

Best Farmer's Markets in Phoenix

Written by Written by Sona Patel

Shop organically! Grocery stores, farmer's markets, health food stores, ranch markets and a variety of other places offer large produce sections. With an abundance of options and controversy surrounding the food industry, we've all grown suspicious of how our food made it to the dinner table. Wherever you decide to shop, here are a few things to remember from a few experts in the industry.



Have you ever wondered if labeling on produce holds any significance? The codes on those tiny stickers contain information helpful for stores, but for consumers as well. Some stickers have 4-digit codes indicating it was grown conventionally meaning it may have been treated with pesticides. 5-digit codes starting with a '9' indicate an organic fruit or vegetable and 5-digit codes starting with an '8' indicate genetically modified produce. Look for the USDA Organic label to guarantee that the product is 95% organic.

Maya Dailey, owner of Maya's Farm at South Mountain, is committed to growing the highest quality produce without the use of pesticides. Her agriculture is available at select farmer's markets around the valley. Daily stresses that knowledge is crucial, "Educate yourself and make sure you know what you're buying." She adds that understanding the seasonality of produce can make the difference. If citrus is available in June, it wasn't grown locally. According to Dee Logan, Senior Coordinator of The Arizona Community Farmer's Market Group, "Vitamin content is lost as produce matures."

At farmer's markets, there is both certified and uncertified produce, but what exactly does getting certified entail and is one better than another? The certifying process begins with a certifying group performing tests and ensuring that certain standards are being met. For example, farmland must be free of chemicals for a period of time before it can be certified. Regular inspections are also held to ensure farms are maintaining those standards.

According to Daily, "Just because it's certified doesn't mean pesticides aren't used." She says the only way to be sure, is to question your local farmers and farmer's market staff. Logan adds, "Farmers are excited to share their techniques."

Unlike grocery stores and health food stores, farmer's markets can sprout up seasonally. The Arizona Community Farmer's Markets along with other farmer's market organizations open their markets on certain days of the week, seasonally and year round. For schedules and locations visit: www.arizonafarmersmarkets.com. For a list of where Maya's Farm products are sold visit: www.mayasfarm.com.

- Ahwatukee Farmer's Market: Sundays, Year Round Hours: 8am-11am Location: 4700 E. Warner Road, Phoenix, AZ 85044
- Twilight Farmer's Market: Wednesdays Hours: 4pm-8pm (Oct-May) 5pm-8pm (June-Aug) Location: 59th Ave. and Utopia (Arrowhead Ranch)
- Mesa Community Farmer's Market: Fridays, Year Round Market Hours: 9am - 12 Noon Location: 260 N. Center St. Mesa, AZ 85201
- Roadrunner Park Farmer's Market: Saturdays, Year Round Hours: 8am-1pm (Oct-May) 7am-11am (June-Sept) Location: 3502 E. Cactus Rd, Phoenix AZ 85032
- Scottsdale Stadium Summer Market: Saturdays, Hours: 8am-Noon Location: Corner of Osborne and Drinkwater

www.arizonafarmersmarkets.com