

Central Coast Buy Fresh Buy Local Campaign

Improving Economic Viability for Central Coast Farmers

Promoting Healthy Local Food, the Farmers Who Grow It and the Stores, Restaurants and Farmers' Markets that Sell It



Five Reasons to Buy Local Food

1. Local produce tastes better and it's better for you.

A recent study showed that fresh produce loses nutrients quickly. In a weeklong (or more) delay from harvest to dinner table, sugars turn to starches, plant cells shrink, and produce loses its vitality. Even in California, produce may have traveled surprisingly far to get to your grocery store. Food grown in your own community was probably picked within the past day or two. It is crisp, sweet and loaded with flavor.

2. Local food supports local farm families.

Fewer than one million Americans now claim farming as their primary occupation (less than 1%). Farming is a vanishing lifestyle. And no wonder: the farmer today gets less than 10 cents of the retail food dollar. Local farmers who sell directly to consumers cut out the many middlemen and get full retail price for their food – which means farm families can afford to stay on the farm, doing the work they love.

3. Local food protects genetic diversity.

In the modern industrial agriculture system, produce varieties are chosen for their ability to ripen simultaneously and withstand harvesting equipment. Shippers demand produce with a tough skin that can survive packing, transport, and a long shelf life in the store. Only a handful of hybrid varieties of each fruit and vegetable meet those rigorous demands, so there is little genetic diversity in the plants grown. In contrast, local farmers that sell direct to you or direct to your local restaurants and grocery stores grow a huge number of varieties selected because they have the best flavors, provide a long harvest season, and come in an array of eye-catching colors. Many varieties are heirlooms, passed down from generation to generation because they taste good. These old varieties contain genetic material from hundreds or even thousands of years of human selection. They may someday provide the genes needed to adapt to a changing climate.

4. Local food preserves open space, and supports a clean environment.

As the value of direct-marketed fruits and vegetables increases, selling farmland for development becomes less likely. A well-managed family farm is a place where the resources of fertile soil and clean water are valued. Good stewards of the land grow cover crops that prevent erosion and replace nutrients used by their crops. Cover crops also capture emissions and help combat global warming. In addition, the patchwork of fields, hedgerows, ponds and buildings is the perfect environment for many beloved species of wildlife. That landscape will survive only as long as farms are financially viable. When you buy locally grown food, you are doing something proactive about preserving the agricultural landscape.

5. Local food is about the future.

By supporting local farmers today, you can help ensure that there will be farms in your community tomorrow, and that future generations will have access to nourishing, flavorful and abundant food. Look for the Central Coast Buy Fresh, Buy Local label and taste the difference!

Adapted from ©2001 Growing for Market



Support the Central Coast Buy Fresh, Buy Local Campaign by joining the Central Coast Chapter of the Community Alliance with Family Farmers. Call (831) 761-8507, or visit www.caff.org for more information.

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