

## From Fried Chicken to Fresh Eggs

Growing up in a part of the country where fried and fast food are not only a tradition but a way of life, I learned a lot about myself and what I consider to be good quality food by moving to Northern California. In this vast and fertile state, I discovered the deliciousness of fresh fruit from the farmer's market and was seduced by the decadence of eating fresh and local vegetables. By learning to eat locally, I learned how to eat seasonally, and gained a newfound enjoyment in the simple pleasures of food.

From the perspective of a non-native Californian, I always find it remarkable how the locals here value organic, pesticide-free produce and are willing to pay for it. But I suppose that carries on through right down to their choice of beer and wine as well. No Lite-beer-out-of-the-can or boxed wine for these folks. And that's the main reason why I stay and enjoy my richer quality of life. I realized that appetizing food is food that is harvested with care and does not harm the environment. And if I value my health and wellbeing, then I can choose to spend my dollars on nutritious food which will not only sustain me, but will increase my level of health; or I can spend those same dollars on a myriad of prescription drugs in my later years.

So after a few years of assimilation into this Organic & Green life, I was finally ready to take the ultimate step a girl raised on fried chicken can take. I resolved to cut out fast food as well as packaged and processed food completely out of my life. Along with that, my husband and I would grow as much of our own produce as we could while raising a couple of hens in our backyard to provide us with fresh eggs daily. And so, I embarked on a journey most of us are too afraid to tackle. I had to actually prepare and cook my own meals; every meal.

One thing I discovered was that, for the lazy-when-it-comes-to-cooking person like me, fresh fruits and vegetables that are tasty without any dip or dressing are a great way to go. I also found that the closer I got to the source of my food, the more enjoyable it was. The sweetest tomatoes I have ever tasted are the ones right out of my backyard. And in doing this we are participating in sustainable agriculture (although I wouldn't consider our backyard to be a farm or anything) in which we are cultivating food that is healthy, humane, seasonal and most of all, pleasurable.

So for those people out there that were raised like myself and could never imagine anything tasting better than your regular order from McDonald's, you'll find that your palate *does* get spoiled and you *can* easily discern the freshness and quality of what you consume. It brings eating out to a whole new level because your expectations are higher. You know that quality food is local food because it is grown and harvested in order benefit our local ecosystems. And, when we buy produce from our neighboring farmers, it supports our local economy. It's never too late to take a bite from that fresh, local, organic strawberry and become aware of the tasty, appetizing possibilities that come with local and sustainable foods.

*Michelle (Serena's Mom) is a Bay Area wife and mother who strives to raise awareness in all things natural and holistic. Living holistically is not an alternative lifestyle, it is a natural one.*