

Strawberries

FROM PAGE 24

for last year's festival. "I just pick her up and she's got dinner all ready."

The popularity of picking your own strawberries has grown through the years, at least on the Urkas' farm.

She attributes it to word of mouth and federal guidelines encouraging higher fruit and vegetable consumption.

"Strawberries are high in antioxidants," she said. "They're fun to pick, too."

She and her husband encourage parents to bring their children because they are concerned about the lack of exercise that is among today's youth.

"People can have quality time with their children and it's an educational process for the little ones," she said. "They get some exercise picking and learn something from it."

U-pick tips

Joy and John Urka have planted and harvested strawberries for decades. Here are Joy's tips for successful picking:

Because the plant is leafy, she said to "move those leaves." The best berries are often hidden behind a little leaf. She also suggests lifting the vines of the plant because the strawberries can hide there as well.

Wear loose, comfortable shoes and clothing that can withstand berry stains. Plenty of sunblock and hats are also encouraged. If you plan on picking for a long time, bring something to drink.

If you do bring your children along, Urka asks that they stay close to the family and pick.

"It keeps them busy and out of trouble," she said.

For more information and directions to the farms, please call 477-5537.

Area farm markets

Alden Farmer's Market 9 a.m.-noon, downtown Alden, 331-4481.

Bellaire Antrim County Farmer's Market, 8 a.m.-noon, Senior Center Pavilion, Bellaire, 533-6023.

Boyer City Farmer's Market, 8 a.m.-noon, Old City Park, Boyne City, 582-6682.

East Jordan Garden Club Farmer's Market, 9 a.m.-1 p.m., East Jordan Sportsmens Club, East Jordan, 536-2526.

Elk Rapids Farmer's Market, 8 a.m., Elk Rapids Chamber of Commerce, 264-8202 or 800-626-7328.

Empire Farmer's Market, 8 a.m.-noon, downtown Empire by the Post Office, 256-9888.

Leland Farmer's Market, 8 a.m.-noon, Blue Bird Restaurant parking lot, Leland, 256-9888.

Suttons Bay Farmer's Market, 8 a.m.-noon, Township Skating Park on Broadway & Lincoln Street, Suttons Bay, 271-5077.

Traverse City Farmer's Market, 8 a.m.-noon, parking lot between Union and Cass streets, TC, 922-2050.

JUNE

- 1: Alden
- 4: Bellaire Antrim County
- 5: Suttons Bay, Traverse City
- 8: Alden
- 9: Boyne City

- 11: Bellaire Antrim County
- 12: Boyne City, Suttons Bay, Traverse City
- 15: Alden, Leland
- 16: Boyne City
- 18: Bellaire Antrim County, Elk Rapids
- 19: Boyne City, Empire, Suttons Bay, Traverse City
- 20: Alden
- 22: Alden, Leland
- 23: Boyne City
- 25: Bellaire Antrim County
- 26: Boyne City, Empire, Suttons Bay, Traverse City
- 29: Alden
- 30: Boyne City

JULY

- 2: Bellaire Antrim County
- 3: Boyne City, Suttons Bay,

- Traverse City
- 6: Alden
- 7: Boyne City, Traverse City
- 9: Bellaire Antrim County
- 10: Boyne City, Suttons Bay
- 13: Alden
- 14: Boyne City, Traverse City
- 16: Bellaire Antrim County
- 17: Boyne City, Empire, Traverse City
- 18: Elk Rapids
- 21: Boyne City, Traverse City
- 23: Bellaire Antrim County
- 24: Boyne City, Suttons Bay, Traverse City
- 25: Elk Rapids
- 26: Suttons Bay
- 27: Alden
- 28: Boyne City, Traverse City
- 30: Bellaire Antrim County
- 31: Boyne City, Empire, Suttons Bay, Traverse City

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