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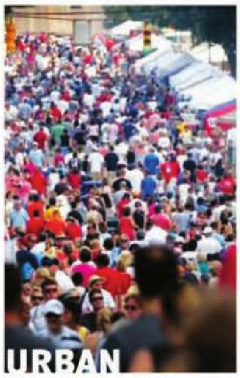

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RISE of the LOCAVORE

How the "buy local" movement is shaping the Gem City

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One Daytonian's attempt to s

BY JENNIFER HANAUER

When my illustrious editor approached me to do a story on buying local, challenging me to go "locavore" for a week and share my findings, I got totally stoked. I'd heard the term bandied about among the more involved of my friends, and I'd been privy to vague rumblings about the health and economic benefits associated with the movement. Sure, I had some reservations, but it wasn't like she'd asked me to go vegan. (That one would have been exceptionally tough for this particular omnivore. As long as the cow had something near a 937 area code, I could still have a burger, right?) So, off I went in search of farmer's markets, mom and pop shops and all other things local, sampling the best of what my community had to offer my consumerist nature.

There were ups, there were downs, tears, heartache, a lot of coffee and eventual success. The following is an account of my week of going local.

Day 1, Saturday

I thought it prudent to start my locavore week off with some food shopping. A little bit of research and I was pleasantly surprised by all of the options available to me. A number of farmer's markets popped up, and I discovered I could even sign up for Dorothy Lane Market's Honestly Local program and have them assemble a box FOR ME filled with local produce and the option to add in any number of other indigenous options, even wine and beer. How easy. Just click, click, click and a stop by the market to pick it up and I'm done. But that seemed a little long-term, and I thought there'd be better people-watching at a farmer's market anyway. Closest to my downtown abode is the 2nd Street Market, so off I trooped, shopping list in one hand, reusable shopping bags in the other. (They might have said Trader Joe's on them, but that's OK, right?)

But first, I needed coffee. A big one. I walked around the corner to Press, locally owned and operated by husband and wife team Brett and Janell Barker, and ordered a latte the size of my head. I had a chance to look around while my milk was being frothed and my, what a locavore landscape. Dayton artists on the walls, Dayton baked goods on the counter, Dayton tee shirts hanging on a rack, all tempting my pocketbook with their hometown-proud charisma. I begrudgingly restrained myself to just the coffee.

Fueled by caffeinated deliciousness, I set off for the market. Parked and walking in to the former freight house, I got a shot straight to the ol' factories. Ah, the aromatic smells of lunch being cooked by vendors up and down the south side of the building. Crepes and jambalaya and pad thai and gyros tempted my attentions far from bringing groceries home, and pointed them toward a savory salmon, spinach and cream cheese crepe. You're not supposed to shop hungry anyway, right?

The deli counter and food displays at local supermarket Dorothy Lane Market.

Alright! Caffeinated, satiated, time to get down to business. My shopping list contained the following:

Bread, butter, olive oil, milk, eggs, some kind of dinner-worthy meat, something along the lines of a salad, fruit, veggies and tea

I found it all and then some. Rahn's Artisan Breads had the sourdough I was hoping for and were selling soft pretzels the size of a dinner plate. I justified that purchase with visions of a Bavarian-style breakfast with soft cheese I'd just picked up at Spice Rack (where I also picked up some strawberry tea) and soft-boiled eggs from KJB Farms. KJB also had bacon that I decided I couldn't live without and some skinless, boneless chicken that I figured would make a delectable dinner. Hydro Growers' stall down the way had all the fruit and veggies I could ask for: onions, mushrooms, cherry tomatoes, bags of spinach, avocados, sweet potatoes, basil ... my stomach growled as visions of tonight's dinner danced through my head.

> *"There's just no comparison ... Fresher is always going to taste better."*

Experienced locavore Siena Williams feels similarly about the delectable selection of produce available at the market. "There's just no comparison," said Williams when evaluating the taste difference between locally grown fruits and vegetables, and those that have to be shipped in to some of the larger chain grocery stores. "Fresher is always going to taste better," she said.

I also needed some sundry items like paper towels and toothpaste and I wasn't sure I'd have much luck in finding those amongst the farmers, but lo! A Greener You has all kinds of household items for sale. But wow, seven bucks for paper towels has got my wallet retreating to the furthest depths of my bag. Maybe I can find an alternative. Same thought in regard to cold-pressed olive oil, which I was able to find, but at $16 for a modestly sized bottle, I think I'll just do without that for the time being.

I almost made it out under budget before deciding I needed some locally grown flowers from the Flower Man. An inquiry at the Wine Gallery's stall helped me procure a bottle of cabernet from Kinkead Ridge Winery in Ripley, Ohio, and also gave me an idea on where to go for date night on Friday.

I brought my booty home and stood back to admire my fridge stocked full of locally grown goodies. Time to head out to moonlight as a server in a restaurant where the only thing they serve that's local is Buckeye Vodka.

Day 2, Sunday

As opposed to my typical Sunday brunch at my usual Oregon District haunt, Blind Bob's, today's brunch would be put together by my own hand in my own kitchen. After snapping my glasses in half at the mere thought of the locally grown meal I had to prepare this morning, I made a mental note to find a local eyeglass store tomorrow. But for now, breakfast: Mmm, bacon and eggs and pretzel and maybe some strawberry tea and a fruit salad.

Though not as effortless as telling the barkeep I'd like Eggs Benedict and a bloody mary, my

Locally sold red skin potatoes at the 2nd Street Market.
Photo courtesy of Tyler Lukacs.

homegrown, homemade brunch was more than satisfying. Everything tasted heartier somehow, as I basked in the self-serving glory of actually meeting the people who had labored to provide me selections for my breakfast table.

Reveling in a somewhat successful 24 hours of being a locavore, I headed down the street to browse Omega Music and, as usual, let myself wander almost immediately to their local section. It makes me proud to live among so many talented artists, musicians and filmmakers.

And then "The Boss" caught my eye: $1.88 for *Born in the U.S.A.* on vinyl? Sold. OK, so Bruce Springsteen isn't a local artist, but I made a purchase from a local business, so that counts.

Evening approached, as did my appetite. A glance into my fully stocked fridge brought the harsh realization that I had to prep and cook and clean up after just about everything in there. Not only was I beginning my new life as a locavore, I was beginning my new life as Julia Child. With the aid of my ever-patient beau, baked chicken and steamed vegetables soon enough found their way on to our plates with some leftovers besides.

Day 3, Monday

My morning needed to start off with coffee again, so I stopped in to 5th Street Wine and Deli to get some Boston Stoker, a Dayton original. I perused their wine selection and was pleased to see a fairly wide selection of Ohio wines. Mentally noted. Because what's better than coffee? Wine.

Then it was time for some errands before work. First stop, Specialeyes in Kettering to see (ha!) about my busted frames. Though not as shiny or as conveniently located amongst other commerce as, say, LensCrafters, the office had a warmth to it that I'd liken to the barber shop my dad took me to as a child. The technician was able to attach a new arm to my spectacles and, unprovoked, replaced the grimy nose pads and told me not to wear them while sleeping anymore. (How did he know?! Damnit.) From there it was just a matter of haggling over the cost for the repair, which oddly involved him talking me down on the price. What a pleasant experience.

Now, the term "locavore" was originally developed to identify persons who consume food grown and produced locally, but I decided to see how far I could stretch the term with all of my day-to-days. Next on the list was filling up my gas tank. United Dairy Farmers was started in Cincinnati and uses only petroleum products from U.S.-based gasoline refiners, so I figured that was as local as I could get on gas.

The vinyl section at local music store Omega Music.
Photo courtesy of Tyler Lukacs.

I stopped to deposit a check at my bank, Chase, and realized I should certainly be able to find a credit union, and, looking at the benefits, I was stumped as to why I hadn't considered them an option before now. I'd known about the Wright-Patt Credit Union, I'd seen the name often enough, but there was also DayAir, Standard Register, Dayton Firefighters, FirstDay and several more that all promise me the best in financial care.

I started to get microscopic in the examining of my daily life as a locavore. What about my cell phone? What about the plates I'm eating my food on? Where are the tires on my car from? Where did this shirt come from and where would I get one for my date on Friday?

Day 4, Tuesday

Fail. I broke. The fast food nation broke me. I was out in search of locally owned and operated stores and shops and before I knew it, the morning had shot without warning into mid-afternoon and I had to get ready for work, like, RIGHT NOW. I was hungry and a little cranky from my shopping failure. Without leftovers and only cous cous and avocado in my fridge, and being strapped for time, my old friend, convenience reared its ugly head. The only thing that sounded good in the whole entire world was a grilled chicken wrap from Wendy's for $1.69. I'm weak. There, I said it. Heaven help us if the enemy gets their hands on me. I'd sell all my secrets for some processed chicken wrapped in a stale flour tortilla.

PRICE COMPARISON

Item	Farmers Market	Kroger
AVOCADO	1.25 ea	1.50 ea
LEMONS	0.33 ea	0.69 ea
ONIONS	1.50/lb	0.49/lb
TEA	3.00 ea	2.29 ea
APPLES	1.25/lb	1.69/lb
BROCCOLI	1.50/lb	1.99/lb
BUTTER	3.00 ea	3.29 ea
BACON	4.29/lb	3.49/lb
CHICKEN	5.00/lb	2.33/lb
FLOUR	3.00/lb	1.93/lb
ASPARAGUS	3.50/lb	2.99/lb

Day 5, Wednesday

Back on track. Lunch at Sunrise Café in Yellow Springs, followed by a stop into Basho Apparel for a T-shirt designed by a local artist that I can work into an outfit for date night, and finally a jaunt over to Young's Jersey Dairy for some cheese, bread and ice cream to snack on until I can go to the market again tomorrow.

On the drive home, my stress and sobriety seemed to pounce on me all at once and I suddenly had a hankering (yes, a hankering) for a big ol' drink. I hopped off I-35 and made the scenic drive into Oakwood, up to Arrow Wine & Spirits ... boy did I get spirited. I picked up a bottle of the strong stuff, but realized that on my trip to the market, I hadn't picked up any mixers. Off to Dorothy Lane Market I went. I am always overwhelmed and taken aback by all the neat foods they have — fresh-cut fruit, in-house soups and entrees, sushi and of course the Killer Brownies. I walked out feeling satisfied (maybe because that damn brownie snuck into my bag) knowing that pretty much anything I would ever imagine wanting (or needing, bleh) is always right at my fingertips at a local establishment.

Day 6, Thursday

OK, 2nd Street Market, take two. They opened at 11 a.m. and I was there to buy more chicken and vegetables to somehow combine with the cous cous and avocado I had left from my first trip to the market.

The whole environment was a bit quieter than it had been Saturday and not as many of the stalls were open. Jean Mattis of KJB Farms was tending not only her own stall, but also watching tables for Hydro Growers.

"We help each other," said Mattis.

I noticed this practice was apparent the length of the market, with just about all of the vendors showcasing items from other vendors. Amish roll butter from Spice Rack served alongside samples of Rahn's breads, Crepe Boheme incorporating berries from one of the local farms.

Lessons learned: buy enough food for a week, get enough grab-and-go foods so as not to be tempted by chain fast-food restaurants, make a lot of food when making a meal and store the leftovers. We have refrigeration now in 2011 — shouldn't be such a problem for me.

Day 7, Friday

Date night! My man and I set out for the Wine Gallery located on the river at Main and Monument Streets. I was pleasantly surprised not only by the prices and wine selection, but also by the fact that their menu features beef from Otte Farms, a family operated farm located in St. Henry, Ohio. After dinner we headed over to Fifth Third Field to watch the Dayton Dragons send the opposing team sullenly home. We wrapped up my week as a locavore at Blind Bob's where I thoroughly enjoyed some local music while sipping on Buckeye Vodka with a splash of water. Locavore date a success! And the week didn't go too far awry, either.

In conclusion...

Going straight locavore for one week had both anticipated and unexpected frustrations. While most of the food I needed/wanted was available and at less than expected prices, some items were tough to find or ended up being cost prohibitive. And it certainly took more effort and required more planning to feed myself multiple times a day for a week.

On the other hand, the pros wholly outweighed the cons. What I gained from this was the knowledge that doing a little research and educating myself on what I was consuming and bringing into my home was not terribly difficult, tasted delicious, made me a more active participant in my community, helped people around me and all but destroyed that vague nagging in the back of my mind when it comes to the guilt of not knowing where exactly the meat in my Big Mac was coming from.

I'm sure there are many things I missed, many things I could have done better or smarter to make my week as a locavore more triumphant. Please send me your suggestions and recommendations. The more shared information out there, the easier it will be to go local.

Inside cover photo courtesy of Tyler Lukacs.

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da local

upport her local economy