

# Greenmarket: Fresh, Fun and Still Growing Strong



A program of GrowNYC, Greenmarket, NYC's outdoor shopping experience, has 50 locations in all five boroughs.

**B**rowse around a Greenmarket in one of the five boroughs and you'll find everything from fresh ricotta, handmade ice cream and grass fed beef to black squid, organic kohlrabi, tomatillos, epazote (a pungent Mexican herb) or papalo (something like cilantro). Then again, you just might want to pick up a bag of orchard apples, a handful of fresh lavender or a pound of goat cheese. It's all available at Greenmarket.

If you want to experience farm grown produce in the midst of New York, there are plenty for the pickings — 50 locations in all five boroughs and expanding. Greenmarket is looking to grow its presence in Brooklyn, the Bronx and Queens. A Staten Island location was opened last year.

A program of GrowNYC,

(the 40-year old nonprofit), Greenmarket currently has 18 year-round markets and many more each week during peak season, May through Christmas.

The outdoor shopping experience, which was founded in 1976 (way before green was a verb), promotes regional and sustainable foods that are produced locally. All of the fish comes from mid-Atlantic waters. Their circle of farmers covers an area that ranges from 250 miles north, 120 miles south, to 170 miles east and west. As a result, Greenmarket helps to preserve 35,000 acres of regional farm lands.

"We actively recruit farmers through word of mouth," explains Michael Hurwitz, director of Greenmarket. There is also no resale allowed — all of their 210 farmers are required to sell only what they produce.

"People are beginning to realize the relationship between food and health," says Hurwitz. "Food harvested within 24 hours and raised without chemicals on pasture is far healthier than its industrial counterparts."

Beyond the fabulous food, fragrant flowers, maple syrup, handmade candles and yummy free tastings, Greenmarket is also a fun family outing and a healthy alternative to your local grocery chain.

For example, NYC's Union Square Greenmarket is a bonafide tourist attraction and a place to buy every type of fresh produce you can imagine. Two thirds of Greenmarket farmers sell at Union Square which is open four days a week in peak season.

Greenmarket is also helping to make sustainability more affordable. "We run one of the

most aggressive food access programs in the country — 29 markets this year will accept food stamps," adds Hurwitz.

And true to the eco-friendly philosophy, there's nothing that goes to waste. Greenmarket is aligned with City Harvest and partners with seven emergency food providers to pack up, pick up and deliver food at the end of a selling day.

"Between our partners, we donated half a million pounds of food last year," says Hurwitz.

Greenmarket also has textile collections at several locations where you can drop off disposable items including used

clothes, rags and shoes.

"In two years we've already hit the 400,000 pound mark of textiles. We partner with a business that sells what they can and shreds the rest into rags. They create mesh products for everything, including the interior of your car door," he explains.

If you want to make a difference, Greenmarket offers one day training sessions. After taking the workshop, volunteers can help at a variety of venues including markets, events, youth education or leading tours. Find out more at [www.grownyc.org](http://www.grownyc.org).

— Holly Reich

## About Big Town **Going Green**

Big Town Going Green is a series of articles showcasing local companies and initiatives that support the environment through innovative "green" programs or services.