What Incredible Choices

Montana WIC Program
1-800-433-4298

6-A

Shopping Smart at Farmers' Markets

A visit to your local farmers' market can be a great way to get farm-fresh produce for your family. You can use your WIC Fruit and Vegetable Benefit with any authorized farmer. Look for the "***We Accept WIC***" sign..

Take your kids.

Farmers' markets are more than a place to buy delicious, local fruits and vegetables. Some have music and dancing, while others offer family-friendly entertainment and special events for children. Many are near a park or trail, perfect for a weekend walk.

Bring your own bags.

Farmers rely on their customers to bring reusable bags for their purchases. The smartest choice is to carry a canvas or heavy plastic tote that can be washed after multiple uses. If you plan to buy meat or dairy foods, bring an insulated bag or cooler to keep them safe.

Time your visit.

Going to market early usually means the best selection and the freshest produce. Going later can mean real bargains for the items that farmers don't want to take home. Markets are often less crowded later in the day – and may be easier to navigate with children.

Plan your menu.

A farmers' market visit can help you plan a weekly menu based on nutritious vegetables and fruits. As you shop, keep a running list of meals and snacks for the week. This will keep you from buying too much produce and from wasting food during the week.

Know your farmer.

As you go from booth to booth, talk to the farmers and ranchers about their products. Ask if they have preparation tips or recipes for the items that they are selling. Find out what they'll be bringing to market in the next few weeks, so you can plan future purchases.

When will you take a tasty trip to a farmers' market?

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6-B

GRAPES:
Green, Red, and Black

Grapes, mostly grown in California, are actually a kind of berry.

HOW TO CHOOSE

- Choose plump firm grapes that are still attached to the stems.
- Avoid grapes with any signs of decay, shriveling, or stickiness.

HOW TO STORE

- Store grapes in fridge in a plastic bag with holes for up to a week.
- Before use, wash with a gentle spray of water and pat dry.

NUTRITION FACTS

- Like all berries, grapes have a variety of anti-oxidants that may help your heart and brain, while preventing some cancers.

Fun ways for your family to enjoy the juicy sweetness of red, green, or black grapes

- Whole grapes can be a choking hazard under age 4, so cut them into half lengthwise.
- Grapes are quick and convenient. Rinse, pack in small bags, and keep in fridge for grab-and-go snacks.
- Grapes go great in salads too! They add color, sweet juiciness, and crunchy texture to both mixed fruit and vegetable salads.
- Freeze whole or halved grapes for a fun summer treat.

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6-C

GREEN BEANS

Also known as string or snap beans, these are available year-round and fresh from farmers' markets. They also come in purple colors.

HOW TO CHOOSE

- Choose brightly colored green or purple beans.
- Fresh beans snap when they are bent. Avoid soft beans or those with holes.

HOW TO STORE

- Refrigerate fresh beans in a plastic bag in the crisper drawer.
- Use beans within 1 week and wash before cooking.

NUTRITION FACTS

- Green beans are fat-, cholesterol-, and sodium-free.
- They are good sources of fiber and vitamin C, and very popular with children.

Easy ways for your family to enjoy the snappy nutrition of green or string beans

- While beans are often cooked, fresh beans can be washed and eaten raw (plain or with low-fat dressing).
- When cooking beans, use minimal times – to preserve crispness, color, and nutrition.
- Depending on size, fresh beans only need 5-7 minutes steaming, or microwaving.
- Stir-frying is another tasty way to quickly cook green beans along with other vegetables, like carrots and onions.

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6-D

Counting Games with Grapes

Learning starts long before children go to school. In fact, early childhood experts often say that learning starts right from birth. The activities that you do with children each and every day can help them be prepared to do well when they start kindergarten.

- **Grapes are a great way to teach simple math skills.**

  Counting grapes is an easy way to teach numbers. *Let's count these grapes as we wash them. One grape, two grapes, three grapes … twenty grapes. Look, we have twenty clean grapes all ready to eat.*

- **Adding and subtracting fun with grapes.**

  Grapes or other small foods (baby carrots, berries, etc.) can easily be used for addition and subtraction. *You have two grapes and I have one grape. How many grapes do we have together. One, two three grapes! Now, I am going to eat one grape. How many grapes do we have left?*

- **Easy graphing with different color grapes.**

  Making graphs is an important math skill that children learn in 3rd or 4th grade. For graphing fun at home (even with younger kids), all you need is a clean place on the counter top and washed grapes of different colors. Help children make rows of grapes next to each other, using a different color grape for each row. *Let's put all the red grapes in a row here – and all the green grapes in a row next to them. Is the row of red grapes longer or shorter than the row of green grapes. How many grapes do we need to eat so that the rows are the same?*

HOW TO REDUCE THE HAZARD OF CHOKING ON FOOD FOR KIDS

For children under the age of four, cut foods into chunks that are ½-inch or less across. This includes grapes, raw carrots, and hard pieces of apple. Other high-risk foods include hot dogs, peanuts, and hard candy.

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Grapes + Vegetables = Great Salads

Most people think of grapes as a snack or dessert. However, when you combine colorful grapes with some crunchy vegetables, you end up with a very special salad for lunch or dinner. Try these yummy combinations – or make up your own.

Grapes **+ salad greens** (Romaine or leaf lettuce, cabbage, etc.)
Dress lightly with oil and vinegar or vinaigrette.

Grapes **+ grated carrots** (+ sliced jicama + cilantro, both optional)
Toss with orange juice concentrate and lime juice.

Grapes **+ chopped cucumbers** (+ green onion optional)
Serve with low-fat Ranch or poppy seed dressing.

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