



Local Food is Good Food!



Close to Home



Did you know that you can help protect nature by eating peaches and peas? Well you can, *if* those fruits and vegetables were grown

locally! By eating locally grown foods, or foods that were grown close to home, you can help protect nature and the environment.

A lot of different kinds of **produce**, or fruits and vegetables, are grown on farms across the country and even across the world. When our food travels long distances to get to us, it causes some serious problems for the environment.

Food Miles



Pineapples, for instance, often come from Jamaica and apples can come from as far away as New Zealand! Most fruits and vegetables travel about 1,500 miles from the farm to the supermarket. That's like

driving from the very top of Washington State, all the way down the Pacific coast to the Mexican border! The distance your food travels from the farm to the store is called **food miles**.

Trains, Trucks, and Pollution



Ships, planes, trucks, and trains are used to **transport**, or move, our food. These forms of transportation all contribute to pollution and **global warming**. Global warming is what

happens when we put too much pollution into the air from burning **fossil fuels** like gasoline, oil and coal. This pollution traps heat from the sun, warms up the planet, and makes our weather change in serious ways. The farther our food travels, the more pollution gets put into our air.

Wasting Nature



If fruits and vegetables arrive at the store bruised, they can't be sold. So, when food travels long distances it needs extra

packaging to protect it. Packaging is made from things like cardboard, paper and plastic, which come from **natural resources** like trees and oil. Using too much packaging hurts our environment. The more cardboard that is used, the more trees need to be cut down, which destroys our forests and harms the animals that live there. Not only that, but the packaging usually gets thrown in the garbage and ends up at the **landfill**, or city dump. This wastes nature!

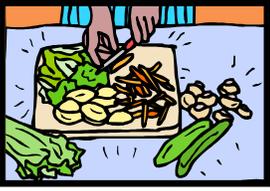
Locally Grown Food



The good news is that we don't have to buy food that comes from thousands of miles away or needs so much packaging! If we buy local food, we can help protect the environment. Because locally grown food doesn't need to be transported as far, less pollution is created. And since the food isn't being shipped thousands of miles, it doesn't need as much packaging. Using less packaging means we can save more trees and help

protect nature. Also, when we use less packaging, we create less garbage that ends up at the landfill.

Fresh and Healthy



Locally grown produce is fresher than food that traveled a long distance. It can take up to one or two weeks for food to reach the grocery store, yet produce from nearby farms is often sold within 24 hours of harvesting!

Eating fresh fruits and vegetables tastes great and is healthier for you, too. That's because local food sits around for less time before it is sold, so it contains more **nutrients**. Nutrients are vitamins and other healthy things like calcium and fiber that keep our bodies fit and strong. Local food also has fewer **preservatives** than food that traveled a long distance. Preservatives are added chemicals that help keep food from spoiling. Unfortunately, most preservatives are not healthy for us to eat.

Seasonal Foods



When you eat local foods you are also eating foods that are **seasonal**. This means they only grow in your area during a certain season of the year like

winter, spring, summer or fall. For example, in California, you can get tasty cherries in the spring, juicy nectarines in the summer, and sweet persimmons in the fall.

Eating seasonal food keeps us healthy throughout the year. What could be better than cold, sweet watermelon on a hot summer day? The water from the watermelon helps **hydrate** our bodies. This means we're getting enough water to stay healthy in the heat. On the other hand, eating brussel sprouts in the autumn gives us

the vitamins we need to fight off the sneezes and sniffles caused by a cold.

Green Space



Buying food from local farms also helps protect **green space**. Green space is open land in or near a city that does not have houses, schools, or other buildings on it. It could be a farm, a nature preserve, or a park. As cities grow and take over more land, local farms are bought by big companies and **developed** or turned into shopping malls, office buildings and housing developments. Every minute two acres of farmland is lost in the United States. That's about the size of two football fields!

Farmers are much less likely to sell their land if they have a successful farm. So, by buying local produce you are supporting local farmers and helping them to keep their business, as well as to keep their land as open, green space. This is important because green space provides homes to different animals, plants and insects, and is a place we can go to enjoy nature's beauty.

Farmers Markets



One of the best places to buy local produce is at a **farmers market**. This is an outdoor market where farmers sell their fruits and vegetables directly to customers. There are over 3,100 farmers markets in the country, including many in the San Francisco Bay Area.

When you buy locally grown produce, not only are you getting the healthiest, fresh fruits and vegetables, but you are also helping to protect the environment and support local farmers. Remember, local food is good food!