

Food Ethics, from the Personal to the Regional: Creating Food Charters

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When it comes to our food we make choices on a daily basis about what we buy and what we eat. What are the principles or values that guide us when it comes to our food choices? How do these choices affect our own health, the health of our families, and of our communities?

Many people have read of Stephen Covey and his work to encourage people to create a “personal mission statement” to guide them in their daily life. Creating a personal “Food Charter” is something along the same lines but specifically pertains to our food choices.

There is a lot of buzz about Alisa Smith and J.B. MacKinnon’s the “*100 Mile Diet*” and also Michael Pollan’s *In Defense of Food, An Eater’s Manifesto*. These are two examples of literature that look broadly at ethics, health, environment, culture and community and its relationship to our food choices.

Pollan simply sums up his personal Food Charter:

“Eat Food, Not Too Much. Mostly Plants”

Personally I can not be as succinct and have the need to embellish, adding eat food that is “local”, “in season” and “fairly traded”, to my list. I want to go deeper with my Charter to respect the gift of food to my plate and ensure that my children feel and know this as well. I think about my need to participate or bear witness to slaughter at least once a year if I eat meat, to grow what I can, and not waste. This is the beginning of my Food Charter. Over the summer I am going to work on it, and I extend this challenge to you to put pen to paper and create your own.

I do understand that there are things that I believe in, things that I want to be able to do but that might not be attainable right now, or without some major shifts in my habits. The challenge is finding ground between the romantic and practical. What am I doing right now that is in line with my Charter? What could I realistically commit to, to get closer to what I believe?

Over the past few years I have been involved in the creation of a Food Charter for the Capital Region, and this is described more below. What has been created says a lot about the people in this region. We are focused on health, we care about the richness and diversity of the world around us, and we are concerned about the welfare of our neighbors. The Regional Food Charter is quite comprehensive, and it is the belief of the CRFAIR member organizations that it is a good template from which to start. Consider “adapting” or “adopting” this Charter, whether you are an individual, a family, a business, a community, or a

government. The Regional Food and Health Action Plan also outlines a broad range of “options for action” that can be taken by individuals, businesses, local governments or organizations to, as the saying goes, put our money (and our actions) where our mouth is.

Currently we are taking the Food Charter on the road as a way to encourage dialogue and build individual, household, community and regional food security. Please send us in a copy of your Personal, Family, Business, or Organizational Food Charter and let us know about your Commitments to Action that so we can see what actions people are taking in the CRD. Sharing these stories has the potential to inspire and motivate others.

Please forward your Food Charters to info@communitycouncil.ca

Moving Forward a Food Charter for BC’s Capital Region.

When we are talking about “food security” and ‘sustainable food systems” in the Capital Region, what do we mean? Over the past ten years CRFAIR has been working with its many partners to answer this question. Three years ago we decided to formalize these discussions and to develop a Capital Region Food Charter.

Many cities and regions across North America are developing Food Charters. Manitoba has a provincial Food Charter, and Vancouver, Saskatoon and Toronto have all adopted Food Charters. Now we are proud to say that a Food Charter has been created in the Capital Region.

A Food Charter is a written document that states the fundamental principles that a region or community share in terms of their food system and food security.

In order to develop a Regional Food Charter we undertook a process to gather the ideas and opinions of our member groups, citizens, farmers, health workers, community groups and politicians. What was our vision for our region in terms of food and how it relates to agriculture, health, the environment, and our economy? We consulted folks at community forums, at kitchen tables, in boardrooms, in backyards and in the fields, at the university, and in advisory committees from Municipalities from across the CRD. As it happens people had a lot to say.

From this work we created a “homegrown” Food Charter. Over the past year, we have taken this document out and revised it a number of times trying to get it to truly reflect what we are hearing. So now after draft 18, we have finally adopted a final version of a Capital Region Food Charter.

Click here to read the [Regional Food Charter](#)

Did you know the District of Central Saanich was the first Municipality to adopt the Food Charter “in principle” in 2005?

Moving Forward: Getting the Regional Food Charter “adopted” or “adapted” in the CRD

Over the next year we are going to go out to each of the Municipalities and our Electoral Districts and ask them to undertake a process to adopt or adapt a Food Charter for their jurisdictions. The Regional Food Charter will be provided as a template that can be either adopted or worked from. CR-FAIR is looking for citizens from each municipality to help with this task. CR-FAIR will also be approaching the CRD, as our regional government, to adopt the Regional Food Charter. If you are interested in supporting or being involved in this work please contact info@communitycouncil.ca