

Food Safety Scoop



Brought to you by the Yavapai County Food Safety Industry Council

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What is Local?

“Local” is a word appearing on more and more menus everyday. Local food is defined as “the direct or intermediated marketing of food to consumers that is produced and distributed in a limited geographic area.” There is no pre-determined distance to define what consumers consider “local,” but a set number of miles from a center point or state/local boundaries is often used.¹

There are many reasons why people purchase local foods. “Consuming locally grown foods is associated with freshness, supporting the local economy, and protecting the environment. Several factors, such as nutritional quality, ripeness at harvest, post-harvest handling, processing and packaging,

and the distance transported, affect the quality of the food.”³

There are farmers and ranchers that produce a variety of foods in Yavapai County. While Yavapai County is mostly recognized for cattle, there are also many specialty crop (fruits, vegetables and nuts) growers in the county as well. Yavapai County growers tend have much smaller operations than the large those locate in the southern part of the state, but they still offer great tasting fruits, vegetables and nuts grown practically next door.

For more information about Arizona agriculture visit: <http://agriculture.az.gov>

Food Safety & Local Food

If you are a food establishment owner looking to include local produce on your menus, you may have some questions about how to safely purchase from local growers.

Large or medium sized farms usually have some type of food safety certification such as the volunteer program from USDA called GHP/GAP (Good Handling Practices/Good Agricultural Practices). In addition to other requirements, GHP/GAP certification includes several costs including paying for USDA to do an on-site farm audit. This certification is often too expensive for small growers, such as those in Yavapai County, to participate. Not having this kind of certification can limit to whom growers can sell their produce.

Yavapai County Community Health Services (YCCHS) brought together local farmers, restaurants and community members to find a way to support local growers in Ya-

vapai County while also the protecting the public from foodborne illness.⁴ This group developed the **Guidance for Kitchen Use of Whole Vegetables, Fruits and Nuts Grown in Yavapai County** (also called the Approved Source Guidance).

The Guidance is a written set of guidelines for kitchen managers in Yavapai County that includes non-regulatory information on the Food Code and approved source requirements in regard to purchasing whole vegetables, fruits and nuts from growers in Yavapai County that do not have a third-party food safety certification.

There is also a **Safe Food Checklist** provided by Yavapai County Community Health Services (YCCHS) that highlights on-farm food safety practices that food establishments should be aware of when purchasing from local growers.

This newsletter is brought to you by the Yavapai County Food Safety Industry Council, which is a joint collaboration between Yavapai County Community Health Services and the University of Arizona Cooperative Extension.

The FSIC meets bimonthly to discuss issues in the food service industry and ways to bring food safety information to the public.

For more information, please call 928-445-6590 ext. 227 or visit our website at: extension.arizona.edu/yavapai/

Yavapai County Approved Source Guidance

The process of developing this guidance required several years of planning, research, and stakeholder engagement. The first stakeholder meeting on February 25, 2014, consisted of 25 participants representing Yavapai County farms, ranches, farmers markets, certified kitchens, University of Arizona Cooperative Extension and support service agencies. This meeting resulted in the support for YCCHS (Yavapai County Community Health

Services) to develop an approved source guidance safely connecting local restaurants and local food purveyors.

The following year included site visits and stakeholder meetings. The site visits allowed stakeholders to review the guidance, ask questions, and offer feedback on the feasibility of the project. The conclusion of this study resulted in the pilot of the approved source guidance and the steps to implementation.

The Guidance was adopted by the Yavapai County Board of Supervisors in May 2016. This initiative has also been recognized by public health colleagues regionally and nationally at the Southwest Environmental Health Conference (Feb. 2015), the National Environmental Health Association's Educational Conference (July 2015), and the National Association of County and City Health Officials Annual Conference (July 2016).

How Can Your Food Establishment Get Involved?

The Guidance was designed to be a simple, flexible process for certified kitchen managers and owners who want to use whole vegetables, fruits and nuts grown in Yavapai County. It is provided to offer assistance to certified kitchen managers and owners; it is not regulatory. The two requirements to participate include:

1. That the grower/producer provide evidence that they have completed a comprehensive, good handling and agricultural practices curriculum (one day course offered by the Arizona Department of Agriculture).

2. That the certified kitchen manager or owner maintain a record indicating: the item, the amount, the date harvested location, the date received and the name of the farm or responsible grower.

It is the responsibility of the certified kitchen manager/owner to ensure the producer appropriately handled the whole vegetables, fruits, and nuts acquired for food service. Proof of completion of a comprehensive, good handling and agricultural practices curriculum and a on-farm food safety plan should be provided by producer.

The Safe Food Checklist provides items to discuss when talking with a farmer/vendor to purchase farm fresh produce.⁵

Growers document and demonstrate their food safety practices and methods of tracking and verifying the safety of food grown outside a third-party certification program. It includes three areas: (1) *on-farm food safety education*, (2) *planning*, and (3) *traceability*.

More information about the Guidance for Certified Kitchen Use of Whole Vegetables, Fruits and Nuts Grown in Yavapai County is on the YCCHS Environmental Health Division website under "Information Links" at www.yavapai.us/chs/EH

References

1. USDA Agricultural Law Information Partnership—<http://nal.usda.gov/aglaw/local-foods>
2. University of Minnesota: <http://www.extension.umn.edu/rsdp/community-and-local-food/>
3. University of Arizona Cooperative Extension: <http://extension.arizona.edu/sites/extension.arizona.edu/files/pubs/az1665-2015.pdf>
4. YCCHS Guidance: <http://www.yavapaihealth.com>
5. Iowa State University Extension: <http://www.extension.iastate.edu/Publications/PM2046A.pdf>

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