

NEWS RELEASE

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Responsible *Eating*

Everyone knows it's important to drink responsibly. But eat responsibly? Most people don't give a second thought to the food they eat beyond dropping it into a plastic bag.

However, think about the pollution and global warming caused by the transport of food over long distances. Think of the takeover of corporate agribusiness over family farms. Think of the lost vitamins during the long journeys to the supermarkets and how that food was probably picked too soon so that it would not spoil before you see it a week or so later.

A recent article in Time Magazine talks about "Locavores," self-styled culinary adventurers, who took a pledge to eat nothing but food from within 100 miles of their homes.

The idea to eat locally produced food is not new. Before global economies, the trucking industry and mega-supermarket chains, everyone ate whatever foods either grew in their own gardens, or from local farms. Eating locally is also the basis of

Eating food grown locally and offered at local farmers' markets goes beyond the issues of ripeness, freshness, vitamin content, and taste. "With gas prices spiking, people are concerned about our dependence on petroleum," says Locavores co-founder Jessica Prentice. "Why import apples from New Zealand when we can grow them nearby?"

Food sold in U.S. supermarkets averages some 1,500 miles from farm to plate--a 25% increase from 1980, according to Worldwatch Institute, a Washington nonprofit.

Even certified-organic produce is grown on vast monoculture spreads, many of them overseas, and shipped long distances. Consumers looking to eat ethically and preserve farmland around their cities are embracing locally grown food as the eco-healthy choice.

Shopping at a farmers' market, like the one in Berthoud, can contribute to your health, the economy, small business, and environment in one gesture.

“And it’s fun,” remarks one local mom with two small children. “Here, my kids can run around, talk to the people who produce the food, help select foods for our dinner that night and know they were picked that morning. You can’t duplicate that with a 45 minute drive to the big supermarket.”

The Berthoud Farmers’ Market offers a fresh selection of produce and food items from local growers to please any palate. Try picking up some fresh greens for sautéing or a salad, hearty bread, cheeses, and some organic beef for the grill.

Local entertainment of all kinds is welcome at each week’s market. Singers, dancers, musicians, mimes, magicians, fire-eaters, or any other entertainers are encouraged to participate in this well-attended market.

Berthoud non-profit organizations, community growers, or artisans within both the town and county who wish to sell either home grown produce or home made crafts may attend the market twice during the season at no charge.

A volunteer-driven, local-food eating, non-profit organization, The Berthoud Main Street Program encourages the community to volunteer with its many upcoming activities and events, such as downtown beautification as well as its annual Berthoud Farmers’ Market. For volunteer opportunities of all kinds, or any questions, please contact Eric Boyd at 532-5199. Visit the Berthoud Main Street Program website at www.berthoudmainstreet.org.

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## **10 Reasons to Eat Local Food**

**Eating local means more for the local economy.** According to a study by the New Economics Foundation in London, a dollar spent locally generates twice as much income for the local economy. When businesses are not owned locally, money leaves the community at every transaction.

**Locally grown produce is fresher.** While produce that is purchased in the supermarket or a big-box store has been in transit or cold-stored for days or weeks, produce that you purchase at your local farmer's market has often been picked within 24 hours of your purchase. This freshness not only affects the taste of your food, but the nutritional value that declines with time.

**Local food just plain tastes better.** Ever tried a tomato that was picked within 24 hours? 'Nuff said.

**Locally grown fruits and vegetables have longer to ripen.** Because the produce will be handled less, locally grown fruit does not have to be "rugged" or to stand up to the rigors of shipping. This means that you are going to be getting peaches so ripe that they fall apart as you eat them, figs that would have been smashed to bits if they were sold using traditional methods, and melons that were allowed to ripen until the last possible minute on the vine.

**Eating local is better for air quality and pollution than eating organic.** In a March 2005 study by the journal Food Policy, it was found that the miles that organic food often travels to our plate creates environmental damage that outweighs the benefit of buying organic.

**Buying local food keeps us in touch with the seasons.** By eating with the seasons, we are eating foods when they are at their peak taste, are the most abundant, and the least expensive.

**Buying locally grown food is fodder for a wonderful story.** Whether it's the farmer who brings local apples to market or the baker who makes local bread, knowing part of the story about your food is such a powerful part of enjoying a meal.

**Eating local protects us from bio-terrorism.** Food with less distance to travel from farm to plate has less susceptibility to harmful contamination.

**Local food translates to more variety.** When a farmer is producing food that will not travel a long distance, will have a shorter shelf life, and does not have a high-yield demand, the farmer is free to try small crops of various fruits and vegetables that would probably never make it to a large supermarket. Supermarkets are interested in selling "Name brand" fruit: Romaine Lettuce, Red Delicious Apples, Russet Potatoes. Local producers often play with their crops from year to year, trying out Little Gem Lettuce, Senshu Apples, and Chieftain Potatoes.

**Supporting local providers supports responsible land development.** When you buy local, you give those with local open space - farms and pastures - an economic reason to stay open and undeveloped.

(List Courtesy Eat Local Challenge)

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