

## **Communal Sukkot Celebration: Reconnecting with the Earth<sup>1</sup>** **by Rose Kowel, Nicole Luna, Lauren Pack**

1. Decorating the sukkah/area with quotes, sustainable decorating alternatives for the children. Decorating options/resources to have available for kids : squash stamps, water soluble paints, recycled paper for paper chains. For Sukkot quotes: See Appendix 1
2. Topic intro and local vegetarian buffet:  
The leader will lead the Hamotzi and introduce it by explaining that this prayer thanks God for not only the product (bread) but also the origins and the process that goes into our food.  
The buffet is foods cooked (by committee) from all local farmers, gathered from local farmers market. Along the buffet, we will provide information about the content and it's local origins.  
For an example of a menu, and possible local ingredients, see Appendix 2. For more information on the importance of local greenmarkets, see Appendix 3. For more information on local food, see Appendix 4.
3. Dessert Discussion  
The leader will introduce the discussion by explaining that eating in the sukkah is a mitzvah. Then, they will lead the discussion by asking the following questions:  
What did you learn/what interested you from the quotes and food information?  
What connection do you find between Sukkot and locally produced goods?  
How does this emphasis on Sukkot and locally produced goods connect to your daily lives and habits?  
In what ways should the Temple community advocate for a greener society? Locally? Internationally?  
(Local options for the Temple include: onegs using local products, studying this issue and its link to Judaism, using biodegradable goods for Temple programs, petitioning local stores to provide biodegradable products)
4. Present example of potential Community Action Initiatives:
  - Vegetarian options for the Temple (See appendix 5)
  - Biodegradable goods
  - Green roof effort in the Bronx (See appendix 6)
  - Funding local harvesting efforts in third world countries (see appendix)

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## APPENDIX 1: SUKKOT QUOTES

After creating the first human beings, God led them around the Garden of Eden and said: ‘Look at My works! See how beautiful they are, how excellent! For your sake, I created them all. See to it that you do not spoil or destroy My world – for if you do, there will be no one to repair it after you. (Midrash Ecclesiastes Rabbah 7:13)

One generation goes and another generation comes, but the earth abides forever. (Ecclesiastes 1:4 - Ecclesiastes is traditionally read during Sukkot)

You shall celebrate the Festival of Ingathering (Sukkot), at the end of the year, when you gather in the results of your work from the field. (Exodus 23:16)

On the fifteenth day of this seventh month there shall be the Feast of Booths to the Lord, to last seven days. (Leviticus 23:34)

Mark, on the fifteenth day of the seventh month, when you have gathered in the yield of your land, you shall observe the festival of the Lord to last seven days: a complete rest on the first day, and a complete rest on the eighth day. (Leviticus 23:39)

After the ingathering from your threshing floor and your vat, you shall hold the Feast of Booths for seven days. You shall rejoice in your festival, with your son and daughter, your male and female slave, the Levite, the stranger, the fatherless, and the widow in your community. (Deuteronomy 16:13-14).

You shall hold a festival for the Lord your God seven days, in the place that the Lord will choose; for the Lord your God will bless all your crops and all your undertakings and you shall have nothing but joy. (Deuteronomy 16:15)

Ben Zoma used to say, “What labors Adam had to carry out before he obtained bread to eat! He ploughed, he sowed, he reaped, he bound the sheaves, he threshed and winnowed and selected the grains, he ground and sifted the flour, he kneaded and baked and then at last he ate. Whereas I get up in the morning and find all these things done for me.” (Babylonian Talmud, Brakhot 58b)

You are what you eat.

## **APPENDIX 2: Local ingredients and Example Menu**

Example menu:

Salad

Local artisan bread

Grilled vegetables

Stuffed squash with quinoa

Desert: apple/pumpkin pie

Organic local wine (long island) and juices

Example of local ingredients:

Wine: Buzzard Crest Vineyards, Yates County, New York.

Apples: The Orchards of Concklin, Pomona, NY

Pumpkins: Terhune Orchards, Salt Point, NY

Vegetables and Herbs: Conuco Farms, Ulster County, New York

Squash: Locust Grove Farms, Ulster County, NY

Bread: Bread Alone, Ulster County, NY

## **APPENDIX 3: IMPORTANCE OF LOCAL GREENMARKETS**

from Council on the Environment of NYC [www.cenyc.org](http://www.cenyc.org)

Greenmarket is good for our environment

**Sustainability.** Greenmarket farmers use sustainable practices. Some are certified organic. All are personally invested in the health of the water, soil, and air quality on the farms where they live and raise families.

**Clean Water.** NYC's water comes from reservoirs northwest of the city where sustainable farms and open space help protect our water supply. More than a dozen Greenmarket farms are in NYC's Watershed.

**Energy Conservation.** Transporting food long distances uses tremendous energy: it takes 435 fossil-fuel calories to fly a 5 calorie strawberry from California to New York. Fossil fuels contribute to global warming, acid rain and smog. Local foods travel short distances and use dramatically less energy.

**Biodiversity.** Greenmarket farmers grow thousands of varieties of fruits and vegetables, including over 100 varieties each of apples and tomatoes. In contrast, industrial agribusiness cultivates high-yield hybrids bred for fast maturation and thick skins to withstand mechanical harvest and transport. Meanwhile heirloom produce and heritage-breed livestock are vanishing from fields and plates, drastically shrinking the gene pool for those foods; the UN Food and Agriculture Organization estimates that more than 75% of agricultural genetic diversity was lost in the 20th century. Small, biodiverse farms preserve our food heritage.

## APPENDIX 4: IMPORTANCE OF BUYING LOCAL FOOD

### 10 Reasons to Buy Local Food<sup>2</sup>

1. **Local food tastes better.** The crops are picked at their peak, and farmstead products like cheese are hand crafted for the best flavor. Food imported from far away is older, has traveled on trucks or planes, and has sat in warehouses before it finally gets to you.
2. **Local produce is better for you.** The shorter the time between the farm and your table, the less likely it is that nutrients will be lost from fresh food.
3. **Local food preserves genetic diversity.** In the modern agricultural system, plant varieties are chosen for their ability to ripen uniformly, withstand harvesting, survive packing and last on the shelf, so there is limited genetic diversity in large-scale production. Smaller local farms, in contrast, often grow many different varieties to provide a long harvest season, in an array of colors and flavors.
4. **Local food is safe.** There's a unique kind of assurance that comes from looking a farmer in the eye at farmers market or driving by the fields where your food comes from. Local farmers aren't anonymous and they take their responsibility to the consumer seriously.
5. **Local food supports local families.** Wholesale prices that farmers get for their products are low, often near the cost of production. Local farmers who sell directly to consumers cut out the middleman and get full retail price for their food, which helps farm families stay on the land.
6. **Local food builds community.** When you buy direct from a farmer, you are engaging in a time-honored connection between eater and grower. Knowing the farmer gives you insight into the seasons, the land, and your food. It gives you access to a place where your children and grandchildren can go to learn about nature and agriculture.
7. **Local food preserves open space.** When farmers get paid more for their products by marketing locally, they are less likely to sell their farmland for development. When you buy locally grown food, you are doing something proactive to preserve our agricultural landscape.
8. **Local food keeps taxes down.** According to several studies, farms contribute more in taxes than they require in services, whereas most other kinds of development contribute less in taxes than the cost of the services they require.
9. **Local food benefits the environment and wildlife.** Well-managed farms conserve fertile soil and clean water in our communities. The farm environment is a patchwork of fields, meadows, woods, ponds, and buildings that provide habitat for wildlife.
10. **Local food is an investment in the future.** By supporting local farmers today, you are helping ensure that there will be farms in your community tomorrow. (cyenyc.org)

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2 Reprinted from With an Ear to the Ground by Vern Grubinger, published by Northeast Region SARE, 2004.



## **APPENDIX 5: VEGETARIAN OPTIONS FOR THE TEMPLE**

Why eating/raising meat contributes to global food waste and an inequitable distribution of food:

Raising animals for food is grossly inefficient, because while animals eat large quantities of grain, they only produce small amounts of meat, dairy products, or eggs in return. This is why more than 70 percent of the grain and cereals that we grow in this country are fed to farmed animals. It takes up to 16 pounds of grain to produce just one pound of meat, and even fish on fish farms must be fed 5 pounds of wild-caught fish to produce one pound of farmed fish flesh.<sup>17,18</sup> All animals require many times more calories, in the form of grain, soybeans, oats, and corn, than they can possibly return in the form of animal flesh for meat-eaters to consume.

The world's cattle alone consume a quantity of food equal to the caloric needs of 8.7 billion people—more than the entire human population on Earth.<sup>19</sup> About 20 percent of the world's population, or 1.4 billion people, could be fed with the grain and soybeans fed to U.S. cattle alone.<sup>20</sup> Learn more about the link between meat consumption and world hunger.

([www.goveg.com](http://www.goveg.com))

### **7 TIPS ON REDUCING MEAT INTAKE:**

1. Forget the protein thing
2. Buy less meat
3. Get it out of the center of the plate
4. Buy new vegetables, and learn new ways to cook them
5. Make non-meat items as convenient as meat
6. Make some rules
7. Looking at restaurant menus differently  
([http://www.nytimes.com/2008/06/11/dining/11mini.html?pagewanted=1&\\_r=1](http://www.nytimes.com/2008/06/11/dining/11mini.html?pagewanted=1&_r=1))

## **APPENDIX 6: FUNDING LOCAL HARVESTING EFFORTS IN THIRD WORLD COUNTRIES**

See American Jewish World Service Annual Report 2001-2002 (specifically, pages 24-26)

Food security is a critical component of the work that AJWS supports. In Africa, AJWS prioritizes food security in its disaster aid and relief work; in the Americas, AJWS supports groups promoting sustainable agriculture; and in Asia AJWS funding encourages sustainable agriculture and organic farming.

One example of a successful project is Kilili Self-Help Project (KSHP) in Kenya. Program participants learn ecology and agriculture techniques, which help them to produce food locally. The result is that Kenyan communities are becoming increasingly self-sufficient, increasing their food security, family income and environmental health.

AJWS also works with its grantees to enable them to partner with peers and experts, building their capacity to respond to environmental concerns. One such example is Integrando Campesinos para la Agricultura Sostenible (Integrating Peasants for Sustainable Agriculture), a peer exchange between five Central American grantees. Eleven organizations in four countries have met over three years, sharing farming techniques and strategies for protecting indigenous land rights.

The global food crisis is hurting those who are most vulnerable—the world's poor and marginalized. AJWS is working hard alongside its grantees to address these issues from a rights-based approach. It will continue to take a strong commitment to the communities of the developing world to stem the tide of the "silent tsunami."