

# FROM FARM TO SCHOOL

August 2012

## Use of Local Produce in School Cafeterias and Buildings

Dear School Foodservice Director and School Staff,

There has been a lot of interest in serving locally grown food products in school cafeterias and using gardens as hands-on learning tools. Exposing students to locally grown foods can be a good way to improve the nutritional value and taste of school meals and provide opportunities for school staff to integrate agriculture and nutrition into existing curriculum.

With all new adventures, there are concerns that have been expressed as to how to transition into this new way of providing fresh fruits and vegetables. **It is important to remember that fresh fruits and vegetables can be grown on site (i.e. school garden) or at a local farm and still be used in a licensed food service operation, in the classroom, or distributed to the public.**

We created this document to provide practical tips and guidance to ensure that students, staff, and local growers are handling food products safely. Should you have any further questions, please contact our office at (216) 201-2000 or visit us at [www.ccbh.net](http://www.ccbh.net).



The South Euclid Lyndhurst farm to school program was launched in September 2010. The district partners with Red Basket Farm, located in Kinsman, Ohio.

# Ready to Start Working with a Local Farm?

Food safety is universally recognized as a public health priority. When shopping for produce, we know that you are looking for high quality food from a trusted source.

Farms and growers should be following the approach of “production to consumption” because there are agents that may have an adverse effect on agricultural operations.

Interested in bringing local produce into your school system? Here is a checklist you can use when talking to a farm or grower about purchasing produce from them. These questions are meant to be used as one piece of your decision making tool to assist you in making an informed decision.

According to the National Farm to School Network, there are currently 2,518 farm to school programs, involving 9,945 schools, across the Country.

## Production Practices

- What type of water source is used for irrigation?
- Is the field exposed to runoff from animal confinement or grazing areas?
- Is land that is frequently flooded used to grow food crops?
- Are farm livestock and wild animals restricted from growing areas?

## Product Handling

- Are storage and packaging facilities located away from growing areas?
- Is there a risk of contamination with manure?
- Are containers washed, rinsed, and sanitized before use with potable water?
- Is harvesting equipment/machinery that comes into contact with the products kept as clean as possible?
- Is dirt, mud, or other debris removed from products before packaging?

## Transportation

- Is product loaded and stored to minimize physical damage and risk of contamination?
- Is transport vehicle well maintained and cleaned?
- Are products kept cool during transportation?

## Facilities

- Is potable water/well tested at least once per year and results kept on file?
- Are packing areas enclosed?
- Are food contact surfaces regularly washed, rinsed, and sanitized with potable water?
- Are food grade packaging materials used?
- Do workers have access to toilets and hand washing stations that contain all the proper supplies?
- Is a pest control program in place?

## Worker Health and Hygiene

- Are workers trained about hygiene practices and sanitation with signs posted to reinforce messages?
- Are smoking and eating confined to designated areas separated from product handling?
- Are workers instructed not to work if they exhibit signs of infection?
- Do workers practice good hygiene by wearing clean clothes, keeping hair restrained, changing gloves, and aprons as needed?



To learn more  
about the Ohio  
Farm to School  
program visit  
[www.farmtoschool  
.osu.edu](http://www.farmtoschool.osu.edu)



School Garden, Greenview Upper Elementary School

## School Gardens

A school garden can serve as an engaging classroom for providing a wide range of educational goals. Working in a garden also offers recreation, exercise, and teaches children responsibility and teamwork. Here are some things to consider when establishing your school garden:

- Locate the garden away from wells, septic systems, in ground tanks, dumpsters, parking lots, or any other areas of possible contamination
- Avoid areas where water collects. The garden should not be in a popular area for flooding.
- Secure the area with a fence to prevent the entrance of rodents or animals.
- Ensure that the garden cannot be contaminated by runoff from animal confinement or grazing areas.
- When irrigation is used, it comes from an approved source.
- Do not use synthetic herbicide, fungicide, or insecticide.
- Do not grow food products such as raw sprouts. The conditions needed to grow these products are ideal for bacteria, such as *Salmonella*, to grow.
- Use food grade containers that can be washed, rinsed, and sanitized with potable water when storing food products.
- Students and staff should be trained about hygiene practices and sanitation.
- Smoking and eating should be confined to designated areas separate from food handling.
- We recommend using raised beds. In the event you want to grow in virgin soil, we recommend soil testing prior to planting in the garden site.

# **Ways to Use Garden Produce**

You can use the produce grown in your garden for more than taste testing events and learning tools for students. Food grown in the garden, when handled correctly, can be used in a licensed food-service operation and sold to the public.

## **Food Service Program**

Produce grown in the schools garden can be used by the licensed school kitchen. Vegetables and or fruits harvested on site should be thoroughly washed before preparing or serving for lunches.

## **Sale to General Public**

Produce harvested from the schools garden can be sold in whole pieces to the public. The majority of school kitchens hold a valid food service license. If this is the case, harvested vegetables and fruits from their local garden can be processed, and sold as a meal or part of a meal. Follow proper food safety and sanitation procedures.

# **What does Organic mean?**

Organic produce is made in a way that limits the use of synthetic material during production. The produce is grown without using most conventional pesticides, fertilizers, made with synthetic ingredients or sewage sludge, bioengineering or ionizing radiation. Before a product can be labeled “organic”, a government approved certifier inspects the farm where the food is grown to make sure the farmer meets the U.S. Department of Agriculture’s organic standards. Companies that handle or process organic food before it reaches the supermarket or restaurant must be certified as well.

# FIGHTBAC!

## SIX STEPS TO SAFER FRUITS AND VEGETABLES

Safe Handling of Fresh Fruits and Vegetables

PROVIDED BY THE PARTNERSHIP FOR FOOD SAFETY EDUCATION

### Check

- Check to be sure that the fresh fruits and vegetables you buy are not bruised or damaged.
- Check that fresh cut fruits and vegetables like packaged salads and precut melons are refrigerated at the store before buying. Do not buy fresh cut items that are not refrigerated.

### Clean

- Wash hands with warm water and soap for at least 20 seconds before and after handling fresh fruits and vegetables.
- Clean all surfaces and utensils with hot water and soap, including cutting boards, counter tops, peelers and knives that will touch fresh fruits or vegetables before and after food-preparation.
- Rinse fresh fruits and vegetables under running tap water, including those with skins and rinds that are not eaten. Packaged fruits and vegetables labeled "ready-to-eat", "washed" or "triple washed" need not be washed.
- Rub firm-skin fruits and vegetables under running tap water or scrub with a clean vegetable brush while rinsing with running tap water.
- Dry fruits and vegetables with a clean cloth towel or paper towel.
- Never use detergent or bleach to wash fresh fruits or vegetables. These products are not intended for consumption.



### Separate

- When shopping, be sure fresh fruits and vegetables are separated from household chemicals and raw foods such as meat, poultry and seafood in your cart and in bags at checkout.
- Keep fresh fruits and vegetables separate from raw meat, poultry or seafood in your refrigerator.

- Separate fresh fruits and vegetables from raw meat, poultry and seafood. Do not use the same cutting board without cleaning with hot water and soap before and after preparing fresh fruits and vegetables.

### Cook

- Cook or throw away fruits or vegetables that have touched raw meat, poultry, seafood or their juices.

### Chill

- Refrigerate all cut, peeled or cooked fresh fruits and vegetables within two hours.

### Throw Away

- Throw away fresh fruits and vegetables that have not been refrigerated within two hours of cutting, peeling or cooking.
- Remove and throw away bruised or damaged portions of fruits and vegetables when preparing to cook them or before eating them raw.
- Throw away any fruit or vegetable that will not be cooked if it has touched raw meat, poultry or seafood.
- If in doubt, throw it out!



## Contact Us

Have questions about food safety and farm to school? Interested in starting a farm to school program?

Call: 216-201-2000

Visit Us: [www.ccbh.net](http://www.ccbh.net)



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