

# Is Your Packaging Going Local?

By JoAnn R. Hines, Packaging Diva



Just this week I read about a rooftop garden project called 'Sky Gardens'.

The premise is simple growing produce on the tops of buildings (mostly unused space) to provide locally grown produce. Therefore saving on transportation miles to provide fresh and locally grown produce.

It got me to thinking about how local produce can be marketed through packaging. As consumers evaluate their purchasing decisions in terms of what's most environmentally friendly, the producers are struggling how to convey that information on the packaging.

It's important to provide the correct information for the consumer to make an informed purchasing decision yet at the same time protecting the product and keeping it fresh and sanitary.

One of the best ideas is to have a colour coding system that shows how far each product was shipped or travelled to the point of sale. Consumers could look at each item and make their purchasing decision (if they care to) on how far a product has traveled.

This could be as simple as a colour sticker applied on the existing packaging. Like this system used in Canada by Byward Market Standholders Association that uses four colour-coded, circular stickers:

- Red means Canadian.
- Blue means imported.
- Green means from within 100 kilometres of Ottawa.
- Yellow means organic produce from anywhere.

Another concept would be to have a wrapper somewhat similar to a barcode that gives you the actual statistics and a printed receipt that spells mileage out exactly. These numbers can be somewhat scary but in a global economy not all that uncommon. In fact many economies are built around alternative shipping seasons such as Chilean produce shipped to the US during our winter. (It's their summer)

This is a conceptual idea only not in actual use. Far Foods (way too far according to this)



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You can also use the fact that your products are grown locally as a marketing and branding tool like these examples that cover a broad range of locally grown products identified by a specific geographic area. When buying close to home counts.



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Of course if you have plenty of money to spend you can launch a branding campaign like FritoLay supporting its potato chips as a locally grown brand. You scan a special code on the packaging and find out where your potatoes were actually grown. Check out how it works with their chip tracker tool@<http://www.fritolay.com/lays/chip-tracker.html>

Lastly another consideration is utilising local suppliers, how far is your packaging being shipped to you. Can you source closer to home? Then you can use the locally grown and sourced statement on your product packaging too.

Grown locally and food miles will continue to be a hot issue as people become more aware of using resources more effectively. In fact there is even a term called "locavore." "Packaging going local" is a great marketing and sell tool if you use it properly so ask yourself how can you capitalise on this trend to build your brand.

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