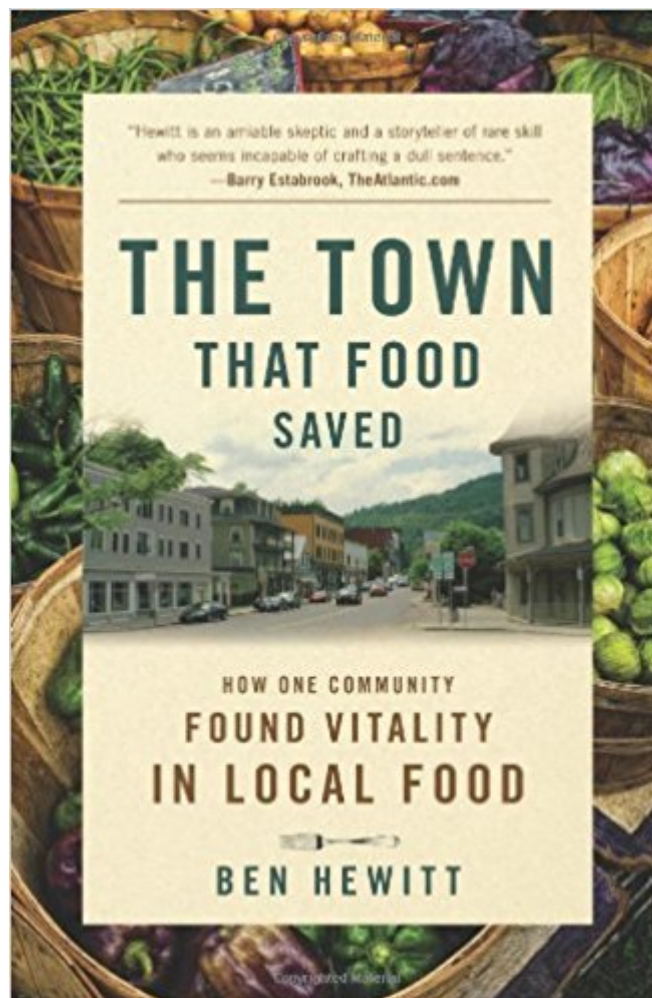




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# The Town That Food Saved: How One Community Found Vitality In Local Food



## Synopsis

Over the past few years, Hardwick, Vermont, a typical hardscrabble farming community of 3,000 residents, has jump-started its economy and redefined its self-image through a local, self-sustaining food system unlike anything else in America. Even as the recent financial downturn threatens to cripple small businesses and privately owned farms, a stunning number of food-based businesses have grown in the region. *The Town That Food Saved* is rich with appealing, colorful characters, from the optimistic upstarts creating a new agricultural model to the long-established farmers wary of the rapid change in the region. Hewitt, a journalist and Vermonter, delves deeply into the repercussions of this groundbreaking approach to growing food, both its astounding successes and potential limitations. The captivating story of an unassuming community and its extraordinary determination to build a vibrant local food system, *The Town That Food Saved* is grounded in ideas that will revolutionize the way we eat and, quite possibly, the way we live.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

Through the last decade the Northern Vermont town of Hardwick, population 3200, gradually evolved into a nationally respected source of local food and began to reap benefits. Hewitt, an area resident and family farmer, previously wrote about the area as a potential example of localized agriculture and economics, especially for a population whose residents' median income was below state average. But curiosity and healthy skepticism, along with his own investment, spurred him to this deeper investigation into the local personalities (and characters) driving the movement, and to observe, participate and reflect upon such odiferous activities as pig slaughtering. The resulting

blend of analysis and reflection highlights the possibilities and perils of what Hewitt argues will impact the agricultural and economic future for better or worse. (Apr.) Copyright © Reed Business Information, a division of Reed Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved. --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

A microscopic burg in northern Vermont may just be the epicenter of a new food movement, a scenario that alternately amuses, enthuses, and enrages its 3,200 residents. With a hardscrabble reputation left over from its heyday as a mining metropolis, Hardwick has had to rely on a can-do/can-do-without stoicism before, though the current economic downturn is certainly testing its mettle. Enter a group of young, energetic agribusinessmen—agripreneurs is Hewitt's newly minted term—whose vision for a revolutionary farm-to-table locavore movement aimed at turning Hardwick's, and possibly the nation's, food crisis around has captured national media attention and garnered local skepticism. The irony plays out in Hewitt's beguiling profiles of the players at the heart and on the periphery of dovetailing associations; from the charismatic media darling who produces heirloom seeds to the craggy erstwhile hippie couple who offer a mobile slaughtering service. Adroitly balancing professional neutrality with personal commitment, Hewitt engagingly examines this paradigm shift in the way a community feeds its citizens. --Carol Haggas --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

This is a somewhat glib, but lively look at a fascinating local economy in the Northeast Kingdom of Vermont. Hewitt's profiles of the people he talks with are often funny and a little edgy, but his "what do I know about any of this" attitude wears a little thin over the course of the book. This may be a generation gap issue; his tone seemed very, very familiar and typically Millennial. There is a lot of information here that you would be hard pressed to find anywhere else (other than by visiting yourself), so in that sense it is an invaluable account.

I live only 14 miles from the town of Hardwick and have witnessed its amazing transformation - in a good way. I love how the author shows both sides of this transformation because it's so apparent that the citizens of the surrounding (as well as the citizens of Hardwick) area have been so supportive of all that's going on there--both in purchasing the local products as well as supporting the new businesses, in word and deed. I wanted to read this book because I've noticed how things have changed in Hardwick and am delighted it is so. Onward and upward Ben Hewitt...am loving

your books! Thank you for your keen sense of observation and the gift of knowing the right questions to ask. But best of all, you know you don't have all the answers, but by putting this type of work out there, I believe the right answers will unfold all by themselves.

Locally raised and produced food is a hot topic, but much of what has been written about it is either hopelessly theoretical and preachy, or too personalized to be of much use (i.e., "I grew an amazing tomato and connected with the soul of my dead grandmother"). Mr. Hewitt starts from the premise that local food is better food, and some might fault him for that. But if you are in general agreement, then this book is a welcome examination of whether food can be raised, processed, and marketed locally in a way that benefits the entire community. The author thinks it can, and he makes his case through the stories of the individuals in an unlikely rural town who somehow came together to start a small, yet significant, revolution of sorts. Will it last? Can it be replicated elsewhere? These questions are, as yet, unanswered. Nonetheless, the success of Hardwick to date makes a fascinating case study, and a very engaging read. An additional bonus: Mr. Hewitt writes with a real wit and economy of style.

I was expecting a little more personal stories about his town and a little less science

The farm-to-table movement, CSAs, and locavores have become all the rage in recent years. This book takes an honest look at how food changed a small town in the Northeast Kingdom (NEK) of Vermont, and how that small town changed (and refused to change) because of the food items being produced. This is more than a story about food, though. It's a critical examination of rural America and the impact of the industrial food system. Hewitt struggles with tough questions and tougher characters. The reader may be left with more questions than those with which they began, but they will be deeper and more informed questions. Oh, and you might just want to go visit the NEK!

This book has been on my 'to read' list for a few years, so when I finally got around to reading it, I suppose I was expecting to be swept off my feet with new insights and a Disney-ish story about food literally saving a town. But really, this is a story about a small town---Hardwick, Vermont---that has gradually grown, both economically and philosophically, through agrepneurialism. Essentially, a number of local residents have started food-based businesses that have pumped vitality into this economically challenged town that was once home to 300 granite companies. Today it boasts High

Mowing Organic Seeds, Jasper Hill Cheese, True Yogurt, Pete's Greens, the Highfield Center for Composting, and a large CSA with 1,000 members for a community of 3,200. All told, it's probably added about 100 jobs, maybe more, so not exactly a renaissance. It hasn't been 'saved', but it's a good start, and it could be a model for other areas. Hewitt's main argument is that a centralized food system is bad for our country. And while I don't disagree, I don't buy his argument that the centralized industrial food system could collapse at any time. I think he overstates that possibility. Yet to understand how centralized our food system has become, he offers some statistics: in 1900 there were 76 million Americans and about 30 million farms. Today there are 307 million Americans and 2 million farms. A lot of food is being produced in a few places and trucked all over the country. Local food, he argues, is better for our people, our environment, and the well-being of our communities. I agree. Perhaps the problem I had with this book is that I've read so much of this before. Hewitt introduced me to the town of Hardwick and its residents and their personal stories, but not to the concept of local vs. industrial food. Michael Pollen did that years ago. Apparently Hardwick has received a lot of national attention (especially since the author wrote an article for Gourmet Magazine about the town a few years ago), but some of the attention has not been well-received by residents. Many of them are just doing what they've always done and don't see the big deal in it. Those residents who like the limelight would like to "sell" Hardwick's model to other towns, and if it can work, it's not a bad thing. I'm just not sure Hewitt needed over 200 pages (much of it, unnecessary detail) to tell this town's story.

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