

Support local food

What's the issue

Two huge changes to our food system in the last 60 years are globalisation and industrialisation. We've shifted from small-scale farms, market gardens, local stores and eating seasonally to huge supermarket chains selling us anything we could ever want from all the corners of the globe at any time of the year.

From a food waste perspective, under these systems we are wasting more food than ever before. The bigger the system, the less flexible it tends to be, which increases waste. When our food comes from so far away, or is sold to us by faceless corporations, it is hard to find out how our food is grown and transported, and to make 'better' choices.

We're also more vulnerable to food shortages as a result of extreme weather events, natural disasters or political turmoil in far-flung places when we rely on these places to grow our food.

What we can do about it

Shopping local isn't going to solve the food waste problem on its own, but there are lots of benefits.

The shorter the distances our food has to travel, and the fewer steps in the journey from farm to plate, the less chance there is of food going bad or going to waste.

Knowing the people and places we buy our food from means we can have conversations about food waste with the very people who grow, produce and sell our food.

And supporting local systems creates resilience in the places where we live. Supporting local growers, farmers, producers and shopkeepers keeps us more connected to our food.

Here's what 'supporting local' can look like:



a bonus resource from

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What does 'local' mean?

The word 'local' means different things to different people. It might refer to a neighbourhood, or a region, or even a country. It could mean a sub-continent. Sometimes it's described as an area that is 100 miles (or 161km) or less from our home.

The first step is deciding – or maybe just starting to think about – what version of 'local' is practical for you. If food doesn't grow where you live, you'll have a different version to someone who lives in a farming community

If you have access to a single rural store you'll be more limited than someone in a big city.

You might decide that rather than having a defined version of 'local', you simply choose 'more local than before' – whatever that looks like for you.

Take action

Shop local challenge

The next time you go food shopping, make a deliberate decision to choose one thing (that you don't usually buy) from a more local source. Just one thing. You'll need to read the labels (they will tell you where the product was grown or made) – either on the shelf, or on the packaging.

Some ideas...

- You could try out a local Farmers Market
- You could shop at a local independent store
- You could track down local products at your regular supermarket
- You could choose fresh fruit or vegetables grown locally
- You could opt for long-life or canned items produced locally
- You could find frozen or chilled products sourced locally

Learn from your habits

This is optional, but you might find it useful to write a few notes about what you noticed when you took this challenge. Was it easy, or difficult? Were there lots of options, or was it restrictive? Were you surprised at how many/how few items were local?

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