



SOUTH CAROLINA FAMILY AND COMMUNITY LEADERS

Affiliated with
National Volunteer Outreach Network, Country Women's Council, U.S.A., Associated Country Women of the World
and in partnership with Clemson University Cooperative Extension Service

LEADER TRAINING GUIDE

Making The Most of Our Locally Grown Food

Objectives:

1. Participants will understand the concept of locally grown food.
2. Participants will learn how to select fresh produce during its growing season.
3. Participants will sample a locally grown produce.

References:

Eating Locally: A Matter of Integrity. John E. Ikerd, Professor Emeritus of Agricultural Economics. University of Missouri. <http://www.ssu.missouri.edu/faculty/jikerd>.

South Carolina Produce Availability Calendar. SC Department of Agriculture. <http://www.state.sc.us/scda/>.

Selecting and Storing Fruits and Vegetables. HGIC 3483. Clemson University. Home and Garden Information Center. <http://hgic.clemson.edu>.

Before the Program:

Cut apart the list of reasons for eating locally (page 6).

Make a copy of the produce availability chart for each person. The chart is at:

<http://www.scda.state.sc.us/consumerinformation/produceavailability/availcalweb.pdf>

Prepare small samples of a fresh, locally grown fruit or vegetable. This will be used as the closing activity of the lesson.

Suggested Program Steps:

Introduce the lesson by describing – in detail – your favorite fresh fruit or vegetable. Ask several others to do the same. As the favorite foods are being described, encourage participants to include the color, smell, size, flavor, juiciness, etc.

Ask ... where will we get these foods? Most likely, these are the foods which are grown locally and available at a local farmer's market. This lesson will help us explore the value of eating locally. Everyone has their own reason for eating locally grown foods. John E. Ikerd, Professor Emeritus of Agricultural Economics at the University of Missouri lists his top ten reasons for eating locally.

Call on the person who has Reason 10 and ask that it be read to the group. After a reason is read, as the leader you can add the comments here. Continue with Reason 9, down to Reason 1. Ask the group if they have other benefits of eating locally grown foods.

Top Ten Reasons To Eat Locally*

10. Eating local eliminates the middleman.

Buying food locally can reduce the need for extra packaging or marketing, which accounts for more than 20-percent of total food costs.

9. Eating local saves on transportation.

The most recent estimates indicate that the average fresh food item travels about 1,500 miles from its points of production to final purchase

8. Eating local improves food quality.

Local foods can be fresher, more flavorful, and nutritious than can fresh foods shipped in from distant locations.

7. Eating local makes at-home eating worth the time and effort.

Obviously, preparing local foods, which typically are raw or minimally processed, could require additional time and effort. But, natural quality of local foods allows almost anyone to prepare really good foods at home, with a reasonable amount of time and effort. Chefs at high-end restaurants admit they prefer locally grown food items in part because of their ease of preparation.

6. Eating local provides meaningful food choices.

By eating local, food buyers can buy foods that are authentically different, not just in physical qualities but also in the ecological and social consequences of how they are produced.

5. Eating local contributes to the local economy.

American farmers, on average, receive only about 20 cents of each dollar spent for food, the rest going for processing, transportation, packing, and other marketing costs. Farmers who sell food direct to local customers, on the other hand, receive the full retail value, a dollar for each food dollar spent.

4. Eating local helps save farmland.

More than one million acres of U.S. farmland are lost each year to residential and commercial development. The loss may seem small in relation to the total of more than 950 million acres of farmland, but an acre lost to development may mean an acre lost forever from food production.

3. Eating local allows people to reconnect.

Those who buy locally grown food often visit the farms where their food is produced. By eating local, people are able to reconnect with local farmers, and through local farmers, reconnect with the earth.

2. Eating local restores integrity to the food system.

Those who eat locally form relationships with farmers who care about their land, care about their neighbors, and care about their customers.

1. Eating local helps build a sustainable society.

A sustainable society means there will be something left to pass along to our grandchildren and future generations.

Distribute the South Carolina Produce Availability Calendar. Using the information here, give several points on how to select the items listed on the chart.

Apples:

Always look for fresh-looking, firm apples with good color. Handle apples carefully to prevent bruises. Store apples in a plastic bag in the refrigerator. Warm temperatures cause apples to rapidly lose crispness and flavor.

Butter Beans:

Choose butter beans which have mature beans in the pod. Pods should be fresh and green, not dried. Always refrigerate fresh butter beans or peas which have purchased already shelled.

Cabbage:

Look for mature heads, fresh-looking leaves which are dark green. A fresh-cut stem is a sign that the cabbage has been freshly harvested.

Cantaloupes:

When selecting melons of any variety, look for quality and freshness. The melon rind should have good color and should not be misshapen or bruised. The rind should give slightly at the stem end when ripe. For maximum enjoyment, let melons develop flavor and juiciness by storing at room temperature.

Cucumbers:

Select only well-shaped, firm cucumbers that are a deep green color. Avoid any exceptionally large cucumbers or those appearing puffy, shriveled, or withered. At home, keep cucumbers cool and use within a few days.

Green Onions:

Select bunches of immature, tender onions with fresh-looking tops.

Mixed Greens:

When selecting greens for cooking, remember they cook down considerably, by one-quarter or more, from their original volume. Wrap fresh greens in damp paper toweling, then place in a perforated plastic bag and refrigerate. If the greens are purchased in good condition and if the paper toweling is kept moist, most varieties will keep one week.

Peaches:

Choose ripe, mature fruit of ideal quality for eating fresh or cooking. Dip fruit in boiling water for 30 to 60 seconds until skins loosen. Dip quickly in cold water and slip skins off. Cut in half, remove pits and slice, if desired. To prevent darkening, keep peeled fruit in ascorbic acid solution of 1 teaspoon or 3000 milligrams ascorbic acid or vitamin C per gallon of water, or use a commercial ascorbic acid mixture according to directions on package. Drain when ready to use.

Peanuts (green):

Choose well-filled peanuts which are not dried.

Peppers:

Sweet peppers should be fresh-looking, firm, thick-fleshed, and a bright green or red color, depending on the stage of maturity. Avoid peppers that are soft and dull-looking. At home, keep sweet peppers cool and humid and use them within a few days for maximum freshness. To prepare peppers to stuff or bake, cut off tops and remove seeds and membrane from inside. Cook peppers in a small amount of boiling water for 5 minutes, then drain, stuff and bake as your recipe directs. When working with hot peppers, always wear plastic gloves or coat hands with fat to avoid burns.

Tomatoes:

Select only disease-free, preferably vine-ripened, firm tomatoes with deep color. For easy peeling, dip tomatoes in boiling water for 30 to 60 seconds until skins split. Dip into cold water and slip off skins. Remove cores. Leave whole or halve.

Squash (yellow):

Select young, tender, small squash. Store in the refrigerator.

Sweet Corn:

Select only tender, freshly-gathered corn in the milk stage. Husk and trim the ears, remove silks, and wash.

Sweet Potatoes:

Look for firm, well-shaped sweet potatoes with clean, smooth skins. Avoid any with soft spots or bruises. Do not refrigerate, because cold temperatures are harmful to sweet potatoes. Store them in a dry, well-ventilated place. To cure sweet potatoes: store the fresh potatoes in a warm room in the house for 14 days. Curing develops the flavor and allows for longer storage.

Watermelons:

When selecting melons of any variety, look for quality and freshness. The melon rind should have good color and should not be misshapen or bruised. The rind should give slightly at the stem end when ripe. For maximum enjoyment, let melons develop flavor and juiciness by storing at room temperature.

Serve the prepared samples of a locally grown fruit or vegetable.

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My Top Ten Reasons For Eating Locally by John Ikerd*

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