

*Simply*  
KANSAS



Event Planning Guide



## **SIMPLY KANSAS EVENT PLANNING**

If you are among the growing number of consumers who enjoy locally grown and produced food, as well as supporting your local growers and processors, this planning guide is for you. Simply Kansas, the trademark program for Kansas grown and produced foods and ingredients, is managed by the Kansas Department of Commerce's Agriculture Marketing team in the Rural Development Division.

Included in this guide are helpful planning tips and resources that will make planning your next event, well, simple. Navigating through the guide, you will find it simple to outline your menu, simple to select the growers you wish to order from and simple to choose the foods you wish to serve. The helpful resources also will make it simple to track your orders, deliveries and invoices for your purchases; use the growing calendar as a resource for which foods are at their peak of freshness and in season. Finally, on the Simply Kansas website, we have included sample menu cards and table tents, along with a template, to make creating your own menu cards and table tents for your Simply Kansas event a very simple process.

Our hope is this guide will help you plan your first or next Simply Kansas event. The Ag Marketing team believes this guide will be instrumental in making your occasion a success. If you have any questions or need assistance as you plan your event, please call (785) 296-3737 or e-mail [ruraldev@kansascommerce.com](mailto:ruraldev@kansascommerce.com).



## KANSAS GROWING SEASONS

Photo courtesy of Chef's Mark Kitchien



When considering local foods for your meals or events, it is important to remember the various growing seasons. While grocery stores offer fresh produce year round, these items are often shipped in from other parts of the country or even from outside the U.S. To use local, in-season products, reference the Kansas Fruit and Vegetable Calendar for a calendar listing of fresh product. In addition, the use of greenhouses or “hoop” houses can extend the season of various items. For example, spinach can be grown almost year round in hoop houses. Check with the local growers to

determine availability of greenhouse-grown products.

Keep in mind, some products, such as potatoes and onions, have a long storage life, while others, such as asparagus, strawberries and blackberries, can only be kept for a short period of time before they must be frozen or preserved.

In the winter months, consider value-added or processed products as a means to include local products in your meals and events.

### Tip

*Visit [SimplyKansas.com](http://SimplyKansas.com) to browse sample menus.*



## Kansas Fruit and Vegetable Calendar

	JAN	FEB	MAR	APR	MAY	JUN	JUL	AUG	SEP	OCT	NOV	DEC
APPLES						X	X	X	X	X	X	
APRICOTS						X	X					
ARTICHOKES								X	X			
ASPARAGUS			X	X	X	X						
BASIL						X	X	X	X	X		
BEANS						X	X	X	X	X	X	
BEETS					X	X	X	X	X	X	X	
BLACKBERRIES							X	X				
BLUEBERRIES						X	X	X	X			
BROCCOLI					X	X	X	X	X	X		
BRUSSEL SPROUTS									X	X		
CABBAGE					X	X	X	X	X	X		
CANTALOUPE							X	X				
CARROTS						X	X	X	X	X	X	X
CAULIFLOWER						X	X			X		
CHARD, SWISS							X	X				
CHERRIES						X	X					
COLLARDS						X				X		
CRABAPPLES							X					
CUCUMBERS					X	X	X	X	X	X		
CURRENTS							X	X	X			
DEWBERRIES							X	X				
EGGPLANT						X	X	X	X	X		
GARLIC						X	X	X	X	X	X	
GOOSEBERRIES							X	X				
GRAPES							X	X	X			
GREEN BEANS						X	X		X	X		
GREEN GARLIC												
HERBS						X	X	X	X	X		
HONEYDEW MELON							X	X				



## Kansas Fruit and Vegetable Calendar

	JAN	FEB	MAR	APR	MAY	JUN	JUL	AUG	SEP	OCT	NOV	DEC
HORSERADISH						X	X	X	X	X	X	
KALE						X				X		
KIWI								X				
KOHLRABI						X				X		
LEEKS										X		
LETTUCES				X	X	X	X	X	X	X		
LIMA BEANS						X	X		X	X		
MESCLUN									X	X		
MULBERRIES							X					
MUSHROOMS						X	X	X	X	X		
MUSTARD GREENS						X				X		
NECTARINES							X	X				
NETTLES												
OKRA						X	X	X	X	X		
OLIVES												
ONIONS				X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	
PARSNIPS										X		
PAW-PAW									X			
PEACHES							X	X				
PEANUTS									X	X		
PEARS									X			
PEAS					X	X	X	X	X	X		
PEPPERS, BELL							X	X	X			
PEPPERS, CHILI							X	X	X			
PERSIMMON									X			
PLUMS							X	X				
POTATOES						X	X	X	X	X	X	
PUMPKINS								X	X	X	X	
RADISHES					X	X	X	X	X	X		
RAPINI												



## Kansas Fruit and Vegetable Calendar

	JAN	FEB	MAR	APR	MAY	JUN	JUL	AUG	SEP	OCT	NOV	DEC
RASPBERRIES						X	X		X	X		
RHUBARB						X						
RUTABAGA									X	X		
SALSIFY										X		
SOYBEANS, EDIBLE						X	X		X	X		
SPINACH		X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X		
SPROUTS						X	X	X	X	X		
SQUASH, SUMMER						X	X	X				
SQUASH, WINTER									X	X		
STRAWBERRIES						X						
SWEET CORN						X	X	X	X	X		
SWEET POTATOES								X	X	X	X	X
TOMATOES					X	X	X	X	X	X	X	
TURNIPS						X			X	X		
WATERMELON							X	X	X			
WINTER MELON									X	X		

### Tip

*If you are using a specialty product that is not widely used, ensure that your chef or caterer knows how to properly store and prepare the item. Offer to bring in sample product in advance for them to work with.*



## MEAT AND POULTRY

Although Kansas is well known for its beef, Simply Kansas members also produce pork, lamb and poultry, including chicken, turkey and duck.

In addition, specialty meats, such as deer, bison, ostrich, emu and elk, are grown and processed in Kansas. For a complete list of meat products and producers, visit [www.SimplyKansas.com](http://www.SimplyKansas.com).



Photo courtesy of Chef's Mark Kitchen

When planning which meat or poultry item to feature at your event, keep in mind the variety of production practices – all of which produce a safe and nutritious product for your guests. Since production practices may cause certain items to be available seasonally, it is important, as with seasonal fruits and vegetables, to work with your local producer in selecting a product for your event.

## WORKING WITH PRODUCERS

As you prepare to begin planning your event, you may need to work with multiple producers. While some producers grow and raise multiple crops and livestock, many specialize in only one product. As such, it is important to have a general idea of which products you would like to include on your menu. Take time to develop goals for your event. Will you feature all Simply Kansas products or infuse them with conventional foods?

It is also important to understand the various labels you may encounter. Definitions for many commonly used labels are listed below:

- **Organic** -- Certified organic products must meet the U.S. Department of Agriculture's National Organic Program standards set by the Organic Foods Production Act. Organically raised livestock must be fed 100 percent organic feed and must be certified through USDA's Agricultural Marketing Service. In addition, the organic standards say these animals cannot be given antibiotics or hormones to promote growth. The animals cannot be denied antibiotics if they are sick, but treated animals then must be removed from the organic program. Organic meat and produce may be more expensive than conventionally raised products.



Photo courtesy of Brownie Pops

- Free-range -- A commonly used term in poultry production to denote that the grower allows the birds to leave confinement for at least a portion of their day/ life. This is a term that does not have an official USDA definition/certification so it is important to visit with the grower to learn what he or she defines as free-range.
- Cage-free -- A commonly used term in egg production signifying that the laying hens are not raised in cages. This is a term that does not have an official USDA definition/ certification so it is important to visit with the grower to learn what he or she defines as cage-free.
- Natural -- By far this is one of the most confusing labels. This is a term that does not have an official USDA definition/certification so it is important to visit with the grower to learn what he or she defines as natural.

**Tip**

*It never hurts to have more than one supplier of a food or ingredient in mind. This way, if for some reason one supplier cannot meet your order... you have a backup plan.*



- Local -- A term used to denote that the foods and ingredients being purchased have been raised and/or processed near their point of consumption. This is a term that does not have an official USDA definition/certification so it is important to visit with the grower to learn what he or she defines as local.



Photo courtesy of Alma Creamery

- Grass-fed -- This term is mostly used in describing beef. All cattle spend the majority of their lives eating grass in pastures. However, grass-finished beef (sometimes marketed as grass-fed beef) comes from cattle that have been raised on pasture

### Tip

*Want to use the Simply Kansas logo to promote your event? Graphic standards for the logo may be found in the "Member Benefits" section on the Simply Kansas website.*

- their entire lives. Producing grass-finished beef in large volumes is difficult in North America where few regions have the growing season to make it possible. Grass-finished beef is often described as having a distinctly different taste and may require different preparation methods.
- Grain-finished -- This term is used in describing beef. Grain-fed beef is the most widely produced kind of beef and tends to be less expensive than other beef choices. Grain-fed cattle spend most of their lives eating grass in pasture before moving to a feedlot where they are fed a high-energy grain diet for four to six months. Research shows many consumers generally prefer the taste of grain-fed beef because of its tenderness and flavor-enhancing marbling.



## ORDERING PRODUCT

Many small processors make and package products for the retail market. When ordering product for a larger audience, it is beneficial to discuss their processing capabilities. Are they able to process their product in the quantity needed for your event? Making note of those producers willing and able to offer product in a variety of package sizes will assist with planning future events and will be a great resource to share with your event partners.

### Tip

*Create a spreadsheet to track your budget, orders and deliveries – this will allow you to know exactly where you are at any given time during the event planning process.*

When ordering product, discuss the selected products, quantity, price and timeline for the event. Delivery, packaging, handling and storage needs should be determined and you also will want to discuss payment methods and timing for the items you have ordered. As you will read in the next section,

there also are conversations you should have with your chef/caterer which will affect ordering and payment for goods.

Food safety is a vital part of providing a quality experience for your guests. Working with a licensed event facility will help to ensure that all food safety regulations are being followed. To learn more about food safety regulations, contact the Kansas Department of Agriculture and/or your local health department. Rest assured, all Simply Kansas companies must be in good standing with the Kansas Department of Agriculture to be eligible for membership in the trademark program.

## SUPPLYING SIMPLY KANSAS PRODUCTS

The use of local products and specialty foods is a growing trend. While many chefs and caterers are familiar with using locally grown or produced products, this section of the Simply Kansas guide will assist you in working with your chef or caterer as you strive to incorporate Simply Kansas products in your event.



Photo courtesy of Chef's Mark Kitchen

### Tip

*Did you know that you can find all Simply Kansas companies online? Search [SimplyKansas.com](http://SimplyKansas.com) by company name for the complete listing of member companies.*

## PRE-EVENT PLANNING

Before going to your chef or caterer, take time to envision your event and the products you will include. Will all the entrees be Simply Kansas products? Or, will you infuse Simply Kansas products

in among conventional items? Review the seasonal foods chart that is included in this toolkit to determine a viable menu. For example, for an October event, select apples or squash instead of green beans or strawberries. If there are specific local producers you would like to use, develop a list for the chef or caterer.

## BUDGETING

When planning your event, you also may want to think about your budget. At times, locally grown and produced foods may be less expensive than conventional items. At other times, the locally grown or produced foods may demand a premium price. In addition, items that are organic or natural may be more expensive to grow or produce and will, as a result, have a higher purchase price. Remember to include the cost for preparing and plating the event in your budget.

## TALKING TO THE PROFESSIONALS

When using Simply Kansas products, allow plenty of lead time for your chef or caterer; utilizing locally grown and produced foods is a wonderful addition to any event,

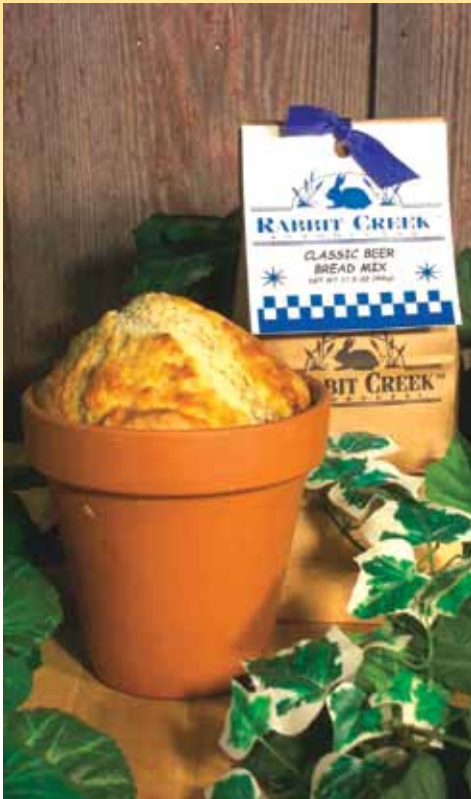


Photo courtesy of Rabbit Creek Gourmet Products



**Tip**

*Looking for a particular product for your event? Search [SimplyKansas.com](http://SimplyKansas.com) by category to find the perfect fit for your menu!*

but one that may require more time for delivery and preparation.

After you have identified the specifics of your event, make an appointment to visit with your chef or caterer. Inquire whether they offer a locally grown and produced

menu. If so, this is an excellent way to utilize the chef or caterer's experience and the perfect opportunity to select existing menu items for your event. If such a menu is not available, inquire if they are willing to incorporate locally grown or produced items in menu items for your event. Share your ideas with them, including what you envision for the event as well as suggestions of growers or producers for the menu items. You might also ask if existing menu items can utilize Simply Kansas products.

When working with the chef or caterer, there are several planning functions to keep in mind.

- 1) Who will order the items?
- 2) In what form does the chef or caterer need the food -- i.e., fresh or frozen ground beef?
- 3) When will they need the items in order to have ample preparation time?
- 4) Are there certain items they will need sooner than others?
- 5) What capabilities are in their kitchen (i.e., are most ingredients "convenience" items or made from scratch)?

**Tip**

*Need to locate a Simply Kansas company in your area? Search [SimplyKansas.com](http://SimplyKansas.com) by region to display all the companies near you.*

Additionally, determine how the items will be delivered to the chef or caterer. Will they be shipped directly to the kitchen? Can the items be sourced through a vendor such as Sysco or U.S. Foodservice? Will you be picking the items up and delivering them?

Remember to allow plenty of lead time. Using locally grown or produced foods sometimes requires more preparation time. For example, fresh carrots from a local farmer may not come pre-washed and cut.



## **PAYING OF INVOICES**

Finally, determine who will pay the grower or producer. Will the chef or caterer pay the supplier and then add the food/ingredient costs on to your final invoice? Will you pay for the food items and pay the chef or caterer separately for preparation and plating?

## **HOW MUCH TO ORDER**

If you are not experienced with planning food needs for a large event, the task can be daunting. Rely on the experience of your chef or caterer. He/she will be an invaluable resource to avoid having too little or too much food at your event. If you are using an “old family-favorite” recipe, request assistance with adapting the recipe for large quantities. Visit with the chef or caterer to find out the proper amount of each food and ingredient to order.

### **Tip**

*The Ag Marketing staff is ready to answer questions and offer suggestions for your event and they are simply a phone call away!  
Phone (785) 296-3737 to speak with our qualified staff.*



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