

# LOCAL FOOD

and a healthy diet.

All the kinds of foods that you need for a healthy diet are available from Minnesota farmers. The new USDA Food Guide Pyramid below shows the kinds and amounts of foods that make up a healthy diet.

Below is a list of Minnesota-grown foods that fit into each Food Guide Pyramid category. You can find out where to get these locally grown foods in Appendix 2: Guide to Minnesota's Local Food Directories.

the food guide pyramid choices available from minnesota producers.

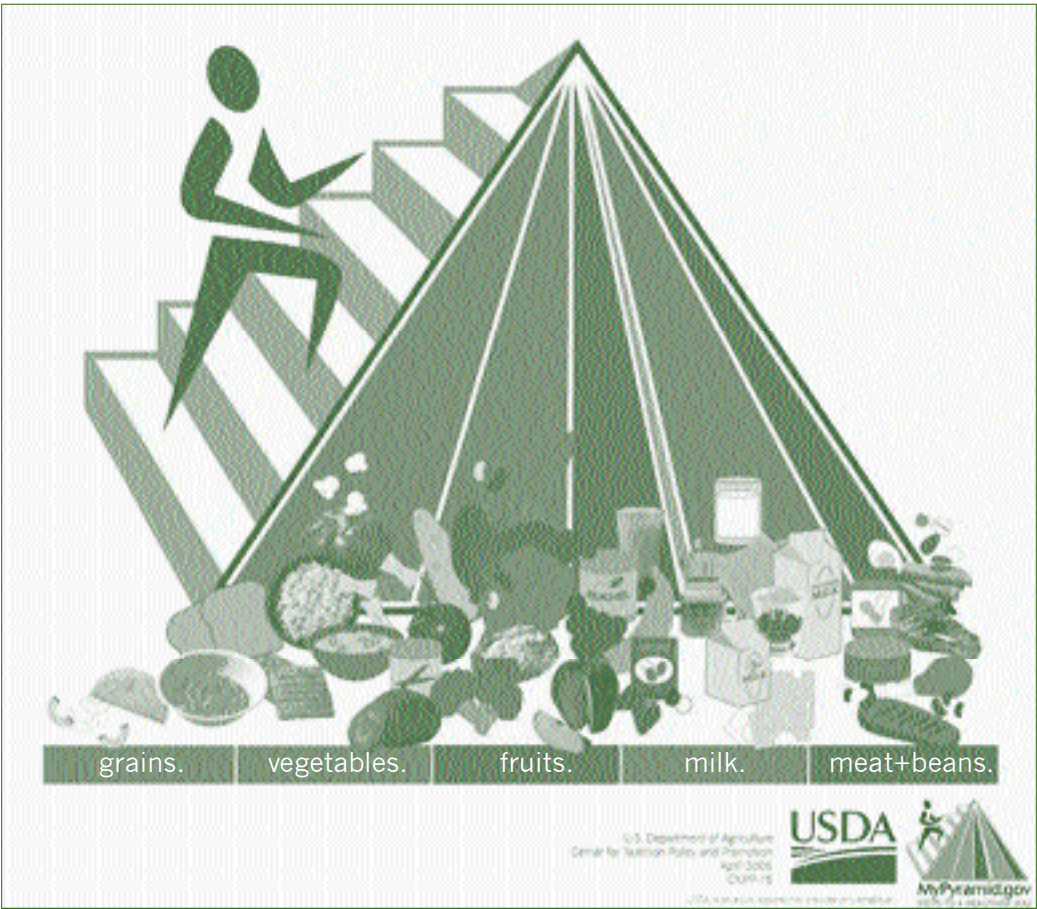
<p><b>fats, oils and sweets group.</b> Jams, jellies, honey, maple syrup, cookies</p> <p><b>milk, yogurt and cheese group.</b> Butter, cheese, milk, ice cream, yogurt, kefir</p> <p><b>meat, poultry, fish, dry beans, eggs, and nuts group.</b> Beef, bison, elk, deer, goat, lamb, pork, chicken, turkey, duck, goose, pheasant, dry beans, hazelnuts, eggs</p>	<p><b>bread, cereal, rice and pasta group.</b> Barley flour, buckwheat flour, corn meal, corn flour (masa), flax, oatmeal, spelt, whole wheat flour, white flour, wild rice, rye flour, popcorn, bread mixes, pancake mixes, breads</p> <p><b>vegetable and fruit groups.</b> Wide variety; availability changes with the seasons. See the Seasonal FoodGuide on page 15.</p>
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my pyramid.

steps to a healthier you.

[www.mypyramid.gov]



# MINNESOTA

## seasonal food guide.

**F**ruits and vegetables that you buy locally and in season are the freshest possible! Use the chart below to find out what is available in each season of the year. The chart was developed by Pride of the Prairie, a collaborative project of area farmers and citizens, Land Stewardship Project, University of Minnesota-Morris, University of Minnesota Extension, West Central Sustainable Development Partnership, and the Sustainable Farming Association of Minnesota.

You can find an even wider variety of locally grown foods than those listed on the Seasonal Food Guide. Minnesotans with Asian, Latin American, or African heritage are contributing to the agriculture of the state. At farmers' markets and cooperatives you might find herbs such as epazote; several kinds of mustard greens; and vegetables such as edamame, bitter melon, and burdock. These are just a few examples of the great variety that Minnesota farmers can grow.

pride of the prairie.

seasonal food guide for the upper minnesota river valley.

[modeled after the regional food guide, wilkins and bokaer-smith, cornell university, 1996.]

spring.		summer.		fall.		winter.	
Nutritious fresh spring greens from a local grower are a welcomed sign of things to come at the start of a new growing season.		Summer's heat is cooled by fresh fruits and vegetables. The season's bounty is an opportunity to freeze, can, or dry summer's surplus.		Late season fruits and vegetables grace the fall table with a colorful variety of squashes. Surplus produce can be stored for winter use.		Winter is a great time to combine canned, frozen, dried, and stored produce with products like locally grown grains and meats available all year round.	
vegetables.		vegetables.		vegetables.		vegetables.	
asparagus cauliflower garlic greens greens- arugula beet bok choi chard collard cress dandelion kale mustard sorrel turnip kohlrabi lettuce mushrooms parsnips peas	radishes rhubarb scallions spinach sprouts turnips	beets broccoli cabbage carrots cauliflower celery cucumbers eggplant endive fennel garlic green beans kohlrabi lettuce mushrooms okra onions peppers potatoes radicchio	scallions summer squash sweet corn tomatoes zucchini	beets broccoli brussels sprouts cabbage carrots cauliflower celeriac daikon greens arugula beet bok choi chard collard cress dandelion kale mustard sorrel	fennel garlic horseradish kohlrabi lettuce mushrooms okra onions peppers potatoes pumpkins purslane rutabaga scallions shallots sweet potatoes turnips winter squash	beets cabbage carrots celeriac daikon garlic horseradish jerusalem artichoke kale kohlrabi leeks mushrooms onion parsnips potatoes rutabagas shallots sweet potatoes turnips winter squash	
fruits.		fruits.		fruits.		fruits.	
raspberries strawberries	currants chokecherries gooseberries melons	plums raspberries strawberries		apples apple cider raspberries plums late melons		apples apple cider plums raspberries	
season with.		season with.		year round.			
chives cilantro dill oregano parsley sage	basil cilantro dill marjoram mint oregano	parsley sage savory tarragon		beef barley buckwheat butter cheese chicken	corn meal dried herbs duck eggs flax goat	honey jams jellies lamb oats popcorn	pork rye soybeans spelt turkey wheat



# LOCAL FOOD

saving.

**B**uying and eating local fruits and vegetables in season might taste so good that you want to extend the experience! You can, with a little bit of food storage and preservation. This might bring to mind images of aproned women working for hours over a hot cookstove. Actually, some basic food preservation is pretty easy. It can be a fun family activity that involves even the smallest children.

## freezing.

A simple food storage activity for the whole family is freezing of berries, other fruits, tomatoes, pumpkin and squash, and sweet corn. Even very small children can help clean (and eat!) berries, slip skins off tomatoes, and help measure pumpkin and corn kernels into bags. Use plastic freezer bags of any brand.

For best keeping quality, it is important to squeeze as much air as you possibly can out of the bag before sealing the bag. There are vacuum-sealer units on the market that do this, but here's a very cheap and effective method: fill a deep pan or a sink full of water. Fill a plastic freezer bag with your fruit or vegetable, then put the bag in the water almost-but-not-quite up to the top of the bag. This forces air out of the bag. Squeeze the bag if needed to bring air bubbles up to the surface. Then, without taking the bag out of the water, close it up; either by "zipping" shut the zipper-type bags, or twisting the top closed of bags with a twist-tie closure. Now take the sealed bag out of the water and dry it off with a towel before putting it in your freezer.

### berries.

Pick out any leaves and stems, wash berries, and measure into plastic freezer bags. Seal the bags, label, and put them in the freezer. Nothing to it! You can also put a thin layer of berries on a cookie sheet and freeze them before putting them into bags. This technique keeps the frozen berries from sticking together. In the winter, toss a few berries into your cereal, or put them on ice cream, or use in muffins or fruit salad.

### rhubarb.

Remove leaves, wash stalks, cut up into bite-sized pieces, measure into plastic freezer bags, seal bags, label, and freeze. Use for rhubarb cake or pie, or make a rhubarb sauce.

### apples.

Peel apples, cut in quarters, and remove cores from apples. Slice apples into a bowl of cold water with one tablespoon of

vinegar or lemon juice per quart of water (this keeps the apple slices from turning brown). Drain the slices and measure into plastic freezer bags, seal the bags, label, and freeze. Use for apple pie, crisp, or cobbler.

### tomatoes.

Blanch the tomatoes in boiling water to make it easy to remove skins. Heat a large pot of water to boiling, and drop in four or five tomatoes. Time for one minute. Use a slotted spoon or a ladle to remove the tomatoes from the pot, and put them in a bowl or sink full of cold water. This loosens the skins and makes them easy to slip off. Repeat the blanching process until you run out of tomatoes, changing your blanching water from time to time if you are doing a lot of tomatoes. Toddler-age children can learn how to stick their little thumb into a blanched and cooled tomato and pull off the skin. Cut the tough stem ends out of the tomatoes, cut tomatoes in chunks if desired, and pack into freezer bags. Seal bags, label, and freeze. Use tomatoes for chili, spaghetti sauce, soup, or stew.

### squash or pumpkin.

The easiest way to cook a squash or pumpkin for freezing is to just bake it whole. Place the squash or pumpkin on a cookie sheet or a disposable metal foil baking pan. Prick it a couple of times with a fork to release steam, and put it in the oven at 350° F for about an hour. Test it with a fork while it's baking; when the fork goes in easily, it is done. Let it cool, then peel off the skin and separate the flesh from the seeds and membrane. You can run the flesh through a strainer if you want to, but it isn't necessary. Measure cooked squash or pumpkin into freezer bags, seal the bags, label, and freeze. Heat up squash with butter, salt, and pepper for a side dish with any meal; use pumpkin or squash for muffins, cake, and pie.

### sweet corn.

This is a little more complicated than squash or fruit, but so worth it. Imagine getting that just-picked-five-minutes-before-cooking sweet corn flavor in the middle of January! Here's how: boil a large pot of water and shuck (peel) the ears. Drop four or five ears in the pot and time for four and one-half minutes. Remove the ears to a pan or sink of cold water (a tongs is invaluable for this). Repeat the process until you run out of corn. Keep the cold-water bath cold by running more cold water or adding ice; this cools the cobs quickly to stop the cooking process so that your kernels won't be overcooked.

Then, on a cutting board, stand a cob on end and slice off kernels from tip to base with a sharp knife. You need to make four or five vertical cuts per cob to get all of the kernels.



## saving local food for year long eating.

Measure the cut kernels into freezer bags; plan about one-third cup of kernels per family member for a meal. Seal bags, label, and freeze. Let the children eat the spilled kernels. Wash off sticky fingers!

Use corn as a vegetable at any meal. Thaw the bag just enough to be able to slip the frozen corn out of the bag, then put the frozen corn in a pan with a little water and heat to simmering, breaking the frozen chunks apart with a fork as it begins to thaw. After corn is completely thawed, simmer for a couple more minutes to complete cooking and heat thoroughly.

### other vegetables.

Almost any vegetable can be frozen using a blanching-then-cooling technique similar to that for corn. Blanching times are different for each vegetable. If you would like to experiment with other vegetables, there are good references available:

### freezing fruits and vegetables.

William Schafer and Shirley T. Munson. University of Minnesota Extension Service. FO-00555.  
[www.extension.umn.edu/distribution/nutrition/DJ0555.htm](http://www.extension.umn.edu/distribution/nutrition/DJ0555.htm)

### ball blue book guide to home canning, freezing, and dehydration.

Available at some hardware stores, and online:  
[www.homecanning.com/usa/ALProducts.asp?M=265](http://www.homecanning.com/usa/ALProducts.asp?M=265)

### stocking up III: the all-new edition of america's classic preserving guide.

Carol Huppung. 1986. Rodale Press (available at many libraries),

### national center for home food preservation.

[www.uga.edu/nchfp/](http://www.uga.edu/nchfp/)

## cool storage.

The easiest food preservation activity, if you are lucky enough to have a cool but not freezing storage spot, is to store some sacks of potatoes or apples in that cool storage area. Potatoes and apples will keep for a couple of months at 50° F, but cooler is better. Around 40° F is ideal for keeping them all winter. If you have a chilly corner in a basement, or an entryway, or an upstairs closet, you have a good potential food storage location.

Onions and garlic are good vegetables to store in a cool spot. Potatoes and apples do well in moist air, such as in a basement; but onions and garlic need to be dry. Hang a

bag or braided rope of onions or garlic from a hook in a cool closet or entryway.

Carrots, parsnips, beets, turnips, and rutabagas dug in September or October will keep for a couple of months in an unsealed plastic bag in your refrigerator. If you have an unfinished section of your basement that is chilly (under 40° F) and not too dry, you can keep these kinds of root vegetables there in boxes or bags for several months. Use several smaller containers instead of one large container. That way, if you have some spoilage in one container, it won't affect all of your stored vegetables.

With any kind of cool storage of apples or root vegetables, look over your stored food fairly often. Throw out anything that is starting to spoil. If you really want to get into this easy and inexpensive type of food storage, here is a superb reference:

### root cellaring: natural cold storage of fruits and vegetables.

Mike and Nancy Bubel 1991. Storey Communications,  
[www.storeybooks.com](http://www.storeybooks.com)

## canning.

Canning is a very useful food preservation practice. Properly canned foods will keep well on a shelf for an extended period of time. Canning is more complicated than cool storage or freezing, but not difficult. Mainly it requires attention to detail. You must carefully follow modern canning instructions to ensure the safety of the canned food. It is very important to make sure that all spoilage- and disease-causing organisms in the food are killed during the canning process.

Canning may seem like a slow process the first couple of times that you try it, but once you get used to the process it becomes very easy. There are some good reference books and websites that explain how to can just about anything.

>canning continued on  
the bottom of page 18<

# LOCAL FOOD

the last word.

**B**uying local is good for the farmers who grew the food, good for the communities where the farmers and their customers live, and good for the people who eat the food. Locally grown food on your table means that you have chosen

to be connected in a positive way to your local environment, your local economy, and to the people in your community. Good for you!

## >canning continued.< quantities.

- >One bushel of **apples** weighs about 48 lbs. and yields 14 to 19 quarts of **applesauce**.<
- >One bushel of **tomatoes** weighs about 53 lbs. and yields 15 to 18 quarts of **tomato juice**.<
- >One bushel of **cucumbers** weighs about 48 lbs. and yields 16 to 24 quarts of **pickles**.<
- >Twelve pounds of **berries** are needed for a “canner load” of 7 quarts.<

[from the National Center for Home Food Preservation, [www.uga.edu/nchfp](http://www.uga.edu/nchfp)]

## equipment

Canning does require some special equipment. Fruits, tomatoes, pickles, jelly, and jam—foods that are high in sugar or that are acidic— can be safely canned using a boiling water “bath.”

Equipment needs for water bath canning:

- A “canner” or other pot large enough to hold several jars and deep enough that water can completely cover the jars.
- Glass canning jars (these come in half-pint, 12-ounce., pint, and quart)
- A jar tongs for lifting hot jars out of boiling water
- Canning lids and bands for the jars.
- A jar funnel and ladle for getting food into the jars without spilling

All of these basic needs can be found at hardware stores. The two common brands of jars and jar lids are Ball and Kerr, and the lids and jars of these brands are interchangeable.

The Lehman’s Non-Electric Catalog website has pictures of all this equipment. Go to [www.lehmans.com](http://www.lehmans.com), click on “Kitchen Implements,” then on “Home Canning and Preserving,” then on “Canning Helpers.”

If you want to can meats or vegetables other than tomatoes, you need to do pressure canning. This requires a pressure canner: a pot with a lid that locks on tightly so that steam pressure can build up inside the pot, which increases the heat inside the pot to hotter than boiling. Pressure canners can be found at hardware stores. The other equipment—jars, lids, tongs, etc.—is the same for either water bath or pressure canning.

If you want to make canned tomato juice or applesauce, you need a food mill or strainer. There are several kinds on the market that vary in price and ease of use.

The cheapest, and slowest, is a funnel-shaped metal strainer with a wooden plunger. You pour cooked tomatoes or apples into the strainer and mash with the plunger to squeeze juice and pulp out the sides of the strainer. Then you scrape seeds and skin out of the inside.

A step up is the “Foley Food Mill,” a metal pan with a strainer-type bottom, little metal “feet” that hold it on to a pot or bowl, and a hand crank on top that turns a metal plate inside the pan. You pour the cooked tomatoes or apples into the pan, and turn the hand crank to squeeze pulp and juice out the bottom of the mill. Turn the crank in reverse to loosen seeds and skin for removal from the pan.

The top of the line is a food mill with a large funnel on top to take the cooked tomatoes or apples, that funnels into a cone-shaped screen with a large screw inside it. You turn a hand crank on the side of the unit to turn the screw and squeeze juice and pulp through the screen. A little chute directs the juice and pulp to a container, and seeds and skins come out the end of the cone. This type of unit is sold under the brand names “Victorio,” “Roma,” and “Squeezeo.”

## safe home canning

William Schafer. University of Minnesota Extension Service. BU-00516. [www.extension.umn.edu/distribution/nutrition/DJ0516.html](http://www.extension.umn.edu/distribution/nutrition/DJ0516.html). (Order a print copy through your local Extension office.)

## ball blue book guide to home canning

Available at some hardware stores, and online: [www.homecanning.com/usa/ALProducts.asp?M=265](http://www.homecanning.com/usa/ALProducts.asp?M=265)

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