

# Munch ON THIS



## Access

By Marcia Rae  
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Imagine roads, apartments, box stores, and houses with postage size lawns for miles in every direction. Water is piped in from miles away, upsetting fragile ecosystems and depleting aquifers. Not much green, no farms, no chickens, no gardens. That's the way it is for 80% of the people that live in this country. Absolutely everything is trucked in. True farmers markets with direct farm-to-customer sales are non-existent. Access to food is limited to food purchased in the grocery store and even the stores are marginal and sporadic. Pastured eggs? Not an option. Grass fed beef? Where would you find it?

It is easy to take things for granted. We have such abundance here, so many options. We grow things ourselves or the neighbor brings it by. We can visit the Farmers Market on the weekend and if it is not there, we can shop at WillametteLocalFoods.com and pick it up on Tuesday. We are, at most, once removed from somebody who knows how to do it, or someone who will loan it.

Even for those who struggle to make ends meet, the support of the community is evident and no one need go hungry. Help is as close as Sharing Hands or Senior Meals on Wheels. Free garden space is available at the Calapooia Food Alliance Community Gardens, or you can participate in the community garden space and take home part of the harvest.

A couple of weeks ago, the CFA conducted a survey at the Farmers Market and one of the questions was, "how important is it to you that you purchase local items?" Surprisingly, the answer that received the most answers was "I seek out local stores/items and will pay more." No-one answered "I will travel a distance for lower price." Of course, most of the people who answered were patrons of the Farmers Market and one would expect a loyalty to local.

But we know from the experience of small grocery store owners that people will say one thing and do another. They want a local grocery, but when it comes down to it, they drive miles and shop at a big store with lower prices and more choices. And it becomes a downward spiraling chicken and egg thing. People buy elsewhere and it is harder for the local merchant to keep the supply line coming in. Then there are fewer choices and higher prices and the customer goes elsewhere, making it harder for local merchants. Year after year small, local groceries are closing and access to food of any kind diminishes.

It is hard to imagine the possibility of not enough, of a community in peril -- and the truth is that we are blessed in the natural abundance of our soil and climate, in the way people stick together and help each other, in the depth of knowledge and know-how resident in the residents. Still, why not pay attention? Why not make sure our neighbor is doing well? Why not keep the money in the community? It is all a choice. We can make choices to make more community out of community and support each other.

Munch on This – What is it worth to you to have fresh, local food? How do your choices support that?

PS – See you at the Farmers Market this Saturday, 9 a.m. to noon. Support your local farmer. Music is Jeana Graham, Tom Janssen, and Rita Perry.

PSS – Rumor has it that there will be surprise entries in the Brownsville Great Bread Bake Off, scheduled for September 18 at the Farmers Market. Stealth recipes, killer bread. Think you are up for the bread challenge? Bring your best to the 11 a.m. judging and be judged. But don't expect fairness. All is fair in love and food fights as any fifth grader knows. Only rule? Local ingredients.

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