



PACIFIC COAST  
FARMERS' MARKET  
ASSOCIATION

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## DEAR DEB - SEPTEMBER 2024



Dear Deb: There is produce at the farmers' market that I've never seen before. How do I find out what it is and how to use it? ----Suzanne, San Jose

Dear Suzanne: This is what's so great about your local farmers' market! California farmers offer fruits and vegetables at the farmers' market that you won't find in mainstream grocery stores! These beautiful products come from farmers of different backgrounds and growing areas. California is especially fortunate in the availability of produce because of our incredible cultural diversity. Many of these unique fruits and vegetables cannot be found elsewhere, especially considering produce you find at the market is often picked just hours before you make your purchase!

Incorporating unfamiliar produce can make your meals a veritable delight of flavors and textures, expand your cooking repertoire, and put smiles on the faces of your family and guests. [Bok choy](#), [gai lan](#), cherimoya, [daikon](#), [sunchokes](#), and [kohlrabi](#) are just a few of the fabulous vegetables you may consider adding to your bag next time you visit the market! When you see unfamiliar leafy greens, such as gai lan, bok choy, or mustard greens look for vibrant green leaves with firm stems. If you're considering adding a new root vegetable to your next dish such as daikon or sun chokes, give them a squeeze to ensure firmness and look for an even complexion without dark spots. Farmer's stalls are likely to have mounds of delicious [specialty](#) [meats](#) and herbs like rosemary, oregano, and basil. That's right, you know your leaves, and more! To learn how

[greens](#) and herbs like pea shoots, water spinach, Thai basil, yu choy, yam leaves, and more! To learn how they taste, how to select the best bunch, or what to do with them when you get home, be sure to ask the farmer! There's no better source of information than the hands that grew the produce and they're happy to help. Engaging with other shoppers is another fun way to explore unfamiliar fruits and vegetables.

Your farmers' market is also a great place to broaden your palate when it comes to uncommon and unfamiliar fruits! Have you ever tried fresh [jujubes](#)? These bite-sized morsels taste similar to an apple and have an edible peel. They're rich in antioxidants and Vitamin C and are known as the fruit of immortality! Korean melon and bittermelon are also some fabulous fruit finds. They have very different tastes and uses, so be sure to ask the farmer or a fellow shopper to learn more when you see something new. You'll find unique varieties of just about every fruit at the market. From new varieties of stone fruit, to exotic melon varieties, the farmers' market is a treasure trove of unique products you simply can't find at the grocery store.

Don't bypass produce you haven't seen before and take a second look at anything that piques your interest. It's like a tasty treasure hunt! Finding something that intrigues you with its unfamiliar aroma and appearance will entice you to create some tempting new recipes! Discovering unique flavors and creating new dishes is just one of the many reasons you have more fun shopping at the farmers' market. The farmers will be glad to help you select something and offer advice on how to cook it. They know everything about their harvest, including many delicious ways to use it!

Ready to try something new? Check out the [Sautéed Gai Lan](#) using Chinese broccoli (gai lan). Make some [Pickled Daikon Radish](#), a great piquant condiment. Instead of potatoes make [Roasted Sunchokes](#)! Blend a new ingredient with a familiar food by making a plate of [Taro Fries](#)! The possibilities are as diverse as you are adventurous!

By exploring the diverse offerings of your local farmers' market, you can expand your culinary horizons, support local farmers, and enjoy the freshest, most flavorful produce available!

#### TAGS

[Dear Deb](#)