

Healthy in Sequim

Kristina Holtrop's March 30 Guest Opinion, "Saving Simplicity," provides a perfect segue for this article.

If I must live in a world whose food supply is controlled by huge chemical corporations with their interests in profits, not health, then Sequim is one of the best places on the planet for me to be.

Many people don't realize that much of the food that is readily available to us has been chemically altered using genetic engineering to produce and process it. Genetic engineering is commonly referred to as genetically modified organisms (GMOs).

The largest corporations have altered seed to produce crops that can withstand the use of herbicides to control weeds while still allowing the crops to grow. Most of the corn, soy, canola and cotton produced in this country are grown from the altered seed. These crops are the source of many by-products used to produce our food. There hasn't been enough independent research for us to know the impacts of genetic engineering, but some health issues attributed to GMOs have arisen.

There are lots of reasons why we may want to avoid consuming these products, but that is difficult to do. GMOs are pervasive in our foods and labelling is not required to identify them.

Eating fresh and organic is one of the only ways to ensure your food has not been altered by GMOs. GMOs are not allowed in certified organic products.

Happily for those of us living in Sequim, this is a health-conscious community that supports locally produced organic food. For the small size of our town, we enjoy an amazing array of resources for obtaining healthy food.

Sequim Locally Grown Mercantile is an organization of dozens of local farmers, growers and producers of hundreds of food products that are available to consumers from one convenient location. The merchants all agree to adhere to strict standards to be chemical free with no use of synthetic fertilizers, herbicides or pesticides.

Some of these merchants also sell their products at the Sequim Open Aire Market held on Wednesdays and Saturdays between May and October each year. Naturally raised produce, meat, fish, eggs and raw dairy products are available at the markets and from several other sources around the community. Bakeries in town, like Bell Street Bakery and Pane D'Amore, offer organic baked goods. You can even eat out and eat healthy in Sequim, at places like the Alder Wood Bistro that serve up organic, locally produced food.

I haven't done a survey or checked statistics, but I know there are a lot of people in Sequim who are growing their own produce, at home or in community gardens. I'm guessing maybe more than your typical community, though there is a national trend toward growing your own.

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Find organics all around

Sequim's two community organic gardens, run by Community Organic Gardens of Sequim (COGS), are another fine example of our town's support for a healthy lifestyle. Anyone can rent a 100-square-foot garden plot for a nominal annual fee, which includes a series of classes on organic gardening. Others who don't rent a plot still can benefit by taking the classes.

Stores such as The Red Rooster Grocery, McComb's Nursery, Sunny Farms and Nash's Organic Produce offer selections of heirloom and organic seed and organic plant starts to help gardeners grow the best quality organic crops.

And the network goes on. Friends of the Fields, devoted to sustainable farming and to saving agricultural land in the Dungeness Valley, teams with and supports COGS. Nash's Organic Produce is a long-standing advocate for all of the above. Nash's also keeps a library of books and films that you can check out for free to learn more about our food supply and our part in it.

I recently attended a forum in Sequim, sponsored by The League of Women Voters of Clallam County, North Olympic Land Trust and North Olympic Resource Conservation & Development, that informed attendees about GMOs. The room was packed with dozens of people from the community, young and old. We all learned a lot, interacted and discovered how we might take action to help gain control of our food supply. Interest was high, with people still wanting to ask the panel questions as the session ended.

Many desirable qualities attracted me to Sequim, such as scenic beauty, moderate climate and a reasonable cost of living, but I wasn't aware until I actually moved here of the greatest benefit of all that awaited me. The availability of good food and the healthy lifestyle culture here are just icing on the (organic!) cake.

Lauren Turner recently retired from the U.S. Forest Service. She is an avid organic gardener living in Sequim with her husband and three cats.