



**Locally
Grown
Food**

Numerous Health Benefits

The commitment to consuming locally grown food is becoming a trend across the country. As people become aware of the advantages to their health and the environment, it's commonly a staple in American family diets.

Not only does buying local impact community farmers and the regional economy, but your body will reward you with numerous benefits and wellness. One of the most substantial incentives to consider when buying local is the preservative-free foods you digest. Because the goods don't endure long-distance transportation to travel to distant grocers, most locally grown foods avoid chemical and preservative treatment to remain fresh during transit.

The International Journal of Scientific and Research Publications warns about overconsuming foods that have extended shelf lives due to the use of biological and non-biological components like:

- Sulfites are often found in fruit can cause headaches, palpitations, allergies and cancer.
- Nitrates, used to cure meats, is suspected of causing stomach cancer.



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- Benzoates serve as anti-microbial preservatives and are contributors of allergies, asthma and skin rashes.

- Sorbates cause rare reactions, but those can include urticaria and contact dermatitis.

The easiest way to avoid health hazards caused by preservatives is to avoid them in your diet. Here are some other significant advantages you will find when you buy

locally grown food.

USUALLY PESTICIDE FREE

Many times, local food producers opt to raise their crops without the use of commercial pesticides. According to the HelpGuide International organization, supporting organically grown food is shown to have tremendous environmental benefits, including:

- Reducing pollution.

- Conserving water.
- Lowering soil erosion.
- Using less energy.

Farming without pesticides is also safer for local birds and wildlife.

ENCOURAGES A WELL- BALANCED DIET

When you limit your diet options to locally grown foods, you are more likely to add lean proteins and healthy greens and fruit. Avoiding the chain

grocery stores can help limit the enticements of purchasing junk food or processed items.

BETTER CHANCES OF SAFE DIETS

A locally farmed diet is also safer when considering the risk of contamination in the items you purchase. Because the goods won't pass through as many hands as commercially grown goods, you can ensure it's safe to consume.

Support Family-Owned Farms

The hardworking farmers in your area greatly benefit when the community buys their locally grown food. Did you know that the majority of farms in America are family-owned?

According to the United States Department of Agriculture, small family farms make up almost 90% of the country's operations. Show your support by promising to shop local and patronize other businesses who share the same standards.

Buying from local farmers produces tremendous advantages to the Earth's environmental health. When you invest in produce or meats from a neighbor in your community, you do your part to limit long-distance transportation. The shorter the commute the food takes from the farm to the grocery store, the less fuel is used, saving our limited oil resources and cuts down on pollution caused by commercial trucks.

SHOP AT FARMERS MARKETS

Both newly established farms and those with extensive service in the industry participate in local farmers markets. Spend some time at these unique events to learn



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more about how your food is grown and harvested. You'll gain a greater sense of appreciation for the sacrifices and hard work your neighbor did to ensure your family has a warm meal. You can also consider volunteering at the farmers market to assist during the busy season or act as an advocate to advertise the gathering.

LEARN TO LOVE SEASONAL FOOD

Help cut down on food waste by trying new recipes with in-season fruits and vegetables. You should also partake in canning and preserving foods while they are bountiful in your area to limit grocery store trips when your favorite items aren't locally available.

Food waste is becoming a tragic situation in America. Each year, an estimated 80 billion pounds of nutritional goods are disposed of. Check out these other startling statistics from the Recycle Track System to understand the urgency of limiting the food we throw away.

- 40% of the country's food supply is wasted each year.

- Thirty-seven million people in America – including 11 million children – are suffering from food insecurity.

- The average family wastes about \$1,600 worth of produce each year.

If you plan to stock up on produce and meats throughout the year, do your research on safely storing it without allowing it to go to waste.



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Start a Movement

The squeaky wheel gets the grease, and the most vocal community members can create a wave to insist local chain grocers carry locally grown foods.

If you don't already have access to buy produce or meat from your local farmers directly, the next best method is to purchase it from a grocery store's shelves.

There are many ways to become a more influential voice for local farmers trying hard to make an honest, productive living in your community.

With the support of your peers, consider creating a petition or an online movement to encourage the

venues in your city to offering at least a section of local favorites.

A first step in the process is to get your neighborhood peers on board. Open a conversation on community social media boards to recruit members in the movement. You can discuss the benefits that locally grown foods introduce to both physical health and the regional economy. Bounce ideas off each other and build a list of advantages that you can

showcase to local leaders.

TALK TO STORE MANAGERS

Once you have recruited a team of like-minded peers, consider scheduling a meeting with your local grocer's general manager. They are likely the decision-maker regarding purchases from vendors and stocking the shelves. It can be helpful to have a list of local farmers who are already involved in producing food for other community stores.

You should also bring along the petition you started to show the neighborhood demand for fresher food options.

Don't be discouraged if they say no or discuss plans to start small with a

minimal locally grown section. Many grocers may choose to slowly source local items to test the popularity before making community farms full-time vendors.

LOCAL LEADERS

Another way to make an impact is to visit city hall meetings where the public is invited to discuss concerns. Ask local leaders to help raise awareness about the benefits of consuming locally grown foods and volunteer to help the cause. With an inexpensive marketing campaign, the movement can be brought to the entire community through airwaves, social media listings and neighborhood fundraisers.

Visit a Farm Event

Local farms have been forced into finding new ways to generate revenue in recent years.

Especially on the heels of the COVID pandemic, many farmers are getting creative to help supplement their efforts that may have been impacted by fewer visitors or reduced ordering from their business customers.

While raising and harvesting meats and produce may be the primary revenue generator for local farms, many operations host fun events to increase their income. With the weather becoming more comfortable, it's likely that on-farm gatherings will soon occur in your community. Look for upcoming events to create timeless memories with your friends and families while supporting the growth of your local farmers.

Here are some fun activities that are commonly thrown on the farm.

FLOWER SHOW

Many produce farmers dedicate a section of their land to growing attractive flowers. They often hold events that invite the public at harvest time and purchase potted plants or navigate the ground and pick their own blooms. Make sure to have a plan regarding where you will rehome the flowers when you get home, as proper planting is required



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for their growth success.

CONCERTS

In attempts to spread the word about local farming operations, some managers choose to host concerts to attract guests while showing off what they have to offer. It's a great chance to find your new favorite artist and rub shoulders

with community members. They will typically invite local vendors to serve food and sell their exceptional items. Make sure you bring plenty of cash to show your support for local creativity and those who make your region unique.

FALL FESTIVITIES

When fall approaches, many

small farmers shift their focus into celebrating autumn festivities. A significant source of income may come from sectioning off a piece of land for a dedicated pumpkin patch. Locals are often invited to walk through the crop and pick their own vegetables. Look for various exceptional options for both carving jack-o-lanterns

and using them as ingredients for fall recipes.

Other common activities include community bonfires, hayrides for the kids and an exciting maze that repurposes a harvested corn crop. Help your local farmers celebrate a successful summer by supporting them during their fall festivities.

Support Local Food Businesses

As community members looking to support our local farmers, we should never feel powerless to impact the greater good.

There are many ways we can help local farmers – and they all start with putting our money where our mouths are.

With a bit of research, you can find numerous businesses in your community that carry locally grown foods. By becoming a frequent shopper, you help boost the nearby economy and support the hardworking men and women who decided to open shop in your hometown.

An excellent place to start your trek to find local suppliers is checking the vendor's online profiles. Many will boast about their commitments to using the freshest ingredients, their relationships with local vendors and the strive to source the business with items from the community. Here are a few types of industries that commonly participate in the locally grown movement.

RESTAURANTS

Research from Penn State University shows that restaurateurs who buy locally grown food are more apt to purchase a significant proportion to fill their menu.

The study shows that owners are willing to sacrifice uncer-



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tain delivery times and heightened costs to receive cleaner and fresher ingredients. The partnership between the local growers and restaurants creates a healthy revenue flow for the economy and quality community relationships.

Show your loyalty to home-grown eateries by avoiding national fast-food chains that

rely on long-distance transportation to stock their shelves. Doing so results in fresher, better-tasting foods and promoting economic growth in your region.

LOCAL GROCERS

Many grocery stores are incorporating shop local sections into their departments.

From fresh produce to home-raised flowers, buyers can get a taste of the community by sticking to the specialty goods. If you like the type of quality you're getting, be sure to email or speak with the store's managers to express your enthusiasm. As popularity grows, they are likely to expand the sections into more

substantial offerings.

FOOD TRUCKS

Farm-to-the-food truck is the concept of food trucks purchasing locally grown goods directly from the source. With fresh and organic ingredients, the truck workers can serve high-quality meals while supporting other local businesses.

Seasonal Foods

Adapting to a locally grown food mindset can take a little work and research to pull off. With the proper research, however, you can determine the types of produce and goods available throughout the year.

Since the harvest times differ depending on your area and climate, your menu will feature multiple ingredients to keep your taste buds excited.

Eating what's in season ensures you are consuming the freshest as possible. When the farm-to-table timeline is reduced, the need for chemicals and preservatives can be avoided. If you plan to support locally grown food throughout the year, you will need a plan to preserve your food when it's not in season naturally.

Fortunately, by freezing and canning, you can ensure that your organically grown foods receive an extended shelf life without introducing harsh additives.

LEARNING WHAT'S IN SEASON

A great place to start becoming familiar with your community's seasonal foods is local farmer's markets. Make frequent visits and create notes to document the types of items that are readily avail-



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able. While you're there, ask the growers about their expectations of when other foods are to be harvested, so you can start planning future menus.

NATURALLY PRESERVING

Preserving food naturally has been used for centuries. Fortunately, the process is

easier than ever it was for our ancestors and can be achieved in many forms. Check out a few ways to save seasonal foods and reuse them throughout the year, as suggested by the National Center for Home Food Preservation.

- Safely canning foods removes oxygen, destroy enzymes and prevent the

growth of undesirable bacteria. When done correctly, once perishable goods achieve an extended life cycle.

- When freezing fruits, vegetables or meats, consider vacuum sealing items before storing them to reduce the risk of freezer burn.

- Drying foods with a dehydrator can extend the life of

fruit by about a year and often six months for vegetables.

Regardless of which method you decide to try, make sure to follow safety guidelines from reputable outlets. Failure to preserve food properly can introduce dangerous conditions, including botulism, a deadly form of food poisoning.

Locally Grown Barbecues

It's the time of year for backyard barbecues and outdoor gatherings.

If you're a master on the grill, consider treating your guests to locally grown meats and vegetables. Your food will impress more than ever when it's bought fresh from a local farmer or butcher shop.

Supporting your local farmers throughout the summer helps hold them over financially during the winter if their operations are on hold. The monetary gains from that season provide them revenue to plan for the next harvesting season and upgrade their operation.

This year, do your part by only buying local and encouraging your guests to do the same when they bring side dishes or main entrees.

BUTCHER SHOPS

The freshest and highest quality meat is typically purchased at an independent butcher shop. They are more likely to source their foods from local sources, which raise grass-fed animals. When buying from an expert, you will also have access to incredible cooking tips and the cleanest cuts in town.

Another advantage you gain from shopping from a local outlet is that the meat is often cut right in front of your eyes. Many national grocers sell pre-packaged items that are left in the cooler or count-



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er for a specific time.

You can avoid buying old or spoiled meat options by investing in the independent butcher's shop in your community.

FARMERS MARKET

The local farmers market is

also an excellent place to acquire fresh beef and fish that's raised humanely.

You can often find organic vegetables to roast or add on a grilled kebab. Farmers markets are a unique chance for the community to gather and local producers to promote

the goods they harvest. When you become a regular, you may even get special treatment from the vendors as they typically show loyalty to their best customers.

DESSERTS

Don't forget to stock up on

locally grown fruits to provide a healthy snack in between a meat fest or make a delicious cobbler.

As you browse the farmer's market or produce stand, look for tasty options to surprise your guests and experiment with new recipes.