

Organic, Locally Grown, and Slow: Alternatives to Fast food?



Fast Food: The Common Problem



- Taste preferences for fats, sugar, and salt.
- Weight gain and poor diets among various populations of consumers (Pereira et al. 2005; Schmidt et al. 2005; and Bowman et al 2004).
- Obesity, diabetes, and cardiovascular disease.
- Challenges the body's ability to regulate appetite and energy intake, resulting in unintended excess calorie consumption.



High energy density from ubiquitous presence of corn as an ingredient component. Think *King Corn* and the study by Jahren and Kraft (2008).

Corn in:

- Oil used for frying foods
- High Fructose Syrup for sweetening soft drinks
- Animal feed
- Hence fast food = energy-intensive food production



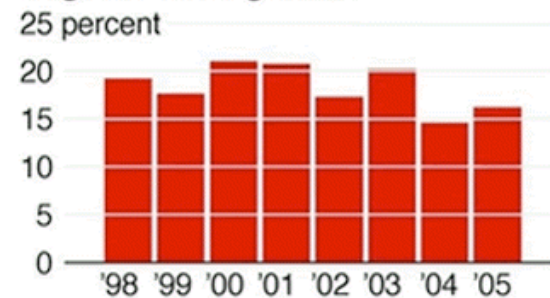
Perceived Benefits of Organic Foods

- ❖ Sales up by 20% annually since 1990, with sales reaching \$13.5 billion in 2005 (Winter and Davis 2006).
- ❖ No synthetic pesticides, growth hormones, antibiotics, modern genetic engineering techniques, chemical fertilizers, or sewage sludge.
- ❖ Assumptions:
 - 1) Less pesticide residue
 - 2) Higher amounts of antioxidants and other nutritional secondary metabolites.

Growing food industry

America's appetite for organic food is so strong that supply can't keep up with demand.

Organic food growth



SOURCE: Organic Trade Association AP

Research Findings on Organic Foods



- **Studies show mixed results because of problems in methodology and measurement.**
- **Pesticide use may lower levels of plant defense compounds in some cases while increasing them in others such as in the case of broad pins, pinto beans, peas, celery, and cotton (Winter and Davis, 2006).**
- **New research needed for comparing conventional and organic systems and determining whether organic conversion can reverse biodiversity losses caused by conventional agriculture (Hole et. al 2005).**

Local Food: The Importance of Place

- More energy-efficient food system.
- Better social relations between consumers and producers.
- Community gardens, food co-ops, farmers markets, and initiatives such as the Community Supported Agriculture program.
- Locavores and the 100-Mile Diet.



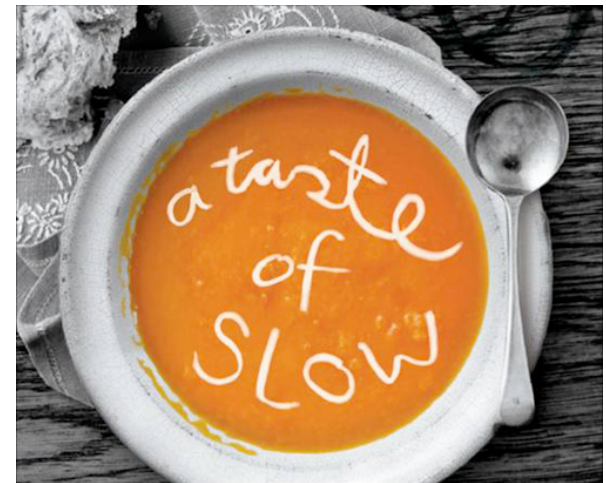
“Fresh” and “Local”

- ❖ “Freshness” affected by storage, processing, and handling; not a reliable criterion for quality.
- ❖ Difficult to define “local,” as it depends on agricultural resources in one’s geographic area.
- ❖ Economies of scale vs. inefficiencies of local transport.
- ❖ Diet of exclusively fresh produce not recommended.



Slow Food: Food Politics and Culture

- ❖ **Founded by Carlo Petrini, 1986; with roots in Italian leftist politics.**
- ❖ **Anti-fast food and homogenization of food culture.**
- ❖ **Ark of Taste: Endangered foods and the preservation of local traditions.**
- ❖ **Slow food chapters in the U.S. and abroad: greater focus on diversity, environmental, political and social change.**



Connecting Slow, Organic, and Local



- Local fits all
- Economics and environmental sustainability: niche and value-added marketing
- Dietary diversity and control over types of food