

GRIST FOR THE MILL



Dear Reader,

Despite the number of years it has been since I rode the bus, each September I get the feeling that it's time to head back to school. It is a wonderful reminder of how certain educational experiences still impact my "edible" ideals and how much there still is to learn.

It was in a seventh-grade cooking class that I developed what was to become a lifelong passion for cooking, and it was a college course that forever changed the way I look at food. The course, called *Nature, Energy and Society*, taught me (among other things) about the correlation between choices on the grocery aisle and energy consumption or—what today we would call my carbon footprint.

We began the semester studying the amount of energy consumed by the average American and compared that to citizens of other developed nations. It was an eye-opener! We were given a 20-page worksheet and asked to calculate our own personal energy consumption rate, looking at transportation methods and all aspects of our fuel-consuming lifestyle choices, including food.

I started the exercise with a trip to the grocery store. I had to look at the labels of the foods I most often ate and track the distances each item had traveled to those store shelves. Higher points were given for imported foods, meat, poultry, seafood and produce shipped over 100 miles. As I added those higher points to my total, there was no escaping what a difference my food choices made in terms of energy use.

Now admittedly I have a weakness for imported cheese and you can find the UPS truck making the occasional comestible delivery to my door, but almost 20 years later (yes, it is that many!) you can find me studying labels in the grocery aisle, giving careful consideration to the foods I buy for my family, knowing my choices can make a difference on many levels. Little did I know back in college how that course would continue to influence my perspective on food or how pertinent its lessons would be today.

Woven through this issue of *Edible Rhody* are many "teachable moments" marking the season as the harvest comes in and the school bus heads out. I hope they inspire a deeper commitment to and appreciation of local food, arouse your hidden talents at the stove and remind us all how much there is to learn right here in Little Rhody.

Dig In!

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edible RHODY

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