



## SPUD-miles

Enquiring minds can now tot up their meal's travel miles – at least for items available through SPUD, a Vancouver-based grocery delivery service.

"Our customers said that they wanted to buy more locally ... [so we started reporting] the distance that each of our products travels to get to our warehouse," says SPUD president David Van Seters.

The figures, offered on SPUD's website, make for

interesting comparison shopping: Amy's Kitchen enchiladas trek 1,432 km to get to SPUD, while Que Pasa enchiladas saunter a mere 15 km; Hardbite chips journey 37 km, while the Kettle brand equivalent voyages 600 km.

The figures aren't a product's full travel tally; for processed products, the other big factor is how far component ingredients travelled to get to the manufacturer. But for produce,



**[530km]**

the numbers provide a fairly accurate travel total, enabling a menu planner watching his family's carbon intake to assess whether it's better to whip up cabbage soup from Delta's

finest cabbage (28 km), borscht with Oregon beets (530 km), or cream of Californian broccoli (1,753 km).

The numbers also contain some happy surprises. For example, the organic basil on the company's website last December wasn't from Mexico or California, as one might expect – it had come only 50 km, all the way from sunny Surrey.

Pesto, anyone?

## Say goodbye to your *thermostat*

It used to be that when you felt hot or cold, you'd push the little dial on your thermostat up or down accordingly. But that's so old-tech. Students at SFU's School of Interactive Arts and Technology are building an "adaptive living interface" that promises to send the thermostat the way of the rotary phone. (Hang on to your Honeywell: it may be worth a fortune on eBay in a decade or two.)

The SFU interface will not only regulate the air temperature in your home, but will measure all factors at play when you hit your personal comfort level, including measures that don't show up on a thermometer, such as radiant heat and air circulation.

"We want to use the project to visualize what the house is actually doing, how it's performing, how changes you make might improve its performance," explains Rob Woodbury, a professor at SFU's School of Interactive Arts and Technology and one of the project leaders.

The actual interface will likely be a BlackBerry or similar mobile communication device that is linked to sensors and controls in the home. "We want to use mobile technology so that people are better informed of the consequences of their decisions," notes Woodbury.

The interface will be wired into a demonstration home to be exhibited at the U.S. Department of Energy's Solar Decathlon in the fall of 2009. The University of Waterloo is drawing the archi-



tectural plans for the demonstration solar house, while Ryerson University is providing the technical engineering expertise. The house will be on permanent display Toronto following the Washington exhibition.