

## Giving thanks for locally grown food

As Canadians sit down to dinner they might consider starting the meal with a quick game of “I spy.” Which foods spied on the dinner table come from local farms?

It is unclear how many would be able to answer the question, because most of us have no idea where our food comes from. A growing number of community nutritionists say this is a shame,<sup>1</sup> because if we pay attention only to nutritional content and taste, we cannot create a truly sustainable diet. They say we should determine where foods are grown, because “local” is the new environmental imperative.<sup>1</sup>

Most foods now travel more than the people who eat them. Thanks to reliable refrigeration, freezing, food preservation, storage and transportation, it is possible to purchase — in Winnipeg, in January — fresh yellow peppers that were grown thousands of kilometres away.<sup>1</sup>

But as pleasing as this is to our palate and sense

of esthetics, the pleasure comes at considerable cost. The energy expenditure, in transportation and refrigeration, is unconscionable ([www.lead.org/leadnet/footprint](http://www.lead.org/leadnet/footprint)). The food may come from countries that are not feeding their own populations. The purchase of produce from remote, intensive, single-crop industries also leaves local farmland unsupported and vulnerable to development. And the sheer vastness of the international food-supply industry, particularly in poorer countries, where public health infrastructure support is inadequate, stretches the food inspection and safety system beyond capacity. This leaves consumers vulnerable to large-scale outbreaks of food-borne diseases.<sup>1</sup>

Community nutritionists have identified several reasons why the more sustainable (and sensible) approach is to buy locally: not only does the food taste better because it is fresher, but the purchases also support local farms.



Art Explosion

### Is your food from local farms?

Buying locally helps to preserve genetic diversity — local farms tend to grow a variety of crops in order to provide a long harvest season — and it supports the preservation of farmland, keeping the local food supply secure. The crops themselves capture carbon emissions and help combat global warming, and they reduce reliance on the fossil fuels needed to transport food great distances. According to a recent study, growing just 10% more produce in a regional system would result in an annual savings of 1.2 million to 1.4 million L of fuel and an annual reduction in carbon dioxide emissions of 3 million to 3.5 million kg.<sup>2</sup>

Food localism is a public health issue — a matter of awareness, governance and leadership.<sup>3</sup> The long-term health of a community's food system is an important indicator of its vitality and sustainability. Food-policy development and planning is a critical element that links production and distribution aspects of a local food economy. As recogni-

### Winter vegetables and corned beef, with maple syrup and mustard glaze

Preparation time: 15 minutes

Cooking time: about 2 hours

Makes 6 servings

2 corned beef briskets, about 500 g total  
2 locally grown onions, quartered  
2 cloves garlic, halved  
2 bay leaves  
6 whole cloves  
1 tsp peppercorns

4 large locally grown carrots  
3 large locally grown potatoes  
1 small locally grown rutabaga  
¼ cup (50 mL) maple syrup  
2 tbsp grainy mustard

Place corned beef, quartered onions, garlic, bay leaves, cloves and peppercorns in a Dutch oven; cover with water and bring to boil. Reduce heat and simmer for 1½ hours. Peel and chop carrots, potatoes and rutabaga into bite-size pieces. Add to pot and simmer for 12 minutes.

Remove meat to centre of 3-L baking dish or shallow casserole. Using slotted spoon, remove vegetables and place around corned beef. Mix together maple syrup and mustard; brush over top of meat and onto carrots and rutabaga. Bake in 375° F (190°C) oven for 20 minutes. Remove meat to cutting board and thinly slice; return to baking dish.

Nutritional information (1 serving): protein 33.5 g, fat 31.0 g, carbohydrates 35.5 g, calories 555.

Source: Foodland Ontario ([www.foodland.gov.on.ca/recipes.html](http://www.foodland.gov.on.ca/recipes.html)).

tion of this grows, so too will recognition of the source of the food on our tables.

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**Roasted vegetable medley**

*Use this recipe as a guideline for creating your own personalized mix of vegetables according to what is in season or available locally. This dish is fantastic as a vegetarian main course sprinkled with cheese or served over pasta or rice.*

- |                                  |  |
|----------------------------------|--|
| 1 small butternut squash, peeled | 2 or 3 cloves of local garlic, minced      |
| 2 beets, peeled                  | 1 tbsp chopped fresh thyme, or 1 tsp dried |
| 1 carrot                         | 2 tbsp fresh rosemary, or 2 tsp dried      |
| 1 parsnip                        | ¼ cup olive oil                            |
| 3 baking potatoes, peeled        | 2 tbsp balsamic vinegar or lemon juice     |
| 1 medium onion                   | Salt and freshly ground pepper to taste    |

Cut squash, beets, carrot, parsnip and potatoes into 1- or 2-inch cubes. Cut onion in half and each half into 4 wedges. Cut off root end and separate onion pieces. In a separate bowl, combine minced garlic, herbs, olive oil, vinegar (or lemon juice) and seasonings. Toss with vegetables until they are coated. Place all vegetables in a single layer on a baking sheet. Use two sheets if you need more room. Roast vegetables for 50 or 60 minutes in a 475° F (250°C) oven, stirring every 10 minutes or until vegetables are cooked through and browned.

Source: EcoPerth Recipe Column ([www.ecoperth.on.ca/Projects/recipecol.html](http://www.ecoperth.on.ca/Projects/recipecol.html)).



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