

Shopping Safely at Farmers Markets

Londa Nwadike

Kansas State University/ University of Missouri Extension Food Safety Specialist

Introduction

Farmers markets continue to grow in popularity across the United States and across Kansas. They are a great place to 1) purchase healthy local produce and other foods, 2) meet and support local farmers, and 3) enjoy shopping in a fun environment. However, it is also important that consumers pay attention to food safety when buying and using foods purchased in such venues.

This lesson will provide some practical tips to use while consumers are at the market, on the way home, and once consumers get home from the market. This information will help consumers enjoy delicious and safe foods purchased from farmers markets and similar food outlets.

Objectives

- Identify food safety clues that shoppers can look for while at a farmers market.
- Discuss important food safety tips to use on the way home from a farmers market or any food market.
- Discuss important food safety tips to use once at home.
- Develop a list of key practices that participant plans to implement the next time he/she is shopping at a farmers market, on the way home, and/or once at home.



Intended Audiences

- Any adult community groups
- Consumers interested in shopping at farmers markets

Before the Lesson

1. Review this leader's guide and the fact sheet (MF3136).
2. Check listed references for more information.
3. Assemble materials including the following:
 - a. Pens and pencils
 - b. Copies of the fact sheet
 - c. Copies of the evaluation to be distributed following the program
4. Look at the list of suggested illustrations in points 7, 9 and 11 in the "During the Lesson" section below and determine which illustrations you will use to reinforce food safety concepts. Gather the necessary materials for those illustrations.

During the Lesson

1. Give each participant a copy of the fact sheet and a pencil and allow a few minutes for each person to review the sheet.
2. Allow 45 to 50 minutes to teach the lesson. Try to answer questions as you go along, instead of waiting until the end.
3. Begin by asking participants what they think are the benefits of shopping at a farmers market.
4. Discuss the introductory paragraph from the fact sheet. If not all the benefits of shopping at a farmers market have been brought up, highlight the other benefits.
5. Ask participants to list some of the different types of foods sold at farmers markets.
6. Use a slide presentation (including photos on each slide) to discuss the different food safety clues shoppers should look for while at a farmers market.
7. Use any of the following suggested illustrations while discussing the relevant section:
 - a. Fresh produce: Show a piece of produce with a cut or nick and describe how that opening could allow bacteria inside the food.
 - b. Cut produce: Show a container of cut and/or peeled produce and describe how it should be displayed on ice to keep it cool to prevent bacterial growth.
 - c. Eggs: Show a clean carton of eggs with clean, not cracked eggs.
 - d. Hot prepared foods: Show a food thermometer and explain how vendors should be checking the temperature of these foods with a thermometer.
 - e. Reiterate that food thermometers are inexpensive (about \$5) and important to monitor the proper temperature to control microbial growth.
 - f. Samples: Cut an apple into slices and place on a small plate; put a toothpick in every slice.
8. Ask participants for ideas of what they think would be important food safety tips on the way home from a farmers market.
9. Use a slide presentation or the fact sheet to discuss any additional tips for the way home or to clarify ones provided by participants.
 - a. Suggested illustration: Bring an insulated reusable grocery bag to provide an example of what could be used to keep foods cool on the way home.
 - b. Discuss that reusable grocery bags should be washed often, stored dry, and not used for other purposes (such as carrying gym clothes or children's toys).
 - c. Emphasize the importance of not allowing foods to be in the temperature danger zone (40° to 140°F) for more than 2 hours. Microorganisms can double every 20 minutes in this zone.
10. Ask participants if anyone knows the four steps to food safety at home (Clean, Separate, Cook, Chill).
11. Use a slide presentation or the fact sheet to discuss the food safety tips at home. Suggested illustrations to enhance the messages in this section:

- a. During “Clean” section, demonstrate washing a cantaloupe with a produce brush. If running water is not available, show scrubbing action with produce brush.
- b. During “Separate” section, show two different colored or shaped cutting boards and describe how one should be used for raw meat and a separate one for fresh produce or cooked meat.
- c. During “Cook” section, demonstrate how to use a food thermometer by sticking it into a food (a piece of bread can be used as an example) and discuss safe minimum internal cooking temperatures listed in fact sheet and in the slide presentation.

12. Ask participants to name some of the food safety tips they feel would be particularly applicable to food purchased from any food outlet (farmers market, grocery store, or other). Note that all the tips for on the way home and at home would be applicable in all food outlets. Many of the tips for shopping at the market would also be applicable or at least comparable.

13. Allow the participants to discuss the key food safety practices they plan to use the next time they are shopping at a farmers market, on the way home, and/or once at home. Have them write down on the fact sheet a few key practices they plan to use.

14. Ask participants to fill out an evaluation.

15. Thank the audience for their participation.

Answers to some Frequently Asked Questions on food safety when shopping at farmers markets

1. Should I use soap or produce washes when washing fresh produce?

No — running water and friction from your hands or a produce brush (for rough-skinned items such as cantaloupe) has been shown to remove the same or even more contaminants than produce washes. Further, soap is not designed for washing produce and the safety of produce washes’ residues has not been well evaluated.

2. Should I wash produce before putting it in the refrigerator or other storage place?

To maintain produce quality and ensure safety, it is best to wash it just before eating or cooking, rather than when it is first purchased.

3. Can I carry meat in a reusable grocery bag?

Yes, but the meat should be put into a disposable plastic bag first and then into the reusable bag. Throw away the disposable bag the meat was in after use to prevent contamination of other products.

References

Safe Food Facts. Published by University of Vermont Extension 1994

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Sources for Further Information:

Kitchen Companion. USDA 2008. Available from www.fsis.usda.gov

Author

Prepared by Londa Nwadike, Ph.D., Kansas State University/University of Missouri Extension Food Safety Specialist

Reviewers

Lori Wuellner, Family and Consumer Sciences Agent, K-State Research and Extension – Wyandotte County

Gayle Price, Southeast Area Family and Consumer Sciences Specialist, K-State Research and Extension

Evaluation

We appreciate your opinions! Please help us make our programs better by taking about 5 minutes to answer the following questions. Your participation is completely voluntary, and you may skip answering one or more questions if you wish. The information that you share will be held in the strictest confidence. We will summarize it in reports, in order to evaluate our program. We greatly value your participation. Thank you!

Scale: Agree completely – 5, Agree somewhat – 4, Neutral – 3, Disagree somewhat – 2, Disagree completely – 1

1. As a result of this program, I improved my knowledge

5 4 3 2 1

2. As a result of this program, I plan to practice new skills

5 4 3 2 1

3. As a result of this program, I learned some food safety clues to use when at a farmers market.

5 4 3 2 1

4. As a result of this program, I intend to transport foods home from a farmers market or other food outlet safely.

5 4 3 2 1

5. As a result of this program, I intend to implement the cook, clean, separate, and chill food safety steps when preparing any foods at home.

5 4 3 2 1

6. As a result of this program, I have also learned (please indicate)

7. I plan to take action and/or change something in my life (at home, play, or at work).

5 4 3 2 1

8. If agree, please describe the action or changes planned:

Additional comments:
