



THE GEAR

Totes Adorable

No shopping carts here, so transport is up to you. If you plan to buy meat or eggs, bring a cooler and sealable plastic containers to keep them cold, says Jan Taylor, director of market operations for the West Coast Farmers Market Association; these also help prevent fragile items like berries from getting squished. For everything else, a reusable bag is the way to go. Three chic picks:

FLEABAGS BALLETTOTE IN SAPPHIRE
\$145, fleabag.com



FEED 1 IN DUSTY BLUE
\$80, feedprojects.com



WILL LEATHER GOODS REVERSIBLE SILK QUILTED KANTHA TOTE
\$250, willleathergoods.com



LEARN THE LINGO

Natural, artisanal, organic, oh my: What really means what? "The USDA Organic label maintains specific standards," says Richard Ruben, author of The Farmer's Market Cookbook. It confirms that no synthetic pesticides were used during production. Other terms—"fresh," for example—could be accurate, but they don't mean the food has met any requirements.

TO HAGGLE OR NOT TO HAGGLE

NO

A head of lettuce. It's poor etiquette to try to bump down the price on a normal haul, because prices are already rock-bottom.

YES

When buying in bulk. It's fine to ask politely about cutting a deal on a whole lotta fruit, especially if you're a regular.



CLICK HERE

Detailed and super comprehensive, the online USDA database is awesome for finding a market. In some cases, it even lists the types of items sold. Go to search.ams.usda.gov/farmersmarkets/.

QUICK TIP

Looking for something special? Don't be fashionably late: Farmers sometimes bring a small batch of a new, unique product, which usually sells out—often early.

THE LIST

Save for Later

- 1 VEGGIES:** Chop, blanch, and freeze, then sauté and add to winter meals. (Cut kernels from corn, but freeze tomatoes whole.)
- 2 FRUIT:** Blueberries, cranberries, peaches, and cherries will keep better as preserves.
- 3 SUMMER HERBS:** Puree with olive oil, pour into jars, and stash in the freezer for six months.
- 4 MEAT:** Tough cuts like brisket are best for freezing (and, later, delish in a stew); eat within three months to avoid freezer burn.

DO LOOKS MATTER?

Just because you're used to most stores' cookie-cutter veggies, don't shun bent carrots or radishes in foreign colors: "Produce's appearance generally has nothing to do with its taste or nutrition," says Ruben. That said, if you feel squishy spots or spy black blotches, move on.