

## Food, Fun and The Farmer's Market!

By Buffy Owens

Have you ever thought about how lucky we are to live in such a delicious region of the country. We are blessed with some of the freshest produce in the nation year around. Shopping at a farmer's market means that you will get the best, freshest produce available. You can find produce that is too delicate to ship, heirloom varieties of produce and freshly prepared local treats.

*Here are Some Helpful Hints and Tips for Farmer's Markets Shopping*

### **Take Your Time**

Have fun browsing! I like to make a slow loop around the market sampling the produce and taking note of stands of special interest. That way I am sure to get the best produce for the best price.

### **Bring Cash**

Cash is the only currency guaranteed to be accepted by every vendor. If you can, take plenty of \$1 and \$5 bills. The vendors are always flooded with large bills and you will get better service and food once they remember you as the person with exact change.

### **Bring Your Own Shopping Bags**

Although most farmer's market vendors have bags and boxes, they can often be flimsy or hard to carry. The best solution is to bring your own tough nylon or canvas bag. If you know that you are going to be purchasing a lot of produce each week you can also invest in a wheeled cart.

### **Bring Your Friends**

You can often get the best deals if you buy in bulk. Better yet, join a CSA (Community Supported Agriculture). Although each CSA varies a bit, you often receive a box of food weekly. The best deal is to join one with a small group of friends. The larger the box the bigger the savings and many vendors offer an additional discount on any other produce purchased from their booth.

*...find yourself in motion*

### **Ask Questions**

Get to know the people you are buying your food from. You may discover that some of your favorite produce comes from a farm that has been farming organic for years yet isn't certified. Plus the vendors and farmers love to talk about their produce and how to best prepare it.

### **Go Late**

The best deals happen just before closing time. Just the other day I walked away with a FULL back of organic fruit for \$5.

### **Know what is in Season**

Living in Southern California we have access to fresh produce year around. If you know a bit of what to expect you can plan your menu and save time when deciding what to buy. To find out what is in season you can simply talk with the growers and ask what will be coming to the market in upcoming weeks or visit [www.sdfarmbureau.org/Pages/farmersmarket.html](http://www.sdfarmbureau.org/Pages/farmersmarket.html) for a calendar of what's in season and a current list of local farmers markets.

Remember, the farmer's market is full of fresh life - so while your there explore and have fun!