

## Producing the Goods

Goods that reflect and sustain locality,  
nature and culture



What is bad for the environment,  
is bad for us. Common Ground champions  
production that reinforces local distinctiveness.

In addition to food, we shall be working on water,  
festivals, souvenirs, building materials and more.



### COMMON GROUND

promotes the value and importance of the local:  
our ordinary cultural heritage, popular history, everyday buildings  
and commonplace nature. We campaign for local distinctiveness –  
the richness of difference between places which reflects  
meaning back to us through the particular accumulations  
of story upon history upon natural history.

Common Ground initiated the campaign to save traditional orchards  
in 1988 and Apple Day (October 21st) in 1990,  
see The Common Ground Book of Orchards (2000).

In 2006 Hodder & Stoughton will publish our new book  
England in Particular.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION AND PUBLICATIONS SEE:  
[WWW.COMMONGROUND.ORG.UK](http://WWW.COMMONGROUND.ORG.UK) AND [ENGLAND-IN-PARTICULAR.INFO](http://ENGLAND-IN-PARTICULAR.INFO)



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## EVERYTHING IS CONNECTED

Buying a bottle of perry produced in Herefordshire or Gloucestershire  
may keep remarkable 60 foot high pear trees alive  
for their full span of more than 300 years.

Pausing by the wayside to purchase strawberries near Cheddar,  
in Somerset, maintains a way of life.

## EATING SHOULD BE A CREATIVE ACT

With every apple you bite into you can make a landscape,  
you can sustain a culture. Creating a circle of positive feedback  
into locality needs us all to make changes in our patterns  
of growing, buying, making, cooking, eating,  
composting, reusing - out of which we shall get more, not less,  
enjoyment in being part of places that are vibrant,  
productive and proud.



## Ways of reinforcing local distinctiveness

Intricate landscapes demonstrate the deep relationship which we and nature have developed over hundreds



of years along with a rich repertoire of stories and customs linking season, produce and locality. Yet we are in danger of losing them because we are forgetting what they mean, having ceased to value the connections.

## Growers and Producers

Foods that celebrate their heritage and provenance have often put places on the map and have brought significant economic benefits to their localities.

The cultivation of damsons is a long-established feature of the limestone-fringed Lyth and Winster valleys of Cumbria. Changing social and economic conditions led to the gradual decline of the orchards after World War II, but this has been reversed since 1996 when Peter Cartmell founded the Westmorland Damson Association.

As well as the restoration of the linear orchards planted along the field boundaries, hedges and stone walls, small orchards in field corners and near farmhouses, damsons have been put to use in many guises – in damson gin, damson beer, in ice cream, wine, gin, vinegar, pickled and in tarts, chutney, pies, jam, jelly, damson ‘cheese’ and damson chocolates. These products are made locally and are available all year,



but are brought together amongst the blossom on Damson Day in mid April, now a popular celebration of this versatile and undemanding fruit. The success of the Association in finding local uses for damsons has ensured the survival of the orchards, their nature, culture and the continuity of a beautiful and distinctive landscape.



Kent Cobs grow best on the Kentish ragstone around the villages of Plaxtol, Igham and Shipbourne. In 1913 there were over 7,000 acres of cultivated hazelnuts, mainly in Kent. In the 1980s the acreage in the



Cobnut plat

county had been reduced to less than 250 acres. The formation of the Kentish Cobnuts Association in 1990 marked a change in their fortunes. The Association promotes cobnuts, provides training and technical information, advice and assistance for members to market their produce. Derelict plats (the local name for hazel orchards) have been restored and new plats planted. Kent cobnuts are available from our greengrocers once more, as well as pick-you-own and by mail order - green and juicy in September and tree-ripened in October.

Foods which come from a particular area can be awarded a PDO (Protected Designation of Origin) or a PGI (Protected Geographical Indication) by the European Union, based on the French designation of appellation contrôlée, which bestows status and protects them from being copied elsewhere.

### Buying power

We need to be more discerning about the things we buy, questioning where



and how our food is produced. In asking for details about provenance we can choose things that have been grown as nearby as possible using the least water, chemicals and energy, demanding fresher, more humanely and ecologically produced food.

In the end we all pay and pay again for buying cheap food transported long distances in the loss of wild life, culture and landscapes, in the taxes

we pay to clean up after disease, the impact of heavy vehicles, and increasingly with mayhem wrought by dramatic swings of weather.

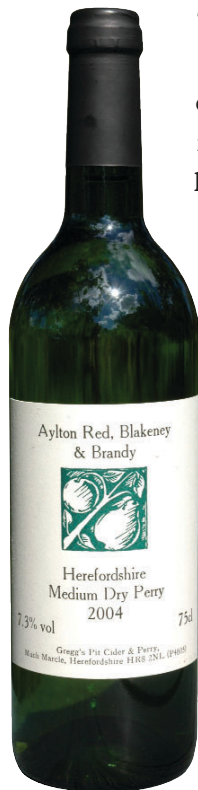
### Local foods

At the start of the 21st century we are importing 95% of our fruit and half of our vegetables. The transport of food accounts for a quarter of all road freight in the UK incurring huge carbon dioxide



emissions (responsible for climate change) and harmful pollutants. Food that has been grown and prepared nearby is not only fresher. Cutting down the food miles means that our food has given less stress to animals, supports the local economy, reinforces local communities, reduces the number of heavy vehicles on the roads and contributes less pollution.

Inventive producers add value to what they grow. Two farmers have started using their own barley and water from the chalk to make beer at Wold Top Brewery in the Yorkshire Wolds. They have even bought a pub The Falling Stone in nearby Thwing. In Kent the National Trust has launched Little Scotney Ale to keep hop gardens and oast houses in work. Near Duloe, Andy Atkinson of Cornish Orchards is growing local Cornish varieties of apples to make his own distinctive cider, apple juice, vinegar and chutneys. Further west Trescowthick Craft Bakery started to grow



its own milling wheat near Newquay in 2003, and now grinds its own flour and makes its own bread. In Dorset, Michael Stoate's mill is using the tiny River Sturkel to stone grind seven kinds of organic flour sold to local bakers, restaurants and shops. Bread making courses at the mill are hosted with master baker, Paul Merry.

The closer the circle, the fewer the links, the more of a real living people can make, the more stays within the locality, the more the mutuality between nature and culture sustains the place and heightened confidence and identity follows.

### Seasonality

The fresher the food the better it is for us, we should buy vegetables and fruit in season – welcome purple sprouting broccoli in March, Brussels sprouts in November. Bananas and oranges and much more



cannot be grown here and we have to import them, but they have their seasons too. French beans grown in Kenya are causing cultural disruption, excessive demands on precious water, overuse of chemicals as well as airfreight which is damaging for all of us. Tired apples from the southern hemisphere

undercut our producers in our own season. Much better to look forward to a menu devised by our own calendar - rhubarb in April, asparagus in May, strawberries in June, our first apples in August the last in April and so on. Then give them a rest and anticipate the tasty and fresh new season's produce.

Cheeses should vary according to the type of cattle or sheep as well as pasture, season and time of day. The perfect place for Old Gloucester cows (an endangered breed) is in the rich meadows by the





River Severn producing milk for producing single or double Gloucester cheese. According to the English Country Cheese Council, 'the Single was known as 'Haymaking' cheese because it was produced from early season milk. As it matured quickly, it was light in colour. In contrast, Double Gloucester used to come from late season milk, and as it was slower in maturing, became darker'. Charles Martell sought to save the Gloucester cattle from extinction (there were only 45 animals left in 1974) and has revived making Gloucester cheese in the traditional way at his farm near Dymock.



Isle of Wight Garlic Festival

Festivals and feasts can help to celebrate seasons and places. The year starts with the Rhubarb Festival in Wakefield (Yorkshire) in January, Damson Day in Cartmell (Westmorland) in April, Watercress Festival in Alresford (Hampshire) in May, Garlic Festival in Newport (IOW) in August and so on.

### Organic production

Working with nature as our ally, the less pollution we introduce into the soil, rivers and aquifers, the better for us and for wild life.

John Hurd grows organic watercress on 8 acres of beds fed by pure mineral water pumped up from the chalk in Hill Deverill, Wiltshire. Water running through the beds feeds an adjacent organic trout farm and then flows into settling ponds and on into the River Wylye with no need for purification.

### Markets and independent shops

Even if you are lucky enough to have a local market and independent shops they are

opened by Geoff Gage. It only sells foods grown or made within a 30 mile radius, such as seasonal vegetables, local varieties of apples such as the Blenheim Orange from Waterperry Gardens near Wheatley,



Market Place, Cambridge

probably fighting for their lives. There are increasingly few outlets in our high streets that sell any kind of fresh foods. Greengrocers have so far been the hardest hit by the dominance of superstores, declining by 59% between 1992-2002.

In Thame, Oxfordshire, a unique shop called Local Tastes has been

goats cheese from Leyhill Farm, Chesham, wine from Chiltern Valley Winery, Beechdean ice cream, honey, free-range eggs, locally milled flour, bread – four hundred items from sixty five producers. He is also running a Vegetable Box Scheme and has started a home delivery service for those who wish to shop online.



John Hurd with organic watercress





seems less important than appearance, and greater inputs of pesticides etc are needed to try to produce the perfect crop.

may list the ingredients, but it probably doesn't say where the raw materials are grown or about their journey from the field to the shop. Does it tell you the varieties used or



At Farmers' Markets and Farm Shops we meet the producers and find out for ourselves exactly how the food is produced, farmers benefit from direct feedback. We can also avoid the enormous waste incurred by superstores - up to 40% of some crops are regularly discarded merely because they do not conform to standard shapes, sizes and colour. For the superstores, taste



farm, indeed the field, where the crop is grown - how near to a major road or flightpath, factory or source of other potential pollutants? How many and what artificial inputs such as fertilisers and pesticides, and what amounts of irrigation water? How much energy was used in its growing/production? All this information may not be appropriate for or fit onto a label, but it could feature on the producer's website.



### Information & labelling

What does the label tell you that you need to know about a product? It

the breeds of animals? The prouder the farmers and growers are, the more they want to show off their produce and their land. Where is the







*Cider Orchard, Whimple, Devon, by James Ravillious*



Looked at from a different angle, if we lose the real cider we lose the need for cider barrels, flagons, wassail bowls, mugs, tools, troughs,

presses, cider barns, pubs.... people. We lose interest in the artefacts and the buildings often particular to their place. They are devalued, left to rot, mislaid, broken up and with them fades the knowledge, the self esteem and soon the orchards, the varieties, the wild life..... the community of interest overlaying the community of place which makes local distinctiveness reverberate with authenticity.

Everything is dependent upon everything else – culture and nature when so finely tuned as in a simple orchard is not a still life, but an intimately woven working world. A world that people are proud to live and labour in, a world which outsiders want to look into.

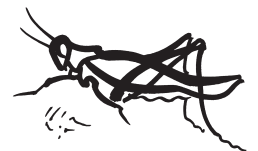
Look for simple, minimal packaging, paper bags rather than punnets (made from oil), and bring your own shopping bag to carry your purchases home.

### What we stand to lose

In just one example: next time you are drinking in the landscape,

remember - when we lose an orchard, we sacrifice not simply a few old trees – bad enough some would say... but you risk losing forever varieties particular to the locality, the intricacy of nature, the songs, the recipes, the cider and juices, the festive gatherings, the hard but social work,

the look of the landscape, the heritage of a working place, the wisdom gathered over generations about pruning and grafting, aspect and slope, soil and season, variety and use. We sever our links with the land.







- Champion foods that reinforce the particularity of our place.
- *Grow our own food in gardens, allotments, community orchards.*
- Buy local foods.
- *Buy food in season.*
- Patronise our local markets, country markets, farmers' markets, farm shops, independent greengrocers, bakers etc.
- *Favour organic produce when possible.*
- Demand more information from the producer.
- *Choose products with minimal or no packaging.*

## WHAT WE CAN DO



- Don't be fooled by appearance - misshapen or blemished fruit can be just as tasty and good for us as perfectly shaped ones.
- *Create new meals with left over food – don't waste it.*
- Compost fruit and vegetable peelings.
- *Link food festivals with the places where food is grown and made.*
- Celebrate with our own local event such as Apple Day (October 21).
- *Create a Parish Map or ABC around local food and its making.*

Ask  
Common  
Ground about  
Parish Maps,  
ABCs and Apple Day.

### FEEDBACK:

Please tell us of more good examples of growers, retailers, and festivals linking with locality.  
email: [info@commonground.org.uk](mailto:info@commonground.org.uk)