

eat local caledon

SCHOOL NEWSLETTER

WHAT IS LOCAL FOOD?

By now we have all heard the term “local food”, but what does it really mean? Well it means different things to different people. It can mean:

- 🍎 Food grown in Ontario.
- 🍎 Food grown within 100 miles (160 kilometres) of where you live.
- 🍎 Food grown in Caledon and surrounding area.
- 🍎 Food grown in your backyard. (100-metre diet)

We are lucky in Caledon to have so many opportunities to eat local food. We can visit Pick-Your-Own farms, small farm-gate operations, and farmers’ markets. Most of us also have a backyard where we can grow a small garden.

The opposite of local food is imported food. By the time imported food arrives on our plate, it has travelled long distances and logged a lot of “food miles”. Imported food arrives in Ontario by airplane, shop, train or truck. All of these transportation methods use fuel, and therefore create pollution and greenhouse gas emissions. Of these transportation methods, airplanes use the most fuel and produce the most greenhouse gas emissions.

Shorter “food miles” is the main reason why local food is better for the environment than imported food. Local foods have travelled much shorter distances, sometimes no distance at all. By eating local food, you are helping to cut down on transportation emissions, pollution and greenhouse gas emissions. Now that’s “taking a bite out of climate change”!

REDUCING YOUR ECOLOGICAL "FOODPRINT"

You may have learned about your "ecological footprint". It is a way of measuring the impact you have on the environment through their overall activities. Footprints are measured in acres or hectares of land and the average Canadian footprint per person is 7.6 hectares. This means that if everyone in the world lived like Canadians, we would need 4.3 Earths!

The food you eat also contributes to the size of your ecological footprint, and we call this your **foodprint**. It accounts for the resources and land that are required to produce and transport your food and to dispose of your food-related waste.

When we consider the **foodprint** of a meal, or even of an ingredient, it is helpful to think of the steps that were involved in getting that food from the farm to your table.

Step 1: Production

Growing your food takes water and sometimes machines (which use fossil fuels) and sometimes chemicals (which can be harmful for the environment). Food that is grown in a greenhouse may require the use of fossil fuels to keep the greenhouse warm.

Step 2: Transportation

Food may be transported by plane, ship, truck, train or car, all which use fuel and create greenhouse gas emissions. Food may be transported by bike or foot, which is emission-free. Food may need lots of packaging and to be kept frozen or chilled during transport.

Step 3: To Your Plate

To get the food to your plate, you pick it up at the store, farmers' market, farm, or garden and take it back to our kitchens to eat it. You travel to do this by car, bike, or foot.

Step 4: Waste

Once finished with the food, you deal with any food waste and packaging through garbage disposal, recycling, green bin composting, or backyard composting.

With these steps in mind, think about the relative **foodprint** sizes of:

- 1) an imported tomato at the grocery store;
- 2) an Ontario greenhouse tomato at the grocery store;
- 3) an Ontario field tomato at the grocery store;
- 4) a Caledon tomato at the farmers' market; and
- 5) a tomato from your backyard garden

Now think about the **foodprint** of some of your favourite foods. What are you going to do to reduce your ecological **foodprint**?

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www.eatlocalcaledon.org

