



Foodloose in Washtenaw: A Foodie's Guide to Washtenaw County

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Foodloose in Washtenaw takes readers on tours to discover food-related treasures throughout a Midwestern county. From centennial farms to trendy restaurants, the self-guided tours of *Foodloose* offer an opportunity to explore where food is grown, produced, distributed, and enjoyed in Washtenaw County Michigan. Celebrate a vibrant, historic and expanding local food community, learn more about a unique and growing local food system, and maybe even find a new favorite place to dine.

INTRODUCTION

The idea for this project came from the book *Footloose in Washtenaw: A Walkers' Guide to Ann Arbor and Washtenaw County* (1976) and *Footloose in Washtenaw: A Revised and Expanded Walkers' Guide to Washtenaw County* (1990). Both editions were written by Ruth Kraut and edited by Keith Taylor. These earlier books provide self-guided walking tours of the county, sometimes trails and other times sidewalks. The current book is intended to be the food version; hence *food* instead of *foot*. The idea is to capture the 2017-2018 Washtenaw County, Michigan local food community in the form of self-guided tours. These tours are curated with the hope of encouraging those not explicitly connected to the food community to get to know the County's food system more intimately and to become involved, perhaps by volunteering at one of the many sites described.

This project attempts to weave the multitude of connections that abound between farmers, restaurants, retailers, and other members of the Washtenaw County local food community into tours that allow for the understanding of the larger patterns at play. We encourage asking questions about geography, social networks, shared experiences, and more that might reveal what makes this local food community so unique and worthy of celebration. Then, we can begin to ask what is missing from the community, or what could improve it? These tours are based on simple connections, such as geographical proximity, themes, or simply following a flow of food. Many intricate inter-relationships exist that have not been included in this book and you are invited to discover for yourself some of these intricacies and uncover your own connections.

There are biases of this book that are not entirely representative of the local food community. Some of the most apparent biases include how this book has a focus on vegetarian as well as organic, pesticide-free, and biodynamic food ventures. The information for this book was gathered through interviews that were traveled to by bicycle, bus, and the occasional car ride. This limited the scope of the project to within county boundaries. It is unfortunate that some folks who engage with our local food community were not included because they are not geographically located within Washtenaw County; nonetheless, their work is still extremely important to us. We hope that future editions will capture this expanding food community.

Additionally, some of the tours in this book involve spending money at some point, in some way. It is important to recognize that it might not be possible (or wise) for some tour-goers to purchase something at every stop on a tour. For this reason, some of the tours, such as **Tour de Farm** and **Markets**, do not require spending money to have an experience. However, people who grow, process, cook, and distribute our food should have their time and effort honored with compensation. Although, this compensation does not necessarily have to be money. Money is, of course, the most convenient method of transaction, but only because we have made it so. We can, in fact we once did, exchange goods and/or services without using money. Humans have so much more to offer than greenbacks or plastic. We have skills, we have experience, we have time, and we have the ability to reciprocate creatively. This book encourages you to find a way to exchange your skills with someone who has food skills, in order to use your actions, not your money. In doing so, you will be fostering a meaningful connection with someone in your community as well as the food you eat.

As Frida Kahlo once said, *“Nothing is absolute, everything changes, everything moves, everything revolutionizes, all flies and goes.”* This flux exists within all local food systems. A farm, store, or restaurant featured in the book will close and others will open; some already have. Due to the constraints of a published book, this single edition cannot reflect this cycling. Thus, this book is a snapshot of the Washtenaw County local food community. It does not claim to be comprehensive, nor does it claim to be the ultimate guide to the county’s local

food. It is simply a curated set of tours that encourage a certain way of exploring the food community based on how it stood in late 2017 and early 2018.

Another reason something/one might have been omitted was because of time constraints in the interview process. Summer is generally a busy time of year for food folks, so finding a moment to spare is rare. A “call-out” was posted in several locations around the county describing how interested and relevant parties could get in touch. Some local food operations did not meet the guidelines, which is another potential reason for omission. The main guideline was that the food operation was physically located in Washtenaw County. Further, they needed to demonstrate how they partner with a couple of other local food enterprises in the county. How many “a couple” meant was determined relative to the scale of operation; the bigger the operation, the more partners they were asked to demonstrate.

We hope you enjoy the book; we enjoyed creating it. We also hope that editions emerge for other counties throughout North America.

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