



2024 Crunch Off Toolkit

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

Guide Contents

What is the Mountain Plains Crunch Off?	1
Steps to Get Started	2
How Can I Find Local Products?.....	3
Tips for Success.....	3
Remote Crunching	4
Resources	5
Crunch Time Activities	5
Learning Activities for Middle and High School	5
Learning Activities for Pre-K and Elementary School	5
Other Ideas for Creating a Great Crunch Event.....	6
Press Release Template	6
Social Media Post Template.....	6
Sample Photo Release (for any pictures taken)	7
Recipes.....	8
Suggested Reading	8
Contact Information	9



What is the Mountain Plains Crunch Off?

In celebration of Farm to School Month, States throughout the Mountain Plains Region (CO, MT, MO, KS, NE, ND, SD, WY) are competing to see which State can get the most “crunches” into a local apple, or other locally grown produce, per capita. Each State is designing its own event with its respective dates and times; please refer to State-specific resources 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 Region has 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.



Steps to Get Started



Register! If you would like to host a Crunch event, register with your State! [Click here to register your Missouri Crunch.](#)

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. 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 too! University sporting events, Governor’s offices, State Agriculture commissions and more can all be great settings 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. At the end of this guide, there are template press releases and social media posts for your use.



How Can I Find Local Products?

- When applicable, look for local apples and produce via DoD Fresh. DoD Fresh allows school districts to use their entitlement dollars to purchase fresh produce. For more information, see the *How to Utilize DoD Fresh to Purchase Local Produce* fact sheet.
- Ask your distributor if they carry items raised or grown locally.
- Source local produce from a food hub.
- Find a local farmer or farmer's market.

Tips for Success

1. **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.
2. **Be conscious of waste!** For younger audiences, consider using apple slices or halves to reduce the amount of delicious local food that is wasted.
3. **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.
4. **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.
5. **Determine how much you plan to spend!** Remember that if you are spending less than the applicable micropurchase threshold, you do not need to obtain quotes to purchase your apples. If you are spending an amount between your small purchase and micropurchase thresholds, small purchase rules apply (obtain three quotes and document them).
6. **Share your success!** Consider inviting local media or having a point person to capture the event to share on social media and other outlets.
7. **Be a great communicator!** Communicate early and clearly about when your Crunch is taking place, how people can participate, and why you are crunching.



Remote Crunching

- Encourage kids/parents to crunch at home. Help them find local apples/produce and send home worksheets that they can complete.
- Consider a Zoom, Google Hangouts/Meet, or other technology platform for everyone to crunch together virtually in a socially distanced manner; if possible, build this into kids' learning time.
- Encourage the submission and compilation of selfies of everyone crunching simultaneously but separately.
- Use hashtags – such as #MountainPlainsCrunch -- to post and collect images from social media.
- Promote crunches in the classroom or in other small groups as allowed.



Sample Announcement to Families for Remote Crunches

Dear Families,

This year _____ (school/center/organization) will be participating in the Crunch Off on ____ (date). This year's will be a _____ (virtual/individual) Crunch.

We encourage you to review the sample lessons/complete the sample activities we have sent home. At ____ (time), all children are encouraged to crunch into their apple (or other local produce). Please send a picture of this crunch to us at _____ (contact information).

OR

At ____ (time), please have your child log into his/her class's _____ (technology platform name) and have his/her apple ready. We will all conduct our Crunch Off together as a group, virtually.

Sincerely,

_____ (Name)

Resources

Crunch Time 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 Middle and High School

- [Apple Cider Lesson](#) from Edible School Yard
- [Food Miles Lesson](#) from Sustainable Schools Project
- [Youth Leadership Curriculum](#) from the Institute for Ag and Trade Policy
- [Nourish for Life Curriculum](#) from the Center for Ecoliteracy

Learning Activities for Pre-K and Elementary School

- [Preschool Apple Activities](#) from The Educators' Spin on It
- [25 Apple-Themed Activities for Preschool](#) from Pre-K Pages
- [Farm Field Trip Guide](#) from Green Mountain Farm to School (VT)
- [National Farm to School Network resources](#)

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, Snap Ed Regional Leads, CACFP providers, WIC programs, Senior Farmers Markets, local farmers markets, Extension offices, etc.
- Have promotional materials at SNA conference, CACFP trainings, NSLP trainings, etc.
- Translate materials into Spanish or other relevant languages to your state/community
- Work with local grocery stores/producers to promote the Crunch Off and point folks to locally grown produce

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 Region 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

- Did you know there are 2,500 varieties of apples 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!
- 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}.
- 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}.
- Utilize these hashtags: #MountainPlainsCrunch, #FarmToSchool, #F2SMissouri, #MoCrunchOff

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.

I am more than 21 years of age.

Signature & Date

Address

City

State

Zip Code

Consent of Guardian

Minor Name _____

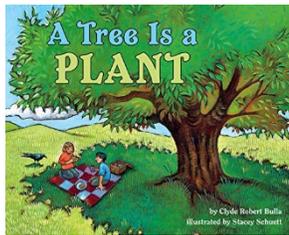
I am the parent and/or guardian of the minor named above and have the legal authority to execute consent and release. I approve the foregoing and waive any rights to the above.

Signature & Date

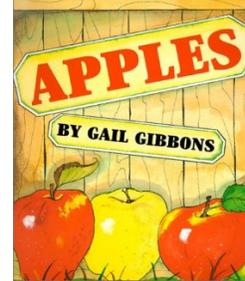


Suggested Reading

[A Tree is a Plant](#) by Clyde Robert Bulla



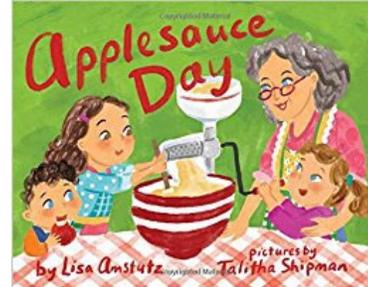
[Apples](#) by Gail Gibbons



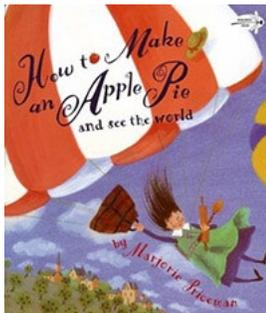
[The Seasons of Arnold's Apple Tree](#)
by Gail Gibbons



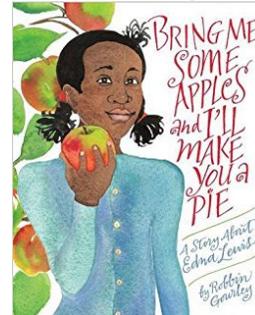
[Applesauce Day](#) by Lisa Amstutz



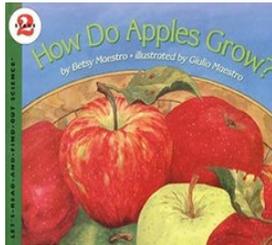
[How to Make an Apple Pie and See the World](#) by
Marjorie Priceman



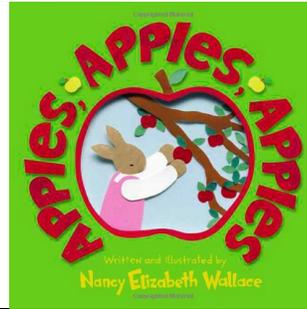
[Bring Me Some Apples and I'll Make You a Pie: A Story About Edna Lewis](#) by Robbin Gourley



[How Do Apples Grow?](#) by Betsy Maestro



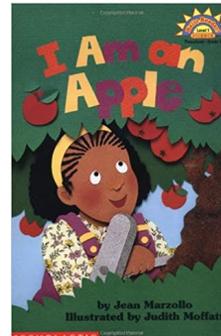
[Apples, Apples, Apples](#) by Nancy Elizabeth Wallace



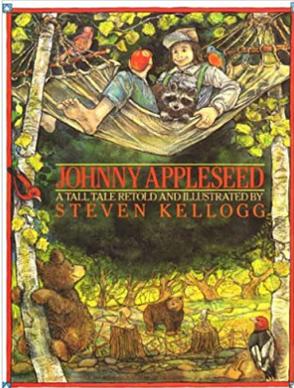
[The Apple Pie Tree](#) by Zoe Hall



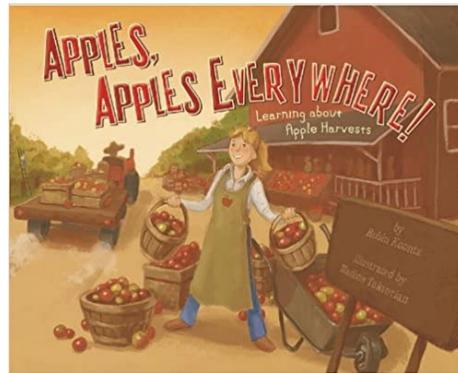
[I Am an Apple](#) by Jean Marzollo



[Johnny Appleseed](#) by Steven Kellogg



[Apples, Apples Everywhere!](#) by Robin Koontz



Contact information

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- (1) **mail**
U.S. Department of Agriculture
Office of the Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights
1400 Independence Avenue, SW
Washington, D.C. 20250-9410; or
- (2) **fax:**
(833) 256-1665 or (202) 690-7442; or
- (3) **email:**
program.intake@usda.gov

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