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WESTERN UNIVERSITY
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New smartphone app helps users '*Buy Local, Eat Smart, Get Healthy*'

Western University researchers and partners released the [SmartAPPetite](#) app today, providing Southwestern Ontarians customized tips about local food, healthy eating, recipes, and information about local farmers and food providers.

As part of an effort to connect the region to healthy, local food options, the smartphone app promotes the motto '*Buy Local, Eat Smart, Get Healthy*,' and its creators aim to give a boost to the local food economy while helping people improve their diets.

The app has been developed collaboratively by the [Human Environments Analysis Laboratory \(HEAL\)](#) at [Western University](#), the [London Training Centre](#), [Brescia University College](#), [Wilfrid Laurier University](#), and the [Old East Village Business Improvement Area](#).

"The goal of our app is to remove barriers to finding local and healthy foods, which will help drive the local food economy," says Jason Gilliland, director of HEAL and professor in Western's Faculty of Social Science. "Many people experience or perceive barriers to accessing local foods, which can prevent local food networks from expanding their capacity."

"I am proud that support from Employment Ontario has helped create an app that will improve access to local produce and encourage people to create healthy meals," says Reza Moridi, Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities. "Through leadership and vision, Western University and its partners are creating opportunities for business expansion in London and area and helping residents overcome barriers to local and healthy food."

App users are provided with daily customized messages containing information on seasonality and nutritional content of local foods, as well as recipes and dietary tips that have been developed with Brescia's renowned Food & Nutrition program. Each message, approved by registered dietitian and Brescia professor Colleen O'Connor, is also linked with information about local food providers whose ingredients are directly tied to the recipes.

The app is intended to help people achieve their individual food-related goals and promote the local food economy. As this app will increase the visibility of local food in neighbourhoods underserved by the conventional food system, Gilliland hopes it can also address inequalities in access to healthy foods and issues related to obesity and other diet-related health issues.

"Educating the public and spreading awareness of the multiple economic, environmental, and health benefits of consuming local food is a necessary first step to fostering greater demand," Gilliland says. "This change in food spending patterns can in turn contribute to jobs growth in local food and strengthen Ontario's economy."

Ontarians currently spend \$18 billion annually on food produced outside the province. Experts estimate that if every family in Ontario shifted \$10 of their weekly food purchases to local food,

Ontario businesses would create 10,000 new jobs and generate an additional \$2.4 billion in food sales annually.

As its user base grows, *SmartAPPetite* will be expanded throughout Southwestern Ontario, before being taken province-wide and, eventually, across Canada. The app was developed with seed funding from Western and the Province's Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities, and technical support provided by London firm InnerGeek.

The SmartAPPetite app is available for download at: www.smartappetite.ca

Employment Ontario, Ontario's integrated employment and training network, makes it easier for Ontarians to find the employment and training programs and services they need.

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