

West Virginia Products

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Heritage of West Virginia Products

During the period of early settlements in West Virginia, the arts were a matter of survival; most native handcrafts were related to necessary home-making and farming activities. This life was filled with the creativity that produced what we now consider the luxury arts and crafts. Some of the crafts we today call Heritage Crafts differ from the true Mountain Arts.

Mountain Arts are one of the most important art forms of the mountains of West Virginia. Examples of the Mountain Arts include log cabins and cabin furnishings, spinning and weaving, quilting and patchwork, native dyes and herbs, mountain baskets and chair bottoms, mountain music and handmade instruments, pottery and clay items, rug and candle making, and needlework and tatting.

Today, the public wants crafts produced for generations by West Virginians. The Mountain Arts and new handcrafts are an important economic and cultural resource for communities.

Although there is a distinction between yesterday's Mountain Arts and today's West Virginia products, both represent a desire to create. Many of us have jobs that result in the creation of these products. Most of us have either grown and preserved our own food or handcrafted items that historically originated from necessity. The continued desire to create and the resultant satisfaction are an inherent part of our culture, reflecting the pride of the people who create these products.

Types of Products

The term *West Virginia product* has a very broad meaning and applies to almost anything manufactured and produced in West Virginia. This program topic focuses on West Virginia products that are either arts and handcrafts or agriculture products. These products typically are sold locally and regionally without mass marketing. Buying these products directly benefits the local community.

West Virginia arts, handcrafts, and agriculture items may be found in local gift shops, community craft shows, county fairs, festivals, farmers' markets, speciality markets, grocery stores, and state park gift shops. The types of art and handcrafts vary from magnificently carved carousel horses to intricately tatted snowflakes. Agriculture products include everything from fresh produce and dried flowers to canned jellies and speciality vinegars.

Special centers such as Tamarack (located near Beckley) sell juried arts and handcrafts, as well as agriculture products. Tamarack is an excellent example of a collective marketing and promotion center for West Virginia products. For more information and to request procedures for crafts jurying, contact the West Virginia Parkways Authority.

One of the best places to purchase locally grown produce is the community farmers' market where a variety of items can be found. Farmers' markets have been on the rise in communities and are expected to continue to flourish, offering even wider varieties of seasonal produce. Fruits and vegetables commonly found at a farmers' market are tomatoes, corn, green beans, strawberries, peaches, and apples.

Marketing Your Own West Virginia Products

When first marketing art or handcrafted products, contact local and statewide arts and craft guilds and associations. These organizations will help you identify appropriate local, regional, and state market outlets. They also will be aware of events and stores requiring a jury process.

The West Virginia Department of Agriculture (WVDA) sets requirements for marketing processed food products. Each processed food item has a different guideline, which makes it necessary to contact the WVDA's Marketing and Development Division. Its staff is more than happy to help you learn the requirements and meet the standards as well as guide you in marketing your product.

West Virginia Grown Program

The *West Virginia Grown* Program promotes West Virginia producers by helping make their quality goods available to consumers. The products have a special blue-and-gold sticker with the state outline and *West Virginia Grown* logo. These products are not mass marketed. When you purchase products with the label, you are helping to preserve West Virginia heritage and support small business.

Benefits of Buying Local Products

Buying West Virginia products has many benefits. When consumers purchase from locally owned and operated businesses, they help support the local economy. Dollars spent to purchase local products are more likely to stay in the local community as direct purchases or investments. This helps build the local economy and ultimately create jobs.

Locally made products can be found almost anywhere. When shopping for yourself or for a gift, consider buying a local handcraft or food product. You will help support the local producer as well as enjoy the benefits of a West Virginia product.

Product Availability—Guides to West Virginia Products

The following are free resources available through the

West Virginia Department of Agriculture
Marketing and Development Division
1900 Kanawha Blvd. East
Charleston, WV 25305-0178
Phone: 304/558-2210

- ◆ *A Taste of West Virginia "Recipes from the Mountain State"*
- ◆ *A Taste of West Virginia*, a catalog of outstanding products from West Virginia's farm families
- ◆ *Old Fashioned Cookbook*
- ◆ *Foods and Things Grown in West Virginia*, a guide to West Virginia products and producers
- ◆ *West Virginia Wineries*, an address and location guide to wineries

For a list of fairs and festivals, phone West Virginia Tourism at 1-800-CallWVA and request a calendar of events.

Resource Persons

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