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Why Should I Buy & Eat Local Foods?

Eating local foods is better for you, for the environment, and (most importantly) for your taste buds. Here are the top eight big, umbrella-style reasons you might want to consider eating more local foods.

1. Local Foods Are Fresher (and Taste Better)

Local food is fresher and tastes better than food that has been trucked or flown in from thousands of miles away. Think you can't taste the difference between lettuce picked yesterday and lettuce picked last week, factory-washed, and sealed in plastic? Do a taste-test at home. I'm betting you can.

Along with tasting better, fresher food lasts longer too.

2. Local Foods Are Seasonal (and Taste Better)

It must be said: Deprivation leads to greater appreciation. When does a cozy room feel best? When you've come in from being out in the freezing cold. In-season, locally grown tomatoes burst with flavor that's easy to forget if you only eat ones that are artificially ripened with gas. Fresh corn in-season tastes best when you haven't eaten any in 9 or 10 months - long enough for its taste to be a slightly blurred memory that is suddenly awakened with that first bite of the season. Eating locally means eating seasonally, with all the deprivation and resulting pleasure that accompanies it.

3. Local Foods Usually Have Less Environmental Impact

Those thousands of miles some food is shipped? That leads to a big carbon footprint for a little bunch of herbs. Look for farmers who follow organic and sustainable growing practices and energy use to minimize your food's environmental impact.

4. Local Foods Preserve Green Space & Farmland

The environmental question of where your food comes from is bigger than its "carbon footprint." By buying foods grown and raised closer to where you live, you help maintain farmland and green space in your area.

5. Local Foods Promote Food Safety

The fewer steps there are between your food's source and your table the less chance there is of contamination. Also, when you know where your food comes from and who grows it, you know a lot more about that food. During the e. coli outbreak in spinach, I knew the spinach in my refrigerator was safe because I knew it was grown in California, not in the Northwest. It's important that it didn't



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6. Local Foods Promote Variety

Local foods tend to create a greater variety of foods available. Farmers who run community-supported agriculture programs (CSAs), sell at farmers markets, and provide local restaurants have the demand and



hence the economic support for raising more types of produce and livestock. This leads to Brandywines, Early Girls, and Lemon Boys instead of "tomatoes."

7. Local Foods Support Your Local Economy

Money spent with local farmers, growers, and artisans and locally-owned purveyors and restaurants all stays close to home. It works to build your local economy instead of being handed over to a corporation in another city, state, or country. Since the food moves through fewer hands, more of the money you spend tends to get to the people growing it.

To make the biggest local economic impact with your food budget, seek out producers who pay their workers a fair wage and practice social justice in their business.

8. Local Foods Create Community

Knowing where your food is from connects you to the people who raise and grow it. Instead of having a single relationship - to a big supermarket - you develop smaller connections to more food sources. All of the sudden you know vendors at the farmers market, the buying manager at the local cheese shop, the butcher at your favorite meat counter, the workers at the co-op that sells local eggs, the roaster and barista at the local café. For some people the benefit of this is social and psychological; for all of us, though, it pays off in the foods we eat. People who know you tend to want to help you, whether it's giving you a deal on a leg of lamb, letting you know when your favorite tomatoes will be on sale, or setting aside a wedge of your favorite cheese.

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