



Celebrate [National Farm to School Month](#) and local food by crunching into any Montana-grown or raised food throughout October! Montana Crunch Time is a state-wide event for students, teachers, farmers, community members, and local food enthusiasts to collectively bite into any locally grown or raised food. All Montanans are invited to join the tenth year of crunching! Montana is participating in the Mountain Plains Crunch Off along with Colorado, Missouri, Kansas, Nebraska, North Dakota, South Dakota, and Wyoming!

Why crunch? This collective crunch encourages healthy eating while supporting “farm to school” and “buy local” initiatives throughout the state. Crunch Time is a great way to introduce kids to fresh, local produce and foods in a fun way!

Share your story by tagging a photo or video with **#MTCrunchTime** on Facebook and Instagram.

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Steps to Get Started



Register! If you would like to host a Crunch event, register your event here:

<https://www.montana.edu/mtfarmtoschool/mt-crunch-time.html>. You must register to be counted!



Create a Crunch Team! Find a group of individuals who are excited about local food and farm to school. Consider including students, teachers, school nutrition staff, administrators, PTA members, and community members to help you plan and promote your event.



Decide what you will crunch and where you will get it from!

Refer to the list of crunch suggestions below or visit the [MT Crunch Time webpage](#). The state-specific resources can help you source local foods provided upon registration, or reach out to Haley Scott, haley.scott1@montana.edu.



Create your Crunch plan! You may choose to have a school or organization-wide crunch in a large assembly, individual classrooms, during breakfast or lunch, with individuals at different locations all at the same time, or at some other time and place.



Promote your Crunch event! Share your event on social media, print media, school announcements, newsletters, etc. There are template press releases and social media posts at the end of this guide for your use. Be sure to use #MTCrunchTime when posting on social media.

Crunch Suggestions

- Apples
- Beets
- Cabbage
- Carrots
- Cherries
- Green beans
- Broccoli
- Peppers
- Winter squash
- Jerky
- Grain products
- Roasted lentils or chickpeas
- Pickles
- Any other crunchable locally grown or raised food!



Find your Local Food

One of the first steps in coordinating your Montana Crunch Time event is to explore options for getting locally grown or raised foods. No matter where you're crunching, check with your distributors and shop around local grocery stores or farmers markets to purchase local foods.

Finding a local grower:

- Locate an Orchard Near You: [Montana Apples](#)
- Find a Farmers Market Near You: [Montana Farmers Market Network](#)
- Find producers, businesses, farmers markets, and more: [Abundant Montana Directory](#)
- Locate a [Local Pumpkin Patch](#)
- Montana [U-Pick Farms](#)



Schools and Institutions

Make sure to connect with the food service director or head cook at your school to see if they are interested in being involved and can help order local foods for the big crunch!

If your school qualifies, use your Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Program (FFVP) money to purchase fresh produce for the Montana Crunch Time event. If crunching during the school day, consider crunching during a mealtime so your Crunch qualifies as a reimbursable component for the National School Lunch Program or School Breakfast Program.

For **procurement information**, including **food safety information** and regulations:

- [Farm to Cafeteria Manual for Montana](#)
- [Garden to Cafeteria Toolkit](#)

Virtual Crunches

If your community isn't ripe for large gatherings, consider the following alternatives!

- Encourage families to crunch at home. Help them find local produce and send home worksheets that they can complete.
- Schedule a Zoom, Google Hangouts/Meet, Microsoft Teams or other technology for everyone to crunch together. If build this into learning time.
- Encourage the submission and compilation of selfies, of everyone crunching simultaneously but separately.
- Use hashtags such as #MTCrunchTime to post and collect images from social media.
- Promote crunches in the classroom or in other small groups as allowed.



Montana Team Nutrition, OPI staff, and folks platform for from around Montana participated in a virtual possible, crunch in 2021.

Sample Announcement to Families for Remote Crunches

Dear Families,

This year _____ (school/center/organization) will be participating in Montana Crunch Time on October 10, 2023, either in person or virtually.

We encourage you to review the sample lessons/complete the sample activities we have sent home. At ____ (time), all children are encouraged to crunch into their choice of local produce. Please send a picture of this crunch to us at _____ (contact information).

OR

At ____ (time) We will all conduct our Crunch Off together as a group or virtually. Sincerely,
_____ (Name)

Crunch Time at School

Increase Involvement

The more involvement in Crunch time, the better! Recruiting volunteers can increase participation while simplifying the Crunch Time countdown. Families and other helpers can pick up food items at a central location in the school, deliver to classrooms, and assist with classroom activities. The school nutrition staff can also be a valuable resource for ordering, receiving, storing, washing, and passing out crunchable foods.

Organizing an Assembly

Rally support and increase excitement for Crunch Time by holding an all-school assembly. How loud can your collective crunch get?!



Crunch in the Cafeteria

Incorporating the crunch food into a school meal or snack and crunching in the cafeteria during the designated mealtime is an easy way to reach students and cover the cost. Make it more than a component of the meal by decorating the cafeteria, having prizes for crunching, taking photos, etc. Be sure to find ways to allow students who bring meals from home to be included in the fun.

Tip! Consider cutting crunch items into halves or slices so everyone can try the food without it going to waste.

Crunch Time Leaders

Appoint Montana Crunch Time champions. An elected student from each classroom can pick up crunch food from the school office or cafeteria for their classroom and help lead Crunch Time activities. A student club or sports team could take the lead in promoting the event and coordinating the distribution of food. Older students can act as Crunch Time mentors or buddies and deliver crunch items and help lead activities with younger students.

Take Photos and Videos

Don't forget to appoint a parent, teacher, or student to act as a photographer and capture all the action of Crunch Time! Share on social media using #MTCrunchTime.

Connect to the Classroom

Crunching into local food is just one part of the Crunch Time experience. Activities in the classroom will help connect the event to current subject matter.

- Use and adapt the Montana Crunch Time Fun Sheet (page 10) for your classroom.
- The [Montana Harvest of the Month videos](#) are available publicly and are a great way to provide fun facts and a connection to Montana agriculture.

Grades K-3

For younger elementary students, crunchy produce can be incorporated into writing, reading, math, science, and art activities. Consider these lesson ideas:

- [Exploring Apples: How They Grow, Taste, Nutrition Facts, Activities, and More!](#)
- [Apple Taste Test for Young Children](#)
- [Writing About Fruits and Vegetables](#)
- [Pumpkin Exploration: Introducing Pumpkins and How They Grow](#)
- [USA Pulses](#)
- [Lentil Song](#)

Grades 4-6

For older elementary students, challenge students to observe, problem solve, and experiment. Students can perform basic science experiments and practice making connections to the fruits, vegetables, and foods grown locally and regionally in their lives. Consider these lesson ideas:

- [Farm to School Month Teacher Toolkit](#)
- [Eating in Season Lesson Plan](#)
- [Ag in the Classroom Lesson Plans for Grades 4-6](#)
- [STEM Based Pulse Curriculum and Growing Lentil Sprouts](#)
- Teach students about bison, the Blackfeet, and Buffalo Jump Park with the [OPI MT First Peoples Buffalo Jump State Park Lesson](#)

Middle School and High School

Middle and high school students can explore their local food system and calculate how far their foods traveled to their plate. The following links can assist with lesson planning:

- [Food Miles Lesson](#)
- [Teaching the Food System from Farm to Fork](#)
- [Ag in the Classroom Lesson Plans for Grades 6-8](#)
- [Beef Jerky Food and Fun](#)

Connect With Community

Montana Crunch Time is an opportunity to reach beyond the school walls and connect with the entire community.

- Schedule a visit to a local farm so students can see what it takes to produce food. If transportation is a challenge, invite a producer into the classroom to share their experiences, eat lunch with students, or help hand out the crunch foods.

- Ask a local dietitian or doctor to share the benefits and importance of eating fruits, vegetables, and local food products. Nutrition or health professionals can share why and how produce fits into a healthy, balanced diet. Local college students involved in nutrition or agriculture programs can also be guest speakers or lead activities.



Bozeman Elementary students bite into Swanson’s Mountain View Orchards apples in 2017.

- Invite community leaders to celebrate Montana Crunch Time. Contact your local chamber of commerce to connect with local business owners or invite members of the school board to your Crunch Time event. Let local newspaper and television reporters know about your event by sending a press release and invite them to come join in the fun. Who will be your “crunch celebrity?”

Littlest Crunchers

Early Childhood Care and Education Activities

For young children, try using activities that help students identify new fruits and vegetables. Students associate vegetables and fruits with visual imagery, feel, smell, and taste. Connecting fruits and vegetables to fun activities is a great way to engage students and support development. Check out these resources and activities:

- [Colorful Plate Spinners](#)
- [Taste and Tales](#)
- [Preschool Plan It](#)
- [Farm to Early Care and Education Interest Areas](#)

Books

- *What Grows in My Garden: Apples Grow on Trees.* Rooney, Anne. QEB Publishing, 2012.
- *Apples A to Z.* McNamara, Margaret. Scholastic, 2012.
- *Rah, Rah, Radishes.* Sayre, April. Simon and Schuster, 2011.
- *Two Old Potatoes and Me.* Coy, John. Random House Children’s Books, 2013.



Students and teachers at Moore School crunched into local apples in 2020.

Taste Testers

Gather and cut up samples of two or three different local foods, such as apples, chickpeas, carrots, and grain products and let the children, adults, and volunteers share experiences between the foods. Try blindfolding to challenge their senses or have them close their eyes.

Do they feel different? Do they smell different? Is one sweeter, crunchier, or more sour than the other? Which is their favorite?

Story Time

Try reading [The Very Hungry Caterpillar Visits Montana](#), a book written by Eric Carle and adapted for Montana, with your students! Have a local farmer, businessperson, or guest speaker come in to read to the students.



Sprout a Beet!

Supplies

- Beet (with root and stems)
- Bowls or saucers
- Soil
- Water

Directions

- Cut the root and stems of the beet so a 1/2 inch remains of each.
- Press the remaining crown of the beet, root facing down into the soil with the stems up, into damp soil in a saucer or container.
- Place the bowl or container in a window with good light and water, and have the students observe the growth of the leaves over time.

Resource from [VT Harvest of the Month](#)



Make a Bigger Crunch!

COOK!



Guide a cooking lesson using locally and regionally grown or raised food ingredients.

TEACH!



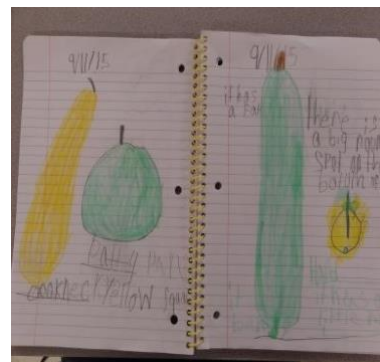
Teach about local and regionally grown or raised foods!

FIELD TRIP!



Take a trip to a local ranch or farm!

ACTIVITIES!



Have activities to engage participation!

Montana Crunch Time Fun Sheet

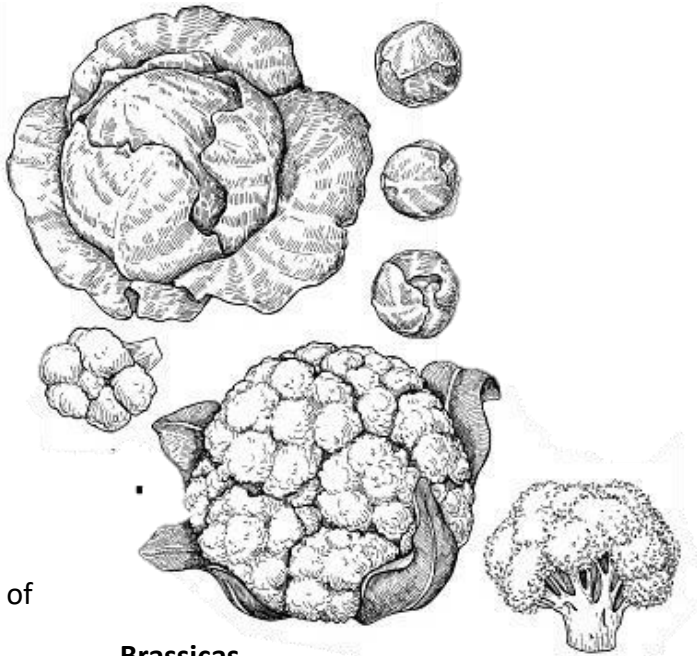
Color Your Favorite!

Color your favorite crunchy Harvest of the Month product on this page.



Cherries

Did you know on average, Montana growers produce two million pounds of



Brassicas

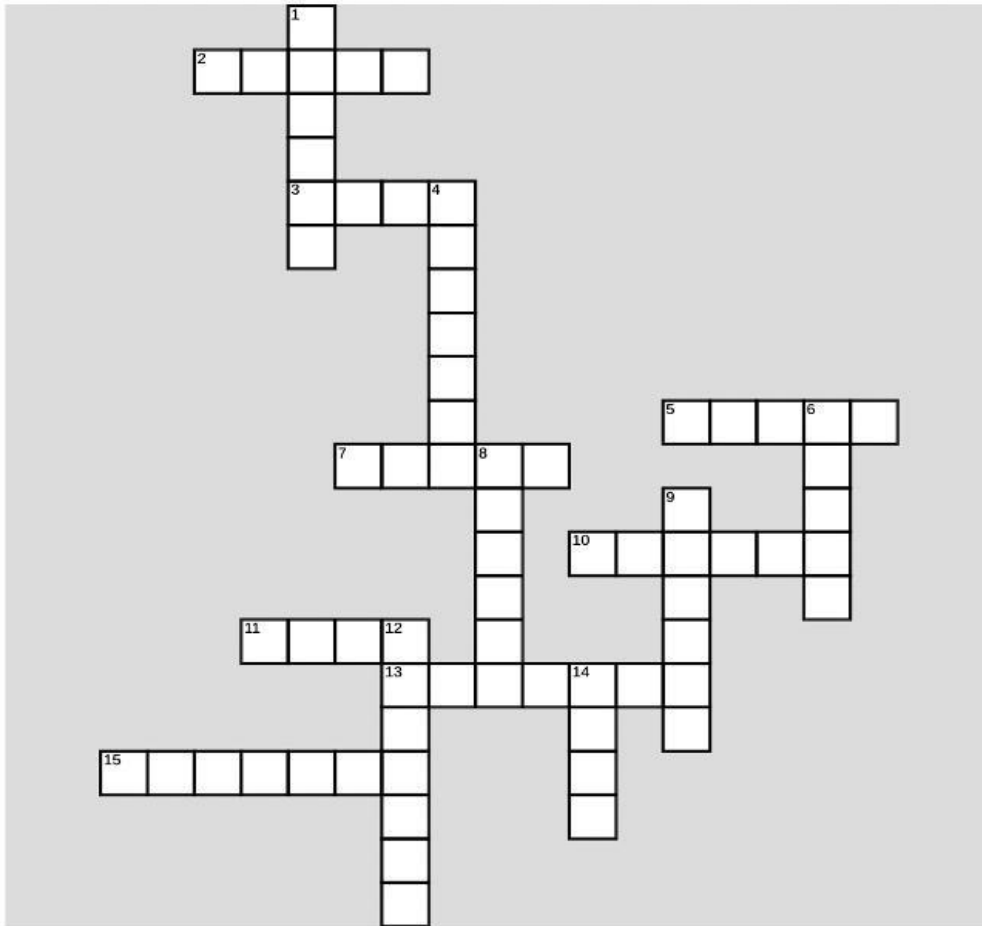
There are 3700+ species of Brassicaceae, or the Brassica plant family, ranging from cauliflower to kohlrabi!



Apples

Over 2,500 varieties of apples are grown in the United States. They come in shades of red, green, yellow, and more!

Montana Crunch Time Crossword



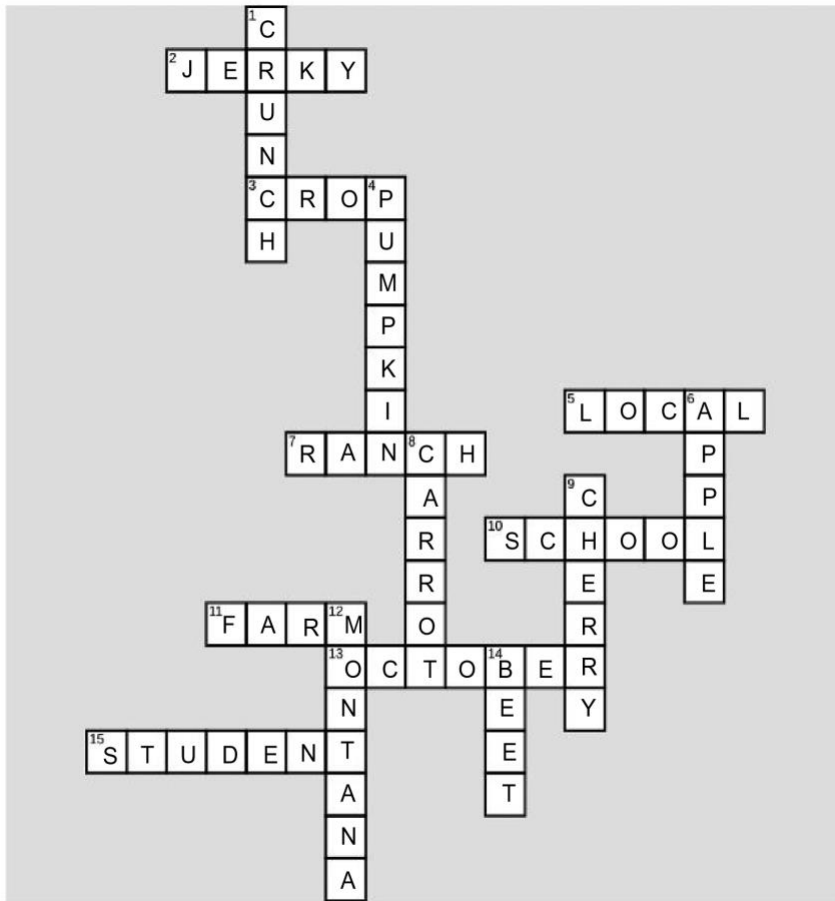
Across

2. A dried meat product
3. Plants grown as food, especially a grain, fruit, or vegetable
5. From the area; in a particular region
7. A large farm where cattle or other animals are bred and raised
10. A place where children go to receive education
11. An area of land used for growing crops
13. National Farm to School month
15. Someone who receives education

Down

1. Loud sound when biting into food
4. Orange-fleshed with lots of seeds and often carved in October
6. A fruit with red or yellow or green skin and sweet to tart crisp, pale flesh
8. An orange root vegetable
9. Popular in the Flathead region, a dark red fruit with a small pit
10. 12 The state you live in
14. Dark red colored root vegetable

Crossword Answers



Across

1. Crunch
2. Jerky
3. Crop
4. Pumpkin
5. Local
7. Ranch
9. Cherry
10. School
11. Farm
12. Montana
13. October
15. Student

Down

6. Apple
8. Carrot
14. Beet

Recipes

Here are some ideas on how to celebrate Montana Crunch Time in the kitchen with tasty snacks!

Silly Apple Bites

Have fun while making these happy treats!

Serves 8 (1/4 cup portions)

Ingredients

2 apples, each quartered

Sunflower butter or other nut butter
Sunflower seeds *Optional:*

2-3 strawberries, sliced

1-2 raisins per apple bite

Preparation

1. Cut the middle out of each quarter of the apple to create a mouth.
2. Coat the inside of the cut gap with a filling of nut butter.
3. Place 4 sunflower seeds on the top of the 'mouth' for the teeth. If you are not using strawberry tongues, add more to the bottom of the 'mouth'.

Optional:

4. Place 1 sliced strawberry inside the mouth for a tongue.
5. Use nut butter to paste on two raisins for eyes.

Source: Fork and Beans



Roasted Munching Chickpeas

Great crunchy snack packed with protein.

Developed by: MSU Extension Nutrition Education Program

Serves 6

Ingredients

1 ¼ cups dry chickpeas

1 tsp olive oil

¼ tsp salt

¼ tsp cumin

¼ tsp paprika

¼ tsp garlic powder



Preparation

1. To cook chickpeas ahead of time: using a colander, rinse dry chickpeas with running water. Add chickpeas to a medium-large bowl and add 3 ½ cups of water. Cover bowl and leave chickpeas to soak for about 16 hours. After soaking, drain off chickpea water and add chickpeas to a large pot along with 3 1/2 cups of water. Bring to a boil on the stovetop and reduce to a strong simmer for 1 1/2 - 2 hours. Taste test a couple chickpeas to check if they are done. Chickpeas should no longer be mealy, but not yet mushy either.
2. Drain the chickpeas, shaking off as much water as possible.
3. Preheat oven to 375°F.
4. Line a baking sheet with parchment paper and pour the chickpeas onto the sheet, making sure they are spread out.
5. Pat dry with a paper towel.
6. Bake for 30 minutes total. Halfway through baking time, shake the pan so the chickpeas turn over. The peas should sound like rocks rolling when they are well roasted.
7. Mix dry seasonings into a large bowl.
8. As soon as the chickpeas are done baking, pour into large bowl, add olive oil.
9. Shake the bowl so all the chickpeas are coated with oil.
10. Pour chickpeas into the bowl with the seasonings.
11. Shake the bowl so all the chickpeas are coated with seasonings.
12. Serve immediately at room temperature, or store in a covered container.

Source: Montana Harvest of the Month

Community Celebrations

Montana Crunch Time isn't just for students and schools, everyone can participate! Across Montana, individuals, healthcare facilities, colleges, workplaces, businesses, community groups, and more will be celebrating healthy, local food with a synchronized crunch.

- To get involved, use the modifiable Crunch Time flyer to spread the word.
- Post the flyer at your workplace or community center.
- Email it to coworkers or other potential participants.
- Announce Crunch Time at a work meeting or gathering.
- Share Crunch Time information on your website, social media pages, and or e-newsletter. Once you have an event scheduled, be sure to share the information with your local media (see press release template below), and also with us! Register your crunch at <https://www.montana.edu/mtfarmtoschool/mt-crunch-time.html> by October 31st and send us photos and video of your crunching crew.

Promoting Your Event

Promote your event and Montana Crunch Time throughout Montana! Use the following sample press release/announcement below to invite others to join in your celebration. Download a modifiable [Montana Crunch Time Flyer](#) to post in your workplace, school, and community. Consider inviting your local representative, an elected official, sports team, service clubs, or other individuals to join in your celebration.

Sample Press Release/ Announcement

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

CONTACT

{NAME}

{SCHOOL/ORGANIZATION}

{PHONE}

{EMAIL OR OTHER CONTACT}

{DATE OF CRUNCH EVENT}

It's Montana Crunch Time, {TOWN/SCHOOL NAME}

{TOWN/SCHOOL NAME} is joining schools, preschools, individuals, and businesses across Montana in celebrating National Farm to School Month by crunching into {FOOD ITEM} from {FARM, RANCH, BUSINESSES NAME OR TOWN} on Wednesday, October 19th for *Montana Crunch Time*!

{PROVIDE A BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF YOUR EVENT, ACTIVITIES, LOGISTICS, HOW PEOPLE CAN BE INVOLVED}

This collective crunch encourages healthy eating and supports farm to school and Buy Local initiatives throughout Montana. {DESCRIBE HOW IT CONNECTS LEARNING OR OTHER RELATED EFFORTS AT YOUR ORGANIZATION}.

For more information, or to crunch with us, please contact {CONTACT NAME} at {CONTACT PHONE AND/OR EMAIL}.

The Montana Farm to School Leadership Team and partners have created a guide to help every Montana child crunch into a healthy or local food of your choice this October! For more information about Montana Crunch Time, to register and receive your guide, visit www.montana.edu/mtfarmtoschool.

-end-

Social Media

We want to see and hear students from across our Big Sky State crunch into Montana grown or raised food at the same time! Get out your cameras, video cameras, or phones and take a *crunch byte* from your school to share with others across the state! Be sure to share your story, photos, or videos on social media (Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram) by using the tag **#MTCrunchTime**.

“ _____ (Name of group/school/business) is participating in Montana Crunch Time. We will be crunching into _____ (local food) at _____ (time) on October 10 at _____ (location). If you want to join us _____ (add instructions for joining if relevant).... #MTCrunchTime

“We encourage you to join _____ (Name of group/school/business) in crunching into _____ (local food) at _____ (time) on October 10. Snap a crunch byte via your _____ (device/video/photo) and post on _____ (social media: Facebook/Instagram/Twitter) and tag #MTCrunchTime!

Promotion Images

[Use the images in this folder](#) when promoting your crunch or create some of your own with the logos provided!

Crunch Byte Photo Release Form

Help us gather crunch bytes (videos, photos, etc.) to share on social media and in future Montana Crunch Time resources by sending your crunch bytes to Haley Scott, haley.scott1@montana.edu and by filling out the Montana Team Nutrition [Photo Release Form](#).

For More Information

Haley Scott

Montana Team Nutrition Program

Phone: 406-994-5641 Email: haley.scott1@montana.edu

Learn more about farm to school in Montana at www.montana.edu/mtfarmtoschool

Resources and ideas about National Farm to School Month in October: www.farmtoschoolmonth.org