

Eating Our Way Forward

Pushing the market with our buying habits toward a food secure future

The year 2007 was a year of high visibility on the local food front. With concerns raised about the safety of foods shipped in from other countries, books published on tales of local eating and 100-mile diets, and the Oxford University Press voting *locavore* as the word of the year, who could help but to take a moment to ponder their pantry?

Here in Lane County, 30,000 copies of our own *Locally Grown* directory were snatched up in six months. In August we were visited by a singing duo, the Ditty Bops, on a tour of America's farms (small van), and the Sustainable Table group from New York on a local foods tour (big bus). Both groups ate their way across the country to the September Farm Aid concert in New York, talking and singing up the tenets of responsible eating: food grown without detriment to the environment, delivered with minimum fossil fuels, in a manner that does not exploit farmers.

Hopefully this media frenzy got a few more of us to the Farmers' Market or convinced us to join a CSA program or to look more closely at the little stickers on the produce in the grocery aisle and ask questions or inspired us to grow edibles in our own back yards. We cannot underestimate the importance of our individual food choices, but what will it take to nudge buying local to the next level, to get our institutions sourcing local foods?

First there is willingness. A year ago, Woodbury County in Iowa mandated that any county purchases of food in the usual course of business would be (subject to availability) locally produced food. Could Lane County be next? Or the green city of Eugene?

Next there is infrastructure. While area schools may have wellness policies stating that they will purchase local or organic foods when possible, it turns out that our small farms can seldom meet the produce needs of a large school district. And the district food service cannot handle deliveries from a dozen different farms, and they often need the vegetables in a washed or peeled or chopped form. So now we're looking at needing local cold storage, small scale processors and a distribution system that consolidates and delivers. The question remains, are we planning for this in our food future?

Whether you are a chef in a restaurant, a food processor, or a food service employee at a school, hospital, or government agency, don't miss the upcoming opportunity to explore and deepen your local marketing connections. **Local Food Connection: Linking Farmers, Fishers and Food Buyers** will be held at Lane Community College on Monday, Feb. 4, 8:30 am to 2:30 pm. This is a free matchmaking event for growers and buyers, a chance to find new sources or new accounts, as well as to discuss strategies, successes and barriers. Hosted by Cascade Pacific RC&D and sponsored by EWEB, OSU and Oregon Tilth, this is the southern valley's version of the famed Portland based Farmer-Chef Connection Conferences. Register by Jan. 25 at cascadepacific.org/category/food.

And for a chance to take the eat local challenge in winter, the Willamette Farm and Food Coalition and the Helios Resource Network are holding the next in the series of "Eat Here Now" local food potlucks on Saturday, Jan. 19. The focus this time around, in addition to eating and networking, will be farmer appreciation, so bring a dish to pass and come thank the farmers fostering the viability and sustainability of our local food system. Challenge yourself to prepare something with local ingredients and enter the "How Local Can You Go?" contest. A prize will go to the tastiest dish with the most local ingredients.

The "Eat Here Now: Farmer Appreciation and Local Foods Community Potluck" is from 6 to 9 pm Jan. 19 at the First United Methodist Church, on 13th and Olive in Eugene. The suggested donation of \$5 gets your name in the door prize drawing.

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

For more information on either event, call 341-1216.

Lynne Fessenden is the executive director of the Willamette Farm and Food Coalition, a community non-profit promoting the purchase of locally grown and produced foods to keep our small farms viable and to strengthen our local economy (lanefood.org).



who got arrested for being in Mexico "illegally"? According to the Comision Nacional de los Derechos Humanos, Mexico's human rights commission, there are approximately 800 people from Latin American countries other than Mexico who are in Mexican jails just for being in Mexico "illegally." That's a conservative figure.

The dirty little secret in Mexico is that the Mexican government wants the U.S. unskilled labor market for itself. Mexico's southern border has thousands of troops to "dissuade" non-Mexican migrants from entering their country to get to the U.S.

Arellano and other Mexican nationalists and open border groups want an open border with the U.S. They want all the benefits that legal immigrants and citizens get. They also think they are entitled to U.S. citizenship. Most citizens and legal immigrants don't think they are entitled. I don't either. Does that make me and others racists and hate mongers? It does not. I and most others feel the policy of looking the other way when someone crosses the border without permission, and the pressure relief valve which the U.S. has turned into for Mexico, has to change.

Arellano needs to put his energy into encouraging Mexicans to stay and fight for economic and social equality in Mexico. It's also time to improve the educational system in Mexico. When all of that happens, you can kick the U.S. and its corporations out. Arellano and other "immigrants" rights activists find it easier to criticize and fight the guilt-ridden Anglo-Americans than to criticize and fight the Mexican rich elite and their corrupt puppet government. Some are fighting; they are the poor of Oaxaca and Chiapas. Arellano and others can learn something from them. Time for Gustavo to use his geeky wit for a worthy cause.

Chris Williamson
Eugene

NASTY POLITICS

What a nasty ending to the State of the County Address! Bobby Green and his cohorts decided to halt the rotating job of chairmanship and give Faye Stewart another year. Why? Bobby Green, Bill Dwyer and Faye Stewart still can't believe that their unfair, regressive flat tax was overwhelmingly defeated by the citizens of Lane County. They must still believe that it was a tax that should have passed. Because of this they appear to still hold a grudge against Pete Sorenson and Bill Fleenor for not supporting their tax, and I'm really concerned that this county is in for some difficult times if they can't work together. Maybe it is time to find new commissioners more in tune with the voters.

Ruth Duemler
Eugene

NOT LEPROSY

I'm always a week or so behind in my reading (three weeks if it's *The New Yorker*), so I only just saw the swell article by Molly Templeton on "Swift Reads: Cute, weird, funny gift books." I was glad to see her mention *Logorrhea*, a book with stories inspired by winners of the Scripps National Spelling Bee.

I wanted to let readers know that, in addition to the Portland writer Jay Lake, Eugene writer Leslie What, aka me, also has a story in that anthology, called "Tsuris," a word that

relates to both the 1982 Scripps National Spelling Bee award-winning word "psoriasis" and the biblical disease "tzaraas" (often incorrectly translated as leprosy — and not a Scripps National Spelling Bee award-winning word).

Leslie What
Eugene

CHERRY PICKING

The earth is an extension of our bodies. The Forest Service and the liquidating Industry use words like thinning, salvage, stewardship, safety, etc. to mask the fact that it is still extracting the lungs of our planet. Extraction! What comes to mind is the painful pulling of parts from my body. Think of a child being violated over and over again. Do we stop the violator? I hope so, but yet the forests continue to be the victim.

Can America trust the government to obey the law? The record on national forests says no. Only 5 percent of our virgin forests remain. Tim Hermach has and will always be strong in his conviction to save the national forests, defending life and liberty through education. He would never misrepresent studies of any kind, whether due to sloppiness or purposeful cherry picking.

Information in his article comes from USDA Forest Service, Pacific Northwest Research Station. "The number of trees killed in the Biscuit fire was highest in the thinned areas we studied, most likely due to slash left after the thinning treatment," Raymond explains. It saddens me to think that Mr. Nagle, Perry, and Fairbanks would purposely or dishonestly point fingers even if it were due to their sloppiness or purposeful cherry picking to support a point of view.

Johnny VanHerwaarden
Eugene

EUGENE'S URBAN BLIGHT

While much attention has focused on problems with unnecessarily restrictive Eugene city codes that inhibit positive development in our downtown area, very little has been said or done by City Council to update codes that could restrain some of the wild and woolly, directionless infilling taking place in some of our most (formerly) desirable older neighborhoods.

A dramatic example is the Friendly Street neighborhood, specifically the area bordered by 24th and 29th avenues. Although there are a number of well kept homes in the neighborhood, there is also a run of several houses that look like they should be condemned. Broken windows, trash piled high on porches, junk cars and buses permanently occupying driveways, "free" boxes with soggy clothing and bedding left next to sidewalks, a Tyvek-wrapped house seemingly frozen in remodel limbo, street signs missing for years.

And that is *nothing* compared to the blight of the alleyways. Don't dare walk the alley between Friendly and Adams from 24th up to 25th Avenue. The pallets piled high as an elephant's eye are not only an eyesore, but in dry weather they are a fire hazard. Willy-nilly infill has led to homes built right on the alley with tenants forced to park in the mud and muck that has become a thoroughfare for lowlife. Gracing this disaster area is the real icing on the mudpie: a 20-foot high, 30-foot long white-tarp-wrapped sailboat looming over the alley and nearly touching powerlines, negating any privacy adjacent neighbors might have had before this backyard be-