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SUPPORT THE BUY LOCAL CHALLENGE

Summer is in full swing and I invite you to take the BUY LOCAL CHALLENGE. This annual event kicks off the last full week of July (July 20-26). The Challenge was conceived and launched in 2007 by the Southern Maryland Agricultural Development Commission (SMADC) to highlight the benefits of buying local to Maryland's economy and environment.
Within just a year the BLC enjoyed tremendous popularity across Maryland, thanks to signature events by Governor Martin O’Malley and the MD Dept of Agriculture as well as extensive media coverage in news and specialty publications. Since 2010, SMADC has extended the invitation to all states to participate with the idea that a unified nationwide effort during the last full week in July will be a profound way to spotlight the need to support local farms.

The BUY LOCAL CHALLENGE website lists four VERY convincing reasons on why you should buy local:

**You’ll Get Exceptional Taste and Freshness**
Local food is fresher and tastes better than food shipped long distances. Local farmers can offer varieties bred for flavor rather than for long shelf life.

**You’ll Support Independent/Family Farms and a Stronger Local Economy**
There's never been a more critical time to support your farming neighbors. With each local food purchase, you ensure that more of your money spent on food goes to the farmer. Buying local food keeps your dollars circulating in your own community.

**You’ll Enhance Your Family’s Health and Safety**
Locally grown food retains more nutrients and is less likely to cause foodborne illnesses than food that is shipped from far away. Buying local enables you to choose farmers who may avoid or reduce their use of chemicals, pesticides, hormones, antibiotics or genetically modified seed.

**You’ll Help Protect the Environment**
Green areas that farms provide help to recharge our aquifers and cleanse the air. Buying from a local farm cuts down on the distance food travels, reducing the consumption of oil and carbon emissions nationwide.

Individuals can take the pledge at [http://www.buy-local-challenge.com/challenge.asp](http://www.buy-local-challenge.com/challenge.asp) and so can local restaurants, businesses, hospitals, universities, clubs and organizations. Promotional materials are available on the website. Display the logo and show your commitment to supporting our local farms. Frederick County Office of Economic Development links consumers to local products at [www.discoverfrederickmd.com](http://www.discoverfrederickmd.com)

Each year the movement gains momentum and this year they have added a photo contest to find the individual who can Take the Challenge to the EXTREME!!! Maybe that is YOU! Serve something local at every meal instead of once a day, OR eat only local foods during Buy Local Week, OR sample new items you've never tried before. Try local meat, cheese, ice cream, beer or wine. Then post your photos on the BLC Facebook page (before July 28, 2014) showing how you took the Challenge. The prize is a $100 gift certificate to Maryland’s Best Ice Cream Trail.

Enjoy these recipes using local ingredients compliments of Brett Grohsgal, Even’ Star Organic Farm, in Lexington Park, MD.
BURGERS FROM LOCAL FREE-RANGE BEEF WITH HERBS AND GARLIC)

1 pound ground beef from local farm  
1 teaspoon salt  
1/2 teaspoon black pepper  
2-3 cloves fresh garlic, minced  
2 tablespoons fresh local onion, minced

Optional: 1 teaspoon chili powder, 1/4 teaspoon cumin, 1 tablespoon fresh cilantro, chopped

Mix all together. Form into patties. Grill or fry to taste. Serve on crusty bread

PASTA ESTIVI

This is another of the really light and healthy meals that match hot summer evenings. Estivi celebrates really good tomatoes and fresh basil or other herbs.

1 (1 pound) box capellini, fettuccini, linguini or other pasta of your choice  
Boiling salted water  
2 pints rainbow cherry tomatoes, halved, or 3-4 cups cubed heirloom tomatoes  
4 cloves garlic, chopped  
1 to 2 Tablespoons olive oil  
1 teaspoon salt  
1/2 teaspoon black pepper  
1 bag Genoa basil or herbs of Provence, chopped

On the side: grated Romano, Parmesan, or Asiago cheeses

Cook the pasta and drain. While still very hot, add the salt, pepper, and garlic; toss. When at about room temp, add the basil and tomatoes. Taste for final seasoning, and consider adding a splash of wine or balsamic vinegar.

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