

# Local hero



Buying food that is locally produced is becoming a priority for shoppers who want to reduce their carbon footprint. In the first of a regular series highlighting local organic suppliers to our big cities, *Clean Food Organic* editor, **Malcolm McGuire**, discovers one organic producer who is working hard to keep Sydney customers satisfied.

**T**he origins of what is now widespread international concern over the impact that food production has on climate change can be traced back to 1994 when British researcher Andrea Paxton published 'The Food Miles Report'. The booklet, which is no longer in print, outlined for the first time the social and environmental implications of the rapid rise in the distances that food products were being transported from the producer to consumers. The report states that as a direct result of the globalisation of trade, greenhouse gas emissions from food criss-crossing the world are a significant contributor to global warming. It

concluded that sourcing locally produced food was urgently required in order to halt the expected continued increase in CO<sub>2</sub> emissions. (See *Clean Food Organic* Vol. 3, 'The true cost of Food Miles').

In Australia, most food sold in supermarkets has travelled vast distances to reach its final destination. From the time it leaves the farm gate – headed to either a food processor or packer and then on to the huge distribution centres and wholesalers – until it reaches the supermarket, a product in an average shopping trolley would have travelled thousands of kilometres, in many cases having found its way back to nearby where it originated.

## SHOPPING LOCAL

The supermarkets are unlikely to change their cost-efficient transportation systems leaving consumers who are looking to buy local products a little perplexed. FSANZ's *Country of Origin Labelling* standards has made buying Australian easier in some areas but it only applies to unpackaged fish, fruit, vegetables and pork. The standard does not apply to unpackaged cereals, meat other than pork, eggs, edible oils, dairy products, sugar and honey, vinegar and salt. Also there is no such thing as a 'state of origin' standard. Australia is a vast land mass and many 'local' food products are transported the length and breadth of the country, and

that includes organic products.

Buying locally produced food is one easy and positive step every grocery buyer can make to help reduce their carbon footprint, and this has led many shoppers to actively search for products grown close to where they live. As it's easier to find such products in farmers' markets, organic retailers and community-based boxed schemes, these outlets have all benefited from this change in people's shopping habits.

Most organic carnivores will tell you that they are happy to eat a little meat providing they are confident that the

animal in question has not suffered and has led a life as close as possible to the way nature intended. The Australian Standard for Organic and Biodynamic Products (ASOBP<sup>2</sup>) prohibits the ill treatment of animals. Livestock must not live in cramped conditions, must have easy access to the outdoors and be free-ranged on pasture with a close to natural diet, supplemented, if required, with certified organic GM-free food. The routine use of antibiotics and growth promoters is prohibited.

It also stands to reason that a contented chicken, eating what it is

supposed to and living a stress-free life with access to the sunshine, is going to taste a whole lot better and be more nutritious than one that has spent its life squashed into a crowded factory farm.

There is no stipulation in the ASOBP that producers of certified organic products must sell their goods locally but many do, either by supplying local retailers or selling direct to the public at the farm gate or local farmers' market. A good number use all three channels. One such supplier is Oaks Organics.

**OAKS ORGANICS**

Our family enjoys occasionally sitting down to a grand, traditional organic chicken Sunday roast (though not always on a Sunday). We have cut down our meat consumption considerably but when we do decide to eat meat we like to eat the best we can afford. And like many organic consumers we go out of our way to reach for local. We live in Australia's largest city, Sydney, and when it comes to organic chicken we choose to buy one from Oaks Organics.

Peter Clinch's Oaks Organics is situated about 60 km southwest of Sydney, just outside the small picturesque town of The Oaks. As you enter his 400 acres of OFC<sup>3</sup>-certified organic land, the most noticeable thing about Peter's operation is the amount of space his chickens have and their easy access to outdoors. This sight contrasts starkly with the well-known images of the terribly crowded conventional chicken



Oaks Organic chooks enjoy scratching around outdoors

**BAUER'S ORGANIC FARM**



Where quality grows naturally

**AWARD WINNING VEGIES**

We are thrilled to have won a Gold Medal at the prestigious 2009 Vogue Entertaining and Travel Produce Awards. This medal joins our Silver Medal from last year's Organic Expo Awards. For great tasting, award-winning, quality produce ask for our vegies at your favourite store.

[www.bauersorganicfarm.com.au](http://www.bauersorganicfarm.com.au)

Wholesale enquiries: Nick Miall 02 4754 2250

VOGUE  
ENTERTAINING + TRAVEL  
produce awards

**GOLD MEDAL**

factory farms where birds are squashed together like sardines in a can.

Chickens are social, inquisitive creatures and protein is a natural part of their diet. Being able to scratch around outside with others for bugs and whatever else they can find is a natural and important part of a chicken's behaviour.

Two loyal Maremma sheepdogs and a couple of alpacas stand guard over the birds 24 hours a day to protect them from foxes and other predators.

### ORGANIC CHICKENS ARE LUCKY

Demand for Oaks' chicken meat and eggs is high and despite the current financial downturn Peter sells everything he can produce. 'We have noticed retailers asking for more locally produced products because of customer demand,' he says. At any one time, Oaks has 2500 meat chickens on the go and 1000 egg layers. The day my daughter Alex and I dropped round for a visit, Peter had just taken delivery of 800 day-old chicks from a local conventional chick breeder. These chicks were the lucky ones. The ones destined for conventional producers wouldn't be having much of a life.

Peter works 20 hours straight each Tuesday when he gathers his chickens and drives them to his local certified organic processing facility in Sydney's north. Organic birds live longer than conventional and are slaughtered at 7 weeks, when most are about 1.5 kg (or size 15, which is the most popular purchased). 'I normally stay during processing and lend a hand,' says Peter, and then the product is sent to his regular customers throughout Sydney. 'If you buy one of my chickens in Sydney on a Tuesday afternoon, chances are it would have been only a matter of hours since it left my farm.' That's about as fresh as it gets.

Peter supplies over 20 retailers in and around Sydney, including Craig Cook's Prime Quality Meats in the David Jones Food Hall at the Westfield Bondi Junction complex in Sydney's east and TJ's Butchery in Balmain. Peter also can be found behind his fresh meat stall every Saturday with his wife, Julie, at Sydney's busiest farmers' market at the Orange Grove Public School in Leichhardt. Son James also has a stand at the fortnightly



Peter Clinch serves customers at the Orange Grove Public School, Leichhardt; Sydney's best farmers' market.

farmers' market in Camden.

Peter also produces certified organic turkey and Hereford beef. Christmas turkeys were as scarce as hen's teeth

in December 2008. Peter turned many customers away disappointed but he plans to triple his production next time around. ●

## Hearty Organic Soups

*Where you'd least expect to find them...*

**Your organic grocer? Your local deli? Your favourite cafe?  
...Try your local foodcourt!**

That's right, SumoSalad is bringing organics to a foodcourt near you. Not only are our soups 100% organic, they're also gluten free, totally delicious and available in four flavours:

- Creamy Pumpkin (vegetarian)
- Roasted Vegetable & Lentil (vegetarian)
- Beef & Barley
- Chicken & Sweetcorn

So forget the pack lunch this winter and remember SumoSalad.

Over 70 locations Australia wide  
[www.sumosalad.com](http://www.sumosalad.com)

 **sumosalad**

