



*Network for a Healthy California—Retail Program*

# Fruit and Vegetable Store Tour Guide



# Introduction

The *Network for a Healthy California—Retail Program (Retail Program)* implements merchandising and promotional activities for supermarkets, small chains, and independent stores in an effort to influence the purchase and consumption of fruits and vegetables among low-income Californians.

The *Retail Program* uses a combination of in-store merchandising, such as point-of-sale signage and recipe cards; and promotional activities, such as food demonstrations and store tours to educate consumers about selecting and preparing fresh, canned, frozen, and juiced fruits and vegetables at the point-of-sale.

The *Retail Program* works closely with each *Campaign and Program* in the *Network for a Healthy California (Network)* to train representatives from community-based organizations, schools, churches, and health care agencies to conduct effective food demonstrations, store tours, and other promotional activities held at local food retailers. As a result, the *Retail Program* has become an invaluable partner for local retailers concerned about the health of the community they serve.

## THE PURPOSE OF THIS GUIDE

This fruit and vegetable store tour guide is designed to provide partners of the *Network* with the knowledge and resources to effectively conduct a fun, interactive, fruit and vegetable store tour at a local grocery store that empowers consumers to purchase, prepare, and consume more fruits and vegetables. If you are not a *Network*-funded project, this guide will still provide valuable information that you'll need to conduct fruit and vegetable store tours in your community.

## HOW TO USE THIS GUIDE

Building and maintaining a partnership with a retailer in your community is critical to an effective fruit and vegetable store tour. For help on beginning a retail partnership, please review the partnership building materials available on the *Retail Program* Web site at: [www.networkforahealthycalifornia.net/retail](http://www.networkforahealthycalifornia.net/retail). Once you've formed a partnership with a retailer, this tour guide will provide information on how to plan, promote, prepare, and implement an interactive and effective fruit and vegetable store tour.



# Portrait of a Fruit and Vegetable Store Tour

Grocery store fruit and vegetable tours are an excellent way to educate consumers about nutrition and its link to good health. A successful tour should increase fruit and vegetable purchases and consumption.

An effective fruit and vegetable store tour will convey the following information:

- How to select and store a variety of fresh fruits and vegetables
- The health benefits of fruits and vegetables
- How to prepare and serve fruits and vegetables
- Ideas on how to include more fruits and vegetables into a family's meal plan
- Ideas on how to involve family members in preparing and eating more fruits and vegetables

A fruit and vegetable store tour may also include:

- How to select frozen, canned, and juiced varieties of fruits and vegetables.
- A taste test of various produce items seen on the tour.
- A tour of the receiving room where retailers receive and prepare produce for display in the produce department.



The number of participants in a fruit and vegetable store tour depends on the size of the store, how you've formed your tour group (from a local school, a field trip for an adult nutrition class, etc.), and the time of the store tour. Fruit and vegetable store tours vary by the number of staff available, the amount of time the retailer allowed for the event, and the size of your retail partner's produce department. While your fruit and vegetable store tours will vary due to these factors, one thing that should remain the same is your ability to engage, educate, and empower consumers while letting them see, touch, and taste how wonderful fruits and vegetables can be.

# Retailer Concerns

While discussing your fruit and vegetable store tours with retail partners, be prepared to address a variety of concerns that they may have. By allowing you to conduct a fruit and vegetable store tour at their store, they are giving you access to their customers/livelihood, and what you do and say during your tour will reflect on them long after you have packed up and gone home. Understanding this responsibility will enable you to become a greater asset to your retail partner. Likewise, they will value your role in providing their customers with a professional, interactive, and beneficial service.

## QUESTIONS FREQUENTLY ASKED BY RETAILERS

### How much will fruit and vegetable store tours cost me?

- Reassure your retail partner that you are offering a free service and that your main objective is to increase fruit and vegetable sales at their location.
- This would be a good time to mention or show your retail partner the free Nutrition Education Reinforcement Items (NERI) (like aprons, recipe cards, vegetable brushes, kitchen timers, etc.) that you will give to store tour participants to increase fruit and vegetable sales.
- Ask if the store can donate fruits and vegetables for the participants to taste test during the tour. If the store cannot provide donations, you may buy fruits and vegetables for your group to sample or you may choose not to offer a taste test during the tour.

### Tour tip:

- Before you ask for food donations, estimate how much you'll need. Tell your retail partner how many people will attend the fruit and vegetable store tour and how many items you would like to sample. If your retail partner can not donate the food you'll need, ask if you can purchase it at a discount.

### Will fruit and vegetable store tours add to my staff's workload?

- Gauge your retailer's interest. If they have a staff member that they would like to have trained to conduct fruit and vegetable store tours, invite the person to attend or lead part of the tour. If they seem to be very busy, be prepared to conduct your fruit and vegetable store tour with minimal involvement from their staff.
- Be very clear with your retailer what their responsibilities will be on the day of the fruit and vegetable store tour (answering participant questions about the store, donating fruit and vegetable product samples, etc.).

### My store's produce department is small. Will you have room for your fruit and vegetable store tour?

- Explain to your retail partner that the tour would include the produce department as well as canned, frozen, and juiced fruits and vegetables. If this question comes up while you are meeting with the retailer on site, this would be a good time to walk him/her through the store the way you plan to take your tour group.

# Planning Your Fruit and Vegetable Store Tour

To be successful, effective planning is crucial. You will be responsible for securing a date, time, tour group, store tour activities, and confirming the final details of the store tour with your retail contact. To help you stay on track with your planning efforts, you may also use the *Fruit and Vegetable Store Tour Planning Checklist* provided in Appendix B.

## SECURING A DATE AND TIME

Before selecting a date and time, you will have to arrange your tour group. The total number of people you can take on a tour may vary according to the size of the store. Confirm with the retailer that the size of your group is acceptable at the store location you've selected.

If you are planning a store tour for a group of adults:

- Select a time and date that is convenient for your group of adults. If this group meets regularly as part of a series of nutrition classes, it is best to hold the tour at the same time and day they normally meet. While slow times and days of the week are optimal times for a store tour, you'll need to find a compromise between the times that your adult group is available and when your retail partner will allow a tour.
- When securing a date, avoid major holiday shopping days, such as before Christmas or Thanksgiving, when customers may be in a hurry and your presence may be a burden to retail staff.

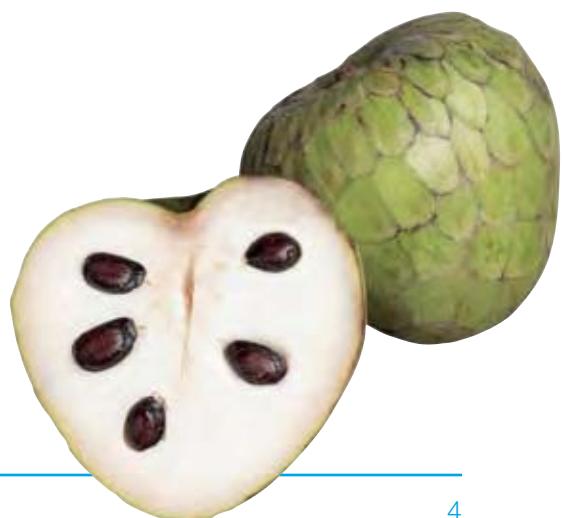
If you are planning a tour for a school group:

- Ideal times for a class tour tend to be from 10:00 am to 2:00 pm on Monday or Tuesday because these are usually the slowest times and days of the week for a grocery store. Always confirm if these general guidelines hold true for your retail partner.
- Check with the school you are working with to pick a day that does not interfere with other school activities or holidays.

If you are planning a store tour for your retail partner's customers:

- Talk with your retailer about who they are trying to serve (weekend shoppers, evening shoppers, etc.) and which times would be the best to host a tour without obstructing too much foot traffic.
- Arrange fruit and vegetable store tours during the prime dates to reach Food Stamp participating families (i.e., the first week of the month).

Once the dates are confirmed, follow-up in writing. This ensures both you and your retail contact understand what will be provided and when.



## **CONFIRMING WITH THE RETAILER**

It is important to confirm any changes or additions you make with your retail contact, preferably in writing. To help you with this step, a sample *Fruit and Vegetable Store Tour Confirmation Letter* is provided in [Appendix C](#) and available on the *Retail Program* Web site at: [www.networkforahealthycalifornia.net/retail](http://www.networkforahealthycalifornia.net/retail).

Some things to consider as you approach the activity date include:

- Confirm the name of the produce clerk scheduled to work during the time you will be conducting your tour.
- Confirm the store policy on fruit and vegetable taste tests. If the store's policy is to offer samples, confirm if preparing and serving samples will be the responsibility of the produce clerk or yours, and how much food will be donated for sampling.

- Ensure your contact is fully informed of the fruit and vegetable store tour activity format, including the tour route, tour activities, and any food sampling or receiving room tours.
- Call your retail partner one week in advance as a reminder. It may also be beneficial to call the day before your fruit and vegetable store tour to be sure there have been no last minute changes on the part of the retailer.
- Confirm all communication with the retail contact in writing. Ask if he/she prefers an email or fax that includes the agreed upon details. Request a written confirmation and ask when you can expect to receive it. Provide your fax number and/or email.

