

ECO-MY-FLAT: WORKSHOPS ON FOOD

I sit down to write about this week's UC Sustainable Living workshops on food, and realise I need to eat something other than bread. The fridge yields half a lemon and some (NZ grown) garlic, but the cupboards are bursting with jars of bulk bought foods. I grab the olive oil, cashew pieces, and seeds – it's time for pesto!

In the garden I pick Italian parsley, dig new potatoes, harvest the one zucchini and three beans ready, and grab a handful of silver-beet. I transfer hot water from the pump pot into a pot and put the spuds onto boil, before prepping the rest of the veg for the steamer. Whilst everything's cooking I blend the oil, nuts, seeds, lemon juice, salt, and garlic together before adding in the parsley to make the pesto.

Half an hour after making the decision to cook, my body is thanking me from the bottom of its soles. I can tick a few eco boxes too; although my income has yet to stretch to locally sourced organics, most of what's in the bowl has come from twenty metres away and was grown organically in compost made from garden waste layered with locally-sourced horse poo. The veggies may not be as big and glossy as their (inbred) supermarket cousins, but they taste like they're supposed to – full of FLAVOUR.

Packaging wise, there is none. Bin Inn and organic bulk stores such as Piko will weigh empty reusable containers so that you can ditch the flimsy plastic designed to go straight to landfill. Energy wise, the pesto took less than ten minutes in the processor, and the rest was cooked on one element in twenty. The veggies will last for two more meals and there's enough pesto for me to give some away.

A meal like this is worth the time required to compost, garden, and organise a bulk-buy shop. It's laden with vitamins, and will also have a bit of a detox effect. Cut back on processed food (with its overload of chemicals, fat, salt and sugar) and your body perks up.

Yet looking good is just one reason to start eating more sustainably. Matt Morris, who will be leading this week's UC Sustainable Living workshops on food, says that "the more sustainable you become in your food intake, the stronger the community. Local food schemes such as farmers' markets reduce food miles and the effects on ecosystems from unsustainable food production/transportation systems, but buying locally also increases community resilience. The more intimate you become with how your food becomes food, the more discerning you are about what you eat."

If you would like to find out more about food with regards to health and environmental issues, the UC Sustainable Living workshops are running this week on Wednesday, Thursday, and Friday at 1pm.

Sign up at: www.sustain.canterbury.ac.nz/ecoliving

HAPPY EATING!

GARDEN – even a couple of tubs on the balcony of the Halls of Residence will keep you in herbs, leafy greens, and tomatoes.

FORAGE – Look for overladen fruit trees in your hood, and ask the owners if you can 'clean up their lawn'.

BARTER – check out your mates/neighbours gardens (and hen houses) and start negotiating!

GO VEGAN – or at least reduce your meat, fish and dairy intake. With animal cruelty, deforestation, land degradation, pollution, excess water and energy just a few of their crimes, these industries are the *enfant terrible* of food production. Apparently, if everyone went vegetarian there would be no environmental crisis.

HUNT – if you must have meat, eating pests such as goat, deer and rabbit is a highly sustainable option. Roadkill, anyone?

FISH – if you do fish or gather shellfish, know the limits/sizes and don't be greedy – if there isn't abundance, take only what you can eat fresh.

MAKE IT – old-school processing methods such as baking, preserving, and brewing are not only good for the environment, they taste *yummier!*

SHOP CONSCIOUSLY – whether you make your decisions based on air miles, organics, packaging, or processing, know what's in your food, where it's come from and how you can find a better alternative.