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GROWING THE SLOW FOOD MOVEMENT
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By Robin Bradley Hansel

Slow Food. Good Food.

Slow food supporters in 150 countries around the world are part of a grassroots movement to link the pleasure of good, clean and fair food with a commitment to their community and the environment. This global movement opposes the fast food standardization of taste and culture and the unrestrained power of food industry multinationals and industrial agriculture. In America, the slow food movement is enjoying a groundswell of support through individuals and nonprofits for local, organic, humanely raised, family-farm identified food.

The Pioneer
Alice Waters

A semester abroad in Paris awoke Alice Waters to a world of fresh food. She returned to Berkeley, California, ready to share her revelation of how food fits into life in a delicious way. When she opened Chez Panisse in 1971, that vision was realized. From her Berkeley restaurant she championed local agriculture by featuring sustainably-sourced, organic and seasonal ingredients including meat, poultry and fish. This act spearheaded the farm-to-table movement, and to this day still inspires chefs, cooks and foodies around the world.

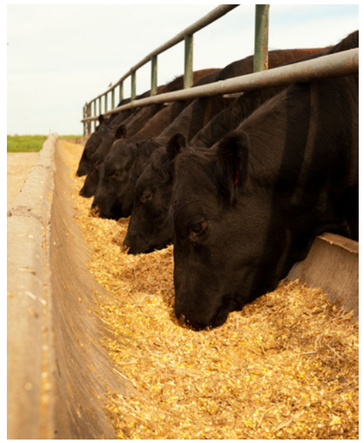
Four decades in, and her work not only endures but continues to impact the culinary world. The vice president of Slow Food International since 2003, Waters was recently named one of *Time* magazine's 100 Most Influential People of 2014. She received the American Honorary Member of American Academy of Arts and Letters in 2014 and the Chevalier de la Legion d'honneur in 2010, and was co-recipient, with Kofi Annan, of the Harvard Global Environmental Citizen Award in 2008. She wrote 14 books including *The Art of Simple Food I & II, 40 Years of Chez Panisse: The Power of Gathering* and *The Edible Schoolyard: A Universal Idea.*

The slow food movement is gaining currency and pushing back against a fast food culture. While fast food promotes speed, availability and uniformity, slow food encourages taste, tradition and community. Waters believes that the best-tasting food is organically and locally grown and harvested in ways that are ecologically sound by people who are taking care of the land for future generations.

Of course, Waters' work doesn't stop with her restaurant. The enjoyment of clean, sustainable food is for all, including children. Twenty years ago she began working with Berkeley's Martin Luther King Jr. Middle School, which eventually launched into The Edible Schoolyard, an innovative model for public education that integrates food and agriculture into the core academic curriculum with the mission to promote a free, sustainable school lunch for all students, K-12. To date, there are more than 3,700 network member programs in 53 countries.

The question of whether or not to consume meat is a delicate subject. Creekstone Farms Premium Black Angus Beef program takes extra steps to ensure that their cows are handled compassionately and humanely. Nathan Stambaugh, Creekstone's national director of foodservice sales, describes their temperature-controlled indoor processing facility in Kansas, designed by Dr. Temple Grandin, which helps minimize the animals' stress: "When it's hot, we have mist machines to keep them cool. When it is cold, the facility is heated." The processing facility has multiple clean pens with running drinking water and ample space for each small group to rest. "Walkways up to harvest are curved, because cattle naturally prefer to follow that pattern," says Stambaugh. "It also prevents them from seeing what's in front of them. This ensures that the animals don't stress out or tense up in the seconds leading up to harvest."

The USDA-certified Creekstone Farms works only with local U.S. farmers to pasture-raise their cows and maintain total control from farm to fork. "Not only do we handpick our cattle, we harvest and butcher them ourselves and then we work with our distributors and chefs to bring our product to the public," says Stambaugh. "We also focus on whole carcass utilization, including selling the pericardial sac to a medical company for human heart transplants. Nothing gets wasted in our process."



Learn Your Labels

Food labeling is confusing, and in actuality some food labels mean nothing at all. Packaged foods marked "all-natural" are not necessarily pesticide-free. They may contain artificial ingredients and genetically modified organisms (GMOs). The U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) says it "has not developed a definition for use of the term 'natural' or its derivatives." Despite that, 59 percent of consumers look for this label before they purchase according to the Consumer Reports National Research Center.

The term "free range" for poultry means that "producers must demonstrate to the Agency that the poultry has been allowed access to the outside" according to the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA). The decision on how much or how little time birds spend outside is up to the individual farmer.

The USDA "organic" label for meat, eggs and dairy products means that 95 percent of the ingredients must be organic. The other 5 percent may be non-organic substances that producers can add to food without sacrificing the organic claim. The National List of Allowed and Prohibited Substances is available for viewing at ecfr.gov. There are about 200 substances on the list. The "100% organic" USDA label means the meat, eggs and dairy products are free of antibiotics and growth hormones, GMOs and grown from fertilizers free of synthetic or sewage components. Organic purists argue that 100% organic is impossible due to factors such as nearby factories, GMO pollution, pesticide drifts and water used to irrigate crops.

Other common misconceptions include the term "humanely raised," which does not require any farm inspection to verify that animals have adequate living space with access to the outdoors or that animals are humanely slaughtered. "Often the 'natural' beef, which you see in the store, is USDA Natural, which means 'minimally processed.' These animals were still treated with hormones and antibiotics. ... 'Organic' means that the animal was fed government-certified organic feed but really tells nothing about the humane handling of the animals," says Creekstone Farms' Nathan Stambaugh.

There is reliable third-party labeling in regards to the humane treatment of animals: Humane Farm Animal Care (HFAC), Global Animal Partnership (GAP), Animal Welfare Approved (AWA), American Humane Certified and the American Grassfed Association (see logos).

Though less than 1 percent of U.S. farms are organic, sales from these farms increased by 82 percent since 2007, reaching $3.1 billion in 2012. Certification of this increasingly diversified population of farmers is time-consuming and expensive. Farm Aid, a nonprofit that promotes fair farm policies, also lists these certified labels: Certified Naturally Grown (CNG), Fair Trade Certified and Non-GMO Project Verified.

What's the Deal with GMOs?

Around the world the discussion of genetically modified organisms (GMOs) rages on. Should the modifications be allowed or are they unethical? Do consumers have the right to know if their food has GMOs? Are they safe or harmful? These are just a few of the questions surrounding the pervasive debate.

Currently 64 nations require labeling of genetically engineered food. In the U.S. there are 84 bills on GMO labeling in 29 states according to the National Conference of State Legislatures. In the past few years, ballot initiatives advocating for transparent food labeling were narrowly defeated in California and Washington while legislation successfully passed in Vermont in May 2014. The Grocery Manufacturers Association (a pro-GMO organization) and other trade associations filed a federal lawsuit to block Vermont's new labeling law shortly thereafter.

Opinions are mixed, but a 2013 New York Times poll showed that 93 percent of Americans support labeling and clearly identifying foods that have been genetically modified or engineered.

Most major scientific bodies and regulatory agencies have concluded that genetically modified foods are as safe as conventional or organic crops. Others argue this is highly unlikely since seed companies control the crop research. Scientists must ask the corporations for permission before publishing independent research on genetically modified crops, according to a *Scientific American* article. Because these agritechs own the patents on their seeds, scientists who conduct research must purchase the seeds and sign a user agreement, which forbids the use of the seed for independent research. Essentially, scientists cannot conduct seed comparisons, examine potential environmental side effects or publish work without the approval of the agritechs.

Agrochemical corporations, such as Monsanto, Dow, DuPont and BASF, have long promised that genetically modified crops could help feed the world, but that has been an empty promise according to an *MIT Technology Review* article. The biotechs have sued smaller farmers over the cross-pollination of their patented seeds. In general these biotechs dominate the sale of seeds and many believe they threaten the livelihood of small and independent farms.

To learn more about GMOs in individual states, visit the Non-GMO Project's website at nongmoproject.org. In addition, TakePart, in partnership with *Consumer Reports*, recently launched its Know Your Labels, Know Your Food campaign (takepart.com/food-labels).

Locavores Unite!

The 2012 Census of Agriculture reported a loss of 95,500, or 4 percent, of American farms since 2007. At the same time, the number of farms with 2,000 or more acres grew. The number of farms earning $500,000 or more increased by 33 percent. The census showed that farmers are now paying 36 percent more in feed costs, fertilizer purchases, fuel and pesticides. Profit margins remained slim for all except the 4 percent of million-dollar farms that happen to produce 66 percent of the country's food. For financial reasons many small farmers sell through shorter supply chains. Consumers who eat food produced within 100-250 miles of their homes are known as locavores because they desire fresh and simple local food.

Buying options include Community Supported Agriculture (CSAs), co-ops and buying clubs. A CSA is a subscription service for delivery of local farm products. Members sign up in advance of growing season and pay a pre-set fee to receive a share of that farmer's upcoming harvest. Co-ops are member-owned organizations where participants shop at discounted prices at a central store location. Buying clubs are made up of a group of people who pool their resources to buy food at discounted prices for better selection and quality. Often, buying clubs like anniesbuyingclub.com and doortodooorganics.com offer online options. Since 2002, U.S. farms selling via farmers markets, roadside stands and pick-your-own operations has shown a dynamic growth, up 60 percent since 2002. The 2012 census noted that these direct farm sales totaled $1.3 billion.

Small, Sustainable & Successful

It's long been known, but often forgotten, that farming is the backbone of the United States. After all, the average person relies on produce at grocery stores conveniently located at what seems like every corner of every town. Many American farms are doing their share by developing outreach programs that positively impact the health of their communities. Here's a tasty sampling of smart farm owners throughout the country. Chances are, one is located near you.

Did you know? Women are taking a larger role in agriculture. The share of U.S. farms operated by women nearly tripled over the past three decades, from 5 percent in 1978 to 14 percent by 2007 according to a 2013 report by the U.S. Department of Agriculture.

AMBER WAVES FARM Amagansett, NY
amberwavesfarm.com

Co-founders Amanda Merrow and Katie Baldwin of Amber Waves Farm connect people to their food and those who grow it, and in turn inspire more conscious culinary choices. Amber Waves invites the Long Island community for school visits and tours, hosts seasonal apprentices and provides vegetables to some of the Hamptons' best restaurants.

REDWOOD HILL FARM Sebastopol, CA
redwoodhill.com

A passion for her goats spurred owner Jennifer Lynn Bice of Redwood Hill Farm® (founded by her parents in 1968) to become the nation's first Certified Humane® goat dairy in 2005. The farm is 100 percent solar powered and produces artisan goat cheese, yogurt and kefir.

VITAL FARMS® Austin, TX
vitalfarms.com

Family-owned Vital Farms® set the national Animal Welfare Approved standard for laying hens. Catherine Stewart and husband Matt O'Hayer started the farm with 50 rescued organic hens in 2007. Today the company is the largest producer of pasture-raised eggs available across the country.

GLASER ORGANIC FARMS Miami, FL
glaserorganicfarms.com

One of Florida's first certified organic farms is a small local farm with national outreach. For more than 30 years, Tracy Fleming and husband Stan Glaser have provided naturally grown organic produce and gourmet raw vegan food created with their own certified organic produce. Their website ships everything from beverages to personal care products with UPS delivery nationwide.

THREE SPRINGS FARM Oaks, OK
threespringsfarm.com

Smaller by design and happy to stay that way is Three Springs Farm whose motto is "sustainably grown from the seed up." Emily Oakley and husband Michael Appel are committed to a new generation of farming practices. Featured in the book *Farmer Jane*, Oakley is interested in agrobiodiversity and the role of women in farming.

LIVE POWER COMMUNITY FARM Covelo, CA
livepower.org

Another *Farmer Jane* inspiration committed to biodiversity is Gloria Decater, who runs a 40-acre, solar electric and horse-powered farm founded in 1973. Decater and family welcome adults from the U.S. and abroad in work-study programs ranging from a few months to three years.

PIE RANCH Pescadero, CA
pieranch.org

Pie Ranch is a model center of sustainable farming and food system education. The nonprofit working farm regularly hosts youth from diversely populated high schools for weekend residential programs. Co-founders Nancy Vail, Jered Lawson and Karen Heisler, their team and community educators help students learn how food (for example, a delicious pie) makes its way from land to table.

BLUE MOON ACRES Buckingham, PA, and Pennington, NJ
bluemoonacres.com

Blue Moon Acres' Kathy and Jim Lyons grow and sell certified organic specialty lettuce, microgreens and baby produce to restaurants and chefs throughout the northeast from their two small farms in Pennsylvania and New Jersey.

Reducing Our Food Waste Footprint

Waste reduction should be on your mind. On a global scale, animal husbandry and feed production use more than 70 percent of all available agricultural land according to *Waste*, a short film that shares shocking waste facts. For instance, each year food that goes uneaten takes up an area that is one and a half times the size of the U.S.

How can you diminish your waste footprint? The Think.Eat.Save campaign of the Save Food Initiative provides practical tips to reduce food waste such as buying only the food you really need. Improving your storage techniques to increase food longevity and becoming more aware that many foods can be eaten past sell-by dates and composting food waste also helps.

Next, check out pay-what-you-can community cafes, the latest trend in food waste reduction. Susan Preston Owen opened F.A.R.M. (Feed All Regardless of Means) Café in Boone, North Carolina, to help eliminate hunger and reduce food waste in her local community. Owen's business allows people to come together and enjoy high quality organic food straight from local sources. In New Home, Pennsylvania, Rolling Harvest Food Rescue, founded by Cathy Snyder, collects donated produce from local farms and immediately distributes it to nonprofit community hunger relief agencies. Sarah Ramirez of BeHealthy Tulare is committed to feeding her impoverished California Central Valley neighbors, many of whom harvest produce for others, yet are unable to earn enough income to feed their families. Ramirez and her nonprofit volunteers glean excess produce from growers and residents and distribute it to local food banks. ■