

BUYING LOCAL GUIDE

A GUIDE FOR RESTAURANTS, GROCERIES AND INSTITUTIONAL BUYERS

Please connect with us at communications@gorgegrown.com to add a resource to this list.

WHY BUY LOCAL?

- **Local food tastes better.** When foods are consumed, purchased, or processed in season, closer to their harvest, they bring along freshness, more flavor, and unique qualities. Leveraging local and seasonal products allows you to highlight the fresh, local flavors in season and beyond.
- **Local food lasts longer.** Fresh produce begins to lose nutrients, flavor and quality the moment it's picked. The average veggie travels 1,500 miles and takes 7 days to reach the grocery store shelves. Local produce is picked at peak freshness.
- **Local food is good for your bottom line.** The long shelf life and quality of local produce means it won't be going bad before you can use it.
- **Buying local food means investing in our local community.** If 20% of the food we eat was purchased directly from a local farmer, we'd keep \$9.6 million extra in the Gorge
- **Buying local supports local farmers and the local economy.** Farmers make 72% more when you buy direct. Farmers are small business owners that create meaningful employment opportunities.
- **Buying local provides an additional marketing angle.** Consumer demand for local food at restaurants is only growing, and sourcing locally can help differentiate you from your competition.
- **Small farmers and food producers rely on you.** Like many restaurants and specialty markets, small farmers and food producers rely on local customers. Help cultivate a cycle of local support by purchasing from producers in your community.

DEFINING LOCAL

- There is no agreed-upon definition of local so it's important to establish a definition that works best for you. This will help support clear messaging of your efforts. Some things to consider:
 - GEOGRAPHY: Defining local by geographic tends to be the most common definition. Examples:
 - From the Columbia River Gorge
 - Within county lines
 - Within the state
 - A TIERED APPROACH: Starting with a more restricted definition and expanding to a larger region if no supplier exists within that area. Examples:
 - Sourcing within 25 miles, then within 50, then within 100 miles.

Tip: Transparency is going to be the most important thing for any local claims regardless of how you chose to define it. This is also true of any additional claims like "Organic" etc.



WHAT TO BUY LOCALLY

See below for a general seasonality guide of some common produce grown in our region. This is not all-encompassing. Depending on farm location and use of hoop houses or green houses, the growing season may extend through the winter months. Some farmers also grow and store crops for use over the winter.

Don't be afraid to think outside the chart. Other items to consider are herbs, edible flowers, and wild-foraged items like mushrooms and berries.

The Gorge also has many amazing food businesses specializing in local meat, eggs, fish, honey, fermented vegetables, jams, jellies, cheese, baked goods, and more.

[illegible]

PRODUCE	JAN	FEB	MAR	APR	MAY	JUN	JUL	AUG	SEP	OCT	NOV	DEC
KALE												
KOHLRABI												
LEEKs												
MELONS												
MICROGREENS												
MUSHROOMS												
NECTARINES												
ONIONS												
PARSNIPS												
PEAS												
PEACHES												
PEARS												
PEPPERS												
PLUMS												
POTATOES												
PUMPKINS												
RADISH												
RHUBARB												
SALAD GREENS												
SHALLOTS												
SUMMER SQUASH												
WINTER SQUASH												
TOMATOES												
TURNIPS												

Tip: Talk to farmers in the winter to plan specific crops or varieties for you in the next season. If you hope for unique or specialty crops, farmers may need to know in the fall, before they start ordering seeds for the following season.

HOW TO BUY LOCAL

There are many ways you can source local food. The important first step is connecting with local farmers and food producers.

- [WHO'S YOUR FARMER GUIDE](#) is a database hosted by Gorge Grown Food Network comprising farmers and food producers in the Columbia Gorge. Search for a specific farm business or product.
- [OREGON TASTE](#) is a directory of local, fresh foods offered by producers across the state of Oregon.
- [WA FARM AND FOOD FINDER](#) can connect you with local food growers and producers in the state of Washington.
- [VISIT YOUR LOCAL FARMERS MARKET](#) to start a face-to-face relationship with farmers and grow your local purchasing efforts.
- ATTEND THE ANNUAL BUYER + SELLER MATCHMAKER, a networking event to connect local food producers and chefs, restaurateurs, and institutional buyers. This event is held every winter. Contact communications@gorgegrown.com for more information.
- TALK TO OTHER RESTAURANTS IN YOUR AREA to tap into the knowledge of like-minded chefs known for local sourcing.
- [MAKE A PROCUREMENT CALENDAR](#) to organize your ordering, deliveries, cancellation windows for standing orders etc.

Tip: if you need to change a standing order, let the farmer know ASAP. At least 48 hours notice is appreciated for a weekly standing order.

A SUCCESSFUL FARM TO RESTAURANT RELATIONSHIP

When we surveyed farmers and food producers in the Gorge, they shared that they seek the following from their restaurant and institutional accounts to ensure a smooth and successful partnership:

- 100% of responses mention good communication
- Help promote the farmer or producer's business (media posts, menu listings etc.)
- Demonstrate a commitment to local food
- Allow for easy self-delivery
- Provide feedback on products
- Aim to keep ordering consistent
- Give appropriate lead time for harvest and prep
- Pay on delivery, or within the agreed upon terms
- Honor commitments
- Have a goal of shared success
- Be willing to work with seasonality

Tip: Celebrate your farm connections and local purchasing publicly through media posts and menu listings, but remember to remove their farm name from your menu after the product is out of season.

BEST PRACTICES FROM CHEFS BUYING LOCAL

We asked experienced chefs who buy local food in the Gorge what they do to work successfully with farmers. Here are some best practices:

- Make sure to pay the farmer as soon as possible
- Be flexible with deliveries
- Help promote the partnership on social media
- Provide consistent communication
- Be flexible with variables that come with vegetable harvesting
- Meet during the winter to discuss growing season needs
- Be understanding of farmers limitations due to weather
- Build menu specials around local, seasonal items

Tip: If a farmer's quality doesn't meet your standards or expectations, talk to them about it. They'd rather know what is going wrong so they can fix it rather than lose a customer.

Tip: It's easier for a chef to incorporate local ingredients if they have decision-making authority over menu changes. Restaurateurs, consider a streamlined process for chefs to add menu items or change ingredients to take advantage of fresh, seasonal products.

HOW TO INTEGRATE LOCAL PRODUCTS

- Examine your current menu and determine what items can be purchased locally. Set small, achievable goals to start.
- Consider which items are the most cross-utilized. These are items that may be purchased more frequently and in higher volumes.
- Find opportunities for specialty local items that can be used when in season or featured in the occasional special.
- Sometimes local foods may cost more, but when in season they may end up being cheaper. Be willing to have an open discussion about price with farmers, keeping in mind the quality items you get direct from the farmer may cost more than the wholesale prices you get for conventional foods from a distributor.
- Make sure you understand the storage parameters of the items you are purchasing and how long you can expect the fresh product to store.

Tip: Local items often last longer than conventional foods from a distributor. This can help you order in a higher volume and minimize food waste.

THANK YOU FOR BUYING LOCAL

Buying local takes commitment. We hope this guide has provided information to help turn your desire to purchase locally into a reality.

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