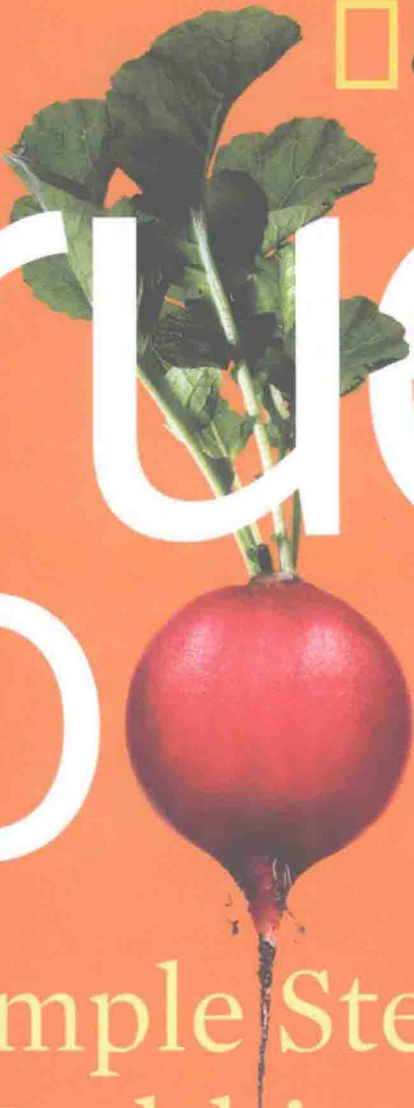


“Cultivate the connection between
plate and planet.”

—FROM THE FOREWORD BY ALICE WATERS



true FOOD

A fresh red radish with green leaves is positioned vertically, centered behind the word "FOOD". The radish's root points downwards, and its leaves extend upwards, partially obscuring the word "true".

8 Simple Steps
to a Healthier You

ANNIE B. BOND • MELISSA BREYER • WENDY GORDON

true FOOD

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NATIONAL GEOGRAPHIC

WASHINGTON, D.C.

TRUE FOOD

by Annie B. Bond, Melissa Breyer, and Wendy Gordon

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*To all the people whose hands reach out to sow the seed,
till the soil, pick the produce, snap the beans,
remove the stems, and make the meal.*

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true FOOD

8 Simple Steps
to a Healthier You

ANNIE B. BOND • MELISSA BREYER • WENDY GORDON



NATIONAL GEOGRAPHIC

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Foreword

By Alice Waters, owner and founder of Chez Panisse

Growing, cooking, and sharing food with friends has always been the most important aspect of my life. My first taste memories were family dinners of fresh corn, green beans, and strawberries picked right out of my parents' victory garden. For me, the daily ritual of the table gives life meaning and beauty. Mealtime is the place where we pass the peas and learn about generosity. It is the place where you share a plate and where you truly learn about somebody else: You practice empathy.

Unfortunately, studies show that over 85 percent of Americans no longer eat even one meal at home together every day. When Annie B. Bond, Melissa Breyer, and Wendy Gordon write about going "out of true"

in this invaluable book, I am reminded of how seriously our nation has veered out of alignment, especially in the ways we grow, buy, eat, and think about food.

Eating "true" is something that's natural to everyone on this planet, yet with fast food omnipresent in our lives, we've abandoned our traditions and basic knowledge. How, then, can we come back to the table and back to our senses? Well, I've always been an idealist—some might say downright uncompromising when it comes to the way I think food should be produced and consumed. That's why it's my pleasure to introduce this practical guide, *True Food*. In it, we're fed thoughtful how-tos on everything from stocking a pantry to preserving

the harvest through the seasons to composting what you can't use. Most important, *True Food* demonstrates the value of buying locally and organically grown food.

I learned these lessons in 1971, when I started Chez Panisse in Berkeley, California. At first I was only looking for flavor, not philosophy. I wanted tiny, juicy raspberries; succulent sweet peppers; and lamb that tasted of grass and sunlight. In my quest to find local Northern Californian ingredients reminiscent of the vibrant flavors of France, I discovered that farmers and ranchers who cared for the land and practiced organic techniques produced the most beautiful and delicious food. Now 85 suppliers provide Chez Panisse with ingredients throughout the year.

When I began shopping at farmers' markets and getting to know the people behind the food, I began to think of myself as a co-producer. By choosing to buy food grown locally and sustainably, I was weaving myself into a community that shares an appreciation for the value of food itself and how it connects us to time and place, the seasons, and the natural cycle. As the Slow Food Manifesto explains, we must remain "in true" within the subtle balance of our right to pleasure and our responsibility to our heritage of food, tradition, and culture. With this book in hand, you can begin to cultivate the connection between plate and planet. *True Food: 8 Simple Steps to a Healthier You* will help you and your family nourish yourselves—deliciously!

Introduction

How we eat determines to a considerable extent how the world is used. —WENDELL BERRY, FARMER AND POET

A simple September supper including local, sweet, vine-ripened tomatoes, freshly picked corn, and miraculously ripe peaches grown nearby with organic local cream on top is a meal one savors forever. Much of the reason is that such a meal is made up of real food with true flavor, food that isn't produced with a priority of yield, market appeal, shelf life, and durability, but food grown in living soil with health and stewardship in mind, from farms that include heritage livestock breeds and heirloom varieties of produce for preserving genetic diversity.

Home-cooked meals using locally harvested food are uplifting to us on every level: They are nourishing, flavorful, and sensual—and they connect us to the ground and community where we live. Eating a diet of such food works on behalf of the environment as well as on

behalf of our bodies, senses, and spirit. It integrates the innovative flavors of greenmarket cuisine with its wide range of healthful nutrients and antioxidants, the pure joy of eating, and the unique and pressing concerns about stewardship and sustainability of Earth's resources.

How many of us know this sort of food, or this way of eating? Half of the population? A quarter? Less? You may have heard the phrase "out of true." It means not in correct alignment. During the last 40 years or so, most of us have been eating a diet that is wildly out of true compared to what our bodies need, and equally out of true considering what is best for the health of the planet.

When we consider our Earth system, which is itself so out of true, we might first think of climate, which scientists overwhelmingly agree has been knocked off track by global

warming. But global warming is the consequence of other systems that are themselves out of true, our energy production system being the most significant. We get far too much of our energy from the burning of fossil fuels, which puts CO₂ and other greenhouse gases into the atmosphere, leading to climate change and a planet out of true. No surprise, but our fossil fuel-dependent food system is out of true as well, not aligned to either our health or our environment.

People themselves are energy burners. Food is our fuel, and the harm of a food supply system spinning off course is evident in the high percentage of Americans who are overweight and diabetic, the water supplies that are contaminated, the rain forests that are destroyed, and the global warming gases produced as we work to sustain our global food network.

There are many people and groups today working to get the food system back in true alignment, working to preserve and sustain "true food," but we—the food shoppers and eaters—are the most important.

"Me?" you say. "Can I really make a difference to improve what we eat and protect the planet?" Yes! That's

why we wrote *True Food*, to be a primer, a tool kit, a simple set of steps that will take you and how you eat in a new direction, and bring you, your health, and the planet all back into line. It's simpler, cheaper, and more pleasing than you think, since *True Food* is really all about getting back to basics, about restoring what's good about food, reconnecting with real food, whole food, food that's local, and supporting and sustaining those food systems that put health first, starting with the soil and not stopping until the plate.

True Food will help you find, or find again, the pleasures you may still remember about food, the flavors packed in a fresh tomato, the delights of home-grown, the healthfulness abundant in home-cooked. The amazing thing is, by embracing the steps set forth in *True Food*, you will find that things really do start falling into place. On the most basic cellular level, your body will begin to feel more in tune, echoing in microcosm the effects that your food choices have on your family, your home, your community, and the planet. The simple choice to select, cook, serve, and eat true food can help ease these realms back into alignment, bringing it all back in to true.

STEP

1

- 10 ➤ Eating Locally
- 12 ➤ Local Flavors, Higher Food Value
- 13 ➤ Making a Global Impact
- 14 ➤ Food from Your Neighborhood

Eat Local Food

Eat locally: Do it to decrease energy consumption; do it to support producers in your region, many of whom are leaders in the conservation of open space, water quality, wildlife, and local food traditions; do it for the flavor! Step away from big-business produce (grown far away and selected for ease of transport and a long shelf life) and opt for the healthy, true flavors of locally grown food. Do it for the sense of place and to strengthen ties within your community.

WHAT IT MEANS

Eating Locally

Be mindful of how far food travels to get to you.

The most commonsense way of stating this principle is: The shorter the distance that food travels from farm to table, the better. Simply consider the distance between you and your food sources (and we're not talking supermarkets here—they're vendors, not sources), and choose the closest producers. Get your eggs from a farm in your town rather than from a farm in the far reaches of your state, and vegetables from farms in your state rather than from farms two states over. If you live on the East Coast, Florida citrus is better than California citrus. If you live in the state of Washington, California is closer than Florida, but Florida is closer than Brazil, and so forth.

Eating locally doesn't mean doing without. You don't have to give up coffee and tea, for example, which are popular the world over, though grown only in certain regions. But it does mean making choices when possible in favor of those foods produced nearest to where you live. Every time you purchase from the closest farmer, you strengthen the network of growers and businesses seeking to build and maintain a "foodshed" that is diverse, nutritious, sustainable, and secure.

The need to maintain the local foodshed has been a matter of concern for almost a century. In 1929, urban planner Walter Hedden in *How Great Cities Are Fed* first introduced the idea of a foodshed—the geographic area embracing consumers and the producers of the food they consume. Hedden was prompted to write about foodsheds when nationwide railroad transportation was threatened in October 1921. Fifty-some years later, the concept of "eating locally" was reintroduced, again in



The Oxford American Dictionary named "locavore" as the 2007 Word of the Year.

response to transportation concerns, and in particular to the oil shocks of the 1970s.

Now, just a decade into the 21st century, climate change and rising energy prices have once again brought our attention to the systems underpinning our national, even international, foodsheds. Many are asking whether local food systems might not provide a more energy-efficient, secure, and sustainable source of food.

Many have picked up on the terms “foodshed” and “eating locally” to advance a vision of how agriculture can thrive in low-density suburban and ex-urban areas by targeting consumers in metropolitan areas. San Francisco-based chef and writer Jessica Prentice coined the term “locavore” to describe and promote the practice of eating food harvested within a 100-mile radius of one’s home. Writers Aaron Newton and Sharon Astyk took it a step further and created the idea of the Bull’s-eye Diet—a dartboard concept, where your home and what you can grow there is at the center, with each concentric circle representing the increasing distance of your food away from your own home and garden.

Local sourcing doesn’t mean one can’t maintain an ethnic diet. Vendors in New York City’s Chinatown get many of their traditional Chinese vegetables from New Jersey farmers. People who move north from the tropics can easily grow or buy locally grown hot peppers. Culturally appropriate seasonings help a lot to make food taste more familiar.



The long-distance, large-scale transportation of food consumes sizable quantities of fossil fuels. In 1940, it took an average of 1 calorie of fossil-fuel energy to produce 2.3 calories of food energy. Now it takes closer to 7–10 calories of fossil fuel energy to produce every 1 calorie of food energy.

We need a system of decentralized, small-scale industries to transform the products of our fields and woodlands and streams: small creameries, cheese factories, canneries, grain mills, saw mills, furniture factories, and the like.

—WENDELL BERRY, FARMER AND POET

WHY IT MATTERS FOR YOU

Local Flavors, Higher Food Value

**Food grown locally is often more nutritious.
Tastes better, too.**

A wide range of benefits have been attributed to local food. While most of the expected benefits of eating local food are ecological and economical, many also believe that local foods taste better and are more nutritious than foods bred and picked for their ability to endure long-distance shipping.

Experts are now wondering whether a more local food system would decrease food safety risks by decentralizing food production. Joan Gussow, influential nutritionist and author, urges growers to be inventive by extending the seasons and pushing the limits of what they can grow. She herself grows some citrus in her home, just north of New York City. She has lime and lemon trees, and even a grapefruit and an orange tree. Pawpaws, a fruit that tastes like bananas, can live in the North, and she is trying to grow them, too. She welcomes investigations to determine if local greenhouses use less energy than that required to import food from elsewhere, or if solar greenhouses can become a realistic way to grow large amounts of food and extend growing seasons. She notes that "local freezing and food processing are what we really need; we could create a market for frozen local organic food."

The distance from which our food comes represents our separation from the knowledge of how and by whom what we consume is produced, processed, and transported.... Can we stay within a hundred-mile radius? —LOCAVORES.COM