In the article “Food, Place and Authenticity: Local Food and the Sustainable Tourism Experience,” the author Rebecca Sims argues that encouraging tourists to purchase local foods (whether for immediate consumption or as a souvenir) improves the sustainability of tourism and positively affects the local economy. The author focuses her study specifically on two rural regions of the United Kingdom: the Lake District in the North-West of England and Exmoor in the South-West of England. Both are popular destinations for tourists interested in camping, biking and hiking because of the beauty of the landscape. In addition, the Lake District is famous for Cumberland sausage, Kendal Mint Cake, and Grasmere Gingerbread. Exmoor is known for cream teas, cider and cheddar cheese.

Sims speaks about “Integrated Rural Tourism” (IRT), tourism that “is focused upon achieving all-around social, economic and environmental benefits” (Sims 2009 p.323). The author claims that tourists’ desire to have an authentic experience (rather than being an ignorant tourist) has led them to eat as the locals do, and as a result of that, buy local food, which supports the local economies, as well as reduces food transportation around the globe.

I found the article to be very interesting, although I would be curious to see the same studies and methodologies applied in a less developed country than England. I have to wonder if in a society in which local people are having enough trouble feeding themselves and their children if tourists coming in and eating all of their food has a positive effect, at least psychologically. However, I tend to agree with the author’s claims, at least theoretically. She also links IRT with the Slow Food Movement, which is my Group Project subject as well as something that I very much believe in. Overall, I thought this was an interesting and informative article.