

Eat Here Now

Let's change our eating habits, not the climate

In our country, food, the most essential and sacred substance of life, one of the great blessings of our natural and social world, comes (as author Bill McKibben puts it in his book *Deep Economy*) delivered to our tables "marinated in crude oil."

It takes half a gallon of oil to produce a bushel of Midwestern hybrid corn: 25 percent to make fertilizer, 35 percent to power farm machinery, 7 percent to irrigate the field and the rest to make pesticides, dry the crop and perform all the other tasks of industrial farming. And farming's the least of it! Processing, packaging and distributing food consumes four times the energy of farming itself. In our industrial system, it takes an average of 10 calories of fuel energy to produce, process and deliver one calorie of food energy to our tables.

The average American meal travels 1,500 miles from harvest to plate. That's a lot of fossil fuel burned and CO2 released into the atmosphere. In such an agriculturally rich and diverse state, we have a momentous opportunity to figure out how to move regionally raised produce to locally owned processing businesses to the home, restaurant and cafeteria tables of our communities without the marinade of crude.

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Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) is a great way to vitalize our local economy and decrease our contribution to global warming with every bite. CSA is local people buying directly from local farmers. Households pay at the beginning of the season to share the risk and give farm families much needed cash flow to sustain their farm business and steward the land without having to go into debt. In return, participants receive a box of fresh fruits and vegetables each week throughout the season (May - October), delivered to convenient drop sites throughout the community. Some farms offer winter shares November through April. Some fill boxes year round. Some sell chicken, beef, pork, cheese, milk and eggs through CSA. Most provide newsletters and recipes for their members. There are more than a dozen CSAs in our area.

If joining a CSA is not for you, there are farmers' markets in communities across our county every day of the week. Buying directly puts a larger percentage of each food dollar into farmers' hands, keeping their business viable while building hometown economy.

But the narrow CSA model and farmers' markets alone won't be antidote enough to heal atmosphere, economy or hunger without a broader public will, complete with infrastructure and funding, to connect local farms to families, locally owned groceries, restaurants, processors and all kinds of institutions with cafeterias, including public schools. Let's quit marinating all our food in oil. Instead, let us flavor it with justice, good stewardship and good sense.

If you are interested in local food and farm related issues and want to know who's who in the local food scene, please join us at an informal community potluck and networking event next week, hosted by the Willamette Farm and Food Coalition and the Helios Resource Network.

The Eat Here Now: Local Food Networking Banquet will be held from 6:30 to 9 pm Thursday, May 24, at the First United Methodist Church (13th and Olive). Suggested donation: \$5-\$20.

This will be an evening of good food and educative entertainment. We will view a few delightful film shorts; enjoy food for thought from local speakers; learn about the issues and efforts of our local organizations, farmers and food businesses; and spend time connecting with each other over a delicious meal of predominantly local foods.

Our intentions in hosting the event are toward strengthening our *food community*, harnessing the public's awareness of food related issues and fostering the viability and sustainability of our local food resources.

Co-sponsoring organizations include: EWEB's Healthy Farms Program, Eugene Permaculture Guild, FOOD for Lane County, Lane County Food Policy Council, Lost Valley Education Center, School Garden Project, Slow Food Eugene and the Willamette Valley Sustainable Foods Alliance.

Proceeds raised will go to the That's My Farmer Low-Income Fund, which subsidizes CSA shares and provides Farmers' Market Dollars for low-income families.

Call 341-1216 to RSVP for the Eat Here Now event or to request a copy of *Locally Grown* (directory of local farms and businesses that sell local foods).

John Pitney is associate pastor at First United Methodist Church in Eugene and a longtime advocate of sustainable agriculture. He has been the lead organizer of the Lane County faith community's annual That's My Farmer event the past seven years. He serves on the board of the Willamette Farm and Food Coalition (lanefood.org).



ing in chain stores. Those may pay some local salaries, but the profits are pulled out of the local economy and go wherever the owners are. It's as though the local leaders are jumping up and down screaming "Kick us! Harder! Do it again!"

It's always a struggle for local businesses to get going, let alone succeed, but there are no tax gifts to them or any encouragement whatsoever. If an outfit isn't already big, the politicians can't see it. When they give freebies to the big guys, they create a very uneven playing field for everyone else. It's as though their objective was to wipe out anything local.

People talk about the importance of tourism in the economy, but the chain-store mentality wipes out whatever local uniqueness is represented by the commercial sector. Tourists aren't going to come to Eugene to go to Whole Foods or the Gap — they don't need to. They've got the chains wherever they are. But the chains can wipe out local businesses that are unique and render the commercial sector just another fragment of homogenous corporate bland. Come to Eugene — it's just like everywhere else! Yawn.

Karen Carlson
Eugene

RUN OFF THE ROAD

Several mornings ago, I came within 90 seconds and a foot of asphalt from death. I was run off the road by an erratic, arrogant semi truck driver who came up behind me and proceeded to force me off the road. This happened on I-5 South, right by the exit to LCC. Since he came up behind me, it was obvious that he saw me and that this was a deliberate act. (I have seen bikes get run off the road as well in this general area of town.)

After regaining some composure, I pursued this truck and felt quite proud that I had been able to get the license plate number. Little good did this do me! After a series of phone calls to the Eugene police, the Eugene and Portland DMV, and several to the Motor Carrier Transportation (MCT) office (all of whom claimed they couldn't help me and that it was another department's responsibility), I finally discover that the plate is not traceable!

Apparently, when an enterprise rents trailer flatbeds, the license plates do not directly lead to them or the company from which it was rented. I was basically told by the MCT that there was absolutely nothing they could do. In addition, they told me they receive irate phone calls all the time from others like myself, who have been run off the road and have been unable to file complaints against the guilty parties due to untraceable plates! So apparently, between the inept and disorganized government agencies and the fact that there are actually license plates out there that cannot be identified, it is actually possible to run cars, bicycles and pedestrians off the road and not be held accountable.

By the way, the Oregon plate number was 81079.

T.D. Turner
Eugene

PUBLIC ART?

I sometimes wonder what those Peter Max letters mean splashed on railroad cars, bridge supports and buildings all over America. If gang affiliated, then to what purpose? A claim

drawing as therapy by harvey dixon



to turf? Recruitment ads? Desperado code exchanges? Is there someone out there that can decipher this?

Surely, some ex-banger has turned coat and become a task force insider who knows the terminology. I mean, some of these letters and logos run together without vowels and jumble together like mathematical equations. There are never any pictures, landscapes or cartoons to go with them. Ancient cave markings are easier to ponder. I say we need a graffiti "taggers" dictionary so I know whether to grab my gun or a bouquet of flowers to respond.

Dan Woodmark
Eugene

IMPERIAL HILLARY

Deb McGee wrote (4/26) that "it's not OK to have the Democratic National Convention in a nonunion hall owned by one of the Wal-Mart oligarchs."

While I share her distaste for Wal-Mart, I think it would be appropriate to enthrone Hillary in a Wal-Mart connected facility since she was on the Wal-Mart board of directors while Bill Clinton was governor of Arkansas.

Barring a miracle, it is likely that Hillary will be the next emperor — she probably has already been selected by the power elites. ("Voting" doesn't really determine who gets to be president.)

www.oilempire.us/hillary.html links to documentation of the Bush/Clinton business ties and Hillary's connections to the hazardous waste incineration industry. I also recommend *Barry and the Boys* by Daniel Hopsicker, which is available at Tsunami Books. It describes how the Iran-Contra scandal flew drugs into Mena, Ark. — and that the "deep politics" of that scandal makes a Hillary presidency almost a certainty. The Bush/Clinton connections make her too compromised to be able to prosecute the current regime for its war crimes in Afghanistan, Iraq and New York City.

The only Democratic presidential candidate who deserves a vote is Dennis Kucinich, who recently introduced a resolution to impeach the de facto president, Richard Cheney.

Mark Robinowitz
Eugene

SAY NO TO NO-KILL

"No-kill" shelters euthanize animals only under extreme circumstances, if at all. Because of this, they cannot accept all the animals who are in need of help. Some no-kill shelters only take in animals who are highly attractive, young or purebred or those who come from the police stations of certain municipalities. Many of these shelters direct peo-