

How Local is Local?
By: Linda K. Schneider

Our road is a very, very, very special road, Clay Hill Road in Hartland, Vermont. You have heard the expression, "Buy Local". How local is local? Sit back and let me expound on this wonderful road.

All summer long, I hear the cattle lowing in the evening. They live about a mile up the road at *Clay Hill Farm*. These naturally raised Black Angus cows are grazed on grass. No hormones or antibiotics are given. The animals are rotated through a pasture system and finished with corn to insure tenderness. I know, I asked. A couple of our Clay Hill Road neighbors are going to split a half of a cow for the freezer this year. I know the date the cows are going to market. I even know the butcher who is going to do the job. (How local is that!) *If you happen to see Bill Emmons, please don't tell him this story because all summer long I bought his beef at the Mt Tom's Farmer's Market. Sorry Bill and Cathy, Guy Crosby is just up the road, your farm is ALL THE WAY over in picturesque Pomfret.*

Rocky Ridge Farm sells eggs, jams, jellies, pies, and crafts. Maybe you have seen Rocky Ridge products at your local farmer's market in the summer. The last weekend in October, on Sunday morning when Sharon Miller Blake was restocking her cooler with eggs, one of the neighborhood children rode up on her bicycle. Her mother had sent her down the road on her bike to buy eggs, about a two mile ride one way. Doesn't this remind you of a simpler time?

Sharon's pies are a real hit at the farmer's markets. I know the berry patch where she picks those raspberries. Only chicken manure from her chicken coop fertilizes this patch. I know, I asked. Ask good questions, if you don't like the answer go elsewhere to buy your food. You have many local choices.

Every spring when my family visits, we walk down the road about two driveways to our neighbor's sugar house. Lance and Dick Williams boil sap into maple syrup. Now my family is so spoiled that only this local product will do. No more store bought syrup.

Clay Hill Corners is a new market farm, just getting started this year. Specialty salad greens in the green house grow from April into November. Carol Stedman markets them at Quechee Farmer's Market. When I look after their dog and cat, I get to pick my own salad greens, what a special treat in November! During the year we barter other crops.

Dream Come True Farm is my farm. I raise llamas for fiber, fun and educational programs and grow specialty crops for market. Two summers ago, we grew three cucumber plants that yielded over 200 cucumbers! (I stopped counting at 200.) I believe the key to this success was the endless supply of llama beans (manure). This type of manure is high in potassium, not high in nitrogen. It makes great fertilizer for vegetables and flowers. We shared that crop with friends, neighbors, and homeless shelters. We made pickles and cucumber salads for a lifetime. I was afraid to grow cucumbers again this year!

Remember that last warm November day before the snow started falling? Shirking all responsibility to enjoy the weather, I took a long walk with one of my llamas, Fancy Pants. We visited neighbors at *Rocky Ridge Farm* and picked up a dozen eggs. After our visit, I tucked my precious egg cargo under my arm. We walked home, enjoying this last warm weather and stopping to chat with neighbors along the way.

At Harlow Brook Farm, for the last couple years, Matt Dunne and Sarah Taylor have raised meat sheep and sold a few to neighbors. We could go to pick up our packaged lamb and have a political conversation or just neighborly chatter. This year they took the year off, Sarah was pregnant with Judson, so they raised babies instead of sheep.

Barter deals work *GREAT*. It's a fair barter if both parties are happy with the trade. They do not need to be equal in dollar amounts. So far I have traded:

Asparagus for eggs
Asparagus for salad greens
Jerusalem Artichokes for jams
Apples for pies
Critter sitting for salad greens

Coming soon is the season where we can go a couple miles down the road to our neighbor, Scott Raney, who sells cut-your-own Christmas trees. This neighbor has four children so his tree farm is his college fund. Education is a good cause and cutting the tree is a family event.

Clay Hill Road is only about five miles long. Within those five miles, I have purchased the following produce: eggs, beef, lamb, salad greens, pies, berries, jams, maple syrup, vegetables and other local products; crafts, yarn and Christmas trees. And I never left my road! How local is that?!

THE ULIMATE CHALLENGE: Can you do this in your neighborhood? Start small. Plant a kitchen garden. Plant some fruit or nut trees. Plant a berry patch. Share or barter with your neighbors. Buy as local as you can, then call me and tell me *YOUR* story.

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