

Be a Healthy Market: A Toolkit for Storeowners



Funding for this guidebook is provided by Healthy Hampshire. Healthy Hampshire is a regional public health collaboration of local municipal leaders, elected officials, schools, public health departments, local businesses, parents, and youth. It is part of the Mass in Motion statewide initiative through the Massachusetts Department of Public Health (MDPH).



Table of Contents

About This Guide	1
3 Reasons a Small Market Can Make a Big Difference	2
How Can Becoming a Healthy Market Help My Business?	3
Increasing Supply: 3 Things You Can Do to Get More Healthy Foods in Your Store	4
Increasing Demand: How Can I Sell More Healthy Foods?	5
It's All About Product Placement: 6 Things You Can Do (for Free!) to Promote Healthy Products	7
Produce Basics	8
Best Bets in Produce	9
Quick Tips for Selling Produce Faster	11
Healthier Picks	12

Also Included:

- Customer Feedback Form
- Healthy Retail Survey



About This Guide

First, we appreciate you making the effort to improve the health of your community! Here's some information about this guide to help you get started.

Who is this guide designed for?

The information in this guide is for storeowners who are interested in stocking or promoting healthier food options. It doesn't matter where you are in the process — whether you're thinking about ordering some healthier foods for your store or you've been stocking healthy products for a while now, this guide has information for you.

The guide also has information that can be helpful to health department directors, local health inspectors, and other organizations interested in promoting access to healthy food choices in their communities.

What will I find in this guide?

You'll find a number of helpful resources and tip sheets in this guide — everything from no-cost strategies for promoting healthy products to facts about why it's important to stock healthy products in your store.

How can I use the guide?

There's no right or wrong way to use these tips and resources. Simply take a look and see what makes sense for your store at this point in time. Remember, there are a lot of things you can do to provide healthy options in your store. Think of it as a work in progress — small changes over time really add up!

What about cost? I'm not sure I can afford to make big changes in my store.

That's not a problem! We understand that ordering healthier products might seem too costly. But becoming a healthy market isn't just about stocking new products — it's also about learning strategies to promote healthy products you already stock.

In fact, there's a lot you can do to make your market healthier that won't cost you anything at all.

As the owner of a small market, what you choose to offer your customers really matters.

Shopping at a market like yours is a very different experience for customers than shopping at a chain supermarket. And it's these differences that explain why you can have such an impact on your community.

Here are 3 reasons why a small market can make a big difference:

1

Your customers trust you.

Many small markets are family-owned businesses that really become part of the community. You see the same faces every day. We don't have to tell you that you build unique relationships with your customers. And that means that your customers will pay attention to what you promote.

2

People come to your store hungry (and in a hurry!).

Almost everyone who stops into a market like yours for a snack or something to drink is going to leave with exactly that — a snack or something to drink — no matter what you stock. And customers in a hurry aren't going to take a lot of time to think about their choice. That means you have a lot of influence over what your customers choose — much more than a huge supermarket with endless options.

3

You can help young people start healthy habits early.

Kids and teens are more likely to shop in small markets than in large supermarkets. That means you have the unique opportunity to help them start making healthy choices early, when those habits are most likely to stick — helping them to stay healthy later in life.

How Can Becoming a Healthy Market Help My Business?

Your customers aren't the only ones who can benefit from more healthy options in your store. Besides working to improve the health of your community, stocking and promoting healthier foods can mean better business for you.

The fact is, healthy food is good for business. Here's why:

Healthy foods can have high profit margins.

Selling 1 apple can earn you 20 cents — that's the same as selling 4 bags of chips!



Healthy foods help you attract new customers — and keep them coming back for more.

- When you make changes to what you sell, your customers notice. Everyone loves to see new foods and more variety.
- Offering foods that other stores don't stock can help your business stand out from other stores in your community.
- By selling healthy foods, you're showing people in your community that you care about their health!



Increasing Supply: 3 Things You Can Do to Get More Healthy Foods in Your Store

We know it can feel overwhelming to make changes to the products in your store. Just remember: in order to increase demand and benefit your business, you need to increase supply first. Here are some tips to help you get started.

1

Think about simple changes you can make to your food orders.

You may be able to make a lot of healthy changes to the foods you stock while keeping your order invoices just about the same. For example:

Instead of	Try
Fruit canned in sugary syrup	Fruit canned in 100% juice
Juice with added sugars	100% juice
Standard canned products	Sodium-free canned products
White bread or pasta	Whole-grain bread or pasta
Potato chips	Low-salt pretzels

2

Replace products that don't sell well with healthier options.

Is there something in your store that's been collecting dust for the last year? Get rid of it! This is a great opportunity to replace it with a new, healthy product. The old product wasn't selling, so you've got nothing to lose.



3

Order small amounts of healthy products to start.

Remember, it may take a few tries to find the right amount to buy for your store. Test out a few different products and see what sells best!





Increasing Demand: How can I sell more healthy foods?

Healthy foods can make money for your store. But at first, you may need to take some steps to increase the demand for healthy products. When your customers want healthy foods and you're committed to providing them, everybody wins.

Talk to your customers.

- Ask what healthy foods they'd like to see in your store. Customers who feel invested in your store are more likely to come back and buy the new healthy foods you stock.
- Ask your customers to tell their friends and family about the changes you're making in your store.

Give your customers ideas for how to use your healthy products.

- Put out recipe cards that use healthy foods that you stock. This can be a good way to show customers how they can use new or unfamiliar foods. You can even offer a small discount when customers buy foods that are featured in that week's recipe.
- Suggest ways your customers can use the fruits and vegetables you have. For example:
 - ✓ Add fruit to your breakfast cereal or oatmeal
 - ✓ Snack on sliced vegetables or dried fruit at work instead of candy
 - ✓ Add a vegetable to your take-out dinner
 - ✓ Eat fruit for dessert instead of sweets



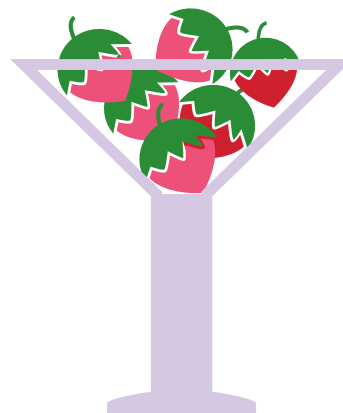


Offer discounts or deals on healthy foods.

- Offer package deals of healthy foods that go well together — for example, “buy a box of oatmeal and get a bunch of bananas for half price.”
- Start a frequent buyer card, so that customers receive a discount or free healthy item after shopping at your store 10 times.
- Offer free samples of new healthy foods so your customers can try them before buying.

Think about snacks.

- Put some healthy snacks right by the register for your customers who are in a hurry!
- If you can, devote a whole refrigerator or display case to healthy snacks. This is a great way to promote your healthy products.





It's All About Product Placement: 6 Things You Can Do (for Free!) to Promote Healthy Products

Remember, promoting healthy foods in your store doesn't have to mean financial investments from you. That's where product placement comes in — how you choose to display healthy products can make a big difference in how well they sell.

And the best part? Making some changes to your product placement won't cost you anything.

To get started, take stock of the produce and healthy foods you already sell. If you're not sure what counts as healthy, check out the packaging. Look for terms like:

- No added sugars
- No trans fat (or trans fat-free)
- Whole grain
- Low-sodium
- High-fiber
- Low in cholesterol

Once you've found some healthy foods to promote:

- 1** Put healthy foods where your customers can see them — for example, at the front of an aisle or by the checkout.
- 2** Always put healthy products at eye level.
- 3** Make your produce “pop” — arrange healthy foods in rows by color.
- 4** Use brightly colored signs and labels to mark healthy foods.
- 5** Make sure your healthy foods have price tags on them.
- 6** Put healthy foods that go well together next to each other — for example, whole grain pasta and low-sodium tomato sauce.



Produce Basics

Fresh produce (fruits and vegetables) can make money and bring new customers to your store. Here are a few simple tips to help you start stocking more produce.

Buy

- Start small: order small amounts of new foods to figure out which sell best.
- Buy local, seasonal fruits and vegetables whenever you can. In-season produce is cheaper — and it tastes better!



Tip: For help finding locally-grown products, visit CISA's website at: <http://www.buylocalfood.org/buy-local/>

Inspect

- If you can, look at produce before you buy it. If you find bruises, dents, or spoiled spots, tell the vendor and send it back.
- Don't buy a fruit or vegetable if the core has black spots or the stem is soft.
- Look for mold on citrus and tropical fruit, like oranges. If you see white on the skin, don't buy it.
- Trust your nose! Fruits and vegetables should smell fresh. Produce that smells bad won't taste good either.

Display

- Remember the saying "first in, first out" — put older produce in front on the shelves. That way, you'll have less waste and higher profits.
- Handle produce as little as you can. Handling fruits and vegetables too much can cause bruising.
- Check your produce every day. Get rid of anything that's spoiled or rotten.



Best Bets in Produce

These fruits and vegetables are popular and they keep for a long time. If you're selling produce for the first time, these are great choices to start with!

Apples

- You can display apples at room temperature during the day, but they won't last as long that way. If you leave them out during the day, be sure to refrigerate them at night.
- If you store apples in the refrigerator, they'll last 2 to 3 weeks.

Oranges

- You can display oranges at room temperature during the day, but they won't last as long that way. If you leave them out during the day, be sure to refrigerate them at night.
- If you store oranges in the refrigerator, they'll last 2 to 3 weeks.

Bananas

- Keep bananas at room temperature. Don't put them in the refrigerator.
- Bananas will last for 5 to 7 days. Remember to check them for spoiling every day.

Peppers

- You can display peppers at room temperature during the day, but they won't last as long that way. If you do that, be sure to refrigerate them at night.
- If you store peppers in the refrigerator, they will last 1 to 2 weeks.

Tomatoes

- Keep tomatoes at room temperature. Don't put them in the refrigerator.
- Tomatoes will last for 5 to 7 days. Remember to check them for spoiling every day.



What about ethylene?

Ethylene is a gas that makes some fruits and vegetables ripen faster. Some fruits and vegetables give off ethylene.

Things to know:

- Don't store produce in bags or other sealed containers. This can make them ripen too fast.
- Learn which fruits and vegetables give off ethylene, and which are ethylene-sensitive (this means that ethylene gas makes them ripen faster).

For example, **apples** and **bananas** give off ethylene, and they are ethylene-sensitive. **Oranges** don't give off ethylene, and they are not ethylene-sensitive. To make your produce last longer, you could place the oranges in between the bananas and the apples in your display.



Tip: For information about handling other types of fruits and vegetables, check out the Healthy Foods Here Produce Guide at: <http://bit.ly/1yEb3wV>

You can also call your local health department.



Quick Tips for Selling Produce Faster

We understand that sometimes buying produce can seem like a bad idea because it can spoil (unlike canned or packaged food). But there are things you can do to make sure your produce sells before it goes bad.

Try some of these tips to sell your produce quickly.

- Use baskets to display produce instead of cardboard boxes. Keep the baskets full: you can tilt baskets forward and pile the produce towards the front to make them look even more full.
- Put fruit that's easy to grab quickly — like bananas and apples — at the register so they sell faster.
- Put items that don't last too long just below eye level so they sell fast. Place items that last longer — like potatoes and onions — on lower shelves.
- Label everything with its name and price so customers can see how much each item costs.
- Get your customers' attention by putting produce in rows by color.



Healthier Picks

Our Healthier Picks program can help you promote healthy foods in your store — and engage your employees while you do it! Remember, getting everyone on board is key to making healthy changes to your store.

What is Healthier Picks?

The idea behind Healthier Picks is for you and your employees to choose some of your personal favorite healthy products from the store to highlight. (Think about the “staff pick” concept you might see in bookstores.) You may be surprised at the difference that personal recommendations can make!

How does Healthier Picks work?

Have your staff members pick a product you want to promote as your personal healthy pick. Then you put that product on display using a special Healthier Pick shelf-talker and stickers that explain why the product is healthy (the stickers say things like “whole grain” or “low in sodium”).

Where can I learn more?

Call your local health department to find out more about the Healthier Picks program — and to ask about the materials you need to get started.



