



## Farm to Table

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Hail to the local farmers and growers, who in a struggling economy, continue to operate their small farms and supply communities with fresh, nutritious food, and praise to the communities themselves for supporting the upswing of local markets. A focus on healthy eating and a need to be conscious of how our food is

grown is driving this trend, and innovative people all over the country are bringing it straight from the farm to the table.

Temperature controlled transportation makes it possible to safely transport food anywhere in the world, but buying from a farmer or grower who lives right in one's own area ensures that fruit, vegetables, meat and dairy are fresh and flavorful in ways that have to be tasted to be believed. Could there be anything more fabulous than a salad, which is made from a variety of lettuces and tomatoes, picked and eaten in the same day!

Seasonal "road-side vegetable stands" have always been a Southern staple, providing happy travelers with an abundance of fruits and vegetables, and farmer's markets are not a new happening. The neighborhood markets that are commonplace today however, offer not only more and different varieties of produce, such as heirloom tomatoes, (my personal favorite) but flowers, container plants, pastries, breads, coffee, casseroles, jellies, crafts and even doggie treats. There has been an insurgence of





certified organically grown fruits, vegetables and meats, and if not organic, meat, chicken and dairy products that come from grass fed or pastured animals.

Today's markets are not just a place to shop for dinner, but have become social events unto themselves, often complete with live music. There is sometimes entertainment for children, such as "face-painting," and

kids are given some insight into where their food originates. Friends gather and socialize, often excited to share about something a particular vendor is selling that day or a recipe someone has suggested. But the ability to actually talk to the person who grew what one is serving for dinner tonight is worth the trip.

There is a diversity of cultures and socio-economic levels at local markets, exemplified in both buyers and sellers, and a unity of spirit brought about by one of everybody's favorite topics....food. There is an atmosphere of optimism and a feeling of mutual support, because participating in local markets benefits everyone. Supporting local farmer's markets is not only a healthy way to shop for healthy nutritious food, but is way to feed our communities and our spirits.

