

Grassroot Food Choices

1. Six questions to ask a grower or producer about your food

Written by Sharon Rempel. June 2008

www.grassrootsolutions.com and email slrempel@shaw.ca

Please note; if you publish this article all or in part please give full author credit and send me a copy of the publication. If you pay for articles; send a cheque. Thanks.

Remember you vote with your food dollar. Find out what philosophy and growing methods a person is using to produce the food you are interesting in buying. Ideally do this at a time when the grower has time to spend with you to answer your questions. It's a great family exercise to source out what's being consumed, how it's grown and the history of the seed from seed to plate.

Questions to ask the local grower or processor about the food you are buying:

1. Do you use pesticides to kill insects? What do you use? (there are many approved products for 'organic' growing and the more conventional products. You can get a list of approved products from the COABC website or OMRI based in Oregon). If the grower has a lot of pest problems then it's a chance to learn more).

2. Do you have a lot of land? Do you do any crop rotations on the land? Do you use legumes or cereals as part of that rotation?

3. How do you increase the fertility of your land? (organic growers use green manures that are plowed into the soil as manure usually isn't available for large scale operations).

4. Where does the manure come from? (Urban compost that uses city waste that includes everything is pretty questionable. Separation of toxic compounds, plastics, etc will resulting a more 'natural' product for the soil). People who use a lot of sea weed and kelp may be depleting ocean resources; always good to ask about quantities.

5. What's the variety name of the crop you are selling? Who did you buy the seed from and did they grow GMO?

6. What's the method of leavening the bread? Natural sourdough wild yeast for all or part of the process (this breaks down the starches and carbohydrates of the wheat making it easier to digest). Some bakers add 'sourdough' to flavor the dough then fast acting yeast to finish the loaf.