

The Daily Gleaner

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By Alycia Morehouse

Why local food matters

As I walked around the local farmer's market recently, it got me thinkingwhy does local food really matter? Why do people come here week after week to support local farmers?

I had a very insightful and spirited call with Richard from Speerville Flour Mill (<http://www.speervilleflourmill.ca/>) about the sustainability and viability of supporting local growers in our bioregion. We are part of the Maritime bioregion – New Brunswick, Nova Scotia, and Prince Edward Island – classified as such for our similar climate, growing seasons, and ecosystems. This provides for a much more sustainable and practical focus on local food, than would a normal 100-mile radius consideration.

Speerville Mills is one of many local businesses focused on creating a more sustainable food supply in the Maritimes. Their 30 supplier farmer base from around the bioregion, allows the bulk of wheat and grain products that they sell to consumers to be considered 'local'. Their ability to support these local farmers, no matter how much they have to sell stimulates local economies, sustains local communities, and provides top quality environmentally sound products. After all, aren't those the pillars of true sustainability?

And there are many other local growers and businesses in the area that are operating on the same premise. Just take a look around the Boyce Farmer's Market on a Saturday morning. Farmers arrive bright and early to sell their freshly picked produce, straight out-of-the-water seafood, and local meats, cheeses and grocery items. It always makes me happy to see patrons leave with smiling faces and full arms, knowing they will be putting local food on their table that week. And many people, don't even relate what they are actually doing to what they are eating – meaning supporting local growers, having their weekly market experience and getting great food all at the same time.

Levi Lawrence of Real Food Fredericton (www.realfoodsfredericton.ca) is a local entrepreneur who is making it his mission to educate the public about local food. What began as a box-order service for customers to have fresh, seasonal fruits, veggies and other local comestibles delivered to their door, has grown into a new storefront at 880 Hanwell Road, which will be open all year round for local meats, cheeses, grocery items, and greenhouse veggies when available. It's well known that for every dollar invested locally can generate double for the local economy. It's good for business, and it's good for you.

Buy Local NB has a great website dedicated to providing a database of local producers from all across the province. You can enter your location or product you are searching for, and bring up a list of suppliers in your area. Check it out at www.buylocalnb.ca.

I would be remiss not to mention the many local restaurants that offer local choices on their menus. Next time you go out for dinner, why not ask what is offered for local fare, and try

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something different that you would normally get. I think your taste buds will be pleasantly surprised.

While I understand that the sometimes premium cost of buying local can be a disincentive, I encourage you to think beyond the price tag. It's more about how it's building the local economy, and providing for local families, and creating a more sustainable food supply for the long term. There may be one day, that in the face of a global food crisis, the foods we have been used to will be unavailable to us. Beginning to adapt to those changes now, and learning to eat local, might just be the best answer to an ever-growing problem.

Alycia Morehouse is the City of Fredericton's Climate Change Coordinator, and charged with the daily operations of the Green Matters Program. She can be reached at alycia.morehouse@fredericton.ca, or follow her on Twitter at @alyciamorehouse.