



Buzz, Body & Bites

A newsletter for actively aging adults
Virginia Cooperative Extension Family & Consumer Sciences
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Growing, Buying, and Eating Local Food: The What, Why, and How?

There are many reasons to support local agriculture and food producers. People's reasons may vary depending on their individual and household situations. When interest in local foods surged in the early 2000s and after the financial crisis of 2008, there was a significant effort to define, and possibly debate, what local food means. Early definitions of "local food" centered on food miles and proximity to one's home. Defined boundaries ranged from 30, 100, 250, to 400 miles, while others defined local food by geographic or watershed boundaries. Nutritionist Joan Gussow, a professor and an early proponent of local, organic food and gardening, proposed trying to buy local food within a leisurely day's drive of our homes with a goal of maintaining a thriving countryside of farms. With any decision, even the smallest, we are in a tangible way building the world we want to see and experience. Our decisions and choices matter -- support of local food and farming is relational and one strategy to deeply root people in a place and solidify farming as integral to local history, landscape, and culture. Ultimately, the goal of food and farming is (or should be) to advance the health and well-being of individuals and the population as a whole. In growing, buying, and eating local, I recommend starting small and in manageable chunks of time, effort, and financial resources for yourself and household. You know your context and capabilities. Growing a container garden or small plot of tomatoes and peppers may be a good first manageable step and what can be more local than planting, growing, harvesting, cooking, and eating your own food. Once you succeed at that level, you might then plant a garden and grow as much of your own food as possible. Growing, buying, and eating local is simply practical, and does not need to be complicated and overwhelming -- even a small amount of change and investment in your local community can have a big impact. Virginia Cooperative Extension can help you learn more about the local food landscape and informational resources such as Virginia Grown and Buy Fresh Buy Local.

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Steps to support local food and farming

- 1) Take a trip to a local farm or farm stand to learn what the farm produces.
- 2) Learn what foods are in season and try to build your menu around them.
- 3) Visit and learn what's available at local farmers markets.
- 4) Encourage your favorite grocery stores and restaurants to source food locally.
- 5) Experiment with drying, canning, jamming, or otherwise preserving fruits and vegetables.
- 6) Start a conversation with local farmers, agricultural and elected officials about how to shape policies that strengthen agriculture and the local food landscape.

Achieving Physical Activity Guidelines Step 4: Strength Training

Muscle strengthening exercises should be done at least 2 days per week. Muscle strengthening exercises make the muscles do more work than they are used to doing during daily activities. No specific amount of time is recommended, but you should repeat each exercise to the point it is difficult to do another repetition. A variety of activities are necessary to achieve balanced muscle strength. Aim to engage a variety of muscles - shoulders, arms, abdomen, legs, hips, chest, and back. You can lift weights, use resistance bands, climb stairs, and more.

Check out this exercise video for exercise ideas:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bNOUGFgbQP0>

<https://www.med.upenn.edu/weight/assets/user-content/documents/home%20strength%20training%20program.pdf>

Vegetarian Enchilada Casserole

A delicious take on a favorite Mexican food classic. This meatless dish is full of colorful vegetables.

Source: dinnertonight.tamu.edu/recipe/vegetarian-enchilada-casserole/

Ingredients (8 Servings):

- 2 teaspoons canola oil
- 1 medium red onion chopped
- 1 medium zucchini grated or diced
- 1 (15.5 oz) can low sodium black beans rinsed and drained
- 1 (15 oz) can low sodium diced tomatoes rinsed and drained
- 1 ½ cup frozen, canned or fresh corn kernels (thaw if frozen)
- 1 teaspoon ground cumin
- 12 corn tortillas quartered
- 1 (10 oz) can red enchilada sauce
- 1 cup reduced fat cheddar or fiesta blend cheese

Instructions:

1. Preheat oven to 400 F, lightly coat a 9x13" baking dish with cooking spray.
2. Cook the onion in the oil until browned. Add zucchini, beans, tomatoes, corn, cumin and salt. Cook vegetables are heated through (3 - 5 minutes).
3. Scatter half of the tortillas in the baking dish. Top with half the vegetables, half the enchilada sauce, and half the cheese. Repeat to form another layer.
4. Cover with foil and bake for 15 minutes. Remove the foil and bake until the casserole is bubbling around the edges and the cheese is melted.

Resources

Buy Fresh, Buy Local

<https://buyfreshbuylocal.org/virginia>

Virginia Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services - Virginia Grown

<https://www.vdacs.virginia.gov/vagrown/index.shtml>

Virginia Cooperative Extension - Food Preservation

<https://ext.vt.edu/food-health/home-food-preservation.html>

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