



Spend 10% of your food budget on local food  
during the  
wisconsin **Eat Local** challenge <sup>2008</sup>

September 5<sup>th</sup> - 14<sup>th</sup>

The Wisconsin Eat Local Challenge is designed to educate our communities about the importance of buying locally grown and raised foods and encourage individuals to spend at least 10% of their food budget on Wisconsin local food during the 10-day challenge period.

[www.eatlocalwisconsin.com](http://www.eatlocalwisconsin.com)

## FINAL REPORT

### Sign-up and Survey Summary

330 people signed up for the 2008 Eat Local Challenge, and 109 people responded to the survey (33% response rate).

#### Of these respondents:

Top three counties represented: 44% were from Dane County, 9% were from Brown County, and 4.5% were from Milwaukee County.

Most respondents were already committed to purchasing at least some local food. Over 98% of people answering the question described themselves using one of the following statements:

- I am aware of the benefits of eating local food and buy it when it is convenient. (36.11%)
- I am committed to eating local food and will go out of my way to buy it. (34.26%)
- I spend some or all of my time growing, marketing and/or promoting local food. (27.78%)

Less than 2% (2 people) described themselves using the following statements:

- I am aware of the benefits of eating local food, but I had not made an effort to buy or eat it before the Eat Local Challenge. (0.93%)
- Prior to the Eat Local Challenge, I knew almost nothing about local food and had never made an effort to buy or eat it. (0.93%)

The Wisconsin Eat Local Challenge was developed by a statewide team of community food group volunteers, organizations, University staff and the WI Department of Agriculture, Trade and Consumer Protection.

Overall, participants increased their local food purchasing during the challenge:

**% of local food purchased before and during the challenge**

<b>% local food purchased</b>	<b>Before</b>	<b>during</b>
Less than 5 %	9%	2%
5 to 15 %	16%	6%
16 to 25 %	24%	24%
26 to 50 %	21%	28%
51 to 75 %	20%	23%
Over 75 %	9%	17%

During the challenge, participants spent the most money on local food purchased at retail establishments such as grocery stores, restaurants, co-ops and cafeterias (on average, \$58). They spent, on average, \$44 at farmers' markets, \$42 on CSA shares, \$31 on home-grown, gathered and preserved food, and \$23 directly from producers and farms.

How did they know the food they purchased was locally produced? 85% said that they met the farmer who produced it, 67% knew where it was produced, and 60% grew it themselves. 59% said that items were advertised as local, 46% read product labels, and 45% harvested it themselves. (Survey participants were asked to report all the ways they knew their food was locally produced, which is why totals don't add up to 100%.)

86% of respondents felt that locally grown produce was easy to find. 66% reported that local eggs were easy to find, 55% felt that local dairy products were easy to find, and 48% felt that local meats (excluding poultry) were easy to find. Nearly even percentages of people felt that local poultry was easy to find (33%) or somewhat available (30%). 26% of participants felt that local bread, grains, and processed food like jam and pesto were difficult to find. 30% of participants said that local fish was difficult to find.

Most participants heard about the Eat Local Challenge through the internet or email (51%). 20% heard about it through a friend or family member, 16% heard of it through a food co-op, 14% learned of it through a newspaper, and 13% heard of it through a club or organization.

After participating in the challenge, respondents said that they are likely to:

- Buy local food when available (71%)
- Encourage my family or friends to buy more local food (69%)
- Shop at a farmers' market (60%)
- Grow, harvest, or hunt more of my own food (59%)
- Ask my grocer or restaurant owner to stock more local food (43%)
- Encourage local institutions (hospitals, colleges, others) to source local food (29%)
- Join a CSA farm (18%)
- Ask for more local food to be served at my child's school (16%)

When asked about challenges, 24% of respondents said they found nothing challenging. The highest percentage of respondents said that money was challenging (29%), followed by schools or employers not providing local food (22%), time (21%), transportation (17%), cooking (8%) and finding local food sources (8%).

Respondents said that participating in the local food challenge helped them to:

- Understand my local food consumption habits (81%)
- Learn more about what kinds of food are grown, processed and sold near me (44%)
- Find resources that support local food production and consumption (local, state, and regional) (33%)
- Find new markets, restaurants and other businesses selling local food (25%)
- Make connections with farmers (13%)
- Hook up with a local food group (10%)

Respondents participated in the Eat Local Challenge because:

- I want to support local farmers (94%)
- Local food is tasty and enjoyable to eat (82%)
- Eating fresh, local food is important for my health (80%)
- I want to reduce the number of miles my food travels (79%)
- I like to cook with local ingredients (71%)
- I want to encourage stores and restaurants in my community to source more local food. (67%)
- I want to see how possible it is to find local food near me (53%)

### **Demographics of survey respondents:**

42% of respondents were between the ages of 26-40, and 36% were between the ages of 41-59. 13% were between the ages of 18-25, and only 9% were age 60 or older.

84% of respondents were female, and 16% were male.

28% had a household income of \$50,000-\$80,000. 25% had a household income of \$20,000-\$50,000. 14% had a household income of \$80,000-\$100,000, and 13% earned less than \$20,000. 11% earned over \$100,000, and 10% chose not to disclose their income.

## **Comments (verbatim):**

### **Finding local food**

The grocery stores listed as having local food should have much more information posted in the store to tell the consumer where the food product is grown. For example, Festival Foods was listed as a store with local foods, but I could not see anything in the store telling me where the food items originated and the store personnel did not know either.

Suggest ways to locate local food for people participating in survey

There was little or no info on your site to find locally grown food in N WI.

Provide a list of beauty products you can easily make at home with a few ingredients. Also, work with groceries to advertise local foods better.

Provide petitions or pre-written emails to go to the major grocery stores in the state (Cub, Festival, Woodman's, Copps, Piggly Wiggly, etc.), big hospitals, and schools where participants can quickly and easily make their desires known to these large entities. I would love to express my pro-local food concerns to all these places, but simply do not have the time to undertake such a project. I would sign an email form that would go directly to venues, however.

Encourage the participation of area groceries, restaurants, et al. Ask for participation via incentives for making local purchases, local dinners etc.

Supportive educational materials for restaurants and institutions wanting to source food locally would also be helpful. Our group did share some good information we found on the Milwaukee group's website that was for food buyers/chefs, but this was not available until August--July or even June would be better if real, sustainable linkages between food buyers and farmers are the goal. Additionally, public institutions, like hospitals, could be contacted directly earlier in the year with information about the challenge from the State so that local groups who work to promote it in the summer are not starting from ground zero.

### **Publicity**

Work with the Wisconsin Restaurant organization to encourage a more visible promotional campaign where the restaurants would have "local food specials" during the Challenge period.

Advertise it more!

I work at Willy St Co-op, but never heard about the challenge there. I think more people would be interested in this challenge if they knew about it. Some ideas: Have CSA farms advertise it in their newsletters Put it in Co-op Reader/other publications Have a kick-off event and/or closing event (in conjunction with Food for thought Festival?) Involve students with local food meals at food carts

Seems like it needs more advance publicity, a bigger splash to get the word out. I knew about it because of last year's, but didn't see anything this year until right before it started. How about a Buy Local prize, maybe a drawing of some kind, to lure people?

I was part of a local group that helped promote the challenge in our area--we organized the Community Harvest Dinner and got 12 restaurants to participate in the challenge. I expected to see the great logo for the challenge in more media, such as in newspapers like the Country Today, La Crosse Tribune, and Vernon Broadcaster. There were press releases from Doyle's office, but no logos that I saw, except for those reproduced by the Viroqua Food Co-op. The People's Food Co-op advertised the challenge, but I don't remember PFC using the logo either. Our group, with help from the VFC, reproduced the logo for the restaurants and we gave one to our local conventional grocery store, Village Market, which management displayed on their specials board next to the "Locally-produced" signage Village Market adopted this summer after we informed them of the upcoming challenge.

Advertise/promote more. Thanks.

I was profoundly disappointed in this effort. We were a restaurant that participated. I can honestly say that not one customer came into our establishment to take part in the challenge. It was a large loss in terms of dollars and time. Little or no publicity in our area and no support. As with most efforts to get restaurants to buy local this was a disorganized and inept attempt. Although I did notice that the guy who supposedly received a grant to promote farm to chef managed to get publicity for his business. This whole thing will leave a bad taste in my mouth for a long time.

### **Goal and incentives**

Make it clearer to people why they should sign up. For example, will that help get state money for more Buy Local grants?

Increase the % goal

I would love to see the challenge ask for a higher percentage of local food consumption.

### **Scorecard and survey**

Allow people to type in the exact percentage of local food they bought, instead of offering ranges. There is a big difference between 25% and 50%. And, if someone went from 25% to 50% of their food money spent on local food, we would never know from this survey. Also, we should offer an advanced challenge. I normally spend about 50% of my food budget on local food, and I had no incentive to try to eat more local food.

Maybe instead of dollar amounts (which are difficult to track) you could ask people to state the number of meals in which they ate local foods.

I do most of my cooking with food from a buying club, so actually spent very little during the challenge. Had to guesstimate how much the food I had on hand was worth. And my CSA comes out to ~\$2.30/day --which is the same cost as the 2oz of mangosteen juice my son takes for allergies; going by cost is not an accurate measure of the quantity of food consumed. You should use % of food consumed each day. Also, your challenge stated w/in 100 miles--my flour comes from Winona MN, which I usually consider local, yet is outside of your range.

I did not include non-food items like coffee filters - that was not clear. I could not tell about origin of milk - I counted as local although in my location it was probably milked in WI and bottled in IL, less than 30 mi away. I counted only the \$ cost of the butcher to process our home caught venison while I counted 'value' of homegrown/butchered meat. See bread above: if I make it, I count non-local ingredients, but if I buy it is local. That doesn't make sense. Local should be < 100 mi or so - but my preferred cottage cheese, mozz, ice cream, butter, while WI made, are probably not within that, while several IL products are only 30 mi away. Clearly for us, fruit is a problem at this season. Usually I have a fair crop of melons, plums, apples at this time, but our bees just aren't doing the job, we had bad weather, both peach trees died last winter, etc. and no local options were available. Estimating value of homegrown was very difficult for me as I don't buy those things and we don't have farm stands, etc for comparison. I had guests for dinner for two of these days and included the extra food and that may make a difference - but is also 'normal'. I did intentionally serve a local wine rather than another for this challenge, but it was the only 'extra' effort I made to buy local. I did this largely to see how I'm doing. I may try it again in a different season.

I had some meals away from home while attending a local conference that I couldn't figure out how to handle. I don't know what they cost because it was part of the conference registration. Some of it was locally produced, but I don't know how much. I didn't track some items I had on hand or used small amounts of in cooking because it seemed too complicated, but this affects the accuracy of the data. Some suggestions about how to handle these things would be helpful.

Give very clear guidelines on what is expected in terms of the accounting part of the challenge, perhaps you could give a sample. I was puzzled a lot in this part of the challenge, for example: I made pancakes for breakfast. Should I spend my time figuring out the monetary value of all the ingredients and add that up? Or should I just use a figure for what I would pay for a plate of pancakes at a restaurant? Of course, some ingredients were local, some purchased, etc just in the plate of pancakes. How specific should one get? For someone like me who grows a lot of my own food or barter for things with neighbors, I was challenged to find the time to look up prices for everything.

I don't really keep track of the dollars I spend on food. I think that for many people price is not the primary driver of what food they buy. Setting targets for local food consumption as a percent of food dollars spent has many limitations. For example for meat consuming household buying meat locally might skew the percentage spent locally dramatically because meat is a high dollar per pound valued product. I am not sure what the alternative is but it is worth thinking about.

### **Keeping people engaged during the challenge**

Send out a reminder email in advance, and then right before the Challenge starts.  
Great program!

This was the only communication I received, except for the initial email. It might have been nice, for people for whom this was a novelty, to have some "pep talks" mid week. Thanks for doing this!

I didn't really participate much. I never went to the website to learn more. I pretty much just signed up and then went to a farmer's market once. It might be nice to send out some short, visually appealing informational emails during the campaign. I would have participated more if the information "interrupted" my normal email routine rather than having to set aside time to visit the website. Basically, I need to be prompted. Filling out the survey, I feel like I probably missed out on a lot of great information.

### **Other**

I made a commitment a year and a half ago to eat local, and probably about 95% of what my family consumes comes from local farms or our garden. So although I applaud the Eat Local Challenge project, I didn't really participate in that sense. The products I find hardest to buy are flour and sorghum.

Good job! I hope you had many participants. I think I have encouraged many friends to subscribe to a CSA and local Dairy because it makes eating local easy, and actually makes life easier in general. Less shopping when you can just pick up a box or have products delivered to your door-step!

A great resource book (even tho not about Wisconsin) is Barbara Kingsolver's book: *Animal, Vegetable, Miracle...a year of food life.*

Many of the Hmong farmers at East Town Market are not organic, or at least are not labeled as such. I would love to see them working toward organic practices.

Let's try it in winter too!