

## A slice of heaven

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"American Pie" was a 1971 smash hit for folk singer Don McLean, but Sustainable Table put the music into motion when they sampled pies across the country.

The group honored pie-making traditions by baking, tasting and comparing varieties of pies during its recent 38-day journey from southern California to New York City.

Diane Hatz, founder and director of Sustainable Table, estimated she sampled 200 pies on the trip -- sometimes as many as 12 to 15 forkfuls in one stop.

There was Oyster Mushroom Pie in Jackson, Wyo., and Tofu Pot Pie in Ypsilanti, Mich.

During the group's Chicago stop, Hatz said, "As of now, the best pie I had is the blueberry pie from the Solstice Cafe in Corvallis, Oregon. They don't cook the blueberries. They serve fresh lemons up front and homemade whipped cream around the top. It was a burst of summer in every bite. I never had blueberry pie like that before."

The pie, which serves six to eight, uses 18 tablespoons of organic butter.

"We had a peach pie in Laramie [Wyoming]," Hatz continued. "The woman who cooked it was a personal chef and she was apologetic about how she had to get her peaches from Colorado -- which was only 30 miles away. It's still local food. If you get whole food picked when its ripe, the flavor speaks for itself. And it was definitely the best crust on the tour."

Downstate farmer/consultant Karen Hudson even brought along her homemade peanuts-and-beer pie for the group's journey from Chicago to Muncie, Ind.

For a 9-inch pie, Hudson deployed a 12-ounce bottle of Miller High Life (you can use any kind of beer) and six ounces of salted peanuts, chopped. She also used half a cup of brown sugar, a teaspoon of vanilla extract and three organic eggs, separated.

"When you lose the diversity of pies, you lose the diversity of the country," Hatz said after sampling some hearty "Beer Nuts" pie. "Tonight we're at Crust [the organic pizza place in Wicker Park]. That's pizza pie, which is also part of it.

"Pies symbolize the circle of life."

Pie recipes are shared at [www.sustainabletable.org/road\\_trip/home.php](http://www.sustainabletable.org/road_trip/home.php).

*Dave Hoekstra*