

Buy Local, Eat Local Challenges Underway

Take the buy local or eat local (or both) challenges this summer. Supporting local food producers can help bolster the local economy in addition to helping the environment

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Are you eating--and buying--local yet?

If not, you have at least two challenges to choose from.

1) Eat Local, America! challenges you to eat local by starting out at a local food co-op--or you can even sign up online. Hosted by natural food co-ops nationwide, the group challenges participants to eat up to five meals a day made from local foods.

In the process, says Eat Local, America, you'll get to know your local farmers and other local food producers.

And you'll get to know your local co-op, too.

Eat Local, America reminds participants that "co-ops were local before local was cool." Staff at the co-op can answer questions like: Who produced it? How was it produced? Where did it come from? How does that impact the local economy, the environment, your health?

The Eat Local, America website has maps to help you find farms, co-ops and bloggers involved.

2) The Buy Local Challenge, started in Maryland in 2007 by the Southern Maryland Agricultural Development Commission (SMADC) to "highlight the benefits of buying local to Maryland's economy and environment," has gone nationwide.

Buy Local Challenge coordinators' goal: Get everyone across the country to take the challenge to "bring a positive and profound impact to our farms, our communities and our planet for generations to come."

To participate, sign up on the website to take the "buy local" pledge and be counted. The site offers links to find places to buy local near you--as well as tips and recipes.

Back in southern Maryland, the SMADC's challenge week theme is "One Week to Healthier Planet. Sweet!" Those participating should submit information on special events they have planned for the 2009 Buy Local Challenge Week (July 18 - 26) to SMADC before July 10.

Find out what's happening near you. Check out the Buy Local Challenge Web site for tools, resources and information about the Challenge.