

One Pound at a Time

How to buy and support locally grown food

Forty-three thousand pounds of produce would fill a tractor trailer truck to the brim. That volume of fruits and vegetables was purchased by Lane County institutions from Lane County farms in 2009. Considering that the UO might consume that much produce in a week puts this quantity into perspective. But as the start of an upward trend, it is encouraging.



In March of 2009, food service directors from the UO, LCC, and Bethel and Eugene 4J School Districts committed to buying locally grown products when they were able. That means when the triumvirate of price, availability, and convenience of delivery aligned.

Price remains the major barrier to purchasing locally grown food. Let's face it, a carrot grown on a small organic farm will never be as cheap as one from an industrial farm (organic or not) in California or Mexico. Although there will come a time in the future when increased fuel costs bring the price of those carrots closer, it is hard to shop now based on a future reality.

While some of us have committed to paying more for our food out of principle and health and in solidarity with our farmers, it is not an option for all, our institutions included. However, the institutional food buyers taking the lead in the past year forged new connections with farmers and distributors and found ways to include more Lane County grown produce in their offerings.

Can we step up to the challenge? Can we pick one item, beloved to our households, and buy it from a local source? Can we commit to sourcing local a day or two a month, on all family birthdays or as a percentage of our grocery budget? Can we commit to dining out at restaurants that showcase local foods?

We encourage the city and county to also consider making this kind of commitment. They could mandate that any purchases of food in the usual course of business (subject to availability) be locally produced food. Or, they could start small and commit to sourcing local for one event a year.

It is important to note that if all of our institutions wanted to source their food locally tomorrow, Lane County farms could not provide it. The supply and demand of our local food system need to be grown gradually and deliberately, one pound at a time, toward a food secure future.

If you are a restaurant chef or a food buyer for a business or institution, interested in purchasing from local growers and processors, don't miss the networking opportunity of the fourth annual Local Food Connection on Monday, Feb. 1. The event, which links farmers, fishers and food buyers will be held at LCC's Center for Meeting and Learning from 8:30 am to 3:30 pm. Read more and register on-line at cascadepacific.org or call Kelly at (541) 341-4663, ext. 217. The Local Food Connection is hosted by Cascade Pacific RC & D and is sponsored by EWEB, Oregon Tilth and LCC.

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

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Progress has been slow because the how has lagged so far behind the why. Hammurabi's "eye for an eye" was, believe it or not, a breakthrough at the time since retribution had previously been unlimited. Jesus's "turn the other cheek" was another hint, but his implementation is marketed today as spiritual, not interpersonal. Thoreau, Ghandi and King added another piece when they suggested that silence is an improvement over screaming, even if that's not yet talking.

Today, Marshall Rosenberg's Non-Violent Communication offers a remarkably user-friendly interface — although NVC meetings are overwhelmingly female, reflecting the widespread belief by both genders that men are less peaceful than women.

Maybe the next piece is figuring out what we're letting go. It's thrilling to be a warrior, even if lazy. Compassion for the downtrodden is easy; doing the same with our enemies remains almost impossible. And the warrior spirit is everywhere. If you hear a friend or a hero talk of "empowering" anyone or "working for social justice," you should cringe. And then gently enlighten them.

When someone like O'Brien's father figures out that vengeance against Germany in 1919 was part of the problem, we see how far we've come. When Obama gets the Nobel Peace Prize while supporting vengeance against Germany in 1939 we see how far we've yet to go.

Thanks for the nudge.

Steve Downey
Eugene

THIEVES ARE US

Regarding "Scrooges Among Us" from Peter Holden (letters, 12/31): Responding to theft by putting up surveillance in a parking lot is a waste! These "Scrooges" are people who are worse off than you! The guys you saw at the parking lot — they are part of our community.

If you don't like what happens up there at 50th and Donald, stay away, or leave your car empty and unlocked. Locked car = something, duh! Unlocked car = nothing of worth or value to a thief! If you are breaking into my car for something, you must be worse off than me in many ways: sick with addiction, alcoholism and likely homeless.

Cameras in the Spencer Butte Trail

parking lot will benefit nobody, just put more people in an overcrowded jail and cost taxpayers money! Change your behavior and think about the less fortunate for once.

Jonathan Guske
Eugene

WE WANT HIGHER TAXES

Actions speak louder than words. We talk peace and charge off to war on any pretext. We talk small government and don't vote or even put forth candidates to curtail those who expand regulations. We talk opposing taxes then add new ones with nearly every election. Actions demonstrate we love war, big government, and transferring wealth to our rulers. We love complaining and avoid getting involved.

The results published by Lane County for the elections from March 11, March 1997, to Nov. 3 2009 were tabulated (email bernhardt@oregonfast.net for the spreadsheet). Recall and primary results were excluded.

Computations show 71 percent of those eligible to vote are registered, but the simple average turnout is 48 percent. Only a third of our adults, or 99,840 of 353,460 (28 percent) population, are choosing who will rule over the rest of us.

Of 1,956 elected positions: For 178 (9 percent), no candidate bothered to file, 1,261 (65 percent) had only one, leaving only 517 (26 percent) where the vote meant anything. So a third of the adults decided a quarter of who would rule all our lives. Winston Churchill said, "The world is ruled by those who show up."

Of 153 measures to increase or sustain taxes, 98 (64 percent) were approved by the voting third. Measures 66 and 67 will probably be approved. We talk no to sales tax, will approve 67 with its gross receipt (sales) tax and ignore that customers, not the corporations, pay the taxes.

Perhaps one reason we love taxes is because it's like war except the expanding transfer of wealth from others is from within.

Keith Stanton
Florence

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