

Persuading the Public to Pay More...For Your Food with Gwendolyn Simpson
(Inspiredgardens.ca)

[A lot of facts were presented fairly quickly during this presentation and not all of them were recorded in these notes. If you would like more facts about the health and environmental benefits of organic food, please contact Gwendolyn Simpson]

Gwendolyn was talking to her mum last night, who remembered the Maritimers as being friendly. Plus Gwendolyn loves working with organic farmers in general. So it has been great to be working with Maritime organic farmers.

In general, the presentation was meant to be a collection of images to inspire.

We need people to pay more for food. She doesn't believe we can badger the public, no one wants to be preached at, but we can romance and cajole. We can talk about how much we love what we do. People respond to passion. Plus telling folks things they might not know could be helpful.

The frog image: An article in Tuesday's Globe and Mail discussed research in Berkeley California that showed male frogs can be made into females by exposure to atrazine that was at a concentration 50% lower than Canada's guidelines for water quality. Atrazine is widely used in corn production in Canada. Here's an idea: put picture of a frog up at your market and get folks to ask you about the frog. It will be an opportunity for you to talk with people about why organic agriculture is so important.

A video called "John Ikerd on the Cost of Cheap Food" was shown:
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uAPskYn72i4>

A quote from Micheal Pollen: "But imagine for a moment if we once again knew, strictly as a matter of course, these few unremarkable things: What is it we're eating. Where it came from. How it found its way to our table. And what, in true accounting, it really cost."

It's important to share that with your customers without preaching.

The OCD asked folks what they would prioritise spending their money. These were the answers given:

1. communication
2. health
3. education
5. recreation
7. restaurants
11. food

And folks don't seem to be making connection with 11, 2 and 3

The burger: Raj Patel, author of “Stuffed and Starved” and “The Value of Nothing”, says if we took into account the true price of hamburger it would cost \$200. Sounds high but it isn't. The job of big corporations is to return big profits and they do that largely due to what they call “externalities.” If a corporation can externalize costs, such as environmental costs, they save money.

[More facts were presented on corporations externalizing costs]

Part of the film “King Korn” was then presented

Carrot vs. pill: Carrots are excellent source of anti-oxidants, they're high in Vitamin A, they can reduce your risk of heart disease etc. People complain about price of carrots but they don't complain about the price of synthetic carrots. Carrot pills don't have all the benefits of carrots but people are willing to pay \$21.95 for a bottle of carrot pills or \$33 for a “just carrots” drink supplement when carrots only cost about 15 cents each. So why not sell you produce to people as vitamins?

Tomatoes: There are over 6000 varieties in world but only 5 varieties are generally found in supermarkets. What's special about those five varieties? Do they taste good? Do they have high nutritional value? Nope, they were bred for yield, size, firmness and uniformity. We're told tomatoes are high in Vitamin A, Vitamin C and many other nutrients but a lot of nutrition has been bred out of many varieties. Tomatoes today contain 60% less Vitamin C, less calcium and overall 9-11% vitamins and minerals than in 1960s. What's replaced the lost vitamins? Tomatoes now have 65% more fat and 200% more salt than earlier tomatoes.

She also mentioned Thomas Pawlick's book “The End of Food.”

Why is organic food so healthy?

1 in 3 pieces of non-organic produce have pesticides on them. Far fewer pieces of organic produce have these residues. Studies show children susceptible to negative health effects from pesticide residues. Children who eat organic produce have been found to be exposed to less than 1/6 of the pesticide residues that children not eating organic food have been exposed to. Exposure to pesticide residues has been linked to lower levels of mental ability, more aggressive behaviour etc.

Organic food is 10-50% higher anti-oxidants. Why? We let plants defend themselves and build up their immune systems. Organic foods also have more trace minerals and more antioxidant phyto-nutrients. Grass fed beef contains twice the beta carotene of grain fed beef and our bodies process the nutrients from grass fed beef differently.

We need to know these things so we can tell people about them.

64% of people believe somewhat or very much that organic food is better. They want it! We need to explain why it's so good for them?

Why is it so expensive? Everyone needs to have a 30minute elevator speech ready to answer that question when it comes along! Customers are weighing the cost and value constantly so get it so that your response to their questions about prices rolls off your tongue.

Another good idea is to pick up feedback from other customers. For example, if two of my customers told me this morning “this is the best tasting salad I’ve ever tasted,” I’ll tell other prospective customers that they said that. Give your customers testimonials.

Also, don’t worry about lowering your price. As the old saying goes, “If no know is complaining about your prices you’re too cheap.” Your price comes from what you say, how you talk about it and how much you know about it. We should try to give customers as much information as we can so that they understand the prices and feel that they’re justified.

Like Micheal Pollen says we need to do full cost accounting. And when you buy organic, you’re paying the full price for it now. It’s not your children who will have to pay for it. Buying organic can play a part in ensuring you will not have water issues in the future, that soil depletion and residual chemicals will be reduced etc.

We have to persuade public to buy more because what is it alternative? More king corn and I don’t think they want that. And we need to give them the information they need.