

# THE REAL FOOD GUIDE FOR MANCHESTER

## It's Time To Get Real About Food

It is not easy to escape hearing about the many food scares that have hit farm and plate in recent years. But it is not so well known that much of modern farming involves environmental degradation as part of its everyday business. It is not so obvious that our food system affects people on the other side of the globe, and can leave people in this country unable to obtain fresh food. It is not widely promoted that governments and business are taking huge risks with our health through the use of artificial chemicals and genetically modified organisms.

But there are alternatives that don't cost the Earth.

Once we realise that this situation is the product of half a century of farming and food policy that has put production ahead of food quality and environmental protection, we start to ask why we accept it so passively.

This is why it is time for Real Food. Real Food can be defined as food that is produced in an environmentally-responsible way, in a manner that is fair to people and animals, and that is consumed and traded relatively close to its place of production. It is also free from genetically modified organisms.

Manchester Friends of the Earth have produced this guide to educate, inspire and equip. Read on and learn about the real costs of your shopping basket. Think about how you could change your consumption habits for the better. And equip yourself with our real food directory: the survival guide for alternative food shopping in Greater Manchester.

## Why local?

Food and farming in the UK is fast becoming a victim of the growing dominance of transnational economic and political forces, known collectively as globalisation. Farmers are almost completely dependent upon the huge agribusinesses (such as agrochemicals) that supply them, and upon the equally large companies (grain dealers, supermarkets...) to which they sell their produce.

Supermarkets now dominate the food retail sector, often to the exclusion of other smaller shops. Their profit-driven behaviour is rarely compatible with environmental and social aspirations. Strict requirements on uniformity and cosmetic appearance of fresh food mean that farmers are forced to use more pesticides. The supermarkets push down prices, in some cases to the extent of having "reverse auctions" whereby producers must undercut themselves to stay in business. For each out-of-town supermarket that opens, 273 jobs are lost in the local economy. However, by supporting local food businesses we can keep the local economy healthy. We can also encourage our supermarkets to stock foods from the region in which individual stores are located.

Then there is transport... Supermarkets are suited to those who have a car and can buy in bulk, and when they are placed on the edges of towns cars are often the only practical way to reach them. Not only does this encourage the growth of car culture and the associated deluge of pollution, road building and wildlife habitat loss, but it excludes those who cannot afford a car and hits them with the double whammy of causing their local shops to close down.

Then there is even more transport... Fruit and vegetables is now the largest category of all airfreight by weight. Daily, armies of juggernauts and jumbos move food around the globe in a crazy globalised market. And as they do so, they pump out into the atmosphere greenhouse gases, which many scientists believe are causing irreversible climate change that could cause sea level rise, the spread of tropical diseases, the loss of human and animal habitats and wreck havoc with our weather systems.

Some of this food could not be produced more locally, but much of it could. Over 60% of UK apple orchards have been lost since 1970, and yet we imported 434,000 tonnes of apples in 1996. And if food could be sourced locally, then chances are it would be more nutritious: fruit and vegetables lose nutritional value when they spend a long time in storage or transit.

Community Supported Agriculture, Vegetable Box Schemes, and Local Exchange Trading Schemes (LETS), all help to keep skills and resources circulating in a local area, thereby bringing the economy back to the level of people and reducing the amount of transport needed by sourcing food where possible from the local region.

## **Why organic?**

In Germany, some water companies have realised that it is actually cheaper to pay farmers to convert to organic agriculture than to clean up the rivers from the pollution that non-organic farmers create. Organic farming is free from artificial pesticides and fertilisers. When these are over applied, they leach into our drinking water. The annual cost of removing fertilisers from the UK water supply is about £120 million. The average UK family subsidises EU agriculture to the tune of £16 a week, that's £3.3 billion in UK taxes per year. The Soil Association estimates that organic farming would reduce these external costs by £1.6 billion. Still think that organic food is expensive?

Almost half of the UK's fresh fruit and vegetables contain residues of the pesticides used during production. Several of the pesticides that turn up regularly as residues in our food are known to disrupt hormone systems. What's more, a number of studies have shown that levels of all nutrients are higher in organic produce than in the non-organic equivalents. Some nutritionists believe that if the soil continues to be depleted of its vital nutrients at the current rate, generations to come will be increasingly dependent on nutritional supplements just to stay healthy.

In organic farming, much more emphasis is placed upon maintaining healthy functioning ecosystems than in conventional farming. Over the last 50 years, we have lost large areas of important wildlife habitats and many habitats, such as ancient woodlands, have been reduced to a tiny fraction of what existed before 1945. Even specially designated sites (such as Sites of Special Scientific Interest, or SSSIs) have suffered damage due to agricultural activities. There has also been a decline in biodiversity throughout the countryside. If we are to halt these declines and retain a healthy countryside, it is important that we reconsider our supposed preference for intensive, industrial farming and think about more sustainable alternatives such as organics.

## **Why Cruelty Free?**

The drive to produce as much food as possible as quickly and as cheaply as possible has led to immense suffering of animals reared in factory farm and battery conditions. These intensive farming conditions have implications for animal rights, human rights, our health and the environment.

Much modern farming restricts the freedom of animals to behave naturally, often providing just enough room for individuals to stand and remain alive. Animals are subjected to brutalities including castration of pigs without anaesthetic, de-beaking of battery hens and skinning and “disassembling” of semi-conscious cows on beef production lines.

The intensive meat industry also wastes large amount of resources and pollutes the environment. 10,000 litres of water are needed just to produce one kilogramme of beef, compared with only 500 litres to make one kilogramme of potatoes. Intensive animal farming has well documented environmental impacts, including manure being created faster than it can be absorbed by the soil, animals producing large amounts of greenhouse gases, and the pollution of watercourses with cattle slurry. With this in mind it is also very important to think about the role of animal products in our diet. It soon becomes clear that a diet heavily dependent on the products of intensive animal agriculture cannot be considered sustainable.

Human rights impacts of factory farming include the working conditions of abattoir/slaughter house workers and fast food employees in Britain and abroad and the effects of Western industrial farming on the Developing World. Agricultural areas in developing countries are used to produce feed for farm animals in the West instead of food for local populations. This impacts on the independence and self-sufficiency of farmers and communities and distorts the local economy.

What exactly constitutes cruelty free is obviously dependent on personal beliefs and ethics, but there are a lot of ways to support alternative, humane farming methods. Alternatives include veganism, vegetarianism and organic or free range and locally sourced meat or dairy products.

*More information about real food is given after the listings, on page 6.*

## Real Food Outlets

The following lists outlets for real food. We're sure there are more in the area, so if you know of other outlets please let us know by completing and returning the form on page 8.

### Café Pop

*Café selling vegetarian food.*

34-36 Oldham St, M1.

0161 237 9688

### Chorlton Wholefoods

*Health food shop.*

64 Beech Road, Chorlton.

0161 881 6399. <http://www.chorltonwholefoods.com>

### Earth Café

*Vegetarian café.*

Manchester Buddhist Centre, 16-20 Turner Street M4 1DT.

0161 834 1996

### Farmers' Market

*Stalls with local and organic produce.*

9am-4pm, 2nd Sat of month, Northern Quarter.

### On the Eighth Day

*Vegetarian café & health food shop*

111 Oxford Road, M1.

0161 273 4878

*Vegetarian café*

49 Old Birley St, Hulme.

0161 227 8848

### The Green House

*Vegetarian restaurant.*

331 Great Western Street, Rusholme

0161 224 0730

### Greens

*Vegetarian restaurant*

43 Lapwing Lane, West Didsbury M20.

0161 434 4259

### Herbivores

*Vegetarian café.*

The Burlington Rooms, Manchester University.

### Home Farm Deliveries

*Deliveries of organic fruit and veg.*

19 Imex Bus Park, Hamilton Road M13.

0161 224 8884

### Just Sharing

*Fair trade shop*

30 Mersey Square, Stockport SK1 1RA.

0161 480 0522

**Limited Resources (box scheme)**

*Deliveries of organic fruit, veg and household products.*

53 Old Birley St, Hulme.

0161 226 4777 / 4787. Email: [limited@resources.u-net.com](mailto:limited@resources.u-net.com)

**Misty's Vegetarian Café**

*Vegetarian café.*

Unit 3 Longsight District Centre, 531 Stockport Road, M12.

0161 256 3355

**Nature's Grace**

*Health food shop.*

37 Barlow Moor Road, M20.

0161 434 6784

**Oxfam**

*Fair trade shop.*

**Shared Earth**

*Fair trade shop.*

51 Piccadilly, M1.

0161 228 7260

**Swinton Health Foods**

*Health food shop.*

177 Moorside Road, Swinton M27 9LD.

**Unicorn Grocery**

*Grocery selling totally GM-free, vegan where possible, fruit, veg, bread and household products.*

89 Albany Road, Chorlton M21.

0161 861 0010

**The Village Health Food Store**

*Health food shop.*

47 Church Street, Eccles M30.

0161 788 9745

**Withington Health Foods**

*Health food shop.*

486 Wilmslow Road, Withington.

0161 445 6696

**Zumbar**

*Restaurant selling vegetarian food.*

14 Oxford Road M1.

0161 236 8438

## Why GMO-free?

### What are GMOs?

Genetic Modification (GM) is the process of taking genetic material from two or more (often completely different) organisms and combining them to produce a plant (or animal) with new qualities. Certain “useful” genes are identified in one species and then transferred to the DNA of another species. An example of this is an experiment in which researchers inserted a gene from arctic fish (which prevents the fish from freezing in icy waters) into tomatoes and strawberries to give them greater resistance to frost.

Despite the fact that the ways in which combinations of genes may work together is unpredictable, agribusiness companies are still ploughing ahead with GM technology, and the fruits of this potentially destructive experiment are already on our supermarket shelves. Genetically Modified Organisms (GMOs) are present in ingredients grown in the USA, and are now close to being grown commercially in this country as well.

Throughout the 1990s GMOs were sneaking their way into our shopping baskets and onto the dinner tables of an unsuspecting public. Soya in processed foods and ready made meals such as pies, pizzas and ice-creams as well as that in basic foodstuffs including oil, margarine, bread, tomato puree and even baby food, was coming from American genetically modified crops. Yet until mid 1998 the majority of the British public were unaware of their part in this experiment with the environment, their health and their right to freedom of choice.

### What effects will GMOs have?

#### Environment

By releasing GM crops into the open environment, we risk genetic pollution of wild plants; for example, oilseed rape cross-pollinates with wild turnip and wild radish.

Some of the main products of genetic engineering are crops resistant to specific weed killers. By releasing such crops into the environment we are creating the potential for herbicide resistant “super-weeds”.

As more resistance to herbicides is developed, stronger herbicide products in larger quantities will be required to keep the “super-weeds” at bay.

Herbicide resistant crops are designed to resist weed killers such as glyphosate and glufosinate which kill all other plants in a field. This creates a sterile field, no weeds means the loss of natural habitat for insects, birds and other wildlife.

#### Health

GM food could release unpredictable toxins or allergy-causing substances into the food chain. Many GM foods contain genes which could cause resistance to commonly used antibiotics e.g. ampicillin. According to a 1994 report by the Government’s own advisory committee on GM foods, this resistance could be passed via bacteria to the gut of humans and animals rendering medicines ineffective.

One GM product had to be withdrawn from tests after a gene in it taken from the brazil nut triggered nut allergy in test subjects.

In animal experiments links have been shown between GM potatoes and damage to internal organs, immune systems and brains.

### **Freedom of Choice**

GM crops present a threat to the organic status of farms near to (within a 6-mile radius of) test sites. Once contaminated, food can no longer be sold as organic as regulatory bodies such as The Soil Association stipulate that organic food must be GMO free.

GM contamination takes away our right to choose not to eat Genetically Modified food. In a 1998 Friends of the Earth/NOP poll, 60% of those questioned did not want supermarkets to sell GM foods.

### **Developing World**

Biotechnology companies claim that GM products will feed the world. But the problems of the developing world are not caused by too little food but by unfair distribution of food, lack of money for food and no access to land.

Patenting of GM seeds is forcing farmers in developing countries to become dependent on the biotechnology companies. This, in combination with the use of “terminator genes”, which make second generation seeds sterile, take away the independence of farmers making them reliant on agribusiness multinationals as opposed to the traditional practices of seed saving.

### **What’s the alternative to GMOs?**

Some of the main ways of avoiding genetically modified foods are outlined here. Buying certified organic food is one of the best ways to ensure food is GM free, as bodies such as the Soil Association stipulate that any food which is to be sold as organic cannot be genetically modified. EU labeling laws require products containing GM ingredients to be labeled as such, but there are loopholes in this law which mean that even if a product appears to be GM free, it may still contain GM oil or lecithin which do not need to be listed. Because of these loopholes, the best way to find out whether a product contains GM ingredients is probably to ask, either by contacting the manufacturer of the product or by speaking to the manager of the shop it was purchased from.

*Sources: Soil Association, The Ecologist, Friends of the Earth*

## Updates

If you aren't in this directory but would like to be, or you know of outlets we've missed, please give us your details by completing the form below and post back to the address on the bottom of the form, this will ensure that your details appear in the updated version of the guide.

Name: .....

Company Name: .....

Address: .....

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Tel: .....

E-Mail / Website address: .....

Short Description (to be included in the guide):

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Do you produce / sell the following types of food (please tick):

Organic

Local

GMO free

Fair Trade

Vegetarian

Vegan

(Where from: ..... )

### Please send to:

Manchester Friends of the Earth,  
6 Mount St,  
Manchester,  
M2 5NS