

THE TRUE COST OF FOOD

We vote three times a day.

With every meal we can choose to help the environment or to harm it.

EAT Local:

* If you care about global warming, don't buy food that has traveled hundreds or thousands of miles by plane and truck to get to you.

* If you care about open spaces, buy food that is grown on small local farms, which help keep open spaces from being paved over.

* If you care about stopping sprawl, buy from local producers rather than from big chain stores.

EAT Organic:

* If you care about biodiversity and endangered species, don't buy food that is produced with toxic pesticides, which kill all sorts of creatures.

* If you care about global warming, don't buy food that is grown with petroleum-based fertilizers.

* If you care about clean air, water and soil, look for food that is grown on farms where farmers don't use chemical pesticides that are sprayed from the air and leach into the water and soil.

EAT more vegetables, fruits, nuts, grains, and seeds

* If you care about forests, wild places, biodiversity, and endangered species, you should know that a leading cause of deforestation in the Americas and elsewhere is the raising of cattle and their feed.

* If you care about clean water and soil, don't buy meat from factory farms where animals are raised in confined operations so that their wastes poison the air, soil and water around them.

“Sustainability means living in such a way that there are enough resources to live well, in an alive, thriving environment—indefinitely.” Jon Jeavons, author of *How to Grow More Vegetables*. . .
A sustainable system is one that can be maintained with minimal use of scarce resources from outside the system; with minimal negative impact on the planet; and with maximum benefit for the producer.

Substitute sustainable agriculture for the industrial model based on pesticides, herbicides and poorly tested genetically engineered foods. Getting rid of outrageous subsidies and restoring family farms is only a first, relatively easy step. Next comes making serious public investment in agricultural research, to put the world's cumulative, sophisticated knowledge of plant ecology to work.

From: *Strategic Ignorance — Why the Bush Administration Is Recklessly Destroying a Century of Environmental Progress*. by Carl Pope

WE CAN MAKE A DIFFERENCE

Most of the world's problems can't be fixed by individual action: disease, war, and poverty require concentrated efforts by policy makers and governments. But **ONLY** consumers can affect the way food is grown and transported; this is an area where our actions make a difference. If we buy food that's grown sustainably supply will follow demand and it will become more available. When it becomes obvious that small farmers can make a decent living, more young people will be able to start farming.

Here's what you can do:

- Find out where the food you eat comes from and how it's grown, raised, and processed. Get to know the farmers who grow your food and support them.
- Buy food that is grown locally. Fresh food from local farmers is more nutritious and avoids pollution caused by transporting food.
- Eat seasonally; you might find blueberries and peaches in Northern supermarkets in February, but they've been shipped from far away—and they're probably tasteless, anyway. Wait for the delicious produce that's grown in your area and you'll enjoy the pleasure of anticipation and learning the rhythm of the seasons.
- Eat the greatest variety of the least processed food and eat less of it.
- Buy organic whenever you can. Organic farmers don't use the chemicals that are polluting our water, air, and soil.
- Start your own organic garden—you can never get fresher food than by growing it yourself!
- Eat less meat. Fruits, vegetables, grains, beans, and seeds are healthier and more sustainable
- Eat with family and friends; learn to cook; share recipes and your knowledge of sustainability.
- Buy grass-fed, free-range, or pasture-raised meat and dairy.
- Try "Sustainable Tuesdays"—learn more about this at www.sierraclub.org/sustainable_consumption/
- Shop at farmers' markets and farmstands; find one at www.localharvest.org or sustainabletable.org.
- Join a CSA, a food co-op that supports a local farm. Check www.csacenter.org.
- If you choose fish, eat fish that is raised sustainably. Learn more at www.seafood.audubon.org.
- Ask restaurants, stores, and schools where they get their food. Support those that buy locally. See www.chefscollaborative.com, www.dinegreen.com.

FAMILY ACTIVITIES

Young children can't fully comprehend the science behind the decisions to eat safe food—but that doesn't mean it's too soon to involve them.

- Plant seeds and watch them grow. You can grow lettuce or herbs in 3-inch pots on a sunny windowsill. If you have room, try squash or tomatoes in the ground or in 5-gallon pots. No yard? Look for a community garden.
- Make composting a family activity. Here's a way to ensure that your kids will get involved: add worms to your pile—kids can't resist them, and they make explaining the composting process fun.
- Start a worm box; they're available through most garden centers and worms teach kids about sustainability—as well as being great fun.
- Organize family outings to farmers' markets and to farms, for apple and strawberry-picking or helping with weeding and harvesting. Introduce your kids to the farmers and to farmers' kids. Joining a CSA—a Community-Supported Agriculture program in which consumers buy shares in a farm's harvest—make this especially easy to do.
- Whenever possible, bring your kids' friends, and their parents, along. Peer pressure is so important to kids; getting your child's class involved will help enormously.
- Get involved in your school's PTA and advocate nutrition education. Try to get local food brought to the school breakfast or lunch program and start a school garden.

KIDS AND VEGETABLES

We're not going to say that it's easy to get kids to eat vegetables, certainly not when their friends are all eating sugar- and fat-filled foods. But here are some ideas for veggies that many kids are happy to try:

- Dips and dunks; it's more fun to eat a broccoli spear or a carrot stick if you've dunked it yourself. Try different vegetables--not every kid will like every one--and try some dips with special kid ingredients, like sweet fruit or peanut butter.
- Make your own pizza: Ask your kids to decorate with vegetables and they're more likely to find them palatable.
- Most important: do it together. Involve your kids in preparing meals—even a two-year-old can tear up greens—and eating as a family.

www.truecostoffood.org

www.sierraclub.org/sustainable_consumption/

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