



Veggies on Wheels



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NEWSLETTER OF PFENNING'S ORGANIC FOOD BOX

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"Veggies on Wheels" (edited by Wolfgang W.) generally appears around the beginning of every month.

Dear Pfenning's Food Box Community,

It's Groundhog Day Month!

Once again, Groundhog Day has come and gone – and despite the overall consensus that we are into an early spring (*How could Wiarton Willie ever see his shadow on such a snowy day?*), we are none the more enlightened as to how winter may progress. Or are we? Chances are that we have caught on to the strong probability that winter in our parts is bound not to come to an abrupt end in six weeks.



So we continue to thrive on what local nutritional bounty is at our disposal at this supposedly bleak time of the year – mostly roots. Yet many if not most of us have come to expect certain foods that do not grow here in the winter to be available at any time of the year. Cucumbers now? Yes, sometimes, recently from Spain – but from local greenhouses soon. Tomatoes? Yes, not always, from Mexico (at least from our continent). Grapes? Yup, however from South Africa. Greens? Mostly from California right now, but thankfully also from Georgia, a whole lot closer to us.

Could we survive without some foods seen as essential coming to us from far away? Are we willing to confine ourselves to foods that come from close enough to minimize what is being termed our carbon footprint? Possibly, but our meals would be a lot simpler, more monotonous, and certainly less colourful – although it's up to us to liven them up. Still, we can thrive even on the less varied offerings coming from local sources at this time of the year – and do so sustainably. Here are a few general pointers to observe aimed at making your winter diet more green and environmentally friendly.

Generally, it seems like a vegetarian option is beneficial for the environment. Hold on to that thought as we will throw in an interesting observation on this a bit later. Here a few more guidelines (inspired by Dan Seitz in Popular Science: <https://www.popsci.com/eat-green-winter-diet/>):

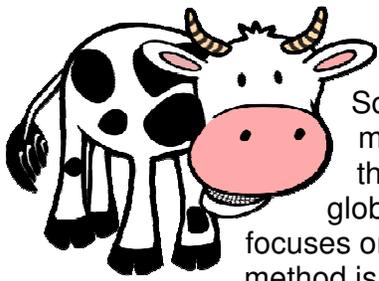
Avoid processed foods. The more a food is processed, the more its nutritional value is compromised.

Favor native crops. Native crops are generally better suited to your local ecosystem. They also don't have to travel as far. Here in Ontario, for example, we now have **LOCAL Black, Kidney and Navy Beans**, and even Popcorn (see our Beans and Legumes Page: <https://tinyurl.com/rrf3q48>).

Every step of food production matters. Do some research into how your food is made. For example, in 2006, researchers in the U.K. found that shipped-in lamb from New Zealand had a lower carbon footprint than local meat—almost entirely because the Kiwis run their farms and processing plants with hydropower, while the British relied on coal. *How strange is that!*

Everything changes. Remember that food production can change rapidly. All around, food production run on fossil fuels is gradually being replaced with cleaner, more sustainable production methods. This may change the whole picture.

Essentially, it is probably a good idea to consume more foods grown locally in your region, definitely organic if possible. Shop around wisely to find local foods in your area. Other than paying attention to labels of origin on whatever you buy, support any local organic or sustainable growers in your neighborhood. If you are already shopping with **Pfenning's Organic & More**, you can trust that we always give preference to local production, whether it comes from the Pfenning's Farm itself or any of our many local organic growers and suppliers. If you have been following our Newsletters, you also know that local winter production can still be quite varied and tasty. Don't forget the **Soup & Stew Veggies** (<https://tinyurl.com/yx54u77o>) or **Almut's Root Veggie Casserole** (<https://tinyurl.com/ya8xt7qh>).



It's not the COW, it's the HOW!

So vegetarian is better for the environment? That does appear to be the underlying message we are being presented with these days. Although cattle have to take most of the blame, so it seems, for the release of methane gas contributing considerably to global warming, an old model which has recently been revisited and studied anew focuses on the concept of mimicking the way herding animals have lived in nature forever. This method is called many different things: mob grazing, rotational grazing, **adaptive multi-paddock (AMP)** grazing, holistic planned management and intensive grazing. The basic idea is that you need to intensively graze the herd of ruminants (grass eaters like cattle, bison, sheep, etc) on a piece of land and then quickly move them, providing the optimal nutrition for the animals and allowing the land to rest and recover. Although there is more to it than this as well as different philosophies on how often to move the animals, the basic concept is about “**biomimicry**” or trying to replicate natural cycles as much as possible.

Contrary to continuous grazing where cattle are left on the same field, resulting in overgrazing and eventually harming plants and soil, a new study from **Michigan State** has shown that the method of raising cattle in this way actually contributes significantly to carbon sequestration in the ground – meaning that in the end the common feedlot system produces considerably more emissions (yes, meaning cow farts) than cattle raised in the AMP management system. So some ranches are mimicking the herd behavior of animals in the wild where they can't simply continuously graze for fear of falling prey to a predator. Herd animals need to clump together in a pack for protection, eat as much as they can when they have the time, and stay on the move due to the pressure of predators.

Essentially, it's the predators that are keeping the land from being overgrazed. At the same time, the hoof stomping of the large animals allows for better water penetration when the rains come. Their manure inoculates the soil with microbes, and their grazing (just enough, not too much) stimulates new growth in the grasses. After they move on, the land has a chance to rest and this is when the “regeneration” happens.

Ranches and farms – some in our area – try to mimic this same system by using, not wild animals, but cattle, sheep, goats or bison. Instead of predators, they can use electric fencing and determine how frequently to move the animals depending on stocking density, available acreage, pasture conditions, and so on.

So, according to these findings, it's not the cow, but **HOW** cattle are kept which has a lasting effect on the environment. Sounds really intriguing – and gives the meat-producing industry somewhat of a break. You may want to read the article here if your curiosity has been sparked: <https://tinyurl.com/yxxqhy3u>.

Local Salad anyone?

After all that talk about meat and cattle, let's move back to what you can eat locally at this time of the year and still thrive – and definitely enjoy.

Just the other day, Almut delighted us with a **LOCAL SALAD** made with entirely local ingredients.

Here it is: **ALMUT'S LOCAL SALAD**

Ingredients: Nappa Cabbage, Watermelon Radish, 1 Small Onion, 1 Golden or Red Beet, Pumpkin Seeds, Pecans or Walnuts. Optional: raw Kale if desired (no longer local at this time, alas).

Preparation: Cut up the Nappa Cabbage finely (and Kale if included), cut the Onion, shred or juliennate the Watermelon Radish and Beets, add the chopped-up nuts and seeds. Serve fresh in a bowl with your favourite dressing.

Almut's Dressing: Sunflower Oil (Mat's), Apple Cider Vinegar, Mustard, Maple Syrup, Garlic, Salt and Pepper. Choose the amounts and ratio according to your preferences. Blend with a hand blender until creamy and add to salad. Enjoy the local goodness!

Keep putting out those blankets (and coolers) on those cold delivery mornings – and have a happy month of February,

Wolfgang