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WEEKLY

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BY AMY KEPFERLE

Farms and Forks

HOW TO EAT LOCAL IN SEPTEMBER



LAST WEEKEND, a longtime friend of the family visiting from Seattle posited that, in a blind taste test, she didn't think most people would be able to tell the difference between a fruit or vegetable grown locally and one that was sourced from the produce aisle of a typical big box grocery store.

I was prepared to prove her wrong. Luckily, I'd brought along a Pyrex container full of red and yellow cherry tomatoes I'd picked just a few hours earlier from my backyard garden.

I didn't feel the need to sit her at the table and wrap a bandana around her eyes, but instead just told her to shut her peepers, pop



one in her mouth and tell me if it tasted anything like what she'd find during a typical stop at Safeway.

"Oh, it's so sweet!" she exclaimed, chewing thoughtfully. "Can I have another one?"

Although we didn't get into the whole concept of eating locally, she did acknowledge that, when it came to tomatoes, the fresher samples are always preferable to those that are cultivated for mass consumption.

If we had gotten into what it *really* means to "eat local," I would've pointed out that all she really needed to do was stay in Whatcom County for the month of September to find out.

Thanks to Sustainable Connections' "Eat Local First" campaign, the month is full of ways to not only hook up local farmers with those who eat their goods, but also for people to learn a little more in the process. Following are a few ways to do so during the next week.

Amy Pennington Visit: While some folks reading this paper have access to wide swaths of soil in which to plant, others are likely condominium or apartment dwellers who have a difficult time finding space for patio furniture, let alone a garden. When Seattle foodie Amy Pennington heads to Bellingham

to share ideas from her new book, *Apartment Gardening: Plants, Projects and Recipes for Growing in Your Urban Home*, it'll be with real-world suggestions in mind. Whether you just want some herbs in pots or are interested in how to cultivate mounds of zucchini in a small space, she's likely to have the answer. *When and where:* Pennington gives a talk at 7pm Fri., Sept. 9 at Village Books and a demo at 12pm Sat., Sept. 10 at the Bellingham Farmers Market.

Whatcom County Farm Tour: It's kind of a no-brainer, but seeing where those who provide the produce and meat that's produced locally live and work goes a long way toward understanding what it takes to get it from their fields to your plates. When the 4th annual Whatcom County Farm Tour takes place this coming Saturday, you'll want to be on board. With 13 stops on the roster this year, you can pick and choose your taste testing. Among the offerings are BelleWood Acres (apples, homemade treats and an Apple Bin train), Bellingham Country Gardens (no-spray strawberries and veggies), Cloud Mountain Farm (rare fruits), Dakota Creek Winery (featuring an eco-friendly wine cellaring cave and locally produced wines), Edelweiss Dairy (not typically open to the public), Twisted S Ranch (bison), Farmer Ben's (free-range hens, grass-fed Angus beef), and more. Bicycle routes will also be available, so if the stellar weather holds up, consider heading out on two wheels instead of four. By the way, the self-guided tour is free, so there's really no excuse not to partake of the goodness. *When and where:* The Whatcom County Farm Tour takes place from 10am-5pm Sat., Sept. 10 throughout the bountiful county.

Frances Moore Lappe: You may not immediately know her name, but if you've read or heard of the groundbreaking 1971 book, *Diet for a Small Planet*, then you're probably aware of some of the ideas the author has espoused during her lifetime. The tome argued that world hunger isn't necessarily caused by a lack of food, but instead by unproductive food policies and meat-centered diets. When she comes to Bellingham Sept. 12, it'll be with her new book, *Ecomind: Changing the Way We Think, to Create the World We Want*, in hand. Even if you don't agree with all Lappe's ideas, you're likely to learn something important from the food activist simply by showing up. *When and where:* A special reception takes place at 5pm Mon., Sept. 12 at the Leopold Crystal Ballroom. The event will be followed by a public talk. Entry is \$20 to the first event, free for second.

Looking past Sept. 12, Eat Local Month continues with Incognito dinners at Ciao Thyme, a potato-digging party at Common Threads Farm, a Garden to Garden Community Bike Tour, Taste Washington Day, a fruit festival and more. By Sept. 30, you should be able to answer the question: does food grown locally really taste any different? ☺

For a full listings of events, head to www.sustainableconnections.org