

# Culinary

## Your taste buds will thank us

Oregon's Willamette Valley was a magnet for pioneers seeking rich soils, a mild climate and a healthy growing season for food crops. Today, farmers here grow a myriad of fruits and vegetables that begin coming into season in the spring and continue through fall and even winter. The arrival of fresh, local strawberries and asparagus are an indication of things to come.



*Downtown street dining.*

Lively farmers' and public markets are held every Saturday and Wednesday in historic downtown Salem (May-October) and in south Salem every Saturday (year round). Visitors, shoppers, workers and city residents congregate here to select farm fresh produce and consume delightful lunch meals prepared on the spot. With two open-air farmers' markets and one indoor public market, the freshest produce is available to area chefs during the region's growing season. Organic produce, delicious baked goods, freshly cut flowers, potted plants, jewelry, crafts and even furniture is readily available at these markets.

A Salem area driving tour can reveal a farmers market, fruit stand, local winery and a quaint country community. Many of these rural gems offer various agricultural festivals that are held in the region — from spring's strawberry and flower festivals to the harvest celebrations

of late summer and autumn. Farmers markets can be found in nearby Woodburn, Silverton, Stayton, Jefferson and Willamina. Each foray into the countryside yields a bountiful table that is a feast for both palate and eye.

Chefs of the region discovered long ago that the produce grown right in their backyard provides the best ingredients for Northwest Cuisine. Heirloom tomatoes, sweet peppers, eggplant, potatoes, sweet corn, squash and sweet onions contribute to local menus as they come into season. Desserts are just as important; highlighting locally grown berries and a variety of fruits such as peaches, apples and pears.

This bountiful region provides the opportunity to enjoy the best things in life. So eat and drink exceptionally well while enjoying the Salem area.

*From farm to plate – the bounty of the region is spectacular.*

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