



FAIRFAX COUNTY PARK AUTHORITY



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For Immediate Release

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April 28, 2016

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IR-050

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Fairfax County Farmers Markets to Open First Week of May

What do Fairfax County residents look forward to at the beginning of May? Many would say the return of farm fresh products with the opening of the 11 locations of the Fairfax County Park Authority's (FCPA) Farmers Markets. Customers can look forward to the freshest produce, meats, cheese, baked breads, honey, ice cream, sweets and cut flowers our region has to offer.

FCPA Farmers Markets are unique because they are strictly "producer-only," which means that all vendors must grow or produce everything they bring to market. This provides customers with the unique opportunity to connect directly with farmers, who are eager to answer questions about their growing practices, animal care, recipes and more.

If you have ever wondered why that grocery store tomato just doesn't taste the same as the homegrown kind, long travel distances are likely the culprit. Most produce at local Farmers Markets is picked less than 24 hours before it arrives at market. Grocery-chain produce travels an average of 1,000 miles to market and is often picked before peak ripeness, resulting in depleted nutrients and flavor. Another reason locally grown produce also often tastes better is that small farmers tend to select produce varieties based on taste rather than durability.

Buying from your local Farmers Markets also helps to keep money circulating through the local economy. Many studies show that money spent locally, tends to stay local. Pledge to shop locally this year by supporting the Buy Fresh Pledge! Stop by any market to get your pledge card and make your commitment to spend \$10 a week locally, and help generate \$1.65 billion a year for Virginia's economy. Download the pledge card here:

<http://www.vdacs.virginia.gov/vagrown/pdf/punchcard2.pdf>. Send in your pledge to be entered to win a VA Grown Gift Basket!

FCPA Farmers Markets are also proud to announce that select locations accept SNAP benefits (formerly food stamps) including McCutcheon/Mount Vernon, Reston, Lorton, and Herndon farmers markets. Thanks to generous grant funding through Wholesome Wave and INOVA, we now match all SNAP purchases up to \$20 per market visit to be spent on additional produce. Thanks to the matching funds, redemptions have increased dramatically at all our SNAP at market locations. We are proud to play a role in increasing access to fresh foods for all citizens in Fairfax County, while also offering additional support to our small farmers.

For more information, including locations, directions and a list of vendors at each market go to www.fairfaxcounty.gov/parks/farmersmarkets or you may contact the Community Horticulture Office at 703-642-0128.

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If accommodations and/or alternative formats are needed, please call (703) 324-8563, at least 10 working days in advance of the registration deadline or event. TTY (703) 803-3354.