

Tips on Eating Locally: created by Citizens for Local Food, a Local 20/20 Action Group, 2015

Why Eat Local?

Local Food supports our community's economy, preserves and keeps local countryside economically viable, and increases our food security in times of crisis (when semi-trucked food is less available). It is also important in the preservation of local food traditions, and helps to reduce our individual and collective carbon foot print. A functional local food system allows for sustainable community growth, since it had the means to feed itself as it expands. Relying on locally grown foods can lead to eating a better diet, and it will reduce the negative environmental and health impacts of agriculture overall, because who wants chemical drift in their own backyard?

What exactly does a Local Diet Look like?

A local plate has locally grown foods that are either fresh in season, or preserved in some way (pickling, fermenting, drying, cold storage, value-added, freezing, and canning). The degree of how much of the plate is local is up to each individual. Some folks eat one local food item per meal per week; others aim for 90% of their 3x/day plate to be local. Foods that are not grown here, but are value added locally (for example: bread, coffee, some cheeses, beer) are also included in a local food diet, depending on the eater's personal choice. Also, a person's definition of "local" can vary depending on whose saying it- to some, it is food from their own neighborhood and to others, and it is within a three county radius of their own or within their state lines. To others, it means eating the indigenous plant and animal foods. Eating locally is a highly individual experience!

Where Do I get Local Food?

At the grocery store, seek out products that are advertised as local, or better yet, get a guide to give you a tour of the local companies that are on the shelves. Bread, cheese, meats, ferments, dairy, beer, wine, cider, tea, coffee, snacks, baked items, deli items, canned foods, and of course fruits and vegetables should all be identified with their farm or local business name. Seek out your nearest farmers market, where local farmers receive the maximum value for their product. If you have a farm that you want to build a purchasing relationship, see if they offer Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) shares for sale. Do ask questions: where is this food from, who grew it, how did they grow it? Visit farm websites, and send the farmers emails; be (respectfully) curious! When eating out at restaurants, ask your server if any food items on the menu are local- they may say no, but at least you asked. If there are locally sourced foods to enjoy- you hit the jack pot! Nothing like a local food meal prepared by someone else- all the joy, little work, and worth every penny. Consider hosting "locavore" potlucks for sharing local food with friends.

What's the deal with Local Meat?

Source local meat direct from local growers: check local grocery store boards, and seek buying clubs to find bulk orders of quarter, halves and whole lamb, beef, pork, and goat. You can also get portioned local meat at the farmers markets, and in some grocery stores, but the cost is higher due to the convenience. Ask the growers what they feed their creatures, and how much space and pasture the animals have to graze on. Do they name their animals? Can they send pictures of their range lands or can you visit? Go in on purchases with neighbors to be able to have a diverse mix of meat to stock your deep freezer (electric or propane). It will cost more than grocery store meat, but it is the true cost of food you are paying for- not commodity grown, mass produced, environmentally damaging process from other states. The most sustainable meat production is decentralized, small diverse farm production, with humane living standards, freedom of disease, and diverse nutrition that supports the thriving of the animal during its lifetime, preferably on lush (not astroturf) pasture and with watershed buffers. Consider reading [Defending Beef](#) or [Grass Soil Hope](#) for a better understanding of the research identifying the environmental impact on sustainable pasturing of animals.

What about Grains, Beans, and Nuts?

If meat isn't a part of your diet, learn to grow grains and beans, and network with other grain and bean growers to get varied plant varieties (and amino acids), and consider getting a flock of chickens for eggs, and sourcing milk from local goats or cows. Chickens are great little garbage disposals, as are pigs (as pets, of course)! Animal ownership is a complex step that requires raccoon/coyote/dog proof coops and plenty of book teaching. Nut trees exist in our area, but more need to be planted, and shell removing equipment would be a great community investment to support nut agriculture.

If you want the Grains and Beans in your diet, but you have no inclination to grow what you need, try buying in large bulk bags and store it in rodent proof bins or hang in bags from ceiling rafters. Nash's Farm Store is a great place to source bulk local grains and beans, along with buying clubs and the local food grocery stores (PT Co-op and Chimacum Corner Farm Stand). Fence pickets, white mold proof paint, and rolling casters make great food storage bin materials.

Fruits and Veggies- home grown or locally grown- and how to preserve the abundance?

Learn to grow your own vegetables- OR- learn to love the farmer's market and locally grown produce in the grocery store. Blessed be the vegetable farmers!

Learn how to store a food harvest at your own home- great books on the topic include Root Cellaring by Mike Bubel. Also learn to can, pickle, ferment, dry, as well as cold storage. Learn how to freeze food (and then use it so as to not let it grow ice crystals for 15 months). Build yourself a home processing kitchen, with large tables, wide refrigerators, sturdy stoves, powerful ventilators, and deep sinks. All your friends will want to process and store food at your place!

Grow or purchase extra food for storage- so you can trade and gift your extra bounty! Who doesn't like a jar of homemade pickles in a white elephant gift exchange? Plus- it might come in handy in an emergency, too.

Plan your meals around available vegetables instead of grains:

- kraut, onion, asparagus and squash, instead of pasta and squash.
- sautéed cabbage and greens with a fresh brown butter corn and basil salad and roasted goat with stewed tomatoes and onion sauce.
- potatoes, carrots, garlic scapes and dried chanterelles cooked in vegetable or meat broth, served with a few rashers of bacon, lentil loaf, fresh steamed clams or poached salmon.
- Local greens with tomato, pickled asparagus, sliced radish, shaved sweet onion, fresh mint, local goat cheese, and a 10 minute egg, topped with a raspberry cider vinaigrette.
- Chard ribbons boiled in water for 5 min, drained, and added to a cup of hot broth with a poached egg and some beet kraut.

Take a guided class or lesson on wild crafting, if considering procuring food from the wild. This includes help with wild mushrooms, greens, and berry collecting, along with clam, mussel, crab, seaweed and fish harvesting. The main themes are promoting sustainability of the wild populations, and learning to identify poisonous mock species, as well as environmental contamination hazards.

Cultivate native edible species on your property; learn about edible weeds.

Do I have to give up Fat and Sugar?

Grow sunflowers or walnuts to press for cooking oil, or consider lard, butter, tallow, instead of olive oil, canola oil, coconut, palm, margarine or shortening. Let honey become your best friend, and consider growing sugar beets and learning the old traditions of milling them for sugar! Or strive for a sensible concession to the local food diet, and get some organic cane juice in the bulk bin at the grocery store for the recipes it is not interchangeable in- perhaps just like the old pioneers with their sacks of sugar, coffee, and flour purchased monthly at the local trading posts.