



Starting a Buy Local Food Campaign

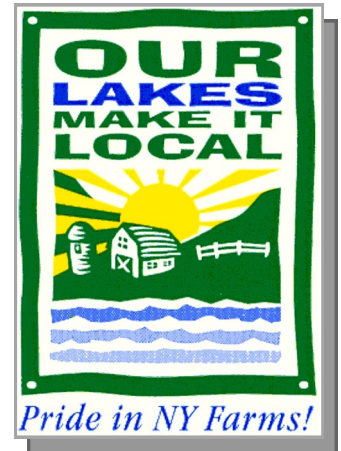
Mobilizing your community.

Working with local food producers, retailers, and consumers to increase sales of local food has many benefits, and communities around the world are working to build strong food producer-food buyer connections. One way to facilitate strong, community-wide “buy local” food efforts is to organize a Buy Local campaign.

A campaign can range from the formal to informal and



may consist of a series of workshops that foster an exchange of ideas and information to marketing initiatives complete with logos, websites, and Buy Local directories. This publication is designed to outline some of the first steps a community organizer can take to rally support and create a strategy for a Buy Local campaign that meets local needs and utilizes local resources.



RESULTS OF A BUY LOCAL *FOOD* CAMPAIGN

- Bring attention—and increased income—to local farmers and ranchers. Help consumers find food that is both local and high quality.
- Promote sustainable production methods.
- Encourage more farmers and ranchers—existing and new—to sell locally.
- Increase communication between producers and consumers about sustainable practices and products.

(Adapted from the [Mesa Verde Guide to Food and Fiber](#))

STEP 1: RESEARCH YOUR MESSAGE



- Identify any Buy Local resources or initiatives that already exist in your community.
- Learn the layout of your community food system to provide you with the tools necessary to build a successful campaign.
- Lay the groundwork for creating key partnerships during this step.
- Ask questions of producers, buyers/retailers, and consumers that will generate interest in—and create partnerships for—your initiative.



DEFINING LOCAL

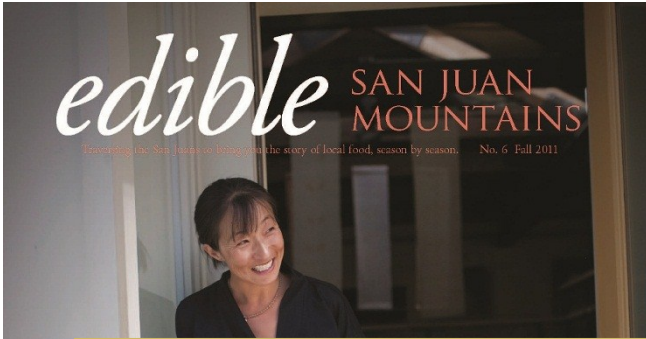
Local means different things to different people—from your own backyard to anything produced in your state. For the purposes of a Buy Local campaign, local should be defined by and for the community it represents. One approach is to simply say “as close to home as possible.”

STEP 2: CREATE YOUR MESSAGE

- Find common ground with groups and/or individuals in your community committed to the idea of supporting local food and agree to working together.
- Create one clear, consistent message.
- Know and write down what guides you. Why is it important to your community to buy local food? How will it create a better tomorrow for future generations? Use these principles to guide and focus your work.
- Deliver a broad and creative message. The more the same message is seen, the more it will stick in people’s minds. Select promotional materials that will catch attention and resonate with your target audience.



STEP 3: GO *LIVE* WITH YOUR MESSAGE



- Get your promotional materials out to your community.
- Engage the local media in your project. This makes advertising more affordable and can also broaden the reach of your message.

A LOCAL FOOD DIRECTORY

A Local Food Directory is a great way to educate the public on buying food locally, while directing business to restaurants, grocery stores, and local farms and ranches. To foster food producer-food buyer connections, you can create a guide that contains product lists from local farms and ranches—with their contact information—as well as a list of the businesses in town that carry local foods. Some directories carry more producer-specific information, such as farm equipment resources, whereas consumer-driven guides have information for the public or for food buyers. It is good to consider both of these audiences when creating your guide, and cater to both if possible. It will make your end product more versatile, and appeal to a greater number of people.

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STEP 4: TEACH THE IMPORTANCE OF YOUR MESSAGE

- Collaborate with community partners to facilitate local food workshops, retreats, and classes. This will help you identify the needs of your food system and help your campaign stay relevant and dynamic.
- Address the needs and gaps of your local food system and utilize the most effective networks and partnerships available to you.
- Spread your message and build partnerships among producers, buyers, consumers, and other food system stakeholders during these events. There are many different examples of events that can help foster local food connections, including:
 - Eat Local Cooking Competition
 - Farmer-Chef Connection Event
 - Tour-de-Farms (bike tour of local farms & gardens)
 - Eat Local Week



STEP 5: REACH OUT WITH YOUR MESSAGE

- Showcase your Buy Local campaign in locations where your message can be especially effective. These may be settings already integrated into the local food system like farmers markets, or less obvious venues for local food, such as a garden site on government grounds (county courthouse, city or tribal council building) where your message can reach local officials and ultimately influence local food policy.
- Explore potential venues to showcase your Buy Local campaign. Some may be better places to post marketing materials (posters, stickers, table tents), while others may allow for more involved activities such as teaming up with community groups to promote Buy Local as a part of other food projects and programs.
 - Farmers markets
 - Schools & colleges
 - Restaurants
 - Grocery stores



STEP 6: COVER THE COST OF YOUR MESSAGE

- Seek out grants and donations to get your project started. There are many governmental and non-governmental sources of financial support to start a Buy Local campaign, and local ones are especially well-suited to Buy Local efforts.
- Consider partnering with a local business alliance or network to help provide your Buy Local food campaign with financial backing and support.
- Form a Buy Local campaign that is a stand-alone organization or project with user fees for members in order to pay for a director to lead the effort.
- Create Buy Local campaign publications. These can cost money up front, but can also be sold to recuperate the cost of production and have the potential to generate funds for the project through advertising.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

Find online resources for this tool, as well as additional tool booklets on other community food topics, under “Food System Tools” at www.healthycommunityfoodsystems.org or www.HCFS.org



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