

SEVEN REASONS NOT TO EAT FACTORY-FARMED FOOD¹

Rachel Cernansky[©]

We've all heard about the evils of factory farms, but sometimes it's useful to take a look at things from a comprehensive perspective. Maybe you know about the risks of salmonella, but figure if you cook your food well enough, you won't have to worry. Here are seven reasons to avoid factory-farmed or industrially-produced food, and to seek out other options—as always, your local farmer's market is a great start—a little more regularly.

Better Nutrition

If you're going to eat products like meat and dairy, studies have found that these foods are more nutritious when raised sustainably than when they are produced by industrial agriculture. (And just this week, it became official even in a U.S. court: hormone-free milk is better.) If you're vegetarian or vegan, the same is true for organically grown fruits and veggies. (This is a hotly-debated topic, but if you think about it from a basic, non-scientific perspective, it's not hard to believe that applying chemicals to intentionally kill living organisms will also deplete the soil of nutrients necessary to grow a healthy crop.)

Better Taste, Healthier Taste Buds

There's an increasing understanding that processed foods, many of which come from factory-farmed meat, dairy, and industrially-grown wheat or corn, are killing our taste buds, making us physically less able to taste and enjoy the naturally-occurring flavors in fresh foods. Anyone who's tasted a home- or locally-grown tomato knows what a difference those flavors make.

For the Earth

Our readers probably already know this, but meat and dairy production are greenhouse gas culprits—even more so than flying. There's also the issue of the basically-unregulated sludge and other pollution that factory farms get to release into the environment.

For the Local Economy

As I've pointed out before, when you buy from a national chain—and for this purpose, factory-farmed food is no different than, say, Barnes & Noble—the community keeps \$4.30 for every \$10 spent. When you buy local (from your farmer's market, for example, or local natural foods store), \$6.80 will stay in the community. Plus, supporting local farms will probably mean supporting more green space and healthier land in your community, which means a healthier lifestyle overall.

Salmonella, Avian Flu, and Swine Flu

(Different reasons, same underlying problem.) This summer's egg recall is the most obvious example: the overcrowded, unsanitary conditions on factory farms lead to disease. The H1N1 virus is also affiliated with factory farm conditions, as is swine flu.

Sensing a pattern here? Just some food for thought as you put your next grocery list together.

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