



CRUNCH OFF TOOLKIT

Colorado, Kansas, Missouri, Montana, Nebraska,
North Dakota, South Dakota



TABLE OF CONTENTS

What is the Mountain Plains Crunch Off?	2
Steps to Get Started	3
How Can I find Local Products?	4
Tips for Success	5
Resources	6
Crunch Off Activities	7
Learning Activities for K-12 and General Resources	8
Learning Activities for Pre-K and Early Childhood Education (ECE)	8
Other Ideas for Creating a Great Crunch Event	9
Press Release Template	10
Social Media Post Template	11
Sample Photo Release	12

WHAT IS THE MOUNTAIN PLAINS CRUNCH OFF?

In celebration of Farm to School Month, States throughout the Mountain Plains (CO, MT, MO, KS, NE, ND, SD) are competing to see which State can get the most “crunches” into locally-grown produce such as apples, carrots, celery, corn, cucumbers, bell peppers, leafy greens, snap peas, or tomatoes, per capita. While the focus is on local fruits and vegetables, States can also have Crunch Off events that crunch into local meat, beef sticks, legumes, grains like popcorn, and other minimally processed local foods. Each State designs its own event with its respective dates and times; please refer to State-specific resources provided upon your registration for more details.

As a Crunch Off participant, you will join students, teachers, farmers, parents, community members, and local food enthusiasts in celebrating the wonderful produce the Mountain Plains States have to offer. Your Crunch efforts will encourage healthy eating and support local agriculture while celebrating Farm to School Month and shedding light on the wonderful efforts of our school food service partners.



Please note: This PDF includes clickable links to additional online resources.

STEPS TO GET STARTED



Register! If you would like to host a Crunch event, register with your State! doe.sd.gov/farmtoschool.

You must register to be counted!



Create a Crunch Team! Find a group of individuals who are excited about Farm to School and local food. Consider including students, teachers, food service staff, administrators, the PTA, and community members to help you plan and promote your event.



Decide what you will crunch and where you will get it from! Items grown or raised locally (each participating organization decides what counts as local) count as “crunchable,” so if you would like to crunch something other than an apple, indicate the item you are crunching at the time of registration.



Create your Crunch plan! You may choose to have a school-wide Crunch in a large assembly, individual classrooms, during breakfast or lunch, with individuals at different locations all at the same time, or at some other time and place (virtual Crunch events are an option too). Each State has its own rules on where and when Crunches can take place; please refer to the State-specific resources provided upon registration. Dream big here! University sporting events, Governor’s offices, State Agriculture commissions and more can all be great settings/partners to plan bigger events that get folks excited about local food!



Promote your Crunch event! Share your event on social media, print media, school announcements, newsletters, etc. There are template press releases and social media posts at the end of this guide for your use. Choose a hashtag and/or use your State’s hashtag so you can be sure to follow along with all the Crunch Off fun!

HOW CAN I FIND LOCAL PRODUCTS?

- ♦ Find a local farmer or farmer's market. If you don't have relationships with farmers in your area, get connected with your Department of Education or Department of Agriculture. They likely have some resources to help get you started!
- ♦ If there is a food hub in your area, talk to them about what local foods you could procure from their producers.
- ♦ Ask your distributor if they carry items raised or grown locally.



TIPS FOR SUCCESS

Get as many people involved as you can! Once you have decided on where your Crunch will take place, start to spread the word! Get students, parents, food service staff, teachers, administrators and community members excited about your Crunch through social media, newsletters, press releases, PTA announcements and any other way you typically interact with the community.

Be conscious of waste and choking hazards! For younger audiences, consider serving produce slices or halves to reduce the amount of delicious local food that is wasted and to reduce the risk of choking. Children under the age of 4 are at a high risk of choking while eating.

Consider incorporating lessons! Consider incorporating lessons on farming, soil, the water cycle, photosynthesis, or other relevant topics into the curriculum during the week or day of the Crunch. At schools, local produce can also be incorporated into the Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Program (FFVP), and the FFVP can serve as the Crunch event! All of this can help get students excited about trying local produce and get them interested in continuing to try local food at the conclusion of the event. There are sample learning activities below, in this guide, for your use.

Consider a field trip! Farm field trips are a great way to help students get excited about local produce, learn more about the food system, and have a successful Crunch! If a field trip isn't feasible, consider inviting farmers to school to speak at an assembly or conduct lessons in classrooms.

Determine how much you plan to spend! Remember that if you are spending less than the applicable micro purchase threshold, you do not need to obtain quotes to purchase your local food of choice. If you are spending an amount between your small purchase and micro purchase thresholds, small purchase rules apply (obtain three quotes, and document them).

Share your success! Consider inviting local media or having a point person to capture the event to share on social media and other outlets. If you have a school newspaper, or student-led photography club, that could be a way to generate more excitement.

Be a great communicator! Communicate early and clearly about when your Crunch is taking place, how people can participate, and why you are crunching.





RESOURCES



CRUNCH OFF ACTIVITIES

- Conduct taste tests with apple (or other produce) varieties.
- Host a cooking contest, class, or demo for recipes.
- Set up a produce-themed photo booth for the Crunch event.
- Read farm or fruit/vegetable themed books (see suggested reading list at the end of this guide).
- Ask students to describe verbally or in writing how their produce looks, feels, tastes, and smells.
- Ask students to write a story about their piece of produce or a field trip to a farm, orchard, or local producer.
- Ask students to count the seeds in their produce.
- Ask students to weigh and measure their produce.
- Discuss the life cycle of produce growth, how it grows, and photosynthesis.



LEARNING ACTIVITIES FOR K-12 AND GENERAL RESOURCES

- ♦ Culinary Kits in the Classroom
doe.sd.gov/farmtoschool/culinarykits.aspx
- ♦ South Dakota Harvest of the Month
doe.sd.gov/farmtoschool/HOM.aspx

LEARNING ACTIVITIES FOR PRE-K AND EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION (ECE)

- ♦ Grow It, Try It, Like It! Nutrition Education Kit
Featuring MyPlate (Preschool)
 - Introduces children to peaches, strawberries, cantaloupe, spinach, sweet potatoes, and crookneck squash
- ♦ Culinary Kits in the Classroom
doe.sd.gov/farmtoschool/culinarykits.aspx
- ♦ South Dakota Harvest of the Month
doe.sd.gov/farmtoschool/HOM.aspx



OTHER IDEAS FOR CREATING A GREAT CRUNCH EVENT

- Tie the event to FFVP - also a great way to fund the Crunch Off
- Look for strategic partnerships - Head Start, State Government, FFA, FCS/Home Economics/Ag Economics classes, CACFP providers, Senior Farmers Markets, local farmers markets, Extension offices, etc.
- Have promotional materials at SNA conferences, CACFP trainings, NSLP trainings, etc.
- Work with local grocery stores/producers to promote the Crunch Off and point folks to locally grown produce
- Work with your school or local library to read books about farming, local produce, or food at your Crunch event. Librarians can help with age-appropriate material.



PRESS RELEASE TEMPLATE

{NAME}

{SCHOOL/ORGANIZATION}

{PHONE}

{EMAIL}

{DATE}

{School/Organization} is joining schools, preschools, nonprofits, and local food enthusiasts in celebrating Farm to School Month by competing in a nine-State Crunch Off competition! {State} is competing against {all other states} to determine who will be crowned the Mountain Plains Crunch Champion through having the most crunches into local apples or produce per capita.

{Include specifics on your event and how to be involved}

This Crunch event encourages healthy eating, supports local agriculture, and helps students and community members gain a deeper understanding of the food system.
{Include details on activities you are doing for the Crunch}

Help {State} win the Crunch crown by joining our Crunch event! For more information, or to participate in the Crunch, please contact {contact name} at {phone} or {email}.

SOCIAL MEDIA POST TEMPLATES

Apples: Did you know there are 2,500 varieties of apples are grown in the United States? Bite into your favorite local apple on {ENTER CRUNCH DATE} to be a part of the {ENTER ORGANIZATION/SCHOOL NAME} Crunch!

Carrots: Did you know carrots can be re-planted to obtain more carrot seeds? Cut off the leaves and replant them until new leaves sprout, sending up a flower stalk which will eventually flower and produce seeds! Crunch into this healthy snack on {ENTER CRUNCH DATE}.

Peaches: Did you know peaches, along with nectarines, plums and cherries, are considered a member of the stone fruit family? Crunch into this beautiful fruit on {ENTER CRUNCH DATE}.

Popcorn: Did you know that popcorn was once a popular breakfast food that was eaten as we eat cereal today? It is also a whole-grain food and gluten free. Crunch into this little kernel on {ENTER CRUNCH DATE}.

Beef Sticks: Did you know beef contains 10 essential nutrients? They are protein, vitamins B6 and B12, Iron, Choline, Phosphorus, Zinc, Niacin, Riboflavin, and Selenium.

Utilize these hashtags: #MountainPlainsCrunch, #FarmToSchool, #F2S(StateName)

SAMPLE PHOTO RELEASE (FOR ANY PICTURES TAKEN)

School/Other Entity Name

CONSENT/RELEASE FORM

I consent to the sale, reproduction, and use, royalty-free, of motion picture films, video, recorded sounds, and still photography of me by the Entity Name for all purposes including, but not limited to, education, training, trade, display, editorial, advertising, promotion, art, and exhibits.

In giving this consent, I release the Entity Name, its officers, employees, nominees, and designees from liability for any violation of any personal proprietary right I may have in connection with such sale, reproduction, and use. By signing below, I am also confirming that I am more than 21 years of age.

Name (please print)

Signature & Date

Address

City **State** **Zip Code**

Consent of Guardian

Minor Name _____

I am the parent and/or guardian of the minor named above and have the legal authority to execute consent and release. I approve the foregoing and waive any rights to the above.

Signature & Date

