



Good for the Earth, Good for People, Good for Communities

TEN REASONS TO EAT LOCALLY

1. *Local food tastes better and has more variety.* Local farmers are not limited to the few varieties that are bred for shipping, storage, and shelf life. They can let their fruits and vegetables truly ripen on the vine, rather than picking them green. At a farmers market, you will find a diversity of produce that simply isn't available in an average supermarket. Think of just-picked tomatoes, red carrots, and heirloom peaches. Preserving genetic diversity allows longer seasons of harvest, a larger assortment of colors, and richer flavors.

2. *Locally grown produce is fresher, healthier, and retains more nutrients.* Compare supermarket food that has been in transit or cold-storage for days or weeks to that sold at a farmers market (which is often picked within 24 hours of your purchase). Studies have shown that the nutritional value of produce sharply declines as time passes. Produce found at the farmers market, picked at the peak of ripeness, is packed with health benefits.

3. *Locally grown produce is cheaper than supermarket produce.* Numerous studies have shown that similar products are usually less expensive at farmers markets than at nearby supermarkets. (Note: if you compare the least expensive item in a supermarket to the same item at the farmers market, it is more expensive about ½ the time, but this doesn't take into account production methods or other factors). And if you buy fresh produce in bulk at the height of its season, preserving it for later use, you can save money.

Additionally, you get what you pay for when it comes to food. Much of the food available in grocery stores is highly processed, grown with pesticides, and/or genetically modified, which can lead to many health problems (including diabetes and obesity). Paying less up front for cheap food can lead to expensive health care costs down the road.

4. *Local food protects the environment.* The average forkful of food in the US travels 1,500 miles to reach your plate. Locally produced food travels drastically fewer miles, resulting in decreased fossil fuel use, less pollution, reduced packaging, and better air quality. And it is generally grown using methods that minimize the impact on the earth.

5. *Eating locally supports the local economy.* According to a study by the New Economics Foundation in London, a dollar spent at a locally owned business generates twice as much income for the local economy than one spent at a chain store. Keeping money in the local community helps to preserve and create jobs (farmers selling in local and regional markets are able to employ 75% more workers than those selling on a national scale.) When businesses are not owned locally, money leaves the community at every transaction. In the industrial food system, for example, less than 10% of the food dollar goes back to the producer (the rest goes to the distributors, packers, and retailers.)

- 6. *Buying locally raised food directly from the producer helps keep ranchers and farmers in business.*** With industrial, long-distance food, the producer gets only 15 cents out of every dollar consumers spend on his product. The rest goes to the shippers, processors, grocers, middlemen, and advertisers. By selling directly to local consumers, producers can get full price for their products, allowing them to make a living wage so they can continue farming or ranching.
- 7. *Eating locally keeps local agricultural land in production,*** preserving rural traditions and ensuring that future generations will be surrounded by open fields, grazing lands, and wildlife.
- 8. *Eating local food keeps us in touch with the seasons and the land.*** By eating with the seasons, foods are consumed when they are at their peak taste, are most abundant, and are least expensive. Additionally, eating locally helps preserve the agricultural traditions of the southwest.
- 9. *Local food has a story.*** Knowing where your food comes from and the rancher or farmer who produced it means that it is not an anonymous product. The producer himself can be held accountable for quality, and can also give personal service, information on how the product was grown, and tips on how to use the ingredients you buy.
- 10. *Local food increases community food security*** by retaining the experts that know how to produce food. Depending on far away food sources at the end of a long and vulnerable food chain leaves a region at the mercy of supply disruptions and increases opportunities for harmful contamination. In contrast, producers who sell at farmers markets are inherently flexible, adapting their product and prices to meet the needs of the local demand.