

# 10 Reasons to Buy Local

## 1. Local tastes better.

Food grown in your own community was probably picked within the past day or two. It's crisp and loaded with flavor. Produce flown or trucked in from California, Florida, or South America is much older. Studies have shown that the average distance food travels from farm to plate is 1,500 miles. In a week-long (or longer) delay from harvest to dinner table, sugars turn to starches, plant cells shrink, and produce loses its vitality.

## 2. Local is better for you.

A recent study shows that fresh produce loses nutrients quickly. Food that's frozen or canned soon after harvest is actually more nutritious than some "fresh" produce that's been out for a week. Local food, purchased soon after harvest, retains its nutrients.

## 3. Local preserves genetic diversity.

In the modern industrial agricultural system, varieties are chosen for their ability to ripen simultaneously and withstand harvesting equipment; for a tough skin that can survive packing and shipping; and for longer shelf life. 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.

Local farms, in contrast, grow multiple varieties to provide a long season of harvest, an array of eye-catching colors, and the best flavors. Many varieties are heirlooms, passed down from generation to generation, because they taste good. Heirlooms contain genetic material from hundreds or even thousands of years of human selection; they may someday provide the genes needed to create varieties that will thrive in a changing climate.

## 4. Local is GMO-free.

Although biotechnology companies have been trying to commercialize genetically modified fruits and vegetables, they are currently licensing them only to large factory-style farms. Local farmers don't have access to genetically modified seed, and most wouldn't use it even if they could. A 2001 survey found 93% of Americans want labels on genetically modified food—mostly so they can avoid it. If you're opposed to eating bioengineered food, know that locally grown produce was bred the old-fashioned way, as nature intended.

## 5. Local supports local farm families.

With fewer than 1 million Americans now claiming agriculture as their primary occupation, farmers are a vanishing breed. And no wonder—commodity prices are at historic lows, often below the cost of production. The farmer now gets less than 10¢ of the retail food dollar. Local farmers who sell direct to consumers cut out the middleman and get full retail price for their food, allowing families to stay on the farm, doing the work they love.

## 6. Local food builds community.

When you buy direct from the farmer, you are re-establishing a time-honored connection between the eater and the grower. Knowing the farmers gives you insight into the seasons, the weather, and the miracle of raising food. In many cases, it gives you access to a farm where your children and grandchildren can go to learn about nature and agriculture. Relationships built on understanding and trust can thrive.



## 7. Local preserves open space.

As the value of direct-marketed produce increases, selling farmland for development becomes less likely. You've probably enjoyed driving out into the country, seeing the lush crop fields, meadows of wildflowers, picturesque barns. 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 your agricultural landscape.

## 8. Local keeps your taxes in check.

Farms contribute more in taxes than they require in services, whereas suburban development costs more than it generates in taxes, according to several studies. On average, for every \$1 in revenue raised by residential development, governments must spend \$1.17 on services, thus requiring higher taxes of all taxpayers. For each dollar of revenue raised by farm, forest, or open space, governments spend 34¢ on services.

## 9. Local supports the environment, benefitting wildlife.

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 to prevent erosion and replace nutrients used by their crops. Cover crops also capture carbon emissions and help combat global warming. According to some estimates, farmers who practice conservation tillage could sequester 12-14% of the carbon emitted by vehicles and industry. In addition, the habitat of a farm—the patchwork of fields, meadows, woods, ponds and buildings—is the perfect environment for many beloved species of wildlife, including bluebirds, killdeer, herons, bats, and rabbits.

## 10. Local is about the future.

By supporting local farmers today, you help ensure that there will be farms in your community tomorrow, and that future generations will have access to nourishing, flavorful, and abundant food. Buy local food, sustain local farms.

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marquette food co-op

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# Eating Seasonally



The February tomato is a ghost of the warm, sweet, infinitely fresher tomato of late summer. It's bred to withstand long travels and careless handling, to resist bruising and molding, splitting and squashing. It was made to look supple, smooth, and to taste unobtrusively bland, to appeal to the masses.

Unfortunately, this convenience causes you to miss out on more than just taste. Food traveling great distance loses much of its nutritional value. Odds are you'll never see the farm it came from or meet its grower. The money you spent on the February tomato leaves your community, rather than supporting it. Why send money to California or Mexico when you can give it to local farmers and get better value for your money?

This summer, don't spend your money on the tomato from some distant location. Come down to your local farmers market and see the beauty in what is available locally rather than what isn't. U.P. Farmers only have so much control over the growing

season—the rest is up to you, to adjust your tastes to what is in season when it is in season. No, you won't find corn or tomatoes in May. This is the U.P. However, you'll find an abundance of fresh greens, onions, rhubarb, peas, and other treats. Tomatoes and corn come later, and the wait makes them that much tastier.

Most of us have come to expect a vast array of produce in grocery stores, but give little thought to which of those items is actually in season and where it was produced. For the most part, we're not in touch with where our food comes from, how it was grown, or who grew it. The nice thing about shopping your local farmers market is that you will find answers to these questions. It means thinking differently about the way you eat. So buy fresh produce while we have it, and go home with the most nutritious, affordable, community-minded, and delicious food around.

**Dates for these foods may vary widely depending on a variety of factors, particularly the weather.**

vegetable / month	jan	feb	mar	apr	may	june	july	aug	sept	oct	nov	dec
arugala				—			—					
asparagus					—		—					
beets								—	—	—	—	—
bell peppers							—	—	—	—	—	—
broccoli						—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Brussels sprouts										—	—	—
butternut squash	—	—	—	—				—	—	—	—	—
cabbage	—	—						—	—	—	—	—
carrots				—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
cauliflower						—	—	—	—	—	—	—
celery	—	—	—							—	—	—
eggplant									—	—	—	—
fennel	—							—	—	—	—	—
garlic						—	—	—	—	—	—	—
green beans							—	—	—	—	—	—
kale					—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
leeks								—	—	—	—	—
mushrooms						—	—	—	—	—	—	—
onions												—
potatoes	—	—	—	—						—	—	—
Romaine lettuce					—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
spinach					—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
tomatoes								—	—	—	—	—
zucchini						—	—	—	—	—	—	—
fruit / month	jan	feb	mar	apr	may	june	july	aug	sept	oct	nov	dec
apples								—	—	—	—	—
blueberries						—	—	—	—	—	—	—
cantaloupe								—	—	—	—	—
grapes								—	—	—	—	—
peaches								—	—	—	—	—
pears					—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
raspberries								—	—	—	—	—
strawberries							—	—	—	—	—	—
watermelon							—	—	—	—	—	—

\*Based on 2010 and 2011 data from Marquette Food Co-op suppliers. The lines indicate when these foods are available to purchase, not necessarily their growing season. Again, dates for the current year may vary widely.