



OKLAHOMA EMPLOYEE WELLNESS

# LOCALLY SUPPORTING YOUR HEALTH

AUGUST TOOLKIT



# Locally supporting **your health**



Your food choices matter – not just for your personal health, but for the strength of your community, the sustainability of the environment and the stability of local farmers.



In celebration of National Farmers Market Week (Aug. 3-9), we are exploring the history of farmers markets and detailing where you can visit local vendors to support fresh, farm-grown food right in Oklahoma.



This toolkit dives into the power of whole foods, how you can transition to a more natural diet, and the countless health benefits of eating minimally processed meals.



Whether you're growing your own produce or simply shopping at your nearest farmers market, small choices lead to big health wins – for both you and your community.



# History of National Farmers Market Week

A farmers market is essentially a place where food is sold directly from the farmer to the consumer. This means there are no middlemen, nor is food kept in a freezer for days or weeks before it reaches someone's kitchen. And since the fruits, vegetables and meats sold at a farmers market are completely organic, free of preservatives and pesticides, and not genetically modified, they taste delicious while also being extremely nutritious. In recognition of the benefits of organic produce, the U.S. Department of Agriculture proclaimed the first National Farmers Market Week in 1999.

However, the history of organic farming is more complicated than we can imagine: In fact, there was a time when the world only had organic food; the need to opt for chemically grown produce emerged much later. From around 1300 to 1400 B.C., mixed-crop cultivation and animal husbandry emerged as the norm for human agriculture. The main problems that farmers had to deal with were constant pest attacks and the slow growth rates of fruits and vegetables. As a solution to both these problems, researchers developed a new class of synthetic chemical pesticides in 1945. This innovation led to a drastic decrease in organic farming, since it was hard for organically grown food to compete with the large amounts of pest-free crops that could be grown using pesticides.

Research conducted over the subsequent decades revealed the harms associated with consuming food grown using pesticides, which led to increased interest in healthier alternatives. As a result, governments across the U.S. began providing funding to farmers markets to strengthen the appeal of organic produce.

## **National Farmers Market Week – Aug. 3-9**

Now in its 26th year, this annual celebration highlights the vital role that farmers markets play in our nation's food system. You can join the celebration by checking out your local farmers market and supporting your local whole-food growers.

### **The historic way**

Farmers gather along the Nile in Egypt to sell fresh produce.

2000 B.C.

### **City streets**

The first farmers market opens up in Boston.

1634

### **The new trend**

Grocery stores become popular; farmers markets take a backseat.

1800s

### **Back in business**

Organic food and farmers markets gain renewed importance and public attention.

1970



# Cultivate knowledge of **whole foods**

Whole foods are natural, minimally processed foods that retain their original nutrients and structure. They are free from artificial additives, preservatives and excessive refinement. These foods offer high nutritional value and promote overall health.

## Examples of whole foods



### **Fruits and vegetables:**

Fresh, frozen or dried varieties (e.g., apples, spinach, carrots, berries).



### **Whole grains:**

Brown rice, quinoa, oats, whole wheat, barley.



### **Legumes and beans:**

Lentils, chickpeas, black beans, kidney beans.



### **Nuts and seeds:**

Almonds, walnuts, chia seeds, flaxseed, sunflower seeds.



### **Lean proteins:**

Eggs, fresh fish, poultry, grass-fed meats, tofu.



### **Dairy:**

Whole milk, yogurt, cheese (without additives).

# Plant the seeds to eat whole foods

Transitioning to a diet rich in whole foods doesn't have to happen overnight – gradual, manageable steps make the shift more sustainable. Here are some strategies you can use to ease into healthier eating habits:

1

## **Make small swaps**

- Replace white rice with brown rice or quinoa for more fiber and nutrients.
- Swap refined grains (white bread, pasta) with whole-grain alternatives.
- Use natural sweeteners (honey, dates) instead of refined sugars.

2

## **Add more fresh ingredients**

- Start by including one extra serving of vegetables or fruits at each meal.
- Snack on nuts, seeds or fresh fruit instead of processed snacks.
- Build meals around whole-food proteins like eggs, lean meats and legumes.

3

## **Cook at home more often**

- Preparing meals from scratch means you have control over the ingredients.
- Experiment with simple whole-food recipes and homemade sauces instead of processed ones.
- Try batch cooking – preparing healthy meals in advance makes it easier to stay consistent.

4

## **Read labels and choose minimally processed options**

- Focus on foods with simple, recognizable ingredients.
- Avoid overly processed items with added preservatives, refined oils or artificial flavors.
- Shop in the outer aisles of grocery stores, or those that typically house fresh produce, proteins and whole grains.



# Plant the seeds to eat **whole foods**



**5**

## **Prioritize hydration and natural beverages**

- Replace sugary drinks with water, herbal teas or infused water.
- Reduce your dependence on processed sodas and energy drinks over time.

**6**

## **Gradually reduce processed foods**

- Instead of cutting out processed foods entirely, phase them out.
- Each week, swap one processed meal or snack with a whole-food alternative.
- Find healthier versions of your favorite processed foods (e.g., homemade granola versus store-bought).

**7**

## **Focus on whole food, snacks and convenience**

- Keep precut veggies, hummus and fresh fruit handy for easy snacking.
- Prepare healthy grab-and-go options like nuts, trail mix or hard-boiled eggs.
- If necessary, choose less-processed convenience foods with simple ingredients.

**8**

## **Listen to your body and make sustainable choices**

- Instead of rushing to make big changes, gradually increase your whole-food intake in a way that feels natural to you.
- When you feel food cravings, allow yourself to have occasional treats while maintaining a balanced approach.
- Focus on what works best for your lifestyle and preferences rather than following rigid food rules.

# Sow the benefits of whole foods

Eating whole foods offers a wealth of health benefits, making them an essential part of a balanced diet. Incorporating more natural, minimally processed foods can improve your overall well-being. Whole foods offer the following benefits:

## **1 Provide higher nutrient density**

Whole foods provide vitamins, minerals, antioxidants and fiber in their natural form, supporting optimal health. Unlike processed foods, they retain their full nutritional value without added preservatives or artificial ingredients.

## **2 Support digestive health**

Fiber-rich whole foods – such as vegetables, fruits and whole grains – promote gut health, aid digestion and prevent bloating. They also help maintain regular bowel movements and support beneficial gut bacteria.

## **3 Help regulate blood sugar**

Whole foods – especially complex carbohydrates like quinoa and oats – slow the absorption of sugar into the bloodstream, reducing spikes and crashes in blood sugar levels. This helps prevent insulin resistance and lowers the risk of Type 2 diabetes.

## **4 Improve heart health**

Whole foods support cardiovascular health by reducing cholesterol, lowering blood pressure and preventing inflammation. Ingredients such as avocados, nuts and whole grains contain healthy fats that protect the heart.

## **5 Aid in weight management**

Since whole foods are naturally more filling, they help control appetite and prevent overeating. They also contain fewer empty calories, helping you maintain a healthy weight without excessive snacking.

## **6 Strengthen immune function**

Whole foods – especially those rich in vitamin C, zinc and antioxidants – help strengthen the immune system. Natural ingredients like garlic, ginger and leafy greens boost cell function and protect against infections.

## **7 Reduce the risk of chronic diseases**

A diet filled with whole foods has been linked to lower risks of cancer, heart disease and neurological disorders. The nutrients in whole foods support healthy aging and protect against oxidative stress.

## **8 Enhance energy and mental clarity**

Since whole foods provide steady, natural energy, they improve focus, cognitive function and overall mood. Eating processed foods often leads to sluggishness and brain fog, while whole foods help maintain clarity and alertness.

**Making small adjustments to prioritize whole foods can have a significant impact on your long-term health.**

# Harvest your food choices

Both home-grown and locally grown whole foods have unique advantages that make them excellent choices for nutrition and sustainability. Here's how they compare:

## Home-grown whole foods:

- **Fresher and more nutrient-dense** – Since you harvest them at peak ripeness, they retain maximum nutrients.
- **No chemical exposure** – You control the fertilizers and pesticides used, if any, and can ensure that your food is organically grown.
- **Cost-effective over time** – Once established, a home garden can save money on produce.
- **Sustainable and eco-friendly** – Reduce reliance on transportation and packaging waste.
- **Personal satisfaction** – Gardening is rewarding and contributes to mental well-being.



## Locally grown whole foods:

- **Support local farmers and economies** – Buying local boosts community agriculture.
- **Greater variety available** – Locally grown foods give you access to diverse seasonal produce beyond what you grow at home.
- **Minimally processed and fresh** – Local foods typically travel less, retaining nutrients.
- **Environmentally friendly** – Less transportation means lower carbon emissions.
- **Convenient** – You get farm-fresh produce without having to put any effort into gardening.

## Which is better?

If you prioritize **freshness, sustainability and total quality control**, home-grown foods are ideal.

If you prioritize **variety, convenience and supporting local businesses**, locally grown foods shine.

The best option depends on your personal lifestyle and accessibility – but incorporating both offers the best balance!



# Farmers markets **you can visit**



AUGUST 2025						
Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
					1	2
3	4	5	6	7	8	9
National Farmers Market Week						
10	11	12	13	14	15	16
17	18	19	20	21	22	23
24	25	26	27	28	29	30
31						

National Farmers Market Week (NFMW) is Aug. 3-9. Celebrate by buying locally grown whole foods and visit your local farmers market to get outdoors, be more active and improve your well-being. Regardless of where you're currently located, there is a farmers market near you: The link below from the National Farmers Market Directory lists the dozens of farmers markets that can be found throughout Oklahoma.



[Local farmers markets in Oklahoma](#)