

SUMMER FOOD (SOME ARE NOT)



The fundamental “principle” of agriculture is that it deals with life. Food is life.

Quality food is fresh, natural and nutritious. Simple food is built from scratch. It is baked, chopped, pureed, tasted, modified, seasoned and served. Simple food is grown, not manufactured.

In an address to the Center for Disease Control, food writer Michael Pollan offered this advice, “Don’t eat anything with more than five ingredients, or ingredients you can’t pronounce.” That is, eat simple, quality food.

Agriculture “touches all our lives, wherever we live or whatever we do. It is about how we feed our own families, and the whole human family. **It is about what is happening to food** [emphasis added] and farming, rural communities and villages, in the face of increasing concentration, new technology, and growing globalization in agriculture.” (*USCCB: Pastoral Reflections on Food, Farmers, and Farmworkers*)

What is happening to food? Is pressing the “start” button on a microwave cooking? Is the package of chemicals and preservatives wrapped around the ingredients and then wrapped in plastic and later plopped on the microwave tray “food?”

Thirty years ago, the average household spent 17% of its income on food. Today it spends 11%. Thirty years ago, the average household spent 11% of its income on health-related issues. Today it spends 17%. Food has become less expensive because it is cheaper to manufacture food with lower nutritional value and higher calories.

Food has become less expensive because it costs less to manufacture a microwaveable package of preservatives and chemicals that is cooked by pressing the “start” button on a microwave. It costs less to mass produce food from a factory farm than to buy from your local farmer. Cooking takes less of our time when we can open a container instead of dicing and sautéing fresh vegetables.

“When we go to the supermarket, we rarely think about where our food comes from, who produces it, who harvests it, or what it takes to process, package, and distribute it [food systems].” (*USCCB*)

How can we “know where our food comes from” and “what is happening to [our] food?” Here are three summer possibilities:

A few summers ago my wife and I were vacationing in Manzanita. It was a Friday evening when we walked past the Manzanita Farmers’ Market. It was crowded with vacationers and locals and I was surprised at the number of farm stands that a beach community could support. I had not expected the menu of fresh, local produce, much of it grown naturally without pesticides and free from biotechnology.

For ten years, we have participated in a Community Supported Agriculture program. CSA’s connect you the consumer to a local farmer. Then you know where some of your food comes from. You don’t have to think about who processed and packaged it because it’s not processed or packaged.

When driving to the coast, we rarely miss the opportunity to stop at a roadside farm stand, especially when there are cherries and peaches.

The fundamental “principle” of agriculture is that it deals with life. Ersatz food is not life. Summer is the perfect time to try real food.



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