

## It's Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Month

June is when harvest season in the Hudson Valley gets into full gear. Besides the early starters like asparagus, lettuce, radishes, rhubarb and spinach, plenty of other fruits and vegetables reach ripeness in June:

Beets, broccoli, cabbage, garlic, peas, summer squash, swiss chard, and the first tomatoes and zucchini all make their season debuts in June, along with strawberries and sweet cherries.

It makes getting your five recommended daily servings of fruits and vegetables easier, and tastier.

### Local Markets: Almost Like Growing Your Own

Not everybody is able to grow their own fruits and vegetables, but our local farmers markets more than make up for what we can't manage on our own. Fresh-from-the-garden and locally grown produce both have proven nutritional benefits that supermarket produce often lacks.

### New York State's Senior Farmers Market Nutrition Program (SFMNP)

Part of the federal Farmers Market Nutrition Program, SFMNP promotes local farmers throughout New York State by expanding their sales to qualifying older adults at farmers' markets and farm stands, and fosters healthy communities through the consumption of locally grown fresh fruits and vegetables.

Examples of what you can buy using SFMNP benefits with authorized vendors include locally grown, fresh fruits, vegetables, and culinary herbs. Examples of eligible items include (but are not limited to) the following: berries, stone fruits, apples, salad greens,

peppers, tomatoes, garlic, potatoes, squashes, basil, thyme, and rosemary.

Examples of what you *cannot* buy using SFMNP benefits include exotic and imported produce, prepared foods, and baked goods. Examples of ineligible items include (but are not limited to) the following: Florida oranges, avocados from Mexico, sandwiches, jams and jellies, stews, hot meals, breads, pies, cookies, etc.

### How To Get SFMNP Benefits, Starting July 1

If you are low-income, older adult (aged 60+ years) who lives in Dutchess County, you may be eligible to receive Senior Farmers' Market Nutrition Program (SFMNP) coupons from the Office for the Aging. The program starts July 1 and coupons are distributed on a first come, first served basis. Coupon booklets contain five \$5 coupons, with a total value of \$25.

Older adults who are eligible for this program receive a booklet with SFMNP coupons that can only be used to purchase local, fresh, unprocessed vegetables and fruits at participating farmers' markets and farm stands. Contact OFA for more information about where and when to receive SFMNP coupons, and where they can be used.

If you qualify for SNAP (formerly food stamps), it's possible for you to also qualify for SFMNP coupons. Some farmers markets accept both SNAP benefits as well as SFMNP coupons.

To apply with OFA, you need to be at least 60 years old, a Dutchess County resident, with a household income that doesn't exceed 185% of federal poverty guidelines.

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Dutchess County Office for the Aging • 114 Delafield St., Poughkeepsie NY 12601  
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# Recipe: Strawberry Salad with Balsamic

## (Serves 4)

### *Ingredients*

¼ cup balsamic vinegar  
1 cup sliced strawberries  
1 cup halved cherry tomatoes  
1 cup halved mini mozzarella balls\*  
1 ripe avocado, pitted and diced  
⅓ cup pecans, toasted  
⅓ cup fresh basil leaves, torn  
Extra-virgin olive oil, for drizzling  
Sea salt and freshly ground black pepper

### *Instructions*

*(\* Omit the cheese if you prefer a vegan recipe)*

In a small saucepan, bring the balsamic vinegar to a high simmer over medium heat. Stir, then reduce the heat to low and simmer until the vinegar has thickened and reduced by half, about 8 to 10 minutes. Set aside to cool.

Place the strawberries, cherry tomatoes, mozzarella, avocado, pecans, and basil in a shallow bowl or platter. Drizzle with olive oil and season generously with salt and pepper. Gently toss. Drizzle with the reduced balsamic.

*Source: loveandlemons.com*