



## The Community Table

**Celebrate your local bounty with a potluck meal of regional fare.**

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Try these two great potluck recipes at your next gathering:

### Roasted Root Vegetables

Spanakopita (Spinach Pie) From peak garden flavors to star-covered nights around the campfire, the beauties of summer magnify the magic of rural living.

This season, it's all about local eating, whether you long for tomatoes harvested right outside your back door or meet up with a cheese maker just down the road. Summer showcases the bounty of local flavors in your community.

Share your passion for farm-fresh food and community by hosting a party that celebrates all the local goodness surrounding us this time of year.

From farm to feast, a local-food-themed potluck showcases more than just peak fresh flavors; it stimulates education and action in your community toward a more sustainable, local-based food system.

### What's Local?

The "buy local" or "locavore" movement continues to gain momentum around the country as folks prioritize purchasing food raised in their community. What exactly "local" is can take on different definitions depending on where you live and your situation.

The "100-mile diet" symbolizes a mantra for many—aiming for a diet comprising as much as possible foodstuffs that are produced within 100 miles of home.

Eating local year-round is understandably easier in a California climate than Wisconsin, but wise decisions to can, extend your harvest with cold frames and "put up" your harvest can go a long way, even in places with four seasons.

The key isn't so much a mileage parameter, but a personal definition of how you utilize local foods and eat well from your "foodshed." I still drink coffee grown halfway around the world (organic, shade grown, Fair Trade certified), but I make sure all my dairy purchases are from Wisconsin, if not my own county.

In the depth of winter, I may eat organic salad greens from California, but the bulk of my family's diet comes from the garden bounty we preserved last summer.

Eating local adds a strong seasonal perspective to eating patterns. This mindset motivates me to savor and appreciate vivid peak flavor. My family eats fresh tomatoes at every meal when they're available from our garden, but I won't buy the flavorless, imported and chemically sprayed tomatoes in the supermarket in January.

I'll have my frozen and canned tomatoes during the winter, but eating fresh is something I save for the tomatoes ripe out of my garden.

### Why Local?

However you slice a local definition, there's a range of reasons why eating local food is important. The flavor, taste and variety of local foods trump anything shrink-wrapped and transported from thousands of miles away. Local food is fresher, and the closer your food source, the higher its nutritional value.

Eating local bolsters our rural landscape. Local food requires less fossil fuel from a transportation perspective; no trucks needed for cross-country hauls.

On the agriculture side, small-scale, local farms generally practice more sustainable agriculture and organic methods than



large-scale, commercial operations.

Eating local also supports small-scale, family-owned farms. As our agriculture system continues to be dominated by large-scale corporations devoted to conventional growing practices using chemicals and selling conventional crops, many family farms take the fall, unable to compete. By developing local markets, these small-scale farms can thrive independently once again.

Additionally, prioritizing local foods promotes the economic health of our communities.

“Dollars spent on local-food purchases keep circulating in your community and multiply in value,” explains Patty Cantrell, a local-foods-system development specialist at the Michigan Land Use Institute. “Say you buy broccoli directly from a local farmer at the market. This farmer is more likely to use that money to purchase something at a locally owned store. The local farmer’s money spends more time in your community and adds up to stronger economic health.”

For The Community Table: Party Planning Tips, go to page 2.

About the Author: Lisa Kivirist writes from her farm and B&B, Inn Serendipity, in Wisconsin. She is co-author of *ECOpreneur* (New Society Publishers, 2008) and *Rural Renaissance* (New Society Publishers, 2009) and is a Kellogg Food & Society Policy Fellow.

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