

MAY 2010

GUIDE

COMMUNITY FOOD



GEORGIA COLLEGE
& STATE UNIVERSITY

IDST2405 - NECESSITIES OF LIFE

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LETTER FROM THE CLASS

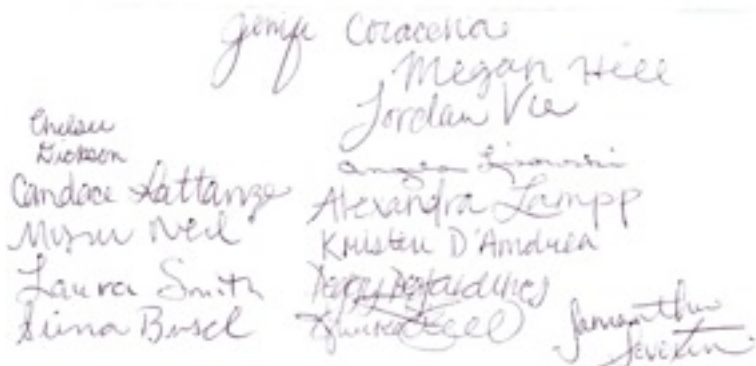
Dear Milledgeville Community,

We have spent the past three weeks uncovering one of the greatest mysteries of our generation: Where does our food come from? This seems like a simple question with a simple answer. Our food comes from the grocery store, from a drive-through window, and from Momma's oven if we're lucky. We have learned that the answer to this question is not so simple; there are corporations and government agencies that separate us from the farms where our food was originally grown. Our goal these past three weeks has been to lift the veil from the mystery of food production.

Our remedy was to dive head first into our community and investigate where our food comes from.

The research presented in this guide shows how different factors play key roles in our area's food crisis. While it was once thought that the way we eat is affected only by how good Momma can cook and how many salads we eat, we learned that there are many more factors that contribute to our diet. Social status, income level, and geographic location all play roles in the way we eat. Throughout this guide, we will analyze and explain the different options available to Milledgeville consumers. Our goal is to educate you more about locally available food and what you can do to take part.

Loyally yours,



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**Our local grocery stores and the
Milledgeville Farmers' Market**

"These students have made history. We hope that their ideas, creativity, and experiences will provide fertile ground for the growth of this course into our regular curriculum at Georgia College."



Julia Metzker
Sandra Godwin
Georgia College & State University

Community Profile - Who are we?

The poverty and unemployment rates in Milledgeville and Baldwin County are growing at an alarming rate. One might ask what poverty and unemployment have to do with the accessibility and affordability of food, but the economic level of a person and their location are closely related to the foods they eat. This project's objective is to highlight differences in the Milledgeville/Baldwin County region in order to see what types of foods are easily accessible and affordable in our local area.

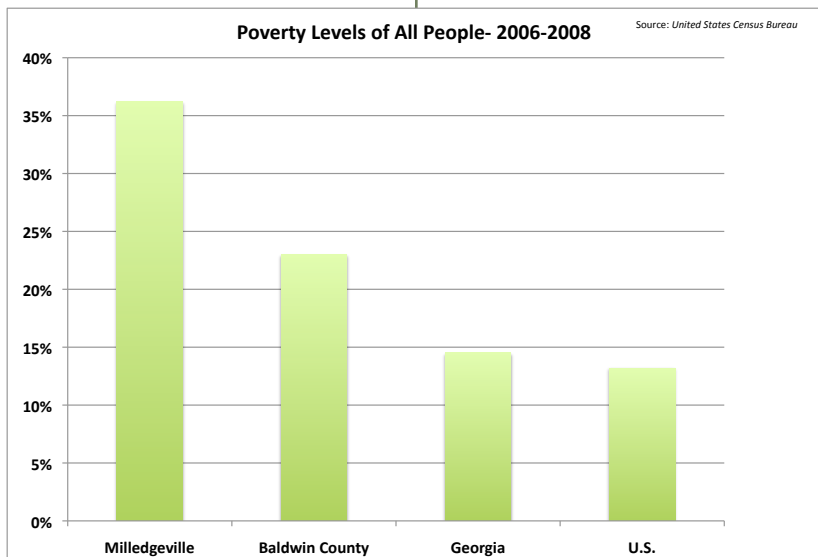


Milledgeville. The total population of Milledgeville declined by 405 people between 2000 and 2008, presumably due to job loss or other economic factors. In 2008, there were 4,724 households in Milledgeville alone. There were only 1,355 married-couple families that year in Milledgeville. In the state of Georgia in 2007, 14.3% of residents had an income below the poverty level. Comparatively, 23.3% of Milledgeville's residents had an income below poverty level. Between 2000 and 2008, the White population in Milledgeville increased by 24.4%. In the same time period, the African American population decreased by 35.4%.



Unemployment Rates (March 2010)

	14% or higher
Baldwin County	higher
Georgia	10.40%
U.S.	9.90%



The economic history.

Milledgeville, Georgia was established in 1803 when the Georgia legislature decided to search for new farmland. Milledgeville was surveyed and a town plot was created with 500 acres that were divided into 84 four-acre squares. The production of cotton in this area called for more importation of free labor, slaves; in the town had 1,599 residents: 789 free whites, 27 free blacks and 783 African American slaves. Throughout the next century Milledgeville attracted large organizations, one of them being Central State Hospital, which was a part of the nineteenth century's social reform movement.



The unemployment rate rose to 11.6% in 2009. For decades Milledgeville has been known for its mental asylum, Central State Hospital. As Milledgeville's most profitable resource, Central State Hospital, suffered from the budget cuts, along with other major corporations. The hospital, which partnered with the prisons of the area began closing its facilities. One of those facilities,

Scott State Prison, employed 281 workers, all of whom were reassigned 40 to 50 miles away. In addition, the Youth Development Campus (YDC), which served as the place of work for more than 300 people, closed its doors. Milledgeville also has been a place of factory workers and previously was the home for several factories. Rheem Manufacturing employed more than 650 employees. In addition Shaw Industries, a carpeting plant that produced a variety of flooring materials also closed its doors in 2009. These companies provided the city of Milledgeville with economic and job security that allowed the area to flourish. However, when these economic centers began closing, hundreds of Milledgeville residents were left jobless. Rheem began to lay its workers off in stages; 500 employees were released in the first stage, then the plant brought to the attention of all of its 1,200 workers that the company would be closed for good.

What Food is Affordable and Available in Milledgeville, Georgia?

How We Obtained the Data

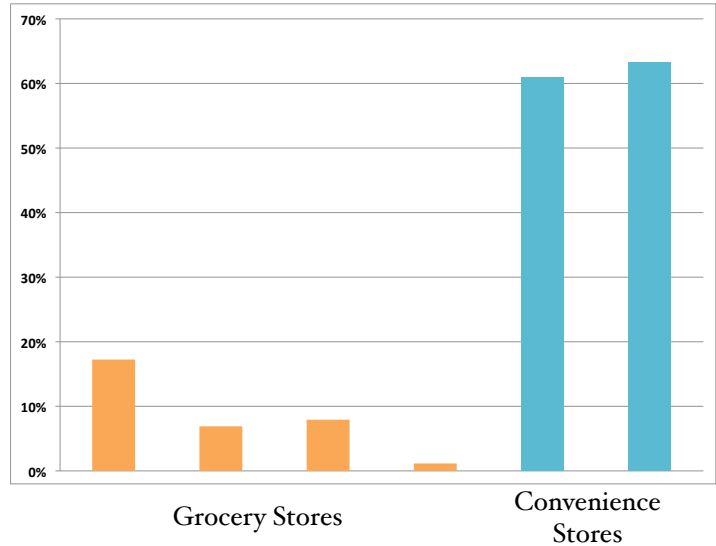
Assessing the food availability and affordability required us to go into local grocery and convenience stores to find which foods were available at each store and the cost of each item. Six stores were assessed in the central Milledgeville area and to ensure the privacy of each store the store names have been omitted from our report.

Using the USDA Community Food Security Assessment Toolkit, we recorded the items listed in the toolkit, checking for availability and the cheapest price of each item. The items were divided into categories including meats, breads, dairies and so on.

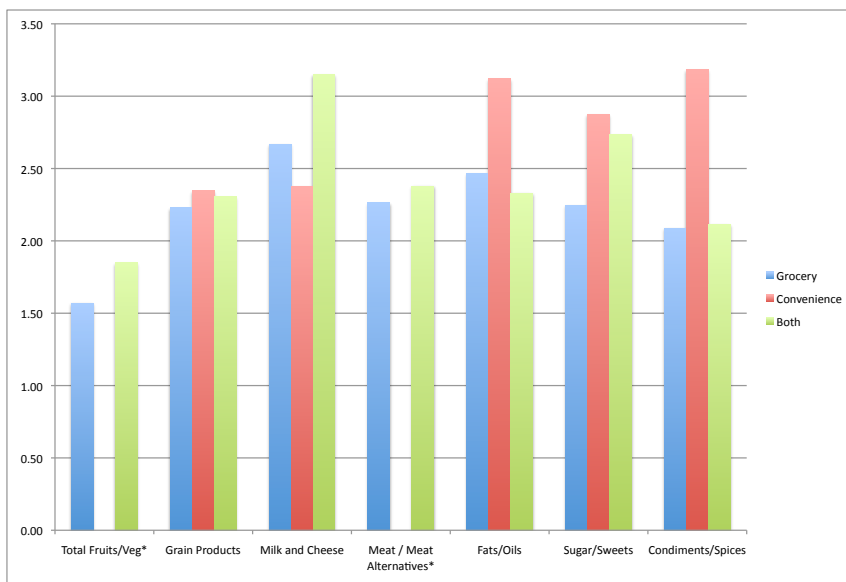
This portion of the guide includes the average price of selected food items for large grocery stores and a few convenience stores. Also included is an analysis of missing items. Our data show that there are a greater number of missing items in convenience stores than grocery stores.

The chart below shows the the percentage of total missing grocery items in each store. Each point shows the number of items missing divided by the total number of items (87). The survey conducted at convenience stores shows that 65% of food items are not available, possibly due to a lack of space or product accessibility. Since many basic food products are not available at convenience stores, a greater selection is available at the farmers' market or grocery stores.

Percentage of Missing Items



Total Average Pricing



To demonstrate the affordability, we recorded the lowest price for each item. Prices have been averaged into several food categories: fruits and vegetables, meat and meat alternatives, grain products, milk and cheese, fats and oils, sugar and sweets, and condiments and spices.

Among the larger grocery stores surveyed, we found the most available merchandise, as well as a large variety of products, with occasional weekly sales, thus providing greater affordability. Pricing is comparable among these larger grocery stores, averaging from \$1.53-\$2.29, with missing items ranging from 1% - 17%. The high percentage of missing items and lack of affordability in convenience stores makes these stores a poor choice for food shopping. However, citizens without viable transportation options may be limited to purchasing food at these stores. This analysis suggests that our community needs more options for healthy food in local neighborhoods.

* Categories were chosen using the Thrifty Food Plan from the USDA Community Food Security Assessment Toolkit. Total Fruits, Vegetables, Meat and Meat Alternatives are not available at convenience stores; therefore they are omitted.

Local Food Production: What *does* Milledgeville offer?

The following describes the different ways that locally-produced food is already available in Milledgeville. These include CSA organizations, the community garden, restaurants in the area that serve local food, and the farmers' market. It is important to support these programs because by doing so, we support local farmers, healthier lifestyles, and environmental stability as well as keeping money in our own community.



Farmers' markets are held in cities all over the nation. Farmers come from nearby towns to sell their produce, meats, cheeses, and sometimes homemade crafts directly to the consumer. Because there is no wholesale representative, produce is only sold in season and is sold often immediately after it is harvested. Without corporate interference between the farmer and the consumer, buying from a farmers' market allows customers to know where their food comes from and how it was grown. At the grocery store, labels that say "Organic" or "Naturally Grown" can be deceiving, and provide little information about the origin of the food. Farmers' markets provide the luxury of being able to talk directly to the farmers about their growing methods and how they raise their



livestock. Farmers' markets allow buyers to have a more personal relationship with the source of their food,

rather than buying from a multinational corporation.

The *Milledgeville Farmers' Market* is held every Tuesday from 4pm-7pm starting in May and ending in October. The market includes an average of 15 vendors each week who offer a variety of products, many of which are organic or naturally grown. Products include:

cheese	spices
honey	watermelon
baked goods	peaches
granola	cantaloupe
tomatoes	plums
pickles	onions
blueberries	homemade jams
eggs	turnips
lettuce	and much more!



Community-supported agriculture (CSA) is a partnership between a farm and a community of supporters, which provides a direct link between the production and consumption of food. Supporters cover a farm's yearly operating budget by purchasing a share of the season's harvest. CSA members make a commitment to support the farm throughout the season and assume the costs, risks, and bounty, of growing food along with the farmer or grower. Members help pay for seeds, fertilizer, water, equipment maintenance, and labor. In return, the farm provides, to the best of its ability, a healthy supply of seasonal fresh produce throughout the growing season.

CSAs Available Near Milledgeville:

- Full Moon Cooperative in Athens
- Deerwood Farm in Sparta
- Davis Farms in Roberta
- Athens Locally Grown Cooperative

- Sparta/Hancock Produce Growers Cooperative

Community Gardens are places where families, students, teachers, and everyone in a community can come to plant vegetables and flowers within the garden. By paying a pre-determined amount per month you gain a plot of land to plant. Since it is a community garden you not only keep your plot of land neat, but you help with the up-keeping of other plots by weeding, watering, or other community tasks. In the end you have a community coming together to grow natural food, which is one step closer to a healthier community.

The *Milledgeville Community Garden*, still in its first year of inception, is located at 200 Southside Drive. It includes a children's garden, a beneficial insect garden, an orchard, and individually owned plots.



Local Restaurants

The following participating restaurants use local food:

- | | |
|-------------------------------|------------------|
| Shrimp Boat | Blackbird Coffee |
| Buffington's | The Brick |
| Barberitos | Puebla's |
| Sylvia's | Choby's |
| Aubri Lane's | |
| Central Station Sandwich Shop | |
| Judy's Country Kitchen | |

Local Food Production: *What could Milledgeville offer?*

Although Milledgeville has taken the first steps towards addressing its food problems, there are many more options for improving our food community. We have the potential to create programs that will help the community achieve these goals. These programs can add to our growing awareness and lead to action towards a more beneficial and community-friendly food system.



School Gardens. Currently, the Baldwin County Board of Education does not have a school garden under the supervision of the students and teachers. However, a Georgia College and State University employee entered the 2010 Post Cereals Health and Wellness Contest in effort to gain sponsorship for a school garden. The purpose of the garden would be for students to plant the foods they want and the food would be in turn served in the school cafeteria. Students would be able garden through in-class activities and after-school programs. Young people would learn to utilize the land to produce local food. GCSU is still waiting to see if there will be a grant provided for this cause.



Farm to School. The Farm-to-School program allows school cafeterias to purchase locally grown foods to serve in their lunchrooms. Many public schools, including Baldwin County schools, purchase their food from major corporations through a competitive bidding process. Whichever corporation can offer the best value at the lowest price gets the bid, and thus becomes the food that we serve to our children at school. The Farm-to-School program encourages community involvement in their children's nutrition and actively supports the fight against childhood obesity. The Farm-to-School program is not active in the Baldwin County area, but it is currently being investigated by Paige Holland, the head of nutrition for Baldwin County schools.



Food Co-op. A food co-op is a collectively owned grocery store which focuses on making natural foods affordable and available to the community. There are private food co-ops in which only members may shop as well as public food co-ops which are open to the public, but in which only members receive discount prices, are considered partial owners of the co-op, and are involved with decision-making processes. In some cases, members also join work crews and contribute a certain amount of hours to working in and running the co-op. Many co-ops offer reduced fees to people of low incomes or allow them to trade work for membership. The overall goal of a co-op is to create a community grocery store with a cooperative ethic and to make natural food available to the public for low prices.

There is a group of people in Milledgeville interested in creating a local co-op. If you are interested in working towards this, you may contact Melanie Hatch at (404) 408-1614 or melanie_hatch@cats.gcsu.edu.



Resources

Community Data

- Milledgeville and Baldwin County Development Authority
www.developmilledgeville.com
- U.S. Census Bureau
www.census.gov
- Georgia Department of Labor
www.dol.state.ga.us

Food Organizations

- Georgia Organics
www.georgiaorganics.org
- American Community Gardening Association
www.communitygarden.org
- Local Harvest
www.localharvest.org

Local Food

- Milledgeville Farmers' Market
milledgevillemarketplace.com
- Milledgeville Community Garden Association
Located at New Beginning Worship Center
200 Southside Drive
mvillegarden.wordpress.com
- Community Supported Agriculture (CSA)
Sparta Hancock Growers
www.spartahancockgrowers.com

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