

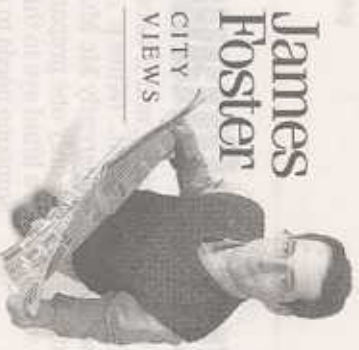
For food safety, buying local is your best bet

It's tragically ironic that one of the deadliest food recalls ever in Canada comes just as there's a big push on to get people to buy more local food.

It's almost like a trend has developed recently: the farther away your food comes from, the more likely it is to kill you.

Ironic also might be the appropriate term for China banning some Maple Leaf's products, even those that don't come from the meat plant that produced tainted meats that killed a dozen consumers. Chinese products have been found by Canadian inspectors to be lacking in the safety department almost on a weekly basis, from kids' toys bearing toxic paint to so-called "health" supplements containing poisonous ingredients, just to name a couple of examples.

Ironic too that this crisis hits in the midst of a Canadian trend towards allowing industry more self-auditing privileges when it comes to safety: be it meat or air travel.



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CITY VIEWS

of the bad-meat crisis, she's glad she's a vegetarian, prompting the rest of us "meatarians" around the table to almost choke on our yummy Maple Leaf hot dogs.

How quick we forget that so many of the most recent food recalls revolved around vegetables, including the most recent scare where tomatoes were, erroneously, suspected of carrying salmonella. After more than a month of tracking tomatoes to find the source of the salmonella, U.S. inspectors now sheepishly admit that they never did find a single bad tomato and that perhaps peppers imported from Mexico were the culprit.

So, all those donairs that were foisted on us for half the summer sans tomatoes were all for naught, and tomato growers across North America have seen their sales fall through the floor.

The challenge to eat locally is not a difficult one at this time of year. The stores are filled with local fruits and vegetables and stores

like Co-op feature many kinds of Atlantic-produced meats year-round.

There are also dozens of farmers selling locally grown meat, vegetables and fruits right out of their farmhouse. You see the little roadside signs at the end of their driveways and if you've never pulled in to grab a few items for your supper table on your way by, you've missed an opportunity.

There is no better safety regime than getting to know the very person who grew your food and asking him or her exactly how it was grown and what was put into it.

Farm markets are another great source of local food, but judging from the size of the crowds last Saturday morning at the Dieppe and Moncton markets, you already know that.

Odd though, that at harvest time with produce in abundance, how ears of corn that sell for two bucks a dozen at the grocery store cost \$6 for 12 at the farm market,

that boxes of blueberries that cost \$15 at the market are 35 per cent cheaper downtown, and that tomatoes that you can barely give away in September as they all flood into the marketplace at about the same time were selling for a princely \$2 each at some stalls. Zowie!

That means that I've owned cars in the past that didn't cost half as much as a dozen locally grown tomatoes!

Other than that, there's no excuse for not eating local. The food is fresher and thus tastes better and is better for you because it hasn't shed its nutrients while sitting in a truck or on a shelf or in a refrigerator for weeks.

Plus, you can talk directly to the family who grew your dinner. When it comes to food safety, that's pretty hard to beat!

■ *City Views appears daily, written by various members of our staff. James Foster is editor-at-large. His column appears every Wednesday.*