

Rockbridge Grown Challenges the Community: Spend at Least 10% of Your Weekly Food Budget on Food Produced in Rockbridge County

Rockbridge Grown, a local citizens group focused on promoting the production and consumption of locally grown foods, is challenging Rockbridge County residents in 2010 to spend at least 10% of each household weekly food budget on food that is produced in the County. If your weekly food budget is \$100 and you spend \$10 a week on local foods, the benefit to the local economy is staggering . . . \$5,400,000 annually will stay in the County! The impact of the commitment will help preserve the beloved agricultural nature of the County, help farmers, large and small continue to farm the land, create jobs, and add to the tax base

The local food movement is not a fad. The benefits of locally produced foods are well documented. The nutritional value of locally produced foods is considerably higher than food that travels cross county (or in some cases across oceans). The local economy is sustained and grows. Jobs are created and family farms made more viable.

It's easier than you think to buy locally. Even in the midst of a cold, harsh winter, products such as meat, cheese, apples, potatoes, even lettuce grown right here in the county are available now! A few of the excellent sources:

- **Donald's Meat Market**, owned and operated by the Charlie Potter family and the Donald brothers, features USDA inspected, fresh Buffalo Creek beef and pork, local eggs, condiments grown and preserved by local farmers, locally made hamburger buns, local honey, local maple syrup, Mountain View Farm cheeses, butter and other products. Lamb is also available by request.

Donald's Meat Processing, the companion business processes meat for local farmers, eliminating long drives to processing plants; USDA processing available.

The meat market and processing plant are located at 194 McCorkle Drive in Lexington (540-463-2333).

- **Farm To You**, owned by Tara Miller, launched in 2009, sources available produce, meats and cheese. Farm to You alerts customers to the availability of the products, takes orders and manages the distribution (local pickup site on Waddell Street). The first week in January Tara had lots of fresh vegetables . . . lettuce, broccoli, potatoes . . . all grown right here in the county. Call 540-460-2990 for more information.
- Christie and Fred Huger produce a variety of cheeses, butter and beef on their **Mountain View Farm** in Fairfield. Christie's cheese is becoming famous in the region and is in high demand. The products are available at Donald's Meat

Market, at Healthy Foods Co-op and through Farm To You. They also take orders and deliver on Wednesday mornings from 9:30 – 10:00 in the parking lot behind The Southern Inn in Lexington. Visit their website: www.mountainviewfarm.com or call 540-460-4161.

- Chris and Cathy Blalock and their son Jordan run **Spring Creek Farm** and sell pork, eggs and free range chickens from the farm in Fairfield. They take orders by phone at 540-460-8559.
- **Broadview Ranch**, managed by the fourth generation of a Rockbridge County farm family, produces grass fed and finished beef, forested pork, and eggs from pastured chicken. Visit www.broadviewranch.com for more information or give the Tilsons a call at 540-458-1001 to arrange a visit to the farm.
- **Healthy Foods Co-op** (110 West Washington, Lexington) sells many local products year round including honey, eggs, bread and baked goods, vegetables, fruit, jams and jellies, herbal iced tea, meat and cheese. You do not have to be a member of the Co-op to shop there.
- The Rockbridge Grown Website lists many more sources: www.rockbridgegrown.org.

The decision to purchase food for your family is a personal one. Some of us like grass fed beef, others prefer the flavor of finished beef. Some of us are passionate about organic foods. Others can't understand the fuss. When you buy food produced in Rockbridge County, you can satisfy your personal preferences as you purchase your food.

When you buy locally produced foods,

- You can have a relationship with the person who produced the food and confidence in what you are eating. The farmers are happy to tell you what their farming philosophy is, whether they use pesticides, whether they practice sustainable farming, how the animals are fed and treated. When you buy locally you can ask questions, understand how the food was produced, and buy what is right for you and your family.
- You are protecting nature and our countryside. Locally grown food travels 5 or 10 or 20 miles, not the national average of 1500 miles. Apples grown locally taste better and are better for you than those grown in Washington State. The shorter travel time reduces carbon emissions, results in less traffic and thus less road wear. We can make our own small impact on the nature that surrounds and sustains us.
- You are enhancing the local economy. Virginia Cooperative Extension Agent, Eric Bendfeldt, produced an economic report on the results of buying locally produced foods and the results were striking. "We determined that if every Virginia household spent at least \$10 per week on locally grown food, they would invest more than \$137 million back into local farms, independent businesses and

the community every month.” Bendfeldt says. That’s more than *\$1.65 billion* a year state wide, and *\$5.4 million* for Rockbridge County alone.

As spring approaches, farmers’ markets will reopen. There are many choices in Rockbridge County including the Wednesday market in Lexington and Saturday markets at the Horse Center and Buena Vista. The Saturday market located at the Horse Center will expand and provide more vendors in 2010. The Bath County Farmers Market makes a great Saturday morning drive. In addition to local farmers’ markets, Cherry Ridge CSA (Community Supported Agriculture) will again offer memberships in the spring and Farm To You will expand its services to offer local food to its customers year round.

The challenge to you, Rockbridge County residents, is to contribute to ***your health*** and ***your community*** by spending at least 10% of your weekly food budget on locally grown products. You will reap the health benefits, enhance your community, help our family farmers and our small locally based businesses in a real way, by buying what they produce. Visit the Rockbridge Grown website www.rockbridgegrown.org to see how your friends and neighbors are meeting this local challenge. Your support of Rockbridge County farmers will make a difference!