

The Local Chow: <https://thelocalchow.com/the-top-7-benefits-of-buying-local-food/>



The Top 7 Benefits of Buying Local Food

Let's face it. The past few years have been a wake-up call when it comes to "being prepared", (think: toilet paper crisis! the price of eggs!). A growing desire to be more ready for disruptions has caused many to look local. Especially for "local food" options.

What exactly is local food? It's generally considered "local" if grown within 100 miles of your home or restaurant where it's served. It doesn't come from large commercial farms and isn't transported over long distances.

The local food movement was already gaining traction before 2020 but has accelerated in popularity as issues like food security have been talked about more and more in the media.

Dive into the top 7 benefits you'll get when you join this movement too!

1. **Fresh is Best**

Think back to the last time you were able to eat some juicy strawberries picked the same morning. Or a crisp cucumber harvested from a garden the day before. For most of us, there's no comparison between the taste of freshly picked and days-old produce!

Fresh doesn't just mean better flavor, it means better nutrition too. Fruits and vegetables start to lose their nutrients [within 24 hours of being picked](#). Locally grown produce is typically picked when it's most dense with nutrients.

Getting your produce from [a local farm](#) means there isn't any refrigeration or additives needed to preserve it for a long trip across the country (or the world). And, according to healthcare provider [VirtuaHealth](#), "Long transportation time means more exposure to air, different temperatures, and artificial lighting, all factors that can affect the nutritional value of produce."

2. Community Health Gets a Boost

Recent studies have shown that areas with a larger amount of local, fresh food businesses [have a lower rate of obesity](#). It is believed this is because people have better access to local fruits, vegetables, and pasture-raised animals that are free of pesticides and hormones.

Diet plays a big role in our health, and a lack of fresh fruits and vegetables can [increase the risk of heart disease, certain cancers, and strokes](#).

It's also easier for food assistance organizations to coordinate with local farmers to provide fresh and nutritious food, especially produce, to those in the community who can't afford it.

One example of this is [Healthy Harvest Food Bank](#). They work with local farmers across the U.S. to get crops donated. They also organize local volunteers to glean and harvest the crops, then collect and deliver the food to people in need.



3. Keeps Money in Your Community – AND Your Pocket

The more successful local community businesses are the better off their individual members are. That means supporting local businesses can help **your** “bottom line.” Local farmers who do well help the overall financial health of the community.

According to research from [Michigan State](#), “money spent with local farmers and growers all stays close to home and is reinvested with businesses and services in your community.” This gives a boost to the economy in your community, instead of a corporation in another county, state, or country.

Is produce sold by local farms more or less expensive than what you might find in a grocery store? In the past, local often meant more expensive. A piece in [The Atlantic](#) recently showed how that’s changed over the past decade – now most things at the farmer’s market are usually **less** than at the grocery store!

The use of [REKO](#) rings has allowed farmers to bring down their prices even more. REKO rings are groups of farmers in the same area that pre-sell their produce online and are then able to have one central location for people to pick up, rather than going to different pick-up points for different farms.

4. Helps You Do Your Bit for the Environment

Buying as much of your food as possible locally helps the environment. Studies show [changes in the U.S. food system](#) over the past several decades (such as farms, food processing operations, and distribution warehouses) have greatly increased the distance between food sources and consumers.

Did you know that most of the food items in your grocery store [travels over 1,500 miles to get to you?](#) When you buy from local sources you reduce the carbon footprint of your food and cut down on greenhouse gases. Long-range transportation and processing aren't needed so far less energy is used.

5. Promotes Sustainability

[The American Public Health Association \(APHA\)](#) defines a sustainable food system as “one that provides healthy foods to meet current food needs while maintaining healthy ecosystems that can provide food for generations to come.”

Local farmers are motivated to keep their soil healthy and increase their production long-term - their livelihood depends on it! They are also motivated to continue to find new and cheaper ways to sell to their customers.

Since World War II the combining of small farms into big ones has meant fewer people making food production decisions for the whole country. In the U.S., only [4 firms control 85% of the beef packing market](#) and 82% of the soybeans produced. Big companies tend to focus on growing tons of one product only, which damages the health of the soil and farm, while local farmers grow a variety of plants and control how they grow them.

6. Gives You that Personal Connection

Most grocery store employees don't know much about the products they sell, other than the area they came from or when they get delivered to their store. They have very little, if any, information about the farms they came from.

They also don't know how old the produce is BEFORE it gets to their store. Produce arriving in a grocery store is not always as fresh as we think. After hearing that apples are often sitting in cold storage for months on end before being shipped to stores, a news team in Sydney did some digging and discovered that apples in several area stores were [ten months old!](#) New cold-storage techniques put the apples produced on big produce farms to “sleep” for several months so they can be available “year-round” to consumers.

When you buy directly from farmers, you can ask them important questions. For example, if a farmer is not “certified organic” (most small farms can't afford to go through the process), what kind of soil do they use? Where are their seeds from and do they use any conventional pesticides? How do they fertilize? Often the small farms have

practices that are every bit as good if not better than the bigger farms that can afford to be “certified organic.”

Local farmers are part of the community and are directly responsible to their customers who see them regularly. Since farmers also eat what they grow, they are motivated to produce great food.



7. Food Security

The “local food” movement received quite a boost from the pandemic, as many of us discovered how fast those seemingly limitless packages of chicken could disappear from stores overnight.

Seeing empty grocery shelves was jarring. Visiting multiple stores to find something as mundane as cream cheese was daunting. Many of us took a closer look at the supply chain and realized we needed some alternative ways to get our food, often by going to local farms.

Local farmers had their revenue streams disrupted during the early days of the pandemic since many farms rely on restaurants and other food service clients to make the bulk of their money. So farmers found new ways to connect with individual customers in their areas just as individual customers wanted to be more [connected to their local farms](#).

During the pandemic, farmers had to find new and innovative ways to connect to their local communities and vice-versa. Facebook groups and new apps, like [LocalChow](#), will continue being developed to help connect farmers, cooks, and bakers to their local customers.

The “local food” movement has grown in the past few years, but hasn’t slowed down, even with things getting back to “normal.” Farmers continue to find new, better ways to sell to individuals and other businesses. The bottom line is now many of us have discovered (or re-

discovered) that buying “local food” has so many benefits for both individuals and communities, most of us are all in!