

## Local Agriculture: Eating with the Seasons

*When planning your menu, the choices you make can have an effect on the environment. Transporting food from far away places can drastically increase the carbon footprint of your restaurant. Serving food that is in season and from local sources not only helps the environment, but also is a great way to entice the palates of your customers.*



Eating habits in the United States have changed dramatically over the last few decades. Just 50 years ago, serving food from the local farm was the norm. In today's restaurants, food often comes from faraway sources, which results in greenhouse gas emissions. Planning your menu to follow the seasons is one way to increase the potential to use locally grown products, and one of the hottest new trends in the food business. And with rising gas prices, choosing local might be more cost effective than you think.

### Benefits of Locally Grown Products

- Serving seasonal and locally grown foods allows you to cut back on transportation costs while helping the environment as well
- A great way to differentiate your restaurant and keep your menu fresh
- A great way to attract customers
- Supports your local communities and family farms
- A great way to connect with your community and get to know your neighbors
- Learn about new fruits and vegetables
- And most importantly, local products are fresher



### Tips of Seasonal/Local Eating:

- Look for the Goodness Grows in NC and Freshness from NC Waters logo
- Know what foods are in season throughout the year and plan menus accordingly. A produce availability chart can be found at [www.ncagr.gov/markets/chart.htm](http://www.ncagr.gov/markets/chart.htm)
- To find unique products, contact the NC Specialty Crops Program at [www.cals.ncsu.edu/specialty\\_crops](http://www.cals.ncsu.edu/specialty_crops)
- Ask your suppliers where their produce comes from
- Tell your customers that you use local products. You can indicate on your menu which items are from local farms, and even a little about those farms
- Consider starting your own vegetable or herb garden.
- Work with local farms to offer combined gardening and cooking classes

### Options for Fresh Food in NC:

List of healthy, fresh, seasonal food option sources:

<http://www.agr.state.nc.us/markets>

<http://www.agr.state.nc.us/ncproducts/CatSubDirectory.asp?CatNum=1011>

[www.asapconnections.org](http://www.asapconnections.org)

[www.cefs.ncsu.edu](http://www.cefs.ncsu.edu)

[www.carolinafarmstewards.org](http://www.carolinafarmstewards.org)



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