



Cascadia Weekly

Tis the season (to eat local)

By Amy Kepferle · Wednesday, May 19, 2010

I should've rinsed it, but I simply couldn't wait the extra 60 or so seconds it would've taken me to walk inside, turn on the faucet and rid the leaves of lettuce I'd just plucked from my backyard garden of any vestige of dirt. Sometimes you've got to risk it. I opened my mouth, tossed in the verdant greens and did just that.

While I've said it before in these pages—and will say again and again until the message gets through—it bears repeating that eating food that was planted, produced and harvested locally just makes sense (and no, I'm not going to stop eating bananas just because they weren't grown in my urban utopia). Yep, it tastes better, but it's also easier on the environment (less travel time, natch) and helps keep nearby growers in business.



Even if you don't have your own produce waiting right outside the kitchen door, if you live in Whatcom or Skagit counties you don't have to travel too far to find edibles—not just fruit and vegetables, mind you, but eggs and meat and seafood as well—that came from within our foodshed.

To help guide the way, Sustainable Connections is once again helping organize “Eat Local (Every) Week,” which, starting Thurs., May 27 and continuing every Thursday into October, will feature a nearby restaurant doing offering up one or more menu items sourced specifically for the event.

Chef Rob Morrell will be on hand at the Chuckanut Brewery—the venue that opens the series—to share his opinions about buying and eating local, and will also unveil a new “Locavore” menu that will rotate throughout the season. (In addition to the Bellingham-brewed beer, look for seafood from Barlean's, house-made Mallard ice cream sandwiches, Samish Bay cheeses and more at the kickoff.)

“For thousands of years, people relied on what was locally and seasonally available,” Morrell says. “If we want to preserve our ability to eat good food, we have to commit to eating locally and seasonally.”

If a bigger devotion to eating what can be found nearby is on your agenda, you can also look for Sustainable Connections' 2010 Whatcom Food & Farm Finder, which points the way to not only restaurants that make it a point to serve up fresh food, but also a variety of farms, grocers, local food processors and a guide to four-season feasting.

However you choose to slice it and plate it, it's never been easier to swear off McDonald's and try to stick to a dining plan that incorporates at least a couple food groups sourced from where you live. One thing, though: you might want to rinse the lettuce, even if you know exactly where it's been.