



Regional Growing Highlight: Central Arizona

October 15, 2024

1:30 PM - 2:00 PM

Professional Standards Learning Codes: 1130, 1230



Meet Your Host



Kim Ruiz, RDN

HEALTH AND NUTRITION SERVICES SPECIALIST

Welcome!



upLIFT was designed specifically for child nutrition professionals like you. It offers resources to help you LEARN about nutrition, get INSPIRED on meal choices for your participants, FEED students healthy meals, and TEACH others in your community about your programs.

You can look forward to materials and monthly webinars featuring unique upLIFT content showcasing Arizona child nutrition professionals, and providing ongoing inspiration throughout the year. This will empower you to upLIFT your programs in your own unique way!

Overview

1. Central AZ Climate and Agriculture
2. Procuring Local Food in Central AZ Region
3. Serving Local Food in Central AZ Region

Central AZ Climate and Agriculture

Introduction

Regionality, Agriculture, and School Meals

The climate in Central Arizona is recognized for its advantageous conditions for growing a variety of crops.

- The region's diverse weather patterns, soil quality, and effectively managed water resources contribute to the successful growth of produce.

Furthermore, agriculture plays a significant role in Arizona's resource production. Locally produced foods like milk, eggs, and beef also influence the meals provided in schools.

Arizona Climate Zone

What is a Climate Zone?

Climate zones are useful for understanding the temperature limitations of a location and selecting appropriate plants for long-term successful plant performance. There are 5 major climate zones world-wide:

- Tropical
- Dry
- Temperate
- Continental
- Polar

Arizona is considered a **Dry** climate zone featuring a **hot desert with mild winters.**

Central AZ Climate

Central AZ Microclimate

Arizona's climate is in part affected by three physiographic landforms, the Colorado Plateau, the Transition Zone, and the Basin and Range. The diverse geography within each landform, such as canyons, creates **microclimates** that can change drastically over a short distance.

Farmers use these microclimates to choose the right soil and water amounts to grow successful crops. **Central AZ is in the “Transition Zone”, which is ideal for growth of certain crops that thrive in dry environments.**

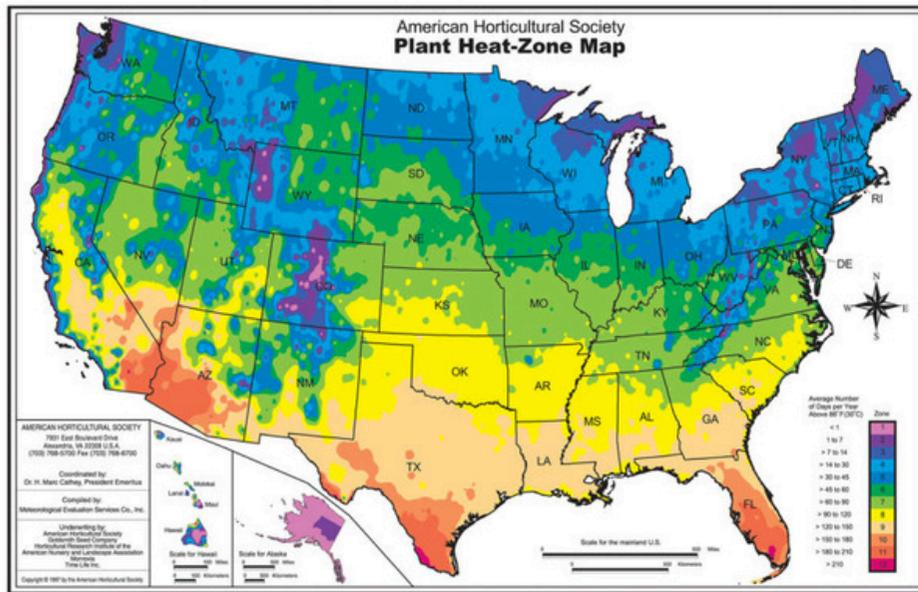
Climate Zone Map



USDA Plant Hardiness Zone Map for Arizona assigns zones based on the average annual minimum winter temperatures and ranges from zone 4b to 10b.

The warmest locations are located in the southwestern and southcentral part of the state, zone 10, mainly along the Colorado River and the Phoenix metropolitan area with minimum winter temperatures between 30°F to 40°F.

Other Useful Climate Tools

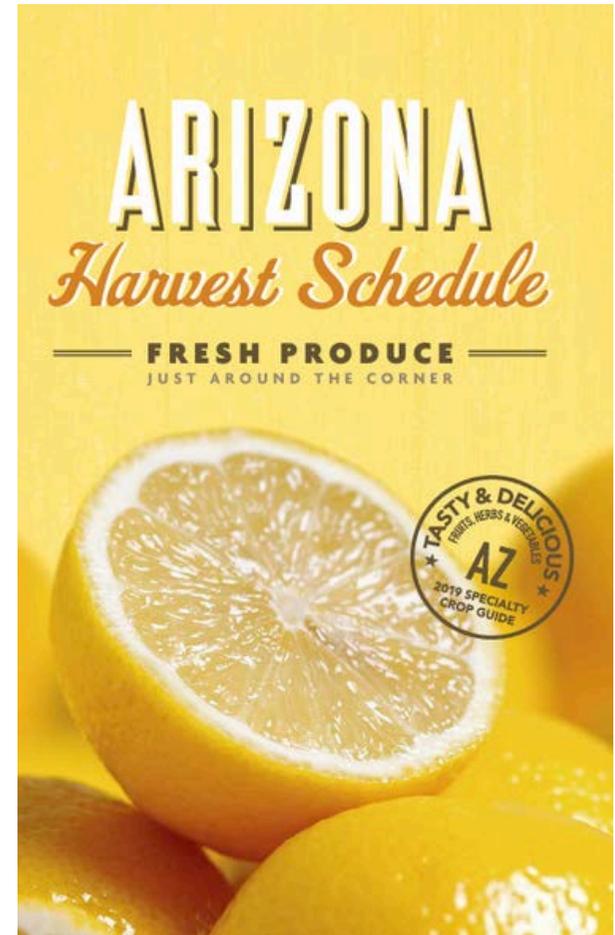


- The **Plant Heat Zone Map** has 12 zones that are classified based on the number of heat days with temperatures above 86°F
- The **Sunset climate zones** consider all aspects of climate such as latitude, high and low temperatures, elevation, ocean or continental air influence, and humidity

AZ Harvest Schedule

Seasonal Crop Guide

There is produce being harvested from January to December in Arizona! Follow the harvesting calendar to see what is available every month of the year.



Key Growing Seasons

How Climate Affects Local Procurement

Key growing seasons in Central AZ include Fall and spring, with limited summer activity due to **extreme heat**.

- Common crops that grow during peak season include: leafy greens, citrus fruits, root vegetables.

Knowing the peak seasons can help with menu planning and forecasting before deciding to procure local.

Due to extreme heat, limited seasonality, and dwindling farmland in Central AZ and Metro Phoenix, connecting directly with Farmers may not be the *most* accessible option for procuring local.

Procuring Local Food in Central AZ Region

Advantages

Accessibility to Local Items

- One of the biggest advantages to being located in Central AZ when procuring local is ACCESS.
 - Even with the decreasing farmland in metro area, mainline distributors and aggregators are readily available and providing local items around the clock.
 - Access to grocery stores also makes it easy to procure local, as many farms have their items available in stores.
 - The volume of food and vendors in central AZ makes it easier to get local items at a lower cost.

Disadvantages

Climate and City Development

- Freeway development has cut through a good portion of existing farmland in out parts of metro Phoenix
- Housing developments expanding to farmland also affects farmers existing locations
- Extreme heat for a good portion of the year limits what can actually grow in central AZ
 - Year round crops and resilient crops that have adapted to extreme temperatures grow best in central AZ

Procurement Resource

Aggregators and Mainline Distributors List

This list was compiled using information reported for Try it Local reimbursement. These contacts and webpages may be used as reference when looking to connect with local farmers and producers.



TRY IT LOCAL RESOURCE LIST

The Arizona Department of Education Health and Nutrition Services does not endorse any specific distributors, farmers, producers, etc. for Try it Local. This list was compiled using information reported for Try it Local reimbursement. The following resources may be used as reference when looking to connect with local farmers and producers. Please note that while this list provides valuable guidance, it is not exhaustive.

Mainline Distributors

Distributors that deal with vast quantities of products and are often able to provide better discounts and pricing options for those who buy in increased volumes.

Grand Avenue Produce
Greco & Sons
Peddlers Son
Shamrock Foods
Stern/Charlie's Produce
Vesta Foodservice
Sysco

Aggregators

A company that negotiates with producers of the food items on behalf of groups of consumers.

Pivot Produce
Sun Produce Co-Op

Procurement Resource

Aggregators and Mainline Distributors Guide

When reaching out to aggregators/distributors, remember these key points to establish a successful connection.

LOCAL FOOD TRY IT LOCAL FOR SCHOOLS

AGGREGATORS AND MAINLINE DISTRIBUTORS

When reaching out to aggregators/distributors, remember these key points to establish a successful connection:

KNOW THE DIFFERENCE

Aggregator: a company that negotiates with producers of the food items on behalf of groups of consumers

Mainline Distributor: distributors that deal with vast quantities of products and are often able to provide better discounts and pricing options for those who buy in increased volumes

DETERMINE WHAT YOU NEED

- Are local products highlighted on the order lists? If not, is it possible to do so in the near future?
- Are notations included indicating a product is sourced locally sent out regularly?
- Can specific farm names for locally grown products be provided, or is the farm of origin information included on product labels?
- Can items from specific farms be requested?

ASK QUESTIONS ABOUT LOCAL FOODS

Ask your distributor or aggregator for a list of available local foods and a report of current local foods you purchase.

The report can show amounts purchased monthly, quarterly or annually, and include total product weights and dollar amounts.

This information helps identify menus that work best for available local foods and set goals for the amount of local foods you purchase.

CLEAR UP EXPECTATIONS

Let the supplier know what "local" truly means in your world.

Make the call if you're all in for local goodies or if you're cool with just a pinch of local flavor.

Then spill the beans to your go-to guy!

KEEP THE CONVERSATION GOING

Talk with your account representative on a regular basis. If you need ideas on what questions to ask, start with the ones we've supplied.

RESOURCES:
GOOD FOOD FINDER
AZED.EDU

July 2024 | Health and Nutrition Services | Arizona Department of Education | This institution is an equal opportunity provider.

Procurement Resource

Connecting with Distributors

- Know the Difference
 - Aggregator: A company that negotiates with producers of the food items on behalf of groups of consumers
 - Mainline Distributor: Distributors that deal with vast quantities of products and are often able to provide better discounts and pricing options for those who buy in increased volumes
- Determine what you need
- Ask Questions About Local Foods
- Clear Up Expectations
- Keep The Conversation Going

Procurement Resource

Available Items

This is an example of available items through distributors. **This list is specific to peak produce in the month of October/Fall in Central Arizona, not a comprehensive list of items available**

- Winter squash
- Peppers
- Radishes
- I'itois onions
- Scallions
- Turnips
- Pickles
- Cheese
- Eggs
- Basil
- Rosemary
- Pomegranates
- Dates (mid to later in the month on)
- All kinds of greens (mid to later in the month on)

It's More than Produce!

Other Local Items Available

Local Items include more than produce!

In Arizona, the animal agriculture industry, which is led by cattle ranching, dairy and dairy production, is the largest agricultural sector! The egg industry is growing as companies see the excellent economic opportunities. There are also facilities licensed for growing fish and shrimp.

These items are also considered local. Several vendors and distributors make these items just as easily available for use in schools!

Serving Local Food in Central AZ Region

Benefits of Local in School Meals

Advantages of Procuring and Serving Local

- Nutritional advantages: fresh, nutrient-rich options
- Support for local farmers: boosts the local economy and reduces carbon footprint
- Educational opportunities: teaching students about agriculture and healthy eating
- Reimbursement for procurement of local items through Try It Local and Local Food for Schools

Successful Strategies

Serving Local Foods

- Partnerships with local farmers and cooperatives
- Seasonal menu planning to incorporate available produce
- Community involvement programs like school gardens

Challenges

Items to Consider When Procuring and Serving Local

- Limited crop variety during peak heat months
- Budget constraints for sourcing local produce
- Need for coordination between schools and local farms

Field Examples

Successful Farm to School Initiatives

Osborn Elementary School District

- During the Summer 2024 Farm Fresh Challenge, Osborn served chioggia beets from Orchard Learning Center, and red beets from Blue Organic Farms. Some were topped with peppercorn feta from Sun Produce Coop!
- Outcomes: improved student nutrition and increased local farm support



Field Examples

Successful Farm to School Initiatives

Madison School District

- During the Summer 2024 Farm Fresh Challenge, Madison Food Service served the following taco toppings:
 - Lettuce - Markon Yuma
 - Beans - AZ Gold Velmar Farms
 - Milk- Stanfield AZ
 - Tomatoes-Yuma
 - Cilantro- Gilber Agritopia Farms



Try It Local

Try it Local: Arizona's Local Food for Schools Program

“Try It Local” is an Arizona Department of Education (ADE) campaign intended to promote local Arizona products for use in School Meal Programs. The program aims to strengthen local and regional food supply chains and to encourage and support School Food Authorities (SFAs) with creating sustainable local procurement practices.

USDA has awarded \$4,380,275 for assistance in purchases of unprocessed or minimally processed domestic local or regional foods for use in meals served in School Meal Programs.

Try It Local

Allowable Foods and Expenses

Invoices eligible for reimbursement using LFS funds are for foods meeting the definition of **unprocessed or minimally processed, domestic, local, or regional, and used in meals associated with the School Meal Programs. Incidental costs** (such as those related to storage and distribution) that are a part of the normal or customary purchase price charged by a vendor for any given food product are also allowable.

ADE will process requests for reimbursement through submission of eligible paid invoices dated July 1, 2023, and later, on a first come first serve basis, through August 30, 2025, or until funds are obligated, whichever is first.

Try It Local Resources

Resources for SFAs

- [Information Sheet for SFAs](#)
- [Aggregators and Mainline Distributors Guide](#)
- [Try it Local Resource List - Mainline Distributors, Aggregators, and Farmers/Producers](#)

Try It Local Interest Form

Try It Local Participation

- HNS is eager to help SFAs understand Try it Local and procure local foods eligible for Try it Local funds. Please submit a **School Interest Form** to connect, learn more, and start receiving funds for eligible food purchases.
- [How to Receive Try it Local Funding for Eligible Food Purchases](#)

Summary

Procuring and Serving Local Foods in Central AZ Region

- Take advantage of the volume of local foods offered in Central AZ in places like supermarkets, farmers markets in addition to ordering through distributors.
- Disadvantages include extremely hot weather and city development leading to decline in farmland.
- Participate in Try It Local to receive reimbursement for local foods purchased for the School Meal Programs!

Resources



Winter Squash

ARIZONA HARVEST SCHEDULE: Jan, Feb, Mar, Apr, May, Jun, Jul, Aug, Sep, Oct, Nov, Dec

Find Winter Squash In Arizona

- Agular Farms in Paulden
- Crooked Sky Farms - Phoenix
- Pinnacle Farms In Laveen and Waddell
- Blooming Reed - Paulden

Food Buying Guide: Winter Squash Quick Math

1 pound of purchased, (unprepared) Acorn Squash	=	2 cups of prepared Acorn Squash
1 pound of purchased, (unprepared) Butternut Squash	=	1.75 cups of prepared Butternut Squash
1 pound of purchased, (unprepared) Hubbard (similar to Hag) Squash	=	1.25 cups of prepared Hubbard Squash
1 pound of purchased, (unprepared) Spaghetti Squash	=	1.75 cups of prepared Spaghetti Squash

Arizona Harvest Facts

- Winter squash is a warm season vegetable that grows and produces well in Arizona.
- Winter squash is harvested and eaten at the mature fruit stage.
- Features fully matured seeds and a tough rind.
- The primary difference between summer and winter squash is the skin.

Local Recipe: Three Sisters Enchilada Casserole

- These enchiladas feature fresh **Indigenous winter squash** as the star ingredient.
- Corn and black beans surround the **Indigenous winter squash** to round out the three sisters ingredients.
- Indigenous cultures warmly refer to corn, beans, and squash as the "three sisters" because these fabulous veggies look out for each other like the ultimate plant family when they grow side by side!
- One, 50 serving, standardized recipe uses about 27 pounds of purchased (unprepared) squash varieties.
- Try this recipe as a taste testing during lunch. It's a simple way to introduce locally harvested produce!

This institution is an equal opportunity provider.

One in a Melon



Edible Desert!

Explore the world of edible desert plants. Numerous plants have evolved to endure the tough conditions of the desert, providing essential nourishment!

Prickly Pear

- Adapted to survive in the desert with shallow roots, spines, and a waxy coating.
- Taste is described as sweet and subtly bland, similar to a melon or kiwi.

One cup of prickly pear is considered a good source of Vitamin C and Magnesium!

Cholla

- Chollas store water in their stems and have spines to protect them and provide shade.
- Taste is similar to green beans, artichoke hearts, or asparagus.

Cholla buds are rich in complex carbohydrates and soluble fibers!

Mesquite

- The roots of mesquite trees host colonies of nitrogen fixing bacteria, which enrich the desert's low-nutrient soil.
- The edible pods have a complex flavor with notes of caramel, toasted nuts, and molasses.

Mesquite pods are high in minerals such as calcium, magnesium, potassium, and iron!

Agave

- Agave survives by storing water in its thick, fleshy leaves.
- Taste depends on its color, with lighter having a more neutral flavor and darker having a stronger caramel flavor.

Agave contains B vitamins including Riboflavin, Pyridoxine, and Folate!

Desert Chia

- Desert chia produces seeds that are desiccation tolerant, which allows them to survive in extreme environmental conditions.
- The seeds are mild and nutty in flavor.

Desert chia seeds are a great source of fiber, antioxidants, and omega-3 fatty acids!

Piñon Pine

- Long taproots that can reach deep into the soil to find water help Piñon pine survive in the harsh desert climate.
- Piñon pine nuts have a buttery, mild, and sweet flavor with notes of citrus.

These nuts are rich in magnesium, iron, zinc, and protein.

UPLIFT
This institution is an equal opportunity provider.

These foods can be utilized for school food service! Check out the USDA Food Buying Guide for more information.

Nutrition Knowledge Fact Sheet

<https://www.azed.gov/hns/nslp/uplift/>

Looking Ahead

Join us next month!

upLIFT Webinar Series: Northern Arizona Growing Season Highlight

November 19, 2024

1:30 pm to 2:00 pm

Join us on November 19 for an informational webinar focusing on the Northern Arizona growing season and its impact on school meals. Discover innovative strategies to highlight and utilize the bounty of Northern Arizona's growing season to provide healthy and delicious meals for students. Learn about the unique opportunities and challenges of sourcing local produce for school nutrition programs in this region, including resources and tips from mainline distributors providing local items. Don't miss this informative session designed for school nutrition professionals interested in serving local foods, and promoting farm-to-school initiatives!



Thank you!

**Any questions?
Please type them into the Q&A now.**

If you are attending the live webinar, you will receive an email once attendance has been completed. Once you have received this email, your training certificate will be available in Arizona Professional Learning Development (APLD).

If you are watching the recorded webinar, you can access the survey link and certificate of completion at the end of the webinar slides.



Congratulations!

You have completed the recorded webinar: [Central Arizona Growing Season Highlight](#)

To request a certificate, please go to the next slide.

In order to count this training toward your Professional Standards training hours, the training content must align with your job duties.

Information to include when documenting this training for Professional Standards:

- Training Title: [Recorded Webinar: Central Arizona Growing Season Highlight](#)
- Length: [0.5 hour](#)

Please Note:

- Attendees must document the amount of training hours indicated regardless of the amount of time it takes to complete it.

Congratulations!

Requesting a Training Certificate

Please click on the link below to complete a brief survey about this webinar. Once the survey is complete, you will be able to print your certificate of completion from Survey Monkey.

*This will not appear in your ADE Professional Learning Development (APLD) Account.

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

The information below is for your reference when completing the survey:

- Training Title: **Recorded Webinar: Central Arizona Growing Season Highlight**

In accordance with federal civil rights law and U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) civil rights regulations and policies, this institution is prohibited from discriminating on the basis of race, color, national origin, sex (including gender identity and sexual orientation), disability, age, or reprisal or retaliation for prior civil rights activity.

Program information may be made available in languages other than English. Persons with disabilities who require alternative means of communication to obtain program information (e.g., Braille, large print, audiotape, American Sign Language), should contact the responsible state or local agency that administers the program or USDA's TARGET Center at (202) 720-2600 (voice and TTY) or contact USDA through the Federal Relay Service at (800) 877-8339.

To file a program discrimination complaint, a Complainant should complete a Form AD-3027, USDA Program Discrimination Complaint Form which can be obtained online at: <https://www.usda.gov/sites/default/files/documents/USDA-OASCR%20P-Complaint-Form-0508-0002-50811-28-17Fax2Mail.pdf>, from any USDA office, by calling (866) 632-9992, or by writing a letter addressed to USDA. The letter must contain the complainant's name, address, telephone number, and a written description of the alleged discriminatory action in sufficient detail to inform the Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights (ASCR) about the nature and date of an alleged civil rights violation.

The completed AD-3027 form or letter must be submitted to USDA by:

Mail: U.S. Department of Agriculture Office of the Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights
1400 Independence Avenue, SW Washington, D.C. 20250-9410; or

Fax: (833) 256-1665 or (202) 690-7442; or

Email: program.intake@usda.gov

This institution is an equal opportunity provider.

