

What the Sacramento Natural Foods Co-op Means to Me

By Jeanine Boyers

Once a week I make a big shopping trip to SNFC. Alone, with a list in hand, bags, glass milk bottles, and various containers in my cart I make my way through the aisles; content and relaxed (at least when my three young children are not in tow!) because I know that the food I'm getting is healthy for my family and for the environment. It is the only place I can shop where the hard work has already been done for me.

The hard work of determining which products contain high fructose corn syrup and trans fats (you'd be hard pressed to find those additives at the Co-op, but it is nearly impossible to find a cereal or cracker without them at Safeway or Albertsons). The hard work of determining whether the organic dairy products I'm buying come from some not-much-better-than-a-factory-farm cow warehouse or whether they come from a more sustainable environment (O-Organics? Seriously. O for O'most Organic?). The hard work of determining what food is in season and whether those delicious looking grapes have been imported from Chile or China or some other far away place, losing vitamins along the way and leaving a trail of pollution in its transportation wake (the Co-op highlights the fruits and vegetables of the season, while Safeway and Albertson's carries strawberries hailed from god-knows-where and tasting suspiciously like cardboard in mid-December). The hard work of remembering what seafood is currently being over-fished or whether I'm risking my children's bodies by filling them with bits of mercury or other pollutants ("Sorry kids, put your forks down, I just heard on the news that this might be the last swordfish to have ever taken a swim in the Atlantic Ocean"). The hard work of keeping abreast of the complicated political atmosphere in which our food industry thrives and doing its best to educate us (the Co-op owners and shoppers) of important changes and discoveries through the Co-op Reporter, classes, and discussion series (where else but the Co-op could I have found out about important movies like "The Future of Food?").

I know that the Co-op isn't perfect, and I don't expect it to do all of my thinking for me (although after three children, having a second "brain" to do some of my thinking may not be such a bad thing). However, I do know that it consistently provides me with food I can feel good about, both because it is healthy for me and my family and because it is almost always a reflection of things that are important to me like sustainability and being good stewards of this earth. I truly believe that food consumption is one area of consumerism where individual decisions can make a real difference and to me, the Co-op provides the one place where those decisions can easily be made.