

LAST BITE

WHAT'S YOUR 'LOCAL'?

In the past the term *local* indicated a sense of place, which encompassed the traditional knowledge held by the people inhabiting a certain geographic area, the set of resources specific to there and the unique character of the experiences that one could have in that particular place. It was a blanket term used to describe every area, yet it represented something totally different in each location.

In regard to food, this was wonderful—a chance to go somewhere and come across agriculture, cooking and cuisine unique to that specific section of the world.

But to me—with the rise of industrialization, globalization and the omnipresent World Wide Web—my definition of local has evolved. While the essence of the sense of place remains, it is now much less rooted in reference to a specific geographic location.

We used to predominately look at, and learn from, what was physically surrounding us, but we now have access to knowledge, ideas and traditions from all over—allowing us to transform our communities while informed by groups of people whose interests align with our own, even if they are from afar.

In this regard, my local—and the type of food that I prefer to support—is that which is grown, made and enjoyed in a meaningful way. It is knowledge and traditional practices that are in danger of going extinct, so I try, whenever possible, to visit / frequent / purchase from / and enjoy the products of people with aligned interests to mine—a humble attitude toward Mother Nature's staggering abilities above our own, a desire to build a relationship with these natural processes and to mimic them wherever appropriate to produce food that is far better in terms of physical and sensory nourishment than we could ever create ourselves, and an understanding that there is great value and pleasure in paying attention to what we eat and how.



This is beer left to ferment for the weeks that the yeast needs, instead of pushing it out the door in days just to satisfy the market demand; it's bread made with slow-rising dough from a sourdough starter, and sold nearby so that it's eaten within hours of being made; it's vegetables grown in my garden, for flavor instead of durability.

It's sharing recipes via e-mail with friends, asking my neighbors for advice during the growing season and seeking out native offerings when I visit someplace new. These things may be down the road, or they may be across the country, but I support them wholeheartedly because they are keeping our true human food culture alive. And with that thriving food culture we'll revive more mindful eaters and producers all over, allowing us to once again embrace the original rooted sense of place that local described. 🌱

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