

The New Faces of Local Food

from *Growing a Garden City* by Jeremy N. Smith (<http://jeremynsmith.com>)

Com•mu•ni•ty Sup•port•ed Ag•ri•cul•ture (abbr. CSA) *n.* **1.** A farm subscription. Members pay up-front for a weekly share of an area farm's seasonal harvest, supporting local agriculture in exchange for choice food. **2.** "Food with the farmer's face on it."

Ag•ri•cul•ture Sup•port•ed Com•mu•ni•ty *n.* **1.** A community bound to one another by local food and farming. Such a group often encompasses diverse members and multiple locations and projects, each undertaken to improve lives and create individual connections. **2.** "The new faces of local food."

Local food fervor is one of the new century's largest cultural trends with "locavore" *The New Oxford American Dictionary's* 2007 word of the year and Bill McKibben's *Deep Economy*, Barbara Kingsolver's *Animal, Vegetable, Miracle*, and Michael Pollan's *In Defense of Food* topping recent bestseller lists. Since 1990, the number of community supported agriculture farms (CSAs) in the United States has grown from estimated 50 to over 2,500, each supported by an average membership of 50 to 100 households.

As yet, though, books on local food consist almost exclusively of first-person memoirs or cultural critiques. *Growing a Garden City* expands the best-selling local food and farming focus through **stories anyone—and entire communities—can not only enjoy but enact themselves.**

This book centers not on Brooklyn or Berkeley, but Missoula, Montana, a Rocky Mountain city of 68,000 where one in five residents lives in poverty and the frost-free growing season averages fewer than 100 days. **If local food, farms, and gardens can succeed here, they can succeed anywhere.** Subjects include not only farmers and foodies, but a low-income senior and troubled teen, a food bank officer and homeless shelter chef, a single mother and entire first grade class. I call these "**the new faces of local food,**" and no other book has profiled them so intimately or completely.

While the engaging photographs and personal stories invite immediate general browsing, corresponding how-to sections reveal not only what's so remarkable about one place and people, but also how to emulate and build on their achievements anywhere across the country and around the world. The surprising, inspiring result proves it's possible to eat well locally even if you don't live on a rural homestead or in an elite urban area, and that volunteer-powered farms and gardens, even in a harsh climate, can provide satisfying food to feed a diverse population.

Even more important, this book demonstrates that growing food, the most ancient of occupations, can address very modern social problems, from poverty and addiction to the sense of disconnection that is so destructive a part of contemporary life.