



Our everyday food choices affect global warming and the environment. The good news is that even small changes in what we buy and eat can add up to real environmental benefits. Pressures from the economy, health concerns, and environmental sustainability awareness are all reasons we are now looking at ways to change our eating habits at home.

## BEST PRACTICE AREA: SUSTAINABLE FOOD SYSTEMS/PRACTICES

### DID YOU KNOW?

In the US, it is estimated that as much as 30% of food gets wasted. That's about \$48.2 billion of food.

### EASY TIPS

- Eat lower on the food chain, join No Meat Mondays.
- Choose locally caught or sustainable fish.
- Buy your meat from a butcher shop. Ask where their beef, pork, or chicken comes from. Or better yet, purchase part of a cow from the farmer and have it processed to your liking.
- Look for fresh foods with the fewest process steps from farm to plate.
- Purchase and use a slow cooker, saves you time and uses less electricity.
- Buy organic when possible.
- Purchase foods that you can consume before they expire.
- Compost your food waste.
- Learn how to preserve foods at home.

### BUY A SHARE!

Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) is a program in which the farmer sells a number of "shares" to the public. Typically the share consists of a box of fresh vegetables, but sometimes other products may be included or available (i.e., bread, eggs, strawberries, honey, etc.) In return the consumer receives a box of seasonal produce each week throughout the farming season. Average for Minnesota CSA's is 15 weeks.

### BUY LOCAL!

Conventional food is shipped an average of 1,500 miles before reaching consumers. As a result of industrial farming practices, 17% of all fossil fuel used in the U.S. is currently consumed by the food production system.

By purchasing from your local farmer you will benefit by eating fresher, healthier food that was picked at the peak of quality while helping decrease the greenhouse gas emissions. This change in consumption will also benefit the local farmer by supporting his business and helping the farmland stay as a "small family" farm which is more likely to use sustainable farming methods.

This means shorter commutes, less traffic, and less greenhouse gas emissions. In turn you have cleaner air, preservation of natural habitats, more birds and wildlife- a healthier ecosystem. Eating locally also means eating seasonally. For example, eat greens in the spring, tomatoes and corn in August, and apples in the fall. And unfortunately trying to buy local fruit (except apples) during Minnesota winters is pretty much impossible. Solution to this is to buy fruit in large quantities when it is in season and preserve it (freezing or canning) for those cold winter months.

### REDUCE YOUR FOOD WASTE

- **Plan out meals weekly** – Perishables picked up without a meal plan can go bad before you have a chance to use them. If you plan meals out between shopping trips, you'll buy only the perishables you need.
- **Don't prepare too much food** – Scale down recipes to ensure you only make what you need.
- **Reuse leftovers** – A lot of what gets thrown out is leftovers. If you're not going to reuse it within a couple of days, freeze it.
- **Share** – After a big party send home leftovers with guests or offer food to neighbors the day after. Put together a plate with leftovers after dinner for a single or elderly neighbor. Donate those canned goods you bought for a casserole but never made to a food pantry before their expiration date arrives.
- **Know what you've got** – Put food in clear containers so you can see what you've got.
- **Doggie bag it** – If you eat out, take your own containers for a doggie bag and bring home your leftovers. Then actually eat them.
- **Grow your own** – It is less likely that one tomato, pepper or herb from your garden will go to waste this summer. It's a lot of hard work to grow them, and most likely you're not about to throw that hard work in the trash.
- **Be truthful with yourself** – You may have the best intentions in the world to cook a healthy dinner every night, but don't buy a week's worth of food if in reality you know you're going to end up picking up take out or eating out a couple of times each week. Shop for who you really are, not for who you want to be.

### FIND A BALANCE

Yes, eating out is convenient in this hectic world we live in today. But in our society children are not learning how to cook and the importance of a home cooked meal. By staying in and cooking homemade meals, you are not only passing down this important tool, but you are saving energy and packaging waste, and you are able to monitor the ingredients, calories, and fat that you are using. If your child needs a snack before dinner will be ready, make sure it is a healthy snack; an apple is a good choice.

