

# Locally farmed food is flavored with pride

Last year, I attended Kentucky Crafted: The Market and marveled at the volume of artists who were able to make a living doing what they love. Two weekends ago, I took in the creativity around me and left a writing workshop pumped about a memoir, but I marveled at the food.

The food at Kentucky Crafted is contained to one long aisle of booths along the side of the exhibit space. Assortments of barbecue sauces, cookies, fudge, gumbo, cheeses, artisan crackers, dipping sauces, jams, honey, soups, gourmet marshmallows and more hit me left and right. I indulged in enough samples to make a farm-fresh, no-skim-milk-allowed fatty meal, and I didn't feel bad about it.

But one particular sample in the food aisle mesmerized me: the bacon cheeseburgers. This is odd because I don't eat pork, and I consume red meat so rarely that

my hunger valve doesn't register that I've eaten it, and its presence puzzles my digestive system.

My diet is the result of two separate Lenten seasons from my childhood. During one I gave up pork. During the other, red meat. Unlike sweets, the absence of cows and pigs didn't give my brain and body cravings so strong that I relented during Lent and ate them on Sundays and birthdays. After a short time of fasting from them, I didn't really miss them.



**MARIAM WILLIAMS**

Neither did my mother, who bought the food and was fine with feeling healthy and saving money.

My mother was also convinced that beef — specifically hamburgers made at fast-food restaurants — didn't taste as good and wasn't made the same way as it was when she was a child.

Twenty or so years since she made the observation, I know she's right, and not just about the meat. I have no idea where most of the food I eat comes from, and most of the time, I don't want to know. I love food, I'm reasonably adventurous — whatever that means — about trying new tastes, I want to sample as much of the earth's goodness as I can, and I want to do it inexpensively. Hence, for the most part, I stick to chain grocery stores and visit Louisville's vast array of ethnic restaurants whenever I can.

But I would like to consume more locally grown food, especially when it comes to meat, and related to that, to

dairy. Kentucky Crafted featured live cooking demonstrations using products from the surrounding food aisle, and I arrived just in time to see Stone Cross Farms, from Taylorsville, Ky., show off its cheeses and meats in the form of bacon cheeseburgers.

The bacon smelled divine, but I was more fascinated by the farmer's words. The demo wasn't really about how to cook a burger, which isn't that difficult; it was about seeing how raw milk cheeses melt, learning how they're made and interacting face to face with the person who not only made but raised your food.

While my diet's origins have nothing to do with ethics, I find returning to a diet that includes beef and pork problematic.

I've heard enough pigs squealing as I make the turn from Main onto Mellwood and read too much — about the pollution from meat plants, about the stuff fed to cows that's not grass, about the relative youth of the

cattle used for human consumption — to think the meat I could afford to buy is ethically killed or even as healthy as meat can be. (Not that chicken, which I do eat, is any better.)

But at Kentucky Crafted's food stage I thought, I could eat this. I sat across from a farmer who was confident about the quality of the beef he was about to serve because he takes good care of the grass he feeds his herd.

"It boils down to being a good steward of your land," Patrick Kennedy, the farmer, said.

The secret to a better world revealed.

And no, I didn't eat the bacon cheeseburger. But I did take two samples of the baked macaroni and cheese. ♣

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