

Local Sourcing 101

A Checklist for Food Service Directors

New to local sourcing? Understanding the right questions to ask, and having basic information, will enable you to communicate effectively with co-workers, supervisors and staff about why you want to source local food. It will also help you understand your own preferences and capabilities, and the best place for your institution to start.

This checklist will ask some basic questions about local sourcing so you can identify realistic goals and next steps. Change is often difficult, but sourcing local can be rewarding for you, your customers, your staff, and the local producers that you support.

WHY SOURCE LOCAL?

1. I want to source local for these reasons:

- | | |
|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Serve fresher, tastier food | <input type="checkbox"/> Customer demand |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Support the local economy | <input type="checkbox"/> Cleaner air – help cut the miles our food travels from farm to table, reducing CO ₂ emissions. The food we eat often travels 1,500 miles or more to reach us. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Support Wisconsin family farms | <input type="checkbox"/> Required by supervisor |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Help preserve farmland | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Serve more nutritious food | |

2. I define local food as... *Know your preference because everyone defines "local food" differently. If you purchase local food from a distributor, you should be clear about what to ask.*

- Product grown or raised in Wisconsin
- Product with most or all ingredients grown or raised in Wisconsin
- Product with half or less of the ingredients from Wisconsin
- Product grown or raised within 100 miles of my institution
- Product processed in Wisconsin
- Product made by a Wisconsin-owned company
- Other: _____

3. How would I like to use local food?

- Offering a single local item or dish such as apples, potatoes, burgers, chicken, salad...
- Replacing several menu ingredients with local fruit, cheese, meat, broccoli...
- Using local food for one special event
- Using mostly local food for regularly scheduled events
- Other: _____

4. I am interested in buying local Wisconsin:

- Fresh fruit
- Pre-cut fruit
- Fresh vegetables
- Pre-cut vegetables
- Milk
- Cheese
- Beef
- Poultry
- Eggs
- Other: _____

LOCAL SOURCING CHALLENGES

Thinking through challenges to local sourcing can help you discover solutions. It is typical for new buyers to have concerns. Anticipating roadblocks can help make local sourcing easier. Feel free to call IFM for help or technical assistance!

5. General concerns:

- I am not sure what is in season when
- Can I source outside of my primary vendor contract? If so, what, and what is my spending limit?
- Can I put local foods in my next RFP bid?
- What is the level of staff interest?
- Do I have supervisor support?

6. Specific concerns:

- Where do I buy local?
- Do I have recipes for local, seasonal produce?
- How much time will it take to prep local menu items?
- Do I need additional storage space?
- Is staff trained for knife use and safety?
- Is staff trained for the food prep needed for local menu items?

COMMUNICATING LOCAL

Keep your staff, supervisors, and colleagues informed about potential changes and opportunities. You might be surprised at the support they will provide. When issues come up, you will be better able to communicate and work together to find solutions. Don't forget to use your colleagues in food service for help, or contact IFM for names.

7. I discussed local sourcing with:

- Upper management
- Food service colleagues
- Executive Chef and kitchen staff
- Administrative and billing staff

8. I discussed the following topics with my staff and colleagues:

- The benefits of local sourcing
- How to define local food
- The challenges of local sourcing
- Preliminary goals and objectives
- Initial steps to take
- Options for purchasing local

9. Need information about local sourcing? *There are many resources that offer information about how institutions use local food, and its benefits.*

The IFM website, www.ifmwi.org

- IFM Local Foods Program
- Why Local factsheet
- Where to buy local?
- Wisconsin seasonal produce chart

Other

- IFM E-news (Local Sourcing News)
- IFM Annual Meeting (every Spring)
- Something Special *from* Wisconsin, www.somethingspecialwi.com
- Wisconsin Dept. of Public Instruction Farm to School, <http://dpi.state.wi.us/fns/f2s.html>

DETERMINING WHERE TO BEGIN...

After reviewing the previous information, you may have a sense of where you would like to start. Please consider the following options, and realize that each of them will require research and communication with a potential supplier. (This could be a great roll for an interested staff member.)

10. Where to source local? Visit the IFM website, www.ifmwi.org, for more detailed info.

- My primary vendor
- A produce distributor
- Directly from a farm
- Direct from a Wisconsin produce auction (large aggregator of local produce)
- IFM Local Foods Program, www.ifmwi.org
- Something Special *from* Wisconsin, www.somethingspecialwi.com (50% or more of their products' value is from Wisconsin ingredients, production or processing)
- Online through Local Dirt, www.localdirt.com

11. Questions for your primary vendor:

- Do you have Wisconsin produce?
- Can I have a list of your Wisconsin products and prices?
- How do you define local? (see question 2)
- Can you get local products for me that you do not currently carry?
- Traceability is important – how do I know this product is from Wisconsin?
- Is your local produce picked ripe, or picked early and gassed to expedite ripening?
- Can you send me information about the local producers for my marketing materials?

12. Questions to ask when sourcing direct from a farmer or local foods business:

- Do you have a product list with pricing information?
- What are the maximum and minimum quantities I can order?
- Can you sell the product in a unit familiar to me (by the pound)? If not, how?
- If you deliver, when and how?
- Can you include the cost of delivery in the product price?
- Will your staff or mine unload the delivery truck?
- Will your delivery driver take a background check? (required by some state and public institutions)
- What kind of product liability insurance do you have? Can you send me a copy?
- I use net 30, 45, etc. with my accounts, will that work for you?

12. cont'd - Produce specific questions:

- How soon after harvest is the produce typically delivered?
- Do you have GAP certification? (required by some institutions)
- Do you use USDA grading standards?
- Do you use standard packaging?

CONCLUSION

You can use the answers to these questions to help you define and plan your next steps, and make your “to do” list. Managing your and others’ expectations by thinking through each step and communicating is critical. In order to become comfortable with a supplier and the process you may need to ask a lot of questions – this dialogue will help to educate both you and your supplier and help to clarify your needs. Feel free to contact IFM Coordinator, Laura Witzling, at (608) 266-6389 or Olivia Parry, IFM Director, at (608) 266-4270, to help find solutions.

Your responses can help to inform IFM’s future programming and resource development. Please fax your completed checklist with your name included to IFM (608) 266-9117.

TO DO LIST

IFM website resources for foodservice directors:

- How to source local
- IFM Local Foods Program product info
- Why local? factsheet
- Wisconsin seasonal produce chart
- How food service directors use local food
- Wisconsin produce auctions Q&A
- Guide to calculating serving sizes for fresh produce
- Writing a food purchasing policy factsheet
- Food miles factsheet
- Wisconsin local food initiatives links
- Testimony from food service directors

What is IFM? Dane County’s Institutional Food Market Coalition (IFM) was established in 2006 in an effort to:

- Develop new market opportunities for Dane County and regional growers
- Increase the sales of local Wisconsin food into institutional markets
- Connect large volume institutional buyers with local Wisconsin product
- Identify and resolve obstacles to local sourcing
- Conduct outreach and education through programming and technical assistance to food service directors, distributors and local growers

Visit www.ifmwi.org for more information!

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