



# SEVEN FOOD RULES TO LIVE BY

Pledge to follow these new food habits and you'll be making a big difference to the environment, your health and your friendly local farmer

THE RULE	WHY YOU SHOULD FOLLOW IT	WHAT YOU NEED TO DO
<p><b>BUY BRITISH LAMB</b></p> 	<p>We should, of course, buy British everything, but sheep farming is particularly in dire straits. "We import 115,500 tonnes of lamb every year," says Philip Lymbery of Compassion In World Farming. "If you buy lamb reared in the UK when it's available [in spring and autumn], you'll help farmers and reduce live exports."</p>	<p>Buying from your local butcher will ensure the farmer got a fair price. Alternatively, visit <a href="http://localfoods.org.uk">localfoods.org.uk</a> to find your nearest farmers' market. Or buy direct online from independent farms such as <a href="http://piperfarm.com">piperfarm.com</a>.</p> 
<p><b>CUT DOWN ON YOUR MEAT INTAKE</b></p>	<p>"More than half the grain grown globally is fed to livestock, which is depleting the world's food resources," says Jo Lewis, head of policy at the Soil Association. "In terms of feeding the world, we wouldn't need to produce so much if we weren't eating so much meat."</p>	<p>Try to go without meat for two days a week or use smaller quantities for flavour, rather than making up the bulk of the meal. <a href="http://Meatfreemondays.co.uk">Meatfreemondays.co.uk</a> and <a href="http://cookveg.co.uk">cookveg.co.uk</a> are great for recipes; Yotam Ottolenghi's <i>Plenty</i> is the vegetarian bible.</p>
<p><b>BUY FRUIT AND VEGETABLES IN SEASON</b></p>	<p>"Buying fruit and veg that's produced out of season means it's air-freighted or grown in heated glass houses, both of which are bad for the environment," says Lewis. As a rule, root vegetables are harvested in winter in the UK, most salad ingredients, potatoes and soft fruits arrive in summer.</p> 	<p>"Sign up for an organic box scheme," advises Lewis. "Growing organic fruit and veg uses about 25% less energy than non-organic." Riverford (<a href="http://riverford.co.uk">riverford.co.uk</a>) is well-established and delivers throughout the UK. Alternatively, dig up your garden. <i>Grow Your Own Vegetables</i> by Joy Larkcom is the classic text, while <a href="http://soilassociation.org">soilassociation.org</a> runs courses.</p>
<p><b>AVOID CHICKEN THAT JUST SAYS 'FRESH'</b></p>	<p>"If chicken isn't accompanied by the words 'free range', 'organic' or 'Freedom Food' then it will most likely be factory farmed," says Lymbery. "The average factory farmed chicken is nearly three times higher in fat than a similar chicken in the Seventies."</p> 	<p>Most supermarkets offer organic chicken – and while it is certainly more expensive (an Essential Waitrose chicken will cost £4.39; a Duchy Organic, £7.09), you know the hen was happy. Try <a href="http://springfieldpoultry.co.uk">springfieldpoultry.co.uk</a> for top quality meat online.</p>
<p><b>CHECK THE LABEL CAREFULLY</b></p>	<p> "If you pick something with a Freedom Food label, standards include things like making sure animals have space to move around, a nutritious diet and comfortable bedding," says Rebecca Lenik from Freedom Food. "In turn, they're having a better life when they are on the farm."</p>	<p>The Red Tractor mark ensures food was farmed in the UK. But for the best quality food, look for labels from organisations such as the Soil Association (<a href="http://soilassociation.org">soilassociation.org</a>) and RSPCA Freedom Food (focusing solely on the welfare of animals reared for food).</p> 
<p><b>BUY BRITISH DAIRY</b></p>	<p>Because milk is perishable, dairy farmers can't hang on to it to wait for a better price, so they're in a weak market position. Plus, only 50% of milk is sold as a liquid; the rest is made into products such as cheese and butter where they are in competition with suppliers in other countries.</p> 	<p>Milk consumption has fallen by around a third in the last 25 years, partly down to milk's poor health image. Whole milk only contains 4% fat so the idea that it's going to harm you is a myth. Drink and buy more milk, and ensure your butter, yoghurt, cream and creme fraiche are sourced in the UK and bear the Union Jack flag.</p>
<p><b>CHOOSE FREE-RANGE EGGS</b></p> 	<p>In 2011, 51% of the UK's eggs came from barn, free-range or organic farm hens. Compare this to 1995, when 86% came from battery hens. So things have got better, but 49% still have a less pleasant existence. "The sad fact is the battery cage produces the cheapest egg," says Lymbery.</p>	<p>The trick is to make sure you've studied the label. "Always avoid eggs from caged hens. Scrutinise the packet as it's sometimes written in tiny letters," says Lymbery. "Free-range eggs are actually healthier, higher in omega 3 fatty acids and vitamin E, and they're less likely to harbour salmonella."</p> 

