

# The Scoop on this Week's Snack!

## A holiday treasure from the orient...

December is here - time for catching snowflakes, making snowmen and singing Rudolph the Red-nosed Reindeer. It's also time for sweet oranges wrapped up in festive green paper.

Did you know that unwrapping Mandarin oranges is a well-loved Canadian holiday tradition we've been enjoying for over 120 years? First introduced by families from Japan, they would arrive in Vancouver by ship from Asia each November. They came packed in nine-pound wooden crates and hand tied in pairs to form a bundle. The oranges were quickly unloaded and shipped across the country by "Orange Trains". The brightly painted orange boxcars let everyone along the way know that the Mandarins had arrived and with them the beginning of the holiday season. These boxes were a favourite gift to give and receive and once the oranges were eaten, the wooden crates became instant sleds and dollhouses.

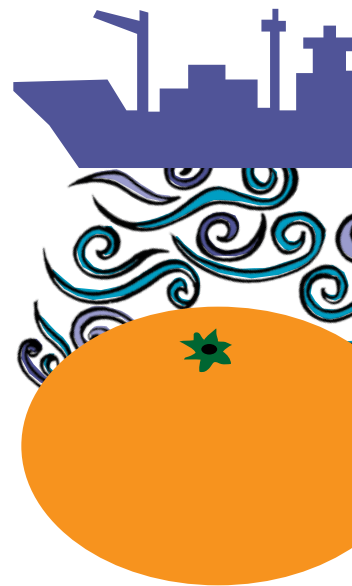
## Such a Long Journey...

Mandarin oranges have been cultivated in China and Japan for two thousands years. **Mandarin** is the family name for several types of small oranges with loose, easily peeled skin.

Mandarin oranges gained their name from the bright orange robes worn by the **mandarins**, public officials of the ancient Chinese court. They were a treat available only to the privileged class in the Far East. When exporting began, local Mandarin oranges were named after their port of origin. The first Mandarin oranges to be exported to North America were named **tangerines** after the city of Tangiers in Morocco.

The Mandarin orange tree is a small deciduous tree with slender twigs. It is delicate and easily damaged by cold and like us, will sunburn in severe heat. Mandarin oranges are cultivated in orchards in Japan, southern China, India, and the East Indies and are shipped around the world so we can enjoy them in our colder climates.

Mandarins from China to Vancouver = 9,500 kilometres by sea.



How many segments did you get in your Mandarin orange?



Buying local = fresh food = great taste =  
happy farmer = healthy plan

## Closer to Home...

A sun-drenched mandarin orange is the perfect winter treat. It's always too cold to grow oranges in BC so we need to import them from warmer growing regions. In our global market place we are able buy foods from all over the world so that we can enjoy a variety of fresh fruits and vegetables all winter.

**What is local food?** Simply, local foods are produced as close to home as possible. Buying local food helps to support the local food system.

For a good part of the year many crops thrive here, making it possible to buy closer to home. At other times, or for foods like oranges, we need to reach farther away. It doesn't mean we never eat bananas or pineapples, it just means that in summer and fall a better choice might be a peach, an apple or a pear. We can make a good choice by eating local produce when it's in season rather than purchasing the same type of food from thousands of miles away.

## Why does it matter how far my food has travelled?

The total distances food has travelled from grower to your plate are called food miles. Distance and method of travel are both important. More **food miles** mean more carbon dioxide in the air as a result of transportation. Choosing to buy local food can reduce global warming, pollution and air quality

**How do local farmers help?** Small, local farms are run by farmers who live on their land and work hard to preserve it. They protect open spaces by keeping land in agricultural use and preserve natural habitats. By being good stewards of the land, seeking out local markets, minimizing packaging, and harvesting food when it's ripe, farmers can greatly reduce their environmental impact.

**Mandarin oranges came from Japan and China, are they a local or imported food?**

## How can we reduce our food miles?

1. Eat what's in season; it won't have had to travel as far as out-of-season fruits and vegetables.
2. Can and freeze local produce to enjoy it all year.
3. Visit our local farmer's market; they're a great source of local produce – and fun too!
4. Grow our own vegetables - that's as local as it gets.
5. Shop at our neighbourhood produce store and ask them to stock locally grown products.
6. Walk, bike or take the bus to go shopping – so we won't add to the food miles.