



Louisiana
HARVEST of the MONTH
TOOL KIT



LOUISIANA
FARM TO SCHOOL
PROGRAM
From the LSU AgCenter

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Program Overview

Purpose

This resource is for any organization, business or school seeking to motivate and empower students to increase consumption and enjoyment of local agricultural products in Louisiana. This tool kit will help guide you to use the resources available through Louisiana Farm to School and implement a successful Louisiana Harvest of the Month program.

Electronic versions and updates of the Louisiana Harvest of the Month Tool Kit are available on the LSU AgCenter Louisiana Farm to School website at www.LSUAgCenter.com/LouisianaFarmtoSchool.

Description

The Louisiana Harvest of the Month program (LA HOM) is designed to bring fresh local agricultural products into participating schools and communities. Each month, one Louisiana agricultural product is highlighted throughout the school. The product is purchased through the school and served in the cafeteria as a meal, snack or taste test. LA HOM allows schools and districts to start small and grow at a rate at which they feel comfortable and confident. If you currently have any of these types of programs or would like to, Louisiana Harvest of the Month can serve as a complement to any work already being done. Any or all of these elements paired with Harvest of the Month strengthen the ability to increase local agricultural product consumption in schools while supporting local farmers and the community.

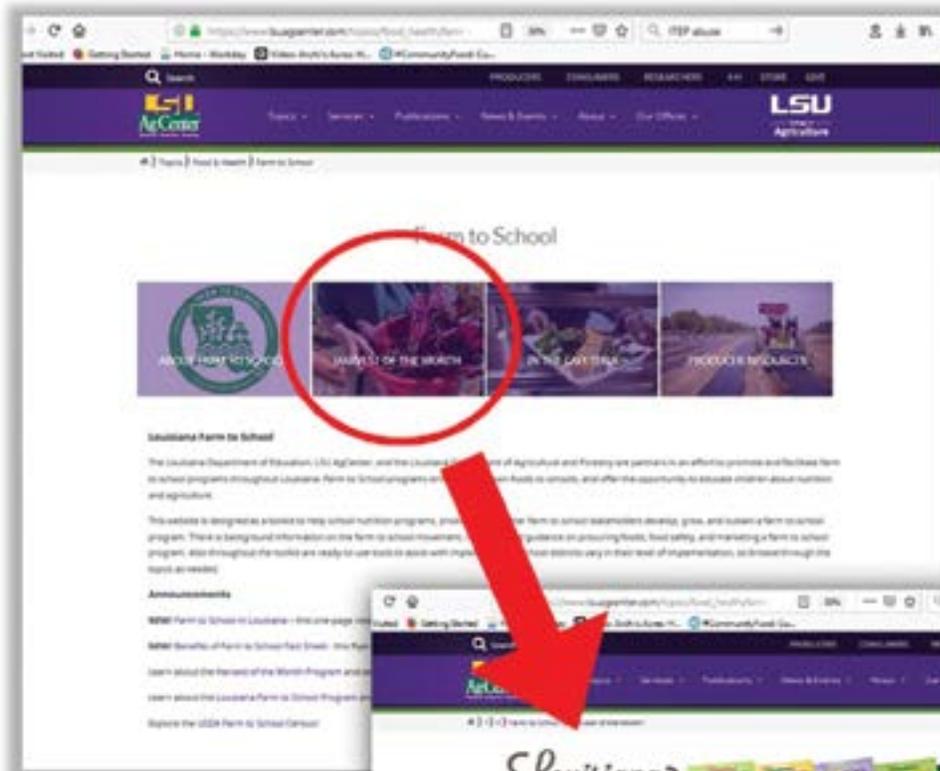
The objective of the Louisiana Harvest of the Month Tool Kit is to:

- Increase access to local fruits, vegetables and other agricultural products through school meal programs, classrooms and gardens.
- Create an opportunity for students to try local products and develop a preference for them.
- Increase knowledge and familiarity with local agricultural products.
- Increase meal participation.
- Increase morale and knowledge among food service staff.
- Provide a significant financial opportunity for local farmers.

The Louisiana Harvest of the Month Tool Kit is composed of four key elements: engagement, education, recipes and promotion. These elements are most effective when used together but can be used separately in a variety of settings.

LSU AgCenter Farm to School Website

www.LSUAgCenter.com/LouisianaFarmtoSchool



Louisiana Harvest of the Month Featured Items

In the beginning phase of the statewide launch, the tool kit featured 13 Louisiana-grown fruits and vegetables and two proteins (seafood). Additional products will be featured in subsequent phases.

Louisiana Harvest of the Month Produce List

Following the Harvest of the Month product cycle calendar (see following page) designated in this tool kit is highly recommended. This will ensure greater consistency in promoting Harvest of the Month with retailers, produce organizations and wholesalers. It will also help to provide a consistent message statewide – in the classroom, cafeteria, home and community. Current Harvest of the Month items include:

- Broccoli
- Cabbage
- Catfish
- Citrus
- Cucumbers
- Eggplant
- Mushrooms
- Peppers
- Shrimp
- Strawberries
- Summer squash
- Sweet potatoes
- Tomatoes
- Watermelon
- Winter squash

In 2018, we introduced two new Harvest of the Month featured products: shrimp and catfish. These can be included in any month you would like to feature them or any month when you have a hard time finding local produce. However, you should keep in mind that National Seafood Month is October.

Please note: If you have food allergies in your school that restrict you from serving certain foods featured in Louisiana Harvest of the Month, or if your school does not serve a particular item, please choose one of the other Harvest of the Month products to feature for that month.





School Year Calendar

Although we recommend following this calendar, your school or program can change the calendar to suit your needs and match the availability of items each year. None of the materials are printed with the month. The calendar will likely change each school year to allow for new harvest foods. We recommend that items in bold are most prevalent in that month.

August

Summer Squash

Watermelon

Peppers

September

Eggplant

Summer Squash

Cucumbers

October

Winter Squash

Eggplant

Sweet Potatoes

November

Sweet Potatoes

Catfish

Winter Squash

December

Citrus

Cabbage

Sweet Potatoes

January

Broccoli

Citrus

Mushrooms

February

Cabbage

Mushrooms

Strawberries

March

Strawberries

Broccoli

Sweet Potatoes

April

Mushrooms

Strawberries

Shrimp

May

Tomatoes

Peppers

Summer Squash

June

Cucumber

Bell Peppers

Eggplant

July

Watermelon

Cucumbers

Tomatoes



For more information:

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Tool Kit Elements

The Louisiana Harvest of the Month Tool Kit is composed of three key elements: Family Engagement and Promotion, Education, and Recipes. Louisiana Harvest of the Month can serve as a complement to any work already being done. Any or all of these elements paired with Harvest of the Month strengthen the ability to increase local agricultural product consumption in schools while supporting local farmers and the community.

Family Engagement and Promotion

Posters

- Target user: Project coordinators, educators, child nutrition staff, administration, business owners
- Target audience: General public
- Each Harvest of the Month is featured on an 11-inch by 17-inch poster. Each Harvest of the Month product is pictured in raw form, in the field and on a plate. Also featured on the posters are fun facts and nutrition facts about each product.



Menu Templates

- Target user: Child nutrition staff
- Target audience: Students, parents
- LA HOM menu templates allow child nutrition staff to insert the monthly school menu. These are fully customizable for schools, and your choice of featured product includes fun facts and pictures.

Social Media Images

- Target user: Project coordinators, educators, child nutrition staff
- Target audience: Students, parents
- Great for marketing to engage families on your social media sites, advertise your menu and encourage kids to try featured products.



Newsletter Content

- Target user: Project coordinators, educators, child nutrition staff
- Target audience: Students, parents
- Reinforce what kids are learning about LA HOM and provide parents with nutrition information, healthy eating tips, and tips for selecting, storing and serving the featured product. Copy and paste content into newsletters, use for announcements or add to menus.

“I Tried It!” Stickers

- Target user: Taste test facilitators
- Target audience: Taste test participants (usually students)
- Utilize the “I Tried It!” stickers to encourage participants to try new foods. Stickers also spark conversations around the taste test and give participants a chance to talk about their experiences with farm-to-school activities.



Home Recipes

- Target user: Project coordinators, educators, child nutrition staff, school administration
- Target audience: Students, parents
- The LA HOM home recipes feature each Harvest of the Month in tested recipes that are culturally relevant, designed with few ingredients and easy to prepare. All our recipes were created here on the Louisiana State University campus and feature nutrition facts.

Education and Curriculum Integration

Evidence-Based Nutrition Education Resources

All resources and curricula in this section are offered by the USDA or featured in the SNAP-Ed toolkit.

Food Hero

Developed in Oregon

Food Hero's mission is to help low-income families improve their health through the increased consumption of fruits and vegetables. Food Hero is a multichannel social marketing campaign that aims to meet goals through direct education. Audience: Adults.

<https://www.foodhero.org>

Grow It, Try It, Like It! Nutrition Education Kit Featuring MyPlate

USDA, Team Nutrition

Garden-themed nutrition education kit that introduces children to six fruits and vegetables. Includes seven booklets featuring three fruits and three vegetables with hands-on planting activities, a CD with supplemental information, and a DVD with Cool Puppy Pup's Picnic and Lunch Parties. Audience: Child care.

<https://www.fns.usda.gov/tn/grow-it>

Discover MyPlate: Curriculum Training for Teachers

USDA, Team Nutrition

Training guide and customizable slideshow presentation designed to boost educators' confidence in teaching nutrition concepts and conducting the food preparation activities included as part of the Discover MyPlate Teacher's Kit. It includes an overview of the lesson materials and how they connect to educational standards, highlights key nutrition concepts and includes a personal self-assessment. Audience: Kindergarten teachers. <https://www.fns.usda.gov/tn/discover-myplate-nutrition-education-kindergarten#anchor2>

Dig In! Standards-Based Nutrition Education From the Ground Up

USDA, Team Nutrition

Eleven inquiry-based lessons that engage fifth and sixth graders in growing, harvesting, tasting and learning

about fruits and vegetables. The curriculum includes reproducible student handouts, 35 copies of the Dig In! At Home parent booklet (parent booklet also available separately in Spanish), and a set of six Dig In! posters. Audience: Grades five to six. <https://www.fns.usda.gov/tn/dig-standards-based-nutrition-education-ground>

The Great Garden Detective

USDA, Team Nutrition

A standards-based gardening nutrition curriculum. Eleven-lesson curriculum for third and fourth grades that contains bulletin board materials, veggie dice, fruit and vegetable flash cards, and 35 copies of each of the 10 Garden Detective newsletters for parents and caregivers. Audience: Grades three and four. <https://www.fns.usda.gov/tn/great-garden-detective-adventure-standards-based-gardening-nutrition-curriculum-grades-3-and-4>

Discover MyPlate: Nutrition Education for Kindergarteners (Teacher's Kit)

USDA, Team Nutrition

Engaging six-lesson kit that includes a teacher's guide, The Five Food Groups poster, Food Group Friends profile cards, food cards, Teacher's Edition of the Emergent Readers, song CD and 25 copies of each of the following: student workbooks, parent handouts, emergent readers, and Look and Cook Recipes. Audience: Kindergarten. <https://www.fns.usda.gov/tn/discover-myplate-nutrition-education-kindergarten#anchor1>

Nutrition Voyage: The Quest to Be Our Best

USDA, Team Nutrition

Middle school resource that includes three mini-lessons per grade and reproducible worksheets that connect nutrition education to math, science, and English educational standards. Audience: Grades seven and eight. <https://www.fns.usda.gov/tn/nutrition-voyage-quest-be-our-best>

Classroom Resources

Sustainable Agriculture Resources and Programs for K-12 Youth

Sustainable Agriculture Research and Education

A guide to sustainable agriculture-oriented educational programs and curricula that includes direct links as well as program contact information. Audience: K-12 youth.
http://www.sare.org/content/download/50159/661951/Youth-Resources-May_2013.pdf?inlinedownload=1

Ag in the Classroom Curriculum Matrix

National Agriculture in the Classroom

The National Agricultural Literacy Curriculum Matrix is an online, searchable, standards-based curriculum map for K-12 teachers. The Matrix contextualizes national education standards in science, social studies and nutrition education with relevant instructional resources linked to Common Core standards. Audience: K-12.
<https://www.agclassroom.org/teacher/matrix/>

Farm-to-School Lesson Plans

Growing Minds

Farm-to-school activities that incorporate both national and North Carolina state curriculum standards. Audience: Pre-K-12.
<https://growing-minds.org/lesson-plans-landing-page>



Resources and Tools Database

Edible Schoolyard Project

Educational resources for the garden classroom, kitchen classroom, academic classroom and cafeteria organized by type, grade level and season! Audience: All ages.

<https://edibleschoolyard.org/resource-search>

Steps to Growing a Successful School Garden

LSU AgCenter

Experiences and best practices in how to create a successful school garden for classroom use. Contains Louisiana-specific resources. <https://www.lsuagcenter.com/profiles/iblack/articles/page1483629430997>



Garden As Classroom Manual

School Food Project, Boulder Valley School District

This manual explores experiences and best practices in the hope of assisting other school districts in implementing their own farm-to-school garden programs. While the specifics may vary depending on district circumstances, growing zones and other factors, the basic tenets of the program should be transferable to most districts throughout the country. <https://www.cde.state.co.us/nutrition/farmtoschoolbygardenclassroommanual>

Harvest of the Month

Developed by California Department of Public Health

All Harvest of the Month resources are based on the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) and Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) 2010 Dietary Guidelines for Americans. Harvest of the Month provides materials for students, families and the community to engage in hands-on opportunities to explore, taste and learn about the importance of eating fruits and vegetables and being active every day. Resources provide the opportunity for collaboration among many partners and stakeholders, including educators, school nutrition staff, school administrators, students, parents, farmers, retail outlets, worksites, SNAP offices, after-school programs and more. <http://harvestofthemonth.cdph.ca.gov/Pages/default.aspx>



Serving Up MyPlate: A Yummy Curriculum

USDA, Team Nutrition

MyPlate lessons available for three grade levels: Level 1 (first and second grades), Level 2 (third and fourth

grades), Level 3 (fifth and sixth grades). Each kit includes a teacher's guide with three lessons, Eat Smart to Play Hard With MyPlate poster, song CD, MyPlate Blast Off Game, and 35 MyPlate at Home parent handouts (parent handouts are also available separately in Spanish, French, and traditional Chinese). Audience: First through sixth grades. <https://www.fns.usda.gov/tn/serving-myplate-yummy-curriculum>

Summer Food, Summer Moves Kit

USDA, Team Nutrition

Engaging and fun activities for summer meal sites. Each kit includes 30 activities (divided into six fun summertime themes), seven educational posters, six types of promotional fliers, an activity placemat, and educational handouts for parents. Activities can be customized based on the ages of participating children, time available and the summer meal site setting (indoor or outdoor). All materials are available separately in English and Spanish. Audience: All grades. <https://www.fns.usda.gov/tn/summer-food-summer-moves>



Recipes

Louisiana Harvest of the Month recipes are available in two formats: home and standardized for cafeteria use.

The standardized recipes feature each of the Harvest of the Month selections and provide child nutrition program operators with delicious new dishes that meet meal pattern requirements. These recipes are standardized to provide updated crediting information, including the vegetable subgroups. They also include recipes made with legumes, whole grains, and dark green, red and orange vegetables.

All LA HOM recipes go through testing. In addition to being tested for overall flavor, color and texture, we design recipes that have low-cost and easy-to-find ingredients, easy-to-follow instructions and a reasonable preparation time. Each recipe is tasted and rated by the LSU College of Agriculture School of Nutrition and Food Sciences. Once a recipe makes it through testing, we use a computer program to create a nutrition facts label and check that the recipe in its final form meets our nutrition program criteria.

In addition to our recipes, we also offer a seasonality chart, which is available in a printable version or as a colorful poster. This chart features the peak availability for all fruits and vegetables typically grown in Louisiana and can be found in Appendix C on page 36. For child nutrition staff, vegetables are separated by the vegetable subgroups to aid in incorporating meal pattern requirements.



Implementing Harvest of the Month

Getting Started

A successful Harvest of the Month program is a team effort. The strength of Harvest of the Month lies in its ability to reach students in a variety of settings and where they are able to be most impacted — the classroom, cafeteria, home and community. The success of your Harvest of the Month program depends on the people who implement it and the staff who work directly with the students to increase their knowledge of, access to and preference for fruits and vegetables.

Key players in implementing Harvest of the Month are classroom educators and child nutrition staff. Additional team members to engage are other school staff, including the administration, community nutrition educators and county extension agents. With a team in place, you can more effectively implement Harvest of the Month and motivate and empower students to increase consumption and enjoyment of a variety of colorful fruits and vegetables.

Steps and Tips to Implement Harvest of the Month

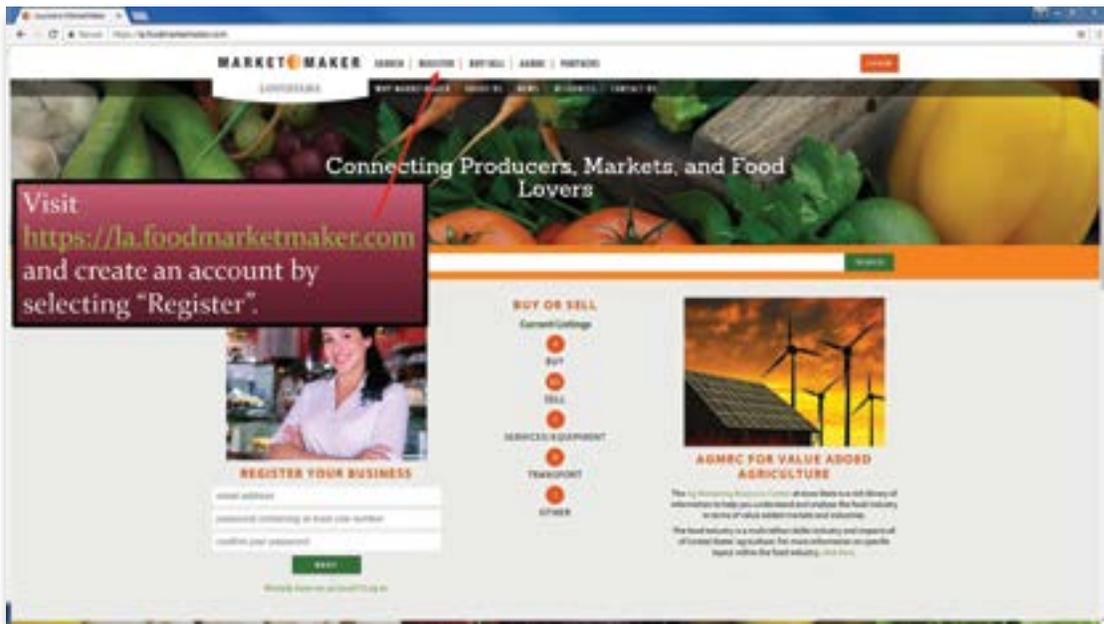
1. Gather support within the school community. Meet with key players — teachers, child nutrition staff, administrators, school board members, school staff, students and parents — to introduce Harvest of the Month. Engage them and solicit ideas for planning and implementing a program in their school or district.
2. Coordinate with the child nutrition program. Meet with the child nutrition director to discuss and determine her or his level of interest in participating. Review and finalize the Harvest of the Month Featured Produce Calendar for the upcoming school year. As needed, determine the logistics for classroom orders and delivery of the featured produce to the classroom for taste testing activities (e.g., classroom allocation and distribution, amount needed, bulk delivery schedule).
3. Create your schedule. Identify what your Harvest of the Month item will be each month. Refer to the Harvest of the Month Featured Produce Calendar and the Seasonality Chart. Also, be sure to check with your distributor to see what is locally available each month.
4. Create a Louisiana MarketMaker account. Louisiana MarketMaker can help you identify producers near you through the website, la.foodmarketmaker.com. You can easily search by product or area to find local products to offer in your Harvest of the Month program. Please see page 15 for more information on creating a MarketMaker account.
5. Decide how you will highlight each item for each month. Depending on your needs, you can choose to highlight the Harvest of the Month as a taste test, utilize it in a recipe already in-use or feature it using a Louisiana Harvest of the Month standardized recipe.
6. Coordinate with regional or parish-level health and nutrition campaigns or school garden groups. Contact your local LSU AgCenter extension office, Louisiana WellAhead and local hospitals to inquire what programs or organizations may be interested in collaborating with your program.
7. Highlight the LA HOM on your lunch menu using the promotional materials for signage.
8. Post the LA HOM graphics and newsletter content on your school and school nutrition website.
9. Send a letter home to families. Describe what F2S and LA HOM are and include a LA HOM calendar. A sample letter is available for reproduction in Appendix B on page 34.
10. Share the LA HOM newsletter content via print, email or parent portal.

11. Use school Facebook, Instagram and Twitter accounts to promote Harvest of the Month. Consider posting the social media graphics, providing a little information about the item and encouraging parents to have their children try it at lunch. For example: “The November Harvest of the Month is sweet potatoes. Try the sweet potato and black bean quesadilla made with sweet potatoes from Crowley, Louisiana, on November 10 and 24. Thanks to the curing process, we serve Louisiana sweet potatoes in our school lunches year-round.”
12. Post LA HOM signage in cafeterias and throughout the school. Put posters up in the cafeteria where kids can see them anytime. Display graphics on walls near the lunch line so students can learn more while waiting.
13. Have food service staff and lunch monitors encourage students to try LA HOM menu items and engage students. For example, on the lunch line say to students “The Harvest of the Month is sweet potatoes. Try the black bean and sweet potato quesadilla, which uses fresh sweet potatoes grown in Louisiana.” In the lunchroom ask, “Did you try the black bean and sweet potato quesadilla? How did you like it?”
14. Do taste tests. Taste tests offer students an opportunity to sample locally grown menu items. They can be conducted in the classroom or in the cafeteria and can be as simple as providing samples of menu item being served that day. There are many ways to conduct taste tests. Here are a few examples, but you can find the full Taste Test Guide in Appendix A on page 26.
 - In the cafeteria: Start by posting LA HOM posters and graphics. Set up a table or walk around with a tray of samples so students who didn’t buy lunch get a chance to try the LA HOM item. Engage students by telling them what they are tasting and where it was grown. Ask what they think of the food they are trying.
 - In the classroom: Let students try the LA HOM in a variety of ways. For example, raw broccoli, steamed broccoli, and roasted broccoli. Teachers and food service staff should work together to coordinate in-classroom taste tests. If possible, invite the food Service Director or other food service staff to the classroom to conduct the taste test and talk about where the food came from and when they can try it at lunch.
15. Integrate Harvest of the Month into your educational curricula. For more information on farm-to-school education, see page 9.

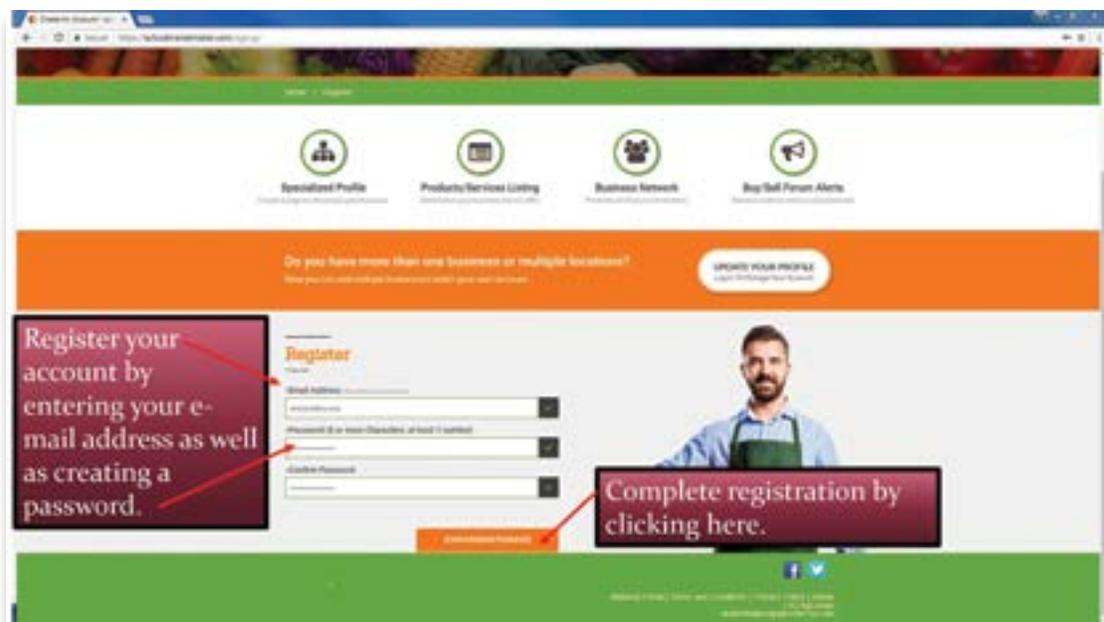
Creating a MarketMaker Account

For step-by-step instructions on how to create a buyer account on Louisiana MarketMaker, please refer to the instructions below. For in-depth tutorial videos on creating a MarketMaker account and searching MarketMaker, please visit our website at www.LSUAgCenter.com/LouisianaFarmtoSchool and click on Producer Resources then MarketMaker.

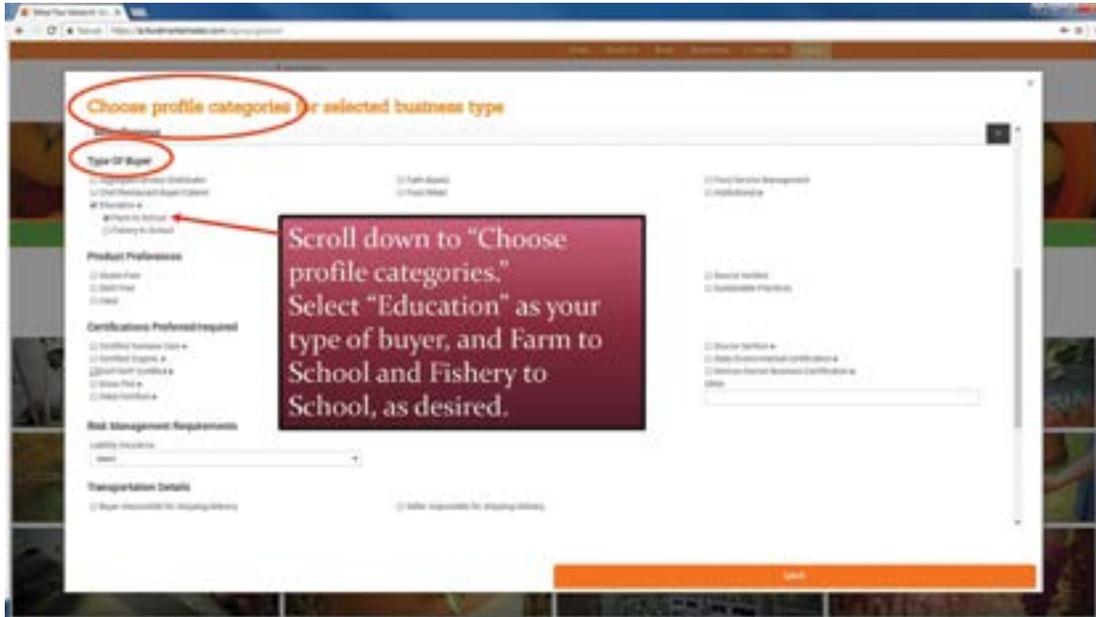
1. Direct your web browser to <https://la.foodmarketmaker.com>. At the home page, click register.



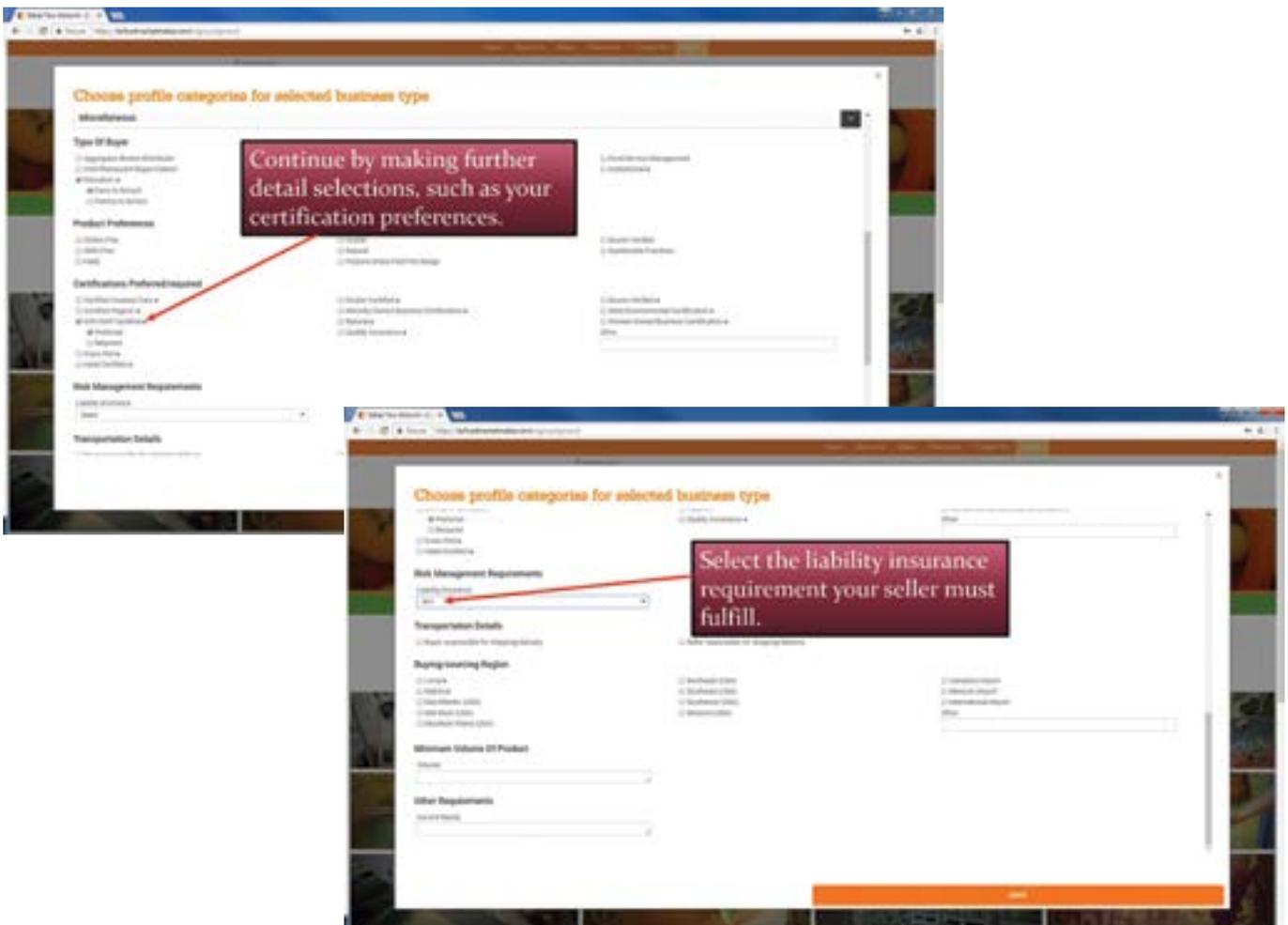
2. Next you will create a user name and password. Your user name is your email address. This is how you will log in.



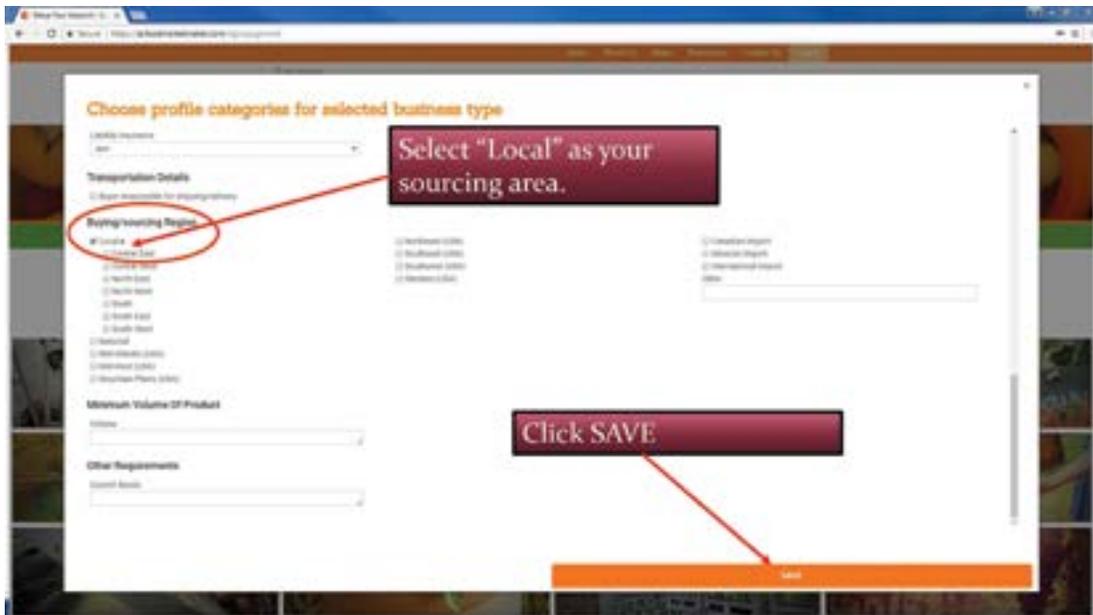
5. Continue scrolling down to the “Miscellaneous” category. Here is where you will add details of your buying practices. Select “Education” as your type of buyer, and “Farm to School” and “Fishery to School,” as desired.



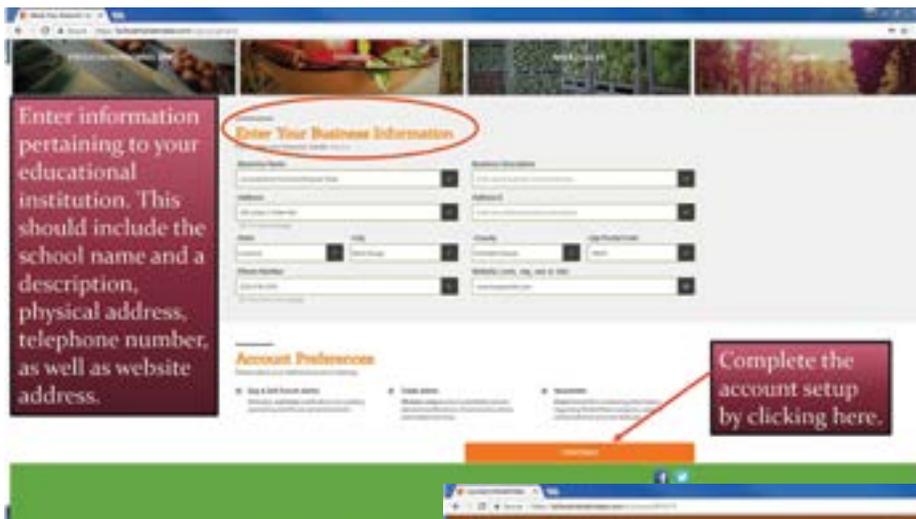
6. Add certifications, if desired, as well as liability insurance requirement amount.



7. Continue scrolling down. To include the entire state of Louisiana, select “Local” only under buying/sourcing region. Then click SAVE.



8. After you click SAVE, Enter information pertaining to your educational institution. This should include the school name and a description, physical address, telephone number, as well as website address. To complete the setup, click CONTINUE.



When you receive this message, your account is complete!



Gathering Support at Your School

Everyone within the school community plays a role in encouraging healthy eating habits. The support and involvement of the child nutrition staff is vital to the success of Harvest of the Month. By involving others in the process, you can gain program support, which will lead to a more successful implementation. Utilize the Harvest of the Month information flyer as a general program overview along with LA HOM 101 flyers. Arrange for time to meet with other key members in the school community, including teachers, principals, superintendents and school boards, school staff, students and parents, to discuss ways in which they would like to become involved and how they can support the messages promoted by Harvest of the Month.

Louisiana Harvest of the Month information flyers and LA HOM 101 flyers are pictured below and found on our website, www.LSUAgCenter.com/LouisianaFarmtoSchool.



Gathering Support in Your Community

1. Involve Teachers, Principals, Superintendents and School Boards

- Discuss the need for nutrition education and give examples of how healthy eating has been linked to improved test scores, reduced absenteeism and better classroom behavior.
- Demonstrate how incorporation of Harvest of the Month supports the federal requirement for establishing a local school wellness policy and will assist them in meeting several aspects of this requirement. Use specific examples, such as the nutrition education piece, and highlight how the program engages families.
- Describe how the tool kit is turnkey, allows for flexibility and provides teachers and child nutrition staff with the tools and links to Louisiana student standards.
- Schedule a presentation for an upcoming meeting (board, staff, faculty, etc.). Invite the Louisiana Farm to School team and share the tool kit elements, describe the program, or hold a Q&A session. Consider inviting students, parents, teachers and child nutrition staff to present the benefits of Harvest of the Month from their perspectives.
- In addition to these suggestions, the following are additional examples of how to engage teachers and school administrators.

Teachers:

- Provide a taste testing demonstration to show how the Harvest of the Month featured product can be used in a classroom.
- Highlight other available resources for staff, such as the educator resources, newsletter content, suggested classroom activities, books and other free resources.
- For additional resources, please refer to the tool kit elements section on pages 8-12 or visit www.LSUAgCenter.com/LouisianaFarmtoSchool.
- School Administrators (School Board, Superintendent and Principals):
- Share stories of districts that have received positive media attention regarding Harvest of the Month and how these districts were seen by the community for addressing the prevention of childhood obesity.
- Invite them to eat a healthy breakfast or lunch with students, work in the school garden or participate in a Harvest of the Month classroom activity.

2. Involve School Staff *(includes school nurses, librarians, physical education teachers and specialists, life skills and food and nutrition teachers, and afterschool program staff.)*

- Discuss possible ways to promote Harvest of the Month on the school campus (nurses' office, library, gymnasium, computer lab, etc.).
- Distribute the educator resources and newsletter content and encourage them to adapt the lessons and activities for their purposes.
- Solicit their ideas for and involvement in staff development and in-service training opportunities.
- Discuss ways in which older students may assist in program implementation at lower grade levels.
- Invite them to participate by offering taste tests as part of their work with students.
- Share Harvest of the Month promotional materials (e.g., featured produce posters, "I Tried It!" stickers).
- Discuss challenges they face in promoting healthy food choices.
- Invite them to implement their own activities. For example, if the school has a garden, discuss ways to engage students in garden-based nutrition education

3. Involve Students

- Schedule meetings with student leaders (e.g., student councils or governments, school health councils, student nutrition advisory committees) and other students to introduce them to Harvest of the Month.
- Solicit their ideas on how to best implement the program on campus.
- Engage students in the opportunity to make a difference in their schools by expressing their ideas and having them work with the appropriate adult to implement them.
- Encourage students to involve their teachers and child nutrition staff to implement changes in the school environment, such as increasing access to fruits and vegetables in the cafeteria (e.g., salad bar), vending machines and snack bars; or starting or maintaining a school garden.

4. Involve Parents

- As gatekeepers to the home, parents are key in implementing a successful program.
- Conduct parent workshop sessions at back to school nights and other parent meetings.
- Emphasize the link between nutrition and improved academic performance and classroom behavior.
- Invite them to share their experiences and skills in gardening or food preparation. Parents can even share these experiences and ideas in the classroom.
- Invite them to volunteer in the classroom on taste testing days or to chaperone on field trips.
- Provide the newsletter content in family newsletters and engage with them through social media. Encourage parents to share these with friends and neighbors.

5. Involve Retail

- Before you begin, it is recommended that you contact the Louisiana Farm to School director to see which stores in your area currently work with Louisiana Harvest of the Month. This will help eliminate any duplication of effort or confusion about the various activities.
- Contact the store or produce manager to arrange a meeting or presentation.
- Inquire with the store or produce manager to learn what they currently source locally and if they would be willing to post the featured product poster to coincide with the school.
- Discuss ways in which they would like to get involved in Harvest of the Month. Be sensitive to the retailer's own business challenges by trying to create a "win-win" situation for everyone.

6. Involve the Agricultural Community

- Support from the agricultural community extends Harvest of the Month messages and enriches students' experiences with fruits and vegetables and the producers. It also presents expanded opportunities for students to learn about Louisiana agriculture.
- Use the Louisiana Department of Agriculture and Forestry and Louisiana Grown as a resource. Visit www.LouisianaGrown.com.
- Meet with local farmers, produce vendors, and Louisiana Master Gardeners and discuss ways in which they would like to get involved with Harvest of the Month. Examples may include classroom presentations on farming, horticulture and marketing.
- Arrange field trips and other special promotions with local farmers' markets or farms. To find information about local farmers' markets and farms in your area, visit www.LouisianaGrown.com or la.foodmarketmaker.com.
- Discuss with your district's vocational agricultural teachers or your local Agriculture in the Classroom ambassador about how to enrich students' learning of the state's agriculture and its role in the economy.

Spreading the Word

There are many outlets for sharing your successes. Connecting with local media and retailers are important areas where you can extend the Harvest of the Month message into the community.

Connect With the Media

- Get the media and community involved with Harvest of the Month events and activities.
- Contact your school district to find out if they have a public information officer or a public affairs department. If so, contact the appropriate person for suggestions, tips and steps to connect with the media.
- Develop a media list of local newspapers (daily, weekly, community publications) and television and radio outlets.
- Call reporters and let them know about Harvest of the Month events and activities. If you do not know whom to contact, ask for the editorial assistant or news desk and ask them to direct you to the appropriate contact.
- Be sure to have signed parental permission slips if students are going to be interviewed or photographed.
- Describe your activities and invite media to film or photograph students participating. Think about visuals and newsworthiness when pitching to television or print photographers.
- Capitalize on existing national and state events, like the Great Louisiana Satsuma Peel, National Farm to School Month, and National Nutrition Month.
- Get permission from the principal, administrators and public information officers as appropriate.
- Be a resource for the media. Develop an ongoing relationship with local media.

Connect with Local Retail

A retail component can help strengthen your program. Retailers can get involved in a variety of ways by offering hands-on and experiential activities and further increasing students' knowledge and access to — and preferences for — local fruits and vegetables. The tool kit elements include a range of resources that can be easily adopted and provided to participating retailers. Examples include recipes, taste testing activities, recipes and even the poster. Additionally, the Harvest of the Month featured produce can be aligned with grocery store tours.

Opportunities for Retailer Participation:

- Conduct in-store taste testing, which creates an opportunity to try the Harvest of the Month featured product.
- Offer grocery store tours and back-of-the-house preparation areas.
- Promote the Harvest of the Month featured product in store by displaying the poster and including educational messages in promotional activities, samplings or displays.
- Align store advertising to include the Harvest of the Month featured product.
- Support local businesses with messages in advertising and sales circulars about the importance of fruits and vegetables in health.
- Provide artwork for coupons that can be distributed with in the family newsletters.
- Issue press releases or post information on store websites indicating that the store is a participant in Harvest of the Month.
- Donate featured produce for classroom activities.

Connect with Other State and Regional Campaigns

Louisiana Farm to School works with other state and regional partners with their own campaigns to build healthy communities. Some of these partners include:

- Louisiana Department of Education, Division of Nutrition
- Louisiana FitKids
- Louisiana Well-Ahead
- Market Umbrella
- Louisiana Department of Agriculture and Forestry
- Louisiana SNAP-Ed
- Ochsner Eat Fit

Ordering Information

Harvest of the Month Posters and Other Hard Copies

Louisiana Harvest of the Month Teams and SNAP-Ed partners can order the Harvest of the Month posters, “I Tried It!” stickers, What’s In Season Charts or paper copies by emailing louisianafarmtoschool@agcenter.lsu.edu or calling 225-578-1037.



Harvest of the Month Digital Program Materials

To access digital materials, please register through the online survey, found here:

<https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/HOMContract>.

Other supporting materials such as guides, flyers and checklists can be found on our website at www.LSUAgCenter.com/LouisianaFarmtoSchool.

For technical support and other questions about materials, email louisianafarmtoschool@agcenter.lsu.edu or call 225-578-1037.

Appendices



Taste Test Guide

Why do taste tests?

Students are often reluctant to try new foods. Taste tests introduce new menu items in a way that raises awareness about healthy food choices, involves the school community and builds a culture of trying new foods. Research has shown that children (and adults!) need to try new foods multiple times (up to 12 times or more) before deciding that they like them. Taste tests of the Louisiana Harvest of the Month (HOM) products give students an opportunity to try locally produced and in-season foods each month. For example, they may not like broccoli as kindergarteners, but providing regular opportunities for students to try it in various forms throughout their school years can lead to a whole new generation of broccoli lovers! All participating HOM schools or afterschool programs are encouraged to conduct at least one taste test each month.

When and where

When: Taste tests work best when implemented on a regular schedule. We suggest a monthly school-wide taste test highlighting the current HOM product.

Where: Taste tests can be run successfully in either the classroom or the cafeteria. Each school or afterschool program has its own unique circumstances, schedules and infrastructure, so be sure to take these into consideration when deciding where to implement your taste tests.

Benefits

- Classroom Benefits
 - Educators can integrate lessons from the HOM classroom handouts.
 - Data is collected in a more controlled environment.
 - HOM team leaders serve as leaders within the school.
 - Taste tests can be prepared by cafeteria staff or within each classroom (depending on the recipe and availability of equipment).
- Cafeteria Benefits
 - Cafeteria staff or other school staff can integrate lessons from the HOM cafeteria handouts.
 - Data is collected in a central location.
 - No classroom or instruction time is required.



For More Information

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(225) 578-1037



How do I run a successful taste test?

Below are some helpful tips for conducting successful taste tests at your school:

- **Involve students.** When students are involved in preparing, serving and surveying other students during a taste test, they will be more willing to try the new foods. Work with educators to create a schedule for classes to participate in preparing and sharing the taste tests.
- **Recruit volunteers.** Parent volunteers are very helpful during taste tests, especially for serving or helping to prepare food. Place a note in your school or afterschool program newsletter asking for parents and guardians interested in helping out.
- **Have a regular schedule.** Commit to taste tests on a certain day each month; this aids planning and makes taste testing a predictable part of the school or program culture.
- **Choose appropriate recipes.** The best recipes are simple and inexpensive to make, so they can be easily added into the regular meal program. Look at the cafeteria and classroom handouts for recipe ideas each month.
- **Use local ingredients.** Whenever possible, use ingredients that are grown or raised locally or in Louisiana for taste testing for the HOM items and the other ingredients. Consider working with the food service to coordinate purchasing of HOM items.
- **Use Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Snack Program funds.** Harvest of the Month works great with the Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Snack Program since it includes both the foods and nutrition education.
- **Advertise.** Generate excitement for your taste tests by announcing them in the school newsletter, take-home letters, bulletin boards, and morning announcements.
- **Don't yuck my yum!** Remind students not to say negative things about how something tastes because it might offend someone and discourage others from trying something new. If a student tries something that she or he does not like, request that they quietly spit it out in a napkin so other students have an opportunity to taste it and form their own opinions. Encourage students to use respectful language such as, "I don't care for it." Remind students that sometimes it takes trying new things several times before you begin to like them. You never know how many times of trying a new food it will take before it becomes your new favorite!
- **Use the right materials.** If you're doing a taste test in the cafeteria, talk to your food service director about whether you can simply serve a sample on each child's tray. Consider purchasing reusable sample cups for the total approximate number of students you plan to engage in taste tests.
- **Send home copies of the recipe.** Students love to share what they have done and learned at school with their families. Ask students who tried the recipe at home.

How should I collect feedback from students?

Getting feedback, both formally and informally, from the students is an important part of the taste test process. There are many ways to gather this feedback, and the size, scope, and context of your taste test will determine which approach is best. Here are three suggested methods of capturing feedback:

Ballot boxes or cups:

- Set up a table in the cafeteria with three containers labeled to indicate “Tried it,” “Liked it” and “Loved it” options. The ballot boxes could display the words or symbols such as smiley/frowny faces or thumbs up/down. Have a container of small objects, such as dry beans or tokens, ready for students to use to cast their votes.
- After the kids have tasted the food, encourage them to cast their vote in the box that corresponds to their opinion.
- This method is interactive and fun and allows them to record their opinion anonymously. Students might also be more apt to vote in accordance with their own opinion, rather than being influenced by what their friends’ reactions are.
- For taste tests in the classroom, count out the tokens aloud with the students and chart the results.

Visual count, tally:

- In a large group, you can walk around the room and keep a tally for every “Tried it,” “Liked it” and “Loved it” as each child tells you their opinion about the taste test.
- Count and keep tally.

Paper survey:

- Casting a paper ballot can be fun, and it has the same advantage as an anonymous ballot box: the secrecy.
- Can encourage students to vote in accordance with their own opinion.
- Create a simple paper ballot asking students to circle their preference: Tried it, Liked it or Loved it.
- Set up a ballot table and remind students to cast their votes after trying the taste test.

What do I do with the data once it is collected?

Food and nutrition education has both cross-curricular and extracurricular applications. Below are a few ideas:

- Curriculum connections. Taste test votes provide a wonderful set of data to work with in mathematics lessons about statistics, graphing or percentages. See the monthly Classroom handouts for more activity ideas.
- School garden connections. If a taste test item is particularly popular, contact your school garden coordinator(s) to see if it would be possible to grow it right there on the school grounds.
- Share your results. Share your results with your child nutrition director and manager to see if that food could be added to the menu.



Classroom Taste Test Survey Form

Harvest of the Month Item:

Today's Recipe:

School:

Teacher's Name:

Total # Students:

Date:

Reminders for Teachers or HOM Volunteers:

- Please remember to share fun facts from the classroom handouts with your students. This is a great opportunity for students to practice reading out loud.
- Pass out the taste test samples, then ask for a show of hands to complete the survey below. Thank you!

Show of Hands Survey

Raise your hand if you	# of students
Tried it	
Liked it	
Loved it	

Thank you for helping collect this data.

Please return this form ASAP to: _____

(HOM Team Leader)





Cafeteria Taste Test Survey Form

Harvest of the Month Item:

Today's Recipe:

School:

Total # Students:

Date:

Reminders for Cafeteria Staff or HOM Volunteers:

- If the environment permits, share fun facts from the cafeteria handouts with students.
- If there is a voting station, make sure it is clearly marked.

Taste Test Results

Tried it	
Liked it	
Loved it	

Comments:

Thank you for helping collect this data.





Schoolwide Results Sheet

Date of the Taste Test:

Harvest of the Month Item:

Recipe:

Where did the taste test take place? _____ Classrooms _____ Cafeteria

	Tried It	Liked It	Loved It
Total			

Comments:

Thank you for helping collect this data.



Taste Test Ballots

Circle Only One



Tried It



Liked It



Loved It

Circle Only One



Tried It



Liked It



Loved It

Circle Only One



Tried It



Liked It



Loved It

Circle Only One



Tried It



Liked It



Loved It

Circle Only One



Tried It



Liked It



Loved It



Greetings,

Our school is participating in the new Louisiana Harvest of the Month program (www.lsuagcenter.com/louisianafarmtoschool). Each month, our school along with other participating schools and programs throughout Louisiana will showcase one locally or Louisiana-grown or raised food by a) serving it in a meal or snack, b) offering taste tests to students, and/or c) doing educational activities. The two primary goals for this program are to expose students to new, healthy foods and to support Louisiana's food producers.

Watch the school menu and information sent home with students for more information about the Harvest of the Month foods being featured. We encourage you to ask your child about Harvest of the Month food and prepare these foods at home during the month that they are promoted. Research has shown that children can try a food up to 12 times before they "like" that food, which means that providing as many opportunities to try new foods is crucial to building healthy eating habits and adventurous eaters. This school year, we will feature the following foods:

- September – Eggplant
- October – Winter Squash
- November – Sweet Potatoes
- December – Citrus
- January – Broccoli
- February – Cabbage
- March – Strawberries
- April – Tomatoes
- May – Bell Peppers
- June – Cucumbers

We welcome your help during taste tests and educational activities. Please inquire with your child's teacher about these and other opportunities to dig in. We hope you join us in this opportunity to promote healthy eating and strong economies.



What's In Season?

LOUISIANA-GROWN PRODUCE SEASONALITY CHART



Vegetables & Herbs*	Jan.	Feb.	Mar.	April	May	June	July	Aug.	Sept.	Oct.	Nov.	Dec.
DARK GREEN												
Basil												
Beet Greens												
Broccoli												
Cilantro												
Endive, Escarole												
Greens (Collard, Mustard, Turnip)												
Kale												
Lettuce (Butterhead, Red Leaf, Romaine)												
Parsley												
Pea Greens/Shoots												
Spinach												
Swiss Chard												
RED/ORANGE												
Carrots												
Peppers (Red or Orange)												
Pumpkins (Orange Meat)												
Sweet Potatoes												
Tomatoes (Field)												
Tomatoes (Greenhouse)												
Winter Squash (Acorn, Butternut, Hubbard)												
STARCHY												
(Fresh, frozen or canned; not dry. Fresh legumes contain more starch than dry legumes.)												
Beans (Butter, Lima)												
Beans (Green, Snap, String)												
Corn (Sweet)												
Peas (Green)												
Peas (Summer or Black-eyed; Fresh, Not Dry)												
Potatoes (Irish)												

*Availability may vary due to location and weather conditions. Some products may be available year-round due to greenhouse production or storage.

SOLID = Peak Availability **SHADED** = Less Availability

Vegetables & Herbs* (cont.)	Jan.	Feb.	Mar.	April	May	June	July	Aug.	Sept.	Oct.	Nov.	Dec.
BEANS AND PEAS (LEGUMES)												
(Canned, frozen or cooked from dry. Does not include green peas, green lima beans and green string beans.)												
Beans (Butter, Lima)												
Beans (Fava)												
Beans (Shelled Green, Snap)												
Beans (Yardlong)												
Peas (Summer or Black-eyed; Mature, Dry)												
OTHER VEGETABLES AND HERBS												
Artichokes												
Asparagus												
Beets												
Brussels Sprouts												
Cabbage												
Cauliflower												
Cucumbers												
Eggplant												
Fennel												
Garlic												
Kohlrabi												
Lettuce (Iceberg)												
Mirliton												
Okra												
Onions (Bulb)												
Onions (Green)												
Peppers (Green, Sweet Bell, Green Chilies, Purple, Yellow)												
Radish												
Squash (Cucuzza)												
Squash (Summer, Yellow)												
Squash (Zucchini)												
Turnips												

*Availability may vary due to location and weather conditions. Some products may be available year-round due to greenhouse production or storage.

SOLID  = Peak Availability **SHADED**  = Less Availability

Fruits & Nuts*	Jan.	Feb.	Mar.	April	May	June	July	Aug.	Sept.	Oct.	Nov.	Dec.
Apples												
Asian Pears												
Blackberries												
Blueberries												
Cantaloupe (Melon)												
Crab Apple												
Figs												
Grapefruit												
Grapes (Bunch, Table)												
Grapes (Muscadine)												
Kumquat												
Lemons (Meyer)												
Loquat												
Mayhaw												
Nectarines												
Orange (Blood)												
Orange (Louisiana Sweet)												
Orange (Navel)												
Peaches												
Pecans												
Persimmons												
Plum (Japanese)												
Pomegranate												
Quince												
Satsuma												
Strawberries												
Tangerines												
Watermelon												

*Availability may vary due to location and weather conditions. Some products may be available year-round due to greenhouse production or storage.

SOLID  = Peak Availability **SHADED**  = Less Availability

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) meal patterns for the National School Lunch Program and School Breakfast Program include five subgroups of vegetables that count toward daily and weekly vegetable requirements. These subgroups are based on the recommendations of the 2010 Dietary Guidelines for Americans. The subgroups are dark green, red/orange, beans and peas (legumes), starchy and other.

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Notes

This resources was made possible through funding by the United States Department of Agriculture Specialty Crop Block Grant Program (2016) through the Louisiana Department of Agriculture and Forestry and USDA funds administered by the Louisiana Department of Education. The Louisiana Farm to School Program is part of an interagency agreement between Louisiana State University Agricultural Center and the Louisiana Department of Education.



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