



SYDNEY
Mash Café Restaurant
 19 Ross Street, Glenbrook,
 Blue Mountains
 (02) 4739 5908
www.mashcafe.com.au

You'll feel immediately at home in Mash's 1950s-style cottage. That's just as well, as you'll want to linger over fair trade-approved hot chocolate or tasty meals using local, seasonal ingredients.

BRISBANE
mondo organics
 116 Hardgrave Road, West End
 (07) 3844 1132
www.mondo-organics.com.au

Also home to a catering business and a cooking school, mondo organics serves up modern Italian cuisine. And with desserts like the 'bleeding' Baci pudding, it's proof that organic is exciting.

MELBOURNE
BCOZ Organic Dining
 403 Riversdale Road,
 Hawthorn East
 (03) 9882 7889
www.bcoz.com.au

BCOZ is Melbourne's first, and only, certified-organic restaurant. Owner Rod Barbey is committed to the cause, offering lactose-free and gluten-free menus, plus a wine list of over 600 drops.

CANBERRA
The Ridge Organic Restaurant
 1 Farrer Place, Farrer
 (02) 6286 8088

The Ridge serves up meals for ethical eaters using Asian techniques. It caters well for vegetarian guests but meat-eaters will not go hungry. Its tantalising dishes include teriyaki steak with tempura oysters.

PERTH
The Sandcastle Organic Café
 11/396 South Terrace,
 South Fremantle
 (08) 9335 2445
www.sandcastleorganic.com.au

Supporting WA producers, as well as trawling the world for the best organic produce, The Sandcastle often plays host to jazz nights – the perfect accompaniment to their organic beer and wine list.

ADELAIDE
The Organic Market and Café
 5 Druids Avenue, Stirling
 (08) 8339 7131
www.organicmarket.com.au

Pop into The Organic Market and Café to stock up on a huge range of local, certified-organic goodies then sample homemade soups, delicious desserts and freshly prepared salads and juices.

Top row, from left: Fill up at Mash Café Restaurant, dine in style at BCOZ Organic Dining or dip into dukkah at The Sandcastle Organic Café.

Bottom row, from left: Savour mondo organics' mains and desserts or head to The Organic Market and Café for supplies.



PHOTOGRAPHY :: PETER HOLDERNESS, CHRISTINE SHARP



FROM FARM TO FORK

THE ETHICAL EATING

MOVEMENT IS FAST GAINING PACE AS MANY ARE ALERTED



With recent films such as *Fast Food Nation* and *Super Size Me* introducing international audiences to the dark side of food production, and much-publicised public debates raging over childhood obesity, Type II diabetes and the threat of livestock pandemics such as foot and mouth disease and avian flu, it's no surprise many of us are paying more attention than ever to what we chow down on.

In fact, in a recent article, *The Economist* went as far as pointing out that while voter turnout in many countries continues to fall, sales of organic and fair-trade food are assuredly on the rise. The ethical eating movement is fast gaining momentum and the push is becoming stronger to make consumers more aware of the effects food choices have on individuals' health, the environment, farming industry, animal welfare and developing countries. So, if our dinner plates are the new political forum, how can we learn more about and become literate in this new language of food activism?

transportation. For example, many of Australia's out-of-season lemons are imported from California – which costs us around 12,000 food miles, and thus spews out a great quantity of carbon dioxide.

The logical solution to limiting food miles? Choose seasonal produce rather than reaching for the same thing year-round. And the food-miles dilemma also reinforces the importance of buying local. Buying produce direct from small, local growers not only saves on the environmental damage caused by large-scale industrial production, but also delivers a better price to farmers by eliminating the middle-man and, of course, reduces the number of miles your food is required to travel from farm to fork. So visiting your local farmers' market, or petitioning your local council to create one, can have a three-fold benefit – not to mention you'll be putting wholesome, healthy food on your plate.

Animal rights is also a big issue for ethical eaters, and while many choose vegetarianism as their

TO THE DARK SIDE OF THE FOOD INDUSTRY. **SHANE CONROY** DISHES IT UP.

For a start, 'organic' and 'fair trade' have been buzz words in ethical eating circles for some time. Organic food is farmed in such a way that aims to reduce dependence on non-renewable resources and makes environmental sustainability its first priority. Certified-organic food is also free of all artificial chemicals, such as pesticides and fertilisers, and in the case of livestock, synthetic growth hormones and other harmful additives. So not only does choosing organic food mean a more chemical-free diet, but also helps take pressure off the environment and promote consumer demand for sustainable farming practices.

However, there are still some food industries in Australia that continue to rely on imported goods, such as coffee, tea and chocolate production. This is not an inherently negative practice and can actually help boost developing economies. But, as much of these ingredients are grown in developing nations, there have been historical abuses of struggling farmers by some large food companies. To ensure these abuses remain in the past, the ethical eating movement encourages consumers to purchase only fair-trade accredited products. In essence, fair trade guarantees minimum, fair prices for growers and, in doing so, doesn't use market forces to undercut the income of poverty-stricken farmers. It also ensures that workers are paid a decent wage.

While choosing organic and fair-trade food products is a positive step, the buck doesn't stop there in the journey to ethical eating. 'Food miles' is a term we'll no doubt become more familiar with as we continue to more closely examine our food choices. This idea refers to the distance the food has had to travel before it hits our plate and, naturally, the level of carbon emissions resulting from that

path to enlightenment, there are plenty of steps carnivores can take to ensure their footprint on the earth is as light as possible. For ethical meat eaters, organic producers are one option, as they often provide better living conditions for their animals. Free-range farms are preferred as they offer animals greater roaming space, natural grazing, adequate shelter and a reasonable lifespan.

To make identifying ethically produced meat slightly less of a headache, Humane Society International and NASAA (National Association for Sustainable Agriculture) have introduced 'Humane Choice' labelling that will indicate to consumers that the animal was treated with proper care from birth to death. And while organic meat does fetch higher prices at your local butcher, you can rest easy knowing the product isn't laced with chemicals and hormones added to the animal's diet to encourage rapid and unnatural growth.

Fishing can also be a contentious issue, and while we have got things pretty right in Australian waters, ethical eaters should be careful buying imported products. The main danger of consuming fish caught overseas is the huge by-catches that can go hand-in-hand with international fishing. That is, in fishing for a certain breed of fish, at times up to 50 per cent of the catch can be comprised of sharks, turtles, rays and other unwanted species. Ethical eaters should also keep an eye on 'overfished' lists (see the Bureau of Rural Sciences' website at www.brs.gov.au) which record species under strain.

There's no denying that the ins and outs of ethical eating can be quite confusing so, to take some of the difficulty out of your dining dilemmas, we've tracked down a few eateries around Australia which welcome ethical eaters. ▶