

A Tale of Two Tomatoes

The nature of food has changed dramatically over the past 60 years. More and more, our food is raised on huge farms, under terms set by distant corporations that control the process from gene to market. And while we might spend less at the checkout stand, there are other costs to pay, and no one escapes the bill.

An alternative is on the rise, led by Local Lucy, the tomato next door. One taste and you'll never go back. When you buy her and other foods raised near to home, more of your money makes it back to the farmer, helping to keep families on the land. It's quite a ripple effect from the purchase of a simple tomato. But Lucy's a special fruit—the vanguard of the Buy Local revolution.

Genetically Engineered?

Would you know if Tom was "GE"?

Genetically Engineered tomatoes were among the first GE foods to arrive on supermarket shelves almost a decade ago. Back then, GE crops had novelty value, so growers labeled them Genetically Engineered as a marketing strategy. Now that we know more about the potential dangers of GE foods, companies don't like to label them anymore. In fact, we eat foods with GE ingredients without even knowing it: they're not in tomatoes these days, but they are in everything from baby food to granola bars. Many countries insist on the labeling of GE foods, but not the U.S.

Preserving Diversity

Fruits and vegetables like local Lucy get their beauty and taste for flavor not mass production. In fact, farmers raise a dazzling array of tomatoes, which not only have their own unique tastes, but also carry traits that allow them to survive and adapt to new pests and changing climates. Farmers are performing a heroic service by keeping these heirloom varieties alive.

Pesticides!

Tom receives several doses of chemicals.

Pesticides in your pee—sound so weird to believe? But it's true—most Americans have traces of half a dozen pesticides in their urine. That's because pesticides don't just stay on the farm. They wind up in the air of nearby residential areas, in the streams flowing out of farm country, and in the produce we eat. Farmworkers are on the front lines of this chemical warfare, suffering tens of thousands of poisonings each year. And to top it off, these chemicals are becoming less effective over time. There's been a tenfold increase in both the amount and the toxicity of insecticide use since the 1940s, but the share of the U.S. harvest lost to pests and insects has gone up, not down.

Providing Safe Haven

Alternative methods of pest control can reduce our chemical habit. Key strategies include monitoring crops for pests before resorting to spray and maintaining hedgerows around fields that support natural predators. These measures pay back in other ways as well—providing lands that offer livable habitat for fish, frogs and other animals. Organic growers have eliminated their use of chemical pesticides, and growers who have adopted standards such as Food Alliance or Salmon Safe are working to reduce their usage.

Keeping Dollars at Home

Buying from local growers pays off big for your region. One study shows that each dollar spent with a local food business is worth \$2.60 for your community. And new types of food shopping arrangements are popping up as well. With Community Supported Agriculture (CSA), customers purchase a share of a farm's output and then enjoy produce that's distributed at the peak of ripeness throughout the growing season.

Overdrawn!

Tom uses more than his share of water and soil. Farmers know better than anyone how important soil is to raising crops. But ironically, industrial practices are causing the very soil they depend on to vanish. Across the nation, we're losing soil 17 times faster than it naturally replaces itself. That forces farmers to rely even more on chemical fertilizers. But fertilizers don't stay on the farm; they pollute the groundwater and are washed downstream to bays and estuaries, where they are a primary cause of low-oxygen zones that are deadly for fish. Agriculture is drawing down our water supplies as well. Over 76 percent of our water use in both Oregon and California goes to farms, and in California that means a deficit for the state's squatters of 478 billion gallons a year.

Balancing the Books

Soil and water are essential not only for food production but even for life on earth. Innovative techniques and technologies are available that can help to protect these assets for future generations. For instance, drip irrigation—feeding water directly to the soil through tubing—has been shown to cut water use and in many cases increase crop yields as well. And farming practices like planting cover crops and leaving crop residue on fields—common tools in the organic farmer kitbag—can nourish and sustain the soil.

Gassed!

Picked while green, Tom is gassed to redness.

In order to better survive the long journey to market, many tomatoes are picked while hard and green, then they're gassed with a hormone to help them ripen. This is just one of the eye-opening practices that has become commonplace in our industrial food system. Others include: Factory chickens typically have their beaks clipped off—in the misery of their close confinement they would peck each other violently. And farmed salmon are dyed pink—changes in their diets have caused them to lose their color.

The Taste of Honest Food

The peak ripeness of fruits and vegetables once determined the timing of harvest festivals throughout the growing season. Ripeness—not the kind that comes from a hormone gas—is still a passion among local farmers. While it may be hard to forget the convenience of long-distance fruits and vegetables throughout the winter, it's only natural that we leap at the opportunity for honest food—local food—when prime season arrives.

1500 miles!

Tom is exhausted by the time he gets to market.

1500 miles from field to fork—that's the trek made by the average fruit or vegetable these days. Because of the need to hold up over distances, our foods are bred, not for taste but for transport—their ability to handle the long haul. And what do we eaters get? Tired tomatoes!

Think also about all the oil consumed in getting that long-distance food to our supermarkets. Nine percent of America's total energy consumption is used to produce, process and transport our foods. Cheap oil, subsidized with our taxpayer dollars as well as with the merchandise of our clean air and climate stability, is the foundation upon which the industrial food system has been built.

Livable Landscapes

We don't need fancy research to realize that eating closer to home consumes less oil. But that's not the only benefit. Relying on local ingredients also gives rise to the tasty variations that define regional cuisines. And because owner-operated farms with a dependable economic base are less vulnerable to the pressures of urban sprawl, buying local helps preserve the kind of open spaces near which we all like to live.

Buy Local

Local Lucy or
Traveling Tom:

Who would you rather have sitting on your salad?

Big Beren's Resources for Local Food vendors at www.ScottlandInfo.com

Eat Local Week: September 3-11

Take the Eat Local Pledge!

Honor your foodshed: Pledge to eat only from Whatcom, Skagit and Island county sources and celebrate the abundance of our region.



"We cannot be free if our food and its sources are controlled by someone else... One reason to eat responsibly is to live free."
Wendell Berry,
 Farmer & Essayist.

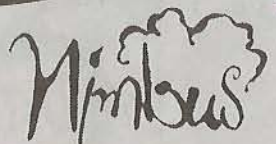
Sun Mon Tue Wed Thu Fri Sat



Mount Bakery & Creperie



3
 Kickoff Party at State Street Depot
 5-8 pm
 Meet producers, sample wine and cheese, celebrate the delicious Northwest



4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Brunch at Old Town Cafe 8 am-2 pm Dinner at Pepper Sisters	Lunch at The Swan Cafe	Dinner at Boundary Bay Brewery & Bistro	Dinner at Nimbus	Dinner at Mannino's	Dinner at Flats Tapas Bar	Lunch at Mount Bakery Dinner at Pastazza

11
 Harvest Dinner at Fairhaven Green
 4 pm

Learn More at www.SustainableConnections.org



FALL HARVEST DINNER
 The 9th Annual Celebration of Whatcom County Farmers & Local Farming Heritage



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