



Agricultural Marketing Service
U.S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE



TOOLKIT

LAUNCHING A FARMERS MARKET FRUIT AND VEGETABLE EDUCATION PROGRAM



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INTRODUCTION

Farmers markets provide opportunities for communities to interact with and learn from local farmers and food producers. Farmers markets strengthen community connections and promote information sharing by increasing food access and providing food education opportunities. These opportunities help farmers markets promote food security by providing communities access to fresh high-quality produce.

According to the 2019 National Farmers Market Manager Survey conducted by USDA, 78% of farmers markets accept Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) benefits (USDA, 2020). Research collected by Emory University and Arizona State University, in partnership with the USDA, found that 126 of 194 farmers market organizations surveyed (~65%) offer cooking or nutrition literacy programming at their markets (Rissing et al, 2024). The logical overlap between markets that accept SNAP and providing cooking demonstrations or other food education indicates there is value in making more nutrition education tools and strategies accessible to a broader farmers market audience. This includes existing curriculums like the one outlined in this toolkit, derived from the USDA's VegU program.

Providing fruit and vegetable nutrition education for market visitors on how to grow, pick, prepare, and store produce purchased at farmers markets further supports food security. Market visitors have increased self-efficacy in preparing fresh fruits and vegetables. When customers engage with educators at farmers markets, they are likely to purchase a greater variety of fruits and vegetables (Lanou et al, 2021). Market attendees have reportedly found information on produce preparation useful and intended to remake the recipe for themselves in the future. Farmers markets provide an excellent opportunity to engage consumers to show the importance of local produce consumption and create a platform for nutrition education. Furthermore, showing market visitors how to prepare fresh produce can encourage purchasing of local produce which supports their local economy.

PILOT OVERVIEW

In 2021, the Farmers Market Coalition (FMC) entered into a partnership with the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Agricultural Marketing Service (AMS) and the USDA Farmers Market team, under a cooperative agreement titled "Increasing Food Access through Farmers Market Implementation and Education with Underserved Community Focus". This agreement includes two pilot projects focused on increasing education and access to local food within communities: The "Fruit and Vegetable Education Pilot" and the "1890 University Farmers Market Pilot".

This project, referred to as the "Fruit and Vegetable Education Pilot", was based on VegU, the USDA Farmers Market's nutrition education program. VegU was launched in 2016 to show market visitors how to grow, pick, prepare, and store locally grown produce through short, accessible, live classes. Current VegU programming can be found on the USDA Farmers Market website. The purpose of this pilot program was to determine how to tailor the VegU-style of nutrition education programming at various types of farmers markets. A multi-step survey and interview process, detailed in the final report for this project [link when available], was used to select these three markets to participate in the cooperative agreement:

- Downtown Evanston Farmers Market (Evanston, IL)
- Red River Gorge Farmers Market (Slade, KY)
- McAllen Farmers Market (McAllen, TX)

Best practices for developing and implementing nutrition education programming taken from the participating markets are shared throughout the toolkit. These best practices offer suggestions for tailoring programming to your community needs and improving overall program effectiveness.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

The toolkit will help farmers market staff develop nutrition education programming at farmers markets in an effort to:

- Design and implement nutrition education programming that optimizes available resources and best fits the needs of a specific community's market site (rural, urban, suburban).
- Expand market visitors' knowledge of how to grow, pick, prepare, and store fruits and vegetables.
- Increase fruit and vegetable consumption among market visitors.
- Improve fruit and vegetable sales for local producers.

DEVELOPING A FRUIT AND VEGETABLE EDUCATION PROGRAM CURRICULUM

The following sections contain instructions and information to be considered when establishing a fruit and vegetable education program at a farmers market.

PROGRAM SCHEDULING

Decide how often your program will be offered. Programming should be offered on a consistent schedule (e.g., weekly, twice monthly, or just once per month), at the same time during the market day. The USDA FM provides programming on every market day during the market season.

Offer a predictable schedule for vendors and shoppers, as well as market and program staff. Promotion of your events will allow the market to have permanent signage and marketing materials available to promote the program. Deciding on a schedule at the beginning of each season and sticking to that plan will also allow you to design program messaging and social media campaigns ahead of time, building anticipation for these events with your market visitors.

Offer multiple sessions each market day when scheduling your programming. Conducting the sessions during the busiest time of the market day will encourage more participants to join each event and allow the program to have a wider reach. Hosting several sessions can also draw in multiple sets of market visitors to participate over the course of the day.



Best Practices Tip #1 **Consistent Demonstration**

Having a program run consistently will allow market visitors to plan to attend the program. Find an interval that works for your market based on staff capacity, special events, and market attendance. Implementing the program once or twice per month allows time for staff to prepare for the demonstration, develop talking points, test recipes, etc.

PRODUCE SELECTION & PROCUREMENT

Prepare to procure local and seasonal produce for a fruit and vegetable education program.

- Estimate the quantity of produce needed based on market attendance, frequency the programming will be offered (e.g., 11:00 AM – 1:00 PM), and weekly program participation.
 - For the VegU program, the USDA FM estimates quantity of produce depending on cooking equipment available and market attendance. Generally, 60 samples are given out during each of the four presentations based on post-pandemic foot traffic. Additional samples will be made available if there are special guests or there is a higher market attendance predicted.

- For surplus of featured produce, you can:
 - **Establish-Local Partnerships for Donations:** Farmers Markets should identify and collaborate with local food banks, community kitchens, or nonprofit organizations that accept fresh produce donations. Create a list of potential partners and develop a protocol for the transfer of surplus produce. Ensure clear communication about donation times and produce handling and storage requirements to maintain freshness and safety.
 - **Develop Sustainable Disposal Options:** If donating surplus of produce is not feasible, markets can adopt environmentally friendly disposal methods. This includes composting the produce to enrich soil for future gardening or connecting with local farms or animal sanctuaries that may use it as feed. Providing training on composting techniques or identifying regional composting services can further support this effort.
- Plan ahead, even before your market season begins. Communicate with producers about how far in advance orders need to be placed to ensure produce availability.
- Consider that certain produce items may need to be procured far enough in advance to give them time to ripen before being featured in educational programming, but not so far in advance that they are no longer fresh.
- Ensure that adequate portions of ingredients are purchased for the demonstrations beforehand based on overall market attendance and engagement at previous programs.
 - If possible, purchase the ingredients to be used in the recipe from vendors at the market. This may include fresh produce as well as herbs, sauces, dressings, or other accompaniments.



Best Practices Tip #2

Be Flexible

Changing climates can make it difficult to predict when a crop may become available. Having a produce schedule allows market staff to plan programming ahead of market days while also encouraging visitors to return for future featured produce. If there is an unexpected change in produce availability, consider changing the featured produce to a new fruit or vegetable or swapping the featured fruit or vegetable with another week.

SEASONALITY

Seasonality of local produce is a key consideration when selecting featured items. Seasonal produce will likely be easier to access and procure, which benefits both producers and consumers. Procuring seasonal produce for fruit and vegetable education programming also supports producers by increasing demand for seasonal produce and strengthening connections between local producers and farmers market staff. It helps ensure that produce featured in the programming will generally be available for participants to purchase at the market and within the community.

- Consumers get produce that may be more affordable, as well as higher in nutritional quality and flavor. Locally grown seasonal food items also spend less time in transit, thus they often stay fresh longer and may have a lower carbon footprint. Additionally, the use of locally and seasonally available produce ensures consumers can learn about ways to prepare the item and subsequently have immediate opportunities to purchase that produce from market vendors.

- Consult a seasonality chart to understand when certain fruits and vegetables are in season in your state or region.
 - Examples: [Seasonal Food Guide](#)

The complete market season schedule should be planned in advance. When selecting and scheduling produce items to be featured in educational programming, market educators should:

- Make selections based on produce holidays (e.g., National Watermelon Day).
 - See - [Fruit Holidays](#); [Vegetable Holidays](#)
- Research and schedule around local produce-related celebrations and festivals (e.g., Florida Strawberry Festival; South Carolina Okra Strut Festival).
- Try to prioritize what is in season and available to procure from local producers when creating and finalizing the featured produce schedule. When possible, schedule in alignment with national holidays and local celebrations.
- Coordinate with vendors to determine ideal timing of featured produce to coincide with availability.

An example of a recipe demonstration schedule (for mid-Atlantic market in temperate climate) is available in [Appendix C](#).

TALKING POINTS

Talking points should be prepared prior to the market. Talking points can be printed and referenced throughout the presentation. Information should be presented in a way that is understandable for all market visitors regardless of education level. Any agricultural, nutritional, or other field-specific information should be defined and explained in lay language. Suggested talking points, organized by topic, are outlined below.

Introduction

- Welcome Visitors to Market: Give background on how long the market has been operating and where vendors are from.
- Explain the general purpose of fruit and vegetable education. Introduce the featured produce item.
- Featured Produce Overview: Include information about national and local consumption patterns. You may also include the history of the produce, general growing information, and any unique facts about the produce.

Grow

- Include information on how to grow the fruit or vegetable at home, tailoring it to your region. Discuss differences between growing indoors versus outdoors. Share information regarding soil type, growing season length, sunlight needed, water needed, pruning, etc.
- Consider mentioning local growing resources. Identify and share community gardens that are accepting volunteers along with other local growing resources to connect with new growers.
- Build connections with vendors and local community garden staff by collaborating with them for region-specific information. Gardening educators can also provide information and be included in presentations.
- If a commodity is typically only grown commercially, explain the growing process. Highlight vendors at your market who sell the produce to generate demand for the produce and increase business for local vendors.
- Tip: Check out resources and materials available through your state's [Cooperative Extension Service](#) related to growing different fruits and vegetables in your region.

Pick

- Share information on picking fruits and vegetables if growing at home or in a garden.
- Share information on how to choose a fruit or vegetable at the store.
- Show various types of fruit that are ripe, not ripe, rotten, etc. to provide visual explanations of these stages to market visitors.

Prepare

- Provide instructions and demonstrate how to cut the featured produce.
- Explain the steps of the recipe of the day to visitors and provide recipe cards for visitors to follow along. As you talk through and show the steps of the recipe, consider availability of kitchen tools and appliances and, if there are any, mention alternatives (e.g., oven and air fryer alternatives).
- Provide ideas for other recipes and methods of preparing the featured produce.

Store

- Share methods and duration for room temperature, refrigeration, or frozen storage.

Nutrition

- Provide general nutrition information about the featured produce and what nutrients it may be most known for.
- Connect to functions in the body and the health benefits consumers will receive. (e.g., beta carotene improves eye health)
- [USDA FoodData Central](#) - use to identify and share nutrient amounts in specific produce.
- [Dietary Reference Intakes](#) – use nutrient-based reference values to share recommended consumption amounts
- [Dietary Guidelines for Americans](#) – use to put the recipe or produce “in context” for visitors and to show that certain produce items are a good source of certain nutrients (e.g., bell peppers are a rich dietary source of vitamin C, one serving of orange bell pepper provides more than 100% of the Reference Daily Intake (RDI) for vitamin C).

Supporting Local Farmers

- Mention which vendors provided produce for the presentation and/or where to purchase the featured produce in the community.

Crowd Engagement

- Include jokes and fun facts to keep the crowd engaged.

Food Safety

- Hand washing – wash hands before, during, and after the presentation.
- Washing dishes – Dishes can be rinsed between demonstrations in a portable sink but should still be washed in hot water after the demonstrations are complete. Another option may be to have several of each item to have clean utensils and dishes for each presentation or disposable items. Set-up may vary from market to market.
- Gloves – have gloves available for use when preparing and serving the recipe.
- Visit <http://www.foodsafety.gov> for more information.

Recipe Demonstrations

- Selected recipes should contain 5 or fewer ingredients, not including salt, pepper, or oil. Keeping the recipes simple increases accessibility of produce, affordability of meal preparation for shoppers, and the ease of the demonstration for the market.
 - Pilot markets used recipes from [Plan Eat Move](#) and the [UK extension program](#).
 - Additional recipes can be found in the [VegU Recipe Archive](#).
- Consider equipment usage and provide alternatives for equipment (ex. oven in place of air fryer).
- The recipe should take approximately 10 minutes to complete. If a recipe takes longer to cook, it is acceptable to prepare samples in advance to have ready for the audience, while using that presentation's demonstration for the next round of samples.



Best Practices Tip #3 Engage the Senses

Use all of the senses to engage market visitors!

Having a sample produce for display can allow market visitors to see and feel an unfamiliar produce. Pilot markets noted that when heat was used in the cooking demonstrations, the smell attracted visitors to the booth to engage with the presentation. Consider using a microphone so participants across the market can hear the presentation, even as they are waiting in line or shopping at another stand. Be sure to make an announcement stating when the presentation will begin.

Figures 1 and 2 show cooking demonstrations and tastings in action. You can also learn more about the recipes, preparation, and cooking techniques used by the USDA Farmers Market team as part of their VegU Program in these [videos featured on the USDA AMS YouTube channel](#). See [Appendix D](#) for more sample talking points.

Figure 1. Sauteing mushrooms during cooking demonstration



Figure 2. Watermelon samples carved and distributed to market visitors



PARTNERSHIPS

Guest Speakers

- Invite regional chefs, gardeners, farmers, Cooperative Extension, or other agricultural or nutrition students and professionals to enhance produce presentations. Connect with these organizations prior to or early in the market season to allow ample planning time. Consider having an outreach document accessible to all team members with contact information for these organizations. Chefs, gardeners, trade associations, and other special guests can enhance presentations by providing different perspectives and additional expertise regarding a fruit or vegetable. You may attract more customers as a result.
- Collaborate with [commodity research and promotion boards](#) to help engage the produce education audience. National boards dedicated to a single or group of commodities (e.g. the Hass Avocado Board) may be able to participate in presentations, and many also have regional chapters. Contact research and promotion boards before the start of the market season to secure dates for them to participate in a presentation. To coordinate a guest speaker appearance, schedule a planning meeting approximately one month prior to the presentation date.



Best Practices Tip #4 Partner Up

All participating markets found that utilizing partnerships with local organizations and/or specialists from the community to help facilitate the program increased capacity for such a program and allowed experts to interact with visitors. Consider the following types of organizations or local groups to collaborate or partner with:

- State extension programs
- Food councils
- Local chefs
- Nutrition, dietetics, or medicine programs at local colleges and universities
- Libraries
- Community gardens

Seasonal Topics and Holidays

- Celebrating various holidays or appreciation months, with themed presentations and recipes, can help increase community engagement. Consider the community your market serves when deciding which holidays to highlight.

EQUIPMENT PROCUREMENT & USAGE

Using basic cooking equipment found in most American households can encourage visitors to prepare fresh produce in their own homes. Choose equipment that is relevant to the demographics of your market visitors.

The USDA Farmers Market uses a mobile kitchen provided by the [Charlie Cart Project](#), a non-profit organization dedicated to hands-on food education. mobile kitchens may not be accessible to all markets. The following are alternative equipment options.

STANDARD EQUIPMENT

Cooking Countertop

- A sturdy table with appropriate tablecloth and signage can be used as the main demonstration area.

Cooking Materials

- Cutting boards (multiple suggested)
- Knives (multiple suggested)
- Clear bowls
- Measuring cups
- Spatulas
- Tongs

Examples of some of the materials used in the USDA's VegU program can be viewed in the short videos available on their [YouTube channel](#).

Additional Equipment

- Other cooking equipment may vary from market to market depending on the resources available to the market. When at least one electrical socket is available, the following cookware may be considered for use:
 - Induction cooktop
 - Pots and pans for heating
 - Blender
 - Griddle or electric skillet
 - Transportation Cart
 - A small cart with wheels may be helpful in keeping all kitchen items together and easily accessible for transportation around the market.
- If it is not possible to do a live demonstration, ingredients may be prepared ahead of time off-site.
- Propane-fueled cookware such as a stove or grill may be an option if electricity is not accessible to the market.



Best Practices Tip #5 Choose Practical Equipment

Consider your market's capacity and budget when investing in new equipment for your program. While a Charlie Cart or similar mobile kitchen equipment can be helpful in program implementation, all three of the markets participating in this pilot were able to operationalize the program without investing in this type of equipment. McAllen Farmers Market recommends choosing simple, practical tools which can be useful in preparing a variety of fruits, vegetables, and other foods rather than specialty gadgets or utensils with limited use. Think about the produce you'll likely feature from season to season and how often you might wish to demonstrate recipes which require ingredients to be cooked or served hot.

FOOD SAFETY

Training

- Food safety training should be required for all demonstrators.
- Following [ServSafe](#) food safety guidelines is strongly recommended when preparing and handling samples.
- [Check your state's food safety regulations.](#)

Cleaning Supplies

- To ensure safety and cleanliness, the demonstration area should be cleaned before, during, and after presentations.
 - Use dish soap to clean cooking equipment between presentations. A tub of hot water can be used in place of running water.
 - Use food-safe cleanser to keep the surface of the mobile kitchen clean
 - Use an all-purpose cleaner to clean the sink after a demonstration.
 - Always wear gloves during food preparation and presentation.
 - Ensure that hand sanitizer and/or hand soap is always available to presenters.

SETUP AND SIGNAGE

- The food and nutrition education program should be set up in an area of the market that will attract market customers. Consider electricity needs for cooking demonstrations and high foot traffic areas when deciding on a location. The demonstration area should have its own tent and fire extinguisher for safety.
- Adequate signage around the market and at the demonstration area should indicate the featured produce, recipe, and time of presentation. Chalkboards or white boards are recommended. Signage may also tell market visitors where to purchase featured commodities.
- Bright and easy to read signage will also help with branding and marketing of your program and give visitors a consistent, recognizable visual aid where they can access program details.

BRANDING AND MARKETING RESOURCES

Consistent branding enables market visitors to easily recognize the program. Having a catchy name and a colorful logo will help staff market the program on social media, and promote it using posters, banners, and word of mouth.

- Define the target audience for the program and tailor branding around messages and themes that will resonate with the target audience.
- Consider:
 - Where the market is located
 - The demographics of market goers
 - Relevant community symbols that may be incorporated
 - Whether materials and presentations could be offered in multiple languages

RECOMMENDED SOFTWARE

If resources allow, design a logo for the program using a graphic design program like [Canva](#), [Adobe Express](#), or [Adobe InDesign](#). If budget allows, use the logo to order a branded tent top for the presentations. Use the logo and consistent formatting (font, colors, etc.) on all program materials (recipe cards, social media posts, etc.) if possible.

Figure 3. below shows examples of VegU branding and logo usage.

Figure 3. VegU logos used in creative ways to promote the program



COMMUNICATION

Plain Language

The language used should be plain, so the audience understands the material the first time they read or hear it.

- Avoid using scientific terms and complex vocabulary.
- Use active voice and common words.
- Use short sentences and paragraphs.

Know Your Customer

Knowing your customer is important to create trust with your audience. Use terms that your audience will understand when creating correspondence. It is important to know who in your community shops at the farmers market and to tailor communications towards them. Language, imagery, and visuals should all reflect the community. (For example, holidays celebrated at the market should also be celebrated by the community.)

DESIGN

When designing an informational flyer to post on social media, send in a newsletter, or distribute in-person, be sure to include adequate information.

Information may include but is not limited to:

- Date/time of presentation
- Address
- Featured produce
- Name of the recipe
- Any special guests or collaborations

For more information regarding design principles, please review these slides from the Farmers Market Coalition's [Graphic Design for Non-Designers training](#). The training provides information on clear formatting of visual information.

The [Alaska Farmers Market Toolkit](#) provides resources regarding successful marketing strategies and campaigns. The toolkit provides both traditional and online marketing suggestions.

The [Oregon Farmers Market](#) also highlights successful examples of branding.



Best Practices Tip #6

Promote Your Program Before and During Market

Consistency of marketing helps spread awareness of the program. Be sure to market the program before the farmer's market day, utilizing social media, flyers, and local connections. It is also important that shoppers at your farmers market are aware that the presentations will happen while they are there. Be sure to guide your market visitors to the presentation booth.

OUTREACH AND PARTICIPANT RECRUITMENT

- Use existing email lists and partnerships for the farmers market if available for outreach about program launch and weekly updates. Also consider partnering with related organizations (food banks, food related non-profits, community gardens, etc.) to spread the word.
- Use direct mailers or text messages if resources allow.
- Drop off posters or other printed materials promoting the program at local restaurants and community sites (libraries, churches, apartment building lobbies, schools etc.).
- Add information about the program to the farmers market website.
- Design social media posts about the program's launch and weekly programming to share on the farmers market's social media pages. Create hashtags for events and ask participants to post images of the food they make using the hashtag.
- If SNAP and/or Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC) benefits are accepted at your market, consider partnering with state and/or local SNAP and WIC offices to spread the word about the program. Local SNAP Education staff may also want to collaborate or provide feedback on program development. WIC benefits include the Farmers Market Nutrition Program (FMNP) and Senior Farmers Market Nutrition Program (SFMNP).
 - Use this [Contact Map](#) to find state and local SNAP contacts.
 - [Learn more about WIC state agencies](#).

EVALUATION

Evaluation is necessary for successful program implementation. Data reporting can help determine how to improve fruit and vegetable education programming at your farmers market in the future.

PARTICIPANT POST-SURVEY

Purpose and Measures

- A sample participant survey, provided in the appendix, contains questions that assess participants' familiarity with the featured produce, satisfaction with the presentation, and general engagement with the market.

Implementation

- Paper surveys should be available near the site of the presentation. Online surveys may be used. The online options include using an on-site tablet that displays the survey link ready to be answered and/or a QR code that allows market visitors to answer the survey on their own device.

Outcomes

- Review participant responses after each presentation day to determine successes and areas for improvement for future sessions.

WEEKLY REPORT

Reporting Log

- Consider keeping a weekly reporting log highlighting notable activities, outputs, and outcomes from the presentations. You may consider tracking the following:
 - Number of presentations conducted
 - Number of attendees/samples given
 - Number of vendors selling the featured produce
 - Weather
 - External activities that could impact market attendance
 - Successes
 - Challenges/Barriers

TROUBLESHOOTING

Below are some solutions to common challenges markets may experience when delivering fruit and vegetable education courses.

FOOD SAFETY ISSUES

- Food safety concerns may also come from market-goers. Incorporating a discussion into the recipe presentation (e.g., location of hand sanitizer or soap, how to wash hands, and general cleaning practices) can help alleviate concerns.
- Presenters should be prepared to answer food safety questions from market-goers.

EQUIPMENT MALFUNCTIONS

- Cooking equipment and preparatory tools can always malfunction. Being prepared with alternative recipes and a back-up plan is strongly recommended.
- Recipe testing in advance is the best way to decide what recipe to feature and to check equipment functionality.
- If using audio equipment (e.g. microphone and speakers), make sure program staff know how the equipment works and that someone is available to troubleshoot any equipment malfunctions. Should the equipment fail, be prepared with a backup plan or to continue the demonstration(s) without audio equipment.

LIMITED RECIPE OR COMMODITY AVAILABILITY

- Before procuring ingredients for the week, consider whether the produce needs to be ripe and allot time for ripening. Ripe fruit not only tastes better, but it also ensures easier prep work.
- Consider having backup procurement sources. Sourcing from vendors at the market is strongly encouraged but not always possible. Consider other farmers markets, wholesale, local grocery stores, or online ordering services like Instacart.
- It is important to focus your program activities during the most productive season for farmers selling at your market. Feature a wide variety of produce during the period in which you operate your program and promote the farmers/vendors selling the featured fruit or vegetable (and any other ingredients) from week to week.

LIMITED ATTENDANCE

- While it can be demotivating to present to a small audience, continue the presentation regardless of the number of people in attendance.
- Making an announcement at the market five minutes before you plan to start and starting the presentation will attract more people. Including incentives (prizes) for participating in the presentation and completing the post-surveys are also ways to gain interest.
- Other ways to increase attendance are to invite local groups to attend presentations, use marketing materials such as flyers and social media posts, and having a central place for more visibility. Having adequate signage, flyers, and displaying featured produce also attract market visitors. Ensure there is sufficient seating, shade, and viewing space for visitors.

REFERENCES

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APPENDIX A. PARTICIPANT SURVEY

1. What was the fruit or vegetable featured today?
 - a. Open-ended
2. How familiar are you with the featured produce? Select all that apply.
 - a. I have seen this fruit or vegetable before.
 - b. I have eaten this fruit or vegetable before.
 - c. I have cooked this fruit or vegetable before.
 - d. I have not seen this produce before.
3. Have you grown this fruit or vegetable before? If yes, where?
 - a. Yes, Home garden
 - b. Yes, Community garden
 - c. Yes, School garden
 - d. Yes, Farm
 - e. I have not grown this fruit or vegetable before.
4. Did you purchase or do you intend to purchase the featured fruit or vegetable at today's farmers market?
 - a. Yes
 - b. I would have, but it was not available for purchase.
 - c. No
 - d. Other
5. In the future, how likely are you to purchase the featured fruit or vegetable after attending today's class?
 - a. 1 – Unlikely
 - b. 2
 - c. 3
 - d. 4
 - e. 5 – Likely
6. What information shared during today's class was most useful to you? [Select one.]
 - a. Seeing the fruit or vegetable
 - b. How to pick the fruit or vegetable
 - c. How to store
 - d. How to grow
 - e. How to cook
 - f. Nutrition information
 - g. Fun facts
7. I feel confident that I can prepare this fruit or vegetable.
 - a. 1 – Disagree
 - b. 2
 - c. 3
 - d. 4
 - e. 5 – Agree
8. Overall, how would you rate the quality of today's presentation and instructor?
 - a. Poor
 - b. Fair
 - c. Good
 - d. Very good
 - e. Excellent

9. How likely are you to attend another class?
- a. 1 – Unlikely
 - b. 2
 - c. 3
 - d. 4
 - e. 5 – Likely
10. How did you find out about [program name]?
- a. Word of mouth
 - b. Read an article online or in print
 - c. On social media
 - i. Instagram
 - ii. Facebook
 - iii. Flickr
 - iv. X
 - d. Website
 - e. Email list
 - f. Stumbled upon it by accident
 - g. I'm a regular
 - h. Saw poster, postcard, or other print advertisement
 - i. Other

APPENDIX B. WEEKLY REPORTING LOG

- General Market Information
 - Date of market: [Calendar option]
 - Hours of operation:
 - Number of fruit and vegetable vendors this week:
 - Number of SNAP-authorized vendors this week:
 - Weather:

- Estimated number of market visitors this week (If an exact number is not available, please report on if your market was busier, less busy, or had an average amount of traffic.)
 - Method used to count market visitors:
 - Total sales this week:

- Fruit and Vegetable Education
 - What was the featured produce?
 - Did the SNAP-authorized vendors sell the featured produce?
 - How many fruit and vegetable class sessions were conducted?
 - How many people participated in the program in each session?

- Feedback
 - Describe outstanding events that could have impacted class attendance? (Consider the weather, holidays, local events, etc.)
 - Describe any barriers to implementing a fruit and vegetable education class
 - Describe successes of the fruit and vegetable education class

APPENDIX C. VEGU SCHEDULE



2024 CLASS SCHEDULE

ATTEND SHORT 10-MINUTE CLASSES EVERY FRIDAY FROM JUNE TO OCTOBER BETWEEN 11:30AM AND 1:00PM IN THE VEGU TENT AT THE USDA FARMERS MARKET. THE MARKET HOSTS 30+ LOCAL VENDORS FROM 10:00AM TO 2:00PM OFFERING A WIDE VARIETY OF PRODUCTS.

JUNE

JUNE 7 PEAS
JUNE 14 BLACKBERRIES/RASPBERRIES
JUNE 21 STRAWBERRIES
JUNE 28 CUCUMBER

JULY

JULY 12 BLUEBERRIES
JULY 19 PEACHES
JULY 26 OKRA

AUGUST

AUGUST 2 MUSHROOMS
AUGUST 9 MANGOES
AUGUST 16 WATERMELON
AUGUST 23 CORN
AUGUST 30 TOMATOES

SEPTEMBER

SEPTEMBER 6 RADISHES
SEPTEMBER 13 POTATOES
SEPTEMBER 20 SWEET POTATOES
SEPTEMBER 27 APPLES

OCTOBER

OCTOBER 4 PEARS
OCTOBER 11 CRANBERRIES
OCTOBER 18 FIGS
OCTOBER 25 PUMPKINS

LOCATED ON THE CORNER OF INDEPENDENCE AVENUE AND 14TH STREET, SW IN WASHINGTON, D.C. 20250
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APPENDIX D. SAMPLE TALKING POINTS: WATERMELON

INTRODUCTION

- The USDA Farmers Market has been in operation for over 25 years.
- The market has a variety of vendors including farmers and other local producers who make products featuring different agricultural foods from the Chesapeake Bay region.
- All vendors are located within a 200-mile radius of Washington, DC, including MD, PA, VA WV.
- VegU is the farmers market’s nutrition education program that teaches visitors how to grow, pick, prepare, and store a variety of different produce depending on what’s in season.
- Today’s featured produce: Watermelon

OVERVIEW

TOPIC	DETAILS
Botanical Information	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A watermelon can technically be considered a berry, “a fleshy fruit that has multiple seeds on the inside, embedded in the flesh of the ovary.” • Watermelon is a succulent fruit/vegetable and vinelike plant of the Cucurbitaceae family native to tropical Africa. Other plants of this family include cucumber, squash, pumpkin, and musk melon. (University of Missouri) • Watermelon flesh can be red, white, or yellow.
Producers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Florida is the biggest producer of watermelon in the US. In 2021, Florida alone accounted for 30% of domestic watermelon production. • Georgia, California, and Texas are also huge watermelon producers. These 4 states accounted for ¾ of all watermelon production in the US in 2021. (USDA ERS)
Imports/ Exports	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • China is the largest watermelon producer in the world with over 60 million tons produced annually. (atlasbig.com) • The US is the world’s 8th biggest watermelon producer, producing over 1.5 million tons.
Consumption	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • US consumption of fresh watermelons in 2022 was around 14 pounds per person. • Watermelon popularity has been increasing in the past few decades and is nearly double of all other US melon availability. The US imports watermelon to keep up with consumer demand.
History	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The history of watermelon goes back 5000 years in Southern Africa, where it was used as a source of water. It then travelled to Egypt, where the first watermelon harvest was recorded in tomb paintings. (University of Missouri) • Watermelon was found growing in the US in Florida as early as 1576. However, watermelon was not as sweet back then as it is now. • In the 20th century, USDA funded a watermelon breeding project and made significant progress in watermelon improvement through selective breeding. It was in that project that the “Charleston Grey” watermelon was produced.
Other	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A seedless watermelon is a sterile hybrid which is created by crossing male pollen for a watermelon with a female watermelon flower. This is similar to the mule, produced by crossing a horse and a donkey. • The white “seeds” in a seedless watermelon are actually empty seed coats in which a seed did not fully mature. They are perfectly safe to eat.

HOW TO GROW

- Season for planting: Spring to Early Summer
 - Watermelons require warm temperatures and a long growing season of 70-90 days.
- Sunlight: Full sun
- Soil: Slightly acidic to neutral soil
- Water:
 - From planting until the fruit begins to form, watermelons require 1-2 inches of water per week.
 - After the fruit begins to form, drier weather is better to produce sweeter fruit.
- Care
 - Blossoms require a pollinator to produce fruit.

HOW TO PICK

- How to pick fresh from plant (fruitandveggies.org)
 - A watermelon takes about 90 days to grow, from planting to harvesting.
 - Thump the watermelon with your palm. If the watermelon sounds hollow, it is ripe.
- How to select at grocery store
 - Pick ripe watermelon that sounds hollow after a solid thump/tap.
 - Choose firm, heavy feeling, symmetrical fruit that is free from bruises, cuts, or dents. The bottom side will have a creamy yellow spot from where it sat on the ground.
 - Avoid soft or light feeling fruit.

HOW TO STORE

- Store fresh and uncut on counter until ripe, up to a week
- Refrigerate ripe and cut fruit for up to 4 days
 - Store cut watermelon in bigger slices before chopping up into smaller
 - Less loss of water makes the watermelon more stable for storage
- Freezing:
 - Cut into cubes and freeze on a tray lined with wax paper. Once fully frozen, transfer it to an airtight container for up to 6 months.
 - Use for smoothies or sorbet. Do not defrost.

HOW TO PREPARE

- Preparation:
 - Scrub watermelon clean with a stiff brush under running water.
 - Wipe dry with a paper towel.
 - Cut the top and bottom ends off, so that it can stand up on a flat bottom.
 - Slice rind off in a downward cutting motion.
 - Cut large slabs and then cut into chunks, strips, etc. as desired
 - NOTE: the more you cut, the more mess you make. Cell walls are like little water balloons—the more you break, the more water leaks out. Store watermelon in bigger slices before chopping up into smaller to avoid a mess.
- Recipe Ideas:
 - Enjoy fresh in juices, smoothies, salads, and other beverages
 - Swap watermelon in for tomatoes in a salsa recipe, and add cucumbers for a fresh twist!
 - Wrap prosciutto or any thinly sliced cured meats around a chunk of fruit, and secure with a toothpick for a flavorful appetizer.
 - Remove seeds and blend. Pour into paper cups with a stick or spoon sticking out. Freeze completely and then tear away the cup for 100% fruit popsicle.
 - Watermelon “cake.” Remove the rind and cut two large “layer-shaped” pieces of watermelon. Mix whipped topping and vanilla yogurt to make a thin layer of filling between the cake layers and cover the cake as well. Decorate with sliced fruits like kiwi, strawberries, and blueberries. Serve chilled.
 - Try fast grilled for an intense watermelon flavor.
 - Some people think that when you salt it, the sweet watermelon flavor is more intense. Try it yourself!
 - Pickled watermelon rind recipes.
- Samples
- Farmers selling produce at our market today:

NUTRITION

- 2 cups of watermelon diced is a source of: (watermelon.org)
 - Potassium: 340 mg
 - Vitamin C: 24.6 g
 - Vitamin A: 85 RAE
- Watermelon is fat free, cholesterol free, sodium free, and a good source of multiple vitamins.
- Red watermelon is also a source of lycopene, a phytonutrient that gives watermelon its color. Lycopene appears to protect the body against a growing list of cancers.

FUN FACTS

- Any other facts:
 - According to Guinness World Records, the world’s heaviest watermelon was grown by Chris Kent of Sevierville, Tennessee in 2013, weighing in at 350.5 lbs.
 - 100% of the watermelon is edible, including the rind.
 - Over 90% of the watermelon is water.

- Jokes and puns:
 - Water my lawn → watermelon
 - When do you go at red and stop at green? When you're eating a watermelon.
 - What do you have left after a pig eats a watermelon? Pork rinds.
 - Why do watermelons have fancy weddings? Because they cantaloupe.
 - What do you call a fruit that commits crimes? A waterfelon.

CLOSING

- Survey
- Raffle

REFERENCES

- [USDA ERS - Chart Detail](#)
- [Watermelon: A Brief History // Missouri Environment and Garden News Article // Integrated Pest Management, University of Missouri](#)
- [World Watermelon Production by Country - AtlasBig.com](#)
- [Nutrition - Watermelon Board](#)
- [Watermelon - Have A Plant \(fruitsandveggies.org\)](#)

APPENDIX E. VEGU PROGRAM SAMPLE BUDGET

Expense	Cost
Equipment: Mobile Cooking Equipment	
Equipment: Tent	
Equipment: Speakers	
Equipment: Microphone	
Equipment Total	
Supplies: Cleaning supplies and paper towels	
Supplies: Cutlery, plates, napkins (1 season)	
Supplies: Cooking equipment	
Supplies: Alternative Cooking Equipment	
Supplies Total	
Publicity: Photocopying/printing	
Publicity: Graphic Designer	
Publicity Total	
Miscellaneous: Aprons	
Miscellaneous: Seasonal Event Supplies	
Miscellaneous: Shirts (FM Attire)	
Miscellaneous Total	
Vendor Produce Orders (Average): Instacart Friday Orders	
Vendor Produce Orders (Average): Instacart Test Orders	
Vendor Produce orders (Average): Featured Produce and supporting ingredients	
Vendor Produce Orders (Average) Total	
Program: Salary for FV Ed Staff	
Program: Salary for travel	
Program: Salary for FV Ed Intern	
Program: Stipends	
Program: 10% indirect costs	
Program Total	
Prizes: Gifts	
Prizes Total	