

About this Curriculum

This curriculum was funded by a 2015 OSU Extension Innovative Grant and the Patricia Kunz Brundige Youth Development Fund for Positive Youth Development Research as part of a project titled, *Adding a Youth Flavor to Extension's Signature Programs*.

The purpose of this curriculum is to equip teens with activities they can use to engage youth peers around the subject of local foods.

Although the emphasis of the curriculum is Ohio, any state/region can easily adjust the focus to match their geographic area.

This curriculum includes:

- **Overview of local foods and references:** background information equipping facilitators with basic content knowledge about local foods
- **Five engaging lesson plans:** plans include all of the information needed to prepare and present the activity, including a list of equipment and supplies, outline of activities, reflection questions, and additional sources of information. Activities and hand-outs include:
 1. **Ohio Foods Flashcards** – a flexible and quick activity whereby youth match pictures of Ohio produce with its respective name and MyPlate food group
 - Hand-outs: **MyPlate, OH Food Flashcards, and Flashcard Answers and Sampling of Local Foods**
 2. **Sensory Testing** – activity whereby youth analyze local versus non-local foods based on appearance, smell, taste, touch, and overall preference
 - Hand-outs: **Sensory Testing Activity and Survey**
 3. **Grow Your Own** – activity whereby youth experience the ease of growing plants and participate in producing food
 4. **Chopped** – activity whereby youth compete to prepare a locally-sourced meal and are judged on its taste and appearance
 - Hand-outs: **Chopped Precautions and Rubric, and Harvest of the Month Calendar** (blank to add in dates)
 5. **Growing Community Involvement** – activity whereby youth brainstorm a plan of action for involving their community in the local foods movement
 - Hand-outs: **Harvest of the Month Calendar** (blank to add in dates), and **List of Activities and Planning Template**

A note about the lesson plans – there is no prescribed order for how the lessons should be presented. However, the activities increase in complexity with 1. Flashcards being the most basic and 5. Growing Community Involvement being more involved and requiring higher levels of thinking and time commitment. Decide on the activities to present by matching the content and availability of resources (i.e. facilities, supplies, money) with the age and experience of the audience. Ideally, all five lessons will be presented to an audience for a holistic understanding. Thank you to the following team of OSU Extension professionals and youth for implementing this project: Becca Goodman, Patrice Powers-Barker, Heather Neikirk, Hannah Epley, Dustin Homan, Carol Smathers, Morgan Kaper, Bonnie Welsh, Kaytlyn Graver, Kayla Tomlin, Annslea Schaber, Jordan Furer, Molly Michael, Jackie Hutchinson, and Clara Selle.



Overview of Local Foods

Although **local food** is a common and popular term, there is no single definition for “local” foods. Individual, family and community **food decisions are made for a variety of reasons:** nutrition and health, accessibility and convenience, food safety, the environment, economics, and enjoyment and taste.

“No Farms No Food” is the tagline of the American Farmland Trust. Notice, they do not specify the type of farm. The farm is not labeled organic or conventional, rural or urban, large or small. In a similar way, OSU Extension does not promote one type of growing or location over another and does not endorse specific stores or businesses or food products. We might use examples of products or stores but that is for the purpose of sharing examples and not for endorsement.

Frequently Asked Questions

What are some of the benefits of purchasing food grown locally?

1. **Local Economy.** Consumers can make a substantial positive impact on local, regional, and state economies by purchasing local food. “Most of the \$40 billion or so that Ohioans spend on food each year goes out of state. By growing and processing more of that food locally and regionally, we can keep billions more dollars circulating in Ohio’s economy.”¹
2. **Nutrition and Wellness.** While someone could eat local food and not necessarily eat healthy, if they have made the commitment to eat healthy it is possible with local foods. For most fresh produce, the sooner it is eaten after it is harvested, the higher the nutrition content. Local produce does not have the transportation time compared to produce grown miles away so it could potentially be higher in nutrients. Foods can also be frozen, canned and processed right in the local community. No matter where the food was grown or produced, a healthy eating pattern includes a variety of foods from all food groups and it limits saturated fats and trans fats, added sugars, and sodium.
3. **Environment.** “One goal of a local food system is to preserve farmland, and to promote rural planning in a way that strengthens the agriculture economy.”¹ Many factors contribute to the environmental impact of growing food ranging from sustainable agricultural practices to transportation to waste recovery. Some local food is grown and processed using specific environmental practices, such as organic, that may align with customers’ values.
4. **Community.** Buying directly from a grower or from a food company that sources locally, helps create a sense of community and a sense of direct linkage to the producer. Places like farmers’ markets not only offer local food purchases but often, they also host other community events and opportunities during market hours.

What are the challenges of purchasing food grown locally?

1. **Availability.** If it’s a fresh, seasonal food like fruits or vegetables there might only be certain times of the year when they’re available.
2. **Accessibility.** If purchasing directly from the grower like at a farmers’ market, farm stand, auction or CSA (Community Supported Agriculture) food might only be available for sale in limited locations for limited times.
3. **Knowledge about where a food was grown or produced.** State branding programs like Ohio Proud or local and regional branding programs can indicate the origin of the food. For example, in Ohio, a company could use the Ohio Proud logo on a product if they are a member of the branding program and their agricultural products are at least 50% raised, grown, or processed in Ohio. It’s not a requirement nor is it always a

¹ Greens to Greenbacks: The Economics of Local Food <http://www.morpc.org/pdf/2014LocalFoodsToolkit.pdf>

common practice to list where the ingredients were grown. Consumers are welcome to inquire about where the food was grown or produced but it is not always convenient to search out this information.

4. **Cost.** Sometimes local foods can be the least expensive option and sometimes it can cost more.

What kind of foods grow in Ohio?

There is a great diversity of hundreds of foods from Ohio that represent all five food groups of MyPlate: milk, grains, fruits, vegetables and proteins. See a list of Ohio foods in the “Ohio Foods Flashcards” activity.

Is local food organic food?

Local and organic do not have the same meaning. Local food could be organic or it might not be. There is no single definition for local foods, although it indicates a distance or area where the food was grown or produced. Organic refers to the methods that were used to grow or raise the food and must be certified by the United States Department of Agriculture.

Can processed food be local foods?

Yes. “Some people misconstrue local and natural foods only as fresh, whole products, and view ‘processing’ as diminishing those goods. But all cheeses are processed food. A family that picks many quarts of strawberries in June, then freezes some and makes jam out of some, is processing food.”¹ Foods can be commercially frozen, canned and processed right in the local community.

What is considered a “local food”?

There is no single definition for “local” foods. **Food miles** is sometimes used as a way to classify local foods. **Food mile** is the distance between where the food was grown and where it was purchased or eaten. Food miles have been used from an environmental perspective to estimate the amount of resources used to transport the food. It has been suggested that the more food miles involved, the more environmental impact. On the other hand, there are other factors that need to be considered. For example, the national food processing and distribution system is cost-effective. Other ways food might be determined as “local” include geographic region like city, county or state. Sometimes buying local is equated with direct-to-consumer marketing where producers sell products directly to the final consumer. Ohio ranks in the top ten states for direct-to-consumer marketing (2007 Census of Ag).

Where can I purchase local foods?

- **Farmers’ Markets**, a group of farmers and producers sell their products at a certain time and day at a designated public place like a park or parking lot. Some are seasonal, some are open year round.
- **Farm Stands or Farm Market**, retail locations based on or near the farm; might be a building or as simple as a table with products at the end of the driveway.
- **Community Supported Agriculture (CSA)**, marketing arrangement where growers and consumers share the risks and benefits of production. Consumers purchase ‘shares’ or ‘membership’ before the season begins. Each week during the season, members receive a bag or box of current produce, either at the farm or at predetermined drop-off locations.
- **Produce Auctions**, Ohio has eight produce auctions throughout the state, where producers collaboratively sell boxes and bins of graded produce and other items to restaurant owners, grocery store buyers, retail vendors and other buyers (Fox, J., 2015).

- **Pick Your Own or U-Pick**, where consumers visit the growing site to harvest their own food. Ideal crops for pick your own are those that require little expertise to harvest and also have high yields. Common examples include berries, tomatoes and pumpkins.
- **Grocery retailers**, many grocery retailers such as large chain grocery stores, locally-owned grocery stores, online stores, co-ops, delis and butchers are featuring more products sourced from nearby producers. Read product labels and look for signs, as well as the Ohio Proud logo to identify local foods.
- **Institutions** such as schools, hospitals and worksites are committing to serving local foods.
- **Restaurants, Cafes and Coffee Shops** that source local foods, locally roasted coffee beans and might even grow fresh herbs or vegetables on their property.

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