

# Eat local, buy local, be local essay

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With the United States economy in practical ruins, the urge to keep American money in America is a vastly growing idea. Buying local foods is an easy and effective way to contribute to your local economy and keep your hard-earned dollars close to home. There is no more exciting place to shop for locally grown food than at the local farmer's market. Over the course of the past few years, buying local produce has become a popular phenomenon.

Not only are local consumers making purchases from the farmer's market, but owners of local restaurants are contributing as well. When local restaurants owners attend a farmer's market not only do they do their part in supporting the community, but they also make themselves known to potential customers and in turn gain more business. While attending the local farmer's market in Springfield, Illinois, I had the pleasure of speaking with Chef Michael Higgins, owner and head chef of Maldaner's Restaurant in Springfield. Higgins spoke of the benefits of being a local business owner and shopping at the farmer's market. He stated: " I get pleasure from helping the local community but I also know that people see me and know that I support them. The customers see me and they know that I use my purchases in the restaurant.

The sellers I buy from also know this. It just looks good. It's sort of like first-hand advertising. Most of the people I pass here [the farmer's market] will stop in the restaurant at some point" (personal interview). With the hype of buying locally being practically everywhere, not many people really know what " local" actually entails. The website [Sustainableable](https://assignbuster.com/eat-local-buy-local-be-local-essay/).

org explains that “ Local is shorthand for an idea that doesn’t have a firm definition. Local means different things to different people, depending on where they live, how long their growing season is, and what products they are looking for.... While local is certainly a flexible term, the basic concept is simple: local foods are produced as close to home as possible...”

(sustainabletable. org). With there being several benefits from buying locally, I can’t help but wonder why more people aren’t doing it. More often than not, the problem isn’t that people don’t want to; it’s that they feel they don’t know how because no one has ever showed them. Buying locally is actually a very easy thing to do. Referring again to Sustainabletable.

org: “ One easy way to start buying local is to choose one product to focus on. Vegetables are often a good place to start. Produce also offers a good introduction to eating seasonally—an excellent way to learn about local agriculture” (sustainabletable. org).

Another reason that people are not buying locally is that they are not aware of the benefits. Not everyone knows that fresh, organic food is healthier for the body than foods with added preservatives and high amounts of fat. In the book Every Body Eats: Supermarket Consumers in the 1990’s, Marcia Mogelonsky discusses how as children of the 1950’s up to the children of the 1990’s were not educated on nutrition facts the way that children are today.

“ No one ever told us that all that food was bad for us. We were not obsessed with nutrition and health issues. There were no “ dangerous” foods.

We ate cookies made with coconut and palm oil, pie crust made with lard, and all the red meat we liked. Only women admitted to counting calories,

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and cholesterol was nothing more than a word in the state-wide spelling bee. Food related issues never made front-page news” (Mogelonsky 16). While buying locally offers several benefits, there are a few bumps in the road.

A problem that consumers and restaurants owners such as Higgins run into when trying to buy strictly local food is purchasing items that are seasonal. This is actually a rather big problem when buying from the farmer’s market because there are very few foods that are not seasonal. I myself, not having the knowledge of which foods grow in which season, asked Higgins if he is ever able to purchase all of his needed produce from the farmer’s market. He answered: “ No, but I can come very close. There are a few things here and there that I have to buy from the local supermarket depending on the season, but that is also the reason I have seasonal items on my menu. I accommodate for the seasons just like the vendors accommodate for me.

When something I use all the time is in season, I come here and almost wipe them out. Often times I call ahead and they set items aside for me” (personal interview). While walking the streets of the farmer’s market, I couldn’t help but wonder why anyone would opt out of what I found to be such an amazing experience.

I asked several local consumers why they choose to shop at the farmer’s market and also what some reasons are that they would not attend. The consensus for attending was that they enjoy supporting the community and there is variety that cannot be found at the supermarket. Everyone agreed that the farmer’s market is an experience that cannot be replicated. This is a very friendly environment and the sense of community is very strong. Of the

customers I spoke to, not one was a first timer at the farmer's market. Most said they had been coming for years and would not stop. On the other hand, there were reasons why customers sometimes did not attend.

While they all agreed that they love coming to the farmer's market and would not stop, it is not always convenient to attend. In today's society, everyone seems to be go-go-go, which is true of local Springfield customers as well. Of all that I spoke to about why they would not attend, there were only two answers amongst them. The first was that a supermarket can be quicker and therefore more convenient in their schedule. The second was that what they would like to purchase is not always in season.

There were no negative comments made about the farmer's market. Buying locally shows support for the community and keeps local hard-earned money exactly that, local. Making an appearance at a farmer's market is an excellent way for restaurant owners to advertise themselves, local farmers and entrpanors to make a living, and family and friends to come together with a general sense of community.

I observed several things on my trip to the Springfield farmer's market but the thing that stuck out to me the most was the general happiness in the atmosphere. Every person had a smile on their face and seemed to enjoy contributing to their community. There is no more exciting place to shop for locally grown food than at the local farmer's market. " Eat Local, Buy Local, Be Local. " Sustainable Table. N. p.

, Jan. 2007. Web. 23 Sept. 2009.

<http://www.sustainabletable.org/issues/eatlocal/>. Higgins, Michael. Personal interview. 7 Sept.

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