



OCTOBER 24, 2013

healthy + sustainable + affordable + fair

[www.foodday.org](http://www.foodday.org)

Center for Science in the Public Interest

MEDIA  
HOW-TO GUIDE

# healthy + sustainable + affordable + fair

Dear Food Day organizer,

Media coverage can help you build local excitement about your Food Day project or event. It can also start a conversation around food issues in your community and enable you to reach many more people than on your own. In 2011, Food Day was covered by 216 local news outlets in more than 140 cities, and received 332 TV mentions—a huge boost to organizing efforts like yours!

This guide is designed to help everyone—from novice to expert—generate media attention and coverage for Food Day

Feel free to contact us for assistance as you develop your plans for Food Day 2013 at [foodday@cspinet.org](mailto:foodday@cspinet.org) or 202-777-8392.

Good luck and thanks for joining us!

The Food Day Team



Center for Science in the Public Interest  
1220 L St. NW, Suite 300,  
Washington, DC 20005  
[foodday@cspinet.org](mailto:foodday@cspinet.org)  
202-777-8392



# A HOW-TO GUIDE FOR GETTING MEDIA ATTENTION TABLE OF CONTENTS

How To Talk About Food Day 2013 .....	4
Talking Points .....	4
How To Pitch And Place A Story .....	5
Likely Outlets .....	6
General Media Outreach Tips: .....	12
Utilizing Social Media: .....	12
Commentaries, Letters-To-The-Editor, And Opinion-Editorials: .....	14
How To Write And Submit A Radio Commentary Piece: .....	14
How To Write And Submit A Letter To The Editor (Lte): .....	15
How To Write And Submit An Opinion Editorial .....	16
Organizing And Earned Media Suggested Timeline ....	17



## HOW TO TALK ABOUT FOOD DAY 2013

As you prepare to reach out to reporters and others about Food Day, please feel free to rely on these core talking points and answers to frequently asked questions. Don't expect yourself to rattle them off verbatim; use them to guide your thinking and your preparation for interviews. You should develop personal talking points that explain why you are involved in Food Day, which food-related issues you would like to address in your community, and what will happen at your Food Day event. These will have the most resonance.

## TALKING POINTS

### What is Food Day?

- Food Day is a nationwide celebration and a movement toward more healthy, affordable, and sustainable food.
- Food Day takes place annually on October 24 to address issues as varied as health and nutrition, hunger, agricultural policy, animal welfare, and farm worker justice.
- Food Day's goals are to raise awareness about food issues among the broader public, strengthen and unify the food movement, and improve our nation's food policies.
- Food Day seeks to inspire community action in every city and state in the country, with individuals and organizations coming together on October 24 to learn, debate, and mobilize to improve our food system and the American diet.

### What are the Food Day priorities?

- **Promote safer, healthier diets.** The foods we eat should promote, not undermine, our good health. Yet, every year we spend around \$147 billion on direct and indirect diet-related health care costs.
- **Support sustainable and organic farms.** Sustainable farms are those that meet the needs of today without comprising the ability of future generations to do the same. Yet, of the \$16 billion a year allocated to federal farm subsidy programs, 74 percent of that fund goes to large agri-businesses that contribute to poor health and severe environmental degradation.
- **Reduce hunger.** Currently, around 50 million Americans are considered "food insecure," or near hunger, and SNAP (food stamp) participation is at an all-time high. SNAP is vital to reducing hunger in the United States, particularly among children, but the program's budget is under constant attack while federal measures to increase food access are minimal.
- **Reform factory farms to protect the environment and animals.** Concentrated Animal Feeding Operations require exorbitant amounts of water, antibiotics commonly used in human medicine, grain feed laced with chemical fertilizers and pesticides, and fossil fuels in order to continue supplying cheap meat. This results in soil erosion, water and air pollution, the formation of antibiotic resistant "superbugs," and many other problems for the environment, humans, and animals.
- **Support fair working conditions for food and farm workers.** Food and farm workers are some of the most marginalized in the United States. Many farmworkers earn well below poverty levels, are forced to work when ill and have no access to health care, and are exposed to poisonous chemicals on a daily basis.



### What happens on Food Day?

- In 2011, 2,300 events took place in all 50 states. Organizations and individuals use Food Day to celebrate what our food system does right, advocate for change, and highlight the work they are already doing.
- Events vary widely in scope. They can be as small as a vegetable identification contest in a kindergarten classroom, or as large as a massive food festival in a state park. College students are using Food Day to host debates and push for healthier foods on campus. Governors and mayors are using Food Day to issue proclamations or call attention to food-related problems among their constituents. A Food Day event could be as simple as a healthy meal with local ingredients for family and friends. You can also get inspired by numerous examples in the Food Day 2011 Report (download it from [FoodDay.org](http://FoodDay.org)).

### How can people get involved?

- Go to [FoodDay.org](http://FoodDay.org). Find and attend an event near you. Or better yet, register your own on the map. Food Day resources include a dinner party kit for families and healthy recipes to celebrate at home, among others.
- Share the idea of Food Day with your friends and family. Sign into [FoodDay.org](http://FoodDay.org) using your Facebook, Twitter, or email account and let everyone know you support healthy, affordable, and sustainable food.

### Who is behind Food Day?

- Food Day was created by the nonprofit Center for Science in the Public Interest, which works for improved nutrition and food safety policies. It is powered by hundreds of local and national organizations that advocate for sustainable agriculture, farmworker justice, animal welfare, better diets, and other pressing issues.
- Food Day's national partners include the American Public Health Association, National Sustainable Agriculture Coalition, Farmers Market Coalition, and many others. Notable food activists serve on the Food Day Advisory Board, such as food author Michael Pollan; restaurateur, author, and food activist Alice Waters; nutrition authorities Walter Willett, Kelly Brownell, and Marion Nestle; filmmaker Morgan Spurlock; and cookbook author and Food Network host Ellie Krieger.
- Food Day accepts no money from corporations, but welcomes their support in other ways. Organizations that donate time and resources to Food Day have the opportunity to raise the profile of their good work by tying them to a national movement.
- At the end, Food Day is a grassroots event, powered by local organizers across the country.

## HOW TO PITCH AND PLACE A STORY

The media are a prime target audience for publicizing Food Day's message. You will want to target individual reporters from specific media outlets and convince them to cover some aspect of Food Day.

To place a story in a media outlet, you can use many approaches to reach out to reporters. Below are the important steps to take before, during, and after your pitch to increase your likelihood of press coverage.

**Step 1: Choose an outlet for your story.** Think about how people in your area get their news — newspapers, radio, television, the internet. What are the most popular or influential sources? Make a list of places you'd like to get coverage and start a list of



journalists from those media outlets who are writing or speaking about issues related to food, nutrition, sustainability, agriculture, community events, farmers markets, etc. You may also be able to find an organization that already has a good press list.

**Step 2: Compile a media list.** Media lists are databases containing the names and contact information for members of the media. Your media list should contain the contact's name, outlet, coverage area ("beat"), email, telephone number, and a notes section where you can add relevant updates about the contact. The best way to build a media list is to evaluate who is already covering the issue(s) you're focused on emphasizing about Food Day. While one approach would be to include every writer at a particular news outlet on your list and hope that a pitch blasted out to all of them will reach a few relevant contacts, you'll have better luck if you create a list of top targets and pursue those people with focus. Note: a media list is always a work in progress. You should always be adding to and updating it according to the media coverage on your topic of interest.

#### **Likely Outlets**

- Daily papers
- Weekly free and commercial papers
- Local commercial radio show hosts (producers)
- Local public radio stations (usually the station manager or lead reporter depending on where you are)
- Local television affiliates (usually the news director)

**Step 3: Identify the best news hook.** Think about what makes your event and activities around Food Day unique, exciting, and relevant to the issues news outlets are covering in your area. Reporters and readers love a narrative — a storyline that helps them understand why something is new and different. Also, you're more likely to get coverage by focusing on your local story — the local event, the local people involved (e.g., the area farmers who provided the food for the event), and why the issue matters to your community.

**Step 4: If you're having an event, send a media advisory.** A **media advisory** is different than a press release — it is sent in advance of an event to urge the media to attend. Your advisory should clearly tell the media *what* the event is focused on, *where* and *when* the event is going to be, *who* will be there, and *why* the event is being held so they have the necessary information to research and send a reporter to your event.

A typical media advisory has the look of a press release, with your contact information up top and an attention-grabbing headline. The body of the advisory more closely resembles an invitation, and should very simply list the information you want the reporter to know.

Send your advisory to journalists 4-7 days prior to your event (earlier if you're sending it to a weekly paper). Once you send it to your targeted media outlets, follow up with a phone call 1-2 days prior to the event and then on the day of the event to find out if someone will be able to attend. During the event or immediately after it takes place, send out your press release.



**Step 5: Write the press release.** A **press release** is a written account of your event that provides details, commentary, quotes, and basic background about Food Day and the related issues you want to present to the media. Anything included in a press release is considered material a reporter could include in a story she decides to write, so it's essential to develop interesting and salient quotes and descriptions.

Your press release should provide a thorough summary of your announcement, event, or other plans for Food Day, with quotes from your spokespersons and any other local leaders whose support would be valuable. You will probably want to send several press releases for Food Day. For example, you could write releases announcing: the formation of your planning committee, your event details once finalized, a Food Day mayoral proclamation you've secured, and a summary of your event for media that could not



Use an embargo if you don't want the story released until a specific time.

(EMBARGOED until: October 18th 2013)

**\*\*MEDIA ADVISORY\*\***

Contact: Local Coordinator, 401-777-0960  
Food Day Committee Chairperson, 401-472-5920

**Thousands of Buffalonians to Celebrate Food Day at Broadway Market  
and City Dinner**

*Celebrating healthy, affordable food and calling attention to local food deserts*

- WHAT:** Thousands of Buffalonians will celebrate Food Day on October 24th. The city-wide events begin at Broadway Market and culminate with an official city dinner hosted by Mayor Christopher Robin at 6pm with one hundred simultaneous house and block parties across the city.
- WHO:** Mayor of Buffalo  
Dozens of children from the Buffalo Public School District  
Local chefs from X, Y, and Z restaurants  
Executive Director, Massachusetts Street Project  
Executive Director, Garden Roots
- WHERE:** Broadway Market, 999 Broadway, Buffalo, NY, 14212. Parking is available on the street and in lots.
- WHEN:** Wednesday, October 24, 10:45am-1:00 p.m.
- VISUALS:** Food Access Photojournalism Display, Live Cooking Demonstration with local chefs and dozens of children from Buffalo Public Schools

###



attend.

At the top of your press release, include the words “For Immediate Release” to tell reporters the information is now public. Also include your contact information. Next, include a headline that is succinct and intriguing. You can add a subtitle in italics to add more context to the headline. In the body of your press release, be sure to lead with the most important and newsy information in one paragraph, and don’t forget your news hook. The rest of the body of your release should contain additional details, why your event is important to Food Day and the community—supported by quotes from organizers and newsmakers—and relevant background information.

**Step 6: Send out your press release.** Your press release should generally go out the day of your announcement or event.

**Step 7: Call reporters.** When you make your pitch, explain how your event or report is unique and newsworthy. For example, “This is one of the thousands of events taking place around the country to celebrate Food Day. It’s part of a growing national movement to improve the food system, and affects all Americans.” With smaller outlets, a local angle is usually the best lead, as well as specifics on noteworthy attendees and whether a significant crowd is anticipated.

Be sure to respect reporters’ time. They are usually on deadline toward the end of the day so it is best to call in mid-morning. Keep to the point, and follow up as necessary. Try to



Use a date when you want the story released.

NEWS RELEASE

October 24, 2013  
Contacts: Local Coordinator, 401-777-0960  
Food Day Committee Chairperson, 401-472-5920  
For Immediate Release:

**Buffalonians Celebrate Food Day in a Big Way**  
*Community event calls attention to food access issues in Buffalo and celebrates national movement for healthy, affordable, and sustainable food*

Indicate city and state of event.

Buffalo, NY – Today, over two thousand Buffalo residents celebrated Food Day—the nationwide celebration and movement toward more healthy, affordable, sustainable food and a better food system—with a kick-off at Broadway Market and hundreds of events across the city, including an official City Dinner hosted by Mayor Christopher Robin at City Hall.

“Food Day is an opportunity to celebrate real food and the growing movement to fix the food system. I’m thrilled that thousands of people across the City of Good Neighbors joined in celebration and mobilized for change, starting with drawing attention to the neighborhoods on the West Side of Buffalo where residents lack access to sources of healthy, fresh, affordable food,” Mayor Christopher Robin said.



Speak to the reporter directly instead of leaving a voicemail.

Food Day is a nationwide celebration and a movement toward more healthy, affordable, and sustainable food culminating in a day of action on October 24 every year. Food Day is a chance to celebrate what our food system does right, and take action to bring us closer to a food system with “real food” that is produced with care for the environment, animals, and the women and men who grow, harvest, and serve it. Food Day’s priorities are to:

- \* Promote safer, healthier diets
- \* Supporting sustainable and organic farms
- \* Reduce hunger
- \* Reform factory farms to protect the environment
- \* Support fair working conditions for food and farm workers

Locally, Buffalonians joined together on Food Day to advocate for:

- \* An end to sugar-sweetened beverages sold in public schools and government buildings
- \* Additional city funding to healthy corner store initiatives that would help local markets and small grocers sell more healthy foods and purchase refrigeration units for fresh produce
- \* Additional nutrition education in Buffalo Public Schools to help students make healthy, informed food choices

Local growers provided fresh ingredients to many of Buffalo’s events. Many of the growers were recruited months in advance to contribute their produce and participate in discussions of the importance of sustainable agriculture to all attendees.

“We were excited to hear about Food Day many months ago and are happy to help out, and let people know about what local agriculture does for the community,” said John Smith, a local grower. “Food Day is not just a day-long event, but an opportunity to make a permanent change that supports a more sustainable and healthy future.”

###

### **Step 8: If a reporter is interested, prepare spokespeople for interviews.**

Interviews can be intimidating for people who have never spoken with reporters before, but there’s no reason to be nervous. Before conducting an interview, research the reporter’s background and previous stories she or he has written that relate to your issue. It’s important to understand the audience the reporter is writing for so you can target your answers—for example, does this reporter target college students, parents, the general public? This information should inform what points you highlight.

Anticipate what questions may be asked and have answers ready, identify potential issues that may arise, know the facts, and know what you don’t know. Identify the main two or three points you want to get across, and make sure you’ll hit those.

**Step 9: Things to do in an interview.** During an interview, there are many ways you can guide the conversation. When you introduce yourself, explain your position and particular areas of expertise, relating these to your event. For example, are you a teacher whose event focuses on bringing local farmers to classrooms for fresh produce demos? Make sure to emphasize your background in education and passion for teaching kids healthy life skills.



When you tell your story, keep it simple and cite the facts and figures that are relevant in an interesting way. Don't overwhelm the interviewer with too much at once—too many statistics are hard to take in!

Use colorful examples, personal experiences, and real-life comparisons to get your point across. Avoid jargon, statistics, and complex concepts when possible.

Although you do not have control over what questions the reporter asks, you are in control of what you say, and “bridging” your answers back to the messages you want to convey can help with this. Bridging simply means acknowledging the question that was asked, but pivoting your response back to the point you wish to make. This may sound something like: “That may be the case, but one thing to consider is...” or “That’s not my area of expertise, but I can tell you...” or “That’s an interesting question, it reminds me of...”

**Step 10: Things NOT to do in an interview.** Don't answer hypothetical questions but instead acknowledge that it's hypothetical and bridge to your message. Don't guess at answers—if you don't know something, acknowledge that, and avoid speculating. Always tell the truth. Avoid “yes” and “no” answers by seizing the opportunity to tell an interesting story. And lastly, avoid long and complex answers.

#### **Step 11: Helpful interview tricks to remember.**

##### **In a phone interview**

- Stand up to sound more energetic
- Smile—and your message will sound more appealing
- Speak clearly and not too fast

##### **When interviewing in person**

- Sit straight in your chair, slightly forward
- Use your hands effectively by keeping motions between your abdomen and shoulders
- Maintain eye contact with the reporter

##### **When a camera is present for a TV interview**

- Speak clearly and not too fast
- Avoid wearing any clothing that might cause distractions like loud prints and shiny jewelry

No matter what form your interview takes, allow pauses in the conversation. It's natural to be nervous and continue talking after you've made your point to avoid awkward silences. Just let the pause sit for a moment to avoid getting off message or creating an unintended sound-byte that becomes the story.

**Step 12: How to Pitch a Feature Story.** In the weeks leading up to Food Day, it's a good idea to try pitching a feature story to local reporters. Pitching a feature means focusing less on the actual event you will be hosting and instead generating interest in the broader issues. Because it is less focused on your Food Day event, feature pitching can take place a few weeks in advance of Food Day.

One way to pitch a feature story about Food Day is to identify a major issue related to food that has been in the news in your area and think of a way to use that issue to direct a reporter's interest to Food Day. For example, if you recently had an outbreak of foodborne illness in your area, you could contact the reporters who covered it and let



them know that there is a growing grassroots movement, Food Day, to prevent these types of outbreaks in the future. Or maybe data recently showed that a high percentage of families in your area are going hungry because they cannot afford food. You can use this news to turn attention to the Food Day movement to alleviate hunger nationwide, a great way to pitch Food Day as a feature story in your area.

It may be that there is not a major issue related to food that is currently in the news in your area. In this case, think about who you know that is participating in Food Day and has an interesting story to tell. Maybe you know a local chef who has committed to local sourcing for his or her menu or started a restaurant vegetable garden, or a school district administrator who is shaking up the lunch menu. Pitch these folks to reporters for potential feature profiles. By using their interesting stories, you can get food-related issues into the spotlight and make sure they bring up Food Day in their interviews.

Your approach to pitching a feature story can be done in a variety of ways, but usually it's best to call up the general news desk and ask who covers food-related issues or who is the feature stories/ feature editor. Once you know who your targets are, read up on a few of their recent stories to get a sense of the issues they cover and topics they might find interesting. Next, craft an email pitch that lays out the story idea you think would best suit them. Follow up with a call to discuss their interest in your idea in the days immediately following. Even if they decide not to write an advance feature story, it's another opportunity to plug Food Day and get them thinking about possible Food Day stories they might want to do or recommend to colleagues.

**Step 13: How to Pitch an Editorial Board.** In the lead up to Food Day, you should also pitch the editorial board of your local newspaper to try convincing them to write an editorial in support of Food Day. Just like getting your city government to pass a proclamation recognizing Food Day, getting your local newspaper to write an editorial recognizing the importance of Food Day can be quite powerful.

In order to get your newspaper to write a positive editorial, the best thing you can do is to find out who sits on the editorial board and contact them with an **editorial board memo**. The best approach to identifying the right contact is to either research the board on the newspaper's website, or call to find out. Some newspapers have multiple editorial writers, some only have one. If there are multiple contacts, find out who covers editorials on food, agriculture, local issues, etc.

Once you know who is in charge of writing editorials at your local paper, craft a short memo that explains what Food Day is, why it is important for your community, and why you believe the editorial board should write about its importance. In the memo, make sure to provide details about the event you will be hosting and make your best effort to tie Food Day into issues that are in the news locally. Your memo should conclude with an offer to come in and talk about Food Day directly with the editorial board member(s).

Once you've sent in your memo, make sure to follow-up by phone. These days, editorial boards are often short-staffed and they may not have time to sit down with you one-on-one. However, a call to flag your memo and remind the editors that you are available to answer questions about Food Day could lead to an editorial appearing without an in-person meeting.



If you are invited to talk with the editorial board, make sure you familiarize yourself with your talking points beforehand and follow the tips we've included for in-person interviews.

### GENERAL MEDIA OUTREACH TIPS:

**Be Helpful:** Reporters are busy, so make their job easier. Organize all the information they will need before your first contact. If you're holding an event, have some materials on hand about Food Day and the issues in case they'd like further information.

**Be Specific:** The more specific information you give reporters, the better. If the media knows what to expect they will be able to better cover your story. If a prominent figure is working with you, mention this. If you're holding an event, describe in detail where it will be held.

**Answer "Why":** Why is this newsworthy? This will be a key point for the media, so don't hide what you are advocating for – put that up front.

**Follow-up — Don't Harass:** If you sent a press release and you don't hear back right away, don't despair — follow up with a call to see if the outlet received what you sent them or needs more information. Be diligent but respectful – checking in is one thing, but if you harass the outlet they will be less eager to work with you in the future.

**Be Polite:** Always remember to thank people — it will go a long way the next time you have an announcement.

### UTILIZING SOCIAL MEDIA:

Social media, like blogs, Facebook, and Twitter, are essential tools for raising awareness about Food Day and sharing your event.

FoodDay.org is designed to fully integrate with these social media platforms, allowing you to share resources, respond to content, and promote your event throughout your networks with ease. To enable these features, visit [foodday.org/connect](http://foodday.org/connect) and hook up your Facebook and Twitter accounts to your [foodday.org](http://foodday.org) profile.

When you post hyperlinks to [foodday.org](http://foodday.org), be sure to use your personal tracking link, which you can find at [foodday.org/recruit](http://foodday.org/recruit). Using that link in tweets and posts will allow you to measure your influence as a Food Day leader.

Because [foodday.org](http://foodday.org) is built on NationBuilder, a web platform designed to support campaigns, the site incorporates the concept of political capital, or 'pc' – you can think of it as 'participation credits' if you like. You'll earn 'pc' when you host an event, sign up as a coordinator, share your personal tracking link via social media, or take another action through the site. You can find your current 'pc' on your public profile.

**Here are some more tips for using blogs, Twitter, and Facebook to share Food Day:**

Blogs—publish your own content, or get featured on [FoodDay.org](http://FoodDay.org)!

If you'd like to publish updates and photos from your Food Day efforts leading up to October 24 and beyond, consider creating your own blog to publish this content. You



can build your blog using Blogger, Tumblr, or WordPress, which are all free blog hosting sites that make publishing your own content very easy.

Want your blog posts to reach a wider audience? Submit a post to FoodDay.org! You can send your post about what you and your organization are planning for October 24, as well as photos of the action, to the Food Day team at [blog@foodday.org](mailto:blog@foodday.org). If your post is selected, it will be featured on the homepage!



#### Twitter—a tool for Internet conversation about Food Day.

A great way to create awareness for your event, Twitter allows you to hold conversations with followers and tell people what you are doing/thinking, what you are reading, and what you are planning.

Once you set up a Twitter account, you should follow local dietitians, health bloggers, reporters, and others to help draw attention to your event. Content on Twitter takes the form of 140 character posts called tweets. As you tweet about Food Day, be sure to use hashtags (#), which act as organic keywords to help tweets show up more readily in a search. Use a hashtag for your city and state to help publicize your event to local people. For example, @FoodDay2013 might tweet: “What’s happening in #Boston #MA for #FoodDay2013? Share your event at foodday.org!”

Use the **#FoodDay2013** tag when talking about your event or sharing your plans for October 24. For example, instead of writing Food Day, write #FoodDay2013. All tweets using this hashtag will show up on the homepage of foodday.org!

Engaging your followers on Twitter is an important way to get more people involved. Best practices include re-tweeting important tweets posted by others, thanking followers for re-tweeting your tweets, acknowledging new followers with a tweet or direct message, and replying to tweets when possible.

For ideas of who to follow, look at <https://twitter.com/cspi> or <https://twitter.com/foodday2013>.



#### Facebook—‘Like’ FoodDay.org and Share your event page to spread the word.

Sharing Food Day on Facebook is a powerful way to build the movement, and you can do it with the click of a button on foodday.org!

Read an interesting blog post, or see a cool event in your town on our site? Hit the Like button at the bottom of the web page, and you’ll have the opportunity to dash off a quick personal comment about the content before sending the post to your News Feed.

Are you hosting an event? Post a link to it on Facebook to encourage RSVPs.

Whatever content you post to Facebook from foodday.org, don’t be afraid to make a direct request that your friends Share the post. They’re your friends—they’ll do it!

Sharing on Facebook is one of the best tools we have to ensure that Food Day reaches a diverse audience, not just self-proclaimed foodies. Eating Real is for everyone!



### Other Networks—Pinterest, LinkedIn, Google+

Please share Food Day widely with your social media networks of choice: [foodday.org/recruit](http://foodday.org/recruit) has them all.



### Twitter

Use hashtags to publicize the event to your followers and beyond: #foodday2013, #eatreal, #food, #health, #nutrition, #localfood, #buylocal, #obesity, #foodsafety.

### Facebook

Food Day: <http://www.facebook.com/FoodDayEatReal>

### CSPI:

<http://www.facebook.com/cspinet>

## COMMENTARIES, LETTERS-TO-THE-EDITOR, AND OPINION-EDITORIALS:

Placing letters-to-the-editor or commentaries in local newspapers and radio stations can be an influential way to insert Food Day's viewpoint into an ongoing conversation. A **commentary** is a radio piece, usually on public radio stations, that expresses an opinion or perspective about an issue in the news. A **letter to the editor** (LTE) is just that — a letter written to a newspaper by a reader in order to respond to a previous article or to offer a newsworthy opinion.

### HOW TO WRITE AND SUBMIT A RADIO COMMENTARY PIECE:

**Step 1:** Decide when to submit a commentary piece and what to write about.

Commentaries are most likely to be aired when there is a public debate or coverage of a particular issue occurring, perhaps around rising food prices or cuts to nutrition education funding. It's best to emphasize a local/regional angle if possible (e.g., how local farmers producing environmentally-friendly and sustainable food are impacted by factory farms). The biggest rule is to *pitch the commentary before the news gets old* — news goes stale very fast.

**Step 2:** Write the commentary. Commentaries should clearly articulate the problem at the beginning of the piece (e.g., junk-food marketing toward children resulting in unhealthy eating habits). Then narrow the arguments down to a regional point (children in the area have a higher obesity rate than in other parts of the country). Conclude with a clearly defined call-to-action, such as "Food Day is a way we can urge our representatives to end junk-food marketing to children and adopt policies that encourage eating real, healthy, and sustainable foods." Radio stations have different time requirements for segments. Roughly speaking, every three words of copy are about one second of air time, so it's best to keep commentaries to 400 words. If the station's website does not indicate time requirements, be sure to ask so you know before you submit your text.



## HOW TO WRITE AND SUBMIT A LETTER TO THE EDITOR (LTE):

**Step 1:** Decide when to submit an LTE. LTEs are most often published in response to an article/editorial and point out an alternate perspective. In some cases it may make sense to submit an LTE that does not relate back to a particular article, but rather highlights an upcoming or recent local event, but keep in mind, these pieces are less likely to be printed (e.g., Food Day supports healthy eating and food production in concert with the environment).

**Step 2:** Choose what to write in an LTE. LTEs should be able to stand on their own and make sense to readers who may not have read the original article to which it is responding. Trying to cover several topics and making too many points reduces letters' impact, so try to keep to one subject.

**Step 3:** Write your LTE. LTEs should be focused and direct. Newspapers and online outlets have different word count requirements for LTEs, so look up the requirements on the newspaper's website. In general, it is best to keep them as short and succinct as possible (usually between 150- 250 words).

**Step 4:** List your info. Always include your credentials and contact information, as most publications will require verbal verification that you have authored the piece. If you do not provide contact information your letter will most likely not be published!

**Step 5:** Follow-up after you submit. Most newspapers have areas online where you can post comments to articles. If your LTE does not get placed, consider going online and adding your letter as a comment to a story.



OCTOBER 24, 2013

Dear Editor,

Obesity is a problem not only in our neighborhood and our state, but all across America. This comes as a result of many problems with our food system. My home is located in an area sometimes known as a “food desert” – which means healthy, affordable food is difficult to obtain because there are not supermarkets or other grocers in the area that sell healthy, fresh foods.

The readily available ‘food’ I have easy access to is ultra-processed and loaded with fat, calories, and sodium. This has to stop. I want access to real food, and by this I mean real, delicious, affordable, and convenient food that makes me feel healthy.

This is why I’m helping with Food Day on October 24th, a nationwide movement to break through the noise and start conversations with neighbors and leaders about what we eat, how we eat it, who is producing it, who can afford it, and if it’s

• • • • •  
SAMPLE  
• • • • •



helping the local economy. I am joining with thousands of activists and hundreds of organizations across the nation to transform the American diet and start making necessary changes to the food system.

Together we will demand healthy, affordable, sustainable food because It's Time to Eat Real, America. Check it out at [www.foodday.org](http://www.foodday.org)

Sincerely,  
Jennifer Smith  
Buffalo Food Day Coordinator

## HOW TO WRITE AND SUBMIT AN OPINION EDITORIAL

**Step 1:** An opinion editorial is longer than a LTE and is not usually linked to a particular article. It functions as a stand-alone article. Op-eds usually highlight an issue, analyze the parts, and present a solution. Newspapers are looking for pieces that make arguments that are not made by one of the publication's journalists or columnists. Make sure your writing is clear, organized, timely, and newsworthy.

**Step 2:** Check the op-ed regulations of the publication and write your op-ed. Some publications ask that pieces contain fewer than 800 words. Write using your own voice – don't use the style you see journalists use. Again, act quickly because news changes quickly. If there are relevant articles about food issues, it might be a good time to submit your piece.



Join the nationwide celebration of all things food on October 24, 2013. Food Day seeks to bring together all aspects of food from sustainable agriculture, to nutrition and health, to access and affordability. Food Day is more than just another day. It is a smart, timely grassroots campaign to raise awareness and find solutions to problems inherent in our food system.

Food Day is based around five priorities: promote safer, healthier diets; support sustainable and organic farms; reduce hunger; reform factory farms to protect the environment; support fair working conditions for food and farm workers.

When 63 percent of Americans are obese or overweight, 25.8 million of them children, and diet-related diseases like diabetes and heart disease are skyrocketing, it's hard to ignore the problem. Diet-related health is a visible, and talked, about problem, but there is a lot more to food than meets the eye. Food Day draws attention to: food access issues, the wages of workers in the food system, the consequences of concentrated animal feeding operations (CAFOs), the importance of sustainable agriculture, and promoting health and nutrition for all.



Sponsored by the nonprofit Center for Science in the Public Interest, Food Day is backed by some of the most inspirational voices in the food movement, including Michael Pollan, Marion Nestle, Daphne Oz, and Will Allen. More than 100 organizations--including the American Public Health Association, Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics, National Sustainable Agriculture Coalition, National PTA, and the National Farmers Market Coalition--are gearing up make a difference.

Food Day 2011 saw over 2,300 events organized in all 50 states. This year, people will celebrate by hosting dinners, farm tours, debates, movie screenings, and much more. Visit [www.FoodDay.org](http://www.FoodDay.org) for more information, or contact me at [xxxx@aol.com](mailto:xxxx@aol.com).

## ORGANIZING AND EARNED MEDIA SUGGESTED TIMELINE

September	12	Get your events on the map for media attention!
	23	Kick-off LTE campaign
	26-20	Pitch feature stories
October	20	Media advisory (for an Oct 24 event)
	21	Press calls (for an Oct 24 event)
	24	Press release (for an Oct 24 event)



## Food Day and CSPI

Food Day was created by the Center for Science in the Public Interest (CSPI) and grew with the support of hundreds of national partner groups. CSPI is a consumer advocacy organization whose twin missions are to conduct innovative research and advocacy programs in health and nutrition, and to provide consumers with current, useful information about their health and well-being. Visit <http://www.cspinet.org> to learn more.



OCTOBER 24, 2013

---

**[www.foodday.org](http://www.foodday.org)**