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### Sustainable Food

What is sustainable food? As you may have heard from the news or people around you, sustainable food is food that is organically made. Now, almost everybody thinks that organic means that it's not going to be good and will taste really plain, but in reality, that's the complete opposite. Sustainable food is basically food that's grown by farmers that don't abuse their crops, animals or workers. Food is grown and can be reproduced over and over in an incredibly green cycle and healthy way of life.

Most food nowadays is made by huge factories and enormous pens and facilities that keep upwards to 1000 animals in about one acre of land. Imagine all the contaminants and abuse those animals go through every second due to the amount of animals kept in those facilities. It's no wonder nowadays food has been poisoned with extremely harmful outbreaks that could have just been avoided if it weren't for the fact that those animals are living in ridiculous conditions. Companies are not telling customers how they treat their product and just sell you their food and they even have the nerve to put down that it's grown "naturally" and that they were "farm-raised." This is complete nonsense that those terms mean absolutely nothing.

In this article about the meaning and claim “All Natural”, it talks about how all natural can mean anything and that the labeling of “All Natural” can be used without regulation from the FDA (Food and Drug Administration).<sup>1</sup> They boast a strong argument about what should be natural and what shouldn’t be natural. All these products that are bad for us like High Fructose Corn Syrup or MSB or even in extreme cases, cocaine is apparently natural to people because it comes from something from natural. The problem is the way they make this product is by adding or changing it in a very unnatural way. Sustainable food isn’t like this. Sustainable food is both natural and organic.

Sustainable food is a great way to help your environment by buying or even creating sustainable solutions. You just have to have a system of no waste while growing your crops and raising your animals. Many would consider this a kind of rural farmer technique where nothing goes to waste and is used somewhere, but that's the whole point of sustainable food, no waste. One way people can do this is to shop at the local Farmer's Market and actually have a talk with the people who grow the food face to face, something you can't normally do if you were to buy food at your local supermarket chain store. Even now, sustainable food is a growing habit in American culture and is rising at an incredible rate.

Farmers all across the world have been making sustainable food all their lives without the use of any chemicals or pesticides; Treating both the workers and animals with respect. They believe that happy animals that are treated with love and care produce the best quality food that there is. People taste the difference and if they’re willing to put that much time into taking care of all those animals, it’s definitely worth every penny spent on sustainable food. It’s no surprise that a happy cows produces good quality meat.

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<sup>1</sup><http://www.naturalnews.com/005778.html>

Restaurant these days have been having a section in their menus that completely consists of healthy and green food. I remember working during my summer internship at the Palio D'Asti restaurant and seeing a healthy section in their menu. The difference was that there was very little fatty meats, more vegetation oriented and appealed to many people around the restaurant as it was healthy and San Francisco is a big innovative city that focuses on becoming healthy. I was curious and wondered if any other restaurants have this kind of selection in their menus where they have a section created just for food that is good for you. Turns out that many high end and popular restaurants have this kind of system incorporated in their menus. More and more restaurants are turning to green and healthy food because the people want to eat organic and healthy. In fact, San Francisco is a leading city that has encourages green renovation everywhere, from everyday occurrences like air conditioners and light fixtures to building houses and skyscrapers.

Food safely...that is a huge topic in today's consumer market now. There have been so many outbreaks and diseases spread by food that it seems commonplace for those epidemics to be on the news almost every single day. National recalls of eggs, beef, pork, lettuce and green onions have been issued because of food quality. Even in foods that you wouldn't think would have a recall, like candy, has been proven unhealthy for human consumption.

Many of these issues have been aimed at huge companies because their lack of attention to their product. For example, Tyson's; Tyson is a huge meat packing company that controls a lot of all the distribution of chicken<sup>2</sup>. They have giant holding houses for chickens and the conditions in there are terrible. The chickens don't see sunlight because there are no windows and it makes them more unaware of their surroundings so they are easier to catch when collected

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<sup>2</sup><http://www.wfad.org/animalagribusiness/>

and they run around in their feces all day being fed their own feces and grounded up cats and dogs from local pounds. This led to an outbreak because of their terrible living conditions and all the chemicals used to make them grow faster, bigger and easier to catch.

Due to this, large scale recalls have been issued due to these conditions and this is not only happening to chickens. This is also relevant to how companies treat their livestock. If you were to see the conditions that they keep cows in, they look familiar to the conditions they keep chickens. The cows are all couped up in a large gated field with no grass to eat. Instead, they are fed corn because corn is easy to get, cheap and is harvested in huge quantities. Because cows are not genetically to eat corn, they grow bigger, but their big sizes come at a big price.<sup>3</sup> All of the corn messes with the cows immune system and produces a higher risk for E. Coli, a deadly bacteria that is found in the intestine of most warm-blooded animals. What people should do is read the labels if you are going shopping and really consider what goes into the process of making this kind of food.

With all being said, how can people stay away from those kinds of foods? Well, there are plenty of ways. Most notably is going vegan. Being vegan means that you eat nothing that came from animals or any animal products such as milk, eggs, cheese or even honey. There are many cultures that follow the vegan way because of religious beliefs. Vegans are a prime example of people who encourage sustainable food.

There are articles and specials about sustainable food every so often in the news and newspaper. It mainly focuses on how different restaurants are putting effort into making their foods more sustainable and being aware of the impact they put on the environment. There are some restaurants that have their menus and fixtures completely made sustainable and are

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<sup>3</sup><http://www.nbafoodadvocate.com/corn-fed-cattle-bigger-cows-bigger-e-coli-threat-more-foodborne-illness-1177>

awarded for such achievements. They are awarded by their effort ranging from using mainly local food that are in set distance away or using very little energy from the entire building. There are some other companies that give a push into sustainability in things that aren't directly related to food. For example, Frito Lays<sup>4</sup> has stepped foot into sustainability by changing the way they package their chips by making their bags compost-able and their company buildings have also been changed for the better by reducing their water level by 40%.

In the year 2010, there has been a huge change in foods that are being served at schools. A bill has been signed called the Healthy, Hunger-Free Kids Act<sup>5</sup> has been passed that changed school lunches being served at school. It expands more sustainable food eating and healthier eating in schools as school lunches is a big reason for obesity in this country. As of now, America is one of the most fattest countries in the world. The bill has changed school lunches by serving healthy food to students and ban vending machines selling unhealthy food and replacing them with food that is much more healthier and in most cases, more sustainable. By adding more organic, healthy food that has been grown sustainably, this will not only encourage kids to eat healthier, but also raise awareness of good wholesome food that people work hard to grow.

Sustainable food helps the community and local economy. If you buy from a local farmer and then he buys something else locally, all the money stays regionally locally and feeds off of each other so indirectly. We're protecting each others economy by keeping the money here instead of shipping it into another country or to another state. People around many cities and counties encourage buying locally because it keeps the money in the realm of the community and therefore supporting the community. In this process, money won't go outside of the

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<sup>4</sup><http://responsible-company.blogspot.com/2009/03/frito-lay-leads-in-sustainability.html>

<sup>5</sup><http://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2010/12/13/president-obama-signs-healthy-hunger-free-kids-act-2010-law>

community, creating a sort of stability and creating a cycle; money used by the community for the community.

When most people think about being green and environmentally friendly, they sometimes refer to the amount of garbage intake and how people throw away garbage and sort them out. In San Francisco, there is a garbage system that sorts different materials. Sustainable food plays a big part in this because garbage to people can be something that can be reused or used in a growing process or even used again and again. Sustainable food isn't always completely directed into food, it can also be what the food is being contained in. In most green sustainable restaurants, one of their main goals is output of garbage everyday<sup>6</sup>. They try and limit themselves from throwing away material that would be placed in huge landfills and try and use all the other bins and organize all their wastes in compost or recyclable.

A big part of improper sustainable food is through the use of pesticides. One major recent event that involved pesticides is the Colony Collapse Disorder<sup>7</sup>. Honey, as well as many other food that is made from bees, is completely sustainable and the practice of honey harvesting is being threatened due to pesticides. This disorder happens when a beehive or honeybees mysteriously disappear. Honeybees, through pollination, indirectly contributes to one-third of foods we eat. One theory of this disorder is that it's caused by pesticides because of pesticides side effects and the dangerous elements that lurk within pesticides. What pesticides do is make bee's and honeybee's immune system to different diseases causing them to be much more vulnerable to outside diseases. Pesticides is the leading case for CCD in theory because of the many tests and research.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>6</sup><http://www.recology.com/profile/communities.php>

<sup>7</sup><http://www.thedailygreen.com/environmental-news/blogs/bees/colony-collapse-disorder-causes-0118>

<sup>8</sup><http://www.epa.gov/pesticides/about/intheworks/honeybee.htm>

Pesticides have been going around for a long time and the effects of it can be rather positive, but on the negative side, it can be deadly. Pesticides cause a flurry of problems in a humans immune system and problems such as, birth defects, cancer and nerve damage<sup>9</sup>. Pesticides are sprayed on plants to make plants less vulnerable to bug attacks and disease. People use pesticides to keep away predators that would otherwise harm the crop and make the crop yield more. After a spray of pesticides, there are some bugs that are immune to the effects of that pesticides and those insects thrive even when the pesticide is being used thus creating another colony of bugs that are immune to that pesticides. After this colony of pesticide-immune insects, the pesticide will not work anymore, so the only solution is to buy another pesticide to get rid of the problem. This continues in an endless cycle and does much more harm than it does good. Pesticides don't just infect plants. Pesticides can leak into the ground which can lead to contamination to your water supply and all those health risks for pesticides can happen if it were to leak into your water system. The same fate may await your cattle and other livestock. In the practice of sustainable food, no pesticides will ever be used thus making a better quality food and according to studies<sup>10</sup>, tastes better.

Food today has really changed for the worse in the past years. It seems that food we buy in the today's supermarkets have so many food additives and can change anything of the food from the color to the taste<sup>11</sup>. These additives cannot be good for you because most of the additives used on those foods derive from unhealthy environments such as coal tar or was banned at some certain point in time. Food additives range from Artificial Food Coloring, Preservatives and Color, Texture and Flavor Enhancers.

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<sup>9</sup><http://www.epa.gov/pesticides/food/risks.htm>

<sup>10</sup><http://www.ibiblio.org/prism/apr98/bugs.html>

<sup>11</sup><http://www.healthy-eating-politics.com/food-additives.html>

Sustainable foods revolves around many aspects of life. One of these involves air pollution. Air pollution in food production is a very big deal since the turn of the century. There are many factors to air pollution when sustainable food is involved. With the scare of Global Warming to industrial factories producing massive amounts of waste from animals, air pollution has to be under tight watch. Even things like moving food from place to place causes big problems to the environment because the gasoline is using fossil fuels. The variables can be endless, but many people are finding solutions to these problems. One company has even went to the heights of making a transport service<sup>12</sup> using completely sustainable methods of transport. This ray of light on what's to become of food transportation in the future.

Milk has been around for as long as anyone has ever remembered, but is it truly safe to trust all that comes out of that white carton? With so many problems spouting up from dairy products, it's no wonder companies don't make raw milk straight out of the carton. Like most food grown in this world, it's all made by only a handful of major companies and they control what is usually put into those white cartons and is so concentrated that many problems have been occurring since.<sup>13</sup> All of these problems are similar to other problems that other major corporations have like low standard of animal life, extreme environmental damage and mass quantities of milk that have been tainted with antibiotics, hormones and pesticide usage.

Every problem has a root in the end of it and if I trace back to the beginning of the problem, food is a place to start. So many companies have been moving to using cheap grains to fatten up their livestock and adding antibiotics to their feed. These cheap grains, ranging from corn, wheat and other grains produced in large quantities, are used in cattle feed, pig feed and

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<sup>12</sup><http://www.sustainabletransportpackaging.com/catalog/carts/bulk-transfer-trucks>

<sup>13</sup><http://www.sustainabletable.org/issues/dairy/>



chicken feed<sup>14</sup>. This leads to unhealthy animals and therefore making them unhealthy for customers buying these products. There are solutions to these problems. One for instance, is to have a large grazing field of grass for cows to eat. Cows are raised to eat grass, not grains and since grass can grow back in an alarming rate, every session or so, the factory workers can put them back at the same spot. This also gets rid of any harmful bacterial that is inside of the cattle because of the unhealthy grain that was in it's body is now replaces with grass. Another fact is that they wouldn't have to deal with all the manure cattle produces.

Water; People don't consider it a food, but I do. One problem with water is that people treat it as a commodity. Water is not a commodity. People don't have to drink bottled water to get water. Studies show that tap water is much safer, cleaner and all around more healthier than bottled watter in many cases. In fact by drinking tap water, you can save money, prevent problems that plastic would produce and protect the environment.

Organic food and sustainable food is not all different nor is it all alike<sup>15</sup>. There are many factors into dividing which is which and one of the biggest ones is regulations of organic farming. There are many guidelines to tell if food is made either sustainably or organically and one of them is that organic foods can have many loopholes. One of these loopholes is that organic food can be grown in large industrial farmers that are not certified. This means they can produce large scale food and only use the bare minimum requirements to be considered organic. Most small scale farms are more organic than those large scale factories and they are not even certified to be organic. This is because WalMart<sup>16</sup> was the first big company to give a big push to it's customers by selling organic products. this lead to companies thinking that they can get

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<sup>14</sup><http://www.sustainabletable.org/issues/feed/>

<sup>15</sup><http://www.sustainabletable.org/issues/organic/>

<sup>16</sup><http://willtaft.com/60/wal-mart-organic-food>

away with selling “organic” products by using only bare minimum requirements to consider organic. Sustainable is nothing like this. Sustainable food has very specific guidelines that do not deviate from organic standards.

In conclusion, sustainable food is a growing trend that is sweeping the country. Sustainable food is the best food ever made because it’s completely made with tender love and care, putting every ounce of attention to detail and result of the end product. It’s a growing trend among restaurateurs and food critics alike that sustainable food is the best food ever produced. People need to be more aware of this growing change for the better. We all need to go back to our roots and understand where our food comes from, how to get it and enjoying our food without any consequences that come eating processed food. I believe that learning about sustainable food, or even food in general, can broaden the thoughts and minds of future generations.

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