The Farmer in the Market...

If you're like me, you love farmers markets. Out in the country, farm stands range from small tables with little pyramids of brilliant red tomatoes to huge sheds with everything from locally grown peaches and watermelons to jams and flowers (and maybe even a playground).

In the city, a farmers market might be anything from one farmer selling produce out of the back of a truck to block-long extravaganzas with dozens of farmers and artisans offering a multitude of delicious fresh and prepared foods. The farmers market phenomenon has exploded in recent years, with more than four times as many markets (7,864) in 2012 as in 1994 (1,755). The U.S. Department of Agriculture estimates that consumers spend upwards of $1.5 billion annually at those markets.

It’s more than fitting that every Friday during the summer (and Wednesday during the winter) a farmers market is located right next to my home. I’m lucky enough to have a one-truck market (Tuscarora Organic Growers) set up every Saturday morning and Tuesday evening right across from my home.

One thing I love about farmers markets is that you can’t assume that everything there is good for you. Last fall I went to a farmers market in a lovely town park in Delaware. Although the fruits and the veggies were booth after booth of white bread, pastries and other baked goods of all kinds, and “no sugar” jams that were sweetened with agave (which is almost pure fructose, and probably less healthful even than ordinary table sugar).

Believe it or not, I’m no food purist. I’ve been known to pick up a jar of sugar-rich preserves or a bread that isn’t 100 percent whole wheat.

But as long as I’m mostly there (and you’re mostly there) for the fresh produce, farmers markets are a win-win. To find the farmers market nearest you, go to search.ams.usda.gov/farmersmarkets (or do a search for “farmers market”).

Fresh fruits & vegetables, plus a chance to see your neighbors and support local farmers.

Want to change the world? CSPI is seeking a Director of Health Promotion Policy (M.P.H., Ph.D., or M.D.) to push for government policies and actions that prevent diet-related chronic disease. See www.cspinet.org/jobs for the full job description.

Michael F. Jacobson, Ph.D.
Executive Director
Center for Science in the Public Interest