

## Eat Local And Organic II: Make A Difference by Janie Chu

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IT MIGHT AS WELL BE A DOOMSDAY DECLARATION. Newspapers and outlets blare headlines of rising food costs, affecting everyone from the poorest of third world countries to the smallest of affluent amenities. To what is this attributed? Part of this is due to the rising cost of corn, used in ethanol for fuel as well as feed for livestock and processed foods. Demand for food has soared along with growth in increasingly developed nations such as China and India. Oil prices continue to climb, making shipping more costly. Meat consumption has increased, along with grains to feed the livestock that would normally go to humans, and agricultural crises caused by global warming. Add a weak dollar which makes our nation of imports that much more expensive. Now let's throw in the recent tomato recall that has affected numerous states. It's enough to scare anyone out of buying fresh produce when we're trying to eat healthier anyway, but think of how this is hurting growers. Let's face it folks. We're at a risky time when it comes to food consumption.

Here's a follow up on the benefits of buying local and organic. While my view on this remains as passionate as ever, I believe it would seem frivolous and insensitive to just wax poetic about free range chicken and grass fed beef without making an effort to give you a broader picture. Our current problems will only continue to escalate while our governments attempt to create solutions. There are no black and white areas or clear long term answers. However, we can start small at home. A friend recently asked what I thought about global warming and my response was that it does no good to alarm people with negative statistics and guilt them into action. While I'm not burying my head in the sand, I realize each of us can take baby steps. It's the same thing with regard to food consumption.

Making informed decisions to buy local and/or organic produce means less fuel to ship and supports smaller farms committed to using responsible practices. On the organic end, non-synthetic farmed foods not only protect you and your family, but also prevent depletion of the environment from overproduction. Mass produced conventional farms, whether to grow produce or to process meat from the slaughterhouses, run the risk of unsanitary practices in addition to inhumane treatment. Keeping up with demand for their products also stresses resources, driving up food costs for feed and increasing freight costs. With the local food initiative, which can sometimes be organic, growers don't have to ship thousands of miles to get their products to consumers. The added benefit? Fresher produce, supporting local farmers to create sustainable farming practices and not further burdening our delicate environment of resources. If you've read [Fast Food Nation](#), you know that there are a myriad of evils from mass produced food. The reports this year from inhumane treatment of animals from conventionally produced livestock should not be a surprise considering the lack of regulation in the industry.

In short, it starts with one consumer. If every American began to think about how to support local and organic initiatives close to home, we could slowly and gradually change the way our resources are utilized while enjoying fresher, tastier food.

It's a tall order to try to return to the way man was meant to live.

*SOURCES:* New York Times, Associated Press, AJC, United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization, "Dirt Cookies and Mud Pies" by Mark Hollingsworth, [Fast Food Nation](#) by Eric Schlosser



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