

Illinois Local Food Purchasing Assistance Cultural Food Guide

The Illinois food system serves consumers from many different backgrounds and cultures. Culinary traditions, customs, and preferences are nuanced and rich with a sense of place and identity that is impossible to capture in a summary. Food preferences within a culture may vary significantly by individual, age, religion, region, or the length of time the person has lived in the United States.

This guide is based on limited data and does not adequately capture the cultural diversity of Illinois. It is intended to serve as a starting point for growers, producers, and community partners interested in providing more culturally responsive foods. We strongly encourage you to gather additional input directly from the communities you seek to serve.

Preferences and restrictions vary greatly by culture, but some key commonalities to keep in mind when serving individuals from different regions:

- Offer fresh, whole foods instead of canned, processed, or packaged foods when possible
- Provide a variety of fresh fruits, vegetables, legumes, meats, and seafood
- White rice may be preferred to brown rice
- Dried beans may be more accepted than canned beans
- Offer herbs, cooking oils, seasonings, and other cooking staples

The following pages provide some basic information on the most requested foods by Latine/o/a, Black/African American, and Asian consumers in each region of Illinois.



Illinois Extension

UNIVERSITY OF ILLINOIS URBANA-CHAMPAIGN

North-Central Illinois



Consumers who self-identified as Latine/o/a

Vegetables

- Any fresh vegetables
- Avocado*
- Cabbage
- Carrots
- Chilis
- Corn
- Jalapenos
- Lettuce
- Onions
- Peppers
- Potatoes
- Spinach
- Tomatoes
- Tomato sauce
- Yuca/cassava*

Fruits

- Any fresh fruits
- Limes*
- Mangoes*
- Pears
- Pineapple*

Grains

- Brown rice
- Tortillas (corn and whole wheat)

Proteins

Animal-based

- Chicken
- Eggs
- Fish
- Lean ground meat

Plant-based

- Black beans
- Chickpeas
- Lentils
- Pinto beans

Dairy

- Low fat cheese
- Low fat milk
- Nonfat sour cream
- Yogurt

Staples

- Any seasonings
- Bay leaves*
- Black pepper*
- Bouillon
- Cinnamon*
- Cumin
- Garlic
- Oil
- Salt

*Indicates a crop that is not typically cultivated in Illinois as indicated by USDA Hardiness Zones

North-Central Illinois



Consumers who self-identified as Black/African American

Vegetables

- Any fresh vegetables
- Asparagus
- Bell peppers
- Celery
- Collard greens
- Green peas
- Okra
- Potatoes
- Sweet potatoes
- Tomato sauce
- Yams*

Fruits

- Any fresh fruits
- Dried cranberries
- Lemons*
- Peaches
- Plantains*

Grains

- Grits (whole grain)
- Millet
- Wild rice*

Proteins

Animal-based

- Catfish
- Chicken
- Lean pork
- Turkey

Plant-based

- Adzuki/Red chori beans
- Black eyed peas
- Pinto beans
- Chickpeas
- Fava beans
- Lentils
- Meat substitutes

Dairy

- No requests

Staples

- Any seasonings
- Cayenne pepper
- Chili pepper
- Garlic
- Oregano

*Indicates a crop that is not typically cultivated in Illinois as indicated by USDA Hardiness Zones

North-Central Illinois



Consumers who self-identified as Asian

Vegetables

- Bamboo shoots*
- Cabbage
- Cauliflower
- Eggplant
- Mushrooms
- Potatoes
- Squash
- Tomatoes

Fruits

- No requests

Grains

- Brown rice

Proteins

Animal-based

- Eggs
- Fish
- Low-sodium meats
- Sardines

Plant-based

- Chickpeas
- Edamame
- Kidney beans
- Tofu

Dairy

- No requests

Staples

- Any seasonings
- Basil
- Cumin
- Curry powder or paste
- Ginger

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Northeast Illinois



Consumers who self-identified as Latine/o/a

Vegetables

- Any fresh vegetables
- Cabbage
- Carrots
- Corn
- Lettuce
- Onions
- Potatoes
- Spinach
- Tomatoes
- Tomato sauce

Fruits

- Any fresh fruits

Grains

- Brown rice
- Tortillas (corn and whole wheat)

Proteins

Animal-based

- Chicken
- Eggs
- Fish
- Lean ground meat

Plant-based

- Black beans
- Chickpeas
- Pinto beans

Dairy

- Low fat cheese
- Low fat milk
- Yogurt

Staples

- Any seasonings
- Bay leaves*
- Black pepper*
- Bouillon
- Cinnamon*
- Salt
- Vegetable oil

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Northeast Illinois



Consumers who self-identified as Black/African American

Vegetables

- Any fresh vegetables
- Asparagus
- Bell peppers
- Celery
- Collard greens
- Green peas
- Potatoes
- Sweet potatoes
- Yams*

Fruits

- Any fresh fruits
- Dried cranberries

Grains

- Grits (whole grain)

Proteins

Animal-based

- Catfish
- Chicken
- Sausage

Plant-based

- Adzuki/red chori beans
- Chickpeas
- Fava beans
- Pinto beans

Dairy

- No requests

Staples

- Any seasonings

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Northeast Illinois



Consumers who self-identified as Asian

Vegetables

- Cabbage
- Potatoes
- Tomatoes

Fruits

- Any fresh fruits

Grains

- Brown rice

Proteins

Animal-based

- Eggs
- Fish
- Low-sodium meats

Plant-based

- Kidney beans
- Tofu

Dairy

- Yogurt

Staples

- Any seasonings

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Central Illinois



Consumers who self-identified as Latine/o/a

Vegetables

- Any fresh vegetables
- Avocados*
- Broccoli
- Cabbage
- Cactus/Nopales*
- Carrots
- Cauliflower
- Celery
- Chayote
- Chilis and Peppers
- Corn
- Cucumbers
- Hominy
- Lettuce
- Onions
- Potatoes
- Spinach
- Tomatillos
- Tomatoes
- Tomato sauce
- Zucchini

Fruits

- Any fresh fruits
- Apples
- Bananas*
- Grapefruit*
- Grapes
- Guavas*
- Lemons*
- Limes*
- Mangoes*
- Oranges*
- Papayas*
- Peaches
- Pears
- Pineapples*
- Pomegranates*
- Raisins

Grains

- Bread (whole wheat)
- Brown rice
- Cereals
- Cornmeal
- Oatmeal
- Pasta
- Tortillas (corn, flour, and whole wheat)
- White rice

Proteins

Animal-based

- Chicken
- Eggs
- Fish (Cod, Salmon, Tilapia, etc.)
- Lean ground meat
- Offal (feet, head, etc.)
- Pork
- Steak
- Turkey

Plant-based

- Black beans
- Chickpeas
- Lentils
- Pinto beans

Dairy

- Dairy alternatives
- Low fat cheese
- Low fat milk
- Nonfat sour cream
- Queso fresco cheese
- Yogurt

Staples

- Any seasonings
- Bay leaves*
- Black pepper*
- Bouillon
- Brown sugar
- Chamomile
- Cinnamon*
- Cilantro
- Cumin
- Flour (all-purpose and corn)
- Garlic
- Goya (Adobo and Sazon)
- Hot sauce
- Oil
- Oregano
- Salt
- Sugar

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Central Illinois



Consumers who self-identified as Black/African American

Vegetables

- Any fresh vegetables
- Asparagus
- Bell peppers
- Collard greens
- Corn
- Greens
- Potatoes
- Sweet potatoes
- Tomatoes
- Tomato sauce
- Yams*

Fruits

- Any fresh fruits

Grains

- Cornmeal
- Grits (whole grain)

Proteins

Animal-based

- Beef (ground, rump roast, and T-bone steak)
- Chicken
- Duck
- Eggs
- Pork (lean and ham)
- Turkey

Plant-based

- Adzuki/red chori beans
- Chickpeas
- Fava beans
- Lentils
- Pinto beans
- Plant based meats

Dairy

- Cheese
- Cottage cheese
- Milk
- Yogurt

Staples

- Any seasonings
- Flour (all purpose and almond)
- Black pepper*
- Canola oil
- Celery flakes
- Cinnamon*
- Garlic powder
- Nutmeg*
- Onion powder
- Sage
- Salt
- Sugar

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Central Illinois



Consumers who self-identified as a Refugee

Vegetables

- Any fresh vegetables
- Chilis

Fruits

- Any fresh fruits

Grains

- Rice
- Noodles

Proteins

Animal-based

- Chicken
- Eggs
- Fish (cod, salmon, tilapia, etc.)
- Pork (ham, bone, and ribs)

Plant-based

- Beans
- Nuts
- Tofu

Dairy

- Cheese
- Cottage cheese
- Milk
- Yogurt

Staples

- Chili oil
- Flour
- Oil

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Central Illinois



Consumers who self-identified as Asian

Vegetables

- Any fresh vegetables
- Cabbage
- Potatoes
- Squash
- Tomatoes

Fruits

- Any fresh fruits

Grains

- Brown rice

Proteins

Animal-based

- Eggs
- Low sodium meats

Plant-based

- Chickpeas
- Edamame
- Kidney beans
- Tofu

Dairy

- No requests

Staples

- Any seasonings

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Southern Illinois



Consumers who self-identified as Latine/o/a

Vegetables

- Any fresh vegetables

Fruits

- Any fresh fruits

Grains

- Brown rice
- Tortillas (corn and whole wheat)
- White rice

Proteins

Animal-based

- Chicken
- Fish
- Lean ground meat

Plant-based

- Chickpeas
- Lentils
- Pinto beans

Dairy

- Low fat cheese
- Low fat milk
- Nonfat sour cream
- Yogurt

Staples

- Bay leaves*
- Black pepper*
- Bouillon
- Cinnamon*
- Salt

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Southern Illinois



Consumers who self-identified as Black/African American

Vegetables

- Any fresh vegetables

Fruits

- Any fresh fruits

Grains

- Grits (whole grain)
- Millet
- Wild rice*

Proteins

Animal-based

- Chicken
- Pork (bacon and lean)
- Sausage
- Turkey

Plant-based

- Aduzki/red chori bean
- Chickpeas
- Fava beans
- Lentils
- Meat substitutes
- Pinto beans

Dairy

- No requests

Staples

- No requests

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Southern Illinois



Consumers who self-identified as Asian

Vegetables

- No requests

Fruits

- No requests

Grains

- Brown rice

Proteins

Animal-based

- Fish
- Low-sodium meats

Plant-based

- Chickpeas
- Edamame
- Kidney beans
- Tofu

Dairy

- No requests

Staples

- No requests

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Acknowledgements

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The food lists were compiled using community surveys, focus groups, and research conducted by the following Illinois organizations:

