



# Harvest of the Month Overview

School nutrition programs play a vital role in supporting student health. School meals are full of fruits, vegetables, whole grains, lean protein, and milk. They also educate students on creating balanced meals through the selection of healthy food choices and provide opportunities to try new foods. However, getting students to participate in school meal programs is not always easy. Schools can implement a variety of strategies to help sustain student interest and increase participation in the meal program.

Farm to School is one strategy that can be used to attract students to participate in the school meals program. Farm to School can be used to describe activities that promote and serve locally produced foods in the cafeteria, classroom, and community. Specifically, Harvest of the Month programs provide students with the opportunity to explore, taste, and learn about local agricultural products. When students connect to the people and the place where their food is grown, they are inspired to choose those foods.

The *Nutritious, Delicious, Wisconsin Toolkit* provides information for school nutrition professionals to implement a Wisconsin Harvest of the Month program at their school. The toolkit contains recipes featuring Wisconsin agricultural products, information on local procurement, promotional materials, and education resources. The Wisconsin Harvest of the Month program is intended to help schools with starting or growing their farm to school program. For additional information and resources, visit [UW Extension's Harvest of the Month Website](#).

## What is Harvest of the Month?

Harvest of the Month is a statewide campaign that provides an opportunity for students to try new foods and learn about how they are produced. Each month, schools feature one seasonal, Wisconsin agricultural product for students to explore, taste, and learn about. Activities may include taste testing, serving the product in a meal or snack, and featuring it in promotional materials in the cafeteria. In the classroom, teachers, AmeriCorps members, or FoodWise educators can engage students in educational activities related to the Wisconsin agricultural product. Additionally, schools can communicate about Harvest of the Month with families through newsletters, emails, and social media posts. Collectively, these activities multiply the impact of the Harvest of the Month program.

## Why Harvest of the Month?

Incorporating local foods into your menus has been shown to increase student participation in the school meal programs. According to the National Farm to School Network, schools participating in Farm to School programming increased participation in their meal program on average by nine percent. Additionally, students increased their fruit and vegetable consumption, were more willing to try new and healthy foods, and were more likely to choose healthier options in the cafeteria. Research shows the many benefits of Harvest of the Month programs by increasing the amount of fruits and vegetables student eat, reducing food waste, increasing participation in school meal programs, and supporting farmers and the local economy.