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## Challenge inspires people to eat locally grown food

By YVONNE AYALA, Alligator Contributing Writer

Carnivore, herbivore, but have you heard of localvore?

A local Web site has challenged Gainesville residents to eat local foods for a month.

Registration for the 2nd Annual Eat Local Challenge is open until April 30, but some participants have already committed to eat local.

“I very much believe in buying local, and that’s been true all my life,” said Rachel Kohl, a Gainesville resident and challenge participant.

“I see these things that grow locally — they’ve been just down the street and slept in the dirt the night before. I think that’s part of what makes them so delicious.”

The contest kicks off May 1 and pushes the average eater to forage and gobble up only local and seasonal foods at home or at locally owned restaurants.

The contest is designed to make people think about what they eat and where it comes from, said Stefanie Hamblen, founder and editor of Hogtown HomeGrown, a newsletter and Web site that promotes eating and buying local food.

Hamblen says for food to be local, the average distance should be within 100 miles of where you live

In the Gainesville area, residents can buy local meat, seafood, dairy products and eggs. But produce such as watermelon, eggplant, squashes, heirloom tomatoes and citrus reach their peak in May.

When contestants lack the energy to cook, Book Lover’s Café, Ti Amo, New Deal and other restaurants will offer special menus with local fare.

The challenge ends May 31 at a community celebration hosted by HomeGrown. Participants can complete a chart available at the HomeGrown Web site to track their progress. Local businesses will donate prizes like locally roasted coffee, massages, oil changes and gift certificates for participants who keep track of what local foods they eat.

“Seasonal, local food tastes better, money spent locally improves our local economy and local food travels fewer miles to your plate, reducing your carbon footprint,” Hamblen said.

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