

Why It Is Such a Marvelous Thing to Shop at the Lansdowne Farmer's Market

by Alexandra DiFilippo, HHC

Your Health. There is no shortage of conflicting information when it comes to nutrition, but one thing I think everyone can agree on -- a healthy diet must include plenty of fresh fruits and vegetables. And more potent than any dietary supplement is the mighty whole food. Consider a carrot or a blueberry -- a single whole food can contain over a thousand nutrients. We don't even know what half of them do! What we do know is that the nutrients contained in a whole food work synergistically to create optimal health in the body. Just as your body has a number of systems working together to make you, a whole food works the same way. A diet high in fruits and vegetables can prevent a laundry list of diet-related diseases and give you more energy and vitality.

For the omnivores out there -- you are what you eat, ate. When you eat an animal that has lead a natural life and fed a natural diet, in addition to being delicious, that animal will contain more omega-3 fatty acids, vitamins, and minerals. They are also a great source for vitamin D, a hormone with a very busy workload in our bodies and that most of us are deficient in. Animals hanging out in the sunshine make plenty of vitamin D.

Another health benefit comes from having the freshest food possible. As soon as a plant is harvested, the nutrients slowly begin to deplete, so fresh, local food is more nutrient dense than something that's traveled from California or Chile.

I think even the sweet treats and goodies deserve a nod, because they are clearly made with love and care. Being a health food Puritan is a bit unreasonable, so if you are going to enjoy a confectionary delight, do it right!

The Environment. Sustainability is a word on everyone's tongue these days, and getting your food from the local farm is the most sustainable thing for the environment, your health, and the economy. The vendors at the Lansdowne Farmers Market sell organic and low spray produce. The less pesticide being sprayed, the less goes into the soil and your body. Soil depletion has become a major issue in this country, but supporting farms that use natural practices keep the land they're on in good shape. Mineral-rich soil also contributes to the health of the plant, or the grass the cows graze upon. Pesticide use also affects nearby waterways, where the water quality and the aquatic ecosystems are already quite troubled.

Eating locally also cuts down on "food miles." The further goods are transported, the more fossil fuels get burned, contributing to pollution and global warming.

The Economy. I'm no economist, but I know that it feels good to support the person that just sold me those divine nectarines! A centralized food system has a lot of issues. When you support the vendor directly, you're skipping the middleman. The vendor and the customer both benefit from this transaction. Also, this creates a community that supports itself. When local businesses are thriving, the whole community benefits.