

A Pacific NorthWest Diet

My whole life I have lived in Seattle, a place that reaps the benefits of the many natural resources the Pacific Northwest has to offer. However, contrary to most Seattle-lites I enjoy foods that are not naturally from the region, I hardly go to any local produce stores and buy food. My diet is your basic American industrial diet, meat and potatoes and plenty of processed foods. So when asked whether or not it is possible for me to eat completely locally, I had to answer many different questions. First being, is it sustainable? both economically, and with the amount of resources available? Also would I be satisfied eating local if there is in fact enough resources? With many phone calls and research I discovered that it is possible for me to eat locally, with stores such as Metropolitan Market and PCC, and local farmers markets who gets their meat and produce from local farms such as Oxbow Center, who's soul purpose it to provide for sustainable agriculture, and Snake River Farms who provides high quality local meat. Eating completely locally for the most part is feasible for me, however in comparison to conventional food production it is not worth my time, money, and most importantly giving up foods that I love.

The local food movement seems to be the new "it" thing when it comes to people's diets. Only this time its not all about what people are putting into their body its more where is the food coming from, and is it both environmentally and economically sustainable. The local movement which presently is becoming more and more an issue is almost like communism at the beginning when Marx first came out with *The Communist Manifesto*. People are questioning and criticizing the idea but they don't really know anything about it. I'm not saying the local food movement has anything to do with communism but there is this uncertainty that people have much like people had against Marx in the 19th century. So what is the local food movement? and what is eating locally? The local food movement is the push for people to eat within their own region and not have to get resources from outside their area. This makes eating locally a pretty simple definition, whatever you put in your body comes from your bio-region. Part of knowing what to eat locally is knowing your region. Living in Seattle puts me a little south of the central part of the puget sound. In the spirit of following the 100 mile

diet I chose four corners to assign a boundary. My most northern point is the city of Bellingham, my southern most point is the state capital Olympia, then I go across the sound to a town call Sequim where that will be my most western point, followed by Leavenworth a town deep into the Cascade foothills as my most eastern point. Eating locally can get tricky and I soon found during the course of my research some amendments would have to be made so that I could attain certain resources that are essential to my diet.

With food being such a large part of the Pacific NorthWest culture it was easy to find people who had done similar research to what I am doing now. People who believed in sustainable local agriculture. So finding places that produce locally wasn't so much the hard part for me, it was determining what foods were feasible to attain. Some of the local farms did have business with Seattle stores, and farmer's markets but for those who didn't it meant that if I were to be eating completely local I would have to do some driving. These farms locations ranged from Carnation, down to Olympia, and even on Vashon Island, transportation would be a huge cost.

When it comes to eating meat I am a bit of a snob, so finding local meat interested me because of the fact that local farms raise their cattle right, by keeping them hormone free, grass fed, and provide a humane way of living. Also having experienced local meat in Seattle area restaurants I know the end product tastes great. There were three farms that met my needs for meat, two of them served local farmers markets. The first farm, Sea Breeze Farm located on Vashon Island has a wide variety of meat, dairy, eggs, and poultry. It has very strict organic production standards, "it goes without saying that no herbicides, pesticides, antibiotics or artificial inputs exist on our farm. We take pride in our commitment to sustainable, traditional, and healthful whole-food production." A statement from Sea Breeze Farm concerning their food production, which also includes a grass based diet for their cattle. They operate in three farmers markets in Seattle, University District, Ballard, and West Seattle, they also have a shop, La Boucherie in Vashon. Stokesberry Sustainable Farm in Olympia a lot like Sea Breeze Farms offers local, organic poultry and eggs. They serve to four local farmers markets in Seattle, two of which are all year round. Sweet Grass Farm in Lopez Island raises and produces local organic meat using similar styles of production as

many of the local farms. They do not have a farmers market in Seattle. So as I found out through my research there is plenty of local, high quality meat in the Seattle region. While there might be plenty of farmers markets in Seattle that offer these farms meat, dairy, and poultry, that doesn't mean that it is always readily available for the consumer. Farmers markets are never a sure thing when you got to them, meaning that the products you are looking for might not be there and most farmers markets are only open one day a week. Eating locally might mean a trip out to these farms, farms that are hard to get to. Unfortunately there are no local food stores in Seattle that sell meat, however there are plenty of stores in Seattle that sell organic meat, and while the two are similar they are also different. I could go to any PCC or Metropolitan Market and get a piece of organic meat, it might be local and it also might not. That is the problem with some of these high end stores, they sell organic but don't always specify where it is coming from. Although due to recent advancements in the industry some of these high end grocery stores are going to start showing where the meat comes from through a barcode.

Meat and dairy however is only one part of my diet, and unlike vegetables and similar produce meat and dairy production doesn't fluctuate much with the change in seasons and isn't reliant on climate as much as fruits and vegetables are. That being said the Pacific NorthWest offers a reasonable climate with fertile soil, so while it would be challenging finding fruits and vegetables, it would be attainable. Immediately starting out I knew finding citrus products would be very unlikely, unless I were to grow a orange tree indoors, which is not feasible. So finding alternatives to Vitamin C was crucial. Fruits and vegetables that grow in the Pacific NorthWest that have Vitamin C in them are strawberries, bok choy, broccoli, kale, chard, and squash. All of which are grown organically at Willie Green's Organic Farm, in Monroe about 30 minutes north of Seattle. Not only does Willie Green's grow alternatives for Vitamin C but an array of plenty of other vegetables, including, onions, tomatoes, peas, cauliflower, cucumber, garlic, lettuce and many other vegetables. They can also deliver in bulk and operate in two Seattle farmers markets. Local Roots a farm in Carnation which is about 30 minutes east of Seattle offers a similar variety of vegetables with the same organic modo. For more fruit, Rosabella's Garden, a family orchard in Skagit County, has a big selection of

apples, berries, and pumpkins. They have many different varieties of apples, including, Gravenstein, Honeycrisp, Jonagold, Gala, King, McIntosh, Liberty, Hawaii, Winter Banana, Yellow Transparen, and Jonagold. They also grow, pears, blueberries, blackberries, and grapes in limited quantity. However I can't ignore the fact that crops don't grow all year long, and that I need to have a reasonable supply for the winter months. I can use modern technology to my advantage and freeze fruits and vegetables in an air tight ceil. I can also do the same thing for fish when the salmon season dies down. Which means going to the Pike Place Market and picking up local salmon and various other seafood that the Puget Sound has to offer, eating some while freezing the rest. This is a solution that has worked in the past for my family and is a good alternative to eating winter crops which are few. If I ever feel the need to go out for dinner I have a great option in the Tilth Restaurant in Seattle, which offers a strictly organic and local menu.

Washington in 2009 produced over a 100 million bushels wheat. However all of that wheat production is on the east side of the state. According to the USDA's food pyramid and my love for pasta's and bread I need at least 3 ounces of grains a day. Trying to eat locally within a 100 mile radius and eating grains is impossible. So in order to maintain a balanced diet I will have to make an amendment to eating locally, by including Eastern Washington, especially the Palouse strictly for wheat production.

I don't believe the local food movement is some kind of fad, rather an alternative to our industrial food production. However its not a viable alternative, there are not enough resources to feed an entire population and it is extremely costly which increases the gap between our rich and poor. Its costly in two different ways, one of which is the cost of food, and another is the cost of transportation. There is this misconception that by eating locally you are reducing your carbon footprint. The truth is that by eating locally there is an increase in the energy it takes to transport local foods as opposed to shipping foods across the country. This is due to the fact if people are eating locally everyone has to drive out to the farms and our farmers markets to get their food, while food that comes from elsewhere is in one bulk shipment that is then distributed. It was next to impossible to calculate the costs of eating local for a whole year but between transportation and the cost of food, it is an financial burden. I live a normal middle class

life where money isn't an issue, so if it's a financial burden for me to eat completely locally, it wouldn't be possible for people with low income to afford eating local. With the growing obesity epidemic in the United States there has been an increase in pressure on fast food restaurants to change their ways of food preparation and also for fast food consumers to change their eating habits. But how can we tell people to eat quality food when that quality food is not affordable? How can there be frustration with people using their food stamps to buy unhealthy food when the food stamps provided aren't enough to get healthy food? Whether people notice it or not the local food movement has its prejudices. When you're in an affluent neighborhood there are plenty of organic stores and high end markets but that is not the case in poorer neighborhoods, instead in poor neighborhoods there is produce being sold at gas stations, which isn't very good produce. I have nothing against local food, rather I have something against the local food movement. I appreciate the idea of getting people to eat healthier and have our agricultural system be more sustainable but it needs to be done in a way that it is geared to the entire population.

I am interested in something similar to a local food movement. Something similar where healthy foods are provided at a cheaper cost and unhealthy items such as candy, chips, burgers etc... are more expensive. The way this needs to happen is an increase in government subsidies for organic farms and local farms. This would offset the huge government subsidies that are given to corn farmers who supply corn for cattle feeds and high fructose corn syrup production. Those two things are the backbone of the American industrial food production. Now if there were subsidies given to local farmers and organic farmers it would make local and organic food cheaper, and would give the lower income class an opportunity to eat healthy. However it's not that simple, the American people would view setting healthy foods cheaper and unhealthy foods more expensive as an element of socialism. There needs to be a change to our food production and if it means to the American people adopting elements of socialism to limit the obesity and increase sustainability, then so be it.

I like eating local, the food tastes good, it is better for me, and it feels good contributing to the local economy. However it's not something I want to do for any particular amount of time. I like the fact that I can eat healthy one day and go to

McDonald's the next day. There are certain foods that I love and I feel as though indulging in certain foods every now and then won't hurt me. I have that luxury which is eating healthy foods and still being able to indulge in fast food, unlike other people who can't afford those healthy foods and only have that one option.

Citations

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