

Nutrition
From the local source into my school!

“Eat local! Eat what’s in season! Eat organic!” Multiple messages hit us every day about what to eat and where to buy it. Here are a few hints about why it really makes sense for a school to promote seasonal and local food for canteens, kiosks and to support students for the food they take along from home.

1. Money

When there is high season for a certain fruit or vegetable, the amount available makes it usually less expensive. It’s the basic law of supply and demand, and when crops are in season, your canteen or the parents will be rewarded financially by purchasing what’s growing now.

2. Taste

When food is not in season locally, it’s either grown in a hothouse or shipped in from other parts of the world, and both affect the taste. When transporting crops, they must be harvested early and refrigerated so they will not spoil during transportation. They may not ripen as effectively as they would in their natural environment, resulting a less than full flavor and loss of nutrients.

3. Variety

Many people are surprised to find that a wide variety of crops are harvested in the fall (squash, apples, endive, garlic, grapes, figs, mushrooms) and winter (citrus, kale, radishes, turnips, leeks) in addition to products that we readily associate with summer, such as sweet peas, corn, peaches, cucumbers, tomatoes, zucchini, and green beans. This certainly is very different from one geographical region to the other. It is important that you, as the head of school, are well informed about it and make sure that students (maybe as a part of a biology lesson) together with their teacher, conduct some research and create a monthly poster with the fruits and vegetables of the month with some price comparison.

4. Limits

Because of limited growing seasons in most regions, it is impossible to eat locally sourced produce that is in season 100% of the time. So why not establish a nice school garden and encourage thereby the students and their parents to create more gardens themselves? While it might not always be possible to purchase locally grown seasonal products, the next best thing is to purchase what’s in season somewhere else - and hopefully not very far away in order to minimize shipping time and other detrimental issues.

Possible additional reading/websites that can be found free online:

- <http://www.rebootwithjoe.com/benefits-of-eating-seasonally/>
- http://msue.anr.msu.edu/news/7_benefits_of_eating_local_foods
- http://www.sustainweb.org/sustainablefood/eat_the_seasons/

