

# “Local Eats” Brings Meal Boxes to Farmers’ Market

## Healthy Ingredients + Recipe Ideas

Farmers’ markets offer fresh produce to community members and support local producers. But what if community members do not know how to combine the fresh produce into a healthy meal? Pre-portioned meal subscription services are growing in popularity and provide a fast easy way to create a healthy meal and build cooking skills. In 2017, PartnerSHIP 4 Health (Local public health and community partners), launched “Local Eats” as part of their Eat Well program. Local Eats began with three main goals: Inspiring healthy eating, building cooking skills, and supporting local foods and sustainable growing practices.



*Chef Elizabeth Hatling prepares one of the featured meals.*

The Local Eats Team chose one recipe each month from June through October that used locally-produced ingredients. Purchasers pre-ordered a meal box online or in person for delivery the following week at the Fergus Falls Farmers’ Market. In addition to the fresh produce, each box included detailed recipe instructions, nutrition facts and materials highlighting local producers. The Local Eats team also partnered with local chef Elizabeth Hatling to produce videos showing step-by-step instructions for each recipe. The videos are available online and also function as a way to market the program. Other marketing efforts included social media, the Farmers’ Market website, information cards, and a weekly drawing for a free meal box.

## Wrapping Up the Season

To evaluate the program, participants received electronic surveys at the end of the season. This provided positive feedback and highlighted areas for improvement. Most respondents reported that the meal boxes were reasonably priced, contained fresh, high quality ingredients, and featured easy to prepare recipes. Respondents felt strongly that the boxes should contain minimal packaging, and a majority reported that all required ingredients, including

those that are shelf-stable, should continue to be included in the boxes. Each meal box contained enough ingredients for four people, but the Local Eats team received requests for boxes containing only two portions, which they hope to implement in the future.

### Season 1 Meals:

- Roasted asparagus, soft-poached egg & brown rice bowl with browned-butter citrus drizzle
- Grass-fed beef burgers with basil & mozzarella with kohlrabi, pea, garlic and chive salad & roasted green bean fries
- Pork sauté with basil & farmers market vegetables and hot crash potatoes
- Honey black pepper salmon with marinated cucumbers & onions, and wild rice with balsamic roasted beets & garlic salad
- Garlic & herb chicken skewers with roasted broccoli and farro, spinach & strawberry salad with mint, green onion & feta

“Local Eats meal boxes are fresh and delicious,” shared Melissa, a local customer. “Always trying to come up with something new and exciting for the family to eat can be a struggle, which is why I loved having the recipes and ingredients already planned for me. The boxes have given our family so many opportunities to try foods we have not had in the past and we’ve enjoyed all of them. Not only are the ingredients fresh and healthy, they are also grown locally which allows me to help support our community.” Innovative ideas like Local Eats connect the farmer to the community, and community members back to the kitchen, creating not just a healthier meal but also a healthier community.

To view the Local Eats recipe tutorials, visit <http://partnership4health.org/local-eats>

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