



A GUIDE TO FOOD ASSISTANCE AND EATING LOCAL



How to *Get it, Grow it,*
Cook it, and Preserve it
in Northwest Michigan

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This is a guide for people who want access to and education about healthful food resources throughout northwest lower Michigan.

The Northwest Michigan Food and Farming Network consists of dozens of partner organizations and individuals who build Northwest Michigan's agricultural future by identifying areas of need throughout the region's food system and coordinating action to address them.



Find a **PANTRY** or **MEAL SITE**

Northwest Food Coalition is a group of area food pantries, baby pantries and meal sites - meeting the hunger needs of residents of the five county area of Antrim, Benzie, Grand Traverse, Wexford, Kalkaska, and Leelanau, while continuing to address the greater issues of poverty. Check their website for more information and resource listings.
NorthwestFoodCoalition.org



Onepantry.org is the one stop location to find food pantries or meal sites near you. One Pantry will tell you what food pantries are open today, where the next community meal will be held, and whether there are any restrictions for clients interested in visiting.



Food Pantries and Meal Sites all over the state use One Pantry to communicate with their clients, but also to communicate with one another and the vast array of local farmers and food producers in our communities.

With this tool, we help food pantries and meal sites gain access to more fresh, healthy local produce. Use the tool yourself to connect with these pantries or to find other helpful resources and recipes for making this healthy produce, into easy delicious meals.

Manna Food Project, now celebrating its 30th anniversary, operates a food rescue program, a food bank, a weekly food pantry, and the “Food 4 Kids” backpack program. Manna works with forty-four partner food pantries and community kitchens to provide nutritious food to over 350,000 individuals each year in Antrim, Charlevoix, and Emmet counties. **www.MannaFoodProject.org**



Food Assistance Resources **BY COUNTY**

Visit the web addresses listed below to discover more food assistance resources in your county.

- **Antrim:** bit.ly/AntrimCoFood
- **Benzie:** bit.ly/BenzieCoFood
- **Charlevoix:** bit.ly/CharlevoixCoFood
- **Emmet:** bit.ly/EmmetCoFood
- **Grant Traverse:** bit.ly/GrandTraverseCoFood
- **Kalkaska:** bit.ly/KalkaskaCoFood
- **Leelanau:** bit.ly/LeelanauCoFood
- **Manistee:** bit.ly/ManisteeCoFood
- **Missaukee:** bit.ly/MissaukeeCoFood
- **Wexford:** bit.ly/WexfordCoFood



FOOD ASSISTANCE PROGRAMS

SUPPLEMENTAL NUTRITION

ASSISTANCE PROGRAM (SNAP, EBT or Bridge Card)

Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) offers nutrition assistance to millions of eligible, low-income individuals and families. SNAP is the largest program in the domestic hunger safety net. To get SNAP benefits, households must meet certain tests, including resource and income tests. www.fns.usda.gov



**DOUBLE UP
FOOD BUCKS™**

DOUBLE UP FOOD BUCKS (DUFBS)

Fair Food Network's Double Up Food Bucks program provides SNAP recipients with extra incentive to use their benefits at participating farmers markets and grocery stores. For every EBT dollar you spend at the market, Double Up Food Bucks will give you an additional dollar - up to twenty dollars per week - to spend on fresh fruits and vegetables. Check their website to see if your market accepts EBT in order to participate in the program. www.doubleupfoodbucks.org

HOOPHOUSES FOR HEALTH

Families who participate in their local Head Start or Great Start Readiness Program can see if they are eligible to receive vouchers from Hoophouses for Health, an initiative that benefits both farmers and consumers. These vouchers are used to purchase fresh produce from participating farmers - check your local farmers market to see who participates. www.mifma.org/hoophousesforhealth





PROJECT FRESH (WIC)

WIC Project FRESH started in 1986 in several states across the country. The program provides low-income, nutritionally-at-risk WIC participants with eligible, locally grown, fresh, unprepared fruits and vegetables from authorized farmers, farmers' markets and roadside stands throughout Michigan. www.projectfresh.msu.edu



SENIOR MARKET FRESH (*Senior Project Fresh*)

The Senior Farmers Market Nutrition Program provides qualified adults, over age 60, with \$20 or more in coupons for unprocessed, fresh Michigan-grown products from registered Farmers markets and roadside stands throughout Michigan. Ask your local commission on aging for more information or to see if you qualify.



FRUIT & VEGGIE PRESCRIPTIONS

Fruit and Vegetable Prescription Programs help healthcare providers give people prescriptions that can be spent on fruits and vegetables at local farmers markets. This program is available through the Munson Family Practice Clinic and is expanding to others in the area - check with your healthcare providers to see if it is available near you.



Visit *Taste the Local Difference* online at **LocalDifference.org** or pick up their free print publication, *The Guide to Local Food*, to find farmers markets that accept these specialty payment options and so much more.



TIPS

for Shopping *Farmers Markets*

Shopping at the farmers market for the first time can be overwhelming. *Here are some tips to make your experience easier, faster and fun!*

1 **KEEP IT SIMPLE**

You're buying ultra-fresh produce when you shop at the farmers market, so let its natural flavor show when you cook it. Keep preparation simple.

2 **INVEST IN WHEELS**

If you buy a lot, consider getting a wheeled cart or wagon. Strollers also work well for fruits and veggies.

3 **TALK TO THE FARMERS!**

If you find a vegetable that's new to you and want to give it a try, ask the farmer how to prepare it.

4 **THINK "WHOLE FOODS"**

Think about how food comes to market without being processed. Carrots come unpeeled while beets still have greens (and dirt) attached. Handling just-harvested produce can take getting used to, but the superior flavor is worth it! Seek out handouts for tips on working with fresh, seasonal produce!

5 **WORK IN VOLUME**

The best deals are had when you buy in bulk. Freezing, canning, and drying are some of the ways you can save food for later in the year.

See page 13 for Ways to Preserve Food.

6 **PLAN FOR SPONTANEITY**

You'll fare better if you plan your trip, but you need to leave a bit of wiggle room for those strawberries you didn't know would be at market so early, or the zucchini blossoms you've never tried before.

7 **PLAN MEALS AHEAD**

Since you know what you're likely to find at the farmers market, you can do a bit of meal planning and shop accordingly. You'll know both how much to buy and what extra herbs or greens you can add to the dish. *See page 11 for Recipe Ideas.*

8 **BRING BIG BAGS & SMALL CHANGE**

Make sure everything gets home without crashing onto the sidewalk by bringing your own sturdy canvas or nylon bags. Although vendors will make change, purchases will go easier and faster if you have exact (or close to exact) change.

9 **GO EARLY (OR GO LATE)**

Markets tend to be less crowded right when they open or just before they close. For the best selection, go to the farmers market early. For the best deals, go to the farmers market late.

10 **KNOW YOUR SEASONS**

Making decisions is much easier if you know what grows locally, and ask about what will be coming to market in upcoming weeks. *See pages 8-9 for What's in Season Guide.*

GROW

Your Own



Growing your own food doesn't have to take up a ton of time or space. *You'll save money, feel accomplished, and get to snack on some delicious produce along the way! If you have kids, involving them in the growing process will help facilitate their exploration of new nutritious foods too!*

TIPS FOR BEGINNING GROWERS

- 1 Begin with plants you know your family likes to eat.** While it's always good to try new foods, start by growing produce you know your family will enjoy!
- 2 Start small!** Many plants can grow in containers and pots. Tomatoes, herbs, and strawberries, among others will do just fine on a sunny porch.
- 3 Feeling lost? Read the back of the seed packet!** Seed packets come with an abundance of growing information on the back such as when to plant, how deep to plant, and the amount of sunlight the plant likes.
- 4 Water consistently.** Until you learn more about how much water each plant needs, you can be relatively sure your plant won't die with not over or underwatering. Keep an even soil moisture level by watering in the morning before the sun is out.
- 5 Talk to your neighbors!** Every community has people who love to grow food whether it be a full-time farmer or your neighbor down the street who has killer tomato plants. Don't be afraid to ask people for advice and tips on growing food! It's a great way to connect with new people and not get frustrated as you're learning a new skill.

Visit your local community garden to connect with other gardeners and gain more space to grow! Your local extension office can also be a great resource to answer your questions and observations about growing food.

What's in SEASON

Michigan is the second most diverse agricultural state in the country! *There is a wide variety of fresh fruits, vegetables and other products available throughout the year. Produce is always more nutritious and flavorful when in season - and it's usually cheaper as well. Below is a guide to common fruits and vegetables and when they are available at farmers markets in Michigan. Crop availability fluctuates with many different factors, so becoming a regular at the market and talking to farmers is the best way to know what's available now - and what will become available in the future.*

MICHIGAN PRODUCE

Apples	<i>Mid-August to late October</i>
Apricots	<i>July to early August</i>
Asparagus	<i>Early May to late June</i>
Beets	<i>July to mid-October</i>
Blackberries	<i>Mid-August to late September</i>
Blueberries	<i>Late July to mid-September</i>
Broccoli	<i>Mid-July to mid-October</i>
Brussels Sprouts	<i>October</i>
Cabbage	<i>Mid-August to late October</i>
Carrots	<i>Late July to October</i>
Cauliflower	<i>August to October</i>
Cherries, Sweet	<i>Early July to early August</i>
Cherries, Tart	<i>July to August</i>
Chestnuts	<i>October</i>
Corn	<i>Late July to mid-September</i>
Cucumbers	<i>Early August to early October</i>
Eggplant	<i>August</i>
Grapes	<i>September to October</i>
Green Beans	<i>Early August to mid-September</i>
Lettuce	<i>April to December</i>
Nectarines	<i>August to September</i>
Onions	<i>Early July to late September</i>



UCE AVAILABILITY

Peaches	<i>Mid-August to mid-September</i>
Pears	<i>September to October</i>
Peas	<i>June</i>
Peppers	<i>August to mid-October</i>
Plums	<i>July to September</i>
Potatoes	<i>Early September to late October</i>
Potatoes, New	<i>Mid-July to early September</i>
Pumpkins	<i>September to October</i>
Radishes	<i>June to October</i>
Ramps	<i>Mid-April to June</i>
Raspberries	<i>July to October</i>
Rhubarb	<i>May to June</i>
Saskatoons	<i>July to August</i>
Snap Peas	<i>Late June to mid-July</i>
Spinach	<i>June to October</i>
Squash, Summer	<i>Mid-July to mid-September</i>
Squash, Winter	<i>Mid-September to mid-October</i>
Strawberries	<i>Mid-June to early July</i>
Tomatoes	<i>Early July to October</i>



Taste the Local Difference (*Throughout Michigan*)

TLD provides informational directories on their website and in print to locate local food, pantries, meal sites, and farms in your area.

Download this full poster at <http://bit.ly/MIProduce> or visit <https://bit.ly/TLDSeasonality> to learn more about what's in season.

Stretch Your FOOD DOLLAR\$

When we try to provide healthy food for ourselves and our family, every dollar counts. *In addition to utilizing food assistance programs (p. 3-5), buying local fruits and vegetables in season (p. 8-9), growing (p. 7) and preserving your own food (p. 12-13), and learning cooking skills and time-saving techniques, these strategies can help alleviate the challenge of eating healthfully on a tight budget.*

- 1 Plan your meals.** Based on your schedule for the week, figure out when you'll have time to cook and what you'll want to eat. This can be as simple as "burgers Monday night, tacos Tuesday night, leftovers Wednesday night, vegetable soup Thursday..." Once you have a plan, you'll know how much food to buy and when you'll use it. Eliminating last minute purchases will help keep your budget on track.
- 2 Use recipes that incorporate leftovers.** Casseroles, smoothies, soups and stir-fries are great dishes that use a variety of vegetables and other items you might already have in your fridge.
- 3 Utilize your freezer and dehydrator.** Freeze food such as bread, sliced fruit, or meat you know you won't be able to eat in time. Bake and freeze chicken breasts or fry and freeze taco meat to use later. Buy fruits and vegetables in bulk and dry in a dehydrator for storage.

One more sure-fire way to maximize your food budget? Make sure you don't end up throwing food away before you have a chance to eat it! An estimated 40% of food in the U.S. ends up in the landfill each year. When we let food go to waste, it's like putting money in the garbage. With a little bit of planning we can make sure the money spent on food gets used in a delicious and healthy way.

What is happening in our community to reduce food waste?

FOOD RESCUE, a program of Goodwill Northern Michigan, has rescued over 7.5 million pounds of food since its inception. In 2016, Food Rescue picked up and delivered 1.2 million pounds of food from over 160+ donors to 45 pantries and meal-sites in Leelanau, Benzie, Wexford, Grand Traverse, Kalkaska and Antrim County. Over 33% of food rescued is produce. If you are interested in learning more, please e-mail us at foodrescue@goodwillnmi.org or call (231) 995-7723.



Additional Resources on eating healthfully on a limited budget can be found on the MyPlate website at www.choosemyplate.gov/budget and in this guide from the USDA at: <https://tinyurl.com/MyPlateGoalsonaBudget>

Tips for DELICIOUS MEALS

Planning for and preparing food at home is a great way to stretch your food dollars - cooking from scratch is less expensive and more nutritious than eating out. However, with work and family obligations, preparing meals at home can be a challenge. There are steps you can take to fit healthy meal prep into your schedule and help you stay within budget.

- 1 Find ways to use vegetables and fruit.** What's on sale at the store or in season at the farmers' market? Seasonal fruits and vegetables have more flavor and are usually less expensive than out-of-season varieties. Use sale or seasonal produce one night as a side dish and leftovers the following day in a soup, pasta sauce or smoothie.
- 2 Prepare dried beans** in batches to freeze in 1-2 cup portions and use them as a source of protein instead of meat.
- 3 Plan for occasional no cook meals** such as salads or sandwiches and recruit family to help prepare. Plenty of fruits and vegetables can be eaten raw - cut up a big batch at once and eat throughout the week.
- 4 If you are selecting food from a food pantry,** prioritize food with the most amount of nutrients. Look for whole grain cereals, rice, dried beans or lentils, fresh, frozen, or canned produce, low-sodium soups, and nut butters. Ask food pantry staff for assistance in finding the most nutritious food available.

RECIPES



With a little practice and creativity, you can add more vegetables to any recipe. Try using up your farmers market haul with these ideas:

- 1. Throw some greens into your soup or stew.** Heartier greens like collards or kale will need to go in earlier than lighter ones like spinach, but all types will enhance your meal.
- 2. Frozen veggies are easy to add to meals.** Think frozen peas in your mac and cheese, frozen corn in your chili, or peppers in your omelet.
- 3. Drink up!** Spinach in a basic smoothie recipe adds nutrition and color. A simple blend could be a cup of milk, a cup of frozen berries, and a handful of spinach. Or get creative and make a smoothie with carrots, ginger and apple. The possibilities are endless and gives you an easy opportunity to consume lots of nutrients.

For more ideas check out the Michigan Harvest of the Month website www.mihotm.recipes and Leanne Brown's cookbook, Good and Cheap, available as a free pdf here: cookbooks.leannebrown.com/good-and-cheap.pdf



How to Keep **FOOD FRESH**

SOME GENERAL RULES FOR FOOD STORAGE ARE AS FOLLOWS:

- 1 Store leafy vegetables in a plastic bag inside the refrigerator.** Placing a piece of paper towel in the bag helps absorb moisture and keeps leaves fresher, longer.
- 2 It's best to treat fresh herbs like cut flowers -** trim the ends of the stems and set the whole bunch upright in a glass of water. Cover loosely with a plastic bag for best results. Basil in particular stores better on your countertop as opposed to in the fridge.
- 3 Some vegetables, like tomatoes, are best stored on at room temperature.** Remove all items from their box or bag and spread out in a single layer for best results.
- 4 Certain foods, like apples and bananas, produce more ethylene gas, which speeds up the ripening process.** Store these separately from your other produce to avoid over-ripening.
- 5 Frozen Food.** Store at 0 °F degrees or less
- 6 Canned Goods.** Store at room temperature.
- 7 Dried Foods.** Store in a cool, dark place.
- 8 Don't wash fruits and vegetables before you store them.** They last longer in the fridge if you wait to clean them just before using.
- 9 Store onions and potatoes** in a cool, dark place.
- 10 When you store leftovers,** label them with the date so you know what items to use first.

For lists of ways to store specific produce items, check out the fact sheets at UC Davis Post-Harvest Technology Website:
[postharvest.ucdavis.edu/
Commodity_Resources/
Storage_Recommendations/](http://postharvest.ucdavis.edu/Commodity_Resources/Storage_Recommendations/)

Ways to PRESERVE FOOD

Can you believe that people have been preserving food for over 14,000 years?! Nowadays, we have better tools and more experience, but the goal is the same: prevent mold and bacteria while making our food last longer. Whether you grew up helping grandma can tomatoes, or recently decided to freeze fresh fruit for year-round smoothies (see page ?), preserving food is a great way to save money, spend time with family or neighbors, and eat healthy in all four seasons. Check the MSU extension website for specific recipes and techniques for preserving food.

- 1 Drying.** Dehydrating is the oldest technique to pull moisture from food. If you don't have access to an electric dehydrator, practice drying fruit in your kitchen stove. Cut into even slices and soak in a mixture of half water/lemon juice. Place evenly onto cookie sheets and bake at 190 degrees with the oven door slightly open. Flip and rotate occasionally until fruit pieces are dry.
- 2 Pickling.** There are two ways to pickle: chemically (salt brine, vinegar, oil, etc) or fermenting (sauerkraut, kimchi, etc). Most of us have tried tasting both, but never tried making our own. By simply adding water (3.5 cups), vinegar (1.25 cups), sugar and salt (1 tbs each), you can try refrigerator pickles yourself in 3 days. Just add 4 cucumbers, some garlic and fresh dill and voila! Pickles!
- 3 Freezing.** Without access to water, bacteria have a hard time growing. Freezing your food is a great way to enjoy fruits and vegetables when they're not fresh from the garden. The trick here is to buy when availability is high and the price is low. Purchase in quantities (with a friend) to get a better deal, and then share the work to process and freeze your harvest. Spread the food out in one layer on a baking sheet, freeze, then transfer to a plastic bag and store at 0 °F.
- 4 Canning.** There are many techniques to canning foods, but the main concept is cooking food and sealing it in jars for storage sake. Most of us recognize the last step of the process, when the jars are boiled to help kill any remaining bacteria. Depending on the acidity of the food, the process will vary and recipes will differ so always clearly mark your jars with dates and store at room temperature.

EDUCATIONAL OPPORTUNITIES

Throughout Northwest Michigan *there are a number of courses and workshops provided by organizations covering healthy cooking, nutrition, how to use and budget for local food, raising your own food, and much more.*

Grow Benzie.

Benzonia

(231) 882-9510

Offers a variety of educational classes and workshop related to their mission of connecting people to healthful foods, jobs, life skills, and each other.



Michigan State Extension.

Offices in Antrim, Benzie, Charlevoix, Grand Traverse, Kalkaska, Leelanau, Manistee, and Wexford Counties.

(517) 355-2308

Offers food and health programming throughout NW Michigan with courses on nutrition, farming, and food budgeting.



Crosshatch

Throughout NW Michigan.

(231) 622-5252

Offering a wide range of focused guilds, agricultural workshops, farm tours, and practical skill workshops.



SEEDS.

Throughout NW Michigan

Connects youth k-12 through educational opportunities including farming, healthy cooking, and nutritional eating.



CO-OPS:

Oryana Natural Foods Market.

Traverse City

(231) 947-0191



-&-

Grain Train.

Petoskey, Boyne City

(231) 347 - 2381

Cooking classes as well as tours teaching customers how to shop on a budget.



COLLEGES:

NCMC | Baker | NMC Extended Education.

Traverse City

Courses offered to the community for personal development in many areas including cooking, farming, and the greater food system.



VOLUNTEERING:

Pay it Forward

Are you passionate about making sure all our neighbors have access to enough healthful food to feed themselves and their families? *Do you want to show your passion by volunteering with others in our community who are dedicated to ensuring healthful food for all? There are many great opportunities to become involved. We hope you'll join us as we work to improve the lives of our neighbors in need.*

OPPORTUNITIES FOR ENGAGEMENT:

1 **Become A Healthy Harvest Volunteer.**

Healthy Harvest is a collaboration between area farmers, Food Rescue and Rotary Clubs of Northwest Michigan to rescue local crops that would otherwise go to waste to feed our hungry neighbors. Would you enjoy volunteering on one of our local farms, harvesting produce for distribution to area pantries? Go to www.goodwillnmi.org/healthy-harvest to register.

2 **Become a Food Rescue Volunteer.**

Food Rescue teams drive the five-county region to collect donated, fresh food from area grocers and farmers, distributing it the same day, free-of-charge, to partner agencies who feed hungry neighbors. Would you enjoy riding on a Food Rescue truck, helping collect and distribute food? **Contact Food Rescue at (231) 995-7723 to volunteer.**

3 **Become a Food Pantry/ Community Meal Site Volunteer.**

Our area food pantries and community meal sites could not function without the support of volunteers. Would you enjoy stocking pantry shelves or serving food at a community meal site? Go to www.onepantry.org to find a pantry or community meal site near you.

MADE POSSIBLE WITH FUNDING FROM



148 E. Front Street | Suite 301
Traverse City, MI 49684
FoodandFarmingNetwork.org



202 E. Grandview Parkway | Suite 203
Traverse City, MI 49684
(231) 941-5421 | TraverseCityRotary.org

Contributions by Members of the

HEALTHFUL FOOD FOR ALL TASKFORCE



148 E. Front Street | Suite 301
Traverse City, MI 49684-5725
(231) 941-6584 | GroundworkCenter.org



826 Hastings Street
Traverse City, MI 49686
(231) 947-2055 | FatherFred.org



5885 Frankfort Highway
Benzonia, MI 49616
(231) 882-9510 | GrowBenzie.org



NorthwestFoodCoalition.org



1610 Barlow Street | Suite 101
Traverse City, MI 49686
(877) 562-2539 | LocalDifference.org



P.O. Box 2454
Traverse City, MI 49685
(231) 947-0312 | EcoSeeds.org



(517) 355-2308 | msue.anr.msu.edu



BenzieSunriseRotary.org



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