

In Jackson, Couloir executive chef Wes Hamilton shops farmers markets and buys crates of fresh produce from nearby farms, never knowing until the last moment what he will be serving that night. Call it the Iron Ski Chef challenge. “I drive my restaurant manager crazy because he can’t print the menu until an hour before dinner,” he says.

The hunger for a locally based diet comes at a time of rising obesity, industrial food recalls and climate change. An estimated 20 percent of American fossil fuel use goes to the production and delivery of food, and more than 70 million cases of food-borne illness are reported annually in the United States. Even so, locavores remain a minority: only 3 to 4 percent of U.S. food is organic or local.

Some things—the beans for your morning cup of coffee, for instance—simply don’t grow in North American backyards. Still, there is progress to be made. Jackson Hole, for example, switched to a local coffee roaster this winter, dumping Starbucks. “We keep that money in the community,” Hamilton says.

Beer is another skier staple. Located in Middlebury, near Vermont’s Mad River Glen and Sugarbush, Wolaver’s Organic Brewery makes brews with local wheat, pumpkins and hops.

For home consumption, skiers are joining CSAs, or Community Supported Agriculture farms, where members pay

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fees to receive weekly supplies of the current harvest. “It starts with greens in the spring and then goes to summer crops and then to potatoes and winter squash in the fall,” says Dale Sharkey of Cosmic Apple Gardens in Victor, Idaho, near Grand Targhee. The farm’s 230 members pay \$450 annually for a 16-week supply of veggies—enough to feed a fam-



FOOD FOR THOUGHT Bananas are a healthy ski snack. But are they healthy for the planet? In addition to advocating natural food, the farm-to-table movement emphasizes that eating locally produced food cuts down on harmful—and costly—energy use. Take the banana. Grown in Central and South American countries, bananas are harvested, boxed and transported on ships in refrigerated containers to U.S. ports, then trucked to grocery shelves. Those miles ratchet up carbon emissions: A banana transported from Guatemala’s plantations to Vail shelves travels more than 2,000 miles by ship, then another 900 miles by truck. The ground transport alone can result in as much as 7 times higher emissions than from an apple trucked in from the Colorado orchards of Paonia. —Valerie Gleaton

ily of four. “We can’t take any more members. We’re maxed out,” says Sharkey. Farming is hard work, but rising before dawn has advantages, says Tyler Webb, owner of Stony Pond Farm in Fairfield, Vt. “It totally annoys our friends when we score first chair on powder days time and time again,” says Webb, who skis 90 days per winter.

In Aspen, Hardy preserves fruits and vegetables during the fall harvests. When winter arrives, his larder is stocked. Organic waste generated by his kitchen is composted or fed to pigs, whose manure fertilizes the gardens. “We call it full-circle cooking.” This waste-not ethic is why he produces so much charcuterie: choice cuts are served immediately; everything else goes into the grinder.

Hardy provides a glimpse of his gourmet peasant-style cooking in his kitchen, where a pig head simmers in a giant pot. When cooked, meat will be picked from the porcine skull and poured into terrines to make head cheese—an old-world staple that will be served warm

with toast points at the holidays. “We use everything but the oink,” Hardy says. He learned about the commercial food industry from his father, who worked as an executive for the restaurant chain Long John Silver’s. His mother, meanwhile, gardened and fed the family fresh vegetables and fruit. “He was bringing home the bacon from fast food while she served us healthy, natural foods.”

The Colorado chef got a lesson in the benefits of buying locally early in his career. A farmer planned to slaughter his goats because nobody wanted the milk. “I told him, ‘I’ll take it,’” says Hardy, who made cheese from the milk and taught the farmer how to do so. Customers loved the cheese, and Hardy saw that his purchasing could sustain a family farm.

Jovial and fit, Hardy practically bounces with enthusiasm when talking about sustainable eating. “We’re trying to change the culture of eating and restaurant cooking. Aspen is a leader in promoting renewable energy, and I want to do the same for food.” ●