

TO MEDIA:

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**BUY LOCAL ... EAT HEALTHY: EXCELA HEALTH DIETITIAN
PROMOTES FARMERS MARKET SHOPPING**

GREENSBURG, PA, July 26, 2010 ... Farmers markets are springing up everywhere and mid-summer is the perfect season to visit them. When you buy into the “buy local” movement, you are supporting the local farmers and local community. “There are several farmers markets in our area that are definitely worth a visit,” according to Dawn Davoli, RD, LDN, nutrition consultant for Excela Health. When it comes to going “green” and all colors of the rainbow, a market is the perfect place to stock up on fresh fruits and vegetables. Davoli offers the following tips to make the most of that trip to the local stand or market:

When to go: The best time to hit a farmers market is as soon as it opens! The food is fresh and the vendors are eager for customers. Try not to go in the middle of the day as parking may be a challenge. If you are looking for a deal, try going near closing time as the vendors may be willing to offer specials so they don't have to cart unsold goods home. The important thing is to just go! You'll be glad you did.

Have a plan: One of the best things to do is to scope out the products then plan your meals accordingly. Many markets offer fresh meats and whole grain breads and starches, in addition to produce, that can make for healthier meal planning. “But don't be too rigid with your plan,” notes Davoli. “You may come across a food item that is unfamiliar to you; buy it and try it ... you might like it.”

Don't over buy: Buying at a farmers market means getting a product that is picked at the peak of its season, when nutrients are abundant. The longer you

leave the food unused, the more its quality declines. As a general rule, don't buy more than you can use within three to five days.

Let food be your medicine: There are many health benefits of eating fresh produce high in phytochemicals. Strawberries and tomatoes may prevent certain cancers; carrots and squash may decrease cholesterol levels; broccoli and spinach may lower lipid levels, blackberries and eggplant may be anti-inflammatory.

Keep it simple: Farm fresh foods don't need fussy preparations. Often a good quality olive oil, sea salt and fresh ground pepper are all that's needed. And don't forget about fresh herbs to season your foods. Davoli adds, "The Internet and cookbooks geared to Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) are great resources for delicious recipes using seasonal foods."

Using local foods can be an inspiration to prepare healthy, plant-based meals that are high in nutrients and low in calories. "It is a win-win situation - the local farmers, economy and environment are supported and we are eating healthier!"

Try the following recipe using summer abundant tomatoes and cucumbers.

Chilled Gazpacho

Serves 4

4 cups tomatoes, chopped
2 cups beef or vegetable broth
1 cup cucumbers, diced
1 cup green or red pepper, diced
1 cup celery, diced
½ cup yellow or red onion, diced
2 tablespoon sugar
1 tablespoon lemon juice
1 teaspoon salt
Several dashes Worcestershire sauce
10-12 drops Tabasco pepper sauce
6 ice cubes
Green onions or chives, chopped (optional)

Mix all ingredients together. Allow soup to stand 30 minutes to let the ice cubes chill the soup and for the flavors to mingle.

Source: [Simply in Season](#) by Lind and Hockman-Wert