



# HOW TO USE SCHOOL GARDEN PRODUCE

After all of that hard work and time in the garden, the fruits (or vegetables) of your labor are all of a sudden ready to eat! Use the “Harvesting” section of the toolkit to safely get your veggies out of the garden and inside to proper storage.

## Take your Produce to the Cafeteria

SPS Nutrition Services is happy to utilize produce from your school garden in school lunches!

When it gets about a week away from harvest time, send an email to Kim Keller, Director of Operations with Nutrition Services (kkeller@spsmail.org) and Amy Gibbons, Director of Nutrition Services (aggibbons@spsmail.org). In this email let them know your anticipated harvest date and how many pounds/bunches/heads of which produce will be available for the cafeteria staff to use. They will then be able to create a recipe that uses your produce and send along instructions to your individual school. Some crops will be able to be harvested and stored until the recipe is created (like potatoes and carrots).

It's also a great idea to connect with the staff in your cafeteria. They'll be your champions through the process, so introduce yourself and your project.

## Host a Taste Test in your Classroom\*

When hosting a taste testing, keep safety and sanitation a top priority. Make sure that anything being served has been well-washed (scrub thick-skinned veggies under running water, rub thin-skinned veggies with fingertips under running water) and stored properly. If you are serving a prepared dish, make sure that foods are cooked to proper temperatures and chilled quickly afterward. Be aware of any food allergies.

Set ground rules for your class before the taste test (be respectful of everyone and the food, wait until everyone has a sample before trying, etc.) and encourage students to try new things. Give kids a direction for the worst-case scenario: if they don't like the sample they can discreetly spit it out into a napkin and drink some water.

Build some excitement around new foods and make it a group event. Once everyone has a sample, direct a “classroom crunch” and all taste at the same time. Allow kids to share how they feel (using thumbs or pictures may work for your class).

## Sell It to Raise Money for Your Garden

You may want to host a Farmer's Market type event with your students to help raise money for your garden. This may work well as an end-of-school, back-to-school, or fall harvest event. This also gives students a chance to talk about their work in the garden and to practice life skills like counting out money, talking with adults about their work, and to show off all that they've learned.

## Send Produce Home with Students, Volunteers, or Staff

You may choose to harvest the produce for your very own students, volunteers, or staff. You'll want to work with your garden committee to decide what this will look like so that it feels fair to everyone involved.

## Donate the Food

Your garden group or class may decide that they would rather donate the harvest to a local shelter, church, senior center, community group, pantry, or food bank. Ozarks Food Harvest is the primary food bank for our area and you can contact them by calling (417) 865-3411. You are also encouraged to find organizations in your neighborhood that might need the help. Building those relationships are incredibly rewarding and it's a wonderful opportunity to show students the joys of collaboration, community, and service.

\*Taste-testing directions have been adapted from a Taste Test 101 document through the MU Extension Family Nutrition Education Program