

GrowingGrowers

*Demystifying the
Wholesale Market*



K-STATE
Research and Extension

Kansas State University Agricultural Experiment Station and Cooperative Extension Service

**The Demystifying the Wholesale Market Manual was brought to you
by The Beginning Farmer Wholesale Project**

The Beginning Farmer Wholesale Project has other resources in addition to this manual to help producers. The Mentor Farmer Program matches qualified farms with a seasoned grower from around the country where they can receive up to 25 hours of targeted consulting services throughout the year. The project also can provide one-on-one technical assistance where beginning farmers can request direct technical assistance from agricultural specialists with tailored support on the topics discussed in this book. They even provide farmer-to-buyer matching where advisors offer consultation to beginning farmers and facilitate their connection with buyers.

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Introduction

A recent feasibility study in Kansas City revealed a large, unmet demand for local food. In Greater Kansas City, consumers spent almost \$2.5 billion on fruits and vegetables in 2013, and the estimated demand for local produce is almost \$177 million. In addition, the survey data showed 43% of specialty crop growers are very interested in growing for a food hub wholesale market and an additional 39% showed a moderate level of interest. Consumer demand for local food is growing, and farmers can benefit from this by growing for wholesale. This manual provides Midwest small or mid-scale specialty crop growers an overview of the steps needed to enter the Greater Kansas City wholesale market.

What is Wholesale?

Wholesale markets involve selling to produce distributors and retailers like grocery stores, co-ops, and food hubs. They also include selling to restaurants and institutions such as hospitals and schools. These buyers purchase much larger quantities of fruits and vegetables than typical direct market buyers.

It is important to understand what each buyer requires of the grower. There are different packing requirements, standards for produce varieties, and business relationships that are needed to cultivate a profitable partnership. Although choosing to sell in wholesale markets can bring challenges that come with growing an operation, it can also bring opportunities to expand your sales and revenue streams.

Focus of this Manual

There are many important aspects of wholesale farming that growers should know, such as marketing, preharvest preparation, harvesting, post-harvest handling, food safety, and more. There are some great resources for farmers that already include all this information and will be referenced throughout this manual. This manual focuses on the planning, marketing, and buyer characteristics that are specific to the Midwest region. Included will also be real examples of contract agreements, buyer requirement sheets, as well as interviews from wholesale buyers and producers near the Kansas City area who have become successful in their own operations in selling to wholesale markets. This manual also includes crop sheets and examples of sales sheets, invoices, and more.



Notes on topics that we will NOT be covering

Soil Management and Irrigation

- When farming at any scale, it is crucial to build and maintain healthy soils. Conduct regular soil sampling to detect any deficiency or overabundance of plant nutrients, organic matter, pH, and other characteristics. Healthy soils can improve plant health and productivity.
- Irrigation is key to maintaining soil moisture during the plant's growth and this affects the postharvest quality of the produce. Too little water can result in dehydrated and smaller-sized produce at harvest. Conversely, too much water can lead to disease and other issues related to crop productivity and quality.



Figure 1: Drip irrigation is one of the most efficient and safe irrigation methods.

Integrated Pest Management (IPM)

- Insects and pests can greatly affect crop production. Managing these crops through integrated pest management techniques can not only prevent damage from pests but also increase the health of your soil and biodiversity.

Harvest Practices

- Good harvest practices include harvesting early in the day when field heat is lowest and avoiding muddy/wet conditions. Always use clean harvesting tools and containers and remove excess soil and debris from the harvested crops while in the field. It is also best to avoid direct sun exposure to harvested crops, so move them immediately to a shaded area until they can be put in a temperature-controlled storage environment.
- It is helpful to learn the indications for ripeness in your crops. For example, tomatoes are best harvested at the first signs of blushing. Other things to keep in mind include knowing how long your product can be stored, if your crop can mature after harvest, and what your buyers' preferences are.

Postharvest Cooling

- Cooling produce and removing field heat is one of the most important steps of postharvest handling. It will dramatically affect the product quality and shelf life of produce. It should be noted that harvesting frequently, early in the day or in cool temperatures, and the prompt transfer of harvested crop to cooling facilities are crucial to optimum produce quality. Maintaining the cold chain from harvest to transaction is critical and there are many detailed resources available about this topic.



Figure 2: Walk in coolers are great for storing wholesale produce.

Postharvest Cleaning

- When it comes to washing your produce, the methods that should be taken are dependent on the crop grown. Some crops should be washed before cooling and storing, but others, such as root crops, are best kept unwashed. It is important to know what water temperatures and cleaning agents are optimum for both maintaining your produce quality as well as food safety.

FSMA and GAP Requirements

- The Food Safety Modernization Act (FSMA) requires all farmers adhere to food safety rules set by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA). You may be exempt from the FSMA Produce Safety Rule if you meet any of the following: produce that is rarely consumed raw, produce used for personal consumption, food grains, produce intended for commercial processing, and farms that have an average annual value of produce sold during the previous three-year period of \$25,000 or less. Depending on the buyer, additional certifications may be required, such as Good Agricultural Practices (GAP) certification. While these certifications can add additional costs to your budget, they can expand your buyer markets and ensure optimum food safety standards.

Recommended readings for more detailed information on these topics:

- [*Family Farmed Wholesale Success Manual*](#)
- [*Cornell Produce Safety Alliance Website*](#)
- [*Wholesale Packing Resource Guide*](#)
- [*ATTRA Scaling Up Your Vegetable Farm for Regional Markets*](#)
- [*KSU Extension Food Safety Website*](#)
- [*KSU Drip Irrigation Basics*](#)
- [*FDA FSMA Website*](#)

Planning and Marketing

When deciding if wholesale is right for you, it is important to consider the pros and cons of growing for market as there is a big difference between wholesale buyers and direct market buyers. The average price for wholesale produce is typically lower than direct markets, but this can be made up with

higher volume. Instead of selling to many different consumers with small orders such as at a farmers market, you will be selling to one buyer with a significantly larger order. It is important to maintain a professional relationship with the buyer and have clear expectations about fulfilling sales.

Pros and Cons of Selling Wholesale

Negatives	Benefits
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Selling to wholesale can result in lower prices for the grower• Buyers typically purchase a limited variety of crops• Buyers often demand a consistent supply and quantity throughout the season• Standards for crop quality and appearance can be higher and stricter than direct markets• High standards for postharvest handling can require additional infrastructure• Buyers may require additional food safety certifications such as GAP• Payment might not be immediate when orders are delivered• Significant planning and communicating with buyers are required• No face-to-face relationship with consumers• Buyers may require specific tracking and traceability software	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Growing demand for local food leaves much of the wholesale market demand untapped• More crop specialization to streamline the planning, harvesting, and storage process• Consistent and guaranteed orders• Large quantities of fruits or vegetables can be sold in one transaction• Significantly reduced time on marketing and distribution• Buyers can assume some of the product quality risks• Farm branding can be maintained with certain buyers and/or crop packaging• Sell your excess produce during peak production• Can still sell to other market outlets such as CSAs or farmers markets• Potential for reduced labor time and fuel costs associated with delivery• Can outsource marketing and distribution tasks to the wholesale buyers

Marketing Channels		
GENERAL CHARACTERISTICS		
FEATURES	WHOLESALE	DIRECT
Price per unit	LOW	HIGH
Price per transaction	HIGH	LOW
Volume	HIGH	LOW
Customer Interaction	LOW	HIGH
Postharvest Handling & Certifications	HIGH	LOW
Crop Diversity	LOW	HIGH

Figure 3: Marketing channel general characteristics



Figure 4: Different buyers may request specific varieties and packing materials

Planning Considerations

When growing at a larger scale, farmers need to adopt a different way of planning than when selling for direct markets. There are many planning considerations to think about such as: scale, operation size, type of products, volume output (quality and consistency), labor, postharvest handling and infrastructure, storage, packing, delivery, pricing, and certifications.

Check out the *Production Planning 2021: Harvest Chart* from the KC Food Hub in the *Additional Resources* section at the end of the manual.

It's a good idea to think of your production goals in case quantities rather than pounds. Think of your buyers and what their preferred units, materials, and weights are. For reference, you can look at the crop cheat sheets in this manual to get a sense of what the KC Food Hub expects.

Once you have set your harvest goals and are planning your production for the year, here is a general format of planning:

1. Determine your harvest goal per week.
2. Determine the field spacing for the plant you are growing.
3. Next, estimate how much you can harvest per plant per week.
4. Divide your harvest goal by the estimated harvest per plant to determine the number of plants needed.
5. Determine the area of bed space based on the number of plants needed.
6. Sometimes it is best to factor in the percent of harvested crops that will meet buyer standards. Some fruit may not be large enough or uniform looking, so to compensate for this, you would need to add more plants to your field to still reach your harvest goal.

Let's run through some examples if you are growing for the KC Food Hub:

Tomatoes



1. Let's say your harvest goal in the summer is five 20-pound cases of medium red slicing tomatoes per week (100 pounds of fruit total).
2. You know that you will be planting tomatoes in your fields at a spacing of 2 feet apart.
3. Let's estimate a harvest of 1 pound of marketable fruit per plant per week.
4. Now we know we'll need 100 plants that give 1 pound of fruit each to reach our harvest goal of 100 pounds of fruit.
5. Our 100 tomato plants will take up 200 linear feet of row.
6. Factor in that perhaps only 50% to 70% of the tomatoes you harvest are #1's and sized correctly (see standard packing in Cheat Sheets). Knowing this, it would be best to plant anywhere from 42 to 100 **extra** plants, which would take up 84 to 200 **extra** linear feet of row.

Cucumbers



1. Your harvest goal in the summer is 10 40-pound crates of medium pickling cucumbers per week (400 pounds of fruit total).
2. You know that you will be planting cucumbers in your fields at a spacing of 3 feet apart.
3. Let's estimate a harvest of 5 pounds of marketable fruit per plant per week.
4. Now we know we'll need 80 plants that give 5 pounds of fruit each to reach our harvest goal of 400 pounds of fruit.
5. Our 80 cucumber plants will take up 240 linear feet of row.
6. If only 50% to 70% of the cucumbers you harvest are #1's and sized correctly (see standard packing in Cheat Sheets), it would be best to plant anywhere from 34 to 80 **extra** plants, which would take up 102 to 240 **extra** linear feet of row.
7. Since cucumbers are typically harvested for three to four weeks, successional plantings can be used to cover growing season.

Sweet Potatoes



1. Your harvest goal is 20 50-pound crates of sweet potatoes (1,000 pounds of sweet potatoes total).
2. You know that you will be planting sweet potatoes in your fields at a spacing of 1 foot apart.
3. Let's estimate a harvest of 1 pound of marketable sweet potatoes per plant.
4. Now we know we'll need 1,000 plants that give 1 pound of roots each to reach our harvest goal of 1,000 pounds.
5. Our 1,000 plants will take up 1,000 linear feet of row.
6. If only 50 to 70% of the sweet potatoes you harvest are #1's and sized correctly (see standard packing in Cheat Sheets), it would be best to plant anywhere from 428 to 1,000 **extra** plants, which would take up 428 to 1,000 **extra** linear feet of row.

Bell Peppers



1. Your harvest goal in the summer is four 30-pound crates of green bell peppers per week (120 pounds of fruit total).
2. You know that you will be planting peppers in your fields at a spacing of 1.5 feet apart.
3. Let's estimate a harvest of 4 pounds of marketable fruit per plant per week.
4. Now we know we'll need 30 plants that weekly give 4 pounds of fruit each to reach our harvest goal of 120 pounds of fruit.
5. Our 30 bell pepper plants will take up 45 linear feet of row.
6. If only 50 to 70% of the peppers you harvest are #1's and sized correctly (see standard packing in Cheat Sheets), it would be best to plant anywhere from 12 to 30 **extra** plants, which would take up 18 to 45 **extra** linear feet of row.

Determining Crop Varieties

It is important to consider the variety you will be growing so you can plan your planting and harvest windows. It is also important to think about which varieties your buyer prefers, what has the best long-term storage characteristics, and which might also sell well in direct-to-consumer markets.



Figure 5: Dishes created by Chef Nick Goellner from The Antler Room who often sources produce locally.

Top Crops Among USDA- Surveyed Wholesalers

- | | |
|------------------|-----------------|
| 1. Sweet Corn | 6. Bell Peppers |
| 2. Cucumbers | 7. Leafy Greens |
| 3. Beans | 8. Tomatoes |
| 4. Summer Squash | 9. Carrots |
| 5. Cabbage | 10. Asparagus |

Contacting Potential Buyers

One of the best ways to initiate conversation with potential buyers is come prepared with knowledge of the market. Get to know how other growers navigate the wholesale market, such as which buyers pay the most, communicate the best, or set their expectations clearly. There are numerous local farmer member groups that can be used, and the Beginning Farmer Wholesale Project has several mentor farmers who are available to help mentees in their free mentor program. Knowing the buyers around you can help you decide who could work best with your operation.

It is also important to prepare an availability sheet to send in advance. Give the buyers time to review the sheet and follow up to see if they are interested. Once a buyer is interested, make sure all details of the sale are understood and documented by both parties. This can include clarifying the product, price, delivery dates, and more. Some buyers may even have a pre-established set of standard requirements for all growers.

Always be professional and maintain good communication. Always keep buyers updated on your farm's production and, if you have any issues, let them know right away. Some of the most common issues buyers state they've had with local growers are inconsistent quality, delivery, and availability. Maintaining clear communication helps both parties have clear expectations on sales orders.

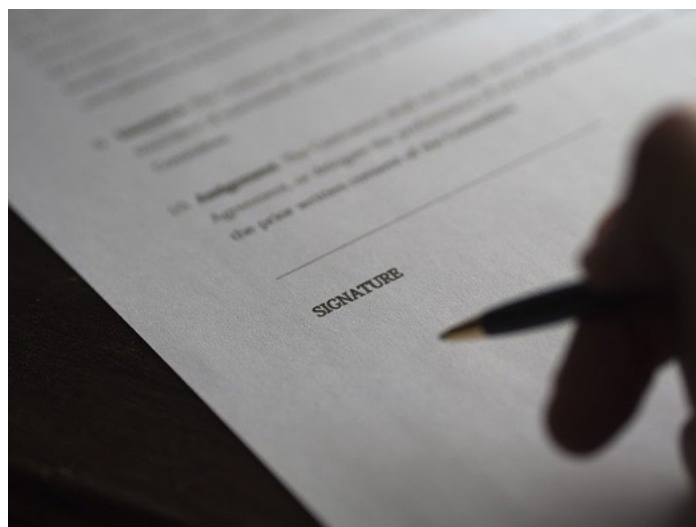


Figure 6: Read through every contract thoroughly

Pricing and Sales Contracts

Pricing is important and making sure you have a comprehensive sales contract is key. Farmers must have realistic expectations with wholesale buyers and should know that their products will not sell at the standard direct-to-consumer rate. You must first know your cost of production and then sell above this price point.

Communicate with buyers about the quality of your local product so they can pay you a consistent and fair price. Compare local wholesale market prices of your crops by searching the USDA Agricultural Marketing Services website (<https://www.ams.usda.gov/market-news/fruits-vegetables>), which provides daily market price reports online.

It is best to get negotiated contracts or agreements in writing. Have detailed expectations to prevent miscommunications and lay the foundation for a business relationship. Some important aspects to have in the contract include names, dates, type and amounts of crops, packaging and delivery requirements, payment schedules, protocol in event of a lost crop, and more.

Availability Sheet

Good communication starts with availability sheets. Depending on the buyer, they may prefer email, fax, texts, or phone calls. It is important to establish which method is best and then maintain all records of communication. Your availability sheet can be one page or multiple and it must always be organized and easy to read. It can also be helpful to include packing specifications preferred by the buyer.

View an example of a sales sheet in the Additional Resources section at the end of the manual.

Table 1: Important details to include in availability sheet

Item	Description	Count	Pack	Unit Price	Qty Available	Notes
1	Red Peppers	80 count	Per bushel	\$40.50	20 bushels	Carmen variety

Billing

After confirming the order with the buyer, it is best to send a copy of the invoice before and after delivery. Include a packing slip with the order upon delivery to confirm accurate fulfillment of the order and ensure a smooth transaction. Always keep copies for your own records and develop a regular invoicing schedule with the buyer.

View an example of a sales invoice in the Additional Resources section at the end of the manual.

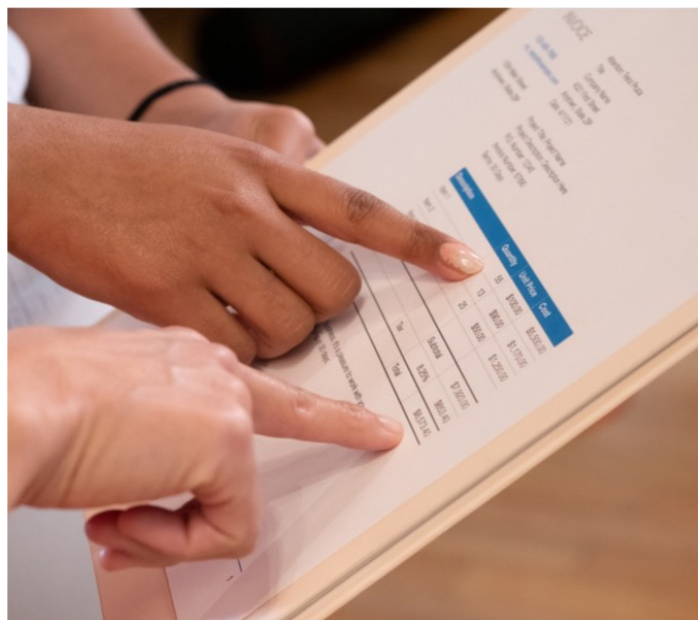


Figure 7: Ensure the buyer reviews and approves the invoice

Buyer Characteristics

It is important to note that different buyers have their own specific standards. This can even vary within the different subtypes of buyers; for example, each restaurant or chef can have vastly different expectations for their produce and deliveries. Generally, most buyers will have their own unique standards on the price, quality, and availability of produce. Below are the general characteristics for the various types of wholesale buyers, and this information can help farmers decide what is the best market for them.



Figure 10: Consistent delivery and communication is key

Common Buyer Requirements

1. Specific grading of produce
 - a. USDA grades or the buyer's own standards
2. Cold chain infrastructure to maintain refrigerated storage of produce
 - a. Maintained from the field to the buyer
3. Food safety plan
4. Thorough record keeping
5. Special food safety certifications
 - a. Ex. Good Agricultural Practices (GAP) certification
6. Large and consistent quantities of produce
7. Signed contracts
8. Professional and consistent communication
 - a. Regular updates on inventory availability
 - b. Placing orders
 - c. Scheduling deliveries
 - d. Billing and invoicing



Figure 9: Grocery stores may have stricter standards for produce than other buyers

Wholesale Buyers and Characteristics

	Description	Pros	Cons	KC Examples
Distributors	Distributors carry a wide variety of products and have expertise in managing inventory and supply chain logistics. They often sell their products to other wholesalers such as grocers, retailers, institutions, or even restaurants. They have the capacity to buy extremely large volumes of products that are distributed to their own buyers.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Great way for farms to sell large quantities of produce at once. • Takes care of all the logistics of delivery, sales, or contracts that farmers would otherwise need to do themselves. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • High expectations for quality and packing. • Runs on timely schedules. • Often lose brand name for generic packaging. • High expectations for traceability, food safety. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Liberty Produce • C&C Produce • KC Food Hub • Good Natured Family Farms
Retailers	Retailers sell food directly to consumers and they can include independent grocery stores, large grocery chains, natural food stores, and more. Each retailer has its own requirements for purchasing and sometimes such decisions are not made at the local store level but may require approval from their regional management. Large grocery chains often have their own distributor that they purchase produce from.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Offers farmers a way to move lots of volume to fewer buyers. • Ability to maintain brand name. • Farmer knows more about who is consuming their product. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Buyer-specific expectations vary greatly. • Very selective with the produce they seek. • May require additional food safety certifications, management, and traceability systems. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Merc • Checkers • Hy-Vee
Restaurants	While all restaurants seek fresh, high-quality, and local products they can use in their menu, the volume in demand can vary greatly from one restaurant to another.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Often willing to buy unique and seasonal items. • Often markets the farm to promote local ingredients. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Some chefs may only buy smaller quantities of produce at a time. • Strict harvest and postharvest quality expectations. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use KC Healthy Kids' Eat Local KC Map to find chefs: https://www.kchealthykids.org/eat-local-kc-map.html
Institutions and Corporate Cafeterias	Institutions encompass many different types of buyers that buy large volumes of food. They can include schools, hospitals, prisons, or colleges. Similar to institutions, some corporations will purchase large volumes of food for their employee cafeterias.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Unique consumer base such as children or healthcare workers. • Ability to purchase large volumes of food. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • May require special certifications or requirements (especially in public sector). • Often prefer to work with distributors. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • KU Medical Center • Kansas City School District

Buyer Profiles

The following pages include interviews from a variety of wholesale buyers in the Kansas City region. Included are details such as important requirements, processes to get involved, the most sought-after crops and general advice for growers. Keep in mind that the details given in each interview are unique

to that buyer and may not be representative of other similar types of wholesale buyer. The written views of the interviewees may not reflect the opinion of the USDA-NIFA, Kansas State University, or any other listed partners.



KC Food Hub

“ The KC Food Hub is a farmer-owned and farmer-run cooperative of 20 family and nonprofit farms that aggregate produce, protein, and value-added goods to meet the demands of Kansas City’s middle market, including schools, corporate cafeterias, restaurants, and grocery stores.

Our farmers grow on 400 acres, have 325 years of collective experience, and operate 40 high tunnels and greenhouses for all-season production. We aggregate through our “sub hub” system: two rural aggregation sites, or sub hubs, where rural farmers bring their goods halfway to town, and the sub hubs deliver to our central warehouse for distribution to customers.

Grower Member Process

Starting every year in January, the KC Food Hub opens consideration for new grower members. In order to become a member grower, all farmers must meet our standard guidelines and set up an on-site farm visit. A member of the KC Food Hub will come out and interview the grower and tour the farm. They will discuss growing practices, food production, storage, food safety plan, and more. After these preliminary steps, if the farmer is voted into membership, an orientation for sales platform and operating procedure training begins.

The KC Food Hub holds at least three production planning meetings with existing member growers throughout the year to establish what everyone has available in order to match their buyers’ needs with the demand.

Guidelines

In addition to quality and food safety standards, the KC Food Hub has packing and prepping expectations. The food hub is a combination of wholesale and retail, so all incoming produce needs to be ready to sell by arriving cleaned, prepared, and packaged for distribution.

Once farmers take the product to the sub hub, the food hub takes care of the rest of the work, including marketing, selling, and distributing the product to the buyers. The food hub aggregates, packs, and delivers about five days a week.

THE KANSAS CITY FOOD HUB



Top Crops

1. Tomatoes
2. Peppers
3. Summer Squash
4. Cucumbers
5. Greens/Lettuces

Advice for Interested Growers

Growers initially join the hub for sales, but they greatly appreciate the benefits of working together with other farmers and from partner connections in our regional food value chain. ”

Check out the KC Food Hub’s Production Planning 2021: Harvest Chart in the appendices or visit www.thekcfoodhub.com

Chef Nick Goellner

“ I have been cooking professionally for 14 years. I attended the French Culinary Institute in NYC in 2007 and then worked for chefs around the world, including under French/Sardinian Chef Alain Allegretti in New York, British Chef Mark Salter at The Robert Morris Inn in Maryland, the Rieger restaurant in Kansas City, Chef Nancy Oakes in California, and Noma Restaurant in Copenhagen, Denmark. I opened The Antler Room with my business partner/wife soon after returning to Kansas City and we've been operating in the Hospital Hill neighborhood for more than four years.

We use a lot of local produce at our restaurant, but we do not define ourselves as a “farm to table” or local/seasonally focused restaurant. Instead, we try to use as much local produce as possible when it makes sense financially and creatively. A great example I like to give when people ask me to expand on this is citrus. We (and almost all restaurants in America) use an abundance of lemons, limes, etc. in our cooking and behind our bar. We go through several cases of lemons a week, whether it is in season or not, and they are, of course, never local. During the winter there is usually a stretch of 12 to 14 weeks every year where we are offered basically nothing from farmers at all, yet we are still open, and we must sell our customers something. The answer of course is to buy produce from large companies sourcing from California and Mexico.

Another thing we struggle with is the lack of diversity in offerings. It is hard for my 42-seat restaurant to support as many farmers as I would like to if everyone is offering basically the same crops at the same times. There are only so many pounds of kale and beets I can buy in a year (even though I love them). Believe it or not, I struggle mightily every year to find a consistent source of many vegetables I became accustomed to buying exclusively from farmers when I was in California or Maryland. If, for example, I had more farmers in the spring growing cardoons, artichokes, asparagus, English peas, etc., I could spread my money out easier; instead I am often given virtually identical offering lists from 10 farmers. I understand there are good reasons for the uniformity of offerings from farmer to farmer, but it nonetheless hampers our ability to spread our buying power around.



Information Needed from Growers

We need to know how/when we will be contacted each week with updated offering/price sheets. Texting and email are best so we can answer in a more methodical and uniform way. We make agreements with farmers to buy a certain amount of something if they grow/raise it on our suggestion.

General Expectations

Prewashed vegetables are not necessary, but if they come in clean it is a bonus for us. We appreciate greens picked and packed in such a way that they do not wilt or bruise fast. If the produce is overpacked in too small containers or bags, we end up with a higher rate of spoilage, product loss.

Most Desired Crops

Asparagus, white asparagus, English peas, cauliflower, Castelfranco radicchio, artichokes, cardoons, little gem lettuce, baby vegetables in general, celtuce, shelling beans

Advice for Interested Growers

Communication is key, continue to send offering lists to restaurants even if they have not purchased from you in a while. More often than not, it is just because they have changed their menu. Inevitably they will need something you are offering in the future. We tend to use different farmers more in different seasons. We may buy more from farmer A in the spring and more from farmer B in the winter. Along the same lines, we may use one producer for chicken liver and one for whole chicken. We buy based on what particular product works for a particular dish. Having discussions up front about needs is very important. ”

For more information visit The Antler Room's website at <https://www.theantlerroomkc.com>

The Merc Co+op

“ The Merc Co+op is a grocery store owned by our community. Our more than 8,500 owners elect a board of directors made up of nine owners, who decide the ends or goals of our cooperative business, beyond sales and profit. These include providing access to healthy, local, and organic food and products and creating a robust, sustainable local food economy.

We define local as within 200 miles of our stores, one in central Lawrence and one in downtown Kansas City, Kansas. Nearly 30% of our annual sales are local, and we are proud to partner with more than 250 local vendors and 19 produce growers in 2020.

Co-op Produce Vendors - Process

Each January, we welcome new vendors and reach out to our existing vendors to establish a forecast for ordering for the calendar year. Growers provide information for the coming season including:

- growing practices;
- planned crops, including changes or additions from previous years;
- estimated harvest times, quantities, and prices;
- delivery days;
- promotional materials.

The produce manager meets with every local producer to establish an agreement estimating the crops and quantities the co-op will purchase from that producer for the coming year. This estimate is based on previous years' sales and projections. Growers are provided guidelines for communicating inventory, delivery, and packaging. Of course, it is rare that a season goes exactly as planned. To ensure we are meeting our customers' needs, we identify primary and secondary sources for every crop.

Guidelines

High Quality. In a grocery setting, quality standards are at their highest. Quality control begins at the farm – beyond growing and harvesting to postharvest and storage practices. We expect to provide produce with



at least three to five days of shelf life. All products delivered to The Merc Co+op should be in optimal condition.

Retail Ready. Products should arrive ready to be placed on our shelves — clean, bagged, bunched, or tied, weighed and labeled when appropriate.

Consistent Communication. At the co-op, we value our relationships with all our producers. We understand the unexpected happens, so consistent, reliable communication about changes to what is available and when is critical.

Top Sellers

Tomatoes and packaged salads

What The Merc Co+op looks for locally

- orchard crops — pears, stone fruit, apples
- nuts
- berries
- peas
- brassicas
- spinach — taste the difference
- herbs

Advice for Interested Growers

As in any relationship, good communication, consistency, and reliability will set you apart. ”

Check out The Merc Co+Op Producer Guidelines sheet in the Additional Resources section or visit <https://www.themerc.coop/>

JCCC Culinary Program

Chef Aaron Prater

“ I used to own and operate a restaurant and market concept in Kansas City and it was there that I developed close relationships with many local farmers and food producers. While I no longer own my restaurant, I work regularly with many of those same local farmers for our Local Foods Production class for Johnson County Community College’s Sustainable Agriculture Certificate. I will order specialty crops for the class and even whole animals to teach the butchery process.

Process for Potential Growers

The college has made it very easy for farmers to work with both our Sustainable Agriculture program and our Hospitality program. Farmers provide an invoice for requested products and if they have card processing capabilities, they receive payment immediately; if not, because the state of Kansas has fiscal reporting protocols, the invoice is submitted to our accounts payable department and a check is mailed to the farmer. As far as ordering goes, however, it can be as simple as a conversation and an agreement to purchase goods.

Since we are a state- and county-funded institution, we have more requirements than I used to have as an independent business. We can’t pay sales tax, so Tax ID numbers and purveyor profiles are kept on file with contact and payment processing methods.

Contract Process

This is generally initiated by me. If I hear about a farm doing something interesting, or if I run across someone at a farmer’s market, I will try to start the process to set up something more formal. Unfortunately, I have two significant barriers: first, JCCC is a big institution, and most people don’t consider us an option or that it would require too much red tape and, second, a lot of farmers don’t know that we have a culinary school that would love to buy from them. We just aren’t on people’s minds.

General Expectations

Making use of fresh, local food is something we teach our students, so having access to locally produced goods is very important in both programs. We want to be considered the same as any independent restaurant in town. We don’t have the capacity to buy a tremendous amount through our department, but we are training



the chefs who will be the next generation of buyers, so if you can put your best foot forward here, it can turn into sales at multiple outlets in the future.

Just like any other restaurant, we want the best quality possible. We’re currently looking to develop a value-added processing class so in the future we might be able to handle a large volume of “seconds.” Packaging is easy for us — the way you bring it to the farmer’s market, or another restaurant is the same way you would bring it to us. Farmers typically know their product the best, and one thing we do in academia is leave it to the experts.

Communication

In a perfect world, a grower would contact me at the beginning of the fall and spring semesters (usually by email) and say here’s what I’m planning on doing for the year and tell when it would be ready, and I would plan my labs and cooking accordingly to accommodate that. For example, if I have to make caponata, I would much rather prefer to get fresh basil, tomatoes, bell pepper, and eggplant from a local source. If I know when a farmer might have those available, I can schedule the Italian cuisine lab for that week.

Most Desired Crops

Everything — we teach basic cooking but also regional and international cuisine, so by necessity, we need a tremendous amount of variety. It may only be for a week or two but if you grow, I can find a place for it.

Advice for Interested Growers

Don’t hesitate to ask and be adventurous. I know it is because the market dictates that you grow certain products, but if you experiment with a few esoteric things, we are a perfect venue to sell those things too. Part of our mission is exposure — the more I can show my students, the better. ”

For more information on the JCCC Culinary Program, visit <https://www.jccc.edu/>

Liberty Fruit Co.

“ About Locally Grown Procurement Program

Liberty Fruit supports locally grown produce year-round. From hothouse-grown Hydro Boston lettuce to seasonal crops grown in the Kansas, Missouri, Arkansas, and Nebraska regions: apples, peaches, summer squash, hard squash, melons of all kinds, beans, cabbage, bell pepper, corn, tomatoes, bush berries, kale, root vegetables to name a few.

Purpose

Supporting locally grown produce is a top priority for Liberty Fruit. Every local grower has a story of their own and we love to be part of and help proliferate that story. Locally grown produce is fresher to market, decreases shipping costs, and supports our community and local farmers. As a distributor, we can move more volume than a local farmers market can move, helping to grow the production on local farms.

Process

We are an SQF level 2 (Certified HACCP-Based Food Safety Plan) rated facility. All our grower partners must be GAP/food safety certified. We cannot carry any items that are not food-safety certified. This is not just for our safety, but for all involved — from grower to consumer — to know that the food they are purchasing has been farmed and distributed in a manner that meets all the proper guidelines for food safety.

We can set up contracts but usually buy on market-based pricing. We strive to have a personal relationship with our growers, including trips to farms and weekly calls to ensure we are ready to either pickup or receive the produce as it is ready to be harvested.



Expectations

Quality is always a top priority. We trade under the USDA Good Delivery Guidelines. Packaging is industry standards: cardboard for bulk items in all different sizing depending on the product; clam shell and bags for certain items, such as cherry tomatoes and mini sweet peppers; bulk boxes for items such as bell pepper, squash, cabbage, and round tomatoes.

Most Desired Crops

Summer squash, green beans, bell pepper, tomatoes, cabbage, melons. It really depends on the farm and what they can grow successfully.

Advice for Interested Growers

Growers should know what they want to grow, the volume they can handle, and have the workforce to harvest and pack the product to the standards of the USDA. ”

For more information, visit Liberty Fruit Co.'s website at <https://libertyfruit.com/>

C&C Produce

“ C&C Produce is a local, family-owned produce company founded in 1993

with an established customer base in the foodservice and retail sectors. C&C Produce has a division dedicated to locally grown produce and local food products. We work with more than 120 small family farms within a 300-mile radius of Kansas City, Missouri. Approximately 80% of our farm families are 120 miles or less from our distribution center in North Kansas City, Missouri. Due to our geographic footprint, we are in a unique position to purchase and pick up directly from our growers, utilizing our fleet of refrigerated tractor trailers and straight trucks that travel daily throughout the Midwest.

Our Harvest to Market Program grows as customer and community awareness lends it support for healthy and sustainable food systems. Our Midwest growing season typically runs from mid-May through the first week in November. We coordinate with our growers as well as our foodservice and retail customers to determine capacities of production before each growing season. This mitigates the risk of over or under production and enhances local farm economic stability. We are working with some innovative producers who are using greenhouses, hoop houses, aqua-culture, aeroponics, and hydroponic growing methods, which allows for year-round produce availability.

Our growers are either USDA GAP Certified, Primus, or Certified Organic. We assist our growers in navigating through the certification process by working closely with the USDA. We are involved and continue to follow developments related to The Food Safety Modernization Act in conjunction with the FDA. We work closely with the Departments of Agriculture in Missouri, Kansas, Oklahoma, and Nebraska. We also have an ongoing process that keeps all growers continuously updated to the latest checks and balances or changes in food safety procedures. We truly appreciate your interest/commitment to produce grown on small family farms and look forward to the continued success of this important program. ”



- Kansas and Missouri potato promotion
- Seed selection – heirloom varieties
- Farmer’s markets
- Marketing — labeling, packaging and signage. Library of components unique to each grower
- Local processed produce through our Cool Creations Division
- Promotion of home grown through our Re-pack Operations
- Improve capacities with current growers and cultivate new growers.
- Farm to school
- Farm to table in business and industry
- Farm tours
- Blackberry Hill Farms
- Implemented food safety traceability system.
- Truckload quantities

For more information visit the C&C Produce website at <https://ccproduce.net/>

Grower Guidelines

- All products will be grown in accordance with G.A.P./G.H.P.
- GAP/ Harmonized GAP/ Primus/ USDA Certified Organic or trending,
- Product must meet US Grade Standards for that commodity.
- Field heat removal through hydro cooling/refrigeration or early a.m. harvest schedule,
- Use of Heirloom Varieties of seeds,
- Active Farm Plan and Farm Maps Sustainable farming practices including:
 - Crop rotation
 - Cover cropping
 - Harvest methods
 - Crop diversity
 - Integrated pest management
 - Minimal use of pesticides
 - Water management & conservation
 - Soil and water testing
- All boxes will clearly state content of box, farm name, location, and date harvested for traceability.
- Produce packed in new industry standard boxes.
- Ability to conduct mock recall and actual recall.
- Undergo farm audits throughout the growing season.
- Committed to farming and establishing long-term grower relationships.
- The ability to consistently grow high-quality produce.
- Staggered plantings throughout season to ensure available product.
- Product will be inspected for quality/grading by C&C Produce Quality Assurance Team.
- Product that fails to meet USDA Quality Standards will be rejected at the time of delivery.
- All orders will be placed through a C&C purchase order identifying item, quantity, and pricing.

Chris Shea, Local Product Development • 816.830.3663

C & C Produce • 1100 Atlantic St, N. Kansas City, MO 64116 • 816.241.4425

Farm Fresh Produce – Our Business Is Making Your Business Better

Chef Ryan Brazeal

Novel KC has been open for seven and half years in downtown Kansas City. One of our core tenets is to work with local producers to try to create a unique culinary environment in the Midwest and drive attention and tourism. Since we don't have a specific culinary identity outside of BBQ, we rely on the terroir by using regional produce to complement our novel American cuisine. We focus on cultivating relationships with farmers that work their own land and grow their own products, as opposed to a lot of "local farmers" that buy most of their foodstuffs at auctions and then just deliver it as a middleman.

I started reaching out to farmers before we opened by asking other chefs for contacts and going to the local farmers market every weekend to meet new people. As a smaller restaurant, we have gradually pared down the number of people we work with to help support the guys that really adhere to our philosophy and mindset. Most farmers have the same product available at the same limited window of time. That meant that originally, we were buying one bunch of radishes or carrots from six different people instead of six bunches from one farmer.

General Expectations

The trust issue is very important. If you take an order and say you are going to be here on a certain day, I plan my menu around that. Too often farmers just would not show up or when they did, they had sold my produce to someone before they got here. That was obviously frustrating. Most farmers call or email on Monday or Tuesday for a weekly Thursday delivery during the growing season.

Some farmers deliver their products in reusable plastic tubs that we would return the following week or give back on the spot. Some farmers deliver in used cardboard boxes that we have to dispose of. Since we are not a retail store it is wasteful to have things delivered in retail packaging. It is nice if the product is relatively free of dirt and bugs so we can just put it away instead of having to process it on the spot. It is also great if they don't deliver after service starts.



Desired Crops

I like dealing with farmers that specialize in a few good vegetables instead of having a little bit of a lot of things. That way I can just say "I get all my tomatoes from the Crums and all my squash from Thane and all my spinach from Johnny." Fruit is also very desirable because not many farmers offer it for delivery.

The most desired crops are things that you can build a dish around like tomatoes, potatoes, eggplant. Things like radishes and cucumbers are great, but I don't need more than a bunch or two at a time. Also, carrots and onions are a tough sell because they are just so much more expensive than commodity products. As a chef, I really like tender young baby vegetables like squash.

Advice for Interested Growers

A good farmer will stagger their planting from the outset so they will have consistent crops for a longer time. Like having good lettuce for six weeks instead of having a ton for one week or having baby lettuce for one week and then having it gradually get bigger and bigger as time goes on. That makes it much easier to have a consistent menu for as long as possible.

For more information visit Novel KC's website at <https://www.novelkc.com/>

USD 231

Gardner Edgerton USD 231 serves the communities of Gardner and Edgerton in Johnson County, Kansas. The district educates more than 6,000 students and includes seven elementary schools, three middle schools, and one high school.

USD 231 Nutrition Services embraces the Farm to School model in three key areas:

- Seasonal menu planning (Garden Bar) to incorporate fresh produce.
- Harvest of the Month, including highlighted menu items weekly (more info below).
- Produce-focused deli salads available weekly at high school.

Harvest of the Month

This is a monthly menu-focused offering for all students that highlights one fruit or vegetable group per month. These are selected to coincide with local growing seasons when possible so students can get a taste for the same items that may be on sale in their local grocery store. For example, we focus on melon in August (watermelon, cantaloupe, honeydew), root vegetables in September, and pears or apples in October. We prepare these items in a variety of ways to give our students the opportunity to try a familiar item in a new way (e.g., roasted pears) or something they may not have tried (butternut squash). This also allows us to procure local produce when possible by using this seasonal planning.

One of our first partners in this directive was the Kansas City Food Hub. Since the inception of this partnership in 2018, we have also worked to source local produce from our broadline distributor as well as a local farmer who lives within our district boundaries.

We follow the Farm to School guidelines as provided by the Kansas State Department of Education's Child Nutrition and Wellness team. This includes a grower's food safety checklist, procurement guidelines, and delivery options. Because we are a medium-sized district, we can purchase larger quantities of produce but have the flexibility to tailor to specific menus and locations.



Price is a key factor for schools as we don't have a huge budget to work within. Most of our produce needs to come in at \$0.25 to \$0.40 per serving and require a minimal amount of processing from our staff (chopping, slicing, etc.). We will pay more for specific local items on a special occasion but know that our budget is significantly less than a grocery store or restaurant.



Note to Growers

Please be aware that this information applies to a pre-COVID world, and we have deviated from this significantly during the current school year. We are planning to return to this model for the 2021-2022 school year.

For more information on USD 231 visit their website at www.usd231.com

Checkers Foods

Checkers Foods is a family-owned, independent grocery store that has been in Lawrence for about 40 years. It has a reputation for having the best produce department in town. The department has been recognized as such many times by the “Best of Lawrence” program.

Connection with Growers

We have a long-standing practice of buying produce from local growers. One of the original growers to sell to us was Britt Gardens, located in Manhattan. Currently we buy from Juniper Hills Farm, South Baldwin Farms, Voight Farms, Two Sisters, Geiringer Orchards, Charles Taylor, Beisecker Farms, and Chlorofields, to name a few. We also buy from individual small growers who come to us with what they have for sale.

Getting Started

Growers should contact us about what they want to sell and at what price. In order to get set up to sell to us, they need to fill out a W-9 form so that we have their tax ID information. Usually, the grower will stay in touch with us on at least a weekly basis to tell us what they have available to sell and to arrange for delivery.

When they deliver to the store, we can help to offload trailers or trucks using our forklift. They leave their invoices, which are sent to the accounting department to be paid in the billing cycle.

Expectations

We expect the growers to have first-quality produce. If packaging is necessary, we prefer to have the grower do it. We do take items in bulk and then bag or band, and price and tag them ourselves in order to make them ready for the sales floor.



What We Buy

We are motivated to buy any local seasonal crop we can. We buy everything:

- Cucumbers
- Cantaloupes
- Watermelons
- Corn
- Tomatoes
- Okra
- Peaches
- Apples
- Pumpkins
- Cider
- Lettuce
- Zucchini
- Yellow squash
- Fall squash
- Asian vegetables such as nira grass, winter melon, opo, sine qua, bitter melon, and daikon

Advice for Interested Growers

Our advice for interested growers is to call us, tell us what they want to sell and let's negotiate a price and get to work!

For more information visit Checkers Foods website at <https://www.checkersfoods.com/>

Farmer Profiles

The following pages contain interviews from real farmers around the Kansas City region who have adopted wholesale markets into their farm sales. For more detailed information on these farmers and their

production, check out the video series, which will be available to watch in 2021 through the Beginning Farmer Wholesale Project.



Juniper Hill Farms

Established in 2010, Juniper Hill Farms, in Lawrence, Kansas, is owned by Scott Thellman.

In addition to producing hay, alfalfa, and small grains, Juniper Hill Farms grows more than 50 acres of produce both organically and conventionally.

They sell to a range of buyers including farmers markets and wholesale. They also work with several growers within the region to broker and distribute their produce.

Crop Highlight: Lettuce

The farm originally grew lettuce on a small scale and harvested everything by hand. As the business grew, Scott realized this was neither cost-effective nor consistent in quality. Investing in better infrastructure enabled increased output, reduced labor, higher quality, and more consistent product. By planting more, Scott could purchase seed in bulk, which lowers input costs. Juniper Hill Farms is GAP certified and certified organic. The operation implements a post-harvest process that includes sanitizer, triple washing, and lettuce spinners.

Wholesale markets for greens include restaurants, institutions, and a variety of retail outlets like grocery stores and an online platform. Scott says that clam-shell packaging has worked well because it is more appealing for consumers, allows for better shelf placement at grocery stores, and it better displays the farm branding.

Learn more about their wholesale production of salad greens from Juniper Hill Farms in the Beginning Wholesale Project's Video Series!



Scott's Tips for Growers

1. Find your buyers first! Start planting a few beds but have your buyers in place as soon as possible, especially with quick growing crops like greens.
2. It might seem like a shock when first looking at wholesale prices compared to direct-to-consumer but don't overthink it! Start shifting your mindset from "by the bunch" to "by the case/pallet." The volume in sales can outweigh the price cuts, especially reduced time marketing and increased efficiency.
3. Additional food safety certifications can open the door to new buyers. Juniper Hill is GAP certified, which has allowed the farm to sell to institutional buyers.



Jirak Family Produce

Mark and his family started Jirak Family Produce in 2005. They farm 7 acres in Cummings, Kansas, where they grow a variety of vegetables including tomatoes, melons, sweet corn, summer squash, winter squash, and lots of peppers.

In addition to growing in the field, they also have four high tunnels where they grow tomatoes and peppers. The farm sells to a variety of markets, which include wholesale buyers like food service, restaurants, and local school districts.

Crop Highlight: Peppers

Jirak Family Produce started growing bell peppers at the request of local food service and schools. Soon after, he expanded production to more specialty varieties like jalapenos, poblanos, and snacking peppers. Mark first began growing snacking peppers when he saw an opportunity to increase his sales with school districts because of the variety's appeal to children.

Mark likes selling to wholesale buyers like food service and schools because he knows exactly where his food is going and who is consuming it. His buyers appreciate the quality and freshness of his local produce over the shipped-in produce they might get from national distributors. Jirak Family Produce is GAP certified and has taken food safety measures like building a wash shed where they handle and store their produce. While he acknowledges you earn less money per item when selling to wholesale, the volume of product you can offload is unmatched.

Learn more about their wholesale production of peppers, including more detailed growing practices from Jirak Family Produce in the Beginning Wholesale Project's Video Series!



Mark's Tips for Growers

1. Be as good a marketer as you are a grower! Unpredictable changes in markets can be easier to navigate when you have multiple buyers to sell product to.
2. Find buyers that appreciate quality and freshness. While some may allocate produce from across the country because it's cheaper, you can stand out from those competitors with your product's quality.
3. Always practice good recordkeeping skills. This is especially important for FSMA compliance or GAP certification, which buyers often require.



Moyer Farms

Nathan Moyer and his family own Moyer Farms in Richmond, Missouri. Since 2011, they have been growing a variety of produce on 60 acres in the field, in high tunnels, a greenhouse, and a hydroponic system. They also raise grass-fed beef and bottled raw honey.

Moyer Farms sells to a variety of market outlets including a retail store, food hub, grocery stores, and distributors.

Crop Highlight: Squash

Moyer Farms grows their squash in both the open field and in high tunnels. They start seeding in greenhouses about three to four weeks in advance before using a water wheel transplanter to plant in the field. They seed again right before the first harvest to ensure a continual succession of harvests throughout the season.

Harvesting and packing can be labor intensive as they can pick up to 500 cases a day in peak season, but a real game changer to their plant production has been the investment in a large cooler. The quality of produce can be maintained much longer, and this alleviates the pressure to offload their product right away.

Nathan says some of the benefits of wholesale over retail includes the ability to sell a higher volume of product and the consistency in sales. He also believes it's an easier market to plan for because you will already know exactly what to produce and when to deliver it.

Learn more about their wholesale production of squash from Moyer Farms in the Beginning Wholesale Project's Video Series!



Nathan's Tips for Growers

1. Always have clear communication with your wholesaler buyers! You should have a good understanding of what they expect of your product (for example, how product should be packaged, the types of varieties they prefer).
2. Utilize your resources for information. Your fellow peers and university extension are both excellent sources of knowledge.
3. Always think about labor when planning production. Labor can be hard to come by, so make sure you have enough hands to manage your crop production.



Mellowfields Farm

Jessi Amussen and Kevin Prather run Mellowfields Farm in Lawrence, Kansas. They produce a wide variety of certified organic produce on 2.5 acres, including growing under cover in tunnels. Their markets include direct sales through farmers markets, a multi-farm CSA, and an online webstore.

They also sell wholesale through **grocery stores**, the **KC Food Hub**, and **restaurants**. They are certified organic, which has allowed them to make more profit on their wholesale account sales.

Crop Highlight: Salad Greens

Mellowfields Farm specializes in greens production and focuses on lettuce mix, arugula, baby kale, and mustard green mix. They start their Salanova salad mixes in the greenhouse and transplant into the field with a Paper Pot Transplanter to succession harvest throughout the year. By starting in protected crop environments like high tunnels, they can harvest as early as February through late May before resuming in September to harvest through December.

Transplanting Salanova is worth the effort because it only takes up a small amount of space in the greenhouse to produce transplants. Direct seeding this crop can lead to unpredictable germination, so transplanting is key. They chose to make the investment in a Paper Pot transplanter because it saves significant labor by minimizing the time to plant. What used to take the whole afternoon to transplant, now takes one person less than 45 minutes.

Mellowfields Farm has a packing shed that incorporates stainless steel wash basins and an electric spinner to efficiently process their greens. When it comes to packing for wholesale accounts, they utilize clamshell packaging, which displays their farm branding and organic certification.

Learn more about their wholesale production of salad greens from Mellowfields Farm in the Beginning Wholesale Project's Video Series!



Jessi and Kevin's Tips for Growers

1. Network with your fellow farmers! You can learn a lot by talking and listening to the farmers near you. Whether it be in person or through social media, these relationships are valuable.
2. Focus on higher value wholesale accounts. They might not beat retail prices, but with the right crops, they can make a profit.
3. Invest time into talking about farmer roles. Your operation can become much more efficient by specializing each person to specific roles like marketing, sales, and harvesting.



JET Produce

Jacob Thomas is the owner of JET Produce and Meats in Leavenworth, Kansas. He first started growing on 0.5 acre but has steadily expanded his operation to 12 acres. He grows a variety of produce but specializes in brassica crops like broccoli, cabbage, and cauliflower.

JET Produce and Meats sells to a variety of retail and wholesale markets. He enjoys having a combination of buyers because while wholesale can accept large volumes, they also have their retail outlets they can sell to. Currently they sell wholesale through the **KC Food Hub**, but they've also worked with grocery stores.

Crop Highlight: Brassicas

JET Produce and Meats yields around 3,000 pounds of broccoli, 4,000 pounds of cabbage and 1,000 pounds of cauliflower a year. Jacob experiments with different varieties, because although heat-tolerant varieties might help extend the growing season, they might produce smaller heads that are not appealing to consumers. He recommends building your relationship with customers first so they can trust your product quality and then try new things.

The JET Produce and Meats team starts their crops in a greenhouse and then transplants around the beginning of March to harvest early May. Jacob invested in a used tobacco transplanter at a local auction to help mechanize their planting process and it has significantly reduced time and labor.

Jacob says controlling insect pests is key with brassica production. Cabbage worms and loopers are the first pests of the season to look for and address. He finds that the organic pesticide *Bacillus thuringiensis* works best for their operation. Another pest to keep an eye out for is the zebra moth caterpillar as it is much more difficult to get rid of and can require more intensive pest management.

Learn more about their wholesale production of brassicas from JET Produce and Meats in the Beginning Wholesale Project's Video Series!



Jacob's Tips for Growers

1. Certain wholesale outlets can save you a lot of time because they will do all the marketing work for you! You can drop produce off to a single location and they'll take care of the distribution.
2. The more you plant, the more efficient you can become. With the right system, you can expand your operation without necessarily expanding the labor.
3. The most important thing when selling wholesale is maintaining good communication, honesty, and quality. If you can stand behind your product, your customers will love it.



Green Thumbs Up

Green Thumbs Up was founded by John Edmonds and Austin Reynolds on two neighboring farms in Leavenworth County, Kansas. They grow roughly 1 acre of fruits and vegetables through field production, greenhouses, and high tunnels.

Their top crops for wholesale include cucumbers, squash, and tomatoes. They started small by selling to farmers markets and then gradually expanded, selling wholesale to the **KC Food Hub**. They found it was easier to crop plan every year knowing they already had a wholesale buyer, whereas their farmers market sales can be highly unpredictable.

Crop Highlight: Cucumbers

Cucumbers are one of Green Thumbs Up's best crops. They have trialed hundreds of varieties to see what sells best at market and they currently grow English, pickling, and slicing cucumbers. Slicing cucumbers are ideal for their wholesale outlet because of their optimal shelf life.

John and Austin start seeding their cucumbers in a greenhouse around April before transplanting two to four weeks later. They grow bush varieties outdoors, and in their high tunnels they use vertical trellising to maximize space. With the right season extension techniques, they can grow from April through November.

Most of their labor goes toward daily pruning and trellising. In peak season, they harvest twice a day because standard size and shapes are crucial in wholesale. With their production plan, they can yield around 500 pounds per week from 400 to 500 plants.

Learn more about their wholesale production of cucumbers & squash from Green Thumbs Up in the Beginning Wholesale Project's Video Series!



John and Austin's Tips for Growers

1. You don't need lots of acreage to grow for wholesale! You can grow a large amount of produce in a small amount of space in protected crop production like high tunnels.
2. Recordkeeping and crop planning are important tasks with wholesale production. Make time to revisit what grew well and what sold the best when planning for the next season.
3. Grading cucurbits is critical in wholesale production. Try to harvest daily to make sure the size is exactly what you want and has not grown too fast.



Spring Creek Farm

Stephanie Thomas and Tom Maiorana started Spring Creek Farm in Baldwin City, Kansas around 2005 after Stephanie apprenticed for the Kansas City Center for Urban Agriculture (now Cultivate KC). In addition to raising free-range heirloom chickens and turkeys, they produce more than 60 varieties of vegetables and fruit. They have four hoop houses in production and grow in cultivated field space of approximately 4 acres.

Stephanie and Tom started by selling exclusively through farmers markets, but today they primarily sell to grocery stores and restaurants. More than 90% of their sweet potato production is sold wholesale through The Merc Co+Op.

Crop Highlight: Sweet Potatoes

Spring Creek Farm specializes in sweet potato production after learning that root crops were well suited for the farm's sandy loam soil. Every year they order their slips and prepare for the first crucial step in production, soil preparation. They amend their soils with organic processed chicken manure and alfalfa pellets while creating raised beds and placing drip line irrigation. They hand plant around 3,000 slips in 12,000 square feet of soil.

Weed control is another vital step because native grasses can become an enormous pressure and labor intensive to control. They also note that although there is little insect pressure, wildlife can cause problems. Deer, mice, and voles love sweet potatoes, so farmers need to be creative with their pest control.

Once they start harvesting in September, they grade and sort their potatoes before bringing them to the packing shed to rinse, dry, and cure. In peak season they can sell around 200 to 500 pounds per week, and with proper storage, sweet potatoes can stay good for months.

Learn more about their wholesale production of sweet potatoes from Spring Creek Farm in the Beginning Wholesale Project's Video Series!



Stephanie & Tom's Tips for Growers

1. Always consider what your farm's capacity is to scale up! This can ensure that you provide an adequate volume before committing to a buyer.
2. Customers are extensions of yourselves. Always know your buyer's needs so you can provide exactly what they are looking for and really succeed.
3. Visual charts can be helpful with grading. Sweet potatoes can be jumbos, number 1's, canners, or cullers so it's important to know what to look for.



Gieringers Family Orchard & Berry Farm

Frank Gieringer owns Gieringers Family Orchard & Berry Farm in Edgerton, Kansas. The farm grows a variety of fruit and vegetables in both field and high tunnel production, but their specialty is in “U-Pick” berry production.

In addition to running their berry activities, Gieringers sells to several different market outlets. Their produce is sold in their on-farm retail store, through farmers markets, and wholesale via grocery stores.

Crop Highlight: Tomatoes

Frank has four high tunnels dedicated to tomato production. He purchases grafted tomatoes (BH589 grafted to Maxifort) for plant vigor and disease resistance and then transplants them into the tunnels by the end of March.

Gieringers’ production plan is unique because they prepare their high tunnels during the winter months. This includes prepping the soil, laying weed fabric and drip irrigation, and setting up their trellis system. By doing this labor early on, they can ensure that they are ready to grow in the spring once the tomatoes can be transplanted.

Frank states that the majority of labor involves sorting and grading the fruit. The tomatoes are packed in 22-pound boxes, which are stored in a temperature-controlled packing shed. In peak season, they can harvest several thousand pounds in one week. While wholesale is not their primary outlet, it’s a great way to offload excess produce and guarantee income.

Learn more about their wholesale production of tomatoes from Gieringers Family Orchard & Berry Farm in the Beginning Wholesale Project’s Video Series!



Frank’s Tips for Growers

1. There is a learning curve when selling wholesale! Take time to understand the expectations of your buyers, as some can be more flexible than others.
2. Some buyers repackage their produce so grading properly and ensuring uniformity is key. Make sure you sort carefully and avoid cracked fruit.
3. Landscape fabric cannot only help keep weeds out of your tunnels, but it can maintain a cleaner and more sterile growing environment.



Crop Cheat Sheets

The following crop sheets are produce featured in the Beginning Wholesale Project's video series and are some of the top crops sold for wholesale markets in the Kansas City region. Each sheet contains information on grading, sizing, packing, storage, and optimal quality descriptions.

Packing information has been tailored to fit the KC Food Hub standards but note that packing requirements can vary from buyer to buyer. For more information on the USDA grade standards

common among various wholesale buyers, please visit the USDA website at <https://www.ams.usda.gov/grades-standards/vegetables>.

These sheets were adapted from the Vegetable Grading/Sizing Templates and Grading and Packing Guidelines by Crop templates with the generous permission of Cornell Cooperative Extension's Growing for Wholesale Resources team. Visit their website at <https://cwp.cce.cornell.edu/> for more information.



Wholesale
Crop
Cheat
Sheets

Tomatoes

Packing Guide

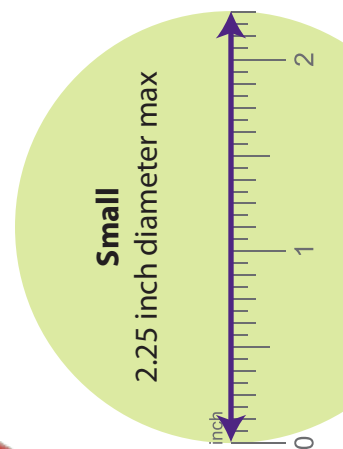
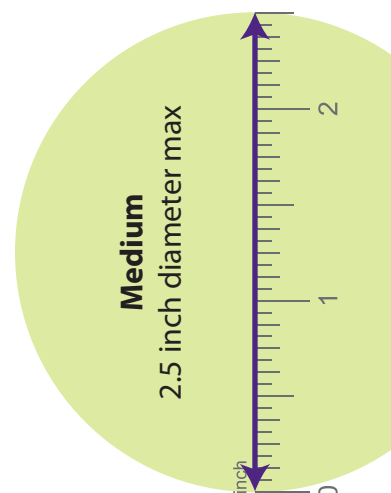
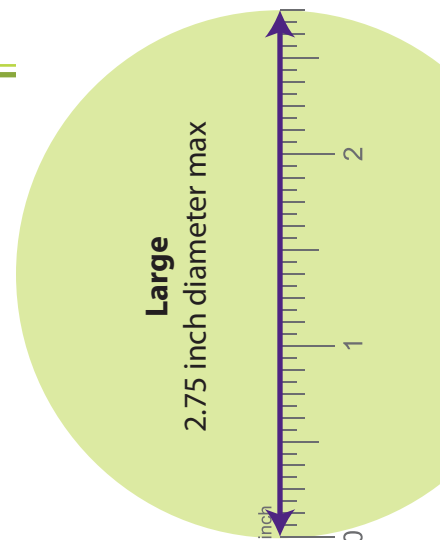
Grades	<p>No.1: “consists of tomatoes which meet the following requirements: Similar varietal characteristics; mature; not overripe or soft; clean; well developed; fairly well formed; and fairly smooth. Free from decay, freezing injury, and sunscald. Not damaged by any other cause.”</p> <p>Combination: “consists of a combination of U.S. No. 1 and U.S. No. 2 tomatoes: Provided, that at least 60 percent, by count, meet the requirements of U.S. No. 1 grade.”</p> <p>No.2: “consists of tomatoes which meet the following requirements: Similar varietal characteristics; mature; not overripe or soft; clean; well developed; reasonably well formed; and, not more than slightly rough. Free from decay, freezing injury, and sunscald. Not seriously damaged by any other cause.”</p> <p>No.3: “consists of tomatoes which meet the following requirements: Similar varietal characteristics; mature; not overripe or soft; clean; well developed; and, may be misshapen. Free from decay and freezing injury. Not seriously damaged by sunscald. Not very seriously damaged by any other cause.”</p>
Size	<p>Cherry/Grape: packed in pints</p> <p>Medium: Diameter 2-2.5” (ex. standard tomato, medium heirlooms)</p> <p>Large: Diameter 2.5-3” (ex. slicers, larger heirlooms)</p> <p>Extra-large: over 3” (not desirable unless it’s an heirloom or specialty tomato)</p>
Material	Produce boxes or pint flats
Units	Pack in 25-lb. tomato or 1/2 bu. produce boxes Cherry tomatoes are packed in 12 pt. flats
Weight	25 lbs. *Notes: Weight must be consistent, especially when selling in bulk. If the buyer is purchasing heirlooms by the “each,” grade the heirlooms by size rather than weight.
Storage	Store tomatoes ideally at 55°F with a relative humidity of 95%. Remove calyx for longer shelf life.
Color	The following are common colors that buyers may request: Green, Breakers, Turning, Pink, Light Red, Red and Mixed color . Visit the USDA’s website for the detailed definitions of these colors on their page, “Tomato Grades and Standards.”

Grade: U.S. #1

- Tomato should be firm and glossy
- Color and shape should be uniform
- Shoulders should be smooth
- Clean
- Pack in 25-lb. produce box

Avoid

- Blemishes and bruising
- Insect damage
- Excessive cracking

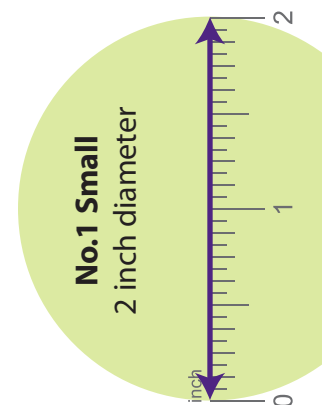
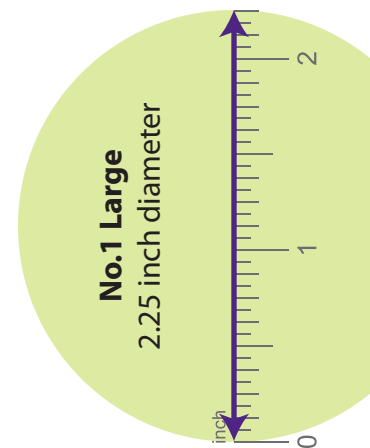
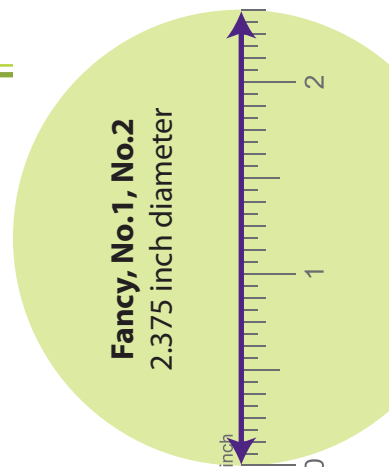


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Cucumbers

Packing Guide

Grades	<p>Fancy: “consists of cucumbers which are well colored, well formed, not overgrown, and which are fresh, firm, and free from decay, sunscald, and from injury caused by scars and from damage caused by yellowing, sunburn, dirt or other foreign material, freezing, mosaic or other disease, insects, cuts, bruises, mechanical or other means.”</p> <p>Extra No. 1: “consists of a combination of U.S. Fancy and U.S. No. 1 cucumbers: Provided, that at least 50 percent of the cucumbers in the lot shall meet the requirements of the U.S. Fancy grade and the remainder shall meet the requirements of the U.S. No. 1 grade.”</p> <p>No.1: “consists of cucumbers which are fairly well colored, fairly well formed, not overgrown, and which are fresh, firm, and free from decay, sunscald and from damage caused by scars, yellowing, sunburn, dirt or other foreign materials, freezing, mosaic or other disease, insects, cuts, bruises, mechanical or other means.”</p> <p>No.1 Small: “Small consists of cucumbers which meet all requirements for the U.S. No. 1 grade except for size.”</p> <p>No. 1 Large: “Large consists of cucumbers which meet all requirements for the U.S. No. 1 grade except for size.”</p> <p>No.2: “consists of cucumbers which are moderately colored, not badly deformed, not overgrown, and which are fresh, firm, free from decay and free from damage caused by freezing, sunscald, cuts and from serious damage caused by scars, yellowing, sunburn, dirt or other foreign material, mosaic or other disease, insects, bruises, mechanical or other means.”</p>
Size	<p>Fancy: Length: Minimum 6” Diameter: Maximum 2 3/8”</p> <p>Extra No.1: No specifications</p> <p>No.1: Length: Minimum 6” Diameter: Maximum 2 3/8”</p> <p>No.1 Small: Length: No requirements Diameter: 1 1/2”-2”</p> <p>No.1 Large: Length: Minimum 6” Diameter: Minimum 2 1/4”</p> <p>No.2: Length: Minimum 5” Diameter: Maximum 2 3/8”</p>
Material	Cartons, crates
Units	<p>20-lb. in 5/9 bu. cartons</p> <p>40-lb. in 1/2 bu. or 1 1/9 bu. cartons or crates</p> <p>24-count cartons</p>
Storage	Store cucumbers ideally at 50-54°F with a relative humidity of 95%.



Grade: U.S. “Semi” Fancy (mix of U.S. #1 and U.S. #2)

- Must be clean and semi-bright
- Semi-well-formed
- Some discoloration is acceptable
- Some skin blemishes and scarring are acceptable
- Cukes do NOT need to be perfectly straight or uniform in size
- All cukes should be washed and waxed
- Pack in standard 1 1/9 250# test box
- Box should contain 65-70 count

Avoid

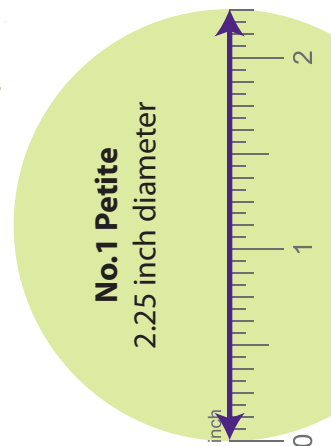
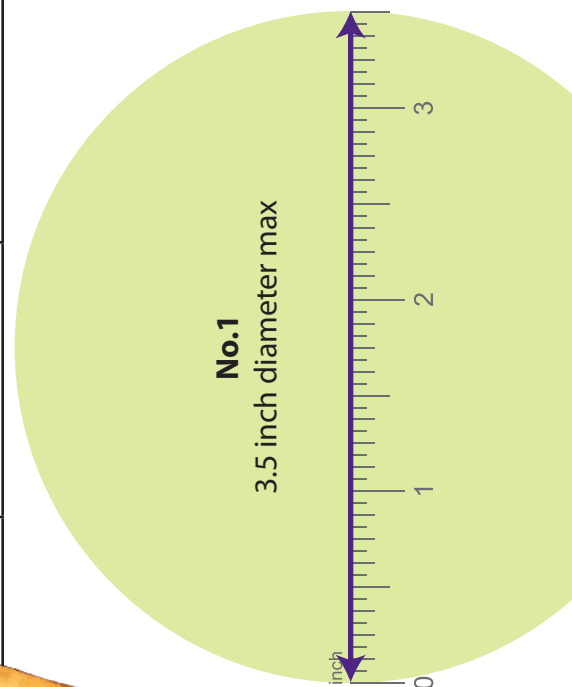
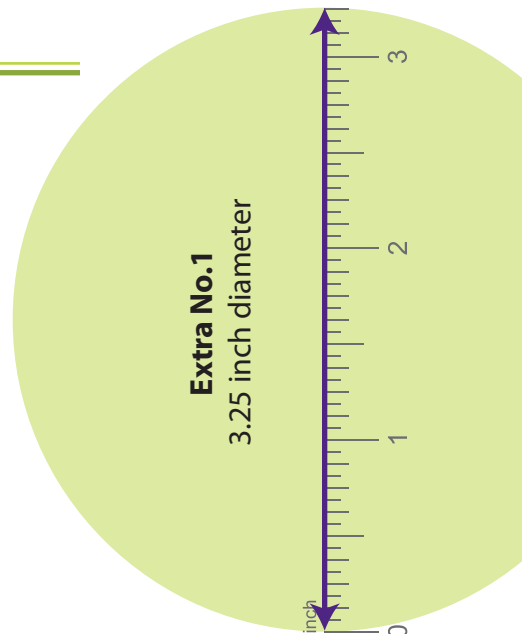
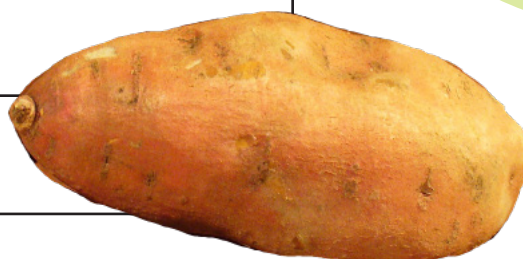
- Excessive amounts of skin blemishes
- Excessive discoloration due to sunscald
- Shriveled ends

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Sweet Potatoes

Packing Guide

Grades	<p>Extra No.1: “consists of sweet potatoes of similar varietal characteristics which are firm, smooth, fairly clean, fairly well shaped, which are free from freezing injury, internal breakdown, Black Rot, other decay or wet breakdown, and free from damage caused by secondary rootlets, sprouts, cuts, bruises, scars, growth cracks, scurf, Pox (Soil Rot), or other diseases, wireworms, weevils, or other insects, or other means.”</p> <p>No.1: “consists of sweet potatoes of one type which are firm, fairly smooth, fairly clean, fairly well shaped, which are free from freezing injury, internal breakdown, Black Rot, other decay or wet breakdown, and free from damage caused by secondary rootlets, sprouts, cuts, bruises, scars, growth cracks, scurf, Pox (Soil Rot), or other diseases, wireworms, weevils or other insects, or other means.”</p> <p>Commercial: “consists of sweet potatoes which meet all the requirements of the U.S. No. 1 grade except that an increased tolerance for defects is allowed.”</p> <p>No.2: “consists of sweet potatoes of one type which are firm and which are free from freezing injury, internal breakdown, Black Rot, other decay or wet breakdown, and free from serious damage, caused by dirt or other foreign materials, cuts, bruises, scars, growth cracks, Pox (Soil Rot), or other diseases, wireworms, weevils or other insects, or other means.”</p>
Size	<p>Extra No.1: Length: 3”-9” Diameter: 1¾”-3¼”</p> <p>No.1: Length: 3”-9” Diameter: 1¾”-3½”</p> <p>No.1 Petite: Length: 3”-7” Diameter: 1½”-2¼”</p> <p>Commercial: Not specified</p> <p>No. 2: Diameter: 1½” minimum</p> <p>*KC Food Hub note: Always pack uniformly and avoid mixing sizes!</p>
Weight	<p>Extra No.1: Weight: 18 oz. maximum</p> <p>No.1: Weight: 20 oz. maximum</p> <p>No.1 Petite: Not specified</p> <p>Commercial: Not specified</p> <p>No.2: Weight: 36 oz. maximum</p>
Units	<p>Bushel or Crate (50-55 lbs.). Dependent on the buyer’s order as packing units and weight can vary.</p>



Grade: U.S. #1

- Sweet potato should be firm and smooth
- Color should be even-toned
- Fairly clean and free of excess dirt
- Pack in 50-lb produce crate

Avoid

- Bruising and soft spots
- Excessive blemishes and scarring

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Leafy Greens

Packing Guide

“Leafy greens” include: iceberg lettuce, romaine lettuce, leaf lettuce, butter lettuce, baby leaf lettuce, escarole, endive, spring mix, spinach, cabbage, kale, arugula, and chard (microgreens are NOT included in this category). There are no standard U.S. grades.

Unprocessed Leafy Greens

Definition	Leafy greens are considered a raw /unprocessed agricultural commodity if you are simply harvesting whole head lettuce, OR loose leafy greens that have been cut from individual roots or stems during harvesting and have not undergone any additional cutting or processing after harvest. Whole head lettuce loose leaves can be sold directly to the public without a license and generally do not need a license when selling to wholesale. Raw greens do not need special licensing as “cut greens” would.
Weights and Units	Bushel = 18-20 lbs Bag = 1-1.5 lbs Whole head lettuce Clamshells
Storage	Refrigerate leafy greens as soon as possible, ideally from 41°F - 32°F with a relative humidity of 95-100%.
Packaging	Packaging on raw leafy greens should clearly state that the product must be washed before serving or eating.
Harvest Notes	Growers are encouraged to triple wash and spin-dry their greens. Always use a safe water source that is clean and either tested to be potable or one that is properly treated using a validated treatment method. If washing your greens post-harvest, it is highly recommended to use a sanitizer in the water.



- Greens should be thoroughly washed in water to remove soil.
- Must label that greens should be washed before consumption.
- Must be stored in proper temperatures.
- Must be clean, crisp, and vibrant in coloring.

Avoid

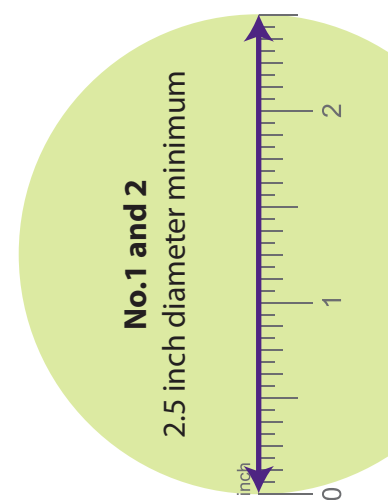
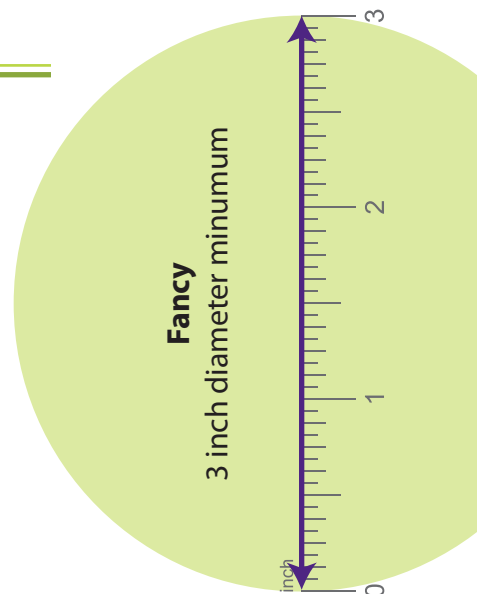
- Wilting and dull leaves
- Damaged or broken leaves
- Excessive moisture in packaging

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Peppers

Packing Guide

Grades	<p>Fancy: “consists of mature peppers of similar varietal characteristics (except when specified as mixed varieties and/or colors), which are firm, well shaped, and free from Blossom End Rot, crushed/broken, freezing, freezing injury, hail, insects, mechanical, sunscald, decay affecting calyxes and/or walls, decay affecting stems, and from injury caused by bruising, dirt, discoloration, disease, insects, pitting, scars, shriveling, sunburn, or other means.”</p> <p>No.1: “consists of mature peppers of similar varietal characteristics (except when specified as mixed varieties and/or colors), which are firm, fairly well shaped, and free from crushed/broken, freezing, freezing injury, sunscald and decay affecting calyxes and/or walls, decay affecting stems, and free from damage caused by Blossom End Rot, bruising, dirt, discoloration, disease, hail, insects, pitting, scars, shriveling, sunburn, mechanical or other means.”</p> <p>No.2: “consists of mature peppers of similar varietal characteristics (except when specified as mixed varieties and/or colors), which are firm, not seriously misshapen, and free from freezing, freezing injury, sunscald and decay affecting calyxes and/or walls, decay affecting stems, crushed/broken and free from serious damage caused Blossom End Rot, bruising, dirt, discoloration, disease, hail, insects, pitting, scars, shriveling, sunburn, mechanical or other means.”</p>
Size	“Size may be specified in inches and fractions thereof in connection with the grade in terms of minimum diameter, maximum diameter, minimum length and/or maximum length, or by count.”
Units	1 1/9 Bushel or Crate
Weight	25-30 lbs.
Storage	Store peppers ideally at 45-55°F with a relative humidity of 95%.



Grade: U.S. Fancy #1

- Must be fresh and firm
- Deep green colored calyx (outer wall) and bright in appearance
- Thick flesh
- Uniformly well-shaped
- Clean
- Pack in standard 1 1/9 box
- Box should contain 50-59 count with uniformity throughout the box

Avoid

- Blemishes and browning
- Misshaped fruit
- Shriveled skin and scarring

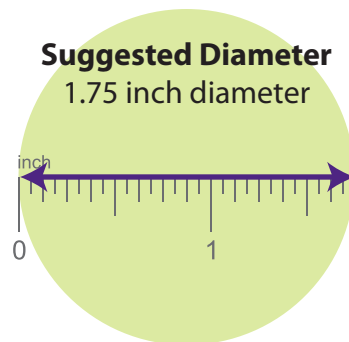


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Summer Squash

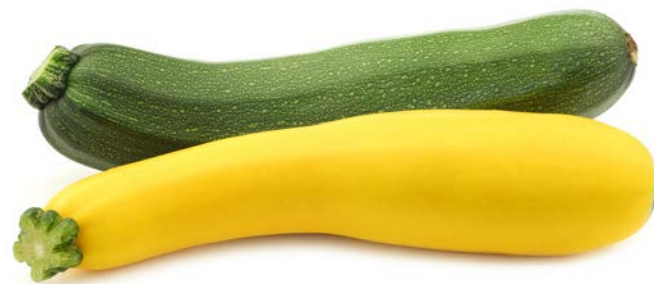
Packing Guide

Grades	<p>No.1: “consists of squash of one variety or similar varietal characteristics, with stems or portions of stems attached, which are fairly young and fairly tender, fairly well formed, firm, free from decay and breakdown, and from damage caused by discoloration, cuts, bruises and scars, freezing, dirt or other foreign material, disease, insects, mechanical or other means.”</p> <p>No.2: “consists of squash of one variety or similar varietal characteristics which are not old and tough, but are firm, free from decay and breakdown, and free from damage caused by freezing, and from serious damage caused by discoloration, cuts, bruises, scars, dirt or other foreign material, disease, insects, mechanical or other means.”</p>
Size	No specific sizing
Material	Pack in produce boxes like sardines, with stem-end facing the carton walls to avoid damage
Units	Bushel or crate
Weight	40-44 lbs.
Storage	Store summer squash ideally at 41-50°F with a relative humidity of 95%.



Grade: U.S. #1

- Squash must be fairly young and tender yet firm
- Bright color
- Fruit should be well-shaped and not too thick
- Length of summer squash should be 7-8 inches
- Diameter of summer squash should be 1.25-2 inches
- Box should contain 28-30 count



Avoid

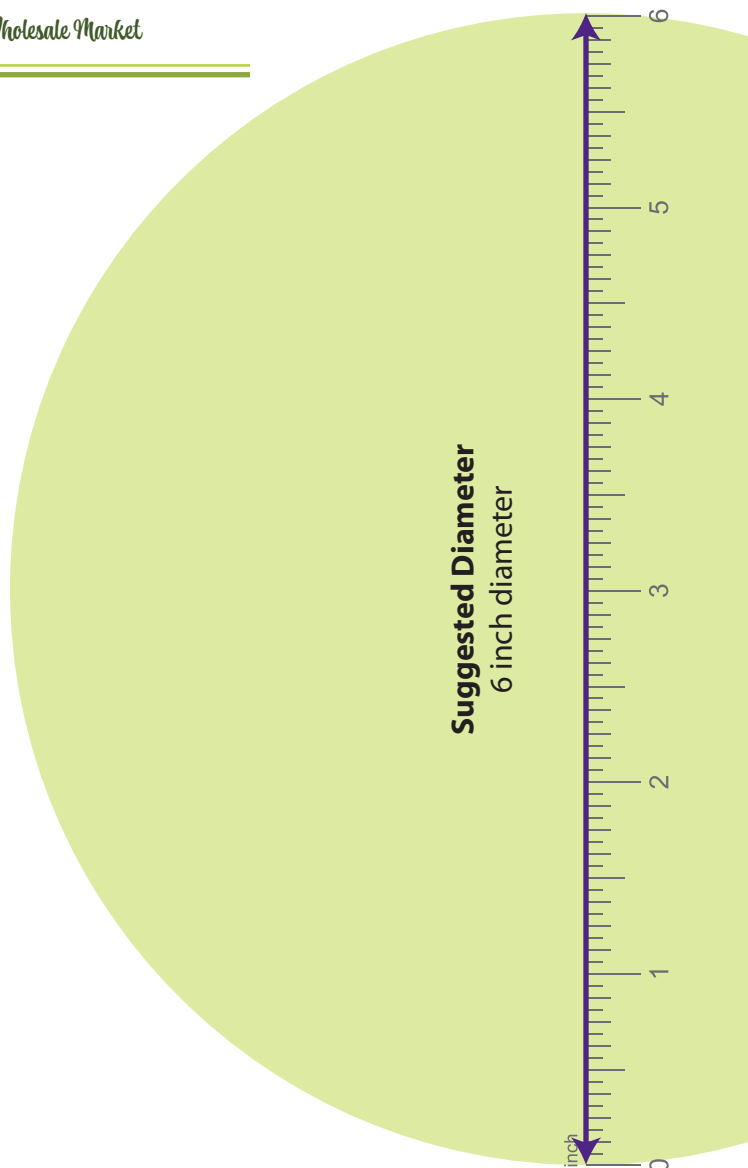
- Bulbous fruit with excessively narrow neck
- Decay and breakdown due to freezing, disease or insects
- Cuts, bruises, and scars caused by mechanical or other means
- Dirt or foreign material

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Broccoli

Packing Guide

Grades	<p>No.1: “consists of stalks or portions of stalks of broccoli which are fresh, tender, and have good characteristic color and compact heads, are well trimmed and which are free from decay and cull material, and are free from damage caused by discoloration, freezing, hollow stem or pithiness, scars, dirt or other foreign material, disease, insects or mechanical or other means.”</p> <p>No.2: “U.S. No. 2” consists of stalks or portions of stalks of broccoli which are fresh, tender, and have good characteristic color and fairly compact heads, are fairly well trimmed and which are free from decay and cull material and are free from damage caused by scars, dirt or other foreign material, disease, insects, are free from serious damage caused by discoloration, freezing, hollow stem or pithiness or mechanical or other means.”</p>
Size	<p>No.1: Diameter: 3/8” minimum (stem), Length: 4”-6”</p> <p>No.2: Diameter: 1/4” minimum (stem), Length: 3”-6”</p>
Material	Produce box, carton
Units	Pack 10, 12, 14, 16 or 18 in a 1/9 bu. produce box
Weight	23 lbs.
Storage	<p>Store broccoli ideally at 32°F with a relative humidity of 95%.</p> <p>Under these conditions, broccoli is acceptable for up to 4 weeks.</p>
Harvest Notes	Leave 6” of stem, crown diameter should be 6”, the KC Food Hub will accept bunched stems as long as overall bundle diameter is 6 inches.



- Bud clusters should be dark green, sage green, or even green with a purplish tinge
- Each bud cluster must be a very well compact bunch
- Stems should be pale green in color and should be tender
- Standard broccoli box, 20 lbs

Avoid

- Loose bud clusters or loose crowns
- Yellowing caused by opening of flower buds
- Black spots due to disease and rot

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Cabbage

Packing Guide

Grades	<p>No.1: “consists of heads of cabbage which are firm, and well trimmed; which are free from soft rot, seedstems, and from damage caused by bursting, discoloration, freezing, disease, birds, insects, mechanical or other means. Unless otherwise specified, the weight of each head of cabbage shall be not less than 3 pounds.”</p> <p>Commercial: “consists of heads of cabbage which are not soft; which are fairly well trimmed, free from soft rot, seedstems, and from serious damage caused by bursting, discoloration, freezing, disease, birds, insects, mechanical or other means. Unless otherwise specified, the weight of each head shall be not less than 2 pounds.”</p>
Size	<p>Small: Under 2 lbs</p> <p>Medium: 2-5 lbs</p> <p>Large: Over 5 lbs</p>
Material	1 2/3-bushel box
Units	One 1 2/3-bushel box
Weight	50 lb. boxes, each box should contain 16-18 heads of cabbage
Storage	Store cabbage ideally at 32 °F with a relative humidity of 95%.
Harvest Notes	Cabbage should be solid, heavy, trimmed, and clean.

Grade: U.S. #1

- Cabbage must be hard or solid and heavy for its size
- Medium green in color
- Stalk should be clean cut
- Must be well trimmed and clean
- 3-4 good green wrapper leaves must be on each head
- Standard 1 2/3 bushel box, 50 lbs
- Box should contain 16-18 count with uniformity throughout the box

Avoid

- Blemishes and browning
- Vein discoloration or rot
- Insect or disease damage



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Resources

Recommended Educational Resources

Publications

FamilyFarmed's The Wholesale Success Manual: A Farmer's Guide to Food Safety, Selling, Postharvest Handling, and Packing Produce <https://familyfarmed.org/farmer-training/>

ATTRA's Tips for Selling to: Wholesale Buyers at Terminal Markets <https://attra.ncat.org/product/tips-for-selling-to-wholesale-buyers-at-terminal-markets/>

Online Manuals

Building a Sustainable Business <https://www.sare.org/Learning-Center/Books/Building-a-Sustainable-Business>

Growing Farms: Successful Whole Farm Management Planning Book Think It! Write It! <https://catalog.extension.oregonstate.edu/sites/catalog/files/project/pdf/em9043.pdf>

Scaling Up Your Vegetable Farm for Regional Markets <https://attra.ncat.org/attra-pub/download.php?id=469>

The Guide to Marketing Channel Assessment: How to Sell Through Wholesale and Direct Marketing Channels <https://ecommons.cornell.edu/handle/1813/40260>

Wholesale Packing Resource Guide <https://www.sare.org/Learning-Center/SARE-Project-Products/Northeast-SARE-Project-Products/Plain-Language-Guides-for-New-and-Under-Served-Producers/Wholesale-Packing-Resource-Guide>

Selling Certified Organic Produce to Retail Produce Markets in the Upper Midwest <https://cias.wisc.edu/wp-content/uploads/sites/194/2008/07/greenbrg1.pdf>

A Farmer's Guide to Crop Quality for Wholesale Outlets <https://sare.org/resources/a-farmers-guide-to-crop-quality-for-wholesale-outlets/>

Wholesale and Retail Product Specifications: Guidance and Best Practices for Fresh Produce <https://www.cefs.ncsu.edu/ncgt/wholesale-and-retail-product-specs.pdf>

Scaling Up: Perspectives from Growers and Buyers on Barriers and Benefits to Wholesale Marketing of Local Fruits and Vegetables https://lib.dr.iastate.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1074&context=leopold_pubspapers

University and Extension Resources

Michigan State University's Market Channel Selection Tool https://www.canr.msu.edu/foodsystems/uploads/resources/crfs_bfrdp_marketchannelselection-tool-pp_interactive.pdf

Cornell Small Farms <https://smallfarms.cornell.edu/projects/baskets-to-pallets/wholesale-resources/>

Kansas State University's Extension Food Safety Resources <https://www.ksre.k-state.edu/foodsafety/produce/>

University of Missouri Marketing Vegetables in Missouri Resources <https://extension.missouri.edu/publications/g6221>

UC Agriculture & Natural Resources' How to Sell Produce Wholesale <https://sarep.ucdavis.edu/fs/supply/wholesale>

NC State Extension's How to Sell Produce to Distributors <https://content.ces.ncsu.edu/how-to-sell-produce-to-distributors>

UC Davis Postharvest Center's Produce Fact Sheets http://postharvest.ucdavis.edu/CommodityResources/Fact_Sheets/index.cfm

Local Websites

North Central SARE <https://northcentral.sare.org/>

Beginning Wholesale Farmer Project <http://www.growinggrowers.org/beginning-farmer-wholesale-project.html>

Cultivate KC <https://www.cultivatekc.org/>

KC Healthy Kids <https://www.kchealthykids.org/>

West Central Missouri Community Action Agency <https://wcmca.org/>

Videos

Selling to Wholesale Buyers: <https://www.canr.msu.edu/videos/selling-to-wholesale-buyers>

Selling Produce to Wegmans: Farmer Buyer Video Series <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=S13h-Jz8Q0Zw&list=PLeB3pvIz7iiFe2fDlGDbg2-FlMqjaXVv>

Selling Produce to Headwater Food Hub: Farmer Buyer Video Series: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NDe2tlq0-Q&list=PLeB3pvIz7iiHsbK-MoFcAWqLYUDzZuk-sG>

Michigan State University's Webinar Series: <https://www.canr.msu.edu/beginning-farmer/index>

Funding Opportunities

USDA Office of Urban Agriculture and Innovative Production offers competitive grants to accelerate existing and emerging models of urban, indoor, and other agricultural practices that serve multiple farmers. For more information, visit the USDA Farmers.gov website (<https://www.farmers.gov/manage/urban/opportunities>).

Sustainable Agriculture Research and Education Program (SARE) offers an array of competitive grants for researchers, agricultural educators, students, farmers and ranchers throughout the United States. Grants are regionally administered. For more information, visit the North Central SARE website (<http://www.northcentralsare.org/>) or contact the Kansas State Coordinator, Kerri Ebert (Phone: 785.532.2976, Email: kebert@ksu.edu).

USDA Organic Certification Cost Share Program

offers funding for cost share assistance to producers who are obtaining or renewing their National Organic Program certification. For more information, visit the USDA OCCSP website (<https://www.fsa.usda.gov/programs-and-services/occsp/index>).

USDA Specialty Crop Block Grant Program

offers funding to support market competition of specialty crops. Anyone can apply for this program and funds can support a variety of projects such as value-added processing, farm to school initiatives, and other research. For more information, visit the USDA SCBGP website (<https://www.ams.usda.gov/services/grants/scbgp/apply>).

Beginning Farmer Wholesale Project Services

Mentor Farmer Program — Qualified farms are matched with seasoned growers from around the country and receive up to 25 hours of targeted consulting services throughout the year.

One-on-one technical assistance — Beginning farmers can request direct technical assistance from ag specialists with tailored support for business management, crop planning, efficient production techniques, weed and pest management strategies, and more.

Farmer-to-buyer matching — Advisors from West Central, KC Food Hub, KC Healthy Kids, and Cultivate KC offer consultation on increasing market access to beginning farmers and facilitate connection with wholesale buyers.

COMING SOON: Foodshed GIS Map — A comprehensive map of the KC foodshed with layers added for Farmers Markets, CSA, restaurants, wholesalers, food rescue & recovery, composting sites, and supply providers.

COMING SOON: Video Series — A series of 6-minute videos filmed on the top crops for wholesale production featuring farms across the Kansas City region, including information on production, packing, marketing, and more.

Production Planning 2021: Harvest Chart



Name of Farm: _____

I feel I've got a good idea of what I'll plant in 2021:	Yes	No	How?
I intend to catch the September-November wave in 2021.	Yes	No	
I have a good idea what the Food Hub can sell for me in 2021:	Yes	No	
I want to do production planning as a group for 2021:	Yes	No	

Crops Planted	Yield per month																							
	Jan		Feb		Mar		Apr		May		June		July		Aug		Sept		Oct		Nov		Dec	
	1	15	1	15	1	15	1	15	1	15	1	15	1	15	1	15	1	15	1	15	1	15	1	15
Arugula										100 4 oz bags	100 4 oz bags	100 4 oz bags							100 4 oz bags	100 4 oz bags	100 4 oz bags			
Bok Choy (baby and large)										50 bunch/ pc	50 bunch/ pc	50 bunch/ pc							50 bunch/ pc	50 bunch/ pc	50 bunch/ pc			
Beets										50 bunch/ lb	50 bunch/ lb	50 bunch/ lb							50 bunch/ lb					
Cabbage, green										200 lb./ 70 heads	200 lb./ 70 heads	200 lb./ 70 heads							200 lb./ 70 heads					
Carrots										100 bunch/ lb	100 bunch/ lb	100 bunch/ lb							100 bunch/ lb	50 bunch/ lb	50 bunch/ lb			
Cilantro																					200 bunch			
Dill										100 bunch	100 bunch	100 bunch									100 bunch			
Fennel										100 bunch/ pc	100 bunch/ pc	100 bunch/ pc												
Ginger																					30 lbs	30 lbs	30 lbs	

Crops Planted	Yield per month																								
	Jan 1	Jan 15	Feb 1	Feb 15	Mar 1	Mar 15	Apr 1	Apr 15	May 1	May 15	June 1	June 15	July 1	July 15	Aug 1	Aug 15	Sept 1	Sept 15	Oct 1	Oct 15	Nov 1	Nov 15	Dec 1	Dec 15	
Kale													200 bunch/bag	200 bunch/bag					200 bunch/bag	200 bunch/bag	200 bunch/bag	200 bunch/bag	200 bunch/bag		
Lettuce Mix					200 4 oz bags	200 4 oz bags	200 4 oz bags	200 4 oz bags	200 4 oz bags	200 4 oz bags	200 4 oz bags	200 4 oz bags	200 4 oz bags	200 bunch/bag						200 4 oz bags	200 4 oz bags	200 4 oz bags	200 4 oz bags		
Lettuce Heads										100 heads	100 heads	100 heads	100 heads							100 heads	100 heads	100 heads			
Onions													50 lbs		50 lbs	50 lbs									
Pea Shoots (grow to order)											20 lbs	20 lbs			20 lbs	20 lbs				20 lbs	20 lbs	20 lbs			20 lbs
Peppers, Bell														50 lbs	50 lbs	50 lbs				50 lbs	50 lbs				
Peppers, hot (jalapeno, poblano, anaheim)														10 lbs	10 lbs	10 lbs				10 lbs	10 lbs				
Peppers, Shishito														10 lbs	10 lbs	10 lbs				10 lbs	10 lbs				
Purple Daikon																				100 lbs	100 lbs	100 lbs			100 lbs
Salad mix																									
Zucchini																									

Thursday, August 14- Monday August 18, 2014
 TERMS DELIVERY NUMBER | See Terms Below

Name
 Address

We are pleased to make available the following products. By ordering, you agree to our terms below:

Item	Description	Count	Pack	Unit Price	Quantity Available	Notes
1	Romaine Lettuce	24 ct.	Per case	\$28.00	12 cases	
2	Red Peppers	80 count	Per bushel	\$40.50	20 bushels	Carmen variety
3						
4						
5						
6						
7						
8						
9						
10						

We want to serve your business for years to come. To help us meet that goal, please note the following terms:

Orders are due by 3pm Monday August 18. Orders placed after 4 pm Monday will only be filled if you receive specific confirmation by 8am Tuesday. Order changed may be made only before 4pm Tuesday. If an order change is made after 4pm Tuesday, we may not be able to make the change. If the order change is crucial, a convenience fee of 5% may be added to the order. A 2% delivery fee is added to each order. The sales availability is an estimate only. Actual Availability may change. Although we are confident in our estimate, if a change is unavoidable, we will let you know by 9am Tuesday. If your order is under \$40, we may not be able to deliver without an additional charge. We will call you by Tuesday at 9am if we cannot deliver your order without an additional charge.

YOUR LOGO

Sales Invoice

Company Name
123 Main Street
Hamilton, OH 44416
(321) 456-7890
Email Address

DATE OF INVOICE
INVOICE NO.
DATE DUE
AMOUNT

CUSTOMER NAME

ATTN: Name / Department
Company Name
123 Main Street
Hamilton, OH 44416
(321) 456-7890
Email Address

DESCRIPTION	QUANTITY	UNIT PRICE	LINE TOTAL
Roma Lettuce Heads	50	2.50	125.00
Case of Roma Tomatoes (12 ct.)	30	4.00	120.00
Green Bell Peppers (10 ct.)	15	5.00	75.00
TOTAL			300.00

Please make check or payment payable to Your Company Name.

THANK YOU

For questions concerning this invoice, please contact
Name, (321) 456-7890, Email Address

www.yourwebsite.com



The Merc Co+Op Producer Guidelines

It's time to begin planning for the next growing season! At the co-op, we value our relationships with local producers and look forward to working with you to make this year successful. Please take the time to read through this information thoroughly, as some items have changed from previous years.

Please submit the online form as soon as possible. **Deadline for consideration is January 31st.** After completion of the Produce and Floral Vendor Form, I will contact you to discuss details, answer questions, and obtain any paperwork or promotional materials you may have.

Individual Meetings

In the past we have set up in-person meetings to discuss details and plan for the upcoming growing season. **Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, we will have these conversations remotely – by email, phone, or video conference, if needed.**

We will discuss and clarify the following:

- What worked well in previous seasons from your perspective, and what could we work on?
- Packaging needs
- Expectations about bunching, bagging etc.
- Pricing
- Quality
- Invoicing
- Promotional Materials

Product Guidelines and Expectations

Quality

In order for us to continue to meet the needs of our customers, we are focusing on quality more than ever. High quality, fresh produce begins at the farm – beyond growing to harvesting and shipping practices. Please take all postharvest steps to ensure freshness.

- We expect to provide produce with at least three to five days of shelf life.

- All products delivered to The Merc Co+op should be in optimal condition: clean, free of cracks and bruises.
- All products will have indicators of freshness and quality, and we can discuss those specifics as needed.
 - For example: Highly perishable products, such as tomatoes and berries should be firm, with good color. To ensure a premium shelf life for our customers, please deliver within one to two days of harvest.

In the event that the product does not meet our quality standards, we will request that the product be credited on the invoice within 24 hours of the time of delivery. If we ask for credit twice on a product from you, we may discontinue ordering that product.

Packaging and Labeling

- Boxes shall be sturdy and lidded or closeable.
- Boxes shall not be damaged, disintegrating or wet.
- Boxes shall be labeled with a sticker no smaller than 3 1/3" x 4" and containing the following information:
 - Product name (if organic, noted as such) in larger print and prominently located
 - Date of delivery
 - Farm name and location
 - Weight or count of product
 - Organic 3rd party certification (if applicable)
- Product shall be packed according to industry standard weight or count.
- Weighing and counting shall be done prior to delivery.
- Product shall be delivered in a retail ready state; any bunching, bagging, tying, etc. should be done prior to delivery.
 - For cut salads and greens – please provide “use by” dates on all packaged salad mixes.
- Organic produce shall only be packed into boxes in which no chemicals or non-organic produce has been packaged

Availability

- We need initial forecasts of your product availability at least two weeks in advance.
- For your product to be considered for the next week's order, you must email (produce@thmerc.coop and producespecialist@thmerc.coop) a copy of product availability or call at 785-843-8544 ext. 242 by Sunday evening/Early Monday morning of the current week.
- *If availability is limited or ending please notify us when we are ordering or email us as soon as possible so that we can make other arrangements to meet our customers' needs.*

Ordering and Delivery

- Orders will be placed between 8am-4pm on Mondays after receiving your weekly updates.
- If you need more than one day notice to deliver or have a need for certain delivery days, please let us know and we can make individual arrangements.
- Deliveries must be made by 3 pm Monday - Friday, unless prior arrangements have been made.
- No deliveries will be accepted during the week-ends unless prior arrangements have been made.
- If you have a bumper crop and wish to renegotiate the price to increase sales volume, please communicate this at least one week in advance to set up a sale.
- If you are unsure if you are able to meet these guidelines or lack the material resources to ensure compliance, let me know and we can discuss options

Invoicing

- All deliveries must be accompanied by an invoice including the following information:
 - Product name (if organic, noted as such)
 - Tracking number
 - Delivery date
 - Farm name, address, & phone number

- Payment terms (14 days or more)
 - Quantity
 - Unit price, extended price, & total price
 - Space for a produce department employee signature
- Invoices must be at least 5"x 8" and in duplicate
 - Invoices must be legible and undamaged; please no wet, crumpled, or torn invoices.

We are unable to accept deliveries that do not meet the above packaging and invoicing guidelines. We reserve the right to discontinue purchasing product if it is priced differently than what was agreed to.

At the co-op, we value our relationships with all our producers. We understand the unexpected happens, so consistent, reliable communication about changes to what is available and when is critical. These guidelines are intended to provide clarity and mutual understanding. If you have any questions, please don't hesitate to reach out to me.

Sincerely,

Becky Crook
Produce Manager
The Merc Co+op
901 Iowa St
Lawrence, KS 66044
785-843-8544, ext 242
produce@thmerc.coop



Brand names appearing in this publication are for product identification purposes only. No endorsement is intended, nor is criticism implied of similar products not mentioned.

Publications from Kansas State University are available at bookstore.ksre.ksu.edu

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**Kansas State University Agricultural Experiment Station
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