



ENVIRONMENTAL MINISTRIES, MASSACHUSETTS CONFERENCE of the UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST

EATING ETHICALLY AND SAFELY

Cornell University Professor David Pimentel calculates that U.S. farmers spend some \$4 billion annually on pesticides to protect about \$16 billion worth of crops. Fertilizer dependent monocultures--planting the same crops on the same land year after year--deplete soil fertility and diminish the defenses that biodiversity provide against disease and insect damage.

In addition, fossil fuels are needed to operate farm equipment and produce fertilizers. Finally, studies show that on average, produce travels more than 1,000 miles from farm to table in the US. One calorie of food takes about one calorie of fossil fuel to produce. Local, organically grown foods provide less environmentally harmful alternatives to conventionally grown food.

Mercury is a product of coal combustion that is then deposited in surface water. Due to high mercury levels, the FDA recommends that pregnant women refrain from eating any swordfish, tilefish, shark or king mackerel. Some species, including Chilean bass, halibut, American lobster and Spanish mackerel occasionally contain as much mercury as the most contaminated types. Based upon FDA and EPA standards, Consumer Reports recommends that pregnant women avoid canned tuna entirely and that young children limit intake to between 3 and 6 ounces per week.

What You Can Do

- Eat locally and organically grown foods.
- Purchase fairly traded coffee and other products.
- Support legislation banning or limiting the use of mercury.

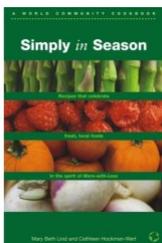
Resources

The **True Cost Tour** identifies the "social, environmental and nutritional implications of various products. www.truecosttour.org

Equal Exchange, Interfaith Program, Fairly Traded Gourmet Coffee, Tea and Chocolate. www.equalexchange.com/interfaith.
Tel. 774-776-7366

Food Routes. Connects consumers with local farmers, farmers markets and local food initiatives. Offers "Buy Local" campaign materials. www.fourroutes.org.

Presbyterian Hunger Program. Their Just Eating curriculum uses scripture, prayer and stories to explore issues related to food. www.pcusa.org/hunger



Simply in Season, by Cathleen Hockman-Wert and Mary Beth Lind. Herald Press, 2005.

Book Description: Not so long ago most fresh food on North American tables came from home gardens and local farmers markets. Today, the average item of food travels more than a thousand miles before it lands on our tables. It's a remarkable technological accomplishment, but has not proven to be healthy for our communities, our land or us.

Through stories and simple "whole foods" recipes, Mary Beth Lind and Cathleen Hockman-Wert explore how the food we put on our tables impacts our local and global neighbors. They show the importance of eating local, seasonal food—and fairly traded food—and invite readers to make choices that offer security and health for our communities, for the land, for body and spirit.

Simply in Season offers a starting point encouraging you to feed both your body and spirit with nutritious food and challenging ideas about the world around you. Woven throughout the recipe pages of each season are writings, tidbits of information to reflect upon while the onions saute, the soup boils, or the bread bakes.

The Omnivore's Dilemma: A Natural History of Four Meals by Michael Pollan. New York: Penguin Press, 2006.

Book Description: Most of us are at a great distance from our food. I don't mean that we live "twelve miles from a lemon," as English wit Sydney Smith said about a home in Yorkshire. I mean that our food bears little resemblance to its natural substance. Hamburger never moored; spaghetti grows on the pasta tree; baby carrots come from a pink and blue nursery. Still, we worry about our meals -- from calories to carbs, from heart-healthy to brain food. And we prefer our food to be "natural," as long as natural doesn't involve real.

In *The Omnivore's Dilemma*, Michael Pollan writes about how our food is grown -- what it is, in fact, that we are eating. The book is really three in one: The first section discusses industrial farming; the second, organic food, both as big business and on a relatively small farm; and the third, what it is like to hunt and gather food for oneself. And each section culminates in a meal -- a cheeseburger and fries from McDonald's; roast chicken, vegetables and a salad from Whole Foods; and grilled chicken, corn and a chocolate soufflé (made with fresh eggs) from a sustainable farm; and, finally, mushrooms and pork, foraged from the wild.

