HEALTHY COMMUNITY FOOD SYSTEMS

Healthy Land, Healthy Food, Healthy People

Year-Round Local Food Calendars

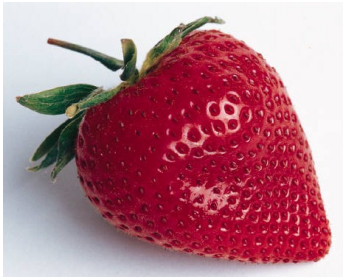
From harvest calendars to four seasons food calendars.

You can buy, eat, and enjoy local foods all year, even in a temperate climate—it's just a matter of changing your focus through the year. Eating local year-round involves embracing the concept of **seasons**. Just as there is a season for sweet corn or tomatoes fresh from the field, there is a season for eating from a cold frame, cold cellar, pantry, or freezer. As we celebrate the change from winter to spring or summer to fall, we can celebrate the change of eating seasons—enjoy the spring-heralding season of asparagus, savor fresh apples or carrots from cold storage in January, or relish a jar of peach jam in March.

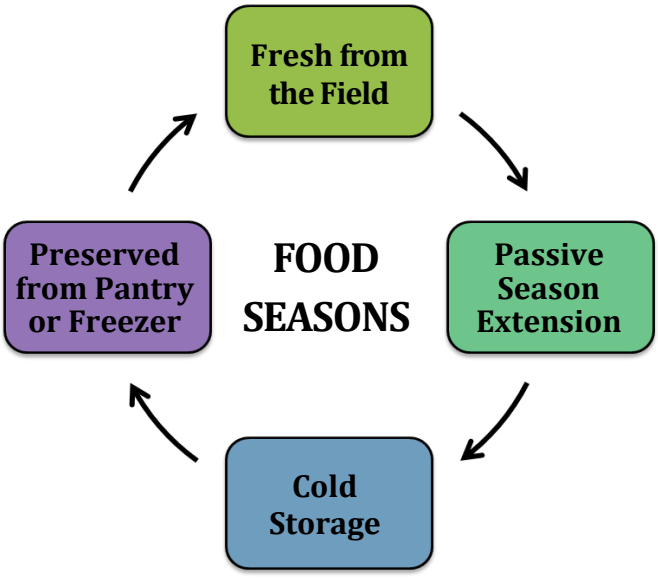


Visual aids like harvest and food season calendars can help you and your community explore the possibilities. It is critical for your calendars to reflect your community's unique climate, physical setting, and cultures. These calendars are useful for consumers, marketers, and producers, as well as the community as a whole.

EATING IN SEASON



Eating in season starts with eating foods when they are being grown and harvested locally. In most temperate climates, this means eating fresh strawberries in June and fresh tomatoes in September—not in January. By eating in season, we can enjoy the ultimate freshness and taste in our foods, support the local economy, and enjoy a practical approach to food. Eating in season also allows us to reduce energy costs and improve nutrition by eliminating long-distance transportation and the associated nutrient loss.



It is possible to eat in season year-round if you realize there are more seasons than just the growing season. Eat fruits and vegetables whenever they are available locally—fresh from the field, garden, cold frame, or orchard; fresh from the cold cellar; or preserved from the pantry or freezer.

START WITH YOUR LOCAL **HARVEST CALENDAR**

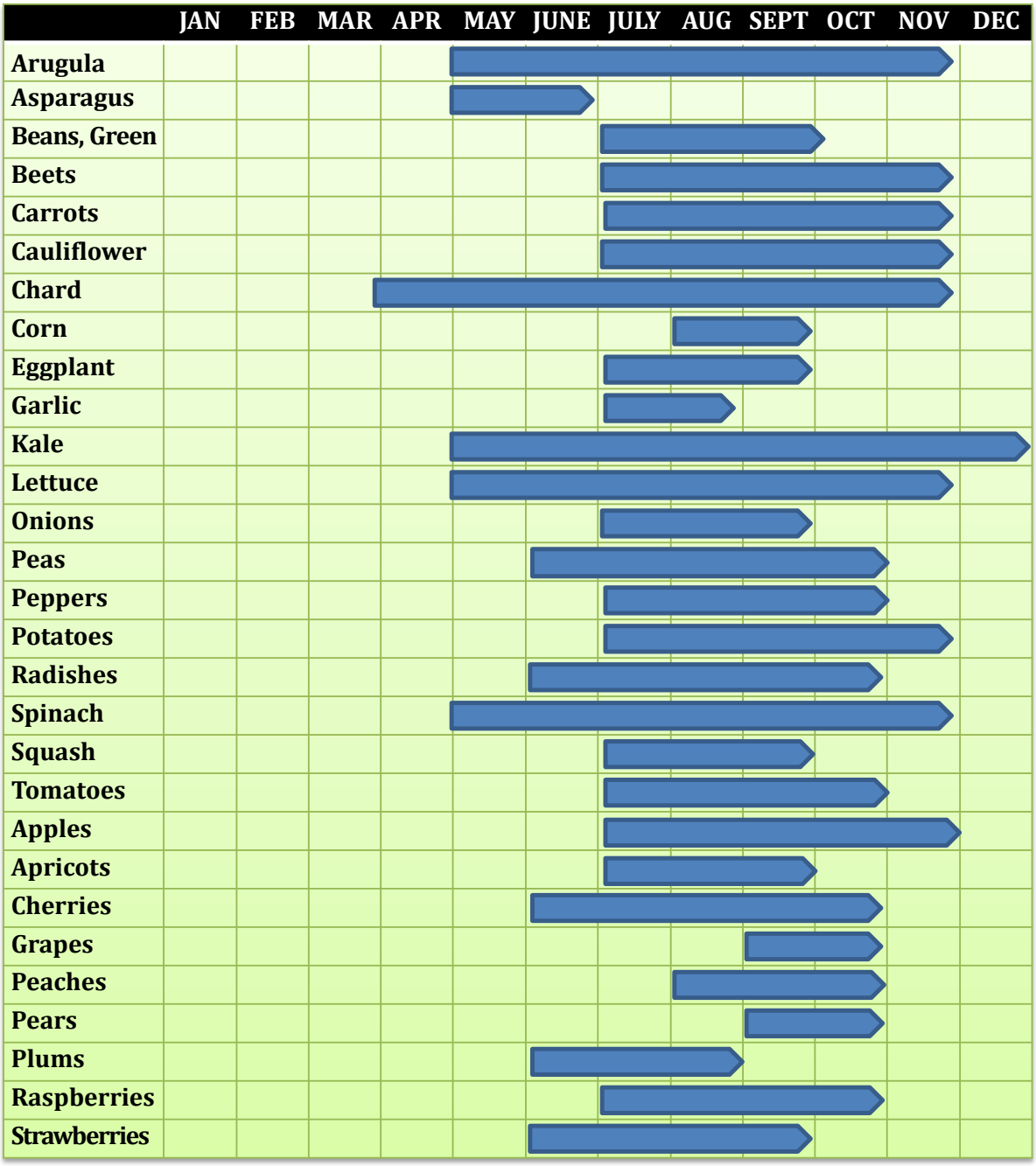
- Many people may be interested in eating in season, but are not aware of when specific crops are harvested locally.
- Creating a local crop or harvest calendar is an excellent way to showcase all the local food in your community.
- Local harvest calendars are more precise than statewide crop calendars as they reflect the local climate, which can be quite variable within states and regions.
- Creation of a calendar is a great way to meet your local producers—involve them and your local extension agent in determining local harvest times!

HARVEST CALENDAR for La Plata County, Colorado

Based on The Growing Partners of Southwest Colorado's *A Guide to Finding & Supporting Local Food Production*

HARVEST

This is a general guideline for La Plata County; conditions will vary with specific locations.



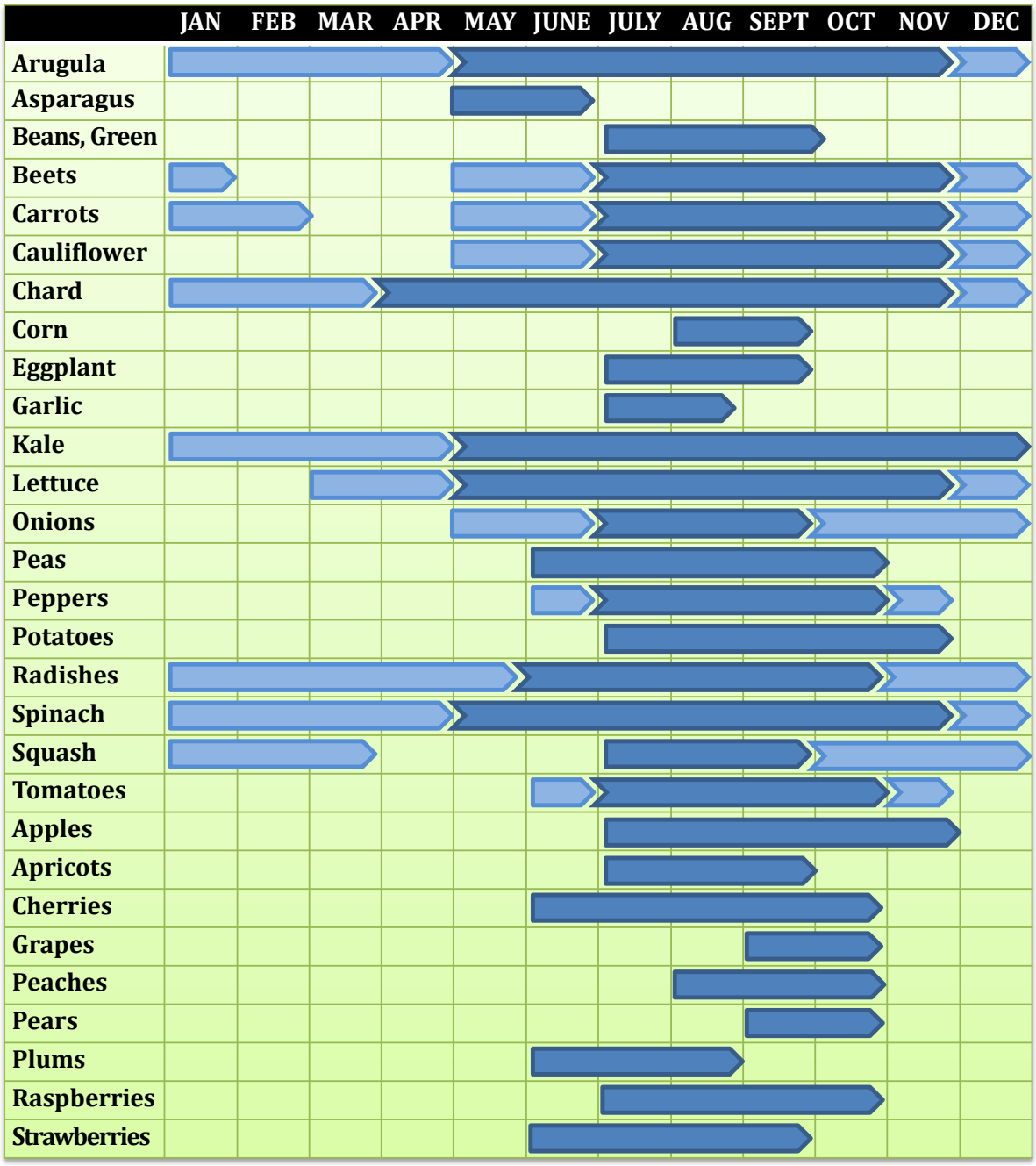
ADD **PASSIVE SEASON EXTENSION** TO YOUR HARVEST CALENDAR

- Showing the possibilities of season extension helps consumers think outside the typical summer harvest season for local foods and encourages producers to take advantage of the niche market for out-of-season produce.
- **Passive season extension** using unheated cold frames or greenhouses allows greens to be produced through the winter. (Research indicates dependence on fossil fuel-heated greenhouses won't be economical or sustainable in the long run.)
- **Root crops** can be harvested deep into winter when insulated with straw or mulch.
- **Warm-season crops** can be harvested both earlier and later in the season by using a cold frame or unheated greenhouse to buffer crops from late spring or early fall frosts.

HARVEST & SEASON EXTENSION CALENDAR for La Plata County, Colorado

HARVEST | PASSIVE SEASON EXTENSION

This is a general guideline for La Plata County; conditions will vary with specific locations.

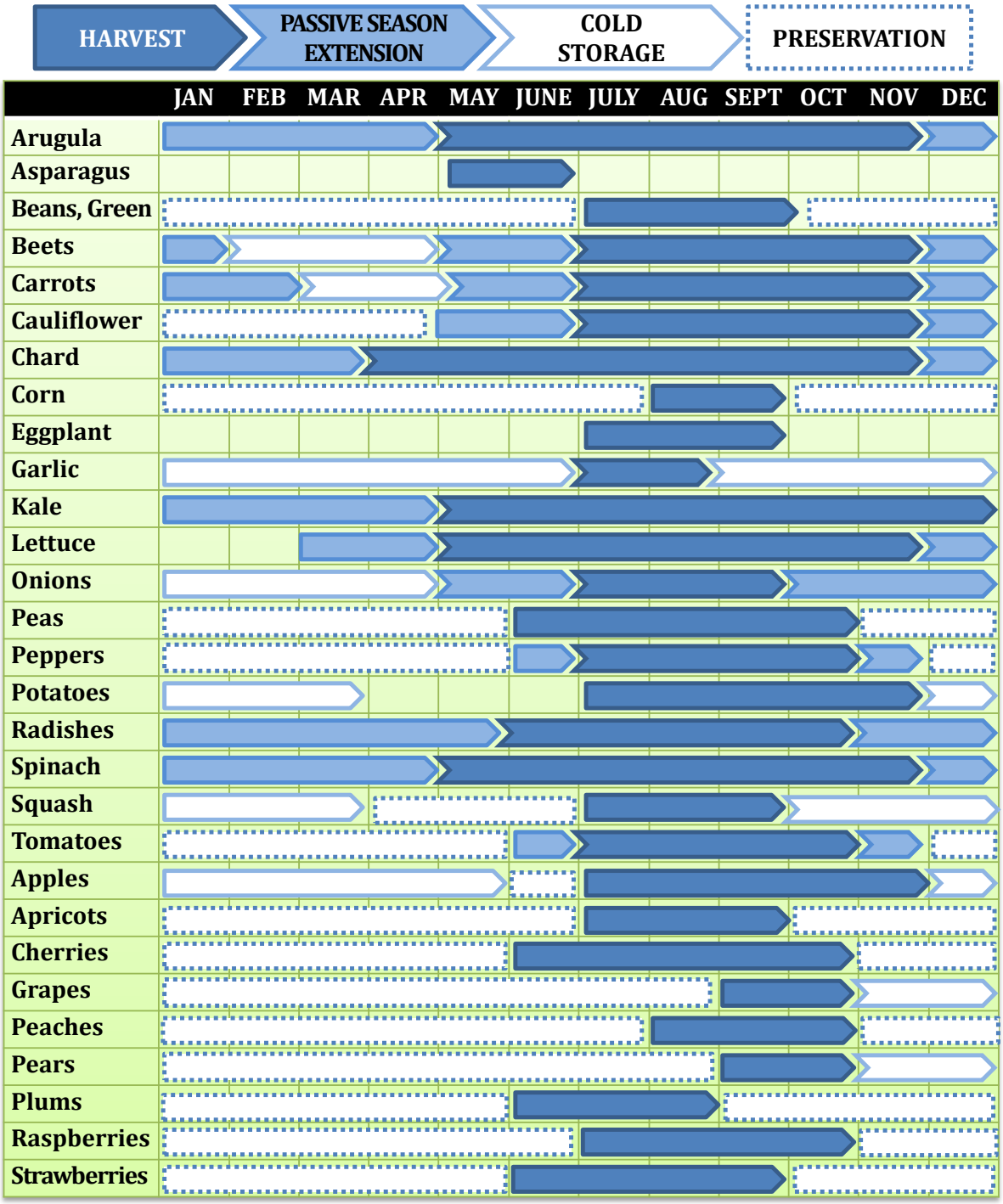


ADD **COLD STORAGE AND PRESERVATION** TO CREATE A YEAR-ROUND LOCAL FOOD CALENDAR

- Many people want to eat local, but are not aware of how this can be done in the colder months.
- While passive season extension provides fresh food beyond the traditional harvest season, cold storage and preservation methods like canning, freezing, or drying allow communities to eat local foods year-round, even in temperate climates.
- Preservation is a great way to eat warm-season crops throughout the year.
- Producers can also explore cold storage options and preserved products to expand their market season.

YEAR-ROUND LOCAL FOOD CALENDAR for La Plata County, Colorado

This is a general guideline for La Plata County; conditions will vary with specific locations.



FOOD SEASONS CALENDAR

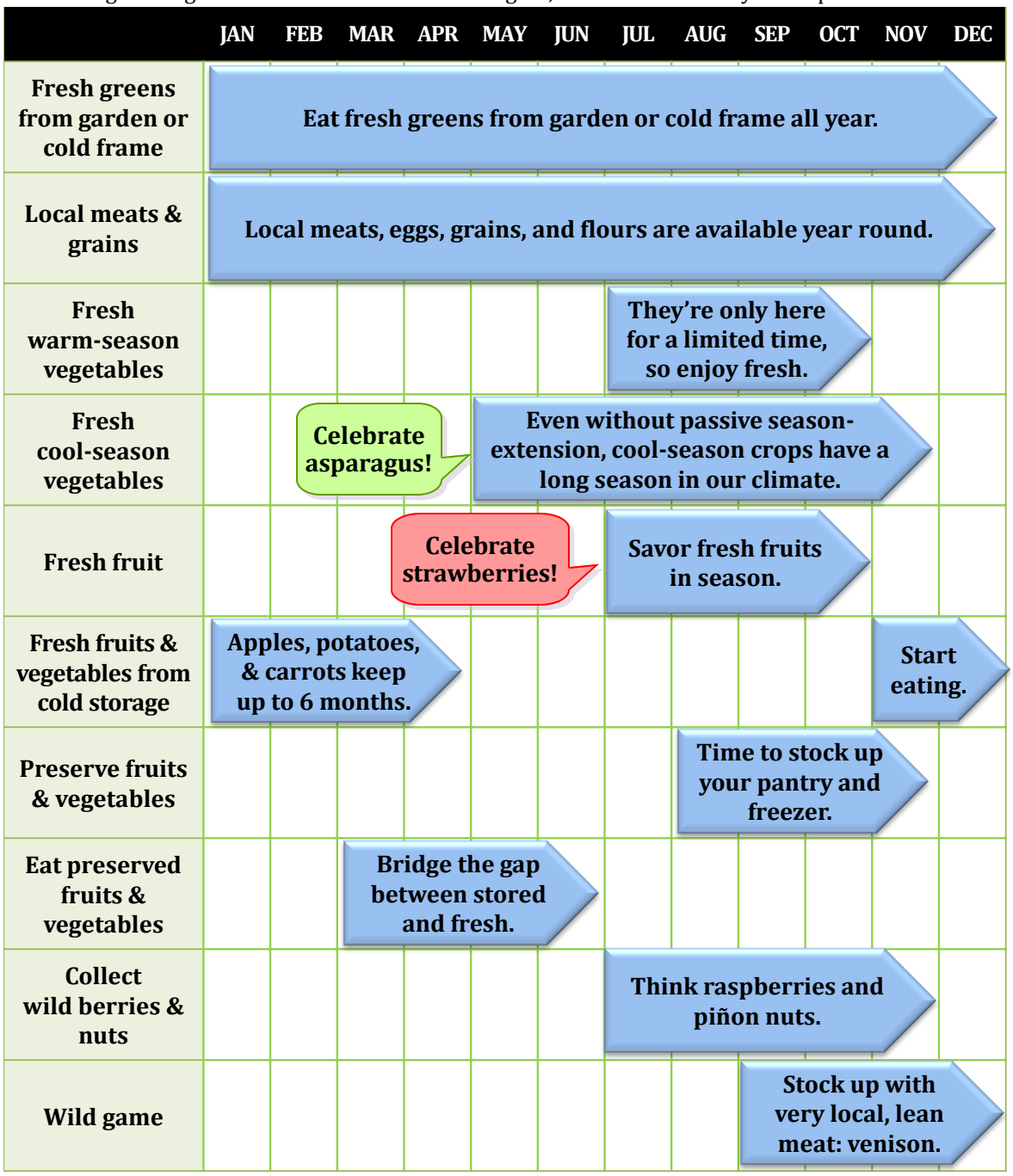
Food seasons can represent more than just eating seasons. There are seasons for harvesting, preserving, garden planning, and planting. These seasons are more broad-scale than specific crop seasons and thus are suited to a regional scale. A food seasons calendar is a great way to look at a complete food system and the factors influencing it.

A food seasons calendar is useful for:

- Outreach by community food groups to public.
- Marketing by producers.
- Thinking beyond the start and end of the farmers market.

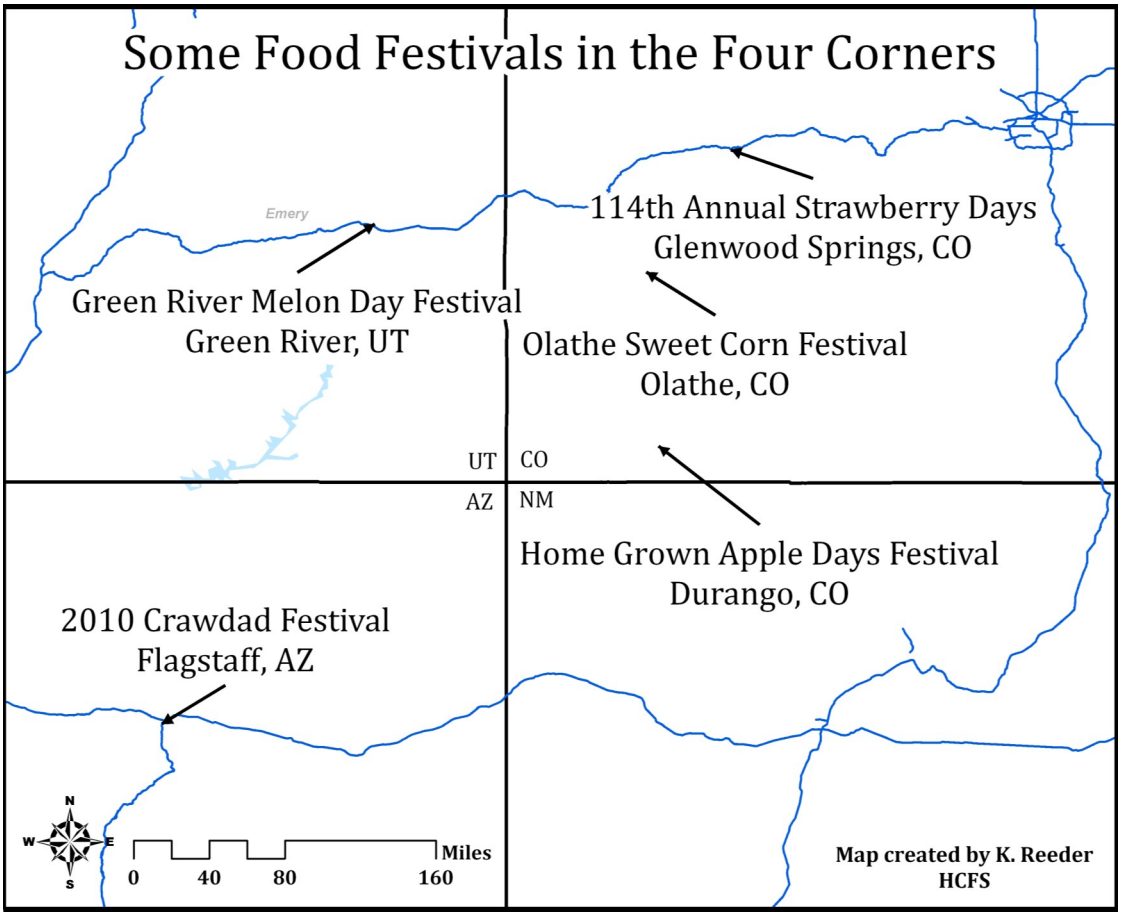
FOOD SEASONS CALENDAR for the Four Corners Region

This is a general guideline for the Four Corners region; conditions will vary with specific locations.



FIND A REASON TO CELEBRATE!

Communities across the country are finding reasons to celebrate local foods in season. From strawberries and asparagus in spring, to tomatoes and sweet corn in summer, to apples and pumpkins in fall, festivals can take many forms. Below are some food celebrations in the Four Corners region.



CREATE YOUR OWN YEAR-ROUND LOCAL FOOD CALENDAR

Check out the template on our online resources to help you create your own year-round calendar using Microsoft Excel. While more basic than the sample calendars in this tool, it will get you on your way to creating a useful year-round local food calendar for your community!

FOR MORE INFORMATION

Find online resources for this tool, as well as additional tool booklets on other community food topics, under "Food System Tools" at www.healthycommunityfoodsystems.org or www.HCFS.org

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KELSEY REEDER & JIM DYER, FEB 2011