

## Benefits of Joining a Community Supported Agriculture Program

**Taking part in a Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) program may be the change you've been looking for. Your wallet, local farmers, and the environment will all thank you.**

Joining a CSA can save you trips to the grocery store, help make sure you have fresh, [high-quality produce](#) readily available, and can make your healthy eating goals become a reality. Here are simple factors to keep in mind if you're deciding if a CSA is right for you.

### What is a CSA?

CSAs are composed of individuals and families who purchase "shares" in a farm. These groups are springing up so quickly that many farmers have had to turn people away! In some CSA's, shareholders will pay money up front before the growing season to enable the farmer to invest in quality plants, labor, machinery, fertilizer, pest control, and many other aspects of farming. In a sense, the shareholder reaps the benefits of the farmer's labor, but is also exposed to some of the risks, which can include weather damage, drought, and other unexpected conditions. The farmers' ready cash, however, enables him or her to plant hearty crops and take the best possible care of them. Thus, problems with [seasonal crop](#) yields tend to be few and if they occur are usually resolved during the following season.

If an annual share sounds like too much of a commitment, look for a CSA that offers monthly memberships with the option to cancel any time.

### Types of CSA Programs

There are several types of CSA programs, which depend on the size and capability of the program. Some CSA programs offer farm pick-ups, while others deliver to a central location where shareholders can then pick up their CSA box. Some will even deliver produce boxes straight to your doorstep.

Certain CSA's even allow you to customize your produce box, selecting exactly which foods you want out of the ones available on the farm. This is a great option for picky eaters or those wary of surprises. In other CSA's programs, farmers will choose what goes in your box. This is a good option for those who enjoy [experimenting with new ingredients](#) and trying new recipes.

Many people say that a share provides enough to feed an army! Some people will choose to "share a share" with friends or family by alternating weeks for pick-up. Most CSA programs also offer half shares, which are typically suitable for a couple. This is a great way to [get your partner to eat more produce](#).

## Benefits of CSA Programs

### ***Sharing with Friends and Family***

One of the many benefits of belonging to a CSA is the fresh produce, meat, cheese, [grains](#), flowers, or pies – all depending on the CSA you choose – that you can receive. Plus, the experiences don't stop there. The friendship, learning, recipe swapping, and the fun of hosting a produce pick-up or taking a trip to the farm are terrific experiences and wonderful ways to deepen your connection with food and your neighbors.

### ***Decrease your Carbon Footprint***

Joining a CSA also allows you to support your local economy by giving your money directly to local farmers. Investing in local agriculture is more environmentally friendly as well. When you factor in the fuel it takes to transport food and the energy it takes to store it during transit, local food has a much lower carbon footprint. [Composting](#) any of your waste can carry your dollar even further in terms of environmental impact.

### ***Cost Savings***

Although it involves a several-hundred-dollar cash layout, the benefits and long-term cost savings of CSA membership accrue and are evident when the unbeatable produce starts arriving. Investing in a CSA is also a great way to get hands-on experience with plant foods and to enjoy your region's [seasonal bounty](#)! Get excited about the possibilities of colorizing your diet with your new CSA produce! [Root-to-stalk cooking](#) has never been so fun!

## How to Join

If you're interested in joining a CSA, you may be wondering how you can find one. To find a CSA in your area, visit [www.localharvest.org](http://www.localharvest.org).

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