of August	Temporary Youth Centre on Main Street (beside Liquor Store)
Somerset	Wednesday	5:00 pm - 7:00 pm	July 4	Sept 26	Corner of 3rd & Carlton
Souris	Saturday	10:00 am - 11:00 am	July 7	Sept 29	Town parking lot behind Whitfields's Drugstore

South Junction	Friday	3:30 pm - 6:30 pm	Aug 3	Aug 31	Located 1/4 mile east of South Junction turn off on Hwy 12 (north side of Hwy)
St. Malo Li Pichi Marché	Saturday	10:30 am - 2:30 pm	June 30	Sept 1	Maison-Chapelle grounds at corner of Hwy 59 & Beach Road (leading to the St. Malo Provincial Park entrance)
St. Norbert	Saturday	8:00 am - 3:00 pm	June 16	Oct 6	3514 Pembina Hwy
	Wednesday	1:00 pm - 7:00 pm	Aug 1	Sept 12	
Steinbach	Thursday	4:00 pm - 7:30 pm	July 5	Aug 30	Clearspring Village Mall parking lot
		4:00 pm - 7:00 pm	Sept 6	Oct 4	
Swan River	Thursday	4:00 pm - 5:30 pm	Aug 2	Oct 4	Display Bldg - Ag Society grounds
Virден	Friday	10:00 am - 1:00	May 18	Sept 28	Next to old CPR Station - 6th

		pm			Avenue
Warren	Saturday, Sunday & holiday Mondays	11:00 am - 2:00 pm	May 12 (except June 23, 24; July 8, 15; Sept 15)	Sept 30	Elevator site on Railway Avenue (note: dependant on Prairie Dog Central running)
Winkler	Tuesday	4:00 pm - 7:00 pm	May 15	Mid Oct	Former Bethel Hospital parking lot
Winnipeg (Red River)	Saturday	9:00 am - 2:00 pm	July 28	Sept 22	Red River Exhibition Park - 3977 Portage Avenue & Perimeter Hwy
Winnipeg (Transcona)	Thursday	11:00 am - 4:00 pm	Aug 2	Sept 14	Transcona BIZ Parking lot, 139 Regent Avenue West
Winnipeg Exchange District	Thursday	10:00 am - 2:00 pm	July 5 (except July 19 & 26)	Sept 27	Old Market Square (corner of Bannatyne & King)
	Saturday	9:00 am - 2:00 pm	July 7	Sept 29	

Source: Government of Manitoba