

## **'Local' food on the menu: the Intermediary perspective.**

The terms 'local' food and 'locally sourced' food, with their inherent notions of provenance, terroir and topophilia, are often to be seen on menus in restaurants, cafés and other food and beverage outlets. The use of these words is widespread, and is intended to encapsulate a noble world that is both appealing and sustainable, although the ultimate aim of the hospitality provider is, of course, to sell these products to the consumer, to make a profit. Significantly, however, there is still no universal understanding of the term 'local' in relation to food, nor any regulation (at least in the UK) with regards to its use on menus. More specifically, although there has undoubtedly been a re-awakening of awareness of the importance of food distinctiveness in the 'local', and although there is a large body of literature based up the producer, the supplier and the consumer perspectives, only limited research has been undertaken from the perspective of the intermediary, that of the hospitality provider. This paper, therefore, explores 'local' food from the intermediary perspective of the hospitality provider, specifically that of the independent, small-scale coffee shop owner/ manager in a rural part of the UK. It is an exploration of how the intermediary fulfils their role in the 'local' food supply chain. In particular, it adopts the view that the consumer is very much reliant on the interpretation, as well as the integrity, of the hospitality provider to deliver food onto the plate described as 'local' on their menu. It is therefore very much a matter of trust in both that integrity and in the hospitality provider having an understanding of what constitutes 'local' food. It is suggested here that this is problematic for many small-scale providers, due to not only cost and availability factors associated with 'local' products, but also due to the lack of understanding as to what constitutes 'local' food. The research suggests that, often, pragmatism and the profit motive outweigh the integrity of these intermediaries, as well as their interest in developing a clear understanding of and response to the term 'local' food. It should be noted, however, that this study is limited by the relatively small sample of independent UK coffee shop owners/ managers engaged in the research, pointing to the need for larger-scale studies in the future.