

from “My Local” in *Foodshed*:

It used to be that local was defined by how far a rider on horseback could ride in one day. Market villages were only a few miles apart; produce and meats were consumed within a stone’s throw of where they had been raised. My vision of local food is more inclusive than the 100-mile diet’s arbitrary focus. I imagine concentric rings, starting at my own garden and radiating outwards to include all of Alberta. In 21st century Canada, with the horse’s power harnessed to a car, an Albertan driving from the heart of the prairie can reach the Peace Country’s boreal forest, the high foothills of Turner Valley, the badlands of the Cypress Hills, the Rocky Mountains, or the northern lakeside arms of the Canadian Shield. That’s the Albertan foodshed.

Albertans raise much of what we need for a pleasurable table: meats, grains, pulses, fruits and vegetables, cheeses, oil and vinegar. Where those rings intersect with the ripples of others provinces is how and where waves of change begin. From beyond my province, I drink wine and eat peaches from BC’s Okanagan and Similkameen valleys, a day west of Calgary. I do not advocate that we consume a diet **strictly** based on regionalism, only that we eat **mostly** based on our foodshed. I like my coffee, tea, chocolate, olives, vanilla and lemons too. They are a part of my pantry, despite my friend Anita’s thoughts. We do live north of the 49th, and our geography imposes limits, but self-deprivation can lead to envy, or worse.

It’s not a fad to eat locally, any more than it was in our grandparents’ day. After all, it’s how the majority of the world eats. When we go to Toulouse, we expect to eat *cassoulet* in the style of Toulouse. In Liguria, we eat pesto on our pasta, and in Galicia, in northern Spain, we eat anchovies.

In Alberta, a natural foodshed, our pantry is overflowing with bounty. Farmers are the wellspring. Better farm practices make for better ingredients. There is a decided correlation: good farming, good cooking, good eating, good health, good living.

The new crop of thoughtful growers is tending fields, orchards and water to produce our food in a sustainable manner. Writing in France in 1825, Antoine Brillat-Savarin said, “Tell me what you eat and I shall tell you what you are.” It is just as true in 21st century Canada. Thanks to travel, television, the internet and books, we are growing more food-conscious than ever; we are realizing that we are, literally, completely and exclusively, what we eat.