

6 tips for eating locally

By Amanda N. Wegner

That ham and cheese on rye that you just picked up from the convenience store and are about to eat?

Yeah. That one. Chances are that each of the sandwiches' individual pieces traveled an average of 1,500 miles just to get to your waiting mouth. Translate that to barrels of crude, dollars put in faraway pockets and more, and that's one expensive sandwich.

Steven L. Hopp, a contributor to Barbara Kingsolver's book, *Animal, Vegetable, Miracle*, writes that if every U.S. citizen ate just one meal a week, any meal, composed of locally and organically raised meats and produce, we would reduce our country's oil consumption by over 1.1 million barrels every week.



Photo by Bill Lubing, www.lubingcreative.com

Peppers from Deerfield Greenhouse are available at the Dane County Farmers' Market.



A CSA share from Luna Circle Farm in Rio.

Plus, says **Craig Kuenning**, general manager of **Quivey's Grove Restaurant** and a **Madison Originals** board member, "eating local and dining local is good for the local economy. More money stays local and is re-circulated and spent many times, helping everyone."

If that weren't enough, it's just plain better for you, too.

Here are some tips to make that a reality.

1. Buy the bulk of your groceries from farmers' markets, co-ops and independent grocers, butchers and specialty shops. They are more likely to have formed relationships with local farmers and producers, so more of your food is produced locally, notes Kuenning.
2. Investigate where your food comes from. "You'll be amazed, fascinated and horrified," says **Rachel Armstrong**, Buy Fresh Buy Local campaign coordinator for **REAP Food Group**. "Once a person learns about how most of the food Americans eat is grown and processed, all of a sudden, eating local isn't a heroic choice or something you do to save the planet, it becomes an immediate preference."
3. In the same vein as No. 2, know your farmer. "Understanding the culture and philosophy of the people who are growing your food gives you more agency and more satisfaction that you're getting the best quality, most nutritious food available," says **Kiera Mulvey**, director, **Madison Area Community Supported Agriculture Coalition (MACSAC)**.
4. Find local independent restaurants. In this day and age, eating local is easy. "Stay away from the malls for the most part," says Kuenning. "Usually, you can find

local restaurants just a block or two away. When exiting highway ramps, drive just a little further. The chains locate right at the exits, while the locals are usually just a little further down the road toward the real towns."

RESOURCES for eating locally

Madison Originals

www.madisonoriginals.org

A coalition of locally owned restaurants dedicated to preserving the Madison area's local flavor.

Madison Area Community Supported Agriculture Coalition

www.macsac.org

While CSA season is underway, some farms may still have openings, so be sure to check!

FRESH Food Connection of Wisconsin

www.freshfoodwisconsin.org

This new organization offers CSA shares.

REAP Food Group

www.reapfoodgroup.org

Includes information, such as the *Farm Fresh Atlas* (also available at www.farmfreshatlas.org), which provides information on local farms and farmers' markets.

- Purchase a good knife and use it. "When you haven't learned how to use one, it's very threatening and difficult," says Armstrong. "But with training, it becomes a tool you can't live without."
- Cultivate an appreciation of "limited-term availability," says Armstrong. Adds Mulvey: "It can be wonderfully satisfying to rearrange your diet to be more seasonal. Supporting local farmers and organizing your meals around what is freshest at that time is not only better for you, but also heightens the anticipation and ultimate thrill of the first spring salad or summer tomato." Don't worry. You don't have to empty your refrigerator and pantry tonight; even baby steps are good steps.

"Any steps make a positive impact," says Armstrong. "Like exercising only 30 more minutes per week, eating three more servings of healthy, fresh food per week makes an impact. And it means something to the local farmer as well. Everyone eating one locally grown, grass-fed hamburger per month adds up to a lot of local cows raised in a healthy and more sustainable manner and contributing to our rural economy."

Local freelance writer and editor Amanda N. Wegner, amandawegner.com, was so inspired by Kingsolver's book that this summer she's starting an heirloom-only garden at her family's homestead farm, with hopes to expand to markets soon.

Local treats to savor this summer

Eating locally doesn't mean you have to give up your favorites treats, like burgers, beer and frozen yogurt.

Just in time for summer, Ian's Pizza is debuting frozen yogurt made from local, live-culture Sugar River Dairy yogurt and fresh Blue Marble Family Farm milk. The yogurt is available – in vanilla and a weekly specialty flavor – at the Ian's Pizza by the Slice on Frances Street in Madison.

"Since a big part of our company vision is to lessen the impact we have on the environment, incorporating more locally produced food into our menu makes a lot of sense to us," notes Ian Gurfield, founder of Ian's Pizza. "Plus we get to support other area small businesses, and the food just tastes better."

As for that beer and burger, consider attending "Burgers and Brew: The Taste is Local" Saturday, May 30, at Capital Brewery Bier Garten in Middleton. The event raises money for REAP Food Group's Buy Fresh Buy Local program, which helps Southern Wisconsin restaurants find locally grown food that meets their needs. Program coordinator Rachel Armstrong describes the event this way: "A savory locally grown burger in one hand and a handcrafted beer in the other. What could be better at the start of the summer?"

Tickets are available at Willy Street Co-op and at the REAP Food Group Web site. Learn more at www.reapfoodgroup.org.



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may 2009 • wisconsin woman 23