

(750 words)

Farmers' markets good at local, fresh and green

(Eds: in farmer's market list, 'Brunswick' is CQ)

LITTLE ROCK – Foodies and locavores are gearing up for their favorite sport: shopping their local farmers' markets.

Many of the state's 59 farmers markets will open in April.

"There are farmers markets now in 48 of Arkansas' 75 counties," said Dr. Ron Rainey, extension economist for the University of Arkansas Division of Agriculture. "And some counties—Arkansas, Benton, Carroll, Miller, Pulaski and Washington – have more than one market."

The farmers' markets have proven popular among both growers and shoppers.

"Fresh, locally grown food is certainly the primary reason for shopping at the farmers' market, but that's just a start," said Tim Ellison, spokesman for the Arkansas Department of Agriculture. "The flowers, the people ... the whole atmosphere of the market is such a positive, uplifting experience that revitalizes the spirit as much as the body."

"And thanks to that short drive, it helps us all be more green by reducing the food's carbon footprint," he said.

Shoppers who really want locally grown produce need only look for the Arkansas Grown logo. Launched in 2008, Arkansas Grown is seen in Wal-Marts throughout Arkansas and more farmers' market sellers are joining the program as well.

"Arkansas Grown is an assurance that the produce, meat or other product you're buying was grown in Arkansas or made from ingredients grown in Arkansas," Ellison said. "Only products authenticated by the Arkansas Agriculture Department may carry the Arkansas Grown logo."

Farmers' markets have also proven important to Arkansas Agritourism. In Little Rock, the River Market became an anchor for redevelopment for an area that once only housed decaying warehouses.

"Because many farmers markets have a mix of locally grown or processed foods and crafts, they tend to attract tourists as well who are looking for things to purchase that are unique to the area they are visiting," said Stacey McCullough, extension instructor for economic and community development for the University of Arkansas Division of Agriculture. "From a local economic perspective, this means outside dollars coming into the community.

And "to the extent that a local farmers market gives residents access to products they would normally purchase outside the community or county, they plug economic leaks by keeping spending local rather than having those dollars spent elsewhere," she said. "This increases the local tax base which helps provide local government services and creates income for local people."

If you're looking for the freshest ingredients for your big culinary project, here is a list of farmers' markets around the state:

Arkansas County

- Arkansas County Farmers' Market, Stuttgart

- Arkansas County Farmers' Market, DeWitt

Ashley County

- Ashley County Farmers' Market, Crossett

Baxter County

- Cotter Farmers' Market, Cotter
- Mountain Home Farmers' Market, Mountain Home

Benton County

- Downtown Bentonville Farmers' Market, Bentonville
- The Gentry Farmers' Market, Gentry
- Gravette Farmers' Market, Gravette
- Rogers Farmers' Market, Rogers
- Siloam Springs Farmers' Market, Siloam Springs

Boone County

- Harrison Farmers' Market, Harrison

Calhoun County

- Calhoun County Farmers' Market, Hampton

Carroll County

- Berryville Farmers' Market, Berryville
- Eureka Springs Farmers' Market, Eureka Springs

Chicot County

- Mel's Farmers' Market, Lake Village

Clark County

- Clark County Farmers' Market, Arkadelphia

Clay County

- Clay County Farmers' Market, Piggott

Cleburne County

- Cleburne County Farmers' Market, Heber Springs

Conway County

- Conway County Farmers' Market, Morrilton

Craighead County

- ASU Regional Farmers' Market, Jonesboro

Cross County

- Cross County Farmers' Market, Wynne

Drew County

- Drew County Farmers' Market, Monticello

Faulkner County

- Conway Farmers' Market, Conway

Franklin County

- Franklin County Farmers' Market, Ozark

Garland County

- Historic Downtown Farmers' Market, Hot Springs

Greene County

- Paragould Farmers' Market, Paragould

Hot Springs County

- Hot Springs County Farmers' Market, Malvern

Izard County

- Melbourne Farmers' Market, Melbourne

Jackson County

- Downtown Newport Farmers' Market, Newport

Jefferson County

- Pine Bluff Farmers' Market, Pine Bluff

Johnson County

- Johnson County Farmers' Market, Clarksville

Lee County

- Lee County Farmers' Market, Marianna

Little River County

- Little River Farmers' Market, Ashdown

Logan County

- Booneville Farmers' Market, Booneville

Lonoke County

- Cabot Farmers' Market, Cabot

Madison County

- Madison County Farmers' Market, Huntsville

Miller County

- Farmers' Market of Texarkana, Texarkana
- Gateway Farmers' Market, Texarkana

Montgomery County

- Montgomery County Farmers' Market, Mt. Ida

Nevada County

- Nevada County Farmers' Market, Prescott

Newton County

- Newton County Farmers' Market, Jasper

Ouachita County

- Ouachita County Farmers' Market, Camden

Perry County

- Perry County Farmers' Market, Perryville

Phillips County

- Marvell Farmers' Market, Marvell

Polk County

- Polk County Farmers' Market, Mena

Poinsett County

- Marked Tree Farmer' Market, Marked Tree

Pope County

- Pope County Farmers' Market, Russellville

Pulaski County

- Certified Arkansas Farmers' Market, NLR
- Home Grown Market, Little Rock
- Maumelle Farmers Market, Maumelle
- River Market Farmers' Market, Little Rock

Randolph County

- Randolph County Farmers' Market, Pocahontas

Saline County

- Benton Farmers' Market, Benton

St. Francis County

- Forrest City Farmers' Market, Forrest City

Scott County

- Scott County Farmers' Market, Waldron

Sebastian County

- Brunswick Farmers' Market, Fort Smith

Stone County

- Stone County Farmers' Market, Mountain View

Union County

- Main Street El Dorado Farmers' Market, El Dorado

Washington County

- Fayetteville Farmers' Market, Fayetteville
- Springdale Farmers' Market, Springdale
- West Fork Garden Market Cooperative, West Fork

For more information about Arkansas farmer's markets visit www.Naturallyarkansas.org, www.uaex.edu or www.aragriculture.org/aai.

The Cooperative Extension Service is part of the University of Arkansas Division of Agriculture.

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