

Farmers

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Trade streets. The market, which is operated by the City of Winston-Salem, operates at the Dixie Classic Fairgrounds on Saturdays.

Fans of the markets say the reasons behind the fresh produce craze is simple. They say that the picked fresh from local farms simply tastes better than items bought from mega-chain grocery stores.

"This is just in my blood because I grew up eating from my grandmother's garden and my mother, she literally preached to us about how good fresh vegetables are," said Deborah Battle of Advance, one of many people shopping at the Downtown Farmer's Market on Tuesday.

Taste isn't the only benefit. Proponents of locally-grown produce also point out that crops from local farmers have a short shelf-life from the field to the plate, which means they are fresher and have much less of a chance of contamination. Recent e-coli outbreaks involving produce have also



Courtney Taylor (center, squatting) brings participants of her Discovering Downtown camp to the farmers market every week.

sent many Americans to their local farmers markets. Energy conservationists also point out that buying local produce reduces emissions because they don't have to be transported over long distances, and waste, since there is no need to package locally-grown crops.

Reedy Creek native Virginia Craver is among those who come to the downtown market to sell produce and freshly-baked bread.

Craver spends much of her time at the market talking with customers about the foods she sells and where

it comes from. She assures them that there are no additives, plant steroids or other tricks used by mass producers, only Mother Nature's goodness.

"It was grown in dirt," she assures her customers.

Craver lost her husband of 56 years, Bill, last

December. She has continued the tradition they started of selling items at the market. Craver, who is retired from AT&T, believes it is important to support farmers in the local area.

"If this country don't promote the farmer and help the farmer stay alive, we're all going hungry," pointed out the great-grandmother of five.

Battle is one of Craver's regulars. The items she buys from Craver and the other farmers quickly end up on her dining room table. Battle says the first meal she ever served to her husband Paul was made up of vegetables from her mother's garden. After 25 years of marriage, the two still dine on all-vegetable meals often, she said.

"My husband grew up on fresh vegetables as well so we share that love of fresh vegetables," she remarked. "You get a lot more flavor and probably more nutrients. Cucumbers, everything has a better taste."

Courtney Taylor, the founder of Positive Image Performing Arts (PIPA), brings the youngsters from her Discovering Downtown summer camp to the

Downtown Farmer's Market to shop every Tuesday.

"A lot of them don't have a lot of experience with organic food or meeting actual farmers," Taylor explained. "It gives them an opportunity to support these farmers that work hard and it also gives them a way of purchasing healthy foods."

The weekly Farmer's Market visit has become a favorite of the participants of the camp, which is now in its sixth year, Taylor said. She makes a point of trying to purchase her own produce from the market as much as possible, too.

"The taste is better and you don't have to worry about the pesticides as much, and the people are nice," she commented.

Though she doesn't cook as often as she did when her husband was alive, Craver often enjoys produce from the farmer's market in her own kitchen. She says nothing beats the taste of home-grown produce.

"It's a huge difference. You actually look forward to that taste," she declared. "You know that summertime's here when you taste the fresh vegetables."

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