

Sustainability Newsletter Week 56: Sept. 8-12, 2008.

Topic: Eat Local Challenge!



*****I know the challenge started on Sept. 5, but in reality, we should be attempting to eat more locally all the time!*****

What is the Eat Local Challenge?

- It is a voluntary challenge to eat either 4 out of 5 meals, or spend 10% of your budget on local foods (150 mile radius from where you live) for 10 days.
- The challenge runs from Sept. 5-14, 2008.
- More information about the challenge can be found at www.eatlocalwisconsin.com and www.eatlocalchallenge.com.

Why is eating local food so important or beneficial?

1. Local foods taste better:

-Many foods lose their peak flavor quickly over time and with refrigeration. Once you have tasted fresh local fruits and veggies you may have trouble going back to long-distance produce. (Hands down, the best broccoli I have ever tasted is organic and from a farm at the Cameron Park Farmer's Market).

2. Local food is healthier:

-As with flavor, many nutrients break down over time and with processing. The fresher your food is, the more nutritious it will be. Produce that you purchase at your local farmer's market has often been picked within 24 hours of your purchase.

3. Local food is safer:

-Local food has to meet the same health standards that shipped foods do. Also, because local food changes hands fewer times there may be fewer opportunities for contamination. Still, whether your food is local or comes from far away, you should follow safe handling and preparation practices.

4. You know more about local food:

-When you buy your food direct from the farmer you can ask about specific production practices you care about (such as the use of pesticides or hormones or about the animals' living conditions). Even if you buy it at a grocery store or restaurant you can usually find more information on where and how local food was grown and processed. (I can't ask Green Giant why their carrots tasted like bitter chemicals as easily as I can directly ask a market farmer if they used fertilizers or pesticides.)

5. Local food is more fun:

-Visiting farmers' markets and farms can be an entertaining activity for the whole family. Many young children are also more likely to try and enjoy foods that they helped pick or that they associate with a specific farmer.

6. Local food supports local farmers:

-Do you like seeing well-tended farmland nearby? That land will only stay open as long as the farmers have a profitable market for what they grow. Otherwise, it could very well turn into a strip mall or housing subdivision.

7. Local food helps the planet:

-In general, local food uses less energy for transport than food that is shipped from far away, even organic foods. In a March 2005 study by the journal *Food Policy*, it was found that the miles organic food often travels to our plate create environmental damage that outweighs the benefit of buying organic. However, many farmers who market locally also choose to use ecological growing practices such as rotational grazing, reduced chemicals, and Integrated Pest Management.

8. Local food helps communities:

-When you buy local food the dollars you spend not only stay in the area, they help local farmers and preserve working lands. According to a study by the New Economics Foundation in London, each dollar spent locally generates twice as much income for the local economy. When businesses are not owned locally, money leaves the community at every transaction.

9. Local food is easy:

-Wisconsin is blessed with farmers who grow wonderful vegetables, fruits, dairy products, meats, and many other products; and with many farmers' markets, CSA farms, and other places for consumers to find local food. Many supermarkets and restaurants also carry some local foods.

Here are some local foods links:

www.farmfreshatlas.org

www.savorwisconsin.com

www.localharvest.org

<http://100milediet.org/get-started/map>

www.peoplesfoodcoop.com

Cooking with local foods links:

<http://www.sustainabletable.org/kitchen/recipes/>

<http://www.landstewardshipproject.org/lfdbg/foodfarm-recipes.html>