

# A WHOLE MONTANA

## EATING KIND

BY SARAH TILT

If someone asked you to “Eat Kind,” you might confuse it with “Eat Kale” or think to chew more gently. To some, it might mean eating only plants, or ensuring animals are raised and harvested in a kind, humane way. It could also mean buying from producers that contribute to healthier soils and waterways. I think Eating Kind is an attractive concept and an important choice.

Here are four ways you might consider Eating Kind:

**1. Eat locally produced food (when possible).** When you eat locally, you are practicing mindful eating. Focusing on what you are eating, and why you are eating it, allows you to reflect on where your food comes from and how it nourishes you. Let’s define *local food* as food that is produced within a short distance of where it is purchased or consumed. To Eat Kind, you might decide to source your food first from your own county, then more broadly from the surrounding counties, and then regionally. Certainly, it can be difficult to track down local and seasonal food and get it consistently, but I’d argue it’s a worthwhile challenge.

**2. Create less waste.** Each day, according to the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, roughly 1 pound of food per person is wasted in the U.S., ending up in our garbage and landfills. When we waste food, we waste the water, energy, and physical labor it took to produce it. We waste the fuel that was used to transport this food. Limiting what you purchase and composting the remains are both part of the solution. You can often donate excess food to a local food bank, and food scraps can be used to feed animals (but **not** wildlife). You can also support small, local businesses like the Ugly Onion who are focused on reducing food waste. (For further reading, find “Waste Not, Want Not” in the Fall 2022 issue at [ediblebozeman.com](http://ediblebozeman.com).)

**3. Donate or volunteer at a local food bank.** Food banks are focused on ensuring that all citizens have access to good, healthy food. We are incredibly lucky in Gallatin and Park counties to have the Gallatin Valley Food Bank, the Big Sky Community Food Bank, the Headwaters Area Food Bank, the Livingston Food Resource Center, Producer Partnership, and Fork & Spoon—the first pay-what-you-can restaurant in Montana. Gallatin Valley is also home to the Open & Local Coalition, a community network focused on strengthening our local food system and conserving agricultural land. Each of these organizations offers volunteer opportunities. And, if you are a hunter and have excess game, there are also ways to donate extra protein to these organizations, or you might volunteer with Montana Hunters Against Hunger.

**4. Be mindful when eating out.** Restaurants are busier than ever these days and, most likely, you will need to wait for a table or wait to be attended to. Staffing is a significant and very real problem for restaurants, and if we want them to survive we need to be respectful, patient, and courteous to the people serving us. Beyond being kind, be thoughtful about the food on your plate, what you leave behind, and what you might take with you.

One Montana is leading an effort called Outside Kind to try to increase outdoor etiquette, reduce conflict, and encourage stewardship of our trails, waterways, and natural resources. We believe kindness is contagious and is a concept that can certainly be applied to our food. 🌿

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**Sarah Tilt** is the executive director of One Montana, a nonprofit working to support private land stewardship and working lands, sustain our cultural heritage, and connect our urban and rural communities. One Montana’s campaign, The Montana Way, is an effort to educate and provide resources for all Montanans to steward our private and public resources and continue traditions for the next generation.



Photo by Nicole Marsh