Why Buy Local?

The “buy local” mantra is well-known in terms of economic development, but in the last few years, the buy local concept has grown to include food. Southwest Colorado is now home to an abundance of farmers markets, community supported agriculture (CSA) opportunities, and producers of meats, cheeses, honey, and other foods. As it turns out, the reasons to buy locally grown and produced foods are many.

1. **Local food tastes better.** By buying local, you are receiving the freshest possible produce, often picked just hours before delivery to your local store or farmers market. Produce that travels long distances can be days or weeks older. Over time, sugars in foods turn to starches, plant cells shrink, and produce loses its vitality and flavor.

2. **Local food is more nutritious.** Once harvested, produce quickly loses nutrients. Since local produce is sold soon after it’s picked, it retains more nutrients.

3. **Local food promotes energy conservation.** The average distance our food travels is 1,500 miles, mostly by air and truck. By buying local, you help conserve the energy that would be used to transport food.

4. **Local food supports local farmers.** The American family farmer is a vanishing breed. In fact, fewer than 1 million people (less than 1 percent of Americans) claim farming as a primary occupation. It’s no wonder when, on average, farmers get less than 10 cents of every retail food dollar. By buying local, many of the middlemen disappear, and local farmers get to keep more of every retail food dollar, which helps them continue to farm.

5. **Local food builds community.** By getting to know the farmers who grow your food, you build understanding, trust, and a connection to your neighbors and the environment. The weather, seasons, and science of growing food offer great lessons in nature and agriculture. Visiting local farms is a great way to foster appreciation for food and helps educate friends and family about where food comes from.

6. **Local food preserves open space.** Do you enjoy meadows of wildflowers, picturesque barns, and rolling pastures? These things should also serve as a reminder that our treasured agricultural landscapes survive only when farms are financially viable. By spending money on locally grown food, you’re increasing the value of the land to the farmer and making development less likely.

7. **Local food supports the environment and benefits wildlife.** Family farmers tend to be good stewards of the land: They respect and value fertile soil and clean water. And their farms provide the fields, meadows, forests, ponds, and buildings that are the habitat for many species of wildlife. In addition, buying local reduces the distance food must be transported, thus reducing the use of fossil fuels and the emission of greenhouse gases.

8. **Local food is about the future.** Supporting local farms today helps keep those farms in our community, ensuring that our children and grandchildren have access to nourishing, flavorful, and abundant food. When you choose to buy local, and make your choices known, you raise the consciousness of your family, friends, and neighbors.

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