



Implementation Guide | K-12 Schools & Afterschool

Getting Started

Intro

The Montana Harvest of the Month program showcases Montana grown foods in Montana schools and communities. Each month, participating K-12 schools and afterschool programs showcase one locally grown item (e.g., winter squash) by serving it in at least one meal or snack, offering taste tests to students, and doing educational lessons and activities. You can watch a short introductory video about the program at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=orzwBczAX6A>.

Dig Deeper

Get more information, register, or download resources:

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mtharvestofthemonth.org

The Montana Harvest of the Month (HOM) program is a perfect way to launch or grow a farm to school program, as it provides an easy framework to follow and ready-to-use materials. Participating sites will receive a full packet of materials at no charge (which includes posters and cafeteria, classroom, and home handouts) as well as guides, additional resources, and training. If you would like to learn more about the benefits of farm to school or read about successful farm to school activities in our state, please visit the Montana Farm to School website at:

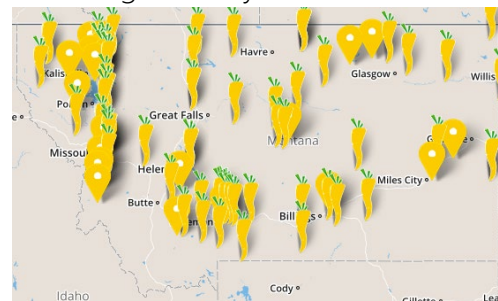
www.montana.edu/mtfarmtoschool

This Harvest of the Month Implementation Guide will provide an overview of how to implement the Harvest of the Month program in your school or district, as well as direct you to many helpful resources to support all your team members. If you have questions after reviewing this guide, or if find yourself in need of assistance once you start the HOM program, please contact Jay Stagg, Montana Farm to School Coordinator at jay.stagg@montana.edu or (406) 994-5996. We want the HOM program to be successful in your school and are here to offer support as needed!

Step-by-Step

Ready to get started? Follow this step-by-step guide and explore the recommended resources for each step. Again, please don't hesitate to reach out for assistance or with any questions as you go!

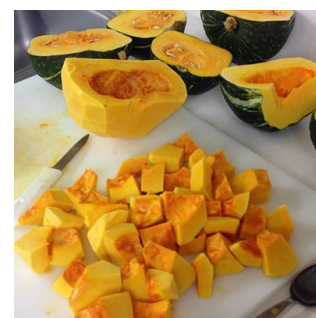
Register for the Harvest of the Month program: The first step is to register your school or district, available anytime during the year at: mtharvestofthemoth.org. Once registered, you will be set to receive all the promotional and educational materials needed for the year at no cost. **Important Note:** The Montana Harvest of the Month program does **NOT** provide the local food items for the school meals and taste tests, so you must be able to plan for and purchase the food for your site.



Assemble Team: The success of HOM depends on a committed team from the school or district. At a minimum, each school must have the commitment of:

- A school administrator
- A teacher or afterschool educator
- A school foodservice staff member (or the individual who prepares or purchases the afterschool snack or meal).

We encourage you to involve others on your team such as parents, non-profits, MSU Extension, EFNEP or SNAP-ed Educators, or any other additional community participants that might be interested in helping launch a successful HOM program. Sharing the general [basics video](#) is a good way to recruit other team members.



It is also a good idea to reach out to producers (farmers and ranchers) in your area, letting them know that you will be participating in the HOM program ahead of time and filling them in on how they might be involved. You can send them the [HOM for Producers, Processors, and Distributors](#) document found at: https://mtharvestofthemoth.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/07/HOM24_101_Producer.pdf.

Team members who are listed on your registration form will receive information, reminders, and updates via email. To add team members so they receive the information send their name, position, and email address to Jay Stagg at jay.stagg@montana.edu.

Review Expectations: Once you have recruited a team, it is important to review the requirements for participation with each member, preferably in a group meeting. The requirements are as follows:

- Purchase and serve the HOM item at least once per month in your school or afterschool program meal or snack.
- Offer at least one taste test of the HOM item per month.
- Provide at least one educational activity per month.
- Display promotional and educational materials in visible locations.
- Participate in evaluations (baseline survey and end of the year survey).

Complete the [Baseline Survey](#): Each school or afterschool program must submit the survey within 30 days of registering.

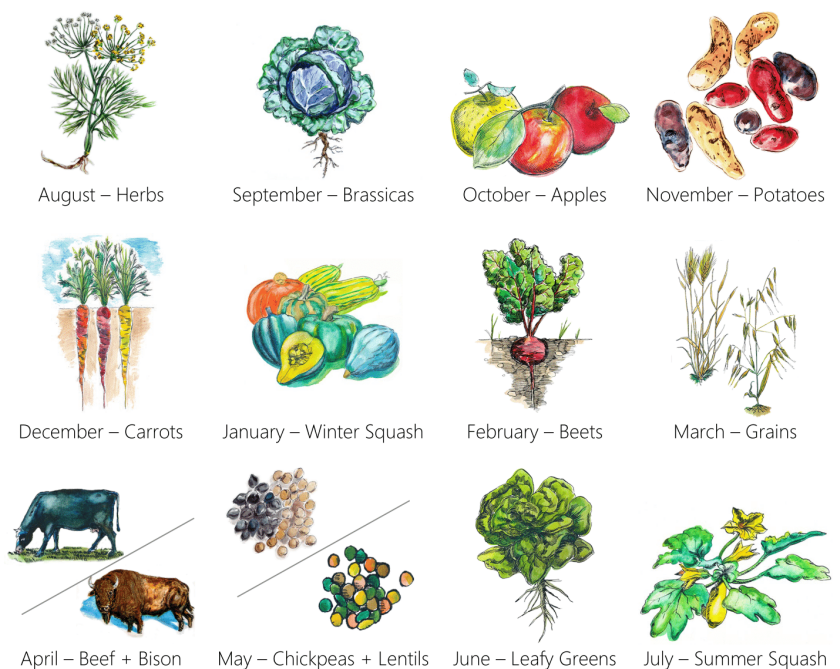
Note: If multiple schools or afterschool programs are participating within a district, a separate survey should be submitted for each school or afterschool program site. If you do not have exact answers for this survey, just fill it out to the best of your ability.

Review and save the email with the HOM Online Portal link to all electronic materials and share link with all team members. Because these resources are for sites that have registered for HOM, please only share this link with team members of your registered site. Also, be sure to bookmark the link, as it is not accessible through the website's menus.

Review resources on the [HOM Online Portal](#). Please take time to watch the [HOM basics video](#) with your team, found at <https://youtu.be/orzwBczAX6A>. This webinar explains the HOM program and provides examples from the pilot year of how different schools implemented the monthly meals, activities, and taste tests. Learn about the available materials and how to access them at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=joMFgBoHrgo>.

Review the HOM calendar: It is important to become familiar with the local food items your school will be highlighting throughout the year by reviewing the suggested calendar each year. **Note:** This is a suggested calendar, recommended by Montana food producers based on Montana's growing season. We recommend you follow the calendar so communities throughout the state are celebrating the same foods each month. However, the materials are NOT marked with specific months, so if you would like to change the order of the calendar to fit your needs or a producer's availability, you are free to do so. We also plan to add new HOM items, so the calendar may change each year.

Some of the items, like beef, lentils, and whole grains are available year-round and can be switched to suit your menu or any special events!

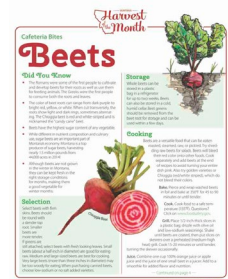


Receive printed materials. Each participating school or afterschool program site receives one free packet of printed HOM materials, which will be mailed to you if you did not pick it up at a conference or event. The packet contains one 18"x24" poster, one static cling, and Cafeteria Bites, Classroom Bites, and Harvest at Home handouts for each food. You can make copies of these handouts or print additional copies from the digital versions located on the *HOM Online Portal*.

Note: additional posters are available for purchase on the *HOM Online Portal*, as well as electronic versions in both in the 18"x24" size and a smaller 11"x17" size that you can print on your own.

Distribute materials to team members. Please give the printed materials to the appropriate team members and remind them that the *HOM Online Portal* has all the digital versions of the handouts, as well as additional resources for each month. All team members should have access to the *HOM Online Portal* from the link that you received (and hopefully shared!) upon registration.

- ❑ Provide **Cafeteria Bites** printed handouts for each month to the Food Service Director or staff member. You can also share the **HOM 101 Cafeteria - Food Service** document for guidance, found at: https://mtharvestofthemonth.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/07/HOM24_K12_ECE_101_Cafeteria.pdf
- ❑ Links to menu templates and serving line signs for the cafeteria's use can be found in the *HOM Online Portal*.
- ❑ The static cling can be removed from the backing and used on salad bars or sneeze guards to remind students which item contains the HOM item. It is compatible with dry-erase markers.
- ❑ Provide **Classroom Bites** and/or Afterschool Lessons for each month to participating teachers and afterschool or other educators. The **HOM 101 Classroom - Educator** document provides an overview: https://mtharvestofthemonth.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/07/HOM24_K12_ECE_101_Classroom.pdf
- ❑ Finally, please share the **Common Core and Next Generation Science Standards** document (https://mtharvestofthemonth.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/11/HOM22_K12_ActivityStandards.pdf)
- ❑ The **Quicktivities** handout with any individuals who plan to do HOM activities with students (https://mtharvestofthemonth.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/07/HOM24_K12_Quicktivities.pdf).
- ❑ The **Harvest at Home** handouts are to be sent home with students, so make sure they go to a teacher, secretary, or afterschool educator who will pass them out to students each month. The information on this handout can also be used on your monthly menus, in the school newsletter, or on social media.



Spread the Word! We hope that you share the great farm to school work you are doing through Harvest of the Month with the broader community.

- ❑ Let parents, caregivers, and community members know that your school or afterschool program is participating by sending out the *Participation Letter* found on the *HOM Online Portal*, or write your own once you begin the HOM program.
- ❑ Share the monthly **newsletter content** documents with the person responsible for writing the monthly school newsletter or posting on social media, found in the *HOM Online Portal*. (And double check that the **Harvest at Home** makes it home!)

Use #MTHarvestoftheMonth on social media sites.

Plan for purchasing the Harvest of the Month item for the meal or snack and the taste test: It is a good idea to start on this well in advance of when you are planning to serve your HOM item so you know where you will be getting it and when it will be delivered. If you are new to farm to school or local food purchasing, there are many resources available to you.

- ❑ Start by going to the *School Food* webpage, where you will find the *Montana Farm to Cafeteria Manual* and many other resources on buying local food:
<http://www.montana.edu/mtfarmtoschool/resources/school-food.html>
- ❑ To find producers or regional distributors in your area who may be interested in working with schools, check out Abundant Montana's directory, found at:
<https://abundantmontana.com/search/>
- ❑ Check with local farmers and businesses early so they can save some winter crops for you such as winter squash, carrots, and beets.
- ❑ Print the *Food Service Tracking Sheet* to keep track of meals served throughout the year. This will make completing the End of Year Survey easier.



The HOM item can be served as an ingredient in a recipe, on the salad bar, as a side option, cooked, or raw. How you serve it is up to you! Recipes are provided in the handouts, but you are not required to use those recipes. Find a recipe that you and the students love? Share it with our



team by submitting on the *Share Your Story* page at:

<http://www.montana.edu/mtfarmtoschool/connect/share-story.html>

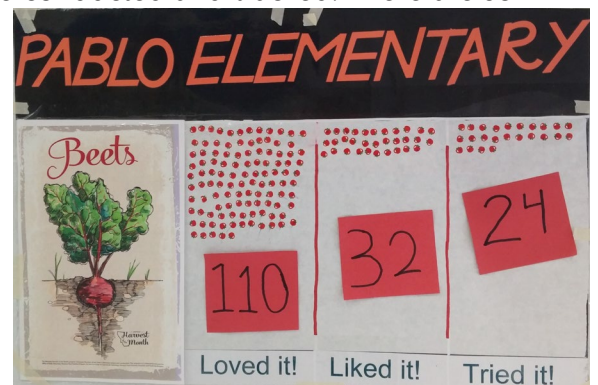
Plan lessons/activities using the lessons provided on the **Classroom Bites**, by visiting the *Quicktivities* page, or designing your own lesson. If you have a school garden, you may be able to use the garden for your HOM activity depending on the time of year.

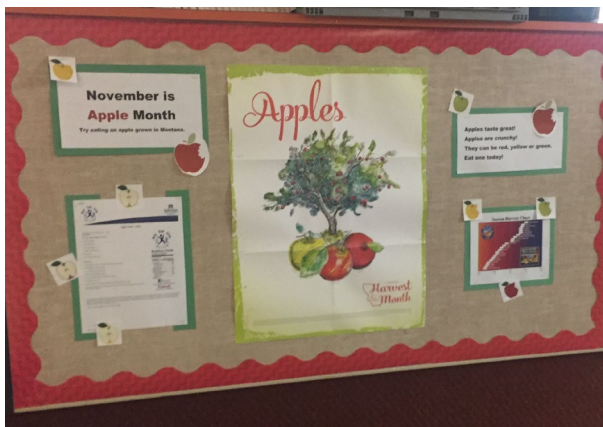
Review the *Cooking with Kids* guide for advice on conducting cooking activities in the classroom (https://mtharvestofthemonth.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/07/HOM24_CookingWithKids.pdf)

- ❑ Consider partnering with classes or student groups to conduct the lessons. Middle and high school students in culinary, family and consumer science, or agriculture classes may be interested in helping to conduct the classes.

Plan the monthly taste test: The taste test is simple to do but requires some planning. Tests can be done in the classroom with a single class or held in the cafeteria with all students. It is up to you how you would like to conduct the taste test, and it can be done differently each month. Some schools have used tablets or computers for students to cast their votes and others have used big poster paper with stickers where kids can record what they thought of the new HOM item or dish.

- ❑ Review the *Taste Test Guide*, found at https://mtharvestofthemonth.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/07/HOM24_TasteTestGuide.pdf
- ❑ Determine where, when, and how the taste tests will be conducted and tracked. There are so many ways to conduct taste tests, so set up a system that works best for your school or afterschool program.
- ❑ Use the “Tried it, Liked it, Loved it” voting system.
- ❑ Remind students of the taste test rule “Don’t yuck my yum, please” before each taste test and encourage open minds and avoid pressuring students into trying the foods.
- ❑ Consider partnering with classes or student groups to conduct the taste tests. Culinary or family and consumer science classes may be interested in preparing and serving taste tests to their peers or younger students.





Go for it! Once all the planning has been done and the HOM food has been ordered and delivered or picked up, you are ready to go! The three required components for each month do not need to be done on the same day. For example, the teacher may do a lesson on summer squash early in the month and the food service director may serve



squash in the school lunch later in the month. However, the goal of the team approach to this program is to make sure that the students are making connections between the classroom and the cafeteria (and perhaps the garden), so anything your team can do to support and reinforce what other team members are doing is encouraged. For example, a teacher holds a taste test featuring a carrot muffin recipe that will be served as part of the school breakfast later in the month, or a rancher presents to a class on the day the cafeteria is serving Montana beef. In each of these examples, it is important that all team members are coordinated so that they can remind students that they will have the opportunity to have the item in the meal or snack later or that they already tried the item in an activity.

- Serve the HOM item in at least **one meal or snack**. Remember that you can find two recipes for each item in the **Cafeteria Bites** handouts, written for school food service nutritional guidelines and serving sizes. Use the *Food Service Tracking Sheet* so you have the information easily available at the end of the year.
- Conduct **taste test** and record results.
- Promote** the HOM program! Let parents and the community know about your HOM activities. Use your school's social media outlets, share the short blurbs in the school newsletter, and take photos for the school website. Use **#MTHarvestoftheMonth** on social media sites!

Take pictures and share success stories! We want to hear about your HOM activities and meals and share your stories with other schools on the Montana Farm to School website. Go to <http://www.montana.edu/mtfarmtoschool/connect/share-story.html> to submit your stories and pictures. If you are sharing photos, especially those with children, we prefer you send signed *Montana Team Nutrition Photo Release Forms* with them so we can use your photos to inspire others (<https://powerforms.docuSign.net/cd1a1e3a-b182-4e64-a6bc-55283f47e0cc?env=na3&acct=960f6090-f7cb-40a6-adf5-0490f456d6eb&accountId=960f6090-f7cb-40a6-adf5-0490f456d6eb>).

Participate in the Evaluation (Please note that **each** participating school will participate in the evaluation requirements):

- **End of the Year Survey:** This survey should be completed by the Team Lead for each school or program site at the end of the year by June 30. The survey is essentially the Baseline survey but requests information from the current school year. Found at <https://mtharvestofthemonth.org/home-k-12/reports-k-12/>.

Thank you for your valuable feedback!

Updated July 5, 2024