

## 5 Easy Ways to Enjoy a Green Farmers' Market Visit

From Big Fork to Wolf Point and many points between, farmers' markets have sprouted all across the Treasure State. For a directory of 40+ local Montana markets, visit AERO at [www.aeromt.org/farm\\_markets.php](http://www.aeromt.org/farm_markets.php) or go to [www.farmersmarkets.mt.gov/](http://www.farmersmarkets.mt.gov/).

### **1. Bike, walk, carpool, or take the bus.**

For a true enviroshopping experience, use energy efficient transportation to and from your local farmers' market. Walking and biking (with a backpack for your produce purchases) use no fossil fuels - and they improve your fitness along the way. Carpooling helps reduce air pollution, saves on gas money, and gives you time to chat with family or friends!

### **2. Bring the whole family for food, fun, and fitness.**

Farmers' markets have become much more than simply a place to buy delicious, local fruits and veggies. Many offer ready-to-eat food booths with a variety of tasty ethnic options for breakfast and/or lunch. Some have music and dancing, while others offer family-friendly entertainment and special events. Many are near a park or trail, perfect for a weekend walk.

### **3. BYOB (bring your own bags - or coolers).**

Many farmers rely on their customers to bring reusable bags for their purchases. The most environmentally responsible choice is to carry a canvas, mesh, or heavy plastic tote that can be washed after multiple uses. Many stores and some farmers' market now offer enviro-bags for sale. If you plan to buy meat or dairy products, be sure to have a cooler to keep them safe.

### **4. Be spontaneous (but only buy what you can use).**

While a list is the most cost-effective way to shop for groceries, it's better to be more flexible at a farmers' market. Produce will vary from week to week during the season and it's hard to predict what the best buys will be. If you don't know how to prepare something, ask the grower for suggestions. Be careful not to over-buy; the cost of wasted food adds up quickly.

### **5. Buy from local, sustainable farms and ranches.**

A major benefit of these markets is that you can build a relationship with the hard working farmers and ranchers who till the soil, feed our families, and maintain our agricultural heritage. There's no need to rush through the booths like you would a supermarket. Take time to talk with the vendors and to thank them for contributing to the local economy.