

## 'Get Local' campaign aims at its neighbours

Advocates want labels to reflect origin of goods for consumers

**Derrick Penner**

Vancouver Sun

*Wednesday, August 29, 2007*

The 100-mile diet got Vancouverites interested in the idea of consuming food grown close to home. And now, local-food advocates have crafted a "Get Local" brand so farmers, retailers, distributors and restaurants can label their products and make them easily identifiable on store shelves and restaurant menus.

But for the "Get Local" campaign organizers, their effort is about more than selling the produce, meat and foodstuffs produced by participating businesses.

They want the label to be a shorthand method to get people thinking about putting their food dollars into the local economy, about considering the "food miles" that their groceries are travelling, and how buying home-grown reduces their environmental impact.

The distinctive starburst "Get Local" label will be visible at member locations, and information on participants and all the reasons why people might choose local produce are included on the group's website, [www.getlocalbc.org](http://www.getlocalbc.org).

"What we want to do is increase the demand for local food," Bonita Magee, project manager for the organization FarmFolk/CityFolk said Tuesday during the Get Local campaign launch, and "provide farmers with a really solid local market."

And not just a market of food connoisseurs, the so-called "foodies" who seek out high-end products.

Tara McDonald, executive director of Your Local Farmers Market Society, said the Lower Mainland produces about 45 to 50 per cent of the food it consumes, but has the capacity to raise that to 80 per cent.

Magee said there are some 5,000 farms in the fertile Fraser Valley alone. And according to B.C. Agriculture, B.C.'s farms generated \$2.4 billion in sales in 2004. Food processing was a \$6.7-billion business in the same year.



CREDIT: Ward Perrin, Vancouver Sun

LOCALLY GROWN FOOD ENDORSED:

Capers produce clerk Trevor Newton works on a display of local produce. The 'Get Local' campaign to support local growers was launched to allow farmers, distributors and restaurants to label their products for easy identification.

Most of Get Local's participants are smaller-scale farms for now, and McDonald acknowledged that they likely can't be competitive on prices with industrial-scale producers in South America, South Africa or China, where labour is incredibly cheap.

However, Get Local members are betting more people will choose to buy locally if think about their money going to local farmers rather than into the large-scale transportation and distribution networks involved in transporting food thousands of kilometres.

McDonald added that local food, picked and produced closer to ripeness, is fresher and more nutritious. "You pay a price for healthier food," she said.

Susan Davidson, a farmer at Aldergrove's Glorious Organics Cooperative, said the campaign encourages people to "be mindful" about their food choices, rather than being simply "clever marketing."

Aron Bjornson, marketing manager at Capers Community Market and a corporate member of the Get Local campaign, said there is definitely public interest in "buying locally."

Capers, in a consumer survey conducted earlier this year, found that seven of 10 respondents wanted to buy locally produced food. And Bjornson added that 81 per cent of respondents listed concern for the environment as a high priority, and a reason why they would want to buy locally produced food. (Less trucking of food equals a smaller "carbon footprint" for society.)

Some 15 restaurants are involved in the Get Local campaign, and Robert Clark, executive chef at nu restaurant + lounge, said they are important participants. The success of a restaurant, he said, depends on the quality of ingredients it uses.

And a successful chef, he added, can have a lot of influence over consumer choices. The Get Local effort, he said, will help connect consumers with the food restaurants themselves use.

"Grocery stores only buy what they think they can sell," Clark said. "If they think the public wants local food, they'll begin stocking it."

That is not to say that big grocery stores don't buy locally. Magee said a couple of IGA outlets got involved at the planning stage of Get Local.

depenner@png.canwest.com

- - -

## GET LOCAL

Several small community groups have adopted a bit of big-business marketing to attract people to the local-food movement. Below are some of the participants in the new Get Local campaign coming to an establishment near you:

### Shopping

Capers Community Markets

East End Food Cooperative

Edible British Columbia

Sliced Tomatoes

The Organic Grocer

Dining

Aurora Bistro

Beyond Restaurant & Lounge

Cactus Club Cafe

Le Gavroche Restaurant

nu restaurant & lounge

A full list of Get Local participants can be found at [www.getlocalbc.org](http://www.getlocalbc.org)

© The Vancouver Sun 2007

**CLOSE WINDOW**

---

Copyright © 2007 CanWest Interactive, a division of CanWest MediaWorks Publications, Inc. All rights reserved.