



CENTER FOR WHOLE COMMUNITIES

OUR FOOD PHILOSOPHY

At Center for Whole Communities, we make every effort to serve locally grown, organic food from small family farms. Local, for us, primarily means our own watershed of the Mad River Valley, though we do need to forage further afield to the greater bioregion of Vermont and the Champlain basin. Vermont being a place where winter hangs on for eight months of the year, you might ask, “Why go to such lengths?”

We believe that food is at the very center of the human experience of land. Each time we prepare a meal, we are presented with an abundance of choices, not only about the flavors and foods we might eat, but where each food comes from, how it was grown and by whom, how much those workers were paid and how much autonomy they had over their work, how soils and water were treated, how the food was harvested and shipped, how many miles it traveled to us, how many chemicals and what packaging it acquired along the way. And each time we sit down to eat, we have the chance to be nourished by the land, the water, and the people who work the land, bringing that story into our cells. Food is health, land, story, relationship, sun, water, history, communion. Food is our daily reminder of the intricate and life-sustaining chain from the earth to our bodies, and food is physical evidence of what happens when that chain is broken.

Our methods are simple: We gather our food from people we know, who are working the land using small-scale, sustainable methods, usually with their families, as their chief form of livelihood. These are people who care about the health of their soils and their animals and the future of the planet, and are committed to producing healthful food of the finest quality. In the kitchen we aim for simple preparations, seasoning dishes largely with herbs gathered from our gardens. Our cooks, Caleb Elder and Jean Hamilton, come to their work from a life of deep appreciation of the land themselves, having spent several years apprenticing with farmers and other cooks, learning to care for land, food, and people.

We feel that the food we serve is another way we can affirm our commitment to people who work and serve the land – farmers and activists. Our awareness of food, as the land’s gift to us, also helps us to aspire to the values that land holds forth: nourishment, joy, diversity, community, generosity, resilience, equity, hope.