



## Eating Local Food

Eating locally is about sourcing food which has been grown and produced close to where you live. It is about learning how to cook delicious and nutritious meals that suit your lifestyle, using local and seasonal ingredients. This may be a combination of home grown and home produced food your own backyard, your neighbours, or a community garden, foraged wild food, seasonal boxes direct from the farmer, or produce from local urban farms, suppliers and producers within your region.

### Why should I eat local food?

Our modern food systems mean many people have to come to expect global food to be available whenever we like, without giving much thought to the consequences of where our food came from, how it was produced, and how it got to us. The benefits of eating food which has come from a local source may include knowing more about your food, as well as a lower impact (from not requiring as much freight, distribution and storage). You can support local farmers and producers, and help to build a resilient local food system for the future.

Eating 'in season' produce when it is at its peak, and it hasn't travelled long distances, may mean your food tastes better, may be more nutritious, and more readily available. Look for more sustainably produced, organically grown, local food options.

If you grow your own food, you may not be able to produce everything you need for a balanced, nutritious diet. You may also need to rely on local food sources, during 'lean times', when the garden or your chooks are not producing as much, or when an issue has reduced your harvests.

### How do I source local food?

Look for a local Food Map, or Regional Food Guide, to help you find places where you can buy local food in your region. It may show you farmers markets, farmers or producers that sell direct, CSA's (Community Supported Agriculture), stores that sell local food, places you can forage for wild food, cafes and restaurants that support local suppliers, even places where you can swap or barter with your home grown produce. It may also list companies and producers from within your region or state.



**Eating Local Food addresses the Permaculture Principals – Use and Value Diversity, and Integrate rather than Segregate.**

It makes more sense to have a resilient local food system, instead of relying on one or two sources to supply our food. By supporting local farmers and producers now, and encouraging sustainable practices, we help them build strong businesses, which develops a network we can rely on in hard times.

### What advice can you offer to help me eat locally?

- A good way to start is buying your fresh produce (vegetables, fruit, herbs, eggs, meat) from a local source.
- Learn how to cook with seasonal produce, which means you eat produce during the period when it is being harvested in your region. Look for cook books or websites that cater to seasonal cooking, or adapt your favourite recipes. You can substitute similar amounts of seasonal, local produce in many recipes
- Talk to the stallholders at the markets or ask your green grocer, where and how the produce was grown. Look for a labelling system, with explanations on a sign, brochure, or website
- Look for convenient options to suit your lifestyle, such as having seasonal boxes delivered, or consider cooking in bulk or in advance. Find the balance that suits you!
- Adaptable meal planning means you can set certain kinds of meals for certain days of the week or fortnight, but use the produce you pick from the garden or buy from the farmers market.

### Will eating local food cost more? How can I afford to eat locally, sustainably and organically?

Organic, sustainable, local and ethically produced food can cost more. Growing your own food is a way to access it without it costing you as much (there will usually be some initial outlay when setting up your garden, chook run etc.) Some ideas to make the most of the local food you do buy are:

- reduce waste with adaptable meal plans, and using up or storing leftovers
- being creative with seasonal produce
- use more vegetables, and less meat/ dairy
- making more of your meals and snacks 'from scratch'
- preserving food when it is in season or abundance, and usually cheaper
- eating the parts you might normally throw away, such as leafy young tops off radishes, turnips, beetroot or swedes, as well the root
- form a small co-op with family, friends and neighbours, to buy in bulk and make it better value, and to coordinate pick ups

Another option is to learn how to safely forage wild foods, and identify edible weeds, which are all free! Invest in a good guide book, or find a course in your area.

### References & Further Reading

**Frugavore** by Arabella Forge, 2011, Skyhorse Publishing

**Kitchen Garden Companion** by Stephanie Alexander, 2010, Quadrille Publishing Ltd

**Local Food – How to Make it Happen in Your Community** by Tamzin Pinkerton & Rob Hopkins, 2009, Green Books

**The Weed Forager's Handbook: A Guide to Edible and Medicinal Weeds in Australia** by Adam Grubb and Annie Raser-Rowland, 2012, ...

**Local Harvest** [www.localharvest.org.au/](http://www.localharvest.org.au/)



### For further information on this topic, contact

#### Growing Home

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