

The SFU Local Food Project

Ideas In Action

newsletter
March 2009



Greetings from the Local Food Project! March has been a busy month for us, with our Project Director, Christiana Miewald presenting a poster on the SFU Pocket Farmers Market at the upcoming *Northwest Real Food Youth Summit: Students Mobilizing for Just and Sustainable Food* in Portland, Oregon. We are also about to launch our new website at www.sfulocalfood.ca next week, so keep checking for updates! The *BC Farm to Campus Network* is also scheduled to launch at the end of the month, which will connect colleges and universities from across the province to share resources, success stories, and challenges of bringing local food to campuses.

This month, our e-newsletter writer, Emma Point, explores the transportation related environmental impacts of food. While purchasing food from a local source is an effective way to support the local economy and access foods at their freshest, the environmental benefits of a local food economy are far more nuanced. On the following page you will find information on the types of food for which long transport distance is of particular environmental concern, a comparison of various modes of transportation (i.e. plane, truck, rail, car) with respect to their associated efficiencies at transporting goods, and a reminder of the importance of consumer transport in the measurement of a product's total "food miles".

Hope you enjoy this month's newsletter and feel free to contact us with comments or questions at our new email address: info@sfulocalfood.ca! Hope to see you at this month's Harvest Box next Thursday March 26th!

- From all of us at the SFU Local Food Project

In the News!

City of Vancouver (Almost) Legalizes Backyard Chickens

On March 6th 2009, City Council unanimously moves to amend the animal control bylaw to allow backyard chickens in Vancouver. They've charged city staff with drawing up guidelines for city chicken keepers. Stay tuned for updates!

For more info, check out the Farm Folk City Folk website: <http://ffcf.bc.ca/NewSiteFiles/programs/farm-city/urban-chickens.html> **or the Vancouver Food Policy website:** www.vancouverfoodpolicycouncil.ca/



Saving the UBC Farm

There is a GREAT FARM TREK on April 7 at 3:30pm from the Student Union building at UBC with the University community and off campus people joining together to express our strong desire to Save the UBC Farm. For more information www.amsubc.ca and on Facebook: Great Farm Trek 2009

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Questions or Comments?

Want to subscribe to our newsletter? We'd love to hear from you! Email us at info@sfulocalfood.ca Or visit our website at www.sfulocalfood.ca

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Ideas In Action

Beyond a Measure of Food Miles: Taking a Closer Look at the Transportation of Food

We choose to eat locally produced food for many reasons: to support the local economy, to re-connect with the people who grow our food, and to reduce the environmental impacts associated with our food choices. However, with respect to environmental emissions like greenhouse gases, a measure of “food miles” (the distance food travels from farm to market) as an indicator of a product’s sustainability, may oversimplify the situation. In fact, there are several other transport-related factors that may be equally, or even more important than distance alone: mode of transportation, the weight and packaging of food and additional distances driven by the consumer, must also be taken into consideration.

Transport “mode” refers to the type of vehicle in which food is transported, and is an important indicator of environmental impact since planes, trucks, trains, boats, and cars have different efficiencies with respect to transporting goods. Transport of food by air is the fastest growing mode of transport and is also the most greenhouse gas intensive. Live lobster flown in from the east coast comes with a mighty large carbon footprint!

Truck transport is 10 times less greenhouse gas intensive (per unit of food) than air freighted goods, and train transport is an order of magnitude more fuel efficient than trucking. Finally, ocean-based transport is 2-3 times more fuel efficient than trains, per unit of food. In some cases, transporting food (in bulk) over long distances on freighter ships may in fact be more energy efficient than transporting food regionally in small, fuel inefficient trucks, illustrating the importance of striving for efficiency in our local food networks. Check out the Validity of Food Miles Report for a more detailed analysis of why the impacts of food transport are highly dependent on transport mode.

A second consideration is the nature of the food itself, such as its weight, shape, and packaging. For instance, food and beverages that are heavy (i.e. liquids, sauces, etc) will burn more fuel during transport (per unit of food) than will lighter foods, since the amount of fuel burned during vehicle operation is related to the weight of the total cargo. Furthermore, food and beverages packaged in glass, or heavy packaging, burn more fuel during transport as a result of packaging weight. Recent actions taken in the wine industry for instance, to reduce the weight of glass bottles,

have resulted in important reductions to wine’s transport-related emissions. Finally, food products and packaging that are irregularly shaped, such as bottles, jugs, fruit and vegetables, are associated with reduced transport efficiency due to the large volume of wasted space that must be transported along with the food.

A final consideration with respect to transport-related environmental costs involves the consumer since a substantial portion of food’s greenhouse gas emissions are derived from this transport leg. For example, a recent study out of Dalhousie University in Halifax found that over 30% of global warming emissions associated with a bottle of Nova Scotia wine results from the consumer driving to the store! Consumer transport may be particularly greenhouse gas intensive when one drives to purchase only a few items since this is a very inefficient way of transporting goods. As a consumer, one of the most effective actions you can take to reduce the environmental impacts associated with your food is to walk or bike to the store (or better yet, a local farmer’s market!)

How can we, as consumers of food, take into account all of this information? When we chose to purchase locally produced, seasonal food, we do so for many reasons: to support local farmers, to obtain fresher, more nutritious food, and to reduce the environmental impact associated with our food by reducing the distance that it travels from “farm to fork”. However, consumers must consider factors beyond a measure of “food miles”, including mode of transport, weight of product, and distance driven to and from the store. As a consumer, you can choose to take a closer look at the types of food you consume and the associated transport emissions. Some food companies and grocery stores are making this decision easier by calculating the carbon footprints of products, or by indicating the mode of transport on the label (see below). As a consumer, gathering as much information about the distance and method by which food is transported is an effective way to make more informed decisions to reduce the greenhouse gas emissions associated with your food. For more information, check out the additional resources listed below.

Further Resources:

On the nuances of global transport networks:

Environmental Cost of Shipping Groceries Around the World (NY Times, April 2008)

http://www.nytimes.com/2008/04/26/business/worldbusiness/26food.html?_r=3&incamp=article_popular_4&pagewanted=all

On calculating the carbon footprint of products:

How Green Is My Orange? How much does your morning glass of orange juice contribute to global warming? (NY Times, January 2009)

<http://www.nytimes.com/2009/01/22/business/22pepsi.html?th&emc=th>

Big Foot: In measuring carbon emissions, it’s easy to confuse morality and science. (The New Yorker, February 2008)

http://www.newyorker.com/reporting/2008/02/25/080225fa_fact_specter

Resources



Upcoming Winter Markets

Coquitlam Farmer's Market

Sunday, March 22nd 1:00pm–5:00pm
Port Moody Recreation Complex
300 Ioco Road, Port Moody
www.makebakegrow.com

Vancouver Farmers Market

Saturday, March 28th 10:00am–2:00pm
WISE Hall, 1882 Adanac Street at Victoria Drive
(2 Blocks east of Commercial Dr.)
Bring your own bag!
www.eatlocal.org/markets.html

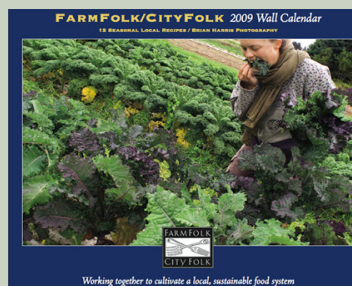
Workshops

MOBY Seed Workshop and Seed Exchange

Saturday, March 21st 10:30am-Noon
MOBY Garden, 1737 East 11th Avenue

A beginners guild to starting from seed (handouts included). There will also be a basic overview of the Square Foot Gardening technique, which is an excellent way to get the most yield out of a small space. Seed exchange: bring some of your own seeds and get a few seeds from other fellow gardeners.

Cost: By Donation (suggest \$5)
Rain or shine, we can stand under skytrain line if it rains.
For more info, contact: moby_lize@yahoo.ca
www.myownbackyard.ca



2009 Farm Folk City Folk
Calendars still available!

Includes 12 seasonal/local
recipes

Only \$10

Visit <http://ffcf.bc.ca/> to
order!

Job Opportunities

Langley Community Farmers Market Manager

Applications are being accepted for the 2009 position of Langley Farmer's Market Manager. This is a paid contract position, with responsibility for the promotion, set up and effective running of a mid-week farmers market.
For more info: www.planetfriendly.net/gwd.php?id=8216

East End Food Co-op

The East End Food Coop on Commercial Drive is hiring for a clerk/cashier position. If you are interested, please email an up-to-date resume and cover letter to genmgr@east-end-food.coop. For more info:

www.east-end-food.coop/employment.html

Volunteer Opportunities

UBC Farm

The UBC Farm is a 24 hectare learning and research farm located on the UBC Campus. As the only working farmland within the city of Vancouver, the UBC Farm is an urban agrarian gem, featuring a landscape of unique beauty. UBC Farm recruits volunteers on an ongoing basis. For more info: www.landfood.ubc.ca/ubcfarm/index.php

Full Time Gardening Opportunity

Glenora Farm (www.glenorafarm.com), situated near Duncan, on beautiful Vancouver Island is looking for a full-time gardener, to help plan and manage the vegetable garden throughout the year. Accomodation, meals and pocket money would be provided within one of our households on the farm. For more info: www.planetfriendly.net/gwd.php?id=8142.

SFPIRG Board of Directors

The Simon Fraser Public Interest Research Group (SFPIRG), SFU's student-based social justice resource centre, is currently seeking applicants for our Board of Directors.

For more information, please visit www.sfpirg.ca

For an application: Please email board@sfpirg.ca, or stop by the office, TC326 (in the Rotunda), SFU Burnaby.

SFPIRG is working towards diversifying its membership at all levels, particularly the Board. We are looking for people from under-represented groups on campus as well as people with a strong anti-oppression analysis. Women, people of colour, people with disabilities, queer folk, and others who face systemic barriers to full participation are strongly encouraged to apply.

Split Pea Soup

Local Eats!

Sourcing locally grown fresh fruits and vegetables in March can be tough. Fall's bounty is nearly gone, and new spring crops have not yet emerged from our cool, wet soils. March thus provides a perfect opportunity to fill our bowls with nutritious legumes that were dried and stored over the winter months. This recipe, adapted from Moosewood Restaurant's "Cooks for a Crowd" cookbook, features dried split peas, as well as several hearty root crops that have survived through the winter in cold storage. If you don't have all the vegetables, it's no problem to leave one (or even two) out. You'll still get a delicious, filling soup. I recommend serving this topped with a spoonful of yoghurt and a hunk of whole grain bread.

INGREDIENTS

- Green or yellow dried split peas, 3/4 cup
- Vegetable stock, or water, 8 cups
- Potatoes, coarsely chopped, 1 1/2 cups
- Carrots, coarsely chopped, 1/2 cup
- Celery coarsely chopped, 1/2 cup
- Onions, coarsely chopped, 1/2 cup
- Turnips, coarsely chopped, 1/2 cup
- Parsnips, coarsely chopped, 1/2 cup
- Dried mustard, 1/2 tsp
- Allspice, 1/8 tsp
- Cumin, 1/3 tsp
- Marjoram, 1/3 tsp
- Thyme, 1/3 tsp
- Salt, 3/4 tsp
- Cracked black pepper, 1/2 tsp
- Yoghurt, (optional), 1/2 cup



COOKING INSTRUCTIONS

- Rinse the split peas and bring the peas and stock (or water) to a boil in a large saucepan.
- Add all the chopped vegetables, reduce the heat, and simmer for 45 mins to 1 hour, or until split peas are very soft and almost disintegrating. Add more water or stock if necessary. NOTE: You can reduce the cooking time (and thus the amount of energy required to make this meal), if you soak the split peas for 4-6 hours before cooking.
- Purée the soup in a blender, or using an immersion blender, until it is smooth (or you can leave it a bit chunky if you like).
- Add the herbs, spices and salt and pepper. Reheat gently and serve topped with a dollop of yoghurt.

What's in Season in March

Apples
Beans (dried)
Cabbage (savoy and red)
Kale
Leeks
Onions (red and yellow)
Mushrooms
Cilantro
Bay leaves
Chervil
Rosemary
Sage
Savory
Thyme
Garlic (Dried)

Other vegetables available in March that have been stored, dried, and/or frozen include: Beets, Potatoes (red, russet, yellow), Rutabagas, Shallots, Carrots, Turnips (white), Parsnips, and Cucumbers/Tomatoes (greenhouse grown).

For more information, visit www.getlocalbc.org.