

10 REASONS TO LEARN SUSTAINABLE HOME COOKING (OR: WHY IT'S TIME TO TAKE BACK THE PLATE!)

We're all cooks now. Or at least we should be. Everybody's talking about home cooking and the connection to sustainable, local food — so, if you need a push, here are ten reasons to help you get cooking with conviction!

- 1 IT'S ECONOMICAL.** Home cooking beats all of the competition hands down when it comes to saving money. Whether you're considering dining out or bringing home prepared food, you're paying for someone else to do something you can do yourself — and, with a little practice, probably do better. At a restaurant, you're spending money on the cost of running somebody's business, including rent and payroll. By the same token, purchasing prepared food from the grocer's freezer involves paying for the processing, packaging, and advertising of that product — none of which adds value to the food itself. So, when you cook, you are saving money, and when you cook sustainably, you're taking those savings to the next level. You're using locally raised and produced food so you're not footing the bill for transporting ingredients across the country or around the globe. You learn to “use the whole thing.” The bones from tonight's chicken and the trimmings from fresh vegetables can be transformed into a rich stock, the perfect starting point for a pot of delicious and nutritious homemade soup. If you compost and do any gardening, some of your dinner waste can be repurposed as free fertilizer.
- 2 IT'S SAFER.** Think about what you DON'T want to find in tonight's dinner — sickening bacteria, toxic pesticides. When you cook, you have more control over what goes into your body. By buying organic, sustainably raised or minimally treated meat, dairy
- 3 IT'S HEALTHIER.** Think about what you DO want to find in tonight's dinner. You have control over the nutritional value of the foods you prepare. Locally grown food is fresher by definition, which also means it's more nutritious. Cooking methods also count. For example, roasting a vegetable will preserve vitamins that are wasted by boiling it; retaining the peel on many fruits and vegetables provides additional vitamins. Watching your salt or sugar intake? Keeping an eye on fats or carbohydrates? You're in control of all these when you cook.
- 4 IT TASTES BETTER.** We're losing our palates to our industrialized food system. Not so long ago, herbs and spices and sugar were used to enhance the flavor in our food. But in recent decades our taste buds have been corrupted through the use of cheap chemicals and corn syrup to fill that role. We've forgotten how wonderfully delicious fresh food tastes as we've become acclimated to food that's polluted with preservatives. The more you cook, the more you'll learn that sustainable, local ingredients just taste better. Let the food do some

and produce, you can dramatically reduce your consumption of food contaminated by chemical fertilizers, hormones, or antibiotics. Once you're in the kitchen, chances are you won't choose a recipe calling for artificial color, arti-

ficial flavor, texturizers, preservatives, or packaging. (That's right. Packaging is considered a food additive by the FDA and does, in many cases, add undesirable ingredients to the food inside.) You can avoid ingesting all of these ingredients by shopping at a market that sells real food, not a chemical supply house.

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10 REASONS TO LEARN SUSTAINABLE HOME COOKING (continued)

of the work for you. Take back your palate so you can take back your plate!

- 5 IT TASTES LIKE YOU WANT IT TO.** When you're doing your own cooking, you can customize the flavor to suit your own (or your family's or friends') preferences. Want more spice in your spice cookies? Want to put a new spin on your spinach salad? The world is your oyster! Once you get the hang of it, experimentation is the name of the game. And as you learn to cook sustainably, you'll begin to find the intersection of which tastes you like and which foods are especially healthy for you.
- 6 IT'S SATISFYING.** You'll discover that you get the same sense of satisfaction from learning to cook sustainably that many people get from working out. You'll feel confident that by preparing healthy meals with local ingredients, you're doing something good for yourself and your family.
- 7 IT WILL MAKE REDUCING YOUR MEAT CONSUMPTION MUCH EASIER.** Lots of people are pledging to cut out meat one day a week for their own health and for the health of the planet. At www.meatlessmonday.com, you'll learn that going meatless once a week reduces your risk of cancer, heart disease, diabetes and obesity. It also reduces your carbon footprint and saves precious resources like fresh water and fossil fuel. But if it's a challenge to find appealing vegetarian choices at a restaurant or your supermarket, learning to cook is the answer! Before you know it, you'll be cooking up your own special signature meatless dish whether it's a twist on an old standby or a tasty recipe that started out meat-free.
- 8 IT'S A GIFT TO FUTURE GENERATIONS.** If the good food movement is to succeed, it will be through our children. Invite them to participate in cooking. Kids love to "play" in the kitchen and there are dozens of ways they can be involved — from reading a recipe to washing produce to mixing ingredients to decorating cookies. Take kids shopping at farmers' markets so they can see where those ingredients come from that they'll be preparing later on. Even better, take them to a farm so they can follow the trail from the beginning! They will learn by example and in a generation, healthy, sustainable home cooking will once again be the norm and not the exception.
- 9 IT WILL ENRICH YOUR LIFE.** Involve friends in a sustainable dinner party. It's a perfect opportunity to build community and spread the word about sustainable local food. Whether it's a potluck or you're pulling out all the stops yourself, folks are guaranteed to get into the spirit. Get everything you need to know when you download our Sustainable Dinner Party Kit at www.sustainabletable.org/spread/kits. And remember that sharing a meal together with family or friends reinforces a precious bond. You'll discover how the simple act of engaging in face-to-face conversation over a repast you've created yourself can become a meaningful part of your lives.
- 10 IT WILL MAKE A STATEMENT.** Learning to cook sustainably is an opportunity to vote with your frying pan while you lobby with your fork; make it your own special way of furthering values you believe in — stewardship, responsibility, independence, love — by taking control of what goes onto your plate, and taking away some of the bloated power of industrialized agribusiness.

To learn more about sustainable local food, visit Sustainable Table at www.sustainabletable.org

