

# 31 Days, 31 Ways: Saving Money at Farmers' Markets

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JACKSONVILLE, FL -- The rising gas prices are now affecting people in their grocery carts. Many supermarkets are increasing the costs of items like fruits and vegetables.

One way to avoid the increase is to shop at local farmers' markets.

I wanted to find out where you would save the most money buying produce at a farmers' market or a local grocery store.

On this shopping trip I went to the Jacksonville Farmers Market on Beaver Street near Stockton St.

The variety of fruit, vegetables and even flowers is endless.

I bought a basket of tomatoes (2.5 lbs.) for \$2.00 at the farmers' market. When priced at a local grocery store the same amount was \$4.48 on sale.

Asparagus regularly runs \$3.99 a pound at the supermarkets. I bought a pound of the vegetable for only \$1.50 at the farmers' market.

Four red peppers, which looked like red bell peppers to be, were \$1.00. At the local supermarkets the same amount was \$4.99.

Heads of iceberg lettuce were 2 for \$1.00 at the farmers' market. It's double that at the local grocery stores.

I bought a basket full of green beans (1.5 lbs.) for \$2.50 at the farmers' market which seemed like a great deal. But I later found them on sale at one local grocery store for only \$2.09 for the same size.

Jim Wynn has been selling fruit, onions and flowers at the market on Beaver Street for 3 years.

He says it's important to know what's in season. "Fresh blueberries and peaches are starting now and the crop is great," says Wynn. "The quality is great. The taste is great."

So I went right for the blue berries. Wynn was selling a 1 lb. basket for \$4.00. The berries were large and very fresh.

Most local stores sell the blue berries in 4.4 ounce containers. It would take 4 of those to make a pound and cost \$11.96.

As for the Georgia peaches, I bought a basket of peaches (1 3/4 lbs.) for \$2.00. At the store, it would be about \$3.49.

1.25 pounds of fuji apples at the farmers' market were \$2.00. The local supermarkets sell them for about \$2.49.

Watermelon, which is a great summer treat, was \$4.00 for a large melon at the farmers' market.

I found a similar size watermelon for \$4.99 on sale at the store. It was regularly priced for \$7.99 without a value discount card.

**In all I spent \$20 at the farmers' market. The same amount of groceries would be \$40.46 at the local supermarkets.**

Regular shoppers at the farmers' markets say you do have to be aware of what you are buying.

"You learn to be judicious about what you pick," says Betsy Barrett. "But that's the same even at the grocery stores."

Much of the produce at the farmers' markets is very fresh so it may not last as long at home, as some of the store bought items.

But the shoppers I talked to say it's worth it for the great taste and freshness you get at the farmers' markets.

Also, the fruit and veggies are often sold in baskets. If you don't need that large amount, some shoppers opt to split the baskets with a friend. That way they get the discount without the worried of not eating it all.

Many of the farmers' markets sell produce grown on farms in Florida or Georgia. But if buying locally grown is important to you, it is best to ask each person you buy from where the fruit or vegetables were grown.

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**Link to Video:**

<http://www.firstcoastnews.com/money/onyourside/news-article.aspx?storyid=109749&catid=9>