

Colorado Reader

An agricultural magazine for students

Fresh Finds:

Discover Colorado's Bountiful Produce!

Welcome to the wonderful world of Colorado **produce**! The late summer and early fall months are the best time to find the vibrant fruits and vegetables that our state has to offer. Whether you love juicy peaches, crunchy carrots, or spicy Pueblo chiles, Colorado's farms are bustling with fresh, delicious produce just waiting for you to explore.

Agriculture is one of Colorado's most important industries. Our state's unique climate and rich soil make it perfect for growing a wide variety of fruits and vegetables. From the sunny slopes on the west to the fertile plains on the east, Colorado farmers work hard to grow high-quality produce that feeds families all over the state and beyond.

For students, August and September mark the end of summer and back to school. But for Colorado produce farmers, August and September are special months because it is the peak of the growing season. This means that the produce you find at farmers markets and grocery stores is at its very best - ripe, flavorful, and packed with nutrients!



Fun Facts About Colorado Produce

Pumpkins and More: Did you know that Colorado is a big producer of pumpkins? Perfect for fall decorations and delicious pies!

Potato Powerhouse: Colorado grows more than 2 billion pounds of potatoes each year. That's enough to fill over 10,000 school buses from top to bottom with delicious spuds!

Farm to Table: Many restaurants in Colorado use locally grown produce, so when you eat out, you're often supporting local farmers.

**Colorado has about 2,100
fruit and vegetable farms.**

Fruit or Vegetable: what's the difference?

When you go to a farmers market or the grocery store, you see lots of colorful fruits and vegetables. But do you know what makes a fruit a fruit and a vegetable a vegetable? Let's explore the tasty world of produce and learn the difference between these two types of food!

What is a Fruit?

A **fruit** is the part of a plant that develops from the flower. The fruit contains the seeds of the plant. It covers and protects the seeds. A fruit may have fleshy or dry tissue.

What is a Vegetable?

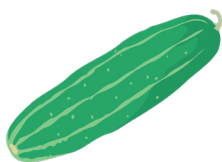
A **vegetable** is any edible part of the plant that does not contain the seed. Vegetables are usually the roots, stems, or leaves of the plant.

Activity: Look at the items below and determine whether the food is a fruit or a vegetable. It's harder than you may think. Fun fact: All these fruits and vegetables are grown in Colorado.



peach

1. fruit



cucumber

2. _____



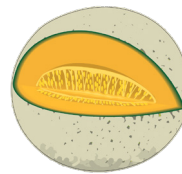
apple

3. _____



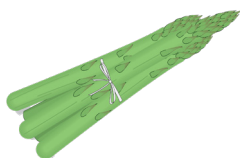
broccoli

4. _____



cantaloupe

5. _____



asparagus

6. _____



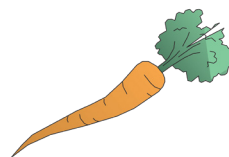
pumpkin

7. _____



grape

8. _____



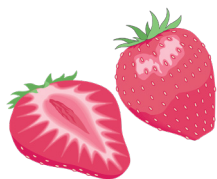
carrot

9. _____



potato

10. _____



strawberry

11. _____



cauliflower

12. _____



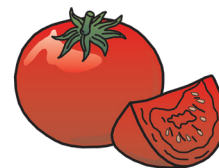
garlic

13. _____



onion

14. _____



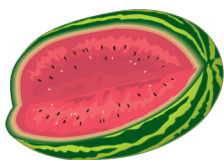
tomato

15. _____



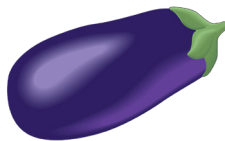
corn

16. _____



watermelon

17. _____



eggplant

18. _____



pepper

19. _____



butternut squash

20. _____

Farmers Markets: Fresh & Full of Flavor!

Farmers markets are special places where you can find the freshest fruits, vegetables, and other tasty treats grown by local farmers. Let's dive into what makes these markets so amazing and why they are a fantastic place to explore.

What Are Farmers Markets?

Farmers markets are open-air markets where farmers and producers come together to sell their fresh produce directly to you. They are usually held once or twice a week in towns and cities across Colorado. When you visit a farmers market, you can see, touch, and taste all sorts of fresh foods, from juicy peaches to crunchy carrots.

Why Are They Important? Farmers markets are important for many reasons:

1. **Freshness:** The fruits and vegetables you find at farmers markets are often picked the same day or the day before, making them super fresh and delicious.
2. **Local Support:** Buying from farmers markets helps support local farmers and keeps money in your community.
3. **Variety:** You can find unique and seasonal produce that you might not see in regular grocery stores.
4. **Healthy Choices:** Fresh produce is packed with vitamins and **nutrients** that help keep you strong and healthy.



Photo from Colorado Farmers Market Association. Learn more about farmers markets by visiting cofarmersmarkets.org.

Find A Farmers Market

With the help of an adult, scan this QR code to view a farmers market map. Use the map to find farm-fresh food, including the days and times it's available.



A Brief History of Farmers Markets Farmers markets have been around for a long time. Hundreds of years ago, farmers would gather in town squares to sell their goods. This tradition continues today, bringing people together and connecting them to the land and their food.

Fun Facts About Farmers Markets

- There are more than 250 farmers markets across the state.
- National Farmers Market week is celebrated the first week of August.
- Saturday is the most popular day of the week for farmers markets.

Cowboy Caviar: A Colorado Veggie Delight!



Did you know that eating fresh fruits and vegetables can be fun and super healthy? It's time to dive into a delicious recipe using some of the best produce grown right here in Colorado.

Get ready to learn

about the amazing nutritional benefits of tomatoes, onions, black beans, sweet corn, bell peppers, and Pueblo chiles!

Nutritional Benefits of Our Star Ingredients

Tomatoes: These juicy red fruits are packed with **vitamins A and C**, which help keep your skin glowing and your immune system strong. They also contain lycopene, a powerful **antioxidant** that protects your cells from damage.

Onions: Although they might make you cry when you chop them, onions are full of **vitamin C**, fiber, and folic acid. They also contain compounds that can help your heart stay healthy.

Black Beans: These little powerhouses are rich in protein and fiber, which keep you full and help your digestive system work smoothly. They also provide important **minerals** like iron and magnesium.

Sweet Corn: Sweet and crunchy, corn is a great source of **vitamins B and C**, fiber, and **antioxidants**. It also contains lutein, which is good for your eyes.

Bell Peppers: These colorful veggies are loaded with vitamins A and C, fiber, and **antioxidants**. They add a sweet crunch to any dish and help boost your immune system.

Pueblo Chiles: Known for their mild heat and unique flavor, Pueblo chiles are rich in **vitamins A and C**. They also contain **capsaicin**, which can help with pain relief and boost **metabolism**.

Cowboy Caviar

Ingredients

- 3 Colorado-grown tomatoes, diced
- 1/2 red onion, diced
- 15 oz black beans, rinsed and drained
- 1 1/2 cups Colorado sweet corn
- 1 bell pepper, diced (any color but orange adds vibrancy!!)
- 1 Pueblo chili, diced
- 1/3 cup cilantro, finely chopped

Dressing

- 1/3 cup olive oil
- 2 tablespoons lime juice
- 2 tablespoons red wine vinegar
- 1 teaspoon sugar
- 1/2 teaspoon salt
- 1/2 teaspoon pepper
- 1/4 teaspoon garlic powder

Optional Ingredients

2 ripe avocados, diced

Instructions

1. Combine tomatoes, onion, black beans, corn, pepper, Pueblo chili pepper, and cilantro in a large bowl. Toss/stir well so that ingredients are well-combined.
2. In a separate bowl, whisk together olive oil, lime juice, red wine vinegar, sugar, salt, pepper, and garlic powder.
3. Pour dressing over other ingredients and stir/toss very well. Add avocado (optional).
4. Keep refrigerated and serve with tortilla chips.

Math Activity: Cowboy Caviar Calculations

Let's use our math skills to explore the Cowboy Caviar recipe. This activity will help you practice measurements, fractions, and multiplication while learning about the yummy ingredients in this healthy dish. Grab your pencils and let's get started!

Measuring Ingredients

1. Tomatoes: The recipe calls for 3 Colorado-grown tomatoes. If each tomato weighs 150 grams, what is the total weight of the tomatoes in grams?

Calculation: 3 tomatoes x 150 grams/
tomato = _____ grams

2. Red Onion: The recipe uses $\frac{1}{2}$ of a red onion. If a whole red onion weighs 200 grams, how much does $\frac{1}{2}$ of the red onion weigh in grams?

Calculation: 200 grams \div 2 = _____ grams

3. Black Beans: The recipe includes a 15 oz can of black beans. If 1 ounce is approximately 28 grams, what is the weight of the black beans in grams?

Calculation: 15 oz x 28 grams/oz = _____ grams

4. Sweet Corn: The recipe needs $1\frac{1}{2}$ cups of sweet corn. If 1 cup of corn weighs 150 grams, how much does $1\frac{1}{2}$ cups weigh in grams?

Calculation: 1.5 cups x 150 grams/cup = _____ grams

Scaling the Recipe

Now, let's imagine you want to make enough Cowboy Caviar for a big family gathering. You need to triple the recipe! Use multiplication to find out how much of each ingredient you will need.

1. Tomatoes: 3 tomatoes x 3 = _____ tomatoes

2. Red Onion: $\frac{1}{2}$ red onion x 3 = _____ red onions

3. Black Beans: 15 oz x 3 = _____ oz

4. Sweet Corn: $1\frac{1}{2}$ cups x 3 = _____ cups

5. Bell Pepper: 1 bell pepper x 3
= _____ bell peppers

6. Pueblo Chile: 1 Pueblo chile x 3
= _____ Pueblo chiles

7. Cilantro: $\frac{1}{3}$ cup cilantro x 3 = _____ cups

Dressing Measurements

Let's convert the dressing ingredients to more precise measurements.

1. Olive Oil: The recipe calls for $\frac{1}{3}$ cup of olive oil. If 1 cup is equal to 16 tablespoons, how many tablespoons of olive oil do you need?

Calculation: $\frac{1}{3}$ cup x
16 tablespoons/cup =
_____ tablespoons

2. Lime Juice: You need 2 tablespoons of lime juice. If you have a 1-teaspoon measuring spoon, how many teaspoons of lime juice do you need? (Remember, 1 tablespoon = 3 teaspoons)

Calculation: 2 tablespoons x
3 teaspoons/tablespoon =
_____ teaspoons

3. Red Wine Vinegar: The recipe requires 2 tablespoons of red wine vinegar. If you double the recipe, how many tablespoons of red wine vinegar will you need?

Calculation: 2 tablespoons x 2
= _____ tablespoons

4. Garlic Powder: The recipe needs $\frac{1}{4}$ teaspoon of garlic powder. If you want to make only half of the recipe, how many teaspoons of garlic powder do you need?

Calculation: $\frac{1}{4}$ teaspoon \div
2 = _____ teaspoons

Rocky Ford: A Sweet Taste of Colorado!



Are you ready to discover the delicious world of Rocky Ford melons? We're going to learn about a special place in Colorado where some of the tastiest melons are grown, and then we'll make a yummy fruit salad using these melons. Let's dive into the juicy details!

What Makes Rocky Ford Special?

Rocky Ford is a small town in Colorado, famous for its incredibly sweet and juicy melons. The area has the perfect combination of hot days and cool nights, which helps the melons develop their unique flavor. The sandy soil and high altitude also contribute to their sweetness.

Agricultural Economic Impact

The Rocky Ford region is not just about tasty melons; it's also a vital part of Colorado's agriculture. Melon farming in this area supports many local families and creates jobs. Every year, the melons from Rocky Ford are sold across the country, bringing in millions of dollars to the local economy.

This helps support schools, businesses, and community services in the area. Farmers feed damaged melons to cattle, so they are not wasted.

Water from the Arkansas River

One of the secrets behind the lush and tasty melons of Rocky Ford is the water from the Arkansas River. This river flows through Colorado and provides essential water for **irrigation**. Farmers use this water to keep their crops healthy and hydrated, especially during the hot summer months. The river's water helps the melons grow big and sweet, making Rocky Ford melons some of the best in the world.

Fun Fact

Did you know that Rocky Ford hosts a Melon Festival every summer? It's a fun event where you can taste different kinds of melons, enjoy games, and learn more about farming in the region. Maybe you can visit one day and join in the fun!

Eating fresh, locally grown produce is not only good for your health but also helps support local farmers and the environment. Plus, it's a tasty way to enjoy the flavors of Colorado!



Activity Time!

Here's a fun challenge: Visit a local farmers market with your family and see if you can find Rocky Ford melons. Talk to the farmers and learn more about how these melons are grown. Maybe even try making the Rocky Ford Melon Fruit Salad at home and share it with your friends!

Rocky Ford Melon Fruit Salad

Ingredients

- 1 small Rocky Ford cantaloupe
- 1/2 large Rocky Ford watermelon

Honey Lime Dressing

- 2 tablespoon honey (plus more to taste)
- 3 tablespoon lime juice
- 2 tablespoon fresh mint, finely chopped

Optional Ingredients

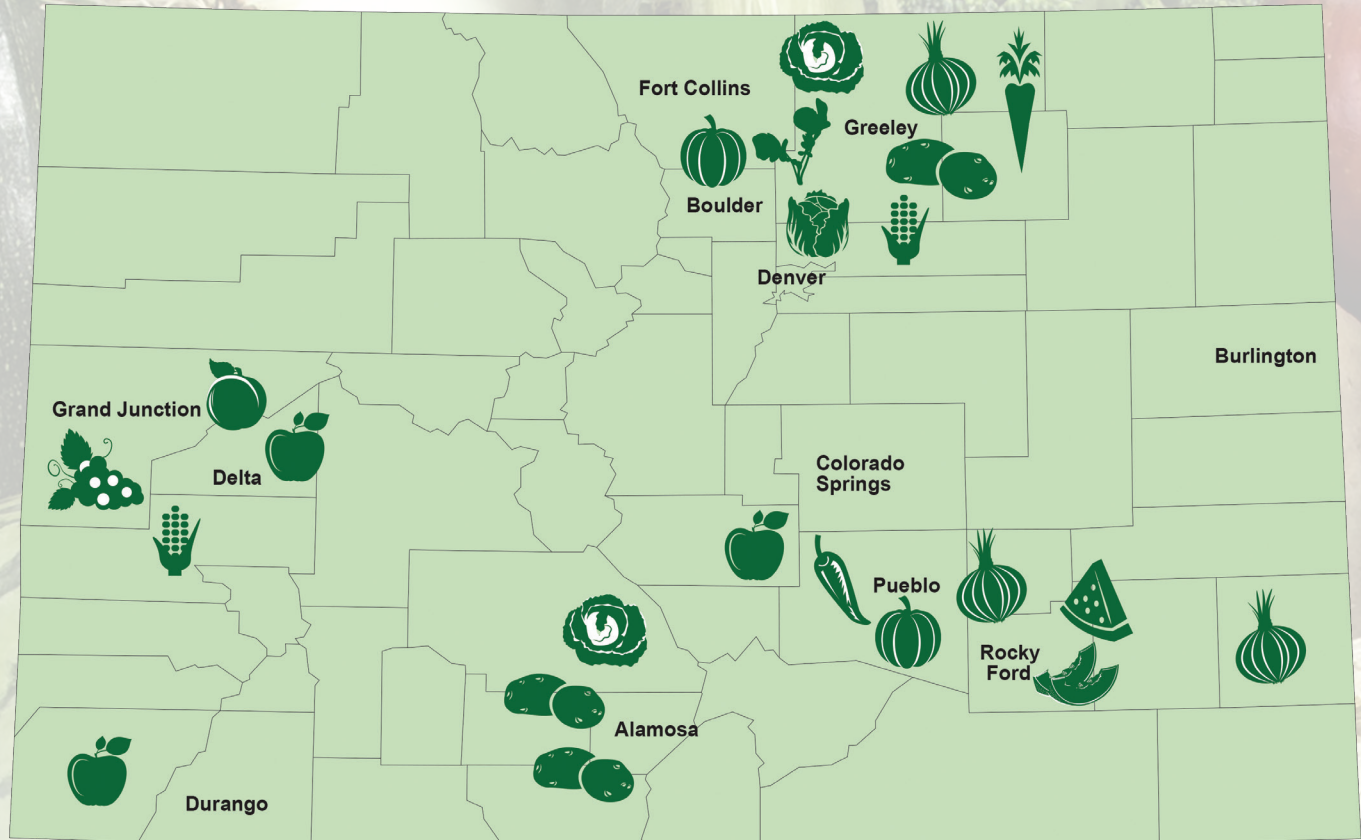
- Pinch of salt

Instructions

1. Slice the cantaloupe and watermelon into bite-size pieces and transfer them to a large bowl. Or use a small scoop to create circular bite-size pieces.
2. In a small bowl, combine the honey, chopped mint, and lime juice. Whisk to combine.
3. Pour the honey lime mixture over the melon. Toss to combine all the ingredients.
4. Keep refrigerated.

Where is Colorado Produce Grown?

This Colorado Produce map, created by the Colorado Fruit and Vegetable Growers Association and the Colorado Department of Agriculture, shows some of the primary produce production areas in Colorado.



KEY

Apples

Cabbage

Cantaloupe

Carrots

Lettuce

Onions

Peaches

Peppers

Potatoes

Pumpkins

Spinach

Sweet Corn

Watermelon

Wine Grapes

Produce Finale: Test Your Knowledge!

Let's see how much you've learned about Colorado produce. Answer the following questions and complete the activities to show off your new knowledge. Good luck!

Quiz Questions

1. Rocky Ford Melons: What makes the Rocky Ford region perfect for growing sweet and juicy melons?

- A) The combination of hot days and cool nights
- B) The sandy soil
- C) The high altitude
- D) All of the above

2. Farmers Markets: Why are farmers markets important?

- A) They offer super fresh produce.
- B) They support local farmers.
- C) They provide a variety of unique and seasonal produce.
- D) All of the above

3. Produce and Geography: What river provides essential water for irrigation in the Rocky Ford region?

- A) Colorado River
- B) Arkansas River
- C) Mississippi River
- D) Rio Grande

4. Nutritional Benefits: Which nutrient is NOT mentioned as being abundant in tomatoes?

- A) Vitamin A
- B) Vitamin C
- C) Lycopene
- D) Vitamin D

5. Colorado Agriculture: How many fruit and vegetable farms are there in Colorado?

- A) About 500
- B) About 1,200
- C) About 2,100
- D) About 3,000

Matching Activity

Match the Colorado produce with its nutritional benefit:

- | | |
|------------------------|--|
| 1. Tomatoes: _____ | A) Good for your eyes |
| 2. Onions: _____ | B) Rich in protein and fiber |
| 3. Black Beans: _____ | C) Full of vitamin C, fiber, and folic acid |
| 4. Sweet Corn: _____ | D) Contains vitamins A and C, and antioxidants |
| 5. Bell Peppers: _____ | E) Packed with vitamins A and C, and lycopene |

Fun Facts

Write down one fun fact you learned about Colorado farmers markets or produce:

Bonus Challenge

Imagine you are selling Cowboy Caviar at a farmers market. If one serving costs \$2.50 and you sell 20 servings, how much money will you make?

Calculation: 20 servings x \$2.50/serving = \$_____

Writing Activity

On a separate piece of paper, write a short story about a day at the farmers market. Who did you go with? What types of produce did you buy? How did you use the fresh ingredients when you got home?



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