



Novato Live Well Network

Nurturing the Body, Sustaining the Community

From the garden to the table and in between! Serving schools, families, & the community.

February 6, 2008
Novato Advance
P.O. Box 8
1068 Machin Avenue
Novato, California 94948

RE: Locavores, plastic bags and Harvest Market

Dear Editor,

Patricia Goodin's article "Grocery stores and customers choosing 'reusable' bags" was encouraging. When Novato Live Well Network (NLWN) hosted the "Rethinking Plastics" forum on January 12, we found out that not only are many plastics toxic, but they also end up in our waterways and oceans killing one million seabirds and 100,000 marine mammals every year through ingestion or entanglement in plastic. And, in most parts of the ocean, plastic debris outweighs zooplankton 6 to 1, in some parts the ratio is even higher! Is this the world we want our children to inherit?

It is a great first step for grocery stores to eliminate plastic bags at the checkout line. But, they also need to look at eliminating them in the produce department: our produce needs to be put in reusable bags, not plastic bags or plastic containers.

Because of this "What do I put my produce in?" dilemma, this summer I contacted Tamar Raphael, owner of EcoExpress, a local, green on-line gift store in Bel Marin Keys and asked her to carry organic, cotton produce bags that we could purchase locally. She agreed and is now carrying organic, cotton mesh and solid bags. Did you know conventional cotton production uses approximately 25% of the world's insecticides and more than 10% of pesticides? Another benefit about these organic cotton produce bags: when they are old and worn out, they are compostable, plastic is not.

Also in this article, Harvest Market owner, Jeff O'Neal, talked about going "Locavore". What was missing from the article is the instrumental role Heidi Kertel, chair of our *Locavores of Novato* project, played in bringing this about. For over a year, Heidi diligently worked with Harvest Market owner and staff, and Marin Organic, to bring in local produce and products to this store. It took longer than we had hoped because we did not realize that it was a distribution challenge. But, with the help from Marin Farmers Market and the Marin Community Foundation grant that paid for the refrigerated truck, a wonderful solution has been found!

When we purchase food grown locally, it's better nutritionally, environmentally, and economically—and it tastes great! We love the farmers markets and will continue to go to them. But for Novato residents, it's a 20 mile round-trip commute to San Rafael from November to April and it isn't always convenient. As a Locavore, I was practically in tears—happy ones—shopping for locally grown produce at Harvest Market, while using my organic produce bags!

Keep in mind, when you shop for locally grown food it may cost a bit more, but you are not only reducing your environmental footprint, you are also sustaining our local farmers and our agricultural heritage. We encourage readers to learn more about the benefits of being a Locavore at www.NovatoLiveWell.org or call 415-897-2302. You can also view listing times when the Rethinking Plastics forum will be re-shown on NPAT Cable 26. Finally, download a flyer about these cotton produce bags or call EcoExpress 415-883-6060 or visit www.EcoExpress.com. Mention NLWN when you order the bags and 20% will go to our non-profit to help us continue our work.

Veronica Valero
Novato Live Well Network Board Member

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