

## **Thought for Food**

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### **Local Diet the Way to Go**

*Gail Southall*

There's been a lot of buzz lately around eating locally-grown food: books like the *100 Mile Diet* and *Animal, Vegetable, Miracle* are popping up on bookstore shelves; participation opportunities such as the Eat Local Challenge abound; and, of course, there are web sites galore dedicated to 'localism'. Is this thing simply a short-lived fad, hippie hype or green politics, or is there something about eating locally-grown food that you can really sink your teeth into?

Although it's not exactly clear where and when the local food movement began, most agree it had its roots in the 'back to the land' crusade of the 1960s and '70s. And without some of the sobering realities of recent days, localism may have remained pretty much, well... local. But today, in the face of soaring fuel costs, a shrinking agricultural land base, genetically modified organisms, biohazard recalls on everything from asparagus to zucchini, and the sheer force of agribusiness to name just a few, people worldwide are seriously questioning the sustainability of our industrialized food system. Enter the local food movement with its focus on consuming products that didn't travel halfway around the globe to get to your plate, thereby enhancing the economic, environmental and social health of a particular place. Multiply that by millions of communities on the face of the planet, and you have a very different agricultural picture than the one we've been painting for the past 50 years or so.

But you don't even have to know what's happening around the world to recognize what would benefit us here in the Creston valley. With the abundance of food produced in our little piece of paradise one can easily see how growing, eating and sharing local bounty makes perfect sense. Every food item produced and purchased locally rather than transglobally improves your air quality (because of reduced fuel-guzzling transportation), supports your economy (because your money stays in the community), enhances your health (because you can access the freshest food grown with knowledge of how it is grown), and strengthens your social fabric (because your food becomes more than just something to fill your belly). Every time you slurp on a local tree-ripened peach, dive into a locally-raised beef steak, or savour a handful of Creston valley summer-sweet cherries, you are feeding not only yourself, but, in one way or another, every person who calls this community home. And by bringing food and the business of food closer to home you increase your control over your food, your knowledge of how your food is produced, and the sustainability of your access to healthy food.

So is the local food movement here to stay? Is there real value in supporting regional agriculture? Is it truly better for you, this community, and the planet to buy your food fresh from the local earth? You decide. Grab an apple and mull it over.

*Gail Southall is Coordinator for the Creston Valley Food Action Coalition, a non-profit organization dedicated to all aspects of the creation, distribution and consumption of sustainable, healthy, local agricultural products. For more information on the Food Action Coalition contact Gail at 254-0254 or email [cvfoodaction@gmail.com](mailto:cvfoodaction@gmail.com).*