

Sourcing Locally for Restaurants

Advantages to Sourcing Local Food

Sourcing local food is the **way of the future**.

The National Restaurant Association conducts an annual survey of the **top trends in the culinary world** by garnering feedback from nearly 1,300 professional chefs nationwide. The top three on the list from 2014 are locally sourced meats and seafood, locally grown produce, and environmental sustainability.



Other top items on the list are also associated with local sourcing and its benefits. For the full survey, visit www.restaurant.org. This isn't just a passing trend, either, as the respondents also reported that the top trends **10 years from now** will be environmental sustainability, local sourcing, and health/nutrition.



Sourcing local food supports healthy people, a healthy environment, and healthy economics.

Other benefits include:

- Supply chains are shorter, leading to greater **certainty and predictability** of delivery times and generally lower delivery costs. The likelihood of disruptive and costly contamination recalls is lower, too.
- Local suppliers can be more **reactive and innovative** in times of high demand or when unforeseen circumstances strike.
- Selling and marketing local produce fosters closer relationships with the community, which generates **great PR** and attracts customers.
- Since you're in sync with the local network, you understand local variations in preferences and can adjust accordingly, resulting in potentially **better sales**.
- Local food tastes better, and **is better for you**, because it is typically fresher and not grown to withstand long distance travel. What tastes better than *San Diego Born & Raised*?
- Local food is good for the environment by **reducing economic and environmental impact** through reduction of transportation, processing, and packaging.
- The many benefits of local produce make them a **superior value** for you and your customers.

Food for Thought



The National Restaurant Association reports that more than 7 out of 10 consumers said they would be **more likely** to visit a restaurant that offers **locally produced menu items**, and more than 6 out of 10 said **locally sourced menus are a key attribute** for choosing a restaurant.

Overcoming Challenges

You may have concerns on how to successfully implement a local food sourcing program that is sustainable and financially successful. Here are some of the most common concerns and ideas for solutions to get you going.

It takes too much time and effort.

- **Start small.** Implement slowly, using scalable techniques and pilot programs.
- **Educate yourself.** Visit farmers' markets, farms, and invite farmers to visit you. This will help you learn more about each other, and how to best work together.
- **Farmers' markets.** Consider sourcing a local item from your nearest farmers' market.
- **Use your existing distributor.** Ask if they have the capacity to source locally, and, if not, encourage them to consider it.

Ingredients may not be available for a key dish.

- **Don't worry.** Not everything on your menu has to be locally sourced. If you have a key big ticket item, source what you can for it locally.



Local food is too expensive and the competition is tough.

- **Buy with the seasons.** This keeps costs down and, as a bonus, it encourages menu rotation. This keeps your menu fresh and interesting, and customers coming back to try your latest creative dish.
- **Keep an eye on waste.** Reducing how much you throw away will keep your margins up. It helps to track your waste by monitoring your produce usage closely.

Customers can be hard to please. They want certain foods all year and will go elsewhere to get them.

- **Promote!** Let your customers know what you're doing and why it's important. People want to be educated about the food they eat. If you help inform them, they will have more respect for you.
- **Be creative with menu items.** Offer something new and different!
- **Be patient.** Changes take time, so be patient with both yourself and your customers. Implement your effort slowly, and your customers will understand it too.

Ideas to Get Going

Harvest of the Month features a widely available, locally grown fruit and vegetable each month. It's the perfect way to kick off or supplement 365. Nutrition and educational resources are available at <http://www.harvestofthemonth.cdph.ca.gov/>.

The **Farm Bureau's San Diego Grown 365 Exchange** is designed to help connect farmers with retail stores, restaurants, distributors, and institutional buyers interested in sourcing locally grown products. To get connected, go to <http://sandiegogrown.com/>.

For more information, visit: <http://www.sdfarmbureau.org/BuyLocal/SD-Grown365.php>

