

# GREENING YOUR CHURCH KITCHEN

## FOOD CHOICES

### Coffee & Tea

- **Buy shade-grown and organic tea and coffee from Fair-Trade vendors. A few suggestions include:**

**Bishop's Blend** (used at St. Mark's Cathedral) is a triple-certified coffee purchased from Episcopal Relief and Development. <http://www.puravidacoffee.com>. Phone: 206.328.9606. ERD chose PuraVida to roast their coffee, and some % goes to ERD.

**Earth Ministry Blend** is a triple-certified coffee selection purchased from Grounds for Change <http://www.groundsforchange.com>.

**Equal Exchange**, 50 United Drive, West Bridgewater, MA, 02379. Phone: 774.776.7400. [www.equalexchange.coop](http://www.equalexchange.coop) or <http://interfaith.equalexchange.com>. Other products are also available.

We might usually be more concerned about the monetary cost of coffee and tea for our Coffee Hours and other meetings, but there are other and longer-term costs to consider. Finding out about the hidden costs to foreign laborers and to habitats where tea and coffee are grown is easier than it used to be but not necessarily easy. Some people are also concerned that small farmers who do not belong to larger Fair-Trade cooperatives may be harmed in this process. We are open to hearing from you about this. Shade-grown coffee leaves native habitat for native animals because the shade above the interspersed coffee plants is native tropical trees. Of course "organic" means that external chemical fertilizers are not applied to the land and cannot wash into the water sources. "Fair Trade" means that the owners and workers are fairly compensated, that international conglomerates are not reaping huge profits while the workers are minimally compensated. These goals are ones we as Christians do support.

TransFair is the only independent certification organization for fair trade coffee, tea, cocoa and sugar in Canada and the US. Here is some background from Wikipedia on Fair Trade:

*"Fair trade is an organized social movement and market-based approach to empowering developing country producers and promoting sustainability. The movement advocates the payment of a fair price as well as social and environmental standards in areas related to the production of a wide variety of goods. It focuses in particular on exports from developing countries to developed countries, most notably handicrafts, coffee, cocoa, sugar, tea, bananas, honey, cotton, wine, fresh fruit and flowers.*

*Fair trade's strategic intent is to deliberately work with marginalized producers and workers in order to help them move from a position of vulnerability to one of security and economic self-sufficiency. It also aims at empowering them to become stakeholders in their own organizations and actively play a wider role in the global arena."*

## Sugar / Honey / Sugar Substitutes

- **Buy organic fairly-traded sugar as much as possible. (See Fair Trade information under “Coffee and Tea.”)**
- **Buy locally produced honey as much as possible.**
- **Sugar substitutes are questionable but necessary for the diabetics in your congregation. Ask them what they need/prefer.**

We don't have a lot of information about organic sugars yet, so please let us know any information you have gleaned. They are available at most groceries and natural food stores. The flavors may vary, so it is worth buying a small quantity first to test acceptance! Sugar cane fields are generally burned, which contributes to air pollution, but this is probably true for organic sugar, too. The one advantage to organic sugars is that the land and water are not harmed with pesticides and non-organic fertilizers.

Honeys are often transported long distances, especially now that North American bees are in such trouble. Tropical and Far East honeys have been put in question recently for added water and other problems. Transporting something as heavy as honey across the ocean doesn't make much sense anyway. Supporting local beekeepers helps our local economy and reduces the air pollution created by long-distance transport. Make sure your local beekeeper actually produces the honey he or she is selling to you or to the store where you buy it.

Sugar substitutes can be “natural” or artificial. Five have been approved in the U.S., but all are under scrutiny for various complaints, health concerns, and safety. You can google the words “sugar” and “substitute” for detailed articles. It seems reasonable to offer ones that members of your congregation prefer or require because of diabetic conditions.

## Milk / Cream / Soy / Creamers

- **Provide *organic* soy, rice milk, or other vegetable-based milk for those allergic to milk, vegans, and others who avoid milk because of the suffering cows experience in most large dairy operations.**
- **When buying milk and cream, buy organic, locally produced in humane farming conditions if possible.**

Milk products from cows fed growth hormones are of serious concern for all people, but especially for children and those who have experienced cancer. There are organic dairy farms in the Pacific Northwest. Some organic dairies have come under scrutiny for not following the strict federal guidelines required to be labeled “organic,” so finding organic products is not always so easy. And there are dairy producers which are not organic but which pledge to not use growth hormones in their cows. We recommend using organic milk products as much as possible to support an industry that does not use artificial hormones,

and treats its land and water with respect. We also recommend purchasing from farmers who do not abuse the cows.

Soy, rice or nut milk products are preferred by those who are allergic to milk products and by those who for reasons of conscience, ethics, and/or religion choose not to eat products created by animals that have suffered in factory dairies (which is where most milk – organic or not – comes from) or keeping animals in confinement of any kind or keeping animals to make use of their labor for profit. Make sure that the soy products you purchase are from organic soybeans, as most soy products these days are made with genetically modified soybeans.

We try to avoid Nestles for social justice reasons as the company has discouraged mothers in poor countries from breast feeding. Please let us know if there are companies of concern—and also if you hear that some company has been removed from such lists of concern because they have changed their practices.

### Low on the Food Chain

- **Find healthy plant-based (vegetarian and vegan) recipes to prepare food for church meals and snacks.**
- **Avoid dairy, eggs and meats, especially beef, or use meats in small quantities. If you must buy meat, find locally grown, pasture-fed animals that have been raised in humane conditions. For eggs and dairy, seek these from humanely raised animals.**

A resolution was passed at the 2008 Diocesan Convention that called for vegetarian/vegan food to be made available at all diocesan sponsored meals. Congregations in the diocese might want to hold themselves to the same standard. The reasons cited on the resolution included environmental stewardship: global warming; air, soil and water pollution; world hunger; compassion to animals; personal health; ethical and religious convictions.

According to a recent United Nations study, raising livestock for food contributes significantly to global warming - more than all the world's transportation (cars, trucks, buses, planes, ships, trains, etc.) added together. And it is a major cause of water and air pollution and soil erosion.

Raising animals for meat products is a very energy-intensive and high-water-use business. 2500 gallons of water and 7 pounds of grain plus electricity equivalent to burning one gallon of gasoline are needed to produce one pound of beef, according to Langholz and Turner in [You Can Prevent Global Warming](#). Grains used to feed animals could be used to feed hungry people. Feedlots are notorious for contaminating nearby water sources. Many meat products are grown and shipped from other countries to the US, thus creating unnecessary transportation pollution in addition to causing water and land abuse in other countries. The tropical rain forests being decimated for short-term profits in growing beef for the

North American market are desperately needed as standing trees to help slow global climate change—for us as well as for those living in the tropics. If we stop cutting rain forests, the whole planet will benefit.

In addition to environmental concerns with animal products, we must consider the Christian call for compassion toward God's creatures. Common estimates are that 98% of animal products sold in grocery stores come from animals that have suffered egregiously in factory farming conditions. Chicken, pork, veal and beef from intensive farming operations are the result of much animal suffering.

Eggs and dairy products are also typically the result of much animal suffering. Battery hens are among the most inhumanely treated of God's creatures. Egg labels of 'free range' or 'cage free' should not be trusted: these labels are not regulated and often mean that the hens were simply jammed in other conditions, still unable to even spread their wings, dust bathe, or peck in dirt. Dairy cattle now typically suffer from frequent udder inflammation and constant painful joints due to genetic manipulation and BGH causing them to produce about 10 times the milk they naturally would. Living on cement floors adds to joint pain. Both dairy cattle and battery hens in intensive operations live in concentration camp like conditions, unable to live as creatures of nature.

Bishop Rickel has told of watching the video ***Earthlings*** and reported that it led him to the decision to eat lower on the food chain. You might consider a showing at your church.

**Resources:**

Earthlings <http://video.google.com/videoplay?docid=6361872964130308142>

Diet for a Small Planet by Frances Moore Lappe

Diet for a New America—How Your Food Choices Affect Your Health, Happiness, and the Future of Life on Earth by John Robbins

You Can Prevent Global Warming by Jeffrey Langholz and Kelly Turner

*Planting a garden and growing your own food yourself (at home or at church) isn't as crazy as it might sound! St. Luke's Church in Sequim had some land behind its church parking lot that was good river valley soil. A local organization, the Community Organic Garden of Sequim [COGS] is renting (for \$1.00 per year for 5 years) an area of St. Luke's land through the non-profit organization Friends of the Fields, which serves as the legal and financial entity for COGS. St. Luke's provides not only the land, where plots are available to anyone from the community, but also space at the church for COGS meetings and the organic gardening classes required for use of the plots. Some of the church coffee grounds plus occasional scraps from an interdenominational free lunch held at the church every Saturday are contributed to the garden composting system.*

## Meals & Potlucks

- Eat locally grown food.
- Eat food in season.
- Eat organically grown food.
- Plant a garden and grow it yourself! (See “Garden” section.)
- Eat low on the food chain.

Why eat locally grown food? It supports local farmers rather than conglomerates in other states or countries. It also reduces transportation costs immensely, things like air pollution from freight trucks or planes. So you put your money into the *food* you eat, not into burning gasoline and causing climate change.

Eating food “in season” increases the chances that you are buying *fresh local food* rather than something from another hemisphere (again transportation issues). This may also bring back the pleasure of anticipating something fresh and wonderful tasting in season rather than enjoying exercising your ‘right’ as a wealthy American who can afford to buy exotic longer-in-time-shipment, foreign-grown produce.

Eating organic products should guarantee that the food you eat has been grown without chemicals. It also should (and usually does) mean that the land on which it was grown, the water nearby, and the farm workers have been treated with respect. Again, these are principles we as Christians strive to support.

*A favorite yearly event at St. John’s in Snohomish is Oktoberfest which features typical foods such as sausage, potatoes, apple desserts, and beer. The newly formed green group, the Creation Stewards, worked with the Men’s Group that puts on the popular community event to find local sources for the foods. No problem, it turned out! All of the foods came from sources within 50 miles of the church – from Skagit Valley potatoes to beer brewed by parishioners. Table cards explained the sources of the foods that everyone was enjoying and listed the advantages to supporting local farmers and producers.*

□ Below are a few ideas for greener meals & potlucks. Let us know your ideas! □

*~~ Have you tried a church potluck encouraging use of primarily locally grown food or organic food or low on the food chain food?*

*~~ How about a coffee hour where raw products from the local Farmers’ Market are given away to encourage folks to try them?*

*~~ Or could you try a coffee hour where such products are used to create the offerings and labels identify the sources?*

*~~ Perhaps garden veggies could be part of your landscaping if your land space is limited. Cabbage and rainbow chard are ornamental!*

## Snacks

- **Find locally grown, in-season snacks whenever possible.**
- **Consider the health benefits of whatever you are sharing or providing.**
- **Simple and small is usually better for us than cheap and unhealthy!**

It may be cheaper to buy a bag of cookies or a box of doughnuts for a meeting, but let's consider the consequences for our own health, for the land where the ingredients were produced, and also for those who may be producing these snacks. With obesity and high blood pressure so prevalent, what alternate choices are available? In season locally grown fruit (from your own trees?) might be an option. Nuts, especially almonds and walnuts, can be a good choice but of course are much more expensive. So we eat fewer and relish them more slowly? How about high-fiber crackers, possibly of organic grains? Rye-crisp-type crackers can be good alone or with organic peanut butter or hummus. What do you do for your meetings? If you bake a 'goodie' at home, can you use something from your own garden or the Farmers' Market (squash, pumpkin, carrots, berries, for example)? Try halving the sugar and/or using organic whole grains for part or all of that part of the recipe. See the "Meals" section for more ideas.

Also, please consider using water from the tap as well as your organic Fair-Trade tea and coffee. Bottled water is not necessary and is not necessarily any safer or better tasting for all its cost in oil-based containers and garbage. A resolution discouraging the use of bottled water at church events and activities was passed at the 2009 General Convention. Encourage people to bring their own water in a reusable metal or BPA-free plastic container. Provide cold water in pitchers at events. If the water is heavily chlorinated, provide filtered water.