



Direct Fresh Produce Access: FoodShare's Good Food Programs The Good Food Box, Good Food Markets and the Bulk Fresh Produce Program

FoodShare's **Good Food Programs** connect individuals and communities with healthy, fresh, affordable and culturally diverse fresh vegetables and fruit, increasing the consumption of healthy produce, improving the income of small family farms, and creating vital community-building opportunities.

The Good Food Box delivers top-quality fresh produce to all, while fostering community development. Customers pay the cost of the produce itself (starting at just \$13), while distribution is subsidized. We deliver 4,500 bountiful boxes every month through 200 volunteer-run drops. FoodShare provides training and produce to support the operation of 20 **Good Food Markets** run by local groups in under-resourced neighbourhoods. These vibrant markets make available the same top-quality fruits and vegetables that go into the Good Food Box, but allow shoppers to purchase in quantities that meet their cash flow needs, at the same time creating public space and breaking down social isolation. FoodShare's **Fresh Produce Program** provides affordable and healthy fresh produce delivered directly to 250 schools, parenting and child care centres and community agencies on a weekly basis.

FoodShare's distribution of fresh produce started 15 years ago as a way to create linkages between field and table. The goal was to increase the income of farmers, at the same time making affordable produce more accessible to Toronto communities and, particularly prioritizing low income people. Today, FoodShare's *Good Food Programs* distribute almost 2 million dollars worth of fresh produce annually, purchasing this produce directly from at least 25 family farmers, and supporting many more farms through purchases made through wholesalers at the Ontario Food Terminal.

More About the Produce in the Good Food Programs and the inception of this model, with the Good Food Box:

The Good Food Box is a non-profit fresh fruit and vegetable distribution system created and operated by FoodShare Toronto, who pioneered this "box model" that has now been adopted by many others. It runs like a large buying club, with centralized purchasing and co-ordination. Individuals place orders for boxes with volunteer drop-off coordinators in their neighbourhood and pay between \$13 and \$33 for their box, depending on the version they choose. This price reflects the cost of the produce itself and FoodShare makes up the rest.

Customers benefit from the cost savings of bulk buying and the time saved by this distribution method. Produce is touched by fewer hands, gets to them faster, and costs less. This means that purchasing high quality, fresh food is within the reach of many more people than through the regular retail system.

FoodShare's customers purchase top-quality fruits and vegetables from local farmers and the Ontario Food Terminal, which volunteers pack into boxes at FoodShare's warehouse. Each box contains the same mixture of produce, though the contents change with each delivery, depending on what is in season and reasonably priced at the time. FoodShare's truck drivers deliver the boxes to the neighbourhood drop-off locations, where the local volunteer coordinators ensure that customers pick up their boxes.

Established in 1994 with just 40 boxes, the Toronto Good Food Box program now distributes just under 4,000 Good Food Boxes each month through about 200 neighbourhood drops.

Priorities in choosing Good Food Box contents:

- Quality
- Value
- Culturally Appropriate Food
- Local and Seasonal
- Sustainable Growing Practices
- Reduced Packaging
- Fair trade

More about Good Food Markets:

Good Food Markets are community markets that sell high-quality, affordable fruits and vegetables. These markets bring healthy produce to neighbourhoods where it might not otherwise be available, and where farmers' markets are not viable because sales are too low to cover farmers' costs.

Good Food Markets feature seasonal, local produce plus imported favourites in order to offer the greatest quality and cultural value to the neighbourhoods they serve. Each market uniquely reflects its community and is a vibrant and important gathering place, providing opportunities for neighbours to meet, share information and to celebrate. Over time many markets add other features, from children's activities to information tables about social issues, bake ovens and home cooked food sales, jewellery and clothing vendors and harvest celebrations.

FoodShare works in partnership with community organizations and neighbourhood leaders to run the markets. We pass on tools and provide training and ongoing support to community partners and residents who manage all the operational aspects of the market.

On market day, FoodShare delivers top-quality fresh produce which we purchase from local farmers and from the Ontario Food Terminal.

79% of Good Food Market customers come back for each and every market, which indicates just how vital they are to communities.

There are now 17 Good Food Markets in communities across the City of Toronto with demand for many more.

We have heard from market shoppers that because of these markets, 52% of adults and children are eating more fruits and vegetables, 35% prepared home cooked meals, 37% reported feeling significantly healthier, 47% said they got to know more of their neighbours and overall, 98% felt that the market had improved their neighbourhood.

For more information:

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