



Cooperative Extension Service

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Eating Local

Did you know that food produced in the U.S. travels an average of 1,500 miles before being eaten, and imported foods travel over 2,600 miles? Despite very efficient transportation systems this is an energy-intensive process—and one good reason why a growing number of individuals are trying to seek more locally-produced foods.

So what does it take to eat locally, and does this mean avoiding all foods that weren't grown within walking distance? Don't sell your car just yet. With the limited growing season in Northern Wyoming such rigid restrictions would make winter and spring eating a challenging affair (snow cones and mud pies, anyone?). Thankfully, season extending growing techniques and safe methods for food preservation make this style of eating a bit more appealing.

Sound like a lot of work?

It probably is a bit more work than most meals eaten at home today but science tells us the work we put in to eating fresh and minimally processed foods pays big dividends. Fresh foods are full of nutrients with all sorts of great health benefits, but these nutrients break down during processing, transportation, and storage—often leaving you with a product that is just a shadow of its former (fresh) self.

Further, growing your own food (or buying from someone you know) allows you to more easily choose foods based on production techniques that suit your preferences. Many local foods supporters prefer organic methods that put fewer chemicals into their body as well as the environment.

How do you find locally grown foods? This can sometimes be the hard part, but things are getting easier. In our area there are community gardens, buying cooperatives, farmer's markets, CSA's (community-supported agriculture—a wonderful concept!), and some grocers that support locally grown foods. It is a little more work for the consumer, but many people find comfort in knowing where their food came from, and prefer the experience of truly fresh food.

If you're interested in learning more about growing and finding local foods in the Sheridan area, please consider dropping by the Sheridan Local Foods Expo at the Sheridan College Watt Agriculture Center on Saturday, April 30 from 9am to 3pm. This will be a great opportunity to mingle with local foods producers and learn about things like composting, bee-keeping, pest management, and building your own hoop house! Local, regional, and national experts will be present for a variety of workshops and discussions. For further information on the local foods expo—or any local foods efforts—feel free to get in touch with me at the Sheridan County Extension Office. *Kentz Willis, M.S., is the University Extension Educator in Nutrition and Food Safety for Northeast Wyoming. He can be reached via email at kwillis3@uwyo.edu or by phone at 674-2980.*