

Alaska Obesity Facts: Local Foods

WHAT'S THE LINK BETWEEN OBESITY AND LOCAL FOODS?

- Research supports a connection between access to healthy food and increased consumption of fruits and vegetables,¹ which can lower the risk of developing chronic diseases and help maintain a healthy weight.²
- Access to farmers' markets, home and community gardens, and farm-to-institution programs has been shown to increase consumption of fruits and vegetables.^{1,3}
- Improving access to farmers' markets for low-income individuals and families, through programs such as the Women, Infants and Children (WIC) and Senior Farmers' Market Nutrition Programs (FMNP), has demonstrated an increase in participants' fruit and/or vegetable intake.⁴
- Traditional Alaska foods, such as fish, wild game, plants and berries, are higher in nutrients and lower in fat than comparable store-bought foods.⁵ Consuming more traditional foods is associated with better health outcomes, such as improved glucose tolerance and lipid profiles.⁶
- While eating local foods has many benefits, consumption of local foods alone has not been found to reduce obesity.⁴

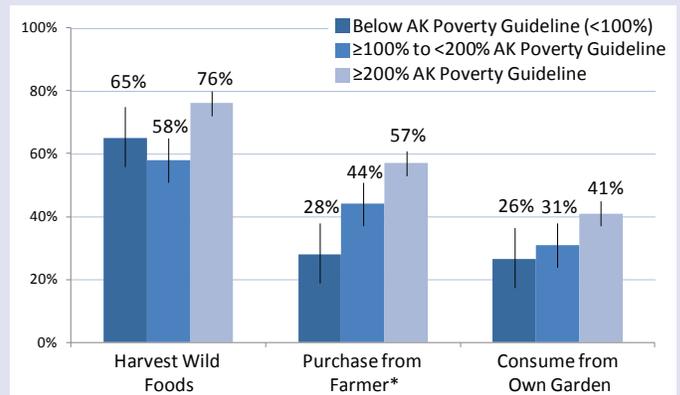
ALASKA FOOD FACTS

- Alaskans spend \$2.5 billion on food each year at grocery stores and restaurants.⁷
- Alaskans harvest 52 million pounds of fish and game a year – under subsistence, personal use, general hunting, and sport fishing.⁸
- The number of farmers' markets in Alaska has almost tripled since 2005, from 13 markets to 37 markets in 2013.⁹

LOCAL FOOD ACTIVITIES REPORTED BY ALASKA ADULTS IN THE PAST YEAR

- 65% harvested wild foods by gathering, hunting or fishing at least one time.
- 50% purchased fresh produce from a farmers' market, farm stand, U-pick farm or Community Supported Agriculture (CSA).
- 34% ate produce from their own garden.

LOCAL FOOD ACTIVITIES BY POVERTY LEVEL, ALASKA ADULTS, 2011

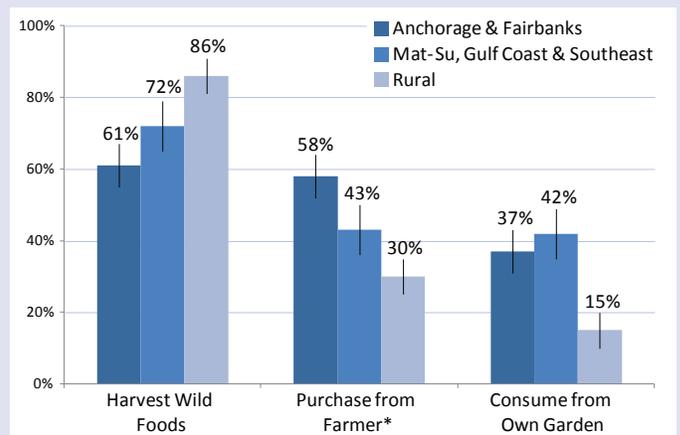


SOURCE: ALASKA BRFSS 2011

*PURCHASED AT FARMERS' MARKETS, FARM STANDS, U-PICK FARMS OR CSAs.

- Alaskans who have more resources are more likely than those in poverty to engage in local food activities.

LOCAL FOOD ACTIVITY BY REGION, ALASKA ADULTS, 2011



SOURCE: ALASKA BRFSS 2011

*PURCHASED AT FARMERS' MARKETS, FARM STANDS, U-PICK FARMS OR CSAs.

- Rural Alaskans are more likely than those in other areas to harvest wild foods and less likely to purchase from a farmer or consume from their own garden.

Alaska Obesity Facts: Local Foods

What Can Alaska Schools, Worksites and Communities Do?³

- Establish policies to provide more local foods at schools, worksite cafeterias, meetings and conferences.
- Support and promote farmers' markets, farm-to-institution programs, community gardens and greenhouses.
- Encourage local food production, processing and distribution.
- Establish a local food or food policy group to work on issues to improve the local food system.
- Establish leave policies supporting traditional, customary and historic food gathering activities.¹⁰

What Can Health Care Providers Do?¹

- Refer low income clients to the Farmers' Market-Quest (Food Stamp), WIC or Senior Farmers' Market Nutrition Programs.
- Advocate for programs and policies that promote good nutrition and increase access, availability and affordability of healthy foods.

What Can Individuals Do?

- Shop at the local farmers' market, farm or farm stand, and purchase "Alaska Grown" at the grocery store.
- Join the Alaska Food Policy Council (see inset).
- Maintain a backyard or container garden.

RESOURCES FOR LOCAL ALASKA FOOD

- Alaska Department of Fish & Game: www.adfg.alaska.gov/
- Alaska Division of Agriculture, Alaska Grown and Farm to School Program: www.dnr.alaska.gov/ag
- Alaska Division of Public Assistance, Alaska Farmers' Market-Quest Program and the Alaska WIC and Senior Farmers' Market Nutrition Programs: www.dhss.alaska.gov/dpa
- Alaska Food Policy Council: www.akfoodpolicycouncil.wordpress.com/
- Alaska Native Tribal Health Consortium, Store Outside Your Door Program: www.anthctoday.org/storeoutside
- University of Alaska Fairbanks, Cooperative Extension Service: www.uaf.edu/ces

- Ask your local restaurant or grocery store to purchase and promote local foods.
- Learn about the edible wild foods available in your area and give some a try!

REFERENCES

1. CDC. Strategies to Prevent Obesity and Other Chronic Diseases: The CDC Guide to Strategies to Increase the Consumption of Fruits and Vegetables. Atlanta: US DHSS; 2011.
2. USDA and US DHHS. Dietary Guidelines for Americans, 2010. 7th Edition, Washington, DC: US GPO, December 2010.
3. CDC. Recommended Community Strategies and Measurements to Prevent Obesity in the United States. *MMWR* 2009;58(No.RR-7).
4. Martinez, S. et al. Local Food Systems: Concepts, Impacts, and Issues. ERR 97, USDA ERS, May 2010.
5. Nobmann, E.D. *Nutrient Value of Alaska Native Foods*. USDHSS, IHS Alaska Area, Alaska Area Native Health Service. Anchorage, Alaska. October 1993.
6. Bersamin, A. et al. Westernizing diets influence fat intake, red blood cell fatty acid composition, and health in remote Alaskan Native communities in the center for Alaska Native health study. *JADA*. 2008;108:266-73..
7. Hanna, V. et al. *Food System Assessment*. UAA Institute of Social and Economic Research. September 2012. Available at: <http://akfoodpolicycouncil.wordpress.com/alaska-food-system-research>.
8. Alaska Department of Fish and Game, Division of Subsistence, *Subsistence in Alaska: A Year 2010 Update*, January 2012.
9. Alaska Department of Natural Resources, Division of Agriculture website at: <http://dnr.alaska.gov/ag>. Accessed on July 11, 2013.
10. Alaska Food Policy Council Strategic Plan. January 12, 2012. Available at: <http://akfoodpolicycouncil.wordpress.com/about/>.



Produced by the State of Alaska Department of Health and Social Services
Obesity Prevention and Control Program
September 2013

dhss.alaska.gov/dph/Chronic/Pages/Obesity/default.aspx

