



How to Eat Local Year Round

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I figure I would write about this subject *now* in late summer since we are in or nearing harvest season.

I know that for our family, we live in climate that has all four seasons - which means that we have don't "grow" food for about 8 months out of the year.

I also know that in the past, people lived here before grocery stores and were totally able to live off what they grew in the summer months.

It is pretty commonly know that eating locally is by far the best way to eat. Not only is it much more nutritious, but it also is environmentally superior and keeps money in the communities that we live in.

So here are some tips for eating local "year round".

Canning:

This is by far the most basic and well known method of preserving food. I use this method mainly with fruits and acidic foods like tomatoes. This is not my favorite way to preserve food because the produce is exposed to high heat for a significant amount of time, which results in some loss of nutrients.

Canning your own food rather than buying it in the store is far superior because you control the amount of sugar and salt used in the preservation process and you don't have to worry about BPA. Last but not least, there is no waste, and no

need to recycle cans because canning jars can be used year after year.

Fermenting:

Fermenting is one of my favorite methods of preserving because not only is there no heating food and losing nutrients, but you are growing beneficial bacteria - which is really helpful in warding off illnesses in the winter months. The main thing about fermenting is keeping things very clean and sterile. YOU DON'T WANT TO GROW BAD BACTERIA.

Cabbages and cucumbers are the obvious foods to ferment but fermenting can extend to beans, beets, onion, garlic, chutneys, carrots, green tomatoes. The list goes on and on...Ben and I are teaching a seminar next week on fermentation, and when it's done we'll upload the video to the Inner Circle!

Freezing:

Freezing is a great option as well. Berries are a favorite of mine. In the Northwest, we grow all kinds. Berries make for a great treat in the winter months, and you can also freeze many veggies like broccoli, cauliflower, beans, peas, corn, carrots, peppers, herbs - and the options are not limited to fruits and veggies. For example, you can also freeze summer soups, pie filling, jams, and my dad's favorite: stuffed peppers. So stock up the freezer this summer for this coming winter.

Dehydrating:

Dehydrating is something I do year round - but I do a lot of it in the summer months. This method is great for herbs, beans, most veggies and fruits. Dehydrating is not only for fruits and veggies but also fish, and some meats. Dehydrated food can last virtually forever if kept in an air tight jar.

Winter Gardening:

Where we are, if you are fortunate enough to have a small hoop house or green house you can continue to grow things like spinach, lettuce, swiss chard, mustard greens, parsley - well into December. If you don't have a hoop house or green house, many local farms do, so you can buy from them. Hydroponics is a newer form of growing in the winter months and I know that we have one farmer in our region that uses this method to grow large amount of lettuce and leafy greens all the way through winter.

Animals:

Finding a local rancher who raises grass feed cows is a great option. Many times you will have a choice of 1/4, 1/2 or a full cow. Our family generally only

needs a ½. You can get fat from the butcher to make lard. Also get bones from the butcher to make bone broth. Hunting is a huge sport where we are. I hate calling it a sport because it is a food source in my opinion and a really good one for that matter. So if you're into hunting, bag yourself a deer or elk for some good eating in the winter winter.

Another great way to get your hands on animal products this winter is to go on to your local craigslist to find a supplier for eggs and milk. I have a guy who I found on craigslist who brings me fresh eggs to my door, and they are a dollar cheaper than what I can get at the store. I have also joined a milk coop - which is where I get my raw milk and my butter. We all split up the weekly drive to pick up the milk. So once every month and a half I go and pick up milk for our group.

Summary:

I hope this gets you thinking about how you can start using resources around you to feed you through the winter. My approach has been to try 3 new things every year. For example - finding a good source of meat, finding a good source of eggs and canning. It is a learning process and one I suggest taking small steps with.