

Activity 8

160 Kilometre Picnic

Goals:

- Draw awareness to issues surrounding and the importance of sustainable food choices
- Educate consumers on the specific criteria affecting the sustainability value of a product
- Introduce key questions to ask when purchasing food

Outcomes:

- A more responsible, informed consumer base
- Reduced environmental and socioeconomic impacts associated with food consumption

Background: The environmental and social effects associated with food production and transport can be far-reaching. The “sustainability value” of a food depends on a) where it was grown, b) how it was grown, c) when it was grown, and d) how it was transported to the point of sale. Eating locally results in the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions related to transportation, while eating organic, in-season, fairly traded goods promotes environmental and social purchasing. These issues and others related to food can be addressed in a stimulating manner by planning an outdoor meal such as a picnic or potluck.

On average, a food item travels roughly 2500 kilometres before landing on a consumer’s plate. By buying locally and shortening the food supply chain, negative environmental and social externalities associated with food production can be reduced. This fun, interactive activity is a twist on the American “100-mile diet”, which challenges participants to consume foods produced within a 100 mile radius (www.100milediet.org).

Remember: don’t be limited by local vendors! Get as local as possible by growing your own fruits, vegetables, and herbs in a personal garden. Home gardening allows you to have complete control over the growing process – ensuring total sustainability if the right choices are made.

Suggested Time: 1-3 hours

Place: Outdoors, on campus grounds to encourage connections with the natural environment and attract other participants, or indoors if desired. The oak grove behind the LSC, or the Quad would be perfect locations to host a picnic!

People:

- Organizer
- As many participants as possible!

Materials needed:

- Electronic map of Nova Scotia and surrounding provinces.
- Sustainable Food Purchasing Guide. Examples include:
 - Ecology Action Centre pamphlet: http://www.ecologyaction.ca/food_action/efabw_intro.shtm
 - Select Nova Scotia's interactive shopping map: <http://www.selectnovascotia.ca/>
- List of local grocers and organic farms. Examples include:
 - Windhorse Farm: <http://www.windhorsefarm.org/>

(Could add a follow-up section to discuss issues versus eating local versus eating organic; or when you can't get local for example coffee other guides –Fair Trade Fair Trade site, Marine Stewardship Council site, USDA Organic site

NOTES:

STEP 1

- Choose a date and location for the event.
- Decide on a maximum radius within which food must have been produced: the designated limit can be a chosen distance such as 160 kilometres (or closer in the late summer or early Fall when food grown within the HRM is more readily available), or a specific area such as the Maritime Provinces.
- Prepare a notification email outlining when and where the picnic will take place, including links to the map and food guide. Send to all team members, recommending each forward the news to at least 3 friends or colleagues.

If planning a potluck, designation of meal items and food allergy awareness may be necessary.

Make a note for everyone to try to limit the amount resource inefficient foods such as top-level predatory fish or beef.

STEP 2

- Using the provided map and guide, participants purchase food with high sustainability value and prepare a dish of their choice.

STEP 3

- Meet and enjoy the tasty local goodness!

Encourage each participant to discuss their dish and its specific ingredients to share information.

Follow-Up:

- Have participants provide an electronic list of their favourite sustainable grocery items and shopping locations. Compile this list as a spreadsheet or word document and send via email or post in a common area to be used as a future resource by others.
- Plan a tour of Seymour Greens community garden located on Seymour St. behind the Cohen to further discuss urban gardening (see Tours and Walks Section).