



## Good Real Food

*Written by Jill Grunewald and published in part in tastebud magazine, Sept. 2008*

### tastebud

We recently had out-of-town guests for a few days, which for me is not only a reason to detail the house, but is also an excuse to dine at our favorite restaurants and also to cook great meals that are not only delicious but also fuel us up for the busy activities of sightseeing and exploring. Our guests were certainly no strangers to good eating; they are well-traveled, are food adventurers, cook more than we do and, being more intuitive than I about how restaurant dishes are made, would often say, "This would be easy to make at home."

Nonetheless, they were repeatedly expressive and effusive about how great the food was on their whole visit. Indeed, we ate at restaurants that focus on featuring locally- and sustainably-grown foods and this was certainly a compliment to the meals we enjoyed around our dining room table. Still, we didn't make anything extravagant or complicated; most of the dishes were things we eat regularly: blueberry pancakes, vegetable frittata, chicken breast and avocado sandwiches, grilled pork chops with sautéed greens, you know, basic stuff.

After several exclamations of, "Everything just tastes so...different," and, "What is the secret ingredient in this?" (of which there never was one), I realized that what they were experiencing was real, fresh food, something that my household is accustomed to but certainly doesn't take for granted. What our friends tasted was local, whole grain pancake mix with blueberries I had just picked from my friend's berry farm, real maple syrup, and real butter. They tasted Fair Trade Coffee with organic cream. They tasted organic, free-range eggs and raw milk cheese. They tasted Food Alliance Certified pork, and the rich, earthy flavor of rainbow chard that been harvested the day before. They tasted an array of vegetables from the farmers' market.

It's difficult for me to not get on my soapbox about how far we've gotten away from real food and what real food tastes like; but that sort of pontificating can turn people off. It's also difficult for me to understand why this food isn't available to everyone. You see, our friends live in a small town where many of these natural foods aren't available. Too many people in this country live in rural areas where, if you don't grow your own food, or have friends or family who do, you're forced to support the commodity food system, a system of often over-produced, over-processed, prematurely harvested, less than tasteful and nutritious food. And we wonder why we have a healthcare crisis in this country.

Having access to the best foods when others don't makes me feel guilty and confused. Granted, it is a choice and some people choose to purchase the cheapest food available. I understand this, especially given the rising food costs in this country. But healthy

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food can be affordable; I paid less for several of the foods I mentioned above than what I would have paid at a big box grocer. It just takes some planning and forethought.

I have to chuckle (on the inside) when people refer to the “local foods *trend*” or the “sustainable foods *trend*.” These healthy food movements aren’t fads, but are sweeping the country and are hopefully sweeping us away from the cheap, commodity food system that is so prevalent, the Titanic in the bathtub and I like to call it. I’m seeing it with my clients and hearing about it from the health counselors I went to school with then they talk about the exciting work they’re doing; people in this country are realizing how important good, real food is - how important it is for their physical, mental, and spiritual wellbeing. We *can* turn this boat around.

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