

Know Your Flour, Know Your Food

GOOD Blog > [Adam Starr](#) on March 17, 2010 at 1:00 pm PDT



Why you should care who makes your flour, and how.

It's no secret how much we Americans love our sugary foods, and our flour is no exception. When we overly refine our grain into flour, we gain an extended shelf life, which we pay for with lost nutrients. That companies like Cargill and Monsanto appear less concerned with our ever-expanding waistlines than they do with their bottom lines shouldn't come as a surprise. Thanks to Big Ag and over-processing, most of our flour has been reduced to a big snowy Pixy Stix in a bag.

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waistlines than they do with their bottom lines shouldn't come as a surprise. But Stone-Buhr, a small flour milling company in Seattle is hoping to change this model. With David vs. Goliath ambitions, owner and CEO Josh Dorf's mission is simple: to sell sustainably farmed flour from small family farmers, and to deliver a superior product that will truly "perform in your recipe." It makes sense: Why spend all that money and time growing tasty organic food and raising free-range eggs only to compromise the flavor by adding low-quality flour to your recipe?

Dorf points out that while Stone-Buhr flour is not organic, the wheat they use is all certified by Food Alliance—the oldest and largest third-party certifier for sustainable agriculture. All the farmers in the program use a less disruptive "direct seed" technique that doesn't require the topsoil to be tilled. By farming in this manner they "pass over the field much less than conventional or organic farmers—using less fuel inputs than either," says Dorf.

Ironically, 10 years ago Monsanto actually flew some of these farmers to a test-farm in the Midwest to show them "no-till" agriculture. The farmers, galvanized by their experience, "banded together to develop an alternative method of growing wheat (and other crops), which worked at stopping soil loss." Their dedication to their technique makes sense. "These are multi-generational family farmers who have one asset: about 18 inches of top-soil," says Dorf. "They also saw real environmental benefits—in soil improvements, water usage, wildlife, and [used] less fuel to run their tractors." By joining forces with this progressive group of family farmers, Stone-Buhr's dream became realizable.

For Dorf and his farming cohorts, sustainability is about real stewardship of the land; it's about "responsibly producing a crop without depleting the vitality of the soil or surrounding areas." Their model recognizes the sustainability of human labor as well, stressing fair worker pay.

As a champion of accountability in our food system, Stone-Buhr developed a tool called "FindtheFarmer" that allows you to track your flour back to the sustainable wheat farmer who grew it. At a time when consumers are increasingly interested in the provenance of their food, why forget about such an important food staple as our flour?

Stone-Buhr's traceable flour is packed with all of the fiber, nutrients, and flavors you probably won't find in your pantry. Now, the next time you bake some delicious cookies, you shouldn't have any problem finding your farmer and sending him a deliciously homemade token of your appreciation.

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Read more: <http://www.good.is/post/know-your-flour-know-your-food#ixzz0iYUahYTX>