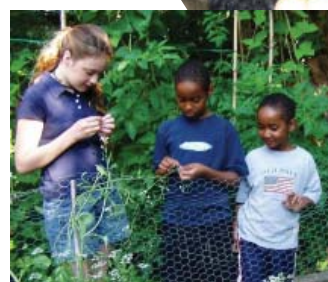


# *Repairing Eden*



**Sustainable, Healthy Food Opportunities  
for Religious Institutions**

**By Stacey Kennealy**

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# Introduction

## Repairing Eden

### *Environmentally Sustainable Food Choices for Religious Institutions*

Religion is inseparable from food. The world's great religious traditions have countless rituals and celebrations involving special meals and foods of various kinds. Whether through Christianity's Holy Communion, Judaism's Passover Seder, the Islamic Iftar meal, or the sharing of sweets during Hinduism's Diwali, the world's religions all recognize food as something that connects people to God and to each other. No matter the religion or culture, food sustains us physically and helps us to celebrate, appreciate and find meaning in life.

For thousands of years, food cultivation and harvesting has offered a spiritual experience; to connect with the land is to connect with God. However, modern methods of food production undermine, if not eliminate, this connection. More and more people are unaware of the origins of their food, while scientists are increasingly clear that our food choices can adversely affect the health of the environment and farm workers. Current farming practices release enormous amounts of toxic chemicals into land and water, while ever increasing levels of meat consumption result in the destruction of valuable habitat and unspeakable cruelty to animals. Workers are exposed to high levels of these toxins, and are frequently underpaid and underinsured. Conversely, by making environmentally-responsible food choices, religious groups can protect farm workers, conserve soil and water, and bear moral witness.

From a religious perspective, the question is clear. Does the food we consume represent the values we profess?



As religious leaders, we are called to be environmental stewards and to foster social justice. The food we serve matters, and it is important that we make food choices aligned with our calling. From organic fruits and vegetables to Fair Trade coffee and tea, there are endless opportunities to serve delicious food that represents our values.

*Repairing Eden* is a guide to help religious groups make environmentally sustainable, ethical food choices. It provides a background about food issues, and outlines effective ways to support sustainable, healthy food in your religious institution. *Repairing Eden* is divided into six main sections. The

first section discusses opportunities for houses of worship. The second section highlights opportunities for schools, and the third section outlines opportunities to use your property to promote healthy eating. We've included Success Stories to showcase religious leaders that have put their beliefs into action. We've also added a set of Definitions to help you understand special terms you may encounter, and Resources to support your efforts moving forward.

GreenFaith is excited to offer *Repairing Eden*. We hope that the guidelines and resources in the pages that follow will help your institution to choose environmentally sound, socially just, and healthy food. Bon appétit!

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# Opportunities for Houses of Worship

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## Chew On These!

### A Summary of Actions for Houses of Worship



**S**erve Fair Trade, Organic, Bird-Friendly Coffee, and Fair Trade, Organic tea and hot chocolate at all refreshment hours, meals and events. (Pg 6)

**W**hen purchasing pastries, choose items that are lower in fat and sugar, and are free of trans-fats. Support your local bakery whenever possible. (Pg 6)



**S**erve fresh fruit and vegetables at all community gatherings. Where possible, purchase organic, local and seasonal produce. (Pg 7)



**R**educe your carbon footprint, and bear moral witness by serving vegetarian meals. Provide at least one vegetarian option at all meals and events. (Pg 7)

**C**hoose Certified Organic and Certified Humane meat where available, and support smaller farmers in your community. (Pg 8)

**C**hoose sustainable seafood by using Monterey Bay Aquarium's Seafood Watch guide. (Pg 9)

**U**se whole grains in meals to increase nutrients and fiber. (Pg 9)

**S**tart small by choosing healthier options for the most frequently-used ingredients, such as organic, local eggs, or organic whole wheat flour. (Pg 9)


**T**each members the basics of healthy eating by hosting expert speakers, posting explanatory signs at meal time, or distributing recipes and helpful guides. (Pg 10)



**P**romote local farmers' markets, farm stands and CSAs in your newsletter or bulletin, and encourage members to garden at home or in a community plot. (Pg 11)

**T**each teenagers about healthy eating through cooking classes, website tools, field trips, leadership opportunities, and open discussion about the connection between eating and body image. (Pg 12)

**H**elp children to develop a healthy palate through food tastings, teaching where food comes from, and offering fun field trips to local farms. (Pg 13)

Items marked with  represent actions that have the biggest impact

## Eating Well - Choosing Healthy and Sustainable Food for Religious Events

### Refreshments after Worship

*Nothing would be more tiresome than eating and drinking if God had not made them a pleasure as well as a necessity.*  
Voltaire

*Eat and drink the sustenance God has provided and do not act wrongfully in the land, causing corruption.*  
Qur'an 2:60

*Six years you may sow your field.  
But in the seventh year the land shall have a blessing of complete rest, a Sabbath of the Lord.*  
Leviticus 25: 2-5

Every religious community enjoys sharing refreshments after worship. Refreshment hour offers time to gather, reflect, and socialize, and good food can make this time more enjoyable. These occasions are among the best and easiest to model healthy, sustainable food choices.

There are several approaches to integrating sustainable, healthy foods into these events.

### Use Fair Trade, Shade Grown, Organic Beverages



**S**erve Fair Trade, Organic, Bird-Friendly Coffee, and Fair Trade, Organic tea and hot chocolate at all refreshment hours, meals and events.

What would refreshment hour be without coffee and tea? For thousands of years, these beverages have been a part of human culture, but the current demand for these products surpasses that of any other time in human history. Prices are low enough that these products are widely available.

These low prices, however, are only possible at the expense of workers and the environment. Individuals who grow and process these crops are often vastly underpaid, and are exposed to harmful pesticides. In addition, the most commonly used farming methods degrade the environment. For example, slash and burn agriculture to clear land for coffee cultivation results in the clear-cutting of large areas of forest, destroying important wildlife habitat. It also leads to soil depletion and erosion, deepening the cycle of poverty in developing countries.

Thankfully, Fair Trade, Organic coffee and tea offers consumers a more ethical choice. These products are grown and processed in an environmentally and socially responsible manner, treating workers and the environment with respect and care. Making the change to Fair Trade, organic beverages demonstrates your commitment to social equity and the health of the environment with each and every cup you serve. Fair Trade, organic coffee, tea, and hot chocolate are increasingly easy to find in your local supermarket, and can also be purchased online (see resources section of Repairing Eden for online purchasing options).

In addition to Fair Trade and Organic Certifications, some coffees and chocolates are also Rainforest Alliance Certified. This certification sets standards that protect biodiversity, and support sustainable livelihoods in developing countries. The Bird Friendly label is another useful label you will find for coffee; it ensures bird habitat is protected during cultivation. If available, purchase products that are Rainforest Alliance Certified and/or Bird Friendly Certified.

### Sustainable Sweets

**W**hen purchasing pastries, choose items that are lower in fat and sugar, and are free of trans-fats. Support your local bakery whenever possible.

Doughnuts, pastries, breads...after coffee, sweets are the next staple at any refreshment hour. With the understanding (and appreciation!) that sweets are not disappearing from the



table anytime soon, there are many options to keep members of your house of worship healthy and happy.

### ◆ Support Local Bakeries

For those sweets you just can't live without, try to purchase from a small, local bakery if available. The more locally an item is produced, generally the smaller its "carbon footprint" – the shorter the distance, the less energy is required to deliver it to your plate. Also, we recommend that you learn from your baker by asking questions. What ingredients are in the pastries, and what are the healthiest pastries available? Does the baker offer any pastries that use locally-grown ingredients?

### ◆ Choose Healthy Ingredients

Choose items that are lower in fat, and have local and/or USDA Certified organic ingredients. Organic certification ensures that the ingredients in the product were grown without synthetic pesticides, hormones or antibiotics. Purchase pastries that are made without trans-fats, also known as hydrogenated or partially hydrogenated oils. You can identify the products that have these oils by reading the ingredient label - these oils are often the second or third ingredient in the list.

### ◆ Encourage Healthier Contributions from Members

If members of the house of worship contribute baked goods, ask them to use local, organic, and Fair Trade ingredients where possible. Explain the importance of these changes, and provide them with information so that they can adapt their recipes more easily.

## Fruits and Vegetables



**S**erve fresh fruit and vegetables at all community gatherings. Where possible, purchase organic, local and seasonal produce.

Think outside the pastry box! Fruits can satisfy a sweet tooth in a very healthy way, and vegetables offer a filling, wholesome snack. We strongly recommend that you provide fresh fruits and vegetables at every refreshment hour, and make these fruits and veggies local and organic where possible. Serving local, in-season produce will help to support farms in your community and educate your members about seasonal eating. When USDA Certified Organic produce is unavailable, look for produce that is Food Alliance Certified, Demeter Biodynamic Certified, or was cultivated using Integrated Pest Management (IPM).

Refreshments after worship provide the most consistent opportunity to model sustainable, healthy eating in your house of worship. Take advantage of this opportunity – and enjoy it!

## Meals and Special Events

Meals and special events are an integral part of the life of religious communities. With food as a central focus, these occasions present great opportunities to showcase sustainable, healthier eating.

## Serve Vegetarian and Vegan Meals



**R**educe your carbon footprint, and bear moral witness by serving vegetarian meals. Provide at least one vegetarian option at all meals and events.

Reducing meat consumption is one of the most effective choices we can make to benefit the environment, our health, and all of creation. With the high demand for meat, eggs and milk worldwide, most farm animals live in large 'factory farms.' These farms are drastically different than the smaller, family farms of decades past. In factory farms, animals are routinely kept in confined quarters that deny them access to the outdoors and prevent them from engaging in their natural behaviors. Slaughter practices are often poorly regulated, leading to additional suffering for the animal. Due to this stress and poor conditions, these animals frequently become sick, resulting in the large-scale use of antibiotics. Hormones are also administered to increase meat, milk and egg production. These chemicals make their way into various meat products and into our bodies.

These factory farming practices harm the environment on a large scale. On average, it requires 8 pounds of grain to produce 1 pound of meat, leading to extremely inefficient land use. The 'carbon footprint' of a meat-rich diet is much greater than that of a vegetarian diet – as many have noted, growing levels of meat consumption is one of the most significant contributors to global warming. Keeping thousands of animals in confined areas leads to significant concentrations of animal waste, which can pollute groundwater supplies and create toxic health threats.

Eating vegetarian fare, even for one meal a week, creates a significant benefit for the planet and the lives of farm animals.

## Opportunities for Houses of Worship . . . . .

Because of this, we strongly recommend that your house of worship adopts the following practices:

### ◆ Offer a Vegetarian/Vegan Selection at Every Meal

Offer a vegetarian and/or vegan selection at every meal or special event. Vegetarian fare respects various dietary needs within your community and invites all members to try new foods. The vegetarian/vegan selection should be a full meal that changes with similar frequency as the meat options. For instance, a side salad, particularly if the toppings do not include protein, or steamed vegetables, are not considered to be full vegetarian meal options.

### ◆ Substitute Vegetarian ‘Meat’ for the Real Thing

Supplant vegetarian ‘meats’ and ingredients for real meat in recipes. There are countless products on the market that have a similar texture and taste as meat, but are entirely vegetarian. These products contain little to no cholesterol, and are much lower in fat and calories than their meat counterparts. Gardenburger, Boca Foods, Tofurkey and other brands sell veggie burgers and vegetarian sausages, while companies like Lightlife sell vegetarian ‘ground meat’ and vegetarian deli slices for sandwiches.

### ◆ Challenge Yourself: Make Some Meals Entirely Vegetarian or Vegan

Once your house of worship is comfortable with these changes, aim to make several meals or events exclusively vegetarian/vegan to demonstrate your commitment towards sustainable eating.

## Not All Meat is Created Equal – So Purchase Responsibly.

**C**hoose Certified Organic and Certified Humane meat where available, and support smaller farmers in your community.

Are pancake breakfasts with soy sausages just not possible for your community? We recognize that meat will not disappear from the menus of religious institutions overnight. If your house of worship does consume meat at community



meals, the type of meat you choose is an important factor in promoting sustainable, healthy eating.

While factory farms are the most common source of meat on the market, more and more farms are raising animals in humane conditions that are also better for the planet. We urge you to support humane farming practices, and bear moral witness by following the guidelines described below.

### ◆ Choose Organic and Humane

Purchase meat that is Certified Organic and certified by at least one of these organizations: Certified Humane Raised and Handled®, Animal Welfare Approved™, Food Alliance Certified, American Humane Certified™. See the Definitions section of *Repairing Eden* for more information on these certifications. These certifications are third-party verified to ensure that they fulfill strict animal welfare and health requirements. All of them require that the animal products are hormone-free; organic meat is free of all antibiotics and certified humane meat is free of all non-therapeutic antibiotics.

### ◆ Support Local, Small Farms

Some of the certified organic and humane meats will be from larger farms, many of which are located far away from your location. While this meat is far better than factory-farmed meat, we encourage you to support local and small farms whenever possible. If a nearby farm is not certified organic or humane, visit the farm and inspect how they raise and handle the animals before making a decision to support them. If no small farms are located nearby your community, purchase meat that is Animal Welfare Approved™. This humane certification is only given to independent family farms.

### ◆ Look for Certifications

There are a number of new eco-labels that are used in the marketing of meat products, such as ‘free range’, ‘grass-fed’ or ‘pasture raised.’ These labeling practices are not as well regulated as the Certified Organic and humane certified labels. If you have a choice, always choose Certified Organic, American Humane Certified™, Certified Humane Raised and Handled®, Food Alliance Certified, or Animal Welfare Approved™. See the Definitions section of *Repairing Eden* for clarification on these labels.

### ◆ Support Sustainable Kosher and Halal Meat

Both Kosher and Halal standards espouse humane treatment of animals. However, as recent well publicized



events have shown, today's industrial farming system is often not able to deliver on this promise. Animals that are slaughtered for Kosher and Halal meat are often raised in confinement on factory farms, and the slaughterhouses themselves often do not uphold ethical standards for the animals or the workers. However, Kosher meat that is also humane is beginning to arrive on the scene, and there is talk within the Islamic community for pastured Halal meat. It's important to use your food dollars to support these ethical producers. Please see the Resources section of *Repairing Eden* for more information on pg 57..

- ◆ **Choose Meat with a Smaller Carbon Footprint**  
When considering the type of meat to serve for a meal, choose chicken and turkey over beef or pork. Chicken and turkey are lower in fat and cholesterol, and create a smaller environmental footprint than beef or pork. The production of chicken and turkey also creates fewer greenhouse gases than the production of pork and beef.

## Consume Seafood Sustainably

**C**hoose sustainable seafood by using Monterey Bay Aquarium's Seafood Watch guide.

Although it is not served as often as other types of meat, seafood is often a welcomed addition to special meals at religious institutions. Choosing sustainable fish can be complicated, however, given the variety of fish on the market and lack of labeling describing how it was harvested. Most fish stocks in the ocean are depleted, due to large-scale fishing practices that harvest without regard for the ability of fish populations to replenish themselves. Fish farming has become a common practice, but some farms release significant pollution into the surrounding environment.

The most up-to-date resource on sustainable seafood is Monterey Bay Aquarium's Seafood Watch, which is listed in the 'Resources' section of *Repairing Eden*. The guide is continually updated, and offers sustainable fish options both regionally and nationally. In addition to following the guidelines in Seafood Watch, aim to purchase seafood with the Marine Stewardship Council Certification label (see 'Definitions' section of *Repairing Eden*).

## Eat Organic, Seasonal, Local Fruits and Vegetables

Fruits and vegetables make for a well-balanced meal, and provide essential vitamins and minerals. Offer a variety of fruits and vegetables at every meal or event, and support this change in the long-term with a policy committing to it. Purchase organic and local products to help support environmentally-sensitive practices and family farms. If organic fruits and vegetables are not available, look for produce that is Demeter Biodynamic Certified, Food Alliance Certified, or produced with Integrated Pest Management (IPM) methods.

## Use Whole Grains

**U**se whole grains in meals to increase nutrients and fiber.

Whole grains, such as those used in whole wheat bread, are much higher in vitamins and fiber than processed grains, such as those used in white bread. Purchase products that contain the Whole Grain label (see 'Definitions' section of *Repairing Eden*), or read the ingredients and look for the word 'whole' preceding the grains listed. Offer whole and unrefined grains as a side dish; choose brown rice over white rice, or offer millet, couscous, barley, buckwheat or quinoa.

## Think Creatively

**S**tart small by choosing healthier options for the most frequently-used ingredients, such as organic, local eggs, or organic whole wheat flour.

An entirely new set of recipes and rules is not always a prerequisite for healthy, sustainable eating. Often, small changes lead to significant results. Make a list of the ingredients and products that you use, and review it to see where you can make changes towards healthy eating. Perhaps white bread can be exchanged for whole wheat bread, or regular eggs can be exchanged for Certified Organic, cage-free, Certified Humane eggs. Involve your members in this process. Nutritionists, vegetarians or other healthy eaters within the house of worship will often be your best sources for creative ideas.

## Teaching Well - *Educating Your Religious Community about Healthy Sustainable Food*

### Adult Education

Every religious tradition calls us to be stewards of our bodies. With our hectic lives and the conflicting messages in the media, however, it is increasingly more difficult to eat healthily. Members of religious institutions need direction and support to eat in a sustainable, healthy manner, and houses of worship provide excellent venues for education about this topic. Through events and activities, you can teach your community about the principles of healthy eating and provide support for their efforts in this direction.

### Teach the Basics of Sustainable, Healthy Food

Teach members the basics of healthy eating by hosting expert speakers, posting explanatory signs at meal time, or distributing recipes and helpful guides.

Members can only make better food choices if they are aware of the fundamental ideas behind sustainable, healthy eating. They need help in discerning sustainable, healthy food from their unhealthy counterparts, and they need information and support to integrate these ideas into their lives.

#### ◆ Invite Speakers

Invite speakers to teach about healthy and sustainable eating, such as nutritionists, vegetarians, dieticians, ecologists or others. Look first within your house of worship for these experts; if a member leads the workshop, it builds leadership in that individual, and it makes the event more comfortable for the participants, as well as more affordable to host.

#### ◆ Post Signs

Post signs to educate your members about the changes taking place within your institution. For instance, at refreshment hour, place a sign in front of the coffee machine describing it as Fair Trade, organic coffee, with a sentence explaining why you made the change. These signs will help to showcase your efforts and give your members examples of actions that they can do at home.

#### ◆ Distribute Recipes

Giving a healthy food suggestion without cooking instructions is like providing a boat without a paddle. When it comes to unfamiliar vegetables or vegetarian dishes, many people resist trying new foods because they have no idea how to cook them. Make this transition easier by including a healthy recipe in each week's worship bulletin or monthly newsletter. Consider creating a recipe sharing group, or asking a member of the house of worship (or a local cook) to lead a vegetarian cooking workshop. If members enjoy the vegetarian or local/organic food offered at an event or meal, distribute the recipes.

#### ◆ Make Healthy Eating Fun

Promote healthy eating in creative and fun ways. Instead of a traditional pot-luck meal or post-worship refreshment, hold a food tasting. This kind of event can broaden everyone's taste buds and encourage members to experiment with healthy cooking at home.

*Give a man a fish and you feed him for a day. Teach a man to fish and you feed him for a lifetime.*

Chinese Proverb

### ◆ Distribute Helpful Guides

Distribute guides to your members to educate them about healthy eating. Monterey Bay Aquarium's Seafood Watch guides are a great option to help members understand sustainable fish choices. These guides are wallet-sized, so members can refer to them when they are out to eat. They have a regional and national food guide, and a separate guide for Sushi. Environmental Working Group has a guide on Pesticides in Produce, which can help members make smarter purchases at the grocery store. Links to both of these guides can be found in the 'Resources' section of *Repairing Eden*.

## Help Your Members Find Healthy Food



**P**romote local farmers' markets, farm stands and CSAs in your newsletter or bulletin, and encourage members to garden at home or in a community plot.

Once the first hurdle is crossed and your community is open to trying new foods, the next step is to help them locate where they can purchase these items.

### ◆ Promote Local Farmers' Markets and Farm Stands

Farmers' markets and farm stands are emerging every day in rural, suburban and even urban areas. Farmers' markets are a great venue for purchasing local and organic produce, as well as local foods such as honey, jams, pies, meats and cheeses. While these markets are becoming more and more common, many people do not know how to locate the nearest market or farm stand. In your institution's newsletter or website, provide a list of the local farmers' markets, with a sentence or two describing the products that each sells. Invite local markets to advertise in your newsletter or other publications.

### ◆ Educate Members about Community Supported Agriculture (CSA)

Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) is a way for members to receive fresh, local produce once per week at relatively inexpensive prices. Unlike a farmers' market, members pay for a 'share' of the farm all at once in the beginning of the season, and the produce is distributed week by week, as it is harvested. CSAs are new to many people, so we encourage you to explain the CSA concept in your newsletter and identify nearby CSA farms where people can get involved. Invite farms to advertise in your newsletter or other publications, or to make a presentation at your house of worship.

### ◆ Encourage Gardening

Sometimes, the best place to find healthy food is in your own backyard. Backyard gardens and container plants can make fresh veggies, herbs and even fruits available during many seasons and in a range of locations. We encourage you to educate members about gardening and provide them with tips and resources to start their own garden. We recommend organic gardening practices, because they do not make use of harmful pesticides and herbicides. This kind of gardening can seem intimidating for newcomers, however, and many people in your community will need resources and tips to get them moving. Educate about organic gardening through newsletter articles, speakers and workshops, or create a gardening group that can share and distribute ideas. See the 'Resources' section of *Repairing Eden* for information you can distribute to members about gardening.

## Support Your Members' Leadership

With leadership comes learning. Encourage your members to play leadership roles in healthy food activities. Invite them to plan a menu for refreshment hour, organize a Community Supported Agriculture project for your house of worship, or organize an educational event for the wider community. Ask members to donate healthier food for food collections—they will make a direct impact on the surrounding community, and it will help them to think more critically about their own food purchases

## Teenage Education

**T**each teenagers about healthy eating through website tools, open discussion about the connection between eating and body image, cooking classes, field trips, and leadership opportunities.

The most formative time for developing a healthy relationship with food is the teenage years. There are countless unhealthy food messages in the media encouraging teenagers to eat junk food, drink caffeine, eat less to lose weight, and more. Instead of eating for health of the body and the planet, these messages often cause teenagers to develop an uninformed sense of what sustainable, healthy eating involves. Helping teenagers develop a healthy relationship with food can foster a better body image, give them more confidence, and help them develop better eating habits for life.

### Connect with Teenagers Through the Web

Teenagers receive a lot of information through the internet, and are very comfortable with the web. While the internet is a great contributor to unhealthy eating, it also provides a unique, fun and creative way to educate teenagers about food-related issues. Online videos such as the Meatrix and Store Wars pack a big lesson in just a few minutes, and can be followed by a discussion or follow-up plan. See the 'Resources' section of *Repairing Eden* for these websites.

### Don't Be Afraid to Discuss Body Image and Emotions

Eating habits and body image are inextricably linked; similar to adults, teenagers learn to eat too little or eat too much if they have a poor body image. Similarly, we learn at an early age to soothe our difficult emotions with unhealthy foods. Invite speakers and host events that discuss these issues, and provide tools for establishing a healthier connection to food.

### Get Them in the Kitchen!

Teenagers love hands-on activities, and often learn best through touching, seeing or feeling. One of the most effective ways to cultivate healthier eating habits is to give teens freedom to experiment in the kitchen. This experience builds their confidence and independence, and helps them think through all aspects of healthy eating from the ingredients to the way the food is cooked and served. Create a teenagers' cooking class focused on sustainable foods, invite a local chef to cook alongside the young adults in the kitchen, or invite teenagers to cook healthy items for refreshment hour.

### Organize Creative Field Trips

Field trips create great learning opportunities for teenagers and adults alike. Visit 'green' restaurants or a local, organic farm to see sustainable food practices in action. Follow-up the field trip with a discussion to help the teenagers think of ways to apply the lessons they have learned.

### Build Teen Leadership

Once a young adult becomes a leader in any issue, s/he is more likely to give thought to that topic in daily life. Invite your teenage members to tend the garden, plan a menu for refreshment hour, or work with your food committee, to help build their leadership and awareness for healthy eating.

## Children's Education

**H**elp children to develop a healthy palate through food tastings, teaching where food comes from, and offering fun field trips to local farms.

Food preferences and taste buds develop early in life, and children learn about eating through their direct experiences with food. Adult education will help to change what is served at home, but children can also learn about sustainable, healthy food through their experiences at your house of worship.

### **Do food tastings for children – blindfolded!**

Whenever food is served to children, it is an opportunity to teach them about healthy and sustainable food. Tastings are a fun and easy way to encourage children to try new foods—do a blind food tasting and have children guess the food item. Or, highlight a locally grown fruit or vegetable at meal time to teach children the concept of seasonality.

### **Help them understand where their food comes from**

For many children, urban and suburban kids in particular, a grocery store is what they imagine when asked where food comes from. Understandably, children believe what they see the most, and what is right in front of their eyes. Healthy and sustainable eating habits are difficult to establish unless children understand the basic ideas of how food is grown and produced. Give out seedlings to help the children start a garden at home, or get them involved in the garden at your religious institution. If the children live in an urban area, help them to get a container garden started. Show them the entire process from seed to harvest, and allow them to taste the fruits of their labor.

### **Visit a Farm!**

Field trips are a fun way to teach children a lesson, and to better ensure they remember what they have learned. Many farms offer pick-your-own opportunities, which teach multiple lessons at once: children learn about the origins of their food, they can taste new fruits and vegetables they may have never tried before, and they begin to understand the idea of seasonality. Children may also have the opportunity to meet with the farmer or get a farm tour during this visit, which will teach them about food harvesting and operation.



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# Opportunities for Religious Schools

## Chew on These!

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## Chew On These!

### A Summary of Actions for Religious Schools

**T**he school menu is the starting place for any food effort. Analyze the menu to understand what is offered and find areas for improvement. (Pg 16)



**O**ffer a vegetarian option at every meal, and aim to make some lunches entirely vegetarian. (Pg 17)



**S**erve fresh fruits and vegetables at every lunch, and aim for as much variety as possible. (Pg 18)



**A**im for organic fruits and vegetables, particularly with the 'Dirty Dozen' that have the highest pesticide residues: peaches, apples, sweet bell peppers, celery, nectarines, strawberries, cherries, lettuce, imported grapes, pears, spinach and potatoes. (Pg 18)

**O**ffer organic, certified humane meat, preferably from small, local farms. Serve sustainable seafood where possible. (Pg 18)

**M**ilk is a staple of lunchtime. Offer organic milk and provide a soymilk option. (Pg 19)



**B**uy local and help children understand seasonal eating through Farm-to-School opportunities. (Pg 19)



**U**nhealthy habits, such as frying food and serving sugary drinks, are standard practice at most schools. Make your menu healthier by changing course from this standard. (Pg 20)


**M**ake school events healthier by serving healthy, locally-made pastries, Fair Trade, organic coffee, fruits and vegetables, and vegetarian meals. (Pg 21)

**O**ffer food-related curricula, which is a great way to teach students about healthy eating before and after lunchtime. (Pg 23)



**F**oster experiential learning by taking students to visit a farm, or by doing hands-on activities with them such as cooking classes, 'green' snack days, or recipe sharing. (Pg 23)

**T**each parents healthy habits by publicizing healthy food venues, such as farmers' markets, farm stands or CSAs, in the school bulletin or list serve. Provide workshops, cooking classes or recipe sharing, or invite them to help improve the lunch menu. (Pg 24)

Items marked with  represent actions that have the biggest impact

## Eating Well - *Choosing Healthy, Greener Food for School*

Over a thousand hours per year, for more than a decade, children spend most of their time in a school environment. At school, children learn and also develop significant life skills. The understandable emphasis on math, science, reading, and other subjects frequently overshadows another important lesson students learn: eating habits. The cafeteria, the classroom and school activities all provide endless opportunities to teach students about healthy eating, to serve nourishing food, and to encourage parents to provide healthier food at home.

### Improving Your Cafeteria Menu

The school menu is the starting place for any food effort. Analyze the menu to understand what is offered and find areas for improvement.

The importance of lunch hour cannot be understated. Children need nourishment that replenishes them after morning classes, and sustains them until dinnertime. Most school lunches provide sufficient calories and are designed around the major food groups, but much of the food remains unhealthy. Making improvements can be a complex process, but at the heart of these efforts is the menu. Improving the menu is one of the easiest and best places to start.

### Know Your Starting Point

You cannot establish your goals and priorities until you know your starting point. The first step is to obtain copies of the menus, analyze them, and record your conclusions. You should record data on the following topics:

- ◆ Number of days per week that meat is served, and the type of meat it is (i.e. hot dog, meatloaf, hamburger, highly processed, etc).
- ◆ How the food is prepared—baked, fried, steamed, etc.
- ◆ Type and amount of fruits and vegetables provided.
- ◆ Dessert options and drinks offered—do they contain a lot of added sugar?
- ◆ Variety—do children have just one choice for lunch each day, or several? How often does the menu change?

Some of the best conclusions come from direct observation. For instance, several members of your food committee can sit in on lunch hour, eat the food and talk with the students. Ask students their opinions, and invite their suggestions. Take note of serving sizes—are they adequate, not sufficient or too large—and see how much food is thrown away after lunch is over. Are there any patterns, such as certain types of foods that are continually wasted?

### Make an Action Plan

After the observations comes the planning. The food committee should review the conclusions, read the recommendations in *Repairing Eden*, and begin prioritizing opportunities for change. Make the easiest changes first. This allows you to gain some quick wins, and build momentum towards addressing more complicated changes. Be sure to make a plan that strikes a balance between the *Repairing Eden* guidelines, the goals and hopes of the committee, and student preferences.

## Get the Principal on Board

The school principal is the ultimate decision-maker, and it is important to have his or her support of the changes being proposed. For many schools, changing what is offered on the menu can affect the budget, because some items may cost more to purchase, or the school may lose money by eliminating the sale of sugary snacks. It is important to talk through these potential barriers with the Principal, so that when it comes time to make changes s/he will be supportive. In addition, the Principal knows the inner-workings of the school very well, and s/he may be able to highlight additional barriers or issues that need to be discussed.

## Work with Staff

Always remember to work with kitchen staff to change the menu. Whether you have a cook from a large corporate provider like Sodexo, or a small local cook, school staff have put their time, effort and hearts into the planning, preparation and serving of food in the cafeteria. Not only are these staff key to the success of your plan, but they deserve to be included in the process. They also have insider knowledge about food purchasing and preparation, so they will likely have some great ideas to offer. Most importantly, never assume that staff understand how to implement the guidelines you propose; staff should always be educated and/or trained to carry out the changes.

## Children Are What They Eat

### Vegetarian Meals



**O**ffer a vegetarian option at every meal, and aim to make some lunches entirely vegetarian.

Most schools serve a meat-based meal 4 to 5 days per week, and provide very few options for vegetarian students or those wishing to eat less meat. Often the perception is that meat is a necessary source of protein, vitamins and nutrients. However, according to the U.S. Department of Agriculture, “Vegetarian diets can meet all of the recommendations for nutrients,” and the American Dietetic Association confirms

that “Well-planned vegan and vegetarian diets are appropriate for all stages of the life-cycle including...infancy, childhood, and adolescence.”<sup>2</sup> Adjusting the menu to incorporate more vegetarian foods is one of the best steps a school can take towards healthy, sustainable fare.

#### ◆ Offer a vegetarian or vegan option each day.

As many vegetarian students can attest, a diet of iceberg lettuce and steamed vegetables during lunchtime is not a preferred meal, and it certainly does not provide the nutrients and minerals a growing body needs. A vegetarian option should fulfill all dietary requirements, and be attractive enough to interest non-vegetarian students in consuming less meat. The vegetarian option should be a full meal, with protein and nutrients comparable to a meat-based meal.

#### ◆ Have All-Vegetarian Lunches

At least 1 day (or more) each week, eliminate meat entirely from the menu. Serve a vegetarian, preferably vegan, meal that includes protein and essential nutrients. Beans, whole grains, textured vegetable protein, vegetarian ‘meats’, and tofu are great substitutes for meat in vegan meals. In vegetarian meals, cheese and eggs can easily take the place of meat.

#### ◆ Be Allergy Conscious

Be conscious of children with allergies by making the vegetarian or vegan options nut-free, soy-free or dairy-free if necessary.

#### ◆ Substitute Vegetarian ‘Meat’ for the Real Thing

Get Creative! Use vegetarian ‘meats’ in places where they can fit in easily, such as vegetarian sausage to go with pancakes, or veggie ground meat in lasagna.

#### ◆ Taste Tests Are Important!

If vegetarian foods are new to your school, test the waters by conducting recipe tastings with students. This will not only ensure that students enjoy the vegetarian foods served, but will also make the entire process more fun for the school community.

## Fruits and Vegetables



**S**erve fresh fruits and vegetables at every lunch, and aim for as much variety as possible.

The USDA food guide pyramid recommends several servings each of fruits and vegetables daily. For students, especially those in low-income areas, lunch may be the only time in the entire day that they have access to fresh fruits and vegetables. Providing these at lunchtime is critical for keeping students healthy and teaching them good eating habits.

- ◆ Each day, offer fresh fruit and/or canned fruit with no added sugar.
- ◆ Provide several vegetables per meal that vary in color (an indication of different nutrients). Aim to include some fresh, leafy greens. If possible, include a side salad, or provide access to a salad bar.
- ◆ Whenever possible, the vegetarian meal should be made with fresh vegetables.
- ◆ Variety is important. In addition to the usual bananas, apples, green beans and potatoes, try serving blueberries, pears, spinach, chard or kale. If children eat a varied diet, they will be more inclined to have a diverse diet as adults and be open to trying new foods.

## Organic Foods



**A**im for organic fruits and vegetables, particularly with the 'Dirty Dozen' that have the highest pesticide residues

Recent studies have shown that children have elevated levels of pesticides in their bloodstream after eating conventional fruits and vegetables, but do not experience the same effects after consuming organic produce. Synthetic pesticides, which are used to spray conventional produce, have been linked to

cancer, Attention Deficit Disorder, asthma and neurological disorders, among other ailments. Pesticides are known to cause similar effects in wildlife, and they are increasingly widespread throughout the environment: traces of them have been found as far away as Antarctica and in remote wilderness areas. When an item is organic, it has been cultivated without the use of synthetic pesticides, herbicides or fertilizers. You can be sure that its production is beneficial to the farm workers, the environment and our health.

### ◆ Purchase USDA Certified Organic

Substitute USDA Certified Organic products for their conventional counterparts whenever possible. Certified organic items are available for nearly any product on the market, from fresh fruits and vegetables to cheeses, meats, crackers and bread. If Certified Organic produce is unavailable, look for produce that is Food Alliance Certified, Demeter Biodynamic Certified, or was produced using Integrated Pest Management (IPM) techniques.

### ◆ Take Baby Steps

Some fruits and vegetables have more pesticide residues than others, or are sprayed more aggressively with pesticides. Replace these fruits and vegetables first. Aim to go organic with the "dirty dozen" fruits and vegetables that fit this category: peaches, apples, sweet bell peppers, celery, nectarines, strawberries, cherries, lettuce, imported grapes, pears, spinach and potatoes.

## Organic, Humane Meat

**O**ffer organic, certified humane meat, preferably from small, local farms. Serve sustainable seafood where possible.

Recently, 143 million pounds of ground beef were recalled, marking the largest beef recall in history. Nearly half of this meat was on its way to schools, soon to be served in the cafeteria. Similar recalls have happened over the last several years, as prevalence of mad cow disease, E. coli and salmonella have increased. One of the root causes of these diseases is the feeding of animal by-products to ruminant creatures like cows. This practice is prohibited with organic meat production. Certified Organic meat also does not contain any hormones or antibiotics, and the animals are given chemical-free, organic feed.



Meat that is certified as humane takes these standards one step further to ensure that the animal was given adequate space in which to move, was able to engage in normal behaviors, and was treated as humanely as possible from birth to slaughter.

Both Certified Organic and meat that is certified humane offer a healthier alternative that respects the welfare of the animals we eat. As often as possible, and particularly for ground meat (which contains meat from many animals and has higher rates of diseases), purchase meat for your school that is Certified Organic and includes one of these humane certifications: Certified Humane Raised and Handled®, American Humane Certified™, Food Alliance Certified, or Animal Welfare Approved™. See the 'Definitions' section of *Repairing Eden* for more information on these certifications.

## Sustainable Seafood

Seafood is not the most common addition to a school menu, save for a few fish sticks. However, if seafood does make its way onto the menu, it is important to only purchase seafood that is harvested in a sustainable manner. Many wild fish stocks are depleted due to over fishing, and large-scale fish farming often leads to widespread pollution in the surrounding environment. Check Monterey Bay Aquarium's Seafood Watch guide, available online and listed in the Resources section of *Repairing Eden*. This guide will list the most sustainable fish per region and on a national level. In addition, look for fish that is certified by the Marine Stewardship Council.

## Healthy Milk

**M**ilk is a staple of lunchtime. Offer organic milk and provide a soymilk option.

What would a school lunch be without milk? Milk is a good source of calcium, vitamin D and protein, and it has been touted as a wonder food for children. However, when cows are given hormones, antibiotics or non-organic feed, the chemicals make their way into the milk. Particularly with the substantial amount of milk that children drink, offering organic milk is a healthier choice.

- ◆ Provide USDA Certified Organic milk, or milk from a small, local farm where cows are not given hormones or antibiotics.

- ◆ More and more children are lactose-intolerant, or are open to drinking soy milk over regular milk. Soy milk contains just as much protein, calcium and nutrients as regular milk, without any cholesterol and with much less fat. Offer an organic soy milk option everyday.

## Local Food



**B**uy local and help children understand seasonal eating through Farm-to-School opportunities.

Locally-produced items have travelled a shorter distance, leading to less energy used for their transportation, and likely a smaller carbon footprint. Purchasing these items helps to boost the local economy, and often supports smaller businesses. Many items served daily in schools, such as bread, can be easily sourced locally.

- ◆ Ask Corporate Providers for Local Options  
If you use a corporate food provider, such as Sodexo, ask them for a list of items they offer that are produced locally and aim to purchase from that list. Or, if the provider has a warehouse where all food is shipped from, aim to purchase foods that are manufactured nearby the warehouse location. This would lead to the least travelled miles overall.

### ◆ Learn More about Local Food Companies

Make a list of nearby food companies, from bakeries and canned goods, to jams and milk, and decide which ones would be good fits for your school. Include nearby farms in your list.

Contact each company to discuss the types of items they sell, and to talk to them about pricing. Even those companies that are smaller, or that you believe to be more expensive, may be able to offer your school competitive products and prices.

## Farm-to-School

Have you ever experienced the burst of flavor from fruit grown at a nearby farm? Research now explains and verifies that flavor burst: the farther a fruit or vegetable travels, the less flavor and nutrients it retains. In response to these findings, there is a new food movement underway, seeking to connect local farms with schools. Called farm-to-school, its purpose is to improve student nutrition, serve healthier food, and support the livelihood of local farms. Farm-to-school ignites a love for fruits and vegetables in children by letting them experience the full flavors and varieties of local produce.

By serving local fruits and vegetables you will also teach children about seasonality, and the value of a diet consistent with the bounty the seasons offer.

- ◆ Make a list of local farms that includes their contact information and the products that they sell.
- ◆ Talk with school staff and your food provider about local food purchasing opportunities. Corporate providers may be unable to source local food, or may pose difficulties to sourcing local food, so you will need to investigate creative ways to implement farm-to-school. This could include procurement outside of the corporate contract, using money that is set aside for local food purchasing.
- ◆ Connect with other schools in your area that

have done farm-to-school efforts, to share ideas and learn what worked for them.

- ◆ See the Farm-to-School section in the ‘Resources’ part of *Repairing Eden* for some great guides and information to help you get started.

## Bake More, Fry Less



**U**nhealthy habits, such as frying food and serving sugary drinks, are standard practice at most schools. Make your menu healthier by changing course from this standard.

Frying is easy and quick, making it standard practice at most schools. However, baking and grilling is much healthier, because it uses little to no oil. Most food that is typically fried can be easily baked or grilled. Determine if baking/grilling is possible for the fried items on the menu, and if not, if there is a substitute item that can be served.

## Cut Down On Sugar

Sugar is far from good for children. It causes cavities, converts to fat in the body, and often makes fruit and other naturally sweet items pale in comparison. Strictly limit items with refined sugar, and substitute naturally sweet items instead.

- ◆ Serve fruit or low-sugar fruit-based desserts instead of cakes, cookies and pies.
- ◆ Eliminate sodas and other sugary drinks, and instead provide water, or unsweetened iced tea. Many drinks will say they are ‘natural’, ‘good for you’ or ‘lightly sweetened’, when in fact they contain a lot of added sugar. Sports drinks and many iced tea drinks fall in this category. Read the labels to be sure.
- ◆ Fruit juice, although it does not contain added sugar, often has a high sugar content but few vitamins or nutrients. If you choose to serve fruit juice, read the labels carefully, and only choose juices that have naturally high levels of vitamins and minerals, such as orange juice.

## Instituting Healthy Eating Policies

Changes in school leadership can bring different priorities. However, policies can help to maintain and support your progress over the long term, through administrative changes. Pass a school policy endorsing and committing to healthier food, clearly stating the food practices your school wants to maintain over time. This policy will not only help to guide the food committee year to year, but it will better ensure that your efforts to implement *Repairing Eden* do not go to waste once power changes hands.

## Special Events

**M**ake school events healthier by serving healthy, locally-made pastries, Fair Trade, organic coffee, fruits and vegetables, and vegetarian meals.

The school year wouldn't be complete without back-to-school nights, after-school activities and community meals. With involvement of students, staff and parents, these events are a great opportunity to demonstrate better eating habits to the entire school community.

## Sustainable Sweets

It's rare to attend a school-related event and not find an array of sweets. A little forethought and creativity can help you locate healthier, 'greener' baked goods.

### ◆ Support Local Bakeries

Who doesn't enjoy the wonderful smells and handcrafted goods at the local bakery? Unfortunately, with the number and variety of cheap assembly-line sweets available, the local bakery is often overlooked. Purchasing from local bakeries is a good food decision. Many use healthy oils (non-hydrogenated), and they may craft their baked goods with local ingredients. Supporting these bakeries helps to boost the local economy, and since they are right

around the corner the pastries carry a smaller carbon footprint than most supermarket sweets. Talk with the baker about your food goals, so s/he can help you to find the pastries that are lowest in fat, calories and cholesterol.

### ◆ Choose Healthier Options

When a bakery is unavailable, choose pastries that are lower in fat and calories, and do not contain trans-fats (also known as partially or fully hydrogenated oils). Or, provide fruit or fruit-based desserts as a healthier option.

### ◆ Encourage Members to Contribute Sustainable Desserts

If members of the community bake their own sweets for an event, encourage them to use local, organic and Fair Trade ingredients. Also encourage them to cook items that are lower in fat and calories, and made with fruit.

## Fair Trade, Organic, Shade Grown Beverages

It's likely that parents in your community depend on coffee and tea to make their days a little easier, and they may not know anything about organic or Fair Trade products. Serving these beverages during school events will help to educate parents, and set an example for them to follow at home. Serve organic and Fair Trade coffee, tea and hot chocolate at all school events. In addition, purchase coffee that is Rainforest Alliance Certified and/or Bird Friendly certified, which ensures that the coffee was shade grown, protecting and preserving bird habitat during cultivation.

## Fruits and Vegetables

Students are often given soda, candy and other unhealthy food at after-school events, and in many cases these bad eating habits continue once they get home. While these sweets are just fine once in a while, they should not be the norm. Serving fruits and vegetables at all events will keep students healthier and will educate parents about better choices for the home. Try serving a vegetable tray and fruit at all school programs.

## Vegetarian and Vegan Meals

Parents are often skeptical of vegetarian food, believing that it doesn't provide adequate nutrients or protein, and convinced that children will not like its taste. Whether the community meal is catered or a potluck, it is a perfect time to open parents' eyes to the health benefits and great flavors of vegetarian eating. Offer a vegetarian/vegan option at every community meal, and aim to make some meals completely vegetarian.

## Restrictions for Parents

During those times when parents contribute food for school events, set restrictions to encourage healthier eating. While this may seem difficult, similar rules have successfully been put in place to protect children with nut allergies. Restrictions should address soda and candy, as well as any other unhealthy foods that are most commonly contributed. Be sure to give parents alternative food ideas, to prevent confusion and resentment.

## Good Resource Partners

Making the transition towards healthy food practices can be a complicated journey. Fortunately, every state has organizations that work on food-related issues. Research the regional and national resources available and think of ways to partner with those groups. Some organizations can provide you with literature to hand out, while others may be able to speak at your school or provide healthy food for events.

Some examples of organizations that may be able to assist you include:

- ◆ Organic Farming Associations
- ◆ USDA regional office
- ◆ Local businesses
- ◆ Health and Wellness Organizations
- ◆ National Farm-to-school organization
- ◆ The Food Trust
- ◆ Local organic restaurants

See the 'Resources' section of *Repairing Eden* for links to some of these organizations.

## Teaching Well - *Teaching the School Community about Healthy Eating*

What other venue in life focuses such attention and devotion to learning? From the classroom to the lunchroom, there are countless opportunities for students to learn over the course of their experiences in school. The beauty of the school environment is that it also invites parents to learn alongside their children. Food, being such an integral part of the school community, can be connected in many ways to the existing curriculum, and also provide experiential learning for the entire community.

### Curriculum

**Offer food-related curricula, which is a great way to teach students about healthy eating before and after lunchtime.**

A teacher's job is always easier if new ideas can fit into an existing curriculum. Food issues span many subjects, from history and math, to science and English. There are some existing curriculum resources (see 'Resources' section of *Repairing Eden*), but teachers should also be encouraged to develop their own food-related curricular resources.

The food committee should provide the teachers with resources that can assist them in developing curricula, such as websites, handouts or books. There may also be an organization in your region that does trainings for teachers on developing food-related curricula.

### Experiential Learning



**Foster experiential learning by taking students to visit a farm, or by doing hands-on activities with them such as cooking classes, 'green' snack days, or recipe sharing.**

Engaging the senses is one of the quickest pathways to the brain, making experiential learning an extremely effective teaching method. There are many opportunities to develop this learning around the topic of sustainable eating.

### Farm Visits

Farms are a learning laboratory: they offer pick-your-own opportunities, provide farm tours, offer workshops, accept volunteers, and occasionally let you meet with the farmers. Farm visits give students a rare glimpse into how food is grown and harvested, a stark contrast to their usual supermarkets trips. These visits also allow parents and children to do an activity together. Follow-up the farm visit with curricula or projects that help the students integrate what they have learned into their lives.

### Hands-on Activities

It's important to engage in hands-on activities to keep healthy eating fun. These activities should not be limited to children—teenagers and adults can also benefit from them.



◆ **Cooking Classes**

Cooking classes are a unique opportunity to teach about healthy foods. For primary school students, incorporate healthier recipes into home economics classes, and for young adults and parents, offer after-school cooking workshops (separately and together). Focus specifically on the issues outlined in *Repairing Eden*, such as vegetarian/vegan meals, low-sugar desserts, etc. Invite a cook from a local restaurant to lead some classes.

◆ **‘Green’ Snack Day**

Do a ‘green snack’ day with students, where each student brings a healthy and sustainable snack from home to share with the class. This activity teaches parents and students what to look for when choosing snacks on their own.

◆ **Recipe Sharing**

Create a community recipe book where parents and students are invited to contribute.

◆ **Get Creative!**

Hold bake-offs and other cooking contests focused on healthy foods, to keep the conversation lively and fun. Host a special section in the recipe book dedicated to ‘award-winning’ recipes.

◆ **Teach Students about Healthy Eating**

Host food-related assemblies where representatives from an organization speak to students, or invite students to create their own assembly for the school.

Label each of the changes that take place in the cafeteria, to help students learn as they eat. In particular, highlight changes that will encourage students to try new foods, such as a new or diverse fruits and vegetables that are offered.

## Adult Education

**T**each parents healthy habits by publicizing healthy food venues, such as farmers’ markets, farm stands or CSAs, in the school bulletin or list serve. Provide workshops, cooking classes or recipe sharing, or invite them to help improve the lunch menu.

What is taught in school takes deepest root when mirrored at home, so parents also need to be educated about healthy and sustainable foods. The more times children are exposed to these ideas, the more that healthy eating will become second nature for them.

◆ **Help Parents Locate Healthy Food Venues**

Help parents to locate farmers’ markets, Community Supported Agriculture, natural food stores, and other venues in the community that sell healthy, ‘green’ food. Publicize these venues through articles and advertisements in the school bulletins, newsletters and other materials. Invite local markets to advertise in your publications.

◆ **Teach Parents about Healthy Eating**

Provide workshops and trainings for parents, highlighting the basics of healthy eating, as well as the more complicated ideas, such as vegetarian/vegan foods for children. These workshops can be offered during PTO meetings, where parents will already be at the school. If possible, provide programs that engage both parents and children together in learning about these issues.

◆ **Invite Parents into the Decision-Making Process**

Invite parents to take part in the decision-making processes, such as working with the food committee to change the school menu, passing a policy to eliminate soda, or other topics. This will help to both teach and engage the larger community in the internal changes happening within the school.

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# Opportunities for Property Operations

## Chew on These!

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## **Chew On These!**

### **A Summary of Actions for Property Operations**

**R**educe food waste by serving smaller portions and allowing for seconds. (Pg 27)



**R**ecycle food waste through composting, which can be done indoors or out. (Pg 27)




**P**lant gardens on your grounds, in a container, or in a vacated community lot. Be sure to test the soil beforehand. (Pg 28)



**B**ecome a host site for Community Supported Agriculture (CSA), to provide your members easier access to fresh, local produce. (Pg 29)

**H**ost a farmers' market or farm stand in your parking lot. Be sure to plan carefully, as farmers' markets take a lot of work! (Pg 29)

Items marked with  represent actions that have the biggest impact

# Modeling Sustainable, Healthy Food through Property Operations

*Using your physical property to promote food-related activities*

## Food Waste

Sustainable food is holistic. It is concerned with the life of food from start to finish – and beyond. Managing food waste responsibly is an important part of sustainable eating.

Americans waste a lot of food—5% of America’s leftovers could feed 4 million people for 1 day—leading food waste to comprise over 10% of all trash produced in the United States. This poses significant environmental problems when the waste decomposes in landfills, as it releases methane, a potent greenhouse gas. By making a few easy changes, religious institutions can reduce their food waste significantly, and handle any unavoidable food waste in an environmentally-friendly manner.

## Food Waste Reduction

**R**educe food waste by serving smaller portions and allowing for seconds.

When GreenFaith conducts waste audits and sorts through an institution’s trash to better understand their waste habits, we consistently find food scraps – lots of them. The crux of the problem is that people often fill their plates with more than they can eat. One way to support better eating and reduce food waste is to serve smaller portions and allow for seconds. Or, if food is served buffet style, encourage people

to take a smaller portion for their first serving. The more that portion sizes are reduced, the less food that needs to be prepared up front, and the less food that is thrown out after the meal.

Food reduction can be a fun and educational activity. For example, you can create a contest by inviting members or students to weigh their food waste after each meal, and encouraging them to reach a waste reduction goal in a set time period. Or, you can have your members or students take part in a waste audit, analyzing what you’re throwing out. These activities can fundamentally change people’s perceptions of the amount of food that they waste, and encourage them to fill their plates only with what they need.

## Composting



**R**ecycle food waste through composting, which can be done indoors or out.

Food waste in the United States typically ends up in one of two places—a landfill, where the food takes months to decompose, or an incinerator where the waste is burned, contributing to air pollution. Instead of simply throwing food waste out, we recommend composting, a method through which food waste breaks down naturally and produces rich soil. When done correctly, composting doesn’t smell or attract pests, and can even be done indoors. The soil that is produced, called humus, can be used to enrich plants or a garden. It maintains moisture in the soil, and can take the place of fertilizer. For information on composting indoors or outdoors, see the ‘Resources’ section of *Repairing Eden*.

## Gardens



**Plant gardens on your grounds, in a container, or in a vacated community lot. Be sure to test the soil beforehand.**

The smells, the tastes, the beauty...for only a bit of labor, gardens reward us with a remarkable bounty. In recent years, there has been a resurgence of interest in gardening, evident with the birth of community gardens and the many vacant lots restored to edible landscapes. Communities everywhere are realizing that with a little space and an investment of time and effort, a garden can produce a significant amount of food while serving as a fantastic project for the members of your institution.

There are many resources that provide detailed instructions about starting a backyard garden—see the Gardening entries in the ‘Resources’ section of *Repairing Eden*. Here are some tips to help you understand the steps you should take to get started. If you decide to pursue a gardening project, we recommend that you consult a detailed guide to backyard gardening.

### Survey Your Land and Plan Your Garden

If your institution is fortunate enough to own undeveloped land, a first step is to survey the property for the best place to plant your garden. Choose an area that has not been identified as a future building site, and, if possible, can be easily viewed and accessed by your members. Once the plot of land is chosen, form a committee to oversee the planning and planting of your garden. This committee will plan out the garden, and choose the vegetables, herbs and fruits that are best suited for your institution.

### Test the Soil

Before planting anything in the soil, have it tested by a lab or agricultural extension office to ensure that there are no harmful chemicals present. If your property was previously farmland, it may have pesticide residues, whereas soil in many urban areas may be contaminated with lead from older houses or other industrial contaminants. Many of these toxic

chemicals are absorbed from the soil by plants, so testing your soil gives you the confidence that your gardening project will be a safe one. If your soil is contaminated, you can consider building raised beds (bringing in clean soil from an outside source), or starting a container garden.

### Containers Make a Fine Garden

Don’t underestimate the ability for a very small space to produce a large amount of food. For many institutions where land is limited or unavailable, containers are a great way to garden. Container gardens also work well for areas that have contaminated soil. Since containers can be moved about easily, these gardens can be placed throughout a facility, serving as a teaching tool and beautification project.

One product, called Earthbox, provides all of the ingredients necessary to create a container garden—the soil, container and fertilizer. However, the soil that comes with Earthbox contains peat, which is derived from ecologically sensitive bogs, and its fertilizer is petroleum-derived. You can start your own container garden that is peat and fertilizer-free by purchasing a container, buying soil, and adding in compost. As your plants grow, be sure to add stakes or trellises to the garden to support the plants.

*The best place to seek God is in a garden. You can dig for him there.*

George Bernard Shaw

### Feed the Community

Fresh fruits and vegetables can often be more expensive than unhealthy packaged food, limiting the opportunities for low-income communities to eat well. Donating produce from your garden to a local food pantry is a great way to promote healthy eating in those communities, while also strengthening your house of worship’s mission to help people in need. If you have excess fruits or vegetables from the garden, talk with the local food pantry about distribution opportunities. To learn about an example of this, see the profile of the Reformed Church of Highland Park in the ‘Success Stories’ section of *Repairing Eden*. Locate food banks in your area by visiting [www.ampleharvest.org](http://www.ampleharvest.org)



## Community Supported Agriculture (CSA)

Promoting Community Supported Agriculture in your community is a great way to support local farms, and provide your house of worship with access to fresh, local, varied produce during the growing season. CSAs teach members lessons about seasonal eating, and encourage them to try new foods.

### Become a CSA Host Site



**B**ecome a host site for Community Supported Agriculture (CSA), to provide your members easier access to fresh, local produce.

CSA farmers are often looking for conveniently-located sites to distribute their produce to shareholders. In order to make the most efficient use of the farmer's time, central locations are chosen as drop-off sites for the produce, and shareholders are asked to pick up their weekly shares from that location. If enough people in your community are interested in purchasing shares of a CSA farm, your house of worship might be able to serve as a drop-off site. Acting as a drop-off site makes it much more convenient for members of your house of worship to participate in a CSA program. See the story of Downtown Harvest in the 'Success Stories' section of *Repairing Eden* for an example of a house of worship that is connected with a CSA.

## Farmers' Markets

**H**ost a farmers' market or farm stand in your parking lot. Be sure to plan carefully, as farmers' markets take a lot of work!

Of any of the opportunities to use your property to promote healthy food, hosting a farmers' market is certainly the most complicated and resource intensive. However, farmers' markets can be a great venue for local, organic and healthy food purchasing. Hosting a Farmer's Market on your property will take your leadership to a higher level.

If you would like to host a farmer's market, we recommend that you consult the guides and information in the 'Resources' section of *Repairing Eden*. To provide you with a sense of how a farmer's market gets started, here is an outline of the steps involved:

### Plan Very Carefully

A committee should carefully analyze and discuss the resources required to host a farmers' market. Review the websites listed in the 'Resources' section of *Repairing Eden* to better understand the time, finances and organization that is needed. Is there sufficient financial capital to hire a coordinator and purchase supplies, and is there adequate space to set-up the market? These are just some of the questions to address before moving forward with the planning of a farmers' market.

### Assign a Coordinator to Oversee the Project

A key ingredient to a successful farmers' market is a coordinator, who can help to plan the market and oversee its implementation. Coordinators are essential to keep the market organized and thriving year-to-year. Most markets hire a part-time or full-time paid coordinator, since volunteer hands can be difficult to locate and may not be as dependable. The farmers' market budget should account for this expense year to year.

### Partner with Other Houses of Worship and Groups

If a farmers' market seems feasible after careful consideration, reach out to other religious institutions to discuss partnering opportunities. Even a very organized, financially stable and large institution will need support and assistance from many individuals to make a farmers' market a success. Partnering with other groups can help to distribute the large workload, and will lead to more wide-spread publicity about the initiative.

### Work Diligently to Ensure the Market's Survival

Continued success of any farmers' market depends on good organization, internal support, and commitment from the institution. Keep a detailed log of all aspects of the market, from the original research, to the details of how it works best. This log will act as a 'kit' for any future market coordinators. Establish internal support for the market by passing a policy endorsing it and committing to its survival in the long-term.

## Success Stories



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## First Reformed Church of Highland Park, NJ

Jim Zarra

### Garden

For a relatively small house of worship, The First Reformed Church of Highland Park, NJ, had a very big problem on its hands: buckets upon buckets full of...tomatoes. Small, big, red, yellow, and heirloom varieties grew over and over again in the Church's garden during the late summer months. With only a modest plot of land to garden, they had expected a small harvest that could be easily distributed to members. But as dozens of tomatoes ripened at once and members were unable to eat them all, the house of worship needed another outlet.

"One of our most important missions as a house of worship is to help the community around us; we reach out to those who cannot provide for themselves, and keep our doors open and welcome," said Jim Zarra, Church member and garden coordinator. "With so many extra tomatoes, we felt there must be some way to get them into the hands of those who needed them most."



"We knew that the local food pantry did not like to receive perishable items," continued Jim, "but we believed that the tomatoes were a unique and nutritious offering for the community." After talking with the Church, the pantry

agreed to take the tomatoes. However, with only a bi-weekly distribution, they could not handle all of the excess produce from the Church garden. Jim was forced to think creatively once again: "I went back to the food pantry staff, and brainstormed. By talking through it with them, we realized that they had a weekly seniors program that was the perfect opportunity." The food pantry loved the idea—senior citizens often won't spend their money on more expensive produce, yet they are in need of nutrients that fresh fruits and vegetables can provide. Week by week, tomatoes were given to local seniors, along with basil and other herbs from the Church garden.

Seniors and pantry guests were invited to visit the garden, pick their own vegetables, and contact the house of worship

if they had any other needs. "The project provided a very real opportunity to live out our mission," Jim asserted, "and we are excited to expand our efforts next year."

Jim attributes the success of the garden to "good plants, good compost, plenty of sun and good watering," and recommends that houses of worship plan properly. "We chose the sunniest spot for our garden, and many of our plants were donated by Rutgers (New Jersey's state university) Cooperative Extension Service, so we were very lucky to have unique heirloom varieties. We also used compost made from the food scraps from our own Church. The compost really helped to maintain nutrients and moisture in the soil, so we didn't need any fertilizer. When our plants needed water, our gardening team was very diligent, particularly in the dry days of summer. The garden was entirely organic, and we found that using natural pest management alternatives like a bit of diluted dish detergent worked just fine. But the biggest piece of advice I would pass on to another institution is to plan out your distribution process way ahead of time. Then when God blesses you with buckets full of tomatoes, you can just smile and spread the wealth."



#### From Our Church To Your Table

*Please help yourself to fresh produce from a new garden at The Reformed Church of Highland Park.*

If you have fresh vegetable needs throughout the week: peppers, tomatoes and basil

Please visit the church office:  
19-21 South Second Avenue  
or call 732-249-7349.

## Sacred Heart Roman Catholic Church, New Brunswick, NJ

Nancy Finn

### *Garden and Farmers' Market*

Nancy Finn shook her head in disbelief as 30 dozen ears of corn flew off the shelves. “When they arrived, we had no idea how we would sell it all,” Nancy described, “but by 4:30, only a half hour after we started, we sold out of everything—corn, peaches, watermelon, everything!” As the first year of the farmers’ market came to a close, Sacred Heart Church had sold dozens of zucchini, peaches, tomatoes and other local, fresh fruits and vegetables, and most impressively, over 1,000 dozen ears of corn.

Starting with a \$2,000 grant from Catholic Relief Services, the Church purchased produce from a local farmer every other week and then sold it at wholesale costs to the community. “We knew that our urban community didn’t have easy access to fresh fruits and vegetables,” Nancy said, “and we also knew that most people didn’t have the income to pay higher prices for healthy eating. We care deeply about these hardships, and we felt the farmers’ market would be a great service. The market was so popular that within a few weeks we were able to increase the prices just slightly—not affecting the community’s ability to participate, but allowing us to make a little bit of money off of it. The money collected replenished the \$2,000 grant, so we now

have a source of revenue year to year.”

It’s not just their city location and smart planning that make Sacred Heart’s market so unique. In addition to the produce from the local farmer, Sacred Heart also sold herbs and vegetables from its own garden. Seventeen members of the parish tended the garden, turning a formerly vacant, rocky piece of land into a lush, productive plot. “Our community has many unemployed and undocumented people,” Nancy described, “so our hope was that the garden would be an

economic development opportunity. We designed it around the principles of SPIN, or Small Plot Intensive Farming, which makes it possible to earn significant income from land under an acre in size. This year, gardeners at Sacred Heart kept most of the harvest for themselves, which certainly helped their food bills. The hope is that next year they will sell much more at the market.”

One of the biggest markers of success for the garden and the market was their ability to reconnect the community with its cultural roots. Sacred Heart’s members are largely immigrant Latinos, people from many countries who are not far removed from their farming







background. The garden served as a hands-on activity that reconnected them with that background, and allowed parents to pass on the art of gardening to their children. “Six days a week, gardeners

came together to plant, weed, water and harvest. Children worked alongside parents, and families connected with one another. It was a great community builder,” said Nancy. The access to fresh fruits and vegetables inspired a lot of traditional cooking as well—families ground up the corn to make homemade tamales, and many gardeners grew tomatillos for traditional Mexican dishes. Marigolds naturally protected the garden from rodents throughout the season, and at season’s end they were used for Day of the Dead celebrations.

Sacred Heart Church has even higher hopes for next year: “Moving forward, we hope to make these projects as educational as possible, through handing out recipes and information on healthy eating. We also want to coordinate the projects better, so that the garden can continue to supply the market with unique and valuable produce. And we won’t forget the empanadas! The empanadas we sold at the market were a huge hit—we definitely want to sell more homemade goods in the future.”

So after all this success, what advice would she give to other houses of worship? “Start early, give yourself enough planning time, and be creative. Make sure to fence in the garden with a high, deeply rooted fence to keep out rodents and people passing by, and don’t use pesticides because they’re not needed and you want to keep your community safe. Be creative with how you fund the project—create a continuous fund, and appeal for donations. The success of your efforts



depends upon good organization, a coordinator, and a lot of planning. But the hard work is absolutely worth it. The benefits to the community are immeasurable.”

To learn more about this success story go to:  
<http://scottalessi.com/Garden.html>.



## Church of the Atonement, Tenafly, NJ

Ellen Kuhn

### Children's Garden

As they sat in their church's garden, the children excitedly sketched and colored, giving the plants and butterflies life on the papers in front of them. Earlier that season, they had collected Swallowtail and Monarch butterfly egg cases from the garden at Church of the Atonement, which they hatched indoors and then released. Today they observed the butterflies in the very same garden, and



learned about their importance for the plants. "Gardens are a wonderful way to foster children's spiritual discovery and connection to nature," described Ellen Kuhn, garden coordinator. "Their sense of awe and wonder is amazing." By helping to plant, weed and cultivate the garden, children at Church of the Atonement are connected to the natural world at an early age, seeing first-hand how care for the environment is critical for life. "Our children learn that their efforts in the garden are directly connected with the fruits, vegetables and flowers that are produced," Ellen described. "Eating something you grew—you can't get much closer to creation than that! There is so much concern for environmental sustainability nowadays, but if children don't have hands-on experience with the natural world, then they don't have a reference point for acting sustainably."

The Church sees the garden as an active expression of faith, and a way to offer its members experiences in nature they may not otherwise have. "Unlike most people my age," Ellen explains, "I grew up in a family that planted a big vegetable garden and grew lots of flowers. I took my gardening skills

and experience for granted; time in the outdoors was integral to my life. Similar hands-on experiences are hard to come by for many children growing up today, as farms and gardens have been replaced with suburban lawns, buildings and concrete sidewalks. Creating a garden is a way to involve people once again in the cycles and seasons of life and of creation. You can watch the leaves change, but picking up a leaf and examining it, or understanding that an oak tree comes from an acorn, can fundamentally shift your perception by making something abstract more tangible. We often think of prayer

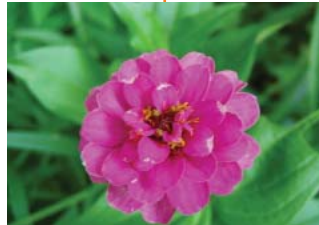
or spirituality as something apart from us, but the garden directly connects us with God's creation. A plant is a part of creation. The children realize that if they step on it, it won't grow."



Work on Atonement's garden starts in early spring near Easter time, when the children plant seeds in containers and bring them home to watch them grow. "We talk about what will happen to the seeds," Ellen describes, "and connect it to the idea of rebirth that is such an important concept at Easter. It's a great way to make the garden a religious education lesson for the children and their parents." Once the plants are tall enough, they are transplanted into the garden and the children take an active role in caring for them. They are taught to differentiate weeds from the fruit and vegetable plants, and are asked to help with watering. The harvest completes the cycle: children pick vegetables and flowers from the garden, and bring them up to the Alter for a blessing. The food is shared by all during coffee hour, and occasional abundant harvests supply a nearby men's shelter with fresh, healthy produce.

The garden took root several years ago, growing in tandem with an Eagle Scout Project. The Scout built four large planters in an unused back lot of the Church. Cost was not a problem; many people donated seeds, and a family member of the Eagle Scout set up a maintenance fund which paid for the manure and annual additions of topsoil. The project is run by a core group of 4 to 5 people. “Everyone understands the value of the garden for the children, and it’s been a big hit,” asserts Ellen. “We don’t have much of a problem getting volunteers to help with it year-to-year. However, recently a Church staff member took on the garden as one of her responsibilities, which has kept it more organized.”

What would Ellen recommend to institutions interested in setting up a children’s garden? “The more the area looks like a garden at the outset, the more appealing it is for volunteers



and donations. Our biggest asset was the quick set-up provided by the Eagle Scout. After he built the planters, it was much more difficult for us to just turn our backs on the garden. The best piece of advice I can offer,” she continues, “is for house of worships just to go for it! People think you need special powers to make a plant grow, which simply isn’t true. By simply mixing seeds with dirt, water and sunlight, you can produce food, flowers, and something beautiful that is part of creation. Any house of worship can start with a small patch, a container garden, or an effort to plant flowers on their grounds instead of hiring a landscaper. Even the smallest child can put a seed into the ground and water it. There is something for everyone to do, which is precisely what makes it work.”

## Our Lady of Good Counsel School, Moorestown, NJ

Suzanne Ishak and Sondra M. De Antonio, MD

### *Changing the School Menu*

Suzanne Ishak and Sondra DeAntonio walked about, observing students and listening intently to the flurry of conversation. This was no ordinary classroom: students shared, thought carefully, and were eager to make the right choices. “Some parents may assume that kids don’t know what is best for them, and they can’t be trusted to make the right decision,” Suzanne described, “but we saw something completely different.” Suzanne and Sondra were sitting in on one of the most important, yet frequently overlooked, lessons of the day: the food that students eat.

Suzanne, a nutritionist, and Sondra, a medical doctor, had high aspirations for the cafeteria food at Our Lady of Good Counsel School in Moorestown, NJ. However, they knew that expertise and goals alone wouldn’t get them very far—they had to talk to the students directly and find out what changes would be possible. They were pleasantly surprised at the result. “We visited several lunch periods to monitor the choices the children made, and to see what they actually ate and what they threw away. We were amazed to see that children frequently chose the healthier options, and in fact they preferred healthy food!” Sondra asserted. “Many students commented that while it was nice to have junk food sometimes, they didn’t think that it should be offered daily or even weekly as is done at our school.” Sondra and Suzanne asked the students for suggestions, and learned that fresh fruit and yogurt would be a great addition to the snacks sold a la carte.

By observing the cafeteria food directly, Suzanne and Sondra also had a chance to see the quality and quantity of food being served. They saw firsthand why it can be difficult for kids to make healthy choices even when they desire it. Salad and fruit were offered, but were often wilted and lacking in variety. Vegetarian meals were few and far between, and many of the main entrees were fried, and included too much salt. The students even highlighted that first graders received the same portion size as eighth graders.



With this knowledge in hand, Suzanne and Sondra set out to make changes. They acquired the school menu, and brainstormed the easiest and most feasible opportunities. They knew they had to start small, but understood that those changes would lay the groundwork for bigger changes in the future. They also knew that Sodexo, the School’s corporate food provider, as well as the company-supplied cook, would both need to be involved in the process. “The cook is very proud of the menu that she creates each week,” Sondra confirmed, “And we wanted to make sure that she was involved every step of the way. Her support of the changes was critical, and we also wanted to include her ideas. We made sure to sit down with her in the very beginning.” At first, reviewing the menu was overwhelming: “We had never realized the number of unhealthy things our kids were eating. Many of the snacks had too much sugar and fat, highly processed meat was offered everyday, there were few to no vegetarian options, and only processed white bread was served,” Sondra described.

A complete overhaul of the menu was not possible, but there were many opportunities to incorporate healthier food. “We felt that our first steps had to keep the menu relatively intact, and include more subtle changes,” Suzanne said, “We began to offer whole grain bread, and we provided healthy wraps as an alternative to the main entrée. We listened to the students by including fresh fruit and yogurt a la carte, and we incorporated a daily veggie burger and soymilk option. We planned a ‘fruits from around the world’ day, and we already have students asking when it will happen again. This excitement is contagious: parents are very pleased with the healthier options.”

What did Suzanne and Sondra learn from this process? “We are realizing that it’s important to let the first set of changes sink in before you build on them,” Sondra described, “See how they fare over the course of a few months—that is when you will know if the changes are sustainable. In our case, by taking time to reflect, we realized that neither the veggie burger nor the



soymilk was being offered alongside the regular food items—students had to ask for the veggie burger ahead of time in the morning, and sometimes they were left waiting as the kitchen staff prepared it. Students also had to wait for their soymilk as it was retrieved from the back room. This waiting gave the kids less time to eat, and cut down on their playtime. No child is going to be happy with that! We think it is critical to streamline these early changes so that they are easy and obvious for the students, and then we can move forward with other opportunities.” Suzanne is quick to emphasize the most important concept: “The goal is to offer a well balanced menu every day, one that includes items from the various food groups. We recognize that different children have different food preferences, and we understand the need for a diverse menu. As long as healthy food options continue to be offered in the cafeteria, we feel that we have accomplished our goal.”

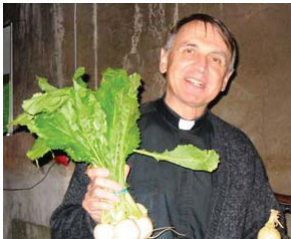


## Downtown Harvest

# Our Lady of Czestochowa Church, Jersey City, NJ

Meg Largey

## Connecting a House of Worship with a CSA



The Paulus Hook District of Jersey City is a thriving and diverse neighborhood, with residents from around the world. Situated just across the waterfront from New York City, the area is constantly evolving; its transient residents change with the ebb and flow of

jobs in the Big Apple. A sense of community typically eludes this neighborhood, but relationships are starting to build around an important, and perhaps surprising, topic: fresh vegetables. “We see something really special happen on our pick-up nights,” described Meg Largey, “people who would otherwise never interact are laughing together, and sharing recipes as they pick out their selection of veggies.”

Meg is co-founder and core member of Downtown Harvest, the Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) project at Our Lady of Czestochowa Church. The project is going strong in its fifth year, with an ever increasing number of members from the Church and the surrounding community. “The selection of produce is great, and the price is quite reasonable. We are in an urban area, so fresh, local produce is difficult to find. Members love that they can go right down the street and pick up vegetables that are freshly picked and organically grown,” said Meg. Father Tom Iwanowski, Church pastor, has been thrilled with the results: “I am amazed at the level of participation in the Downtown Harvest CSA. It is obvious this program has tapped into a need and a desire in our neighborhood.”



The process is relatively simple. Once a week during the harvesting season, the farmer drops off produce to the Church. Volunteers then lay out the vegetables on long tables that are located in a garage attached to the main Church building. A large whiteboard in the garage displays the selection of produce available to each CSA member for that particular week. “The set-up we chose, where members are responsible for compiling their own share, makes it easier for the volunteers and the farmer,” explained Meg, “and it also allows the members to learn about new vegetables. If they didn’t know what mustard greens were prior to that week, they will surely know once they have to locate that vegetable on the table!”



Downtown Harvest has thrived at the hands of many volunteers. “From the time we set-up at 5 p.m., to the time we clean-up at 8:15p.m., we have 2 to 4 volunteers on hand,” described Meg, “We require each member to volunteer at least once during the season, which supplies a constant stream of helping hands and gets the members more involved.” To better ensure the project’s survival, the CSA coordinators also did a lot of research in the beginning of the project. “We started out by contacting Just Food in NYC, a non-profit organization that helps CSAs get started in communities. Although we were beyond the five boroughs in which they work, they were willing to talk with us and provide advice to get us started. We also spent a lot of time searching websites and reading books to learn how to set up a CSA and operate it in a way that maximizes the volunteer effort and minimizes the work involved,” said Meg.

The CSA coordinators adapted as they went along, helping the project to grow successfully. “Some things you cannot learn until you start the process. For instance, we realized during the first year that the farmer wasn’t a good match for our CSA—he rarely communicated with us and there





were several mishaps along the way,” Meg described. “Immediately following the first year, we did an extensive search for another CSA farmer. We went through every database we could find, along with the entire NOFA (Northeast Organic Farming Association) website, and we drove around NJ to write down names of farms on the road. This helped us to create a long list and to do good due diligence.” Meg continued: “As we narrowed the list, we visited each farm and talked with them directly about their philosophy of farming. Unlike the first farmer we worked with, we wanted somebody who would really understand his/her responsibility to the CSA members and would be a good planner. We also wanted someone who would foster a relationship with the members. When we found Farmer John of Starbrite Farm, we knew he was the one.” Despite the problems in the first year, the coordinators of Downtown Harvest maintained membership levels; the key was clear and honest communication with the members. “We told them that we shared their disappointment,” said Meg, “and we assured them of the many steps we took to find Farmer John. By being honest and open with them, our membership levels actually increased the second year.”



Farmer John isn’t the only one doing long-term planning—the CSA coordinators do their best to deal with potential burdens early on. “We require each member to pay a separate \$15 yearly fee that is used to offset administrative costs. To date, this small income has been enough to keep the CSA afloat,” Meg said, “and we create a Memorandum of Understanding with Farmer John to better ensure that both his needs and our needs are met season to season. We understand and respect the fact that we can’t control the harvest, but we feel an MOU keeps all of us working towards our shared goals.”

Through Downtown Harvest, the Parish is demonstrating its values to the entire community. Father Iwanowski asserts: “The involvement of the Church with the CSA movement is of benefit to both groups. The Church demonstrates its concern for God’s earth and for the farmers of our land, and the CSA is kept spiritually grounded and reminded of the Creator whose works we are called to cherish and respect.” The project also furthers an important mission of the Church: helping to end hunger in the community. Each

week, the Church donates its excess produce to a nearby emergency food pantry operated by Our Lady of Sorrows Church. There is always a significant amount of excess produce—members often forget to pick up their shares, choose not to take the entire share, or may donate their share if they are on vacation. In addition, as a gesture of thanks the farmer provides the CSA coordinators with an extra share, and the coordinators have chosen to donate these shares to the pantry. The donations have been so successful that Our Lady of Sorrows Church recently received a grant to purchase refrigerators in which to store the extra produce. “The food pantry is thrilled,” said Meg, “This gives them direct access to fresh food that they rarely encounter. It provides their clients with more nutritious foods which are critical for the challenged communities they serve.”

After all of this success, what would Meg recommend most to houses of worship going down the same path? “Maintain good and clear communication with the members, particularly in the beginning of the program. Be realistic with them about expectations. Many people don’t realize that they share the burden with the farmer when they become a CSA member. When things are going fine, people are OK, and they often take the good years for granted. But when a bad harvest happens, sometimes people forget their shared risk. We have regular communication from our farmer each week, where he tells us what is happening on the farm. It’s important that the farmer tells you when things aren’t going well as much as when they are.”

Meg emphasized the importance of educating the members: “We send out the farm’s updates to members each week to give them an idea of where their food is coming from, and help them appreciate what the farmer is dealing with. We also think it’s important for the members to meet the farmer face-to-face, so we ask him to visit us twice in the season to see the members when they come for their vegetables. Members love to see him and talk about the farm. Occasionally we spice things up with fun and creative projects, like food and wine tastings or potluck dinners. The most exciting events are the farm visits, and volunteer time we put in on the farm. We have helped clear rocks from the fields, covered greenhouses, and even helped with some planting. The keys to success are education and celebration—if you can keep the members engaged and informed, you are sure to have a booming CSA for years to come!”



## The Green Taam Ohio

Amalia Haas, GreenFaith Fellow

### *Providing Pasture-Raised, Kosher Poultry to the Jewish Community*

The early morning dawn cast its first shadows on the beautiful pastoral countryside. On the hill, a large group of people huddled together in a circle, quiet in anticipation. In the center of the circle stood three goats and their shepherd, each animal calm, unaware of the event that was eminent. Blessings and ritual set the tone of deep respect and reverence, and when each goat was gently laid on its side, the Shochet's knife took its life in an instant. The meat was later served to the group on the Sabbath.

In the circle stood Amalia Haas, an Orthodox Jewish woman committed to sustainable agriculture and healthy food in her work and family life. But even she had never before witnessed the slaughter of an animal—she had never seen what is required to provide the food she ate each day. She stood breathless, and left changed: after the experience she felt called upon, as a meat eater, to take full responsibility for the food that she ate.

Amalia didn't just return home and eat differently—she returned to her home in Beachwood, Ohio and ordered ducklings and a brooder lamp, which arrived a few weeks later in a mail-order box. With no animal husbandry experience under her belt, she had to learn as she went along. It was too cold at the time to keep the ducklings outside, so Amalia found the next best suitable place: her basement! The ducklings grew unbelievably fast, and soon were out in her grassy backyard. Next, she had to find a Shochet (Kosher ritual slaughterer) to shecht (slaughter) them. This time she

was involved in every step; she held the ducks as they were slaughtered, and also helped with the processing—gutting, cleaning, soaking and salting. “It was a very powerful experience,” Amalia explains, “a part of the human inheritance that has really been lost in the West. Until three generations ago, there was hardly a person on the earth that didn't have a close relationship to animal husbandry and slaughter.”



As she cared for her brood, which expanded to include laying hens as well, Amalia was able to observe the birds' natural behaviors closely and gain an appreciation for their simple but real needs. Juxtaposing this experience with the realities of factory farming—where inhumane confinement and denial of basic instincts is status quo—she understood

the importance of the project she had undertaken. “The more I saw my chickens and ducks scratching, pecking and digging for worms, the more I understood the cruelty and shortsightedness of factory farming practices. These practices overlook everything but financial costs, and prioritize only one goal: maximum production in minimum time. The beak is a brilliant tool of evolution—an amazing thing—birds can catch tiny bugs, pluck small berries, pull up worms, munch a tender blade of grass or clover, all of which enrich the animal's diet and the meat that we ultimately eat. In factory farms, we de-beak birds, making their beaks into blunt little shovels for genetically modified grain dosed with antibiotics and pesticides. They can no longer peck; this is neither humane nor healthy” emphasized Amalia.

As news of Amalia's small project began to spread, more and more people within the Jewish community were interested in supporting her, and purchasing pasture-raised, Kosher meat. Unexpectedly, a New York investor offered to finance Amalia's burgeoning business, and a friend stepped forward as a business partner. Within months, Amalia and her friend Ariella Reback established The Green Taam—the midwest's first Kosher, pasture-raised poultry business. As Amalia explains: "The meaning of the word Ta'am in Hebrew is both 'taste' and 'meaning'. We speak of 'Taam HaTorah,' the deeper meaning of the Torah, and the connotation of our businesses' name is that taste and meaning are inseparable from each other, and from the environment. When we taste, we participate in and experience a story. In an immediate sense, it may be the story of a parent who wishes to nurture a sick child back to health, or to celebrate the Shabbat with a chicken soup. But it also partakes of stories that preceded that moment: of a farm or factory where this animal grew, of the quality of that animal's life, as well as the treatment of the workers who raised, processed, and delivered that food."



Amalia's business supports a promising story, one steeped in respect for both the environment and the animals. "One commandment in Judaism is to guard our health and guard it exceedingly—take great care around it. There is clearly a relationship between how we eat and our health. As much as The Green Taam is a business project, it's also a project about repentance, and communities taking responsibility even if government does not. It's a call to political activism, and a profound call towards education. We know that in Lorain County, Ohio—just outside my community—that we have lost 31% of small farms over the last 20 years. That's an astonishing statistic. We also know the Jewish community has an obesity crisis, and cancer rates that parallel the rest of the county. The community is in need of healthier meat. I see a community of small farmers doing really great, honorable work, and just trying to make a fair living off of farming. The Green Taam is the convergence of a lot of positive elements—the Jewish community needs this good food, the farmers need the market, and pastured poultry is one of the

ways to most quickly rebuild rich topsoil using solar power – the power of the sun growing the pasture. Moving chickens over land is transformative in so many ways."

Amalia and Ariella have partnered with Amish farmers who raise the animals on pasture, and supplement their diet with a small amount of locally-sourced, chemical-free grain. The result: poultry that is higher in Omega-3 fatty acids, lower in overall fat and higher in the healthy fats, and free of antibiotics and pesticides. The ratio of forage (green matter) in the birds' diet is so high – from 30-50% - that it actually changes the color of the meat, creating a product that is nutrient-dense and flavorful. It has made chefs and customers buy out each run of poultry by The Green Taam even before the day of slaughter.

The environment also benefits because of the limited processing involved; the grass grows continually without any chemical inputs, and the entire production process happens locally. Currently, the farmers' production is small enough that they are able to sell directly from the farm to the consumer, and they are doing kosher processing directly on the farm. Amalia and Ariella, along with a rabbi in the community, have educated the farmers about kosher production, and in turn the farmers have shared their enormous knowledge base about farming. The poultry is shechted, soaked and salted in accordance with *balachah L'mehadrin Min Hamehadrin*, meaning, at a level appropriate to the most scrupulous kosher consumer. The chicken, duck and turkey is then distributed directly to the Jewish community in both Columbus and Cleveland, Ohio.

Though small, the business has grown fast. Synagogues in the area have shared information about The Green Taam with their members, and have posted fliers in their buildings. The Cleveland and Akron Jewish newspapers recently published articles, and Amalia has been travelling around Ohio doing speaking engagements. "It is so critical for congregations to get involved," Amalia asserts. "Without the nearby synagogues standing alongside us demanding a more ethical, healthier, and sustainable product, our project would not have been nearly as successful. This movement requires farmers, communities, businesses and consumers all working together. This really is about the health of the human and earth community—it's something that religious communities need to take a stand about and have a say in. Every dollar

## Success Stories . . . . .

our congregations spend on food is a vote—we either vote for a promising, sustainable future or we vote to keep factory farming alive.”

Amalia believes it’s important for people of all faiths to lift the veil off today’s current farming practices: “Half of the ingredients on our food aren’t recognizable,” Amalia explains. “As Michael Pollan suggests in *The Omnivore’s Dilemma*, ‘If you’re eating something that your great, great grandmother wouldn’t have recognized as food, it’s probably something that doesn’t belong on our plates.’ The basic meaning of the word “kosher” is ‘fit’ or ‘proper’, and we need to ask ourselves: is this package that I hold in my hands really food? Ought it be eaten, is it proper? There is a lot of money and political power wielded to make our packaging look very pastoral and make us feel safe, but we are being misled. Our animals are not being raised on farms, and the cruelty

to animal and human beings alike in our processing facilities does not align with religious values. We who believe that the Divine created this earth, and commanded us to treasure and protect life, must stand up and declare that the current system of confined animal production was not meant to be. We can, and must forge another way.”

To see Green Taam featured in the Cleveland Jewish News, visit: <http://www.clevelandjewishnews.com/articles/2009/08/20/news/local/doc4a843bb740894870303484.txt>

Or the Akron Jewish News, visit: [http://www.jewishakron.org/local\\_includes/downloads/35250.pdf](http://www.jewishakron.org/local_includes/downloads/35250.pdf)

Green Taam website: <http://sites.google.com/site/thegreentaam/>



## Kayam Farm Reisterstown, MD Jakir Manela

# Farming with Jewish Agricultural Laws and Organic Agriculture

The Hebrew word *Kayam* is variously translated in several ways: exist, sustain, firmly established and everlasting. At Kayam Farm, a 2.5 acre oasis just outside of Baltimore, these words come alive on the land, where ancient Jewish agricultural laws and modern, innovative farming practices merge together beautifully. The corners of the field are reserved for the less fortunate, and every 7th year the land lies fallow. Fruits, vegetables and herbs are grown using organic practices, with a mindful eye towards the land's well being. "We study and apply Biblical agricultural laws," explains Jakir Manela, Kayam Farm director, "delving deeply into the set of laws in the Torah. These laws espouse sustainable farming, and the obligation to share the farm's abundance with the less fortunate in order to create a just society. We put those laws into the ground and teach them. We are figuring out the values of the Biblical food system—social justice, land stewardship, diversity—and we are reflecting them in our mission and work on the farm."

Kayam Farm is thriving, and packs a large agricultural punch in a relatively small space. It offers culinary herbs, many types of vegetables, an asparagus patch, an orchard, a vineyard and berries, along with a greenhouse that is operated year round. A small brood of chickens and goats currently help to clear the land, and will offer eggs and dairy in the coming years. A small CSA (Community Supported Agriculture) has been established, starting with 11 members last year, and growing to 25 members this year. "The CSA is the

first and foremost outlet for the food," explains Jakir, "It's been profitable for the farm and we also feel that providing a seasonal eating experience for our shareholders is really impactful." Since Kayam Farm is situated at the Pearlstone

Conference and Retreat Center, much of the harvest also goes to the Pearlstone kitchen, to supply fresh and organic produce to the retreat participants. In addition, a portion of the harvest is sold at a nearby farmers' market, which was initiated by Kayam Farm last year and has expanded under the current direction of the Baltimore area Jewish Community Center. Most importantly, the harvest itself reflects Jewish tradition—10% is given to a local women's shelter, following the Biblical law of tithing.



One of Kayam Farm's strongest assets is the many educational programs its staff provides to the wider Baltimore community. Each year for the past 3 years, the Farm has welcomed approximately 3,000 visitors, including groups from many different Hebrew schools, Jewish day schools, youth groups and congregations. Participants can go on farm tours, and can also take part in a large array of volunteer opportunities, holiday celebrations and skills workshops. "Our educational efforts serve two goals—to inspire and to provide skills," described Jakir, "We want participants to be inspired to change things in their own community—in their home, in their school, or at the *shul* (synagogue). But we also know that these efforts take work, and require skills that are unfamiliar to a large number of people who travel to our





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farm. Through our workshops and volunteering opportunities, we provide them with the tools to make real changes.”

This December, the farm will publish a comprehensive curriculum that reflects its ideas and values. The curriculum will provide several dozen activities that fit people of all ages, from kids to seniors. “The purpose of the curriculum,” explains Jakir, “is to have people actually participate in Biblical agriculture and talk about the social and ecological implications of those laws.” One unit is focused exclusively on the Biblical agricultural laws coming to life. Another unit features a Hebrew calendar garden, which is an ongoing activity at Kayam Farm. The garden is a big circle, divided into 12 pie-shaped slices, where people gather at the beginning of every month to learn about the new month they are entering. Participants learn about the color, sense, teaching and plant associated with a particular month, which provides a real, practical way to ground them in Hebrew time.

Kayam Farm has also established direct relationships with several Maryland schools that are achieving the state’s ‘green’ schools status. Kayam staff has gone into the schools to talk about the overlap between the environment, peace, food, and other issues, after which the students come out to the farm to plant crops. Later in the spring, those same students revisit the farm at harvest time. “Farming is empowering for these kids,” said Jakir, “they have an ‘aha’ moment when they realize that they can grow food on their own. With some seeds, a bit of work, and care, they can feed themselves. It really changes these kids for life.” One graduating 8th grade class gave their school a gift that symbolized the power of their Kayam experience—a greenhouse!

The Kayam Fellowship Program is the Farm’s largest endeavor—one that they believe directly affects the future of the Jewish agricultural movement. Every summer, a few hundred young adults gather at the farm for a 3 month summer

fellowship program, where they can live, learn and teach together as a Jewish community. “It’s like a kibbutz,” explains Jakir, “an intentional community that is geared towards kids that are really into these ideas and are thinking about doing a project like Kayam Farm in their own community.” Jakir has a larger vision he hopes this project will achieve: “As the Jewish food movement becomes more mainstream, these Jewish educational farms will become commonplace. Every Jewish community will have a learning center where kids can get their hands dirty, eat and cook their own food, doing things that are healthy for the mind, body and spirit. Today every Jewish community has a JCC, a *mikvah* (a Jewish ritual bath) and a *shul*. In the next century, every Jewish community should have an educational farm.”



Kayam Farm is certainly achieving its goal: many of the students from the fellowship, and many of the synagogues that have visited the farm, have started community gardens that uphold Biblical laws. In the future, Jakir hopes to reach an even a bigger audience: “We want to do more interfaith work, and we hope to establish a Chesapeake diversity farm camp, where kids from all religious traditions and backgrounds can come together to live and work on the farm. The experience would break down cultural barriers and build community in an agricultural context.”

To learn more about Kayam Farm, visit: <http://www.pearlstonecenter.org/kayam.html>

## Good Tree Farm New Egypt, NJ Hisham Moharram, PhD

### *Community-invested Faith-based Farm*

It was 1981 and Hisham Moharram was in a dilemma.

He had a good life, having recently arrived from England to the United States to attend college. He was bright, starting his second year of hotel management studies, and was expected to go far. As a Muslim from Egypt, Hisham had worked hard to reach this point, grateful for the work ethic and sacrifices of his parents.



And then, like many young adults in his situation, he began asking questions - deep questions. One question in particular kept presenting itself to him – “When I look back one day and ask what my life was worth,

will I be able to say that I helped to ease some of the world’s suffering?” In the backdrop was Hisham’s growing awareness of poverty, famines, inequities and injustices throughout the world, which presented him with a crisis of conscience. He realized that studies in hotel management did not fit within his expanding worldview, and he decided to re-direct his life’s focus. Thus began a 28 year journey.

Hisham’s parents owned a farm in Egypt, and he fondly recalled his experiences on the land. He realized that growing food was the confluence of his two greatest passions—environmental stewardship and the desire to bring good to the world. A PhD, several post-doctoral fellowships, and dozens of research endeavors later, Hisham was an expert in agriculture. From plant genetics to natural plant products, he had extensive academic experience, both in the US and abroad. And then one day, the time was right for him to take the step from theoretical research to one where he put his knowledge into practice in the real world: “Personally, I had to feel confident and prepared enough to take the ‘risk’ of being self-employed, and to take my love of plant and agricultural sciences to the ‘real’, applied world. Financially, I had drummed up enough support for the project’s concept

within the Muslim community, that I started to get some serious requests from individuals to invest in it if it got started. Logistically, I had to find suitable and affordable land. It took three tries, but at last I found a property that could work for me. All of these steps helped to build a strong foundation for an agribusiness.” He entered into an exciting, and challenging time. “It’s very, very different in the real world,” said Hisham, “something academics aren’t often in touch with. In the laboratory, you can draw brilliant hypotheses and conclusions, but not until you get your hands in the earth do you understand that farming is as much an art as a science.”

As Hisham began to think about farming, he recalled the motto ‘think globally, act locally,’ and believed that he should emulate his vision for a better world in his own community. He set his sights high; he intended to not only contribute to the community through his farm, but also to involve them as investors from the outset. He felt for sure that there would be others in his community with a similar vision. “I made the effort to present the idea—logistics, cost, etc—using PowerPoint,” explained Hisham, “I travelled throughout the community making presentations, and inviting people to invest in the farm. I told them we would all own the project together, and



I would be happy to run it. Out of over 150 people that I approached, about 25 agreed to invest. The project got the money it needed—half a million dollars—which allowed us to build the infrastructure, clean-up the existing land, and take other necessary steps.”

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And so Good Tree Farm came to be. Designed as a diversified crop farm, it avoids monocultures and limited crop types. While the farm grows a lot of what is in demand so that it can break even at the end of the year, its larger mission is to educate people about herbs and vegetables they may not be familiar with. “Diversity is key to our project,” says Hisham, “we want to educate our customers about the nutritional and dietary habits of other cultures and other people. We also don’t want to put all of our eggs in one basket in case one crop does poorly in a particular year. We grow organic crops, and our farm is Certified Organic by the NJ Department of Agriculture. We also raise pasture-fed livestock, which are slaughtered in accordance with Halal standards. Our sheep, goat (and, soon, poultry) are all organically raised, but are not yet certified organic. As the farm grows, our hope is to further diversify by setting up a kitchen, a catering business, and providing educational seminars and workshops for schools, religious institutions and the community at large.”

Diversity is also exemplified through Good Tree Farm’s CSA (Community Supported Agriculture). Participants in the CSA are from many different traditions—Hindus, Muslims and Christians—and Hisham feels people of faith often have a keen understanding of the risks and benefits involved. “Shareholders in a CSA do well if there are good yields, and don’t do well if there are bad yields,” Hisham explains, “People of faith all understand ‘God willing’—we don’t control the temperature, winds or rains. If you want to really understand how subject you are to God’s will, do agriculture! The number of days I’ve wished for the rains to stop has been too many this season, but we accept and move on and do the best with what we have. We develop such a healthy respect for all those people who did develop a life in this country based on agriculture—the hardships they had to endure, and the happiness. Our shareholders have been right alongside us throughout this process.”

The most unique aspect of Good Tree Farm is that all of the investors are Muslim, united in the idea of caring for creation. “We are required to believe that this earth, and every planet beyond it, is in trust to us by the creator,” Hisham proclaims, “and we need to care for it wisely with proper stewardship.

That’s what the Prophet admonished us to do. If we really understand our faith as Muslims, we understand this is a requirement.” Good Tree Farm is one of the first projects of its kind in the US, and is setting an example here and abroad. Hisham is currently talking with Islamic Relief, an organization that provides humanitarian relief in Muslim countries, to see if similar projects can be started elsewhere. “In countries where poverty, lack of education and healthcare drive a lot of injustices,” explains Hisham, “a project similar to Good Tree Farm is something that can provide income and food to revive the community. It offers up a compelling vision of sustainable development. When a project is driven and



sustained by the community itself, they are taking their first steps towards a journey back on their feet. Projects like these would mitigate a lot of problems in these communities, in a sustainable, long-term manner.”

Hisham believes community supported farms also have the potential to shape the world of agribusiness. “We can still make a profit and change the food production systems to a more wholesome one,” said Hisham, “We do not have to accept that food comes from huge farms or large agribusinesses. What drives those companies is the bottom line and the bottom line doesn’t care about long-term effects on humans or the environment. Our investors do care. Whenever responsibility is not specifically assigned, which is what happens in large agribusinesses, nobody knows who should be carrying the responsibility. So you don’t know who to blame when there is a health or environmental problem. The company becomes a faceless entity. A group of people is different. If a small group of investors does something that harms the environment, you know who to speak to. The responsibility is no longer nebulous.”

This first year of farming has brought many difficulties with it, but Hisham stands resolute in his vision and his passion. “The message I’d like to give to agripreneurs, especially young ones,” explains Hisham, “is to understand that developing a farm takes work and offers challenges, but it is also one of the most rewarding projects you can imagine. Be flexible with your business plan, but hold fast to your vision.” Hisham is more than happy to help others get projects like Good Tree Farm started, and welcomes inquiries about logistics, costs, and the benefits and risks involved.

[www.goodtreefarms.com](http://www.goodtreefarms.com)



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## Definition of Terms

### Animal Welfare Approved™

Created by the Animal Welfare Institute in 2006, Animal Welfare Approved™ offers a seal of approval to family farmers who meet its standards for raising and slaughtering pigs, dairy and beef cattle, poultry, sheep and goats. The Program is third-party administered, better ensuring that the requirements are met by producers that receive the Animal Welfare Approved label. Under this program, animals must be kept in conditions that allow for exercise and freedom of movement, and they must spend the majority of their lives on pasture. Growth hormones are not allowed, and antibiotics are only given to sick animals. Unlike other humane certifiers, approvals are only given to independent family farmers, and farmers are not charged any fees to be approved. Animal Welfare Approved was recently lauded by the World Society for the Protection of Animals as having the highest animal welfare standards of all third-party certifiers.<sup>1 2</sup>



### American Humane Certified™

American Humane Certified™ was the first program in the United States certifying the humane treatment of farm animals. The program is third-party administered, better ensuring that the requirements are met by producers that receive the American Humane label. American Humane claims to conduct video monitoring of all of their producers to ensure that the animals are treated humanely on a continual basis. Under this program, animals must be kept in conditions that allow for exercise and freedom of movement, but outdoor access is not required. Crates, cages and tethers are prohibited, animals cannot be overcrowded, and every animal is given bedding materials. Hormones are prohibited, and only sick animals are given antibiotics. The organization certifies beef, pork, poultry and dairy products.<sup>3 4</sup>



### Bird Friendly

The Smithsonian Migratory Bird Center of the National Zoo has developed criteria and works with organic certification agencies that certify “Bird Friendly” coffee as organic and shade-grown, meaning that the coffee grows beneath a tree canopy that provides quality habitat for birds. This contrasts with normal coffee production, where trees and shade bushes are removed to grow the coffee in full sun, which creates poor habitat for animal life. This label is third-party administered, better ensuring that the requirements are met by producers that receive the Bird Friendly label. This label is the only one on the market that ensures the coffee is both shade grown and 100% organic.<sup>5</sup>



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<sup>1</sup> [www.animalwelfareapproved.org](http://www.animalwelfareapproved.org); Retrieved on 1/16/09

<sup>2</sup> <http://www.thegreenguide.com/greenguide/food/buying/beef-label-decoder>, Retrieved on 1/16/09

<sup>3</sup> <http://www.americanhumane.org/protecting-animals/programs/farm-animals/>, Retrieved on 12/1/08

<sup>4</sup> [http://www.hsus.org/farm/resources/pubs/meat\\_and\\_dairy\\_labels.html](http://www.hsus.org/farm/resources/pubs/meat_and_dairy_labels.html), Retrieved on 12/1/08

<sup>5</sup> <http://www.earthwatch2.org/sustainability/decoding%20labels.htm>, Retrieved 3/25/09

## Cage-free

Cage-free is not a third-party certified label. The label is not significant when used for poultry, because birds raised for meat are rarely caged before they are shipped to the slaughterhouse. However, egg laying hens are kept in very small cages that prohibit natural behaviors, so the cage-free label is useful when purchasing eggs.<sup>6</sup>

## Certified Humane Raised and Handled®

Certified Humane Raised and Handled® is an animal welfare program certifying the humane treatment of farm animals from birth through slaughter. The program is third-party certified, better ensuring that the requirements are met by all producers that receive the Certified Humane® label. It is the only animal welfare certification program in the US that is accredited under the International Organization for Standardization (ISO), a highly respected certification organization. As part of the ISO process, the program is audited annually by the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) to ensure that it meets its standards.<sup>7</sup>



Under this program, animals must be kept in conditions that allow for exercise and freedom of movement. However, outdoor access is not required. Crates, cages and tethers are prohibited, animals cannot be overcrowded, and every animal is given bedding materials. Hormones are prohibited and only sick animals are given antibiotics. The organization certifies meat, eggs, dairy, and poultry products.<sup>8</sup>

## Community-Supported Agriculture (CSA)

Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) is a farming business model that connects farmers directly with consumers. Prior to the start of the growing season, a consumer purchases a 'share' of the farm for a set price, normally ranging from \$350-\$500. In exchange for this share, the CSA member receives a box of fresh produce weekly for the entire season. The produce distributed is dependent upon what is seasonally available and what is growing successfully. The investment is non-refundable, so members share the risks and benefits of the farm's operation throughout the season. Some CSAs also provide weekly subscriptions, whereby consumers pay a set price per week and can cancel at any time.



The profit from sale of the 'shares' provides the farmer with upfront capital, allowing him/her to invest time, energy and resources into farming in place of investments in marketing and distribution. Due to lowered marketing and distribution costs, the price to the consumer can often be competitive with grocery store prices. In addition, since the farmer knows the demand for his/her crops at the beginning of the season, s/he can plant and harvest crops that cater to shareholders' interests. This lends itself to more efficient production and less wasted produce. Shareholders benefit by receiving fresh, healthy foods each week, and by learning about new foods and seasonal eating.

Many CSAs are organic or use less pesticides than other farms (low-spray practices), and are often small and family-owned. Many shareholders visit their CSA farm, contribute volunteer hours, and get to know the farmer, creating an enjoyable rela-

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<sup>6</sup> [http://www.hsus.org/farm/resources/pubs/meat\\_and\\_dairy\\_labels.html](http://www.hsus.org/farm/resources/pubs/meat_and_dairy_labels.html), Retrieved on 12/1/08

<sup>7</sup> <http://www.certifiedhumane.com/>, Retrieved on 12/1/08

<sup>8</sup> [http://www.hsus.org/farm/resources/pubs/meat\\_and\\_dairy\\_labels.html](http://www.hsus.org/farm/resources/pubs/meat_and_dairy_labels.html), Retrieved on 12/1/08



## Definition of Terms. . . . .

tionship between the farmer and consumer.

### Conventional Agriculture

Conventional agriculture, the most common form of agricultural production in the world, uses various practices that can be considered harmful to human health and the environment. These practices include the use of synthetic chemical pesticides, hormones, antibiotics, large areas of land planted with one crop (monoculture), synthetic fertilizers, sewage sludge, genetic engineering, ionizing radiation and factory-farming. In most stores, conventional produce is not labeled as such, but you can identify it by a sticker on the fruit or vegetable that has a four-digit number starting with 4. Organic foods, on the other hand, are labeled with a four-digit number starting with 9.



### Demeter Biodynamic Certification

Demeter® USA is the only certification agent for Biodynamic® farms, processors and products in the United States. As a non-profit organization, Demeter’s mission is to improve the health of the planet and its people by providing certification of products whose ingredients are grown and processed according to the highest agricultural and environmental standards. Biodynamic® products meet all of the requirements of a Certified Organic label, and must be produced without synthetic pesticides or fertilizers, or genetic engineering. When meat is labeled Biodynamic®, there were no animal by-products used in the livestock feed.<sup>9 10</sup>



### Factory Farming

Factory farming is the term used by animal welfare advocates to describe today’s most common animal production methods in the US. Similar to a factory, farm animals are raised and slaughtered in way that maximizes production and profits. These production practices lead to inhumane conditions and suffering for farm animals. For instance, egg-laying hens are kept in wire cages stacked floor to ceiling indoors, where the birds cannot spread their wings and can barely turn around. Such close quarters often lead to fighting, as the chickens’ natural ‘pecking order’ instinct is heightened. In order to limit the adverse effects of fighting, such as injury or death, part of the chicken’s beak is cut off when it is young. In addition, birds are not considered by the USDA to be livestock, and therefore unlike other animals they do not receive protection under the Humane Methods of Slaughter Act, which requires that animals are rendered ‘insensible to pain’ before slaughter.<sup>11</sup>

Similarly, breeding pigs are housed in gestation crates during their entire pregnancy and while feeding the piglets; these crates are barely bigger than the pigs’ bodies and do not allow the animal to turn around, engage in instinctual nesting behaviors, or interact with the piglets aside from feeding them. The European Union has banned the usage of gestation crates, and has taken similar action on battery cages, veal crates, and other types of confinement. However, the United States is far behind Europe in this regard, and these practices are commonplace in the US.<sup>12</sup>

<sup>9</sup> <http://www.earthwatch2.org/sustainability/decoding%20labels.htm>, Retrieved 3/25/09

<sup>10</sup> <http://www.demeter-usa.org/>, Retrieved 3/25/09

<sup>11</sup> <http://www.hsus.org/farm/camp/p4p/>, Retrieved on 12/1/08

<sup>12</sup> <http://www.hsus.org/farm/camp/p4p/>, Retrieved on 12/1/08

## Fair Trade

Fair Trade certification ensures that the workers who produce an item are given a fair price and experienced fair and safe working conditions. Environmentally sustainable farming methods are required as part of Fair Trade certification, as these methods protect the health of farmers and the environment. Fair Trade importers purchase as directly as possible from the producers, enabling the producers to make more money and helping them to strengthen their businesses. Fair Trade practices also promote the development of small business skills among farmers and artisans, who often form cooperatives to market their products. Members of these coops decide how to invest the revenues from their Fair Trade business activity. Studies have shown that these coops often invest in social and business development projects in their community such as organic certification, education and training programs, and scholarships.<sup>13</sup>



## Farmers' Markets

Across time and cultures, farmers' markets have provided a venue for farmers to sell their produce or products directly to the consumer. For modern-day farmers' markets, this direct sale enables the farmer to avoid marketing and distribution costs and pass on lower prices to the customer. These markets come in a variety of sizes and include a diversity of products, ranging from fruits and vegetables to eggs, cheese, meat products, and various homemade goods and crafts. They offer communities easier access to healthy foods at competitive prices, particularly in low-income and minority areas where the provision of fresh produce is more limited.

## Farm-to-School

Farm-to-school programs connect schools with local farms, to increase the local, often organic fruits, vegetable and food products served in the school cafeteria. The objective of farm-to-school is to serve healthy meals in the school cafeteria, improve student nutrition, give students an education about nutrition and health, and support local small farmers. There are farm-to-school programs in an increasing number of locations across the country, and even large corporate providers like Aramark and Sodexo are starting to revise their policies to enable local food purchasing.<sup>14</sup>

## Food Alliance Certified

Food Alliance Certification is a comprehensive set of standards for sustainable food, including both meat and produce. Under this Program, animals must be kept in conditions that allow for exercise and freedom of movement, and they are given access to pasture. Growth hormones are not allowed, and antibiotics are only given to sick animals. Unlike other certified labels, animal protein is allowed in feed. The standards also include Integrated Pest Management (not organic) practices for crops, fair and safe working conditions for farm workers, the use of GMO-free seeds, energy and waste conservation, habitat conservation, and the use of less toxic materials. The Program is third-party administered, better ensuring that the requirements are met by producers that receive the Food Alliance Certification label.<sup>15 16</sup>



<sup>13</sup> <http://www.transfairusa.org/content/about/overview.php>, Retrieved on 12/1/08

<sup>14</sup> [www.farmtoschool.org](http://www.farmtoschool.org), Retrieved on 12/1/08

<sup>15</sup> [www.foodalliance.org](http://www.foodalliance.org), Retrieved on 1/16/09

<sup>16</sup> <http://www.thegreenguide.com/greenguide/food/buying/beef-label-decoder>, Retrieved on 1/16/09

## Free-range

The free-range label is not third-party certified, and is only verified on a limited basis. For poultry to claim “free-range” status, the USDA requires that animals are given access to the outdoors, and producers must submit affidavits to support that they meet this requirement. However, producers are not required to submit information on stocking density of the birds, and the USDA does not specify how frequently the birds must receive outdoor access or what that access must look like. The free range label is only regulated for poultry, so its use on eggs has no significance.<sup>17</sup>

## Genetically Engineered Foods (GMO)

Genetically modified (GM or GMO) foods are food items that have had their DNA changed through genetic engineering. Farmers and plant biologists have modified plants’ genes for thousands of years through breeding, but genetic engineering came to life in the early 1990s and is usually conducted in a laboratory. For instance, the genetics of a food may be altered to help it survive in colder climates, or to help it ward off pests. The *Flavr Savr* tomato was one of the first GMO foods on the market, and soybeans, corn and cotton are some of the most common GM crops grown today.

There is controversy surrounding GM foods, since there is not yet an understanding of their long-term impacts on human health or the environment. In addition, some scientists believe that genetically modified foods could adversely impact biodiversity, native crops, and insects. Since GM foods are not yet required to have a label alerting the consumer, many critics believe that the prevalence of these foods on the market is an infringement of consumer choice.

## Grass-Fed

Grass-fed labels on animal products are not third-party certified, and are only verified on a limited basis. The USDA sets the basic requirements for this certification, which include access for animals to the outdoors, along with engagement in natural behaviors. Producers must submit affidavits to support their claim that they meet the requirements. However, the producer is not required to submit information on stocking density of the animals, and the USDA does not specify how frequently the animals must receive outdoor access or the extent of the access.<sup>18</sup>



For example, American Grassfed requires animals to be on pasture most of their lives, hormones are prohibited, and antibiotics are only given to sick animals. However, the organization rarely inspects the farms that claim to fulfill the standards, and there are few standards related to animal welfare. The standards are set by the organization’s own board of directors.<sup>19</sup>

## Integrated Pest Management

Integrated Pest Management, or IPM, is an environmentally sensitive method of agricultural production that uses less harmful pest management techniques. IPM uses a combination of common-sense practices, information on the life cycle of pests and their interaction with the environment, and both bio-based and conventional pest control methods to manage pests in a way that poses the least hazard to people, property and the environment. While conventional pesticides are used in IPM, they are used less often and in smaller doses than conventional agricultural production.<sup>20</sup>

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<sup>17</sup> [http://www.hsus.org/farm/resources/pubs/meat\\_and\\_dairy\\_labels.html](http://www.hsus.org/farm/resources/pubs/meat_and_dairy_labels.html) , Retrieved on 12/1/08

<sup>18</sup> [http://www.hsus.org/farm/resources/pubs/meat\\_and\\_dairy\\_labels.html](http://www.hsus.org/farm/resources/pubs/meat_and_dairy_labels.html) , Retrieved on 12/1/08

<sup>19</sup> [www.americangrassfed.org](http://www.americangrassfed.org) , Retrieved on 1/16/09

<sup>20</sup> <http://www.epa.gov/opp00001/factsheets/ipm.htm> , Retrieved on 3/25/09

## Local

Local foods are fruits, vegetables and other products made regionally—in the towns, counties or states located closest to an institution. Local foods involve the fewest travelled miles between the farm and the point of purchase, in contrast to the produce found in grocery stores, which typically travels 1,500 miles from farm to shelf.<sup>21</sup>

In many cases, the farther a food item travels from where it is produced to where it is consumed, the more greenhouse gas emissions are released, contributing to global warming. Many miles also require many middlemen—the average grocery store does not purchase food directly from the farmer or producer, so the farmers make less money. Studies have also shown that local foods are healthier; nutritional value and flavor is higher when produce is eaten soon after it is harvested.<sup>22</sup>

## Marine Stewardship Council

This label ensures that the seafood came from fisheries that meet strict environmental standards created by the Marine Stewardship Council. The standards address various parts of the fishery, including the condition of the fish stocks, the effect of the fishery on the marine environment and the way in which the fishery is managed overall. All products with the Marine Stewardship Council label are traceable back to the fishery, and the label is also accessible to developing countries and small fisheries. Independent certifiers inspect the fisheries, better ensuring that they meet the environmental standards set forth by the label.<sup>23 24</sup>



## Organic

According to the US Department of Agriculture (USDA), certified organic foods are produced without the use of most conventional pesticides, petroleum-based or sewage sludge-based fertilizers, genetic engineering or ionizing radiation. Organic meat, poultry, eggs and dairy are produced without the use of antibiotics or growth hormones, and the animals are given organic feed and access to the outdoors. Organic agriculture promotes crop rotation, cover cropping, Integrated Pest Management, composting, and many other means to control pests and weeds naturally.<sup>25</sup>



Studies support that organic produce is significantly more rich in nutrients than conventional counterparts, containing, for example, up to 40% more antioxidants.<sup>26</sup> Organic production is beneficial for farmers' health, ensuring that they have reduced exposure to harmful pesticides. Organic agriculture also protects water quality and helps make soils healthier.<sup>27</sup>

The USDA has established an organic certification system, through which produce or organic products are labeled with the 'USDA certified organic' label ensuring that they fulfill strict requirements. This certification process is lengthy, costly, and complex so many smaller and family-owned farms have chosen not to be certified or need not be certified if they sell less than \$5,000 a year in produce. With farms that lack certification, it is best to talk with the farmer directly and visit the farm to learn how your food is produced.<sup>28</sup>

<sup>21</sup> Halweil, Brian. 2002, November. Worldwatch Paper #163: Home Grown: The Case For Local Food In A Global Market. Worldwatch Institute.

<sup>22</sup> <http://www.sustainabletable.org/issues/buylocal/>, Retrieved on 12/1/08

<sup>23</sup> <http://www.earthwatch2.org/sustainability/decoding%20labels.htm>, Retrieved on 3/20/09

<sup>24</sup> <http://www.msc.org/>, Retrieved on 3/20/09

<sup>25</sup> [www.ams.usda.gov/nop/](http://www.ams.usda.gov/nop/), Retrieved on 12/1/08

<sup>26</sup> <http://www.timesonline.co.uk/tol/news/uk/health/article2753446.ece>, Retrieved on 12/15/08

<sup>27</sup> [www.beyondpesticides.org](http://www.beyondpesticides.org), Retrieved on 12/1/08

<sup>28</sup> <http://www.ams.usda.gov/AMSV1.0/getfile?dDocName=STELDEV3004443&acct=nopgeninfo>, Retrieved on 12/1/08

## Pasture-raised

The pasture-raised label for animal products is not third-party certified, and is only verified on a limited basis. The USDA sets the basic requirements for this certification, which include access for animals to the outdoors, along with engagement in natural behaviors. Producers must submit affidavits to support their claim that they meet the requirements. However, the producer is not required to submit information on stocking density of the animals, and the USDA does not specify how frequently the animals must receive outdoor access or the extent of that access.<sup>29</sup>

## Pesticides, Herbicides, Fungicides

Pesticides, herbicides and fungicides are chemicals used to kill unwanted pests, weeds and fungi. Most of the chemicals are man-made. Many are known or suspected to cause cancer, reproductive disorders, endocrine disruption, and respiratory damage. Farm workers and others directly exposed to these chemicals are at high risk for these health problems. Consumers are also exposed to these chemicals through pesticide residues found on fruits, vegetables and other foods that have been sprayed. For instance, studies have shown that children have higher levels of pesticides in their bloodstream after eating conventional produce, but do not experience the same elevated levels after eating organic produce. Pesticides also cause health problems for a wide range of wildlife, and pesticide residues have been found in nearly every body of water in the world.<sup>30</sup>

## Rainforest Alliance Certified

The Rainforest Alliance, a non-profit organization, works to conserve biodiversity and ensure sustainable livelihoods by transforming land-use practices, business practices and consumer behavior. Farms that meet the comprehensive criteria of the Sustainable Agriculture Network earn the right to use the Rainforest Alliance Certified™ seal. This certification is third-party approved to ensure it fits rigorous environmental and social standards.



## Trans Fat

Hydrogenated oils, partially hydrogenated oils and shortening are all considered trans fats. Trans fats are unsaturated fats that are made into saturated fats through an industrial chemical process. Saturated fats have a higher melting point and are used in products that need a longer shelf life. Unlike olive oil and other natural oils, trans fats have been shown by many studies to be harmful to human health. Trans fats raise levels of 'bad' LDL cholesterol, and decrease levels of 'good' HDL cholesterol. Trans fats are commonly found in fast food, fried foods and snack foods.

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<sup>29</sup> [http://www.hsus.org/farm/resources/pubs/meat\\_and\\_dairy\\_labels.html](http://www.hsus.org/farm/resources/pubs/meat_and_dairy_labels.html), Retrieved on 12/1/08

<sup>30</sup> [www.beyondpesticides.org](http://www.beyondpesticides.org), Retrieved on 12/1/08



## Transitional Farming

Transitional farming refers to a farm that is taking steps towards organic agriculture, but cannot yet be considered a certified organic farm. Organic certification requires that the soil is free from active use of certain chemicals for three years, disqualifying farms that are in the very beginning stages of chemical-free production. Supporting transitional farming is important, to provide needed income to the farmer during the costly certification process, and also to demonstrate support for the farm's transition.

## Vegetarian

A vegetarian diet excludes all meat, including fish. There are several types of vegetarian diets: lacto-vegetarianism includes dairy products but excludes eggs, ovo-vegetarianism includes eggs but not dairy, and lacto-ovo-vegetarianism includes both eggs and dairy products. Vegan diets are stricter, and exclude any animal products or by-products, including dairy, eggs and honey.

Meat production poses significant environmental and moral questions. For example, meat production in the US is responsible for more greenhouse gas emissions than the entire US transportation sector.<sup>31</sup> Eight pounds of grain protein are required to produce 1 pound of meat protein, and animal farms release an enormous amount of animal waste which pollute water supplies and create health hazards.<sup>32</sup>

In addition, most animals produced for meat are raised in inhumane conditions, through a system known as Factory Farming. The animals are rarely allowed access to the outdoors, are confined in cages or small quarters, and are not allowed to engage in their instinctual behaviors.

## Whole Grain

A whole grain contains the whole seed from a plant—the bran ('outer shell'-contains vitamins and trace minerals), germ (nourishment for the seed—contains antioxidants, vitamin E, B vitamins) and endosperm (the energy for the growing plant-contains protein and carbohydrates). Processed foods often remove the bran and germ from the seed, which subsequently removes the beneficial vitamins and minerals.

Many products now claim they are 'made with whole grain', but there is no government standard regulating use of the claim. The Whole Grain Council has a label, which ensures that the product contains at least 8 grams or more of whole grain per serving. The exact grams of whole grains in the product will be listed at the bottom of the label.



It is also helpful to check the product ingredient list, and see if the grain is preceded by the word 'whole', such as 'whole grains', 'whole wheat' or 'whole oats'.<sup>33</sup>

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<sup>31</sup> <http://www.fao.org/newsroom/en/news/2006/1000448/index.html> , Retrieved on 12/1/08

<sup>32</sup> <http://www.ehponline.org/members/2002/110p445-456horrigan/horrigan-full.html> , Retrieved on 12/1/08

<sup>33</sup> <http://www.wholegrainscouncil.org/> , Retrieved on 12/1/08

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# Resources

## Community Supported Agriculture (CSA)

### Hazon

Tuv Ha'Aretz Program ("Good for the Land")  
Resources and assistance to help Jewish Communities set up a  
CSA program  
[www.hazon.org](http://www.hazon.org)

### Just Food

Non-profit that works to develop sustainable and just food systems  
in the New York City region  
[www.justfood.org](http://www.justfood.org)

### Local Harvest

National listing of CSAs, farms and farmers' markets  
[www.localharvest.org](http://www.localharvest.org)

### Northeast Organic Farming Association of NJ

List of CSAs in NJ  
[www.nofanj.org/csa.htm](http://www.nofanj.org/csa.htm)

## Composting

### How to Compost

[www.howtocompost.org/](http://www.howtocompost.org/)

### The New York City Compost Project

Composting guides useful for any location  
[www.nyccompost.org/how/index.html](http://www.nyccompost.org/how/index.html)

## Curriculum and Education Resources

### Center for Science in the Public Interest

Eating Green Calculator  
[www.cspinet.org/EatingGreen/calculator.html](http://www.cspinet.org/EatingGreen/calculator.html)



### Hazon

'Food for Thought' and 'Min Ha'Aretz'— sustainable food curricula  
and sourcebooks for Jewish communities  
[www.hazon.org](http://www.hazon.org)

### Meatrix

Cartoon video showcasing the problems with factory farming – based  
on the Matrix film  
[www.meatrix.com/](http://www.meatrix.com/)

### "Media that Matters" Film Festival

'Good Food' videos  
[www.mediathatmattersfest.org/mtm\\_good\\_food/](http://www.mediathatmattersfest.org/mtm_good_food/)

### Northwest Earth Institute

'Menu for the Future' Discussion Guides  
Small group discussion guides on food and sustainability  
[www.nwei.org/](http://www.nwei.org/)

### Presbyterian Church

'Just Eating? Practicing our Faith at the Table'  
7 week curriculum on sustainable eating, covering the topics of food  
sharing, nurturing the body, hunger, food and environment and  
creating community.  
[www.pcusa.org/food/resources.htm](http://www.pcusa.org/food/resources.htm)

### "Store Wars"

A takeoff on Star Wars, this cartoon video offers a fun introduction  
to organic foods.  
[www.storewars.org/noflash/](http://www.storewars.org/noflash/)

## Fair Trade Products

### Catholic Relief Services

Fair Trade information specific for Catholic institutions  
[www.crsfairtrade.org/](http://www.crsfairtrade.org/)

### Equal Exchange

Sells Fair Trade coffee, tea and chocolate, and organizes a widely-used  
interfaith program.  
[www.equalexchange.coop/](http://www.equalexchange.coop/)

### **Fair Trade Federation**

*A trade association that strengthens and promotes North American organizations committed to Fair Trade.*

[www.fairtradefederation.org/](http://www.fairtradefederation.org/)

### **Trans-Fair USA**

*A third-party certifying body for Fair Trade products*

[www.transfairusa.org/](http://www.transfairusa.org/)

## **Farms**

### **Northeast Organic Farming Association**

*'Find a Farm' search—locate certified organic and CSA farms in NJ and eastern PA*

[www.nofanj.org/cofpa.htm](http://www.nofanj.org/cofpa.htm)

### **Rodale Institute**

*'Farm Locator'*

*Helps consumers, brokers, restaurateurs and farmers find varied farm services.*

<http://newfarm.org/farmlocator/>

## **Farmers' Markets**

### **Northeast Organic Farming Association**

*A listing of farms in NJ with information on markets, farm stands and restaurants they serve.*

[www.nofanj.org/cof.htm](http://www.nofanj.org/cof.htm)

### **United States Department of Agriculture**

*A national farmer's market search, searchable by location and form of payment accepted.*

<http://apps.ams.usda.gov/FarmersMarkets/>

### **Wallace Center**

*A guide for recruiting vendors for a farmer's market.*

[www.wallacecenter.org/our-work/Resource-Library/wallace-publications/handbooks/RECRUITERS\\_Sc.pdf](http://www.wallacecenter.org/our-work/Resource-Library/wallace-publications/handbooks/RECRUITERS_Sc.pdf)

## **Farm-to-School**

### **Food Routes**

*Search under 'Library' for great guides to establishing a farm-to-school program, with tips, information on potential barriers, and helpful case studies.*

[www.foodroutes.org](http://www.foodroutes.org)

### **Food and Nutrition Service, USDA**

*Small Farms/ School Meals Initiative: A Step-by-step Guide on How to Bring Small Farms and Local Schools Together.*

[www.fns.usda.gov/cnd/Lunch/Downloadable/small.pdf](http://www.fns.usda.gov/cnd/Lunch/Downloadable/small.pdf)

### **National Farm-to-School Program**

*National program helping schools to connect with local farms and implement local food purchasing.*

[www.farmtoschool.org](http://www.farmtoschool.org)

## **Food Labels**

### **EarthWatch Institute**

*A comprehensive and up-to-date guide on understanding food labels—such as organic, rainforest certified, etc—to help consumers purchase more sustainable food.*

[www.earthwatch2.org/sustainability/decoding%20labels.htm](http://www.earthwatch2.org/sustainability/decoding%20labels.htm)

## **Gardens**

### **American Community Garden Association**

*Lists community gardens by state, provides a good newsletter, and lists funding opportunities.*

[www.communitygarden.org/](http://www.communitygarden.org/)

### **Ample Harvest**

*Connecting backyard gardeners with food pantries so that excess produce can be shared with those in need.*

[www.ampleharvest.org](http://www.ampleharvest.org)

### **Cool Food Campaign**

*A great guide for gardens in the yard, in containers, and in window boxes that discusses the best plants for your zone, methods for organic gardening, and tips for harvest.*

<http://coolfoodscampaign.org/your-tools/garden-guide/>

### **Earthbox**

*An all-in-one product for creating a container garden*

[www.earthbox.com/](http://www.earthbox.com/)

### **Kids Gardening**

*Children's gardening website*

[www.kidsgardening.com](http://www.kidsgardening.com)

### **Small Plot Intensive farming—SPIN**

*Information on building successful and lucrative farms on land under an acre in size*

[www.spinfarming.com](http://www.spinfarming.com)

## General/Miscellaneous

### Faith in Place

*Chicago organization promoting sustainable farming and food in faith-based communities*

[www.faithinplace.org](http://www.faithinplace.org)

### List of organizations working on food and farming issues

<http://spreadsheets.google.com/pub?key=pKOLsCD4SNSZGqXOk5mc9Mw>

### Sustainable Food Center

*A Central Texas group promoting local and healthy food through gardens, classes, etc.*

[www.sustainablefoodcenter.org](http://www.sustainablefoodcenter.org)

### Sustainable Table

*Educates consumers on food-related issues and works to build community through food.*

[www.sustainabletable.org](http://www.sustainabletable.org)

### The Jew and the Carrot

*Blog on food organized by Hazon; focused on Jewish communities*

[www.jcarrot.org](http://www.jcarrot.org)

## Humane Meat

### Animal Welfare Institute

*Created the 'Animal Welfare Approved' label—the only third-party certified label limited to independent family farmers.*

[www.animalwelfareapproved.org](http://www.animalwelfareapproved.org)

### American Humane

*Created the 'American Humane Certified' label—the first-ever certification program for humane meat.*

<http://thehumanetouch.org/>

### Food Alliance

*Created the 'Food Alliance Certified' label—a comprehensive label for sustainable food, from humanely produced meat, to fewer pesticides used on crops.*

[www.foodalliance.org](http://www.foodalliance.org)

### Green Taam

*Kosher pastured poultry available in Ohio (Cleveland and Columbus).*

<http://sites.google.com/site/thegreentaam/>

### Humane Farm Animal Care

*Created the 'Certified Humane' label—the only humane certification label accredited under ISO*

<http://www.certifiedhumane.org/>

### Kol Foods

*The largest supplier of Kosher grass fed, humane meat.*

[www.kolfoods.com/](http://www.kolfoods.com/)

### LoKo

*Providing local, humanely-raised, pastured Kosher meat in the Boston area.*

Contact Marion for more information: [marionmenzin@gmail.com](mailto:marionmenzin@gmail.com)

## Immigrant Farming

### National Immigrant Farming Initiative

*Provides information on grants, policies, news and success stories.*

[www.immigrantfarming.org/](http://www.immigrantfarming.org/)

## Local Food

### Eat Well Guide

*Guides for finding local, fresh, sustainable food*

[www.eatwellguide.org](http://www.eatwellguide.org)

### Epicurious

*Interactive map to identify fresh foods in your area, and find ingredient descriptions, shopping guides, recipes, and tips.*

[www.epicurious.com](http://www.epicurious.com)

### Food Routes

*Information on local food purchasing, news and advocacy*

[www.foodroutes.org](http://www.foodroutes.org)

## Nutrition Assistance Programs

### Snap-Ed

*Website and program designed to support nutrition education to low-income communities throughout NJ.*

[www.njsnap-ed.org/](http://www.njsnap-ed.org/)

## Organic Foods

### Environmental Working Group

*“Pesticides in Produce” guide—a guide that can be distributed to members, describing the most important produce to buy organic.*

[www.foodnews.org/](http://www.foodnews.org/)

### Organic Center

*Communicates the benefits of organic farming through peer-reviewed scientific articles*

[www.organic-center.org](http://www.organic-center.org)

## Policies

### Sustainable Food Policy

*A Guide to Developing a Sustainable Food Purchasing Policy*

[www.sustainablefoodpolicy.org/SustainableFoodPolicyGuide.pdf](http://www.sustainablefoodpolicy.org/SustainableFoodPolicyGuide.pdf)

## Recipes

### Angelic Organics

*Beautifully formatted guides highlighting different vegetables; can be used in newsletters.*

[www.angelicorganics.com/ao/index.php?option=com\\_content&task=view&id=131&Itemid=239](http://www.angelicorganics.com/ao/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=131&Itemid=239)

### Vegetarian Times

*Thousands of vegetarian recipes, with a search feature.*

[www.vegetariantimes.com](http://www.vegetariantimes.com)

## School Wellness

### Nutritional Development Services of the Archdiocese of Philadelphia

*A guide for creating a school wellness policy*

[www.ndsarch.org/Pdfs/PolicyResourceGuidePrincipals.pdf](http://www.ndsarch.org/Pdfs/PolicyResourceGuidePrincipals.pdf)

### Nutritional Development Services of the Archdiocese of Philadelphia

*Healthy Celebrations: Promoting a Healthy School Environment*

[www.ndsarch.org/Pdfs/HealthyCelebrations.pdf](http://www.ndsarch.org/Pdfs/HealthyCelebrations.pdf)

## Seafood

### Monterey Bay Aquarium

*The well-known “Seafood Watch” Guide*

[www.montereybayaquarium.org/cr/seafoodwatch.aspx](http://www.montereybayaquarium.org/cr/seafoodwatch.aspx)

## Waste Audits

### The Solid Waste Policy Group

*Guide to conducting waste audits, created by the solid waste policy group at Rutgers University*

[www.cook.rutgers.edu/~envpurchase/basics\\_cycle\\_audits.htm](http://www.cook.rutgers.edu/~envpurchase/basics_cycle_audits.htm)

## Vegetarianism, Veganism

### Christian Vegetarian Association

*The Christian Vegetarian Association (CVA) is an international, non-denominational Christian organization promoting vegetarian eating.*

[www.all-creatures.org/cva/default.htm](http://www.all-creatures.org/cva/default.htm)

### Jewish Veg

*Information about the Jewish vegetarian movement*

[www.jewishveg.com/index.htm](http://www.jewishveg.com/index.htm)

### Vegetarian Resource Group

*Resources, guides and news about vegetarian eating*

[www.vrg.org](http://www.vrg.org)

### Vegetarian Kitchen

*Nava Atlas, author of several vegetarian cookbooks, provides recipes, cooking tips, and nutrition information on vegetarian cooking*

<http://vegkitchen.com/>