

# Guidelines for Eating Well

If not **LOCALLY PRODUCED**, then **Organic**. This is one of the most readily available alternatives in the market and making this choice protects the environment and your body from harsh chemicals and hormones.

If not **ORGANIC**, then **Family farm**. When faced with Kraft or Cabot cheeses, Cabot, a dairy co-op in Vermont, is the better choice. Supporting family farms helps to keep food processing decisions out of the hands of corporate conglomeration.

If not **FAMILY FARM**, then **Local business**. Basics like coffee and bread make buying local difficult. Try a local coffee shop or bakery to keep your food dollar close to home.

If not a **LOCAL BUSINESS**, then **Terroir**, which means 'taste of the Earth'. Purchase foods famous for the region they are grown in and support the agriculture that produces your favorite non-local foods such as Brie cheese from Brie, France or parmesan cheese from Parma, Italy.

Hit the **farmers' market** before the supermarket. Plan your meal around local ingredients you find at the market.

**Branch out**. Maybe your usual food repertoire could use some fresh ideas. The farmers' market provides a perfect chance to try a new ingredient when it's in season, and lets you talk to its grower to find out the best way to prepare your new food. Flirt with your food producer!

**Feed the freezer**. Can't cook every night? Worried about your fresh produce going bad? It's easy. Make lasagna with local tomatoes or a soup packed with fresh veggies and freeze it! You can also make personal size meals for a brown bag lunch.

**Go out!** Many Bay Area restaurants emphasize local foods in their dishes. Ask around, you might be surprised how many options you find that serve up local flavor.

## Top Twelve Reasons to Eat Locally

1. **Freshness**. Locally-grown organic fruits and vegetables are usually harvested within 24 hours of being purchased by the consumer. Produce from California can't be that fresh.
2. **Taste**. Produce picked and eaten at the height of freshness tastes better.
3. **Nutrition**. Nutritional value declines, often dramatically, as time passes after harvest. Because locally-grown produce is freshest, it is more nutritionally complete.
4. **Purity**. Eighty percent of American adults say they are concerned about the safety of the food they eat. They worry about residues of pesticides and fungicides. These materials are not permitted in an organic production system either before or after harvest.

5. **Regional Economic Health.** Buying locally grown food keeps money within the community. This contributes to the health of all sectors of the local economy, increasing the local quality of life.
6. **Variety.** Organic farmers selling locally are not limited to the few varieties that are bred for long distance shipping, high yields, and shelf life. Often they raise and sell wonderful unusual varieties you will never find on supermarket shelves.
7. **Soil Stewardship.** Soil health is essential for the survival of our species. Conventional farming practices are rapidly depleting topsoil fertility. Creating and sustaining soil fertility is the major objective for organic growers.
8. **Energy Conservation.** Buying locally grown organic foods decreases dependence on petroleum, a non-renewable energy source. One fifth of all petroleum now used in the United States is used in Agriculture. Organic production systems do not rely upon the input of petroleum derived fertilizers and pesticides and thus save energy at the farm. Buying from local producers conserves additional energy at the distribution level.
9. **Environmental Protection.** Soil erosion; pesticide contamination of soil, air, and water; nitrate loading of waterways and wells; and elimination of planetary biodiversity are some of the problems associated with today's predominate farming methods. Organic growers use practices that protect soil, air, and water resources; and that promote biodiversity.
10. **Cost.** Conventional food processes don't reflect the hidden costs of the environmental, health and social consequences of predominate production practices- of, for instance, correcting a water supply polluted by agricultural runoff, or obtaining medical treatment for pesticide induced illness suffered by farmers or consumers. When these and other hidden costs are taken into account, as they should be, locally grown organic foods are seen clearly for the value they are, even if they cost a few pennies more.
11. **A Step Toward Regional Food Self Reliance.** Dependency on far away food sources leaves a region vulnerable to supply disruptions, and removes any real accountability of producer to consumer. It also tends to promote larger, less diversified farms that hurt both the environment and local economies/communities. Regional food production systems, on the other hand, keep the food supply in the hands of many, providing interesting job and self-employment opportunities, and enabling people to influence how their food is grown.
12. **Passing on the Stewardship Ethic.** When you buy locally produced organic food you cannot help but raise the consciousness of your friends and family about how food buying decisions can make a difference in your life and the life of your community; and about how this basic act is connected to planetary issues.