

Maine Harvest Lunch



Connecting
Local Farms
with
Local
Schools

Multiple partnerships were created in 2003 to develop the Maine Harvest Lunch Program

- * Cumberland County Soil and Water Conservation District
- * PROP's Communities Promoting Health
- * Farm Fresh Connection, a Project of Maine's Sustainable Agriculture Society
- * Gorham School Nutrition Program
- * Gorham teachers
- * Community volunteers

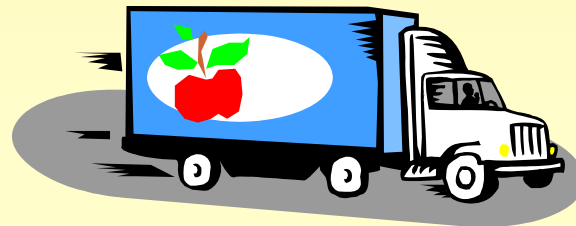


How far does the average bite of food travel before it reaches your mouth?

2000 +

✦ Estimates show that most states in the US import 85 to 90% of their food supply.

✦ Importing food from out of state typically requires 17 times more petroleum than transporting locally produced products.



Each year U.S. Citizens spend more money on fast-food than higher education.



* According to a survey done by the Surgeon General in 1999, 13% of children and 14% of adolescents were overweight. These percentages are three times as high as they were 20 years ago.

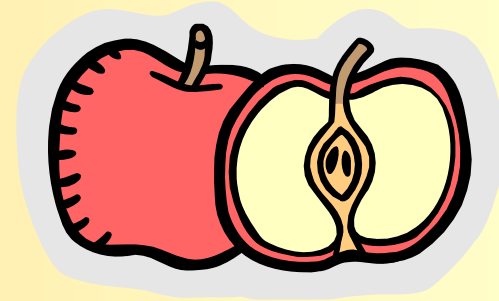
* The average American 8-year-old watches 10,000 commercials a year for food related products. Nearly all are for fast food, candy, soda, etc.

Half of the farms in Maine have disappeared in the past 40 years.



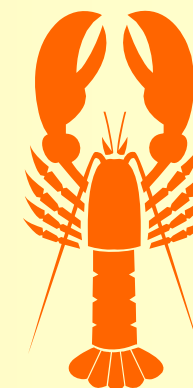
- * In 1950 farmers received \$0.41 from every food dollar spent. In 1999 it was \$0.20.
- * Many small local farmers have a difficult time competing with large factory farms.
- * Fewer farms in our communities leads to the growing disconnection between the food we eat and where it comes from, and erodes food security.

8 Benefits of Eating Locally Grown Foods:



1. Freshness – fruits and vegetables that are grown locally are usually sold within 24 hours after harvesting.
2. Taste – produce is grown for taste instead of for durability during transport
3. Safety – food produced locally in smaller quantities is less at risk for contamination
4. Nutrition – harvesting takes place at the peak of ripeness and produce is properly handled to maintain the maximum amount of nutrients

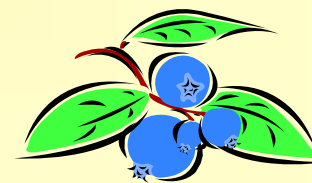
5. Community – buying local goods puts money back into the local economy



6. Variety – local farmers often are able to produce different varieties of traditional foods

7. Energy conservation – transporting food from the field to the local farmers market requires fewer resources.

8. Regional identity – buying local promotes regional products and pride in the community



If Every  Family

Spent \$10.00 on Local

Food you would put \$

100,000,000

back in Maine



Goals of the Maine Harvest Lunch Program include:

- ✦ To promote the incorporation of Maine grown products in the school nutrition program
- ✦ To provide schools and school nutrition programs with the confidence, tools, and ability to serve local foods on a more regular basis



Perceived obstacles to schools buying local food

- * Expense
- * Distribution
- * Liability
- * Lack of storage space
- * Labor



Expense

- * Local foods aren't always more expensive – less waste, higher yield
- * Paying for higher quality and greater nutritional value
- * Sometimes it means adding only a few cents onto each meal



Distribution

- * Often natural foods brokers, farm co-ops and other distributors will organize distribution in the same way as regular contractors
- * Sometimes it is easier for food service directors and farmers to start by adding local products gradually rather than replacing the whole menu at once



Liability

- * Most farmer co-ops have liability insurance
- * This covers production, packaging, processing, transport and food safety



Lack of storage space

- * Menus can be created to capitalize on produce in season, cutting down the need for storage
- * In Maine, meat and dairy products are always in season. Storage crops are available well past the growing season.

Labor/Staff Issues

- * In the beginning, utilizing volunteer organizations & community members can help the transition
- * Some farmers distribute value-added products such as chopped lettuce, peeled potatoes, etc.
- * Schools can apply for grants to buy kitchen equipment to make food production easier



The Maine Harvest Lunch Components

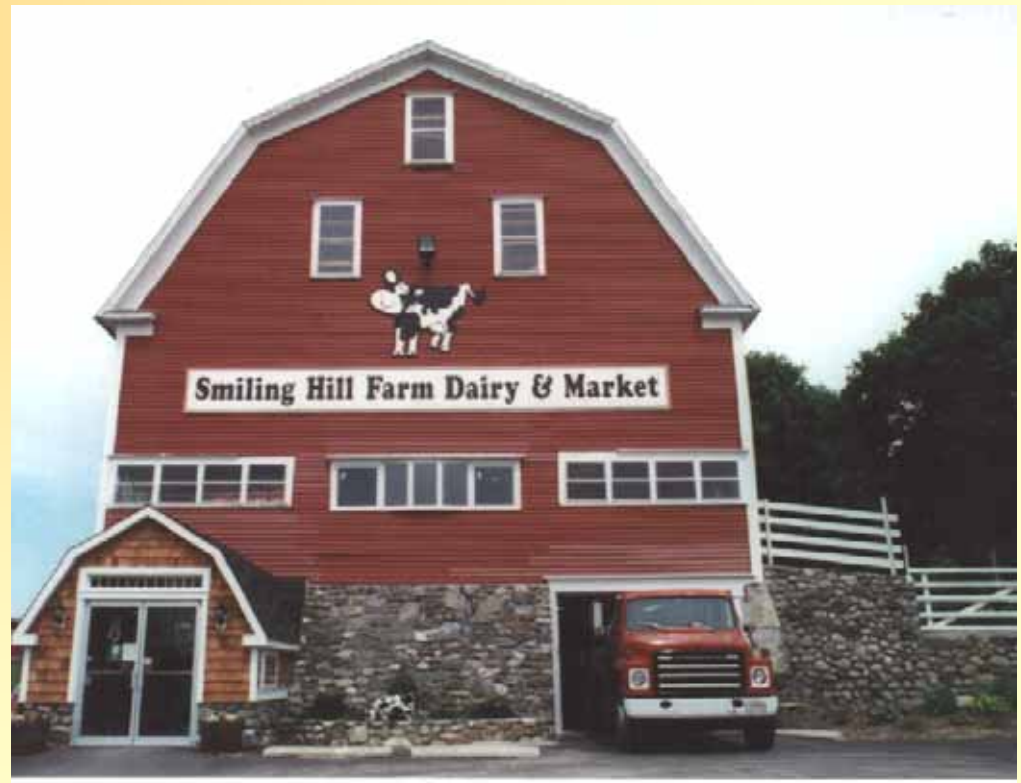
- * All food is locally grown or produced
- * Guest presenters visit classrooms prior to the event and curriculum materials are distributed to teachers to address why the event is being held and the importance of eating local food
- * School-wide poster contest; state-wide educational initiative



Poster Contest

✦ Prior to the MHL event, students participated in a poster contest, highlighting the benefits of local food

✦ Prizes were gift certificates to a local dairy's ice cream shop





At the Event:

- * Food line signs and table tents are created with interesting local food facts
- * Each lunch item is identified by the farm it came from
- * Poster contest entries decorate the cafeterias
- * Local farmers come with displays from their farms to share with the students





Menu from the Day:



Maine Baked Potato with Buxton Broccoli and Cabot Cheddar Cheese

Findview Farm Beefy Burgers on a Roll

Chili and Chips with Findview Farm Beef and the Beanery Red Kidney Beans and Tortilla Chips from el Mirador

Flaherty Corn on the Cob

Organic Maine Wheat Rolls with Nezinscot Farm Butter and Fiddlehead Farm Honey

Snell's Garden Salad with Mixed Greens

Hawkes Cucumbers

Coleslaw with Hawkes Carrots and Snell's Cabbage

Organic Cherry Tomatoes

Assorted Variety of Apples

Wild Maine Blueberries with Topping



Results:

- ✦ 33% more hot lunches are purchased on MHL day
- ✦ Local and regional newspapers report on the event
- ✦ A link between the Gorham Nutrition Director and Farm Fresh Connection was made, and he continues to order Maine produce whenever possible
- ✦ Students build their knowledge of the benefits of choosing healthy and local food each year



Partnerships & Collaborations in the works to continue and expand the Maine Harvest Lunch Program

- * PROP's Communities Promoting Health
- * Farm Fresh Connection
- * Cumberland County Soil and Water Conservation District
- * Gorham School Nutrition Program
- * Gorham teachers
- * Community volunteers
- * Maine Organic Farmers & Gardeners Association (MOFGA)
- * Cultivating Community
- * Slow Food Portland
- * Maine Nutrition Network
- * Maine Department of Education
- * Maine Department of Agriculture
- * Maine School Food Service Association
- * Healthy Maine Partnerships
- * Eat Local Foods Coalition

Resources

Maine Local Food Initiatives:

Maine Organic Farmer's & Gardener's Association – www.mofga.org

Searchable Maine Foods Database – www.mainefoods.net

Maine Eat Local Foods Coalition – www.eatlocalfoods.org

Cultivating Community – www.cultivatingcommunity.us

Troy Howard Middle School Garden Project –
www.sad34.net/%7esteve_tanguay/garden.html

National & International Local Food Initiatives:

Community Food Security Coalition – www.foodsecurity.org/farm_to_school.html

Food Routes – www.foodroutes.org

Slow Food – www.slowfood.com & www.slowfoodusa.org

Worldwatch Institute – www.worldwatch.org

The Food Project – www.thefoodproject.org

The Edible Schoolyard – www.edibleschoolyard.org