

The 100-mile Diet

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If you had to, could you live without avocados? Bananas? Chocolate? Maybe. What about sugar? Oil? Coffee? Impossible?

When I first heard about something called 'The 100-mile Diet', I thought it must be another fad diet, figuring it required you to run 100-miles a week or some other ludicrous thing. However, after reading about it, I learned that it is not a diet to lose weight, but a lifestyle choice. In fact, it's a way of eating where you eat local food. The name comes from a couple who spent a year eating ONLY food that could be grown and produced within 100 miles (160 km) of their home. For that year, they lived mainly on seafood, chicken, vegetables, and corn. They didn't have cooking oil, rice, and sugar.

Take a moment to imagine your life like that. We live in Imabari, and 160km covers most of Shikoku; the coast of Oita, Hiroshima, Yamaguchi, Okayama, Shimane and the western edge of Tottori. This would mean no bananas, no oil, no sugar, no coffee!! Much of the meat you get in the supermarket would be off-limits, especially the cheaper cuts from Australia or the US. In fact, a great majority of your shopping basket would be off-limits.

At the same time, eating locally is appealing, don't you think? The greatest advantage of being a locavore (a name for people who eat locally), is that you are naturally eating healthier. The food that you eat is almost always fresh. No more factory-processed food! The meals you make from the fresh ingredients don't contain additives, preservatives, and other chemicals you can't pronounce.

Although it seems like such a major shift in how we eat, it's not that far-removed from how I grew up. Living in rural Canada, our beef was from our own farm, our pork and chicken came from neighbors, and many of our vegetables were grown in our backyard garden and then frozen, for winter consumption. The only thing we couldn't really grow was fruit. Other than berries and watermelon in the summer, all our fruit was shipped in from far away.

Here in Imabari, we are actually lucky. With a year-round growing season, a wide variety of fresh fruit and vegetables are always available. And because they are fresh and in season and often picked 'just that morning' before you buy it, they taste amazing!

In addition to being healthier and tastier, buying locally helps out local farmers. Why would you buy broccoli grown by some unknown farmer in an unknown location in America, that's then spent several days being flown thousands of kms when you could buy broccoli from my husband here in Imabari?! Given the popularity of farmer's markets like Saisaikitya and other markets around town, many people seem to like this local option. When you buy food from these local farmers, you can get to know their names, perhaps ask questions about their growing practices. I think you can feel comfortable that your food is fresh and safe.

Eating locally is certainly not a new idea; however, in this world of convenience, global trading and

marketing, many of us have gotten away from a diet that includes locally-grown food. I don't expect you will eat only food grown within 160km of Imabari (neither will I-I could never live without chocolate!). However, I do want to encourage you to think about your food choices. Standing in the store, comparing between asparagus grown here and asparagus grown in Thailand-which one would you rather buy? Making small changes in your food purchases, you can start to live healthier, enjoy better-tasting food and help out our farming community.

