



THINK GREEN



EAT GREEN

BUYING FOOD LOCALLY

Buying food locally was the topic of the very first **Think Green Eat Green** newsletter back in 2019. It is worth re-visiting as we now head into our most abundant season for local eating here in Maryland.

Farmers markets are flourishing, roadside produce stands have opened for the season, pick-your-own strawberries are available, and local produce is even making appearances in our grocery stores. We can appreciate our good fortune with so many opportunities to obtain produce, eggs, poultry, and meat from nearby farms.



Another opportunity available from several of our local farms is a CSA, or Community-Supported Agriculture, share. This arrangement benefits both farmer and consumer, with CSA members paying the farmer in advance for regular, abundant shares of whatever the farm produces throughout the growing season.

The benefits of “eating like a locavore” are many:

- We are supporting a small business. When we buy our food directly from a farmer, we are encouraging that farmer to continue farming, thus preserving agricultural land.
- Food is sold at peak freshness and peak flavor.
- Our carbon footprint is reduced as the food travels short distances.
- Small, sustainable farms are - by design – diversified! Practices may include companion planting of crops to help control weeds and insects, integrating pastured animals in a closed-loop of nutrients, preserving and improving the soil with varied and rotating crops, and no-till planting. A resulting benefit from this type of farming is the wide variety of foods offered to the consumer.



However, in order to truly "eat locally," we must commit to eating seasonally. We can spread seasonal bounty throughout the year by preserving food (think freezing and canning); however, we should realize that we won't have local fresh strawberries available in winter, or our favorite just-picked leafy greens in the middle of a hot Maryland summer. But, if we learn to embrace various types of local produce when they are at peak, we'll find there are always crops that are both abundant and delicious. Perhaps they are not the vegetables or fruits we are used to eating -- and they may be more nutritious! For those of us whose childhood memory of “greens” consists of spinach (usually frozen), the variety of greens that flourish on local farms is remarkable: tatsoi, bok choy, Swiss chard, kale, and collards - to name a few.

How to find out what's in season? Visit a local farmers market!

How about extending the growing season? Third-generation family farmer and author of several books, Joel Salatin maintains that one of the best uses of petroleum is to make plastic to provide for “season extension.” Covering tunnels with plastic allows crop cultivation to be extended far beyond its normal outdoor growing season. Many farms in our region are able to grow crops nearly year-round by using these methods. Read more [here](#).





The local food movement in the US has been around for decades, and has had support from the US Department of Agriculture (USDA). USDA launched its **Know Your Farmer, Know Your Food (KYF2)** program in 2009, in an effort to improve local and regional food systems and create economic development in low-income communities by supporting small to mid-sized farms. The program has expanded over the years, and was celebrated with “KYF2 Month” and roll-out of a revamped website in 2016. This [article](#) discusses the growth and development of the program. Here’s a [link](#) to the website.

National Farmers Market Week August 7-13, 2022

Why Farmers Markets?



Stimulate Local Economies

Locally-owned retailers, such as farmers markets, return more than three times as much of their sales to the local economy compared to chain competitors.

Chain	local \$
Locally-owned	3x

Growers selling locally create 13 full time jobs per \$1 million in revenue earned. Those not selling locally create 3.



Markets are small business incubators.

“Selling at the market allowed us to start our business slowly... We wouldn't be here without the market.” - Freddy Kaufmann, Owner, Proper Sausages, Miami Shores, Florida



Preserve Farmland & Rural Livelihoods

The U.S. loses an acre of farmland a minute to development.

The 7 Seattle farmers markets hosted by the Neighborhood Farmers Market Alliance support **9,491 acres of farmland** in diversified production.

25% of vendors derive their sole source of income from the market.

80% of farmers market vendors in Iowa, New York, and California said that **farmers markets offer them a greater opportunity for business development** than any other possible marketing outlet.



Increase Access to Fresh, Nutritious Food

60% Of farmers market shoppers in low-income neighborhoods say that their market has better prices than the grocery store.

300% Increase in SNAP benefits (food stamps) redeemed at U.S. farmers markets from '09 to '12.

500% Increase in the number of vulnerable seniors visiting Crescent City Farmers Markets (New Orleans) from 2008-2013.

Markets bring fresh food directly to the neighborhoods that need it most.



Support Healthy Communities

People who shop at farmers markets have 15-20 social interactions per visit.

They would have only 1-2 per visit to the grocery store.

Markets provide the opportunity for farmers and neighbors to **educate each other in nutrition, cooking & agriculture.**

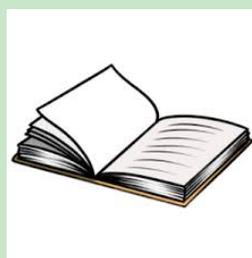
Proximity to farmers markets is associated with lower body mass index.

67% of farmers market incentive program participants in NY increased their fruit and vegetable intake.

The **Farmers Market Coalition** is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit that works to strengthen farmers markets for the good of farmers, consumers, and communities. Help us provide the growing farmers market movement with information, tools, and a voice in public policy. Donate or join today! For references and more info, visit:

www.farmersmarketcoalition.org

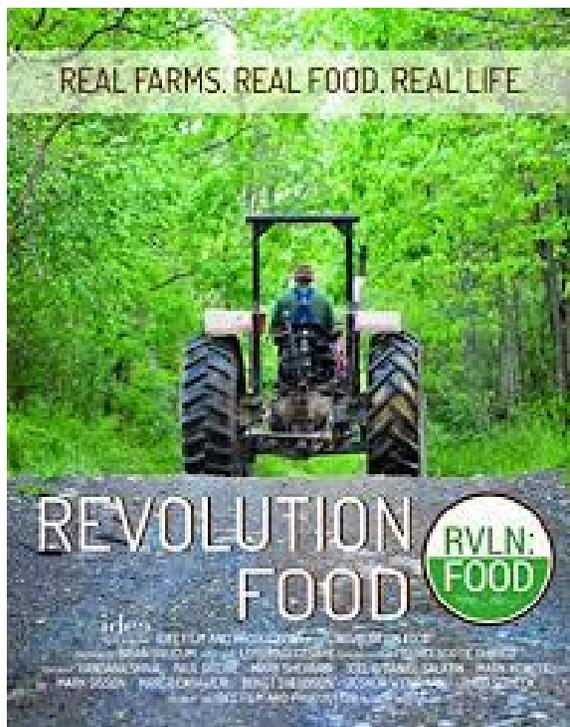
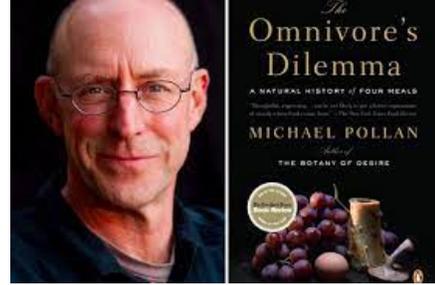
Farmers markets truly are our treasures in Maryland. This information chart from the Farmers Market Coalition gives us lots of reasons to shop at our local markets.



Our book recommendation is *The Omnivore's Dilemma: A Natural History of*

Four Meals by Michael Pollan (The Penguin Press, 2006). This groundbreaking book asks the question: what *should* we eat? When we *can* eat basically any kind of food produced almost anywhere in the world, what should we chose? Pollan follows each of the food chains that sustain us—industrial food, organic or alternative food, and foraged food —from source to final meal, and along the way gives a good account of the American way of eating. Michael Pollan's writings started many of us on the path of local, organic, and non-processed eating.

(available through Harford County Public Library)



And our film recommendation is *Revolution: Food*. This optimistic and beautiful documentary relates the positive changes taking root in our modern food system. It focuses on real farmers who are growing real food for the consumers who are demanding it. The movie's message is one of hope and inspiration in a time when we are barraged with so much bad news about our food. You will be inspired!

(available on Roku Channel, Tubi, and YouTube)

SOME GREEN THOUGHTS



"There has never been a better time or a more efficient time to participate in our food system."

- *Joel Salatin, author, farmer*

"If it came from a plant, eat it; if it was made in a plant, don't. "

- *Michael Pollan, author*

"Agriculture is the most healthful, most useful and most noble employment of man."

- *George Washington*

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