

Putting local food in the spotlight

BY LETHBRIDGE HERALD OPINION ON AUGUST 15, 2018.

Raising the profile of food that is produced closer to home is the focus of the inaugural Alberta Local Food Week, which is taking place this week across the province.

Locally produced food has become more trendy in recent years, aided by the 2007 best-selling book “The 100-Mile Diet” by Canadian authors Alisa Smith and J.B. MacKinnon. There are good reasons for a locally derived diet, as pointed out in an article on the McGill University website titled “The benefits of eating local foods.” The benefits include the fact it’s good for the environment because the food doesn’t need to be transported great distances.

It also boosts the local economy, encourages sustainable agriculture, is fresher, and produce harvested locally has usually been given more time to ripen. You usually find it tastes better, too.

In Lethbridge, consumers have access to regular farmers’ markets – Saturdays at Exhibition Park and Wednesdays at Festival Square downtown – which feature a wide selection of quality, locally grown food. Anyone who is focused on healthful living knows it starts by putting good-quality food into the body. By purchasing food that is produced close by, we can have a better idea of what went into producing that food. We can get to know the people growing the produce or raising the livestock and can have confidence in the product we are buying.

It all comes down to being educated about how food is produced, and education is one of the key aspects of Alberta Local Food Week, which culminates with Open Farm Days taking place Aug. 18 and 19. During Open Farm Days, farms and ranches across the province open themselves to visitors to help them understand how food gets from the farm to the plate.

“Local food connects Alberta’s communities as more consumers want to know where their food comes from and how it’s produced,” Oneil Carlier, Alberta’s Minister of Agriculture and Forestry, said in a news release. “Alberta Local Food Week is an opportunity to celebrate and promote our province’s outstanding agriculture and food industry.”

Locally, the organization Farming Smarter will give people an opportunity to learn about food production up close by hosting an Open Farm Days event Saturday from 10:30 a.m. to 2 p.m. at the Farming Smarter site east of Lethbridge. The family-friendly event promises to be both educational and fun (not to mention tasty).

You can sign up for the event online at <http://www.farmingsmarter.com>.

Supporting local food producers is a win-win situation. It’s good for the local agricultural community and it’s good for the consumers who get to enjoy quality food from close to home.

Comment on this editorial online at <https://www.lethbridgeherald.com/>