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Central Florida Food Culture: The Changing Landscape

*A Project Submitted in Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirement for the Degree of
Master of Liberal Studies*

By

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Chapter 1—Our Central Florida Food Culture

“A nation’s diet can be more revealing than its art or literature.”¹

Like the well-organized and productive parent she is, Janey is making a list to help her remember the food items she needs to pick up to feed her family for the next couple days. Her list is fairly familiar to many looking to keep their family eating well: eggs, milk, bread, peanut butter, jam, spinach, chicken, fruit, and potatoes. Janey has heard that the best way to keep her family healthy is to make sure they have a variety of nutritious food available. After she finishes agonizing over her meal plan for the next evening, the hard decisions begin. Does she go to her local supermarket and buy everything she needs there? If so, does she buy organic or conventional produce? Eggs with added Omega-3s or cage free? What percentage fat milk and should it be organic? Bakery bread, bread from the bread aisle, and what kind – white, wheat, multi-grain, or something else? Should her peanut butter and jam be organic, all-natural, sugar-free, not to mention whole fruit preserves, jelly, crunchy or creamy? And oh my goodness, the chicken – should it be organic, humanely-raised, conventional, fresh, frozen, or pre-cooked? What about the local farmer’s market? Can she get everything she needs there or will she need to make a second trip? How far away is the market and when is it open? Does it accept credit cards or cash

¹ Eric F Schlosser, *Fast Food Nation: The Dark Side of the All-American Meal* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 2001), 3.

only? She has a local produce store near her home, should she try there first? What if they do not have everything she is looking for, does she change her list or her shopping venue? What if the local produce is not organic? What if the milk is not pasteurized?

Decisions, decisions. Luckily, for Janey, she has a moderate income and lives in Central Florida where she is blessed with a growing list of ways she can obtain the healthy food she is striving to feed her family. She can visit local supermarkets and choose organic foods, visit farmer's markets and local produce shops for a variety of local, in-season produce, milk, eggs, honey, and meat, and she can even visit the farmers themselves if she would like and purchase directly from them.

Like many people, Janey is attempting to navigate our treacherous food landscape and make it home with meals for her family that are fresh, healthy, and responsibly produced. Within the communities in and around Central Florida, there is a growing effort to reshape and reclaim our food culture away from the overly processed foodstuffs that populates the majority of the shelves in our supermarkets. The mission and motivation of the programs, organizations, and people working within the greater movement reflect the diversity of the national alternative agricultural movement and can draw on their desire for superior taste, improved environmental health, assurance of food safety, improved personal health, and the need to support local, independent farms and farmers. Although these groups continue to make great progress in their work to provide and educate the consumer about local, seasonal, organic, and

sustainable foods, much more work is needed to be able to truly reclaim our food culture in Central Florida.

In this paper, I will explore the community in Central Florida that is working to reshape our food landscape. I will provide a framework in this work that will create a way to begin classifying the movement of individuals and groups in Central Florida as they work to reeducate themselves about the local food landscape and reframe their expectations about food, while attempting to change their eating, shopping, and cooking habits. The individuals and groups work together as a community to impact the larger food culture in Central Florida and spread the growing movement that centers on a shift from a highly-processed food product to a more traditional food culture. This framework will be based on contributions from existing literature on our national food culture and interviews with many of Central Florida's nutritional education programs, community gardening programs, county extension office community education programs (nutrition, gardening, cooking), as well as the activists, local farmers, and local market owners who are attempting to bring local, seasonal produce and more traditional cooking and eating habits into mainstream Central Florida. As I spoke with groups and individuals participating in the reformation of the local food movement, a few key ideas kept emerging: education/reeducation and access. These two themes seem to be integral to their efforts to strengthen and spread the shift to a more local, sustainable, and traditional food culture in Central Florida. As people working to either educate/reeducate others or themselves and improve access to the quality food they promote interact with each other and

the larger community, they seem to fall into four distinct stages or Tiers of development. These Tiers include both the groups and individuals looking to reeducate and improve access, as well as the typical community members they wish to influence and will provide the framework for further discussion of this changing community in this paper. During my investigations, I also participated in many of the programs and community events that are offered to residents in the Central Florida community and those experiences are included where relevant as examples of our how individuals can participate in their reeducation and connect to the changing food landscape.

In this investigation, however, a few questions continually arose. How sustainable is this movement in Central Florida? How many people can it truly impact? Can everyone participate in this movement? What about demographics; is there a group of people that are “left behind,” so to speak? What would it take to truly shift our culture in a way that would be impactful and meaningful on a large scale? Will this movement always be for the few, the trendy, the relatively wealthy? What I found is that while the movement is growing in Central Florida and more and more people are participating in some form or another, the need for a complete culture shift to reinforce and make permanent the more traditional lifestyle required for the movement’s sustainability is still a significant amount of time away and may never truly arrive without outside intervention—governmental, environmental, or both.

The Food Culture Revolution in America

America is in the grips of another revolution, a food culture revolution, and people are starting to take notice. Over the past decade, social scientists, doctors, scientists, public health officials, nutritionists, journalists, politicians, and many others turned their focus (and worry) towards the ways Americans interact with food – the way we encounter, manufacture, and consume food products. They are studying the nutritional (and chemical) makeup of our diet; our new cultural mores surrounding when, how and with whom we eat; and how we choose what is for dinner, amongst other areas. One of the main reasons our food culture is garnering so much attention is apparent to anyone spending just a few minutes in a crowd, reading the news, or watching a program on television: America is overweight, unhealthy, and rapidly exporting our western-style diet and it's related afflictions all over the world. In 2009-2010, 35.7% of adults of the United States were obese and 16.9% of children and adolescents were obese.² One of the main causes of this staggering statistic, our western-style diet – a diet of highly processed foods laden with sugar, salt, and fat, not to mention a multitude of synthetic chemicals, taste-agents, and preservatives, is the main target of this food culture revolution.

Those participating in this national food culture revolution acknowledge that their efforts often seem to be focused on turning back the clock, so to speak, on our evolving food culture. They are fighting the rapidly growing reality, as Paul Roberts acknowledges in his “The End of Food,” that is changing our very concept of what food is and how we interact with it. He notes that:

² Cynthia L. Ogden, Ph.D.; Margaret D. Carroll, M.S.P.H.; Brian K. Kit, M.D., M.P.H.; and Katherine M. Flegal, Ph.D., “Prevalence of Obesity in the United States, 2009–2010” National Center for Health Statistics Data Brief, No. 82, January 2012.

Food cultures that once treated cooking and eating as central elements in maintaining social structure and tradition are slowly being usurped by a global food culture, where cost and convenience are dominant, the social meal is obsolete, and the art of cooking is fetishized in coffee-table cookbooks and on television shows.³

This global food culture is robbing us of a fundamental cultural trait that is (or used to) set the cadence and rhythm for our lives. In fact, “the very act of eating, the basis of many of our social, family, and spiritual traditions – not to mention the one cheap pleasure that could ever rival sex – has for many devolved into an exercise in irritation, confusion, and guilt.”⁴ If we were to look at the diet of humans over an extremely long timeframe, “what we eat has changed more in the last forty years than in the previous forty thousand.”⁵ The shift was from whole foods to processed, from scratch cooking at home with local ingredients that were in season or locally preserved to imported strawberries in January, and from shared meals that bring everyone in a family together and transmit ideas and culture to individually frozen microwave dinners so everyone in the family can indulge their own personal tastes on their own individual schedule. As Michael Pollan notes in his *In Defense of Food*, the changes in our modern diet are even simpler: We moved from 1) Whole Foods to Refined, 2) Complexity to Simplicity 3) Quality to Quantity, 4) Leaves to Seeds, and 5) Food Culture to Food Science.⁶ To facilitate these changes, food companies have been investing in new technology and food-processing innovations that allow and continue to encourage Americans to abandon the kitchen, let the garden go

³ Paul Roberts, *The End of Food* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 2008), xii.

⁴ *Ibid.*, xii.

⁵ Eric F Schlosser, *Fast Food Nation*, 7.

⁶ Michael Pollan, *In Defense of Food: an Eater's Manifesto* (New York: Penguin Press, 2008), 106-136.

follow, and embrace the convenience of the products they sell as we collectively tune into our favorite television program.

And we are more than happy to let the food processors do the cooking. We rely on their technology, ingenuity, and efficiency to produce food that appears cheaper and of more variety than the home cook could muster, even if the true amount of complexity and variety of ingredients in those foods is quite small, with four crops (corn, soy, wheat, and rice) makeup about two-thirds of the calories we consume.⁷ However, as food safety scare after food safety scare rocks the country, from pink slime to salmonella spinach, people are beginning to question whether the food companies are truly the best “men” for the job. When these questions turn into the prime-time investigations into the food system that reveal the structures behind it, Americans are beginning to notice that our beloved, trusted, and “huge networks of production and distribution and retailing that convey millions of tons of food to the hundreds of millions of consumers,” are “broken or derailed.”⁸ We are beginning to widely acknowledge that, as Marion Nestle notes in her *Food Politics*, that “food companies – just like companies that sell cigarettes, pharmaceuticals, or any other commodity – routinely place the needs of stockholders over considerations of public health” and that they “will make and market any product that sells regardless of its nutritional value or its effect on health.”⁹ But while, we are incensed by Big Tobacco’s efforts to continue to market a product linked to so many health concerns to our younger

⁷ Michael Pollan, *In Defense of Food*, see pages 114-118 for his discussion of complexity to simplicity, focusing on page 117 for his discussion on the four major crops in our diet.

⁸ Paul Roberts, *The End of Food*, xii.

⁹ Marion Nestle, *Food Politics: How the Food Industry Influences Nutrition and Health* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002), viii.

generations, we continue to allow the food industry to do exactly the same thing at a time where our younger generation is threatened with diseases directly linked to the poor diet they are learning to prefer.¹⁰

The big question here is: What do our choices say about us as a people? As a culture? As a country? As we examine the major threats to our vitality as a nation, the health and wellbeing of our citizens is rapidly emerging as a potential drain on our resources. And it is not as if we are unable to feed our growing country; indeed, our problems are centered more on the “*overnutrition* – eating too much food or too much of certain kinds of food,” as opposed to undernutrition, or malnutrition, which ironically still threatens an embarrassing large proportion of the population in our country, the wealthiest country in the world.¹¹ It is this problem, the problem of what to eat, how much to eat, where to eat it, and with whom to eat that is threatening the people of our country. And many of these people are starting to come together and attempt to rebuild and reclaim a set of principles and traditions that, might just possibly, begin to rebuild our broken relationship with food.

What we eat is mainly established by three factors: our biological needs, our surrounding environment, and our culture.¹² At this point in America, we have the burden of choice upon us. Our biological needs can be easily satisfied. We grow and import more food than our bodies could ever possibly need to

¹⁰ Michael Moss, *Salt, Sugar, Fat: How the Food Giants Hooked Us* (New York: Random House, 2013), Kindle Edition, location 150.

¹¹ Marion Nestle, *Food Politics*, 2-3.

¹² Carol A., Bryant, Anita Courtney, Barbara A. Markesbery, and Kethleen M. DeWalt, *The Cultural Feast: An Introduction to Food and Society* (St. Paul: West Publishing Company, 1985), 76-77.

thrive, let alone survive. Our surrounding environment no longer poses a challenge to the quantity of foodstuffs that are available (please notice I did not say quality, just quantity). Our technology and improved food distribution systems move products clear across the county (and even world) in a matter of days. We can acquire practically anything we would ever want (or need) to eat in a matter of hours, or at the most, days. Olive oil from Italy? No problem. Smoked Salmon from Scotland? Most definitely. Any fruit or vegetable at almost any time of the year, say eggplant in January or February? You betcha. Because we can step into one of the countless grocery stores, stocked with thousands of products, anchoring our street corners and shopping plazas at almost any time of the day (even twenty-four hours a day for some), the only tool we now have to determine what we and our families eat is our culture, engrained in us in the form of habits about our food options and choices.

Yes, our traditional food culture. That should be helpful. So what type of cereal did your mother or grandmother eat? Soy, almond, two-percent, or skim milk? Grape, strawberry, or guava jelly on her toast? What about your typical lunch or dinner? The food products available over the last century have changed so rapidly, these questions are barely relevant. As Michael Pollan points out, our food culture “is really just a fancy word for your mother. What to eat, how much of it to eat, what order in which to eat it, with what an when and with whom have for most human history been a set of questions settled and passed down from parents to children without a lot of controversy or fuss.”¹³ Our food landscape changes at such a rapid pace that “most of us no longer eat what our mothers

¹³ Michael Pollan, *In Defense of Food*, 3.

ate as children, or for that matter, what our mothers fed us as children.”¹⁴ We have simply moved on to the next great product, the next diet fad, the next nutritional component that is touted to be the cure for all the western diseases that ail us.

The food system in the United States is built on this concept of product marketing. The changes that modernized the other sectors of our economy, also affected the food industry. Those changes, those modernizations, have, as Marion Nestle remarks in her *Food Politics*:

Led from small family farms to giant corporations, from a society that cooked at home to one that buys nearly half of its meals prepared and consumed elsewhere, and from a diet based on “whole” foods grown locally to one based largely on foods that have been processed in some way and transported long distances.¹⁵

Our food system evolved just like the other economic sectors in the United States – we focused on the products that we could sell and make the most profit from – and the goal of food companies, we are beginning to understand, just “like that of tobacco companies, is to sell products.”¹⁶ They market food products to a global audience as *aspirational* products – “where wealthy consumers aspire to steak, ice cream, and other elements of the high-value [and high-profit], high-calorie Western-style diet.”¹⁷

But people are beginning to notice and work to reclaim the food culture they misplaced. We used to know what to eat and where to get it. In fact, most of our nation *used* to be agrarian and “it is frightening how ignorant of food and

¹⁴ Ibid., 3.

¹⁵ Marion Nestle, *Food Politics*, 11.

¹⁶ Marion Nestle, *Food Politics*, 2.

¹⁷ Paul Roberts, *The End of Food*, xvii.

cuisine we have become.”¹⁸ For, “while society places importance on saving biodiversity, language, and material cultural artifacts like paintings, pottery, and historical buildings we have yet to think about food in a similar way.”¹⁹ But that is changing. People are beginning to free themselves from the products, the commercials, the gimmicks, and look for food. As Michael Pollan notes:

We are entering a postindustrial era of food; for the first time in a generation [or maybe more, I think] it is possible to leave behind the Western diet without having to also leave behind civilization. And the more eaters who vote with their forks for a different kind of food, the more commonplace and accessible such food will become.²⁰

What people like Pollan are looking for is a “broader, more ecological—and more cultural—view of food; a way of eating that brings eating back from *feeding* and into the realm of a human meal, back to *dining*.”²¹

As more and more people become informed consumers, as they learn what actually goes into their Cheetos and feed-lot meat, the cognitive dissonance created is more than just a crisis of “what do I feed my family now?” The real problem is more than the fact that the food systems we created over the past twenty years are almost completely broken and have an extremely hard time providing the kinds of real, sustainable, healthy food we should be enjoying. We have a fundamental problem of habit and the efforts that go along with changing those habits. Regardless of all the money and efforts we invest in teaching children to identify cucumbers and broccoli and sweet potatoes and the seasons

¹⁸ Darrin Nordahl, *Public Produce The New Urban Agriculture* (Washington, DC: Island Press, 2009), 115.

¹⁹ Michael Carolan, *The Sociology of Food and Agriculture* (London: Routledge, 2012), 132.

²⁰ Michael Pollan, *In Defense of Food*, 14.

²¹ Michael Pollan, *In Defense of Food*, see pages 102 and 7. On page 7, Pollan notes Jean-Anthelme Brillat-Savrin (an eighteenth-century gastronome) who contrasts the idea of animal feeding to human dining as evidence of culture versus biological drive.

in which they are at their peak, if we cannot change the habits of the adults in their lives, the main transmitters of culture and habits to them, then we are going to have a hard time instilling the kinds of habits (shopping habits and cooking habits) that are essential to thriving without relying on processed junk food.

These habits are a challenge to change in adults, even adults that are genuinely interested and invested in working on improving their diet. It requires a significant paradigm shift in thinking to reassess how your time is spent and the activities that you value as most important. Cooking, for example, is often portrayed in our culture as a superfluous and arduous task, a burden that the marketers, fast food restaurants, and food processors are more than happy to relieve us of. Our culture's emphasis on the amount of time we should be spending focused on our leisure activities—sports, television, internet-surfing, fitness, you name it—rarely includes time spent on daily cooking and meal preparation. It is not a widely acceptable way to spend our time after the travails of work. We glorify happy hour, not going home and scrubbing, chopping, and sautéing seasonal vegetables for a lovely omelet made from local eggs-hour. We are more apt to see our favorite reality stars eating takeout in their beautiful kitchens while they discuss the amazing “activities” planned for later in the show, than we are likely to see them make a simple meal for them and their families to enjoy. In fact, these reality shows often show cooked family meals often only in the form of a holiday or celebration, a special occasion where the time and effort needed to create food for friends and family is seen as worth the effort because it becomes part of the “event.” It takes time and effort on a daily basis to cook for

yourself or your family and we do not acknowledge that effort as a worthy use of our all-too-precious time. Until we revalue and re-elevate the thrice-daily meal to the status of an event in our lives, it is going to be difficult to encourage and make permanent the habits of daily cooking and food preparation that are critical if one is interested in eating in a more sustainable fashion.

A Framework for Classifying the Reclaiming of Our Food Culture

With this thought in mind, groups and individuals are working together to reeducate themselves and each other in an effort to change the habits of the Central Florida food community and adopt a sustainably healthier way of eating. This does not happen overnight. Not only are there groups working on many different levels to begin changing our food culture, the people they interact with are also functioning on many of these different levels of change as they work to reeducate themselves and change their own habits. Both individuals and groups must work together to make this a permanent and sustainable change in Central Florida. In my research, I interacted with individuals and groups functioning in every area on this continuum of change. This spectrum can be thought of as being made up of four distinct Tiers which encompass those working to educate and the individuals and groups they target. Tier One consists of individuals and groups that are working to fight the basic health crises associated with our western-style diet. Tier Two groups and individuals build on the healthier habits of Tier One but have not fully embraced the ideals of the local, sustainable food movement, whereas Tier Three groups and individuals make a concerted effort

to choose products and producers that bring their food as close to home as possible. Producers of the local food economy – the farmers, artisan food chefs, farmers' market organizers, and others – make up Tier Four. The chart below describes the individuals and groups in each Tier as they work to reeducate themselves and their community, while they reframe Central Florida's food culture.

The Four-Tier Framework

| Tier | Typical Actions of Target Audience | Typical Actions of Educational Groups |
|--------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Tier 1 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Learning about and beginning to take steps to counteract the health-related issues of processed food | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Nutrition and healthy eating education programs and classes Targeted at families and children from a variety of socioeconomic levels |
| Tier 2 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Independently seeking out healthier habits and beginning to build their own food culture while incorporating more organic, local, and sustainable practices | <p>Educational materials and groups that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Build awareness about the local food community Inform readers of the benefits of a more organic, local, and sustainable lifestyle, Teach basic classes on cooking and simple gardening. |

The Four-Tier Framework (continued)

| Tier | Typical Actions of Target Audience | Typical Actions of Educational Groups |
|--------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Tier 3 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Deepening their food culture and reclaiming lost skills that allow them to create a more personal relationship with the everyday act of eating | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Classes and groups that teach advanced gardening/farming techniques as well as cooking skills such as canning or pickling. • Organizations in the community that not only provide an outlet for the purchase of their food products, but also advocate for a local, sustainable food culture. |
| Tier 4 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Producing local, sustainable foodstuffs for the community | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Communities and groups that work to help producers set-up, market, and bring their products to market • Organizations that work to educate and support the agriculture and production. |

Tier One

Organizations working on Tier One are looking to create your basic, informed consumer. These groups, and the individuals functioning on this level, are typically working to fight the obesity, processed-food epidemic in our community. Lessons from these groups can be as simple as teaching people to “shop the perimeter of the supermarket” and incorporate fruits and vegetables into your diet. Individuals functioning on Tier One are beginning to learn the dangers of the food in their local supermarket and are attempting to make healthier choices for themselves and their families. They are incorporating more produce and fresh foods and attempting to eliminate some of the worst examples of processed food from their diet; however, almost all of their shopping is still completed at a local supermarket or other “big-box” retail store and they still continue to consume processed food, although that is a habit they are working to shift.

Tier Two

Tier Two groups are working with people who are independently seeking out healthier habits and beginning to build their own food culture while incorporating more organic, local, and sustainable practices. These individuals often have not yet progressed completely passed the supermarket, but are learning to take a greater interest in the quality of their food and where it comes from. They are looking for organic versions of the produce, meat, dairy, and processed foods their families are familiar with. Venturing out to a local farmer’s

market or harvest festival if convenient, might be a common activity for those occupying this part of the change spectrum, but they are not counting on creating their family's weekly menu from what is local, available, and in-season. The individuals in this group also take note when restaurants offer organic or local produce. Programs that teach more introductory cooking or gardening skills to those individuals who are looking to incorporate some small cooking or gardening projects into their lifestyle are part of the support system for those functioning on Tier Two. There are also many municipalities working to create community events that encourage the inclusion and recognition of the local farming community that help individuals on Tier Two become more aware of the local food economy and make better choices as to what is the best quality food for themselves and their families.

Tier Three

Tier Three groups and individuals have progressed past the supermarket and are now working to attempt to bring their food closer to home. They are learning to deepen their food culture and reclaiming lost skills that allow them to create a more personal relationship with the everyday act of eating. Buying food from a local farmer's market or local produce outlet and supplementing from the supermarket when something is unavailable is a great example of an individual in Tier Three. Also, many groups are supporting individuals as they attempt to reclaim many of the skills and crafts that their grand (or great-grand) parents used to complete on a regular basis. They are growing as much of their own

produce as their lifestyle makes possible and are buying what they cannot from local farmers during the season. They are canning, pickling, salting, and preserving as needed. They are cooking from scratch and potentially even raising small amounts of livestock at their home. The groups that are encouraging and educating those in Tier Three are usually your farmers, farmers' markets, and other vendors who benefit from the purchase and consumption of their goods and they actively seek out the individuals in this Tier to continue to educate them about the benefits of a more traditional food culture. Those supporting them are often those that are teaching the skills they need or working to pass the municipal laws that they require to be able to completely abandon the supermarket and the large-scale, corporate food processors and return to a food culture that is much more "traditional" than what we consider our food culture today.

Tier Four

Tier Four groups and individuals are the true food producers of the local economy. They are the local farmers, jam-makers, livestock raisers, and artisan-food producers of Central Florida. They are as diverse as the products they sell. They tend to support each other, but they also have groups that work with them to help their businesses grow and help provide them the tools they need to produce healthy, seasonal, fresh products that people in Tiers Two through Four are eager to purchase.

A Framework for Change

The individuals and groups that comprise the Four-Tier Framework are working together to reshape our Central Florida food culture. The groups are targeting individuals in an attempt to educate them more about what they eat, where it comes from, and what is involved in the production of the products they enjoy. They are looking to educate and inspire the community to take a good look at the food their families are consuming and to evaluate the quality of their diet and the impact that diet has on not only their unique family, but also the community around them. Most individuals beginning on Tier One learn about their diet—either through their own research, possibly motivated by a health scare or desire for a lifestyle change, or through a community program—and begin to make food decisions that incorporate healthier, more sustainable options. As they actively seek out new and healthier foods, the individuals are able to engage with others in the larger food community in Central Florida and make truly significant changes in their personal food culture, while potentially progressing through to Tier 2, Tier 3, or even Tier 4. These changes, if made by enough people, will be the catalyst for continued growth and change in our area and a community food culture that is focused on products that are local, sustainable, and less processed by large corporations. But most new choices made by individuals first looking to alternative options are small. These small, but significant changes can best be analyzed by examining the characteristics of the individual and groups that comprise Tier One in Central Florida.

Central Florida Food Culture: The Changing Landscape
Chapter 2—Tier One: Creating an Informed Consumer

“Because of the increasing rates of obesity, unhealthy eating habits and physical inactivity, we may see the first generation that will be less healthy and have a shorter life expectancy than their parents.”²²

Tier One—The Need For Informed Consumers in Central Florida

Central Florida is facing an obesity epidemic. We are getting too fat. In Florida, 32% of children (ages 10-17) were overweight or obese in 2007.²³ That is an entire third of our young population, one out of ever three. This is a major issue—and possibly beyond a cosmetic one for these young, impressionable Central Floridians. Childhood is the time period when many of us learn our dietary habits that will follow us for the rest of our lives and many children are flat out learning habits that are setting them up for a lifetime of health problems and weight struggles.

These habits, the repeated eating of processed and calorie-dense, but nutritionally deficient foods, are communicated through almost every aspect of our culture and, unfortunately, often reinforced at home. Food marketing, especially advertising targeted at children, has warped the entire family-unit’s

²² “Understanding Childhood Obesity, 2011 Statistical Sourcebook,” *American Heart Association*, 2011, accessed September 30, 2013, http://www.heart.org/idc/groups/heart-public/@wcm/@fc/documents/downloadable/ucm_428180.pdf.

²³ Florida Initiative for Children’s Healthcare Quality, “Obesity - Key Findings and Implications” *Child Health and Healthcare Quality in Florida Chartbook: A Focus on Childhood Obesity*, accessed October 1, 2013, <http://www.flchartbook.childhealthdata.org/pages/Topics.aspx?section=11&topic=159>.

ideas as to what is appropriate to eat, how much to eat, when to eat, and with whom it is eaten. These food companies and their marketing campaigns have altered our entire food relationship—“it is now socially acceptable to eat more food, more often, in more places. Without provoking social disapproval, you can snack all day instead of eating meals, consume gigantic amounts of food at a sitting, and eat in formally forbidden places like clothing stores, bookstores, and libraries.”²⁴ Not only that, but the people dictating what is eaten are also changing. Children are a recognized voice at the grocery store, in the car, in the kitchen, demanding a specific food, a specific brand, and specific meal, all on their own time and schedule, but these children do not always know what they should be eating. They are victims of a lack of healthy food education by their families and by our larger food culture in general. All they hear about is junk food; consequently, all they want to consume is junk food. It turns into a nightly battle at home. As Marion Nestle notes, “It has become socially acceptable for children to consume soft drinks all day long in school, and to decide for themselves what to eat at home.”²⁵ Our ancestors would be shocked at our lack of adherence to “traditional” food norms.

And we are not just talking about a tyranny of the food marketers via our young, impressionable innocents. Adults are susceptible to the lure of the processed-food sirens as well. We are the ones who are capitulating to junk food whims of the youth, allowing our habits to be altered as well, and sometimes leading the charge for more convenience, more savings, more junk. Michael

²⁴ Marion Nestle, *What to Eat* (New York: North Point Press, 2006), 13, Kindle Edition.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, 13.

Lowe, a professor of clinical psychology at Drexel University observed, as quoted in Moss's *Sugar, Salt, Fat*:

“When a lot of us grew up...there were three meals a day, and maybe a planned snack at bedtime—and that was it. You never ate outside of those times because you would spoil your appetite. That changed. People began eating everywhere, in meetings, or walking down the street. There’s no place where food isn’t acceptable now, and people are so busy they don’t make time to sit down for meals.”²⁶

Part of the reason for this change is the marketing foisted upon us by the food companies. But they are only advertising to us what they are desperate to sell. Our food supply in the United States provides enough supply to ensure every citizen 3,800 kilocalories of food everyday—approximately twice what the average adult needs to consume to maintain a healthy weight.²⁷ With that many calories floating around, and food marketers fighting for every inch of “stomach share” they can, it is no wonder that we are so confused about what we should be eating and feeding our families. When this happens, “food becomes just another commodity, an abstraction. And as soon as that happens we become easy prey for corporations selling synthetic versions of the real thing...edible foodlike substances. We end up trying to nourish ourselves on images.”²⁸

It is from this bleak state of being, this utterly unhelpful, overweight, confused connection with food, that we can start to see change happening. Groups in Central Florida are working to educate the consumer about healthier eating and attempting to begin to rebuild their relationship with food. Individuals

²⁶ Michael Moss, *Salt, Sugar, Fat: How the Food Giants Hooked Us*, 34. In this quote, Moss is interviewing Professor Lowe concerning the shift in dietary patterns in America. Lowe is commenting on the changes he noted as early as the 1980s in America.

²⁷ Marion Nestle, “Editorial: The Ironic Politics of Obesity.” *Science* 299 (2003): 781, accessed June 24, 2013, www.proquest.com.

²⁸ Michael Pollan, *Cooked: a Natural History of Transformation* (New York: The Penguin Press, 2013), 9.

themselves are also beginning to reeducate themselves by investigating the value of the food they are eating and feeding their families. These groups and the individuals just on the cusp of learning about proper nutrition and dietary habits, make up the bulk of the individuals, providers, and their participants in our Tier One.

Many Tier One individuals are working to reeducate themselves about a more traditional food culture. They can seek out information from books, experts, the internet, and local groups in an effort to learn as much as possible about what healthy, sustainable, more traditional eating look like. Many of them turn to educational support groups that cater to individuals in Tier One to begin the process. Many of these Tier One groups teach the skills that consumers need to begin to rebuild their relationship with food. These skills fall into two main categories—nutrition and wellness skills that encourage people to make smarter, lighter choices when shopping and planning their family’s meals, as well as food-origin skills that focus on introducing (or reintroducing) the concept that much of our food comes from the earth, a farmer, an actual living creature, as opposed to the supermarket. Many of these groups aim to affect change for the entire family and potentially include similar lessons (often nutrition, basic cooking skills, and gardening or the concept of growing food) at some point in time, but for this investigation, we are looking at their main program delivery model—what their main focus is for the majority of their curriculum. Also, many of these programs in Tier One are mainly focused on reaching adults and children in lower-socioeconomic groups—groups that often struggle with the conflict between

feeding their families enough calories and feeding their families healthily on a strict budget.

Teaching Nutrition and Health

In Central Florida, one of the major forces attempting to teach adults and families the basics of nutrition in order to fight the obesity epidemic and improve the health of the public in general are administered through the Cooperative Extension Services—a partnership established in 1914 between Federal, State, and County offices to attempt to solve local problems with the help of land grant universities.²⁹ These local Extension Offices are run jointly between the individual counties and the Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences at the University of Florida (UF/IFAS Extension Offices) and focus on problems that range from agriculture, horticulture, and natural resources, to family and consumer sciences and 4-H youth programs.³⁰ They offer programs that support individuals in Tiers One through Four and their programs will be featured as they fit into the individual Tiers. The two programs that impact the individuals in Tier One are the Family Nutrition Program and the Expanded Food & Nutrition Education Program. I was able to visit the Orange County/UF extension office and meet with Annie Peterson, Program Coordinator at UF's IFAS Extension/Orange County for Family Nutrition Program and Expanded Food and Nutrition Education Program, as well as interview Wanda Adorno-Lynch, Program Assistant at UF's IFAS Extension/Seminole County for the Expanded

²⁹ Orange County UF/IFAS Extension Office, "Orange County UF/IFAS Extension Annual Report 2012" (2012 Annual Report, 2013), 1.

³⁰ Ibid., 1.

Food and Nutrition Education Program, to help me understand the critical need for programs like this in our community. Both of these educational programs work to provide nutritional education to audiences of limited resources in an effort to improve the health of the participants and their families.³¹ The Family Nutrition Program reaches thousands of children and the Expanded Food and Nutrition Program reaches hundreds of adults and their families every year.

The Expanded Food and Nutrition Program is an extension office program that helps teach the adults living at or below the poverty line, but, as Wanda Adorno-Lynch points out, not necessarily on food stamps, to make healthy food choices, plan proper meals, save money, and be more physically active.³² This program delivers lessons to groups at adult rehab centers, libraries, and the department of corrections, among other places, on food, basic cooking, nutrition, and healthy behaviors over eight weeks during one and a half hour lessons.³³ Each week, the groups also create a new, low-cost recipe for the participants to taste and try at home.³⁴ This program, targeting mainly adults, helps to teach them the skills they need to be informed consumers in the supermarket and begin to create healthy food habits with their families.

In addition to the nutritional programs that target adults, the extension offices also offer the Family Nutrition Program, a program that reaches children a

³¹ Ibid., 17.

³² Wanda Adorno-Lynch (Program Assistant at UF's IFAS Extension/Seminole County for the Expanded Food and Nutrition Education Program) in email message with the author, August 2013.

³³ Orange County UF/IFAS Extension Office, "Orange County UF/IFAS Extension Annual Report," 18 and Wanda Adoro-Lynch, August 2013.

³⁴ Annie Peterson (Program Coordinator at UF's IFAS Extension/Orange County for Family Nutrition Program and Expanded Food and Nutrition Education Program) in discussion with the author, August 2013 and Wanda Adoro-Lynch, August 2013.

well as adults and educates them about healthy nutrition. The goals of the Family Nutrition Program are to teach food stamp recipients the skills necessary to be able to “improve their dietary practices and become more effective managers of available food resources such as money and food stamps.”³⁵ The Orange County Family Nutrition Program offers nutritional lessons at churches, community centers, public libraries, public housing, and local public schools.³⁶ Public schools qualify for the Family Nutrition Program with 51% of their students eligible for reduced-lunch prices.³⁷ The lessons are 30 minutes long and are offered in their classrooms approximately once a month over the course of the school year. In addition, Annie Peterson notes that there is also a monthly newsletter sent home with each lesson to communicate nutritional education lesson to the parents in an effort to include them in modifying their families’ eating habits.³⁸

Another successful community partnership that is working to educate the community about proper nutrition and wellness is the Nemours’s Children’s Hospital’s Florida Prevention Initiative. This program is working “to provide leadership in the central Florida community around health promotion so that each child in its communities can grow up healthy.”³⁹ Kelly Rogers, Program and Policy Analyst for Nemours Florida Prevention Initiative was able to help me understand the important messaging that Nemours works to disseminate into

³⁵ Orange County UF/IFAS Extension Office, “Orange County UF/IFAS Extension Annual Report,” 17.

³⁶ Orange County UF/IFAS Extension Office, “Orange County UF/IFAS Extension Annual Report,” 18.

³⁷ Annie Peterson, August 2013.

³⁸ Annie Peterson, August 2013.

³⁹ Kelly Rogers, MPH (Program & Policy Analyst II for Nemours Florida Prevention Initiative) in email message with the author, August 2013.

Central Florida. Nemours and its community partners come together to train educators and outreach programs to spread the *5-2-1-Almost None* message (Five or more fruits and vegetables, Two hours or less of screen time, One hour of physical activity, Almost none of items such as soft drinks, sports drinks, and fruit drinks that are not 100% fruit juice) to early childcare centers across Central Florida.⁴⁰ These messages concerning healthy eating and physical activity are taught to the children, posted at the care sites, incorporated into parent handbooks, as well as used and reinforced in staff trainings.⁴¹

As Kelly Rogers notes, The Florida Prevention Initiative has successfully made an impression on the children in Central Florida. The program has impacted 393 childcare sites through 24 community partners since 2009.⁴² That translates to 1,151 childcare providers trained and 15,874 children and their families exposed to the *5-2-1-Almost None* healthy messaging.⁴³ It is nutrition and wellness focused programs like the Nemour's Children's Hospital's Florida Prevention Initiative and the Extension Offices' Family Nutrition and Expanded Food and Nutrition Programs that help to introduce the basic concepts of healthy eating back into our Central Florida community and support families and individuals in Tier One who are looking to make smart, sustainable, and healthy changes to their food culture.

⁴⁰ Kelly Rogers, August 2013 and Nemours "5-2-1-Almost None" *Nemours A Children's Health System*, accessed October 1, 2013, <http://www.nemours.org/service/health/growuphealthy/521almostnone.html>.

⁴¹ Kelly Rogers, August 2013.

⁴² Kelly Rogers, August 2013.

⁴³ Kelly Rogers, August 2013.

These programs are just a few of the programs that are running throughout the country in an effort to create informed eaters and attempt to change habits in children, adults, and families. The question that still remains, however, is: How do you take a short-term program, say 4-12 weeks long, and provide enough support and reinforcement to actually change what people eat? Can we create a sustainable messaging system that not only creates informed consumers, but truly makes them *want* to eat and prepare healthier meals for themselves and their families? With all the marketing in the country (or the world for that matter) that encourages people to eat in an unhealthy way, is there a venue that could combat those billions of dollars of influence in an effective way?

Teaching Food Origin Awareness

Another way many individuals in the Central Florida community reeducate themselves and their families is by interacting with groups in Central Florida that approach teaching healthy nutrition and food choices through community or school-based gardens. These programs support individuals in Tier One by introducing (or reinforcing) the idea that real food comes from the earth, from a farmer, from a living creature, as opposed to a box or a bag or a cellophane wrapper in a store. There are quite a few garden-based education programs in our area, sponsored by extension offices, community partnerships, and individual school programs. In addition, many individual schools run their own school gardens and use them to teach lessons about nutrition, agriculture, and plant science. Most of the gardens in the area target children and the hope is that they

will be more willing to try foods that they grow themselves and then become an active, vocal advocate for incorporating fruits, vegetables, and other healthy food choices in their own households.

One such program is the Garden-Based Nutrition Program operated by the Orange County/University of Florida Extension Office's Family Nutrition Program, located in 48 elementary school gardens in Orange County. In these programs, 4th and 5th grade students grow vegetables in raised vegetable gardens and learn about nutrition. It is a 13-week program where students have lessons one hour a week and then enjoy the "fruits" of their labor at the conclusion of the class. In 2011-2012 that brought this nutrition and garden education program to middle school students with disabilities at Meadow Woods Middle School.⁴⁴

Other national garden-based school programs have also taken root here in Orlando. The Edible Schoolyard Project, founded by Alice Waters and her Chez Panisse Foundation, began seventeen years ago and has developed into a national program that works to "build and share an edible education curriculum for kindergarten through high school."⁴⁵ There are several Edible Schoolyard Project Gardens in Central Florida. I was lucky enough to be able to visit the garden at the Orlando Junior Academy in Orlando.

Pulling into the Orlando Junior Academy to meet with the instructor for Orlando Junior Academy's Edible Schoolyard Project, Sarah Cahill, in early

⁴⁴ Orange County UF/IFAS Extension Office, "Orange County UF/IFAS Extension Annual Report," 17 and Annie Peterson, August 2013.

⁴⁵ "Our Work," *The Edible Schoolyard Project*, 2013, Accessed October 1, 2013, <http://edibleschoolyard.org>.

August, I was struck by how much was growing in their garden. School was out on summer break, students had not been tending the garden for at least six weeks, yet the amount and variety of plants still growing and producing, even in the summer heat, gave evidence of the amount of tender care this garden receives throughout the school year. Maybe it was a bit of envy, but I was amazed at how tranquil and beautiful the inner green space of their school looked, transformed into an Edible Schoolyard. After meeting Sarah, and receiving a tour of their lovely garden, we went in to talk about how the Edible Schoolyard Project impacts the children and their families' eating habits.

The Orlando Junior Academy's Edible Schoolyard Project works to create a large kitchen garden with the help of students at the school in grades five through eight.⁴⁶ They work the garden—planting seeds, transplanting seedlings, tending crops, and harvesting produce—and then use their bounty in a variety of educational opportunities in their school. Sarah's classroom is setup as a large kitchen lab where she works with students to learn about food: to understand the growing, buying, and preparation of food, using much of their garden produce in the process. Students participate in lessons concerning proper nutrition and how to read the labels they encounter in the grocery store and at home. One of Sarah's goals is to create "conscious consumers" that can not only begin to change their own eating habits and make better choices, but also impact the

⁴⁶ Sarah Cahill (Edible Schoolyard Instructor for Orlando Junior Academy) in discussion with the author, August 2013.

eating habits of those around them—other kids, their parents, and those out in the community.⁴⁷

She also focuses on teaching students how to prepare healthy, tasty meals using many of the ingredients the students grow themselves.⁴⁸ Not only are the children learning basic recipes they can take home and replicate for their families, they are also learning basic life and kitchen skills that many of them might have missed at home. Simple things like reading a recipe, measuring ingredients, and cutting produce to a proper size can be brand new skills to students who have never helped a family member in the kitchen before, let alone more complicated (and dangerous) skills such as anything involving actual heat and their food. Sarah noted in our discussion that one of the most striking things she noticed about many of her students is that they “can’t even set the table” when asked to do so at the end of a lesson to be able to sit down and enjoy the fruits of their labor.⁴⁹ So few of her students eat meals at the table with their families on a regular basis, they are completely unaware of where the plate, silverware, and glass is supposed to go. So it was a skill she built into her curriculum—basic table setting and table manners. Interestingly, when the Academy would have open house and parents would come in to experience an Edible Schoolyard Project Lesson, some of them also have trouble setting the table, proof that the “traditional” food culture in Central Florida has been eroding away for at least two generations.⁵⁰ The basic cooking and life skills taught help

⁴⁷ Sarah Cahill, August 2013.

⁴⁸ Sarah Cahill, August 2013.

⁴⁹ Sarah Cahill, August 2013.

⁵⁰ Sarah Cahill, August 2013.

to enable Sarah's students to lead the charge at home when it comes to changing their families' eating habits. Some of them, it seems, could even teach their parents a skill or two and maybe begin to change their entire family's perspective about food.

Sarah noted in our discussion that many of the skills her students are learning are not only garden-based skills. Teachers at the Orlando Junior Academy use the garden to teach many subjects—math lessons using the produce for measurement and calculations of volume and surface area, geography lessons on cartography and map-distortion using the produce as models, you name it.⁵¹ Even reading sessions outside in the shade of the Plumeria trees of the garden provide an opportunity for students to build an awareness about and a connection with where their food comes from. Strikingly, it seems that as students build an awareness of what food actually is, where their food comes from, and what it looks like to eat proper, nutritious food, they are able to take this knowledge out of the classroom and impact their families' lives. Students reporting back that they are encouraging their families to shop at Whole Foods or farmer's markets, eat in season, and eat organic is common—a good sign that garden-based programs, like Orlando Junior Academy's Edible Schoolyard Project, are making a difference for people attempting to learn about

⁵¹ Sarah Cahill, August 2013; "Watermelon Geography" *The Garden at OJA a journal of our edible education* (blog), September 18, 2013, <http://thegardenatoja.wordpress.com>; "Watermelon Math—Part One" *The Garden at OJA a journal of our edible education* (blog), September 11, 2013, <http://thegardenatoja.wordpress.com>; and "Watermelon Math—Part Two" *The Garden at OJA a journal of our edible education* (blog), September 14, 2013, <http://thegardenatoja.wordpress.com>.

the food they eat and begin to make changes to their personal and their families' diets.

In addition to school-based garden programs, other student-centered groups, such as the New Image Youth Center, located in the Parramore neighborhood in Orlando, work to introduce school-aged children to gardening, cooking, and broaden their food culture.⁵² The garden is also open to the community and they are encouraged to participate in the programs.⁵³ Along with all the other programs the New Image Youth Center offers children, the community garden is an integral part of their services to the community. As Shanta Barton-Stubbs, Director of the New Image Youth Center, notes "The Community Garden is important to our program because it is something that changes the lifestyles of the children and their families. The garden is apart (sic) of our Healthy Living Program, and within this program we offer the garden, dance classes, exercise classes, and cooking classes."⁵⁴ Their gardening programming and cooking classes also are making a difference. Stubbs also described how New Image Youth Center's children are learning how to choose healthy meals and snacks and are turning out to be extremely vocal when out shopping for groceries with their families.⁵⁵

With all of these programs that work to make vocal advocates of children, a few questions remain. The first question is about the families' ability to actually

⁵² New Image Youth Center "New Image Youth Center Press Kit" *New Image Youth Center Press Kit* (2013) 3.

⁵³ Shanta Barton-Stubbs (CEO, President, Founder, Director New Image Youth Center) in email message to the author, October 2013.

⁵⁴ Shanta Barton-Stubbs, October 2013

⁵⁵ Shanta Barton-Stubbs, October 2013

make meaningful changes. How affordable are the changes that their children are learning about? How many children go with their parents to the grocery store? Are they all making their parents switch to Whole Foods and requesting organic Kale as opposed to sugary cereal or pizza or chicken nuggets? I highly doubt it. They might be more interested in trying new fruits and vegetables, which is always a great thing, but someone (some adult) has to be the one to purchase said fruit and vegetable, prepare it, and put it in front of their child. As it is, nationally “only 50% of children ages 2-5 met recommendations for fruit intake, and 22% met recommendations for vegetable intake.”⁵⁶ For children most impacted by the garden-education programs, those ages 6-11, “26% met recommendations for fruit intake, and 16% met recommendations for vegetable intake” and that is including fruit juice and french-fries as an acceptable fruit and vegetable choice!⁵⁷ That means that most parents are not working to ensure their children are eating properly in the first place—how much change can the children affect in their homes? Maybe a lot, maybe none—it will probably rest with the one making the purchasing decisions ultimately. Even if children are learning to appreciate these new foods, will they be able to overcome eighteen years of programming when they make it out on their own to change their own habits and create change in their community or themselves?

As the school and community gardens work to create now opportunities for students of all socio-economic levels to interact with food “from the ground,”

⁵⁶ Erin Oxenham, MS, RD and Amber D. King, MS, RD, “School Gardens as a Strategy for Increasing Fruit and Vegetable Consumption,” *School Nutrition Association*, Volume 34, Issue 1 (Spring 2010):1, accessed November 27, 2013, www.asfsa.org/Content.aspx?id=14025.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, 1.

there are quite a few barriers that can keep schools and other community groups from being able to fully embrace the gardens. Time maintaining the gardens (whether over summer and winter breaks or during the school year), lack of support from administrators or key community members (parent organizations or even county/city officials), and sources of funding for the gardens (land use, seeds, soil, etc.) are all major barriers that can keep a school or community group from being able to start, maintain, or fully implement a garden-based education program.⁵⁸ As the number of programs in the community grow and the novelty of the garden-classroom fades, schools and community organizations will need to secure permanent funding to ensure the sustainability and even growth of their programs. The hope for these programs is to create a sustainable messaging system that communicates healthy eating messages to children and for these new ideas to be incorporated into lasting habits that can positively impact not only the children, not only their families, but their entire community as well.

The school-based garden programs and community garden programs, as well as the nutrition and wellness outreach programs all target individuals in an effort to help them make those first crucial steps towards healthy living. These programs recognize one of the basic problems of our food culture:

When we see aisles upon aisles of soft drinks, snack foods, frozen meals, and canned vegetables in our supermarkets, and burger joints, pizza parlors, and drive-through taco stands throughout our community, we

⁵⁸ Eric L. Hazzard, Elizabeth Moreno, Deborah L. Beall, Sheri Zidenberg-Cherr, "Best Practices Models for Implementing, Sustaining, and Using Instructional School Gardens in California," *Journal of Nutrition Education and Behavior*, Volume 43, Issue 5 (September–October 2011): 411, accessed November 28, 2013, <http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.jneb.2011.05.005>.

quickly forget what was once the most common knowledge: what food is and where it comes from.⁵⁹

To begin to fight the battle for a healthier food culture, the programs introduce the idea that not all food you can purchase from the supermarket is the best, or even remotely healthy or appropriate for consumption, and work to reeducate the consumer as to what to eat, where to get it, and how to incorporate it into their daily routine in an effort to promote the health and wellness of our community. The hope is that once these programs have reached an individual or family, those, now “informed consumers” are able to begin making healthier choices and evaluating their food in a whole new way. Some of these individuals will continue to stay at Tier One and potentially incorporate a few of their new skills into their current lifestyles; others however, will continue to seek out information about healthier habits and begin to build their own, independent food culture based on more organic, local, and sustainable practices.

⁵⁹ Darrin Nordahl, *Public Produce The New Urban Agriculture* (Washington, DC: Island Press, 2009), 116.

Central Florida Food Culture: The Changing Landscape

Chapter 2—Tiers Two and Three: Developing a Personal Food Culture and Engaging in the Community

“How is it that at the precise historical moment when Americans were abandoning the kitchen, handing over the preparation of most of our meals to the food industry, we began spending so much of our time thinking about food and watching other people cook it on television?”⁶⁰

Tier Two—Building on the basics of healthier eating in the community

Even with the information disseminated by local groups about nutrition and food awareness, many individuals continue down a path to an unhealthy lifestyle and limited interaction with one of the most primal instincts in modern humans—the need to nourish our bodies well; however, a growing population in Central Florida is beginning to take small steps towards developing a personal food culture and engaging in our local food community. These individuals are at the beginnings of the journey to develop a personal food culture that is based on eating healthier, more sustainable food. This journey involves an education that teaches about the foodstuffs available to them and encourages the development of the habits and skills needed to begin participating in their own food processing and production—basic cooking and gardening skills.

In order to build on the basic nutrition knowledge gained in Tier One—either through independent study and research or a formal nutritional education

⁶⁰ Michael Pollan, *Cooked: a Natural History of Transformation* (New York: The Penguin Press, 2013), 2, Kindle Edition.

program—consumers need to seek out places that provide information about the food they are consuming. For many, the first stop in learning more about what is in their food is the supermarket. The supermarkets in Central Florida range from discount retailers all the way through specialty, gourmet shops. Depending on where the consumer seeks information, a wide variety of knowledge is waiting to be uncovered.

Some of the best supermarkets for consumers to search out information about their food post immense amounts of information about the food they offer (organic, conventional, city/state/country of origin, producer, cooking tips, how to choose the ripest, vegan/non-dairy/gluten-free/etc); however, it is important for these new consumers to recognize (and many do) that, as Marion Nestle notes: “The foods that sell best and bring in the most profits are not necessarily the ones that are best for your health, and the conflict between health and business goals is at the root of public confusion about food choices.”⁶¹ This is where the knowledge that consumers have already acquired is useful—knowing how to navigate even the healthiest supermarket and find information that can help them learn about what they plan on eating can be a challenge for even the savviest consumer.

One of the large grocery stores in the area that posts quite a bit of information about their products is Whole Foods. Walking into Whole Foods, the knowledge our Central Florida consumers seeking out information can find is both daunting and amazing. The produce section details whether the produce is organic, conventional, or local as well as the origins (farms, producers, and

⁶¹ Marion Nestle, *What to Eat?* (New York: North Point Press, 2006), 7, Kindle Edition.

country) of many of the fruits and vegetables available. The seafood standards are posted and fish labeled extensively. The meat available is rated on a 5-tier animal welfare system that allows the consumer to understand more about their food prior to processing. Across the rest of the store, local, organic, and sustainable products are labeled. Even the body care products have descriptions associated with them that detail what ingredients are and are not allowed in their products. And, for the consumer that is even more interested in where their products in the grocery store come from, the information Whole Foods has available online is even more comprehensive. In short, as investigations in their store and on their extensive website show, their commitment to “helping you [the consumer] make informed choices about the food you eat” is a robust example of an avenue that many individuals in Tier Two who are looking to make better, more informed choices about what they and their family consumes can take.⁶² However, it is important to remember that it takes a good amount of effort to investigate all the healthy/organic/sustainable options available, even when grocery stores go to immense effort to post information for the public. It is even harder to find information at grocery stores that cater to a lower income bracket—not everyone in Central Florida shops at Whole Foods. And Whole Foods itself is not an organic, locally sourced panacea. There are a whole host of questions that are raised by a large-scale chain of stores, like Whole Foods, that encourage an industrial-scale organic model to feed their

⁶² Whole Foods, “Quality Standards” *Whole Foods Market*, 2013, accessed October 13, 2013, <http://www.wholefoodsmarket.com/about-our-products/quality-standards>.

consumers' appetites.⁶³ How ethical and sustainable is the industrial organic model or the globalization of grass-fed meat and milk?⁶⁴ There are many different options for consumers looking to try to reeducate themselves about the food they eat and many questions they need to answer for themselves and their families about what to eat. The challenge for Tier Two consumers, even those interested in participating in this local food movement, is often to find products that fit into their family's existing lifestyle and budget, that still allow them to make the choices they would like to make. It can be a daunting task and often requires a reworking of the family budget/priorities to commit to this new lifestyle.

Another activity that consumers in Tier Two begin to engage in is visiting the local farmers' markets. This might not be their main way of purchasing food, but they are exposed to the wide variety of local, seasonal fruits and vegetables, as well as the many artisanal products that the Central Florida producers have available. This is important in their development of a personal food culture because once you begin to stop listening to the food marketers, once you begin to evaluate your food options for yourself, the first question that pops up is usually, "Ok, so now that I have an idea about what I should eat, what is available in my area?" Farmer's markets—and informative grocery stores—are a great way to answer this question.

In Central Florida, we have quite a few farmers' markets. Most are mainly open on the weekends, for a few hours either on Saturday or Sunday, but there are also farmers' markets in the more urban area of Orlando that take place

⁶³ Pollan, Michael, "Mass Natural," New York Times, June 4, 2006.

⁶⁴ Ibid.

during the evening hours on a weeknight as well. There are usually fruit and vegetable vendors (some selling local or organic produce, some selling conventional), plant vendors, prepared food vendors (everything from baked goods, jellies, and pickles, to cheese, dog cookies, food ready-to-eat), and local groups working to fundraise. Many of these local farmers' markets, especially during the harvest times, are a veritable cornucopia of options for consumers looking to make a conscious effort to expand their food options and seek out more sustainable agriculture; however, there are times when farmers' markets in Central Florida can seem more like arts and crafts/plant sales and less like a place a farmer has ever set up a stand in. Many of the "regular" produce vendors do not purchase their fruits and vegetables locally; it takes effort to seek out the true local producers in some of these markets. Even locals who just visit the farmers' markets, without buying much (or anything at all) can benefit from this public display of our local bounty, for "food does not have to be eaten to have value. Just being able to see the bounty and diversity of edibles in our environment can be educational and may prompt diversity in our diet, while making us more food fluent."⁶⁵ And that is the goal of consumers in Tier Two: to continue building upon their existing knowledge of what is healthy to eat and create their own personal food culture, while developing the new habits needed to sustain it.

The new habits needed to sustain a way of eating can be a drastic change for many individuals and often require learning new skills and dedicating the time

⁶⁵ Darrin Nordahl, *Public Produce The New Urban Agriculture* (Washington, DC: Island Press, 2009), 117.

to reinforcing them at home. For many in Tier Two, the skills they are looking to learn fall into two main categories—cooking and gardening. Cooking is often a skill that those of us looking to eat in a way that eliminates heavily processed food need to develop. The major food processors (the ones that Tier One consumers are learning to try to avoid) cook (food process) significantly differently than cooks at home do—they add more sugar, salt, and fat, as well as many more chemical ingredients.⁶⁶ So those of us looking to eliminate these offenders, must start cooking more at home or spend the money to have healthy meals prepared for our families for us. Since this cost is fairly high, even for a middle class or upper-middle class household, our main choice to effectively provide our families with affordable, nutritious, even sustainable meals is to actually spend time in our kitchens completing a task many now view as a “chore” as opposed to an integral activity in our daily lives—cooking.

The problem is that we, as Americans, spend very little time in the kitchen—“the amount of time spent preparing meals...has fallen by half since the mid-sixties...to a scant twenty-seven minutes a day.”⁶⁷ And this is warping our idea of what food and even a meal actually is. As Michael Pollan notes in his work on the art of Cooking, *Cooked: a Natural History of Transformation*, “our growing distance from any direct, physical engagement with the process by which the raw stuff of nature gets transformed into a cooked meal is changing our understanding of what food is.”⁶⁸ We are content to idolize celebrity chefs, read food magazines, and watch countless hours of cooking shows and

⁶⁶ Michael Pollan, *Cooked: a Natural History of Transformation*, Kindle Edition, 8.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, 2.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, 9.

competitions on reality television, but we are reluctant to spend even a fraction of that time in our actual kitchens, cooking for our actual families. For some, this is not only a symptom of our increasing reliance on outside food processing, it is also a symptom of the fraying social fabric that cooking and eating together as a family helped to reinforce. Pollan also laments that “the rise of fast food and the decline in home cooking have also undermined the institution of the shared meal.”⁶⁹ This is a problem because: “the shared meal is no small thing. It is a foundation of family life, the place where our children learn the art of conversation and acquire the habits of civilization: sharing, listening, taking turns, navigating differences, arguing without offending.”⁷⁰ Cooking, and learning or relearning the skills needed to be able to create wholesome meals for our families, is an easy, if a bit more time consuming, way to begin to establish a personal food culture. Luckily for residents of Central Florida looking to acquire these skills, there are quite a few programs available; many offered through the local UF/county extension offices that can help them learn these much-needed skills.

One such office is the Seminole County UF/IFAS Extension Office. Seminole County and UF offer a plethora of extremely popular cooking and food preparation classes to help residents build their skills in the kitchen. These classes range from canning, freezing, and drying foods, to slow-cooker classes and basic food preparation, even classes that focus on one ingredient, like

⁶⁹ Ibid., 8.

⁷⁰ Ibid., 8.

healthy meals using fish.⁷¹ They often fill up quickly—an indication of the demand in the community for affordable education on how to perform some of the basic kitchen tasks that many of our mothers, grandmothers, and great-grandmothers took for granted; skills that were ubiquitous fifty years ago, now need special classes and instruction for many residents of Central Florida. It is fascinating that just as the amount of food processing that is available to us is at a level greater than at any other time in history, people are lining up to take scratch-cooking classes, watching hours upon hours of “food television,” and demanding multiple rows of cookbooks at the local bookstores—a sign possibly that people are really looking for ways to rediscover or reclaim skills and even a culture that has been lost to them over the past few generations.

These programs look to help people reclaim many of the skills they either forgot or never learned from their parents, grandparents, or other “food culture mentor,” as many of these skills are not new skills, but rather quite old; they are skills our grandmothers knew by heart, skills we are trying to relearn to reclaim our food culture from the mass market. But, as Michael Pollan questions,

“Can we ever go back? Once it has been dismantled, can a culture of everyday cooking...be rebuilt? Because it’s hard to imagine ever reforming the American way of eating unless millions of us—women and men both—are willing to make cooking and eating meals a part of daily life. The path to a healthier diet of fresh, unprocessed food (not to mention to a revitalized food economy) passes right through the home kitchen.”⁷²

As individuals on the path to healthier eating, the skills needed to reclaim our kitchen can be acquired (or reacquired) locally, if there is a desire. In addition to

⁷¹ Gabrielle Milch (Extension Agent at UF’s IFAS Extension/Seminole County for Urban Horticultural) in discussion with the author, October 2013.

⁷² Michael Pollan, *Cooked: a Natural History of Transformation*, Kindle Edition, 192.

cooking, however, many individuals in Tier Two are also looking to begin cultivating their own produce in their backyard, kitchen, small garden, you name it. Luckily for them, there are many resources in our Central Florida community that also support the acquisition of basic (and advanced) gardening skills for those who are interested. Quite a few of them are also run through the UF/county extension programs. I was fortunate enough to be able to take one of the Seminole County/UF-IFAS extension classes—a class on container gardening and hydroponics. The class met for three hours on a Wednesday evening and went through the basics. The amount of information given out to us was immense. For hydroponic gardening, we were briefed on the historical background of hydroponics, the different types of hydroponic set ups, the plants that will often thrive in a hydroponic environment, as well as the basics on how to set up your own hydroponic garden at home. For the container gardening segment, we learned why we should use containers for growing food in our environment, the basics of raised-bed gardening, square-foot gardening, and basic container gardening, as well as watering your containers/managing rainfall, seed choice, seasonality of crops, cold protection, and many useful tips about what plants do best in certain containers. Both segments included demonstrations as to how to set up your first system. The learning experience also included a folder chock-full of articles and handouts on vegetable gardening in Florida and what to plant, where and when. It was run by two UF-IFAS Extension Agents and a Seminole County Master Gardner, one of which,

Gabrielle Milch, the Extension Urban Horticulturalist at the UF-IFAS Extension office in Seminole County, I was able to speak with a few weeks later.

In speaking with Gabrielle, I was able to gain a better understanding of the huge amount of information and service they (and the other extension offices in Central Florida) are providing the residents of the area. The Seminole County Extension office offers many different types of horticultural programs to help service and educate those in the local community. Gabrielle mentioned that some of their most popular classes are the first vegetable gardening classes (attended by over 260 people so far this year), the container gardening class—like the one I attended (over 50 people), and a new hydroponics and aquaponics course (only offered once so far and was attended by 90 people).⁷³ These classes are attended, she noted, by mostly middle-aged to retiree residents of Seminole County, something I also observed in the class I attended, which was more women than men, and definitely skewed to an older generation.⁷⁴ Gabrielle noted that they are working to expand their reach to a younger generation—incorporating more social media, a new website, and how-to videos instead of traditional classes to grab the attention of the younger generation who also might have the same interests as their older novice-gardeners.⁷⁵

Besides the traditional classes to build or hone your gardening prowess, the extension office also holds community events that could help inform and educate an individual in Tier Two. A spring plant sale draws about 400 people and their monthly Master Gardener Help Desk (where people can go and talk to

⁷³ Gabrielle Milch, October 2013.

⁷⁴ Gabrielle Milch, October 2013.

⁷⁵ Gabrielle Milch, October 2013.

a Seminole County Master Gardener about their plant woes for help) draws about 150 to 300 visitors a month, but their big even is their Fall Garden Expo.⁷⁶ “The goal of this full day exposition is to expand the public’s awareness and knowledge of gardening through education and exposure to a wide range of horticultural topics.”⁷⁷ This is the fourth year for their Expo, an all-day affair that draws about 1,000 to 1,200 people to visit 18 vendors and hear gardening talks from master gardeners and special experts.⁷⁸ And Seminole County is just one of the examples of how the many local Extension Offices are working to inform and educate individuals occupying Tier Two who are looking to build and hone their gardening and cooking skills.

Individuals in Tier Two are actively looking to learn more about their food—where it comes from, how it is made, how it is processed—and learn (or relearn) the skills needed to begin to create a healthy, sustainable food culture for themselves and their families. They have moved from the passive phase where they are simply receiving information about nutrition to a more active phase where they are personally seeking out information themselves and trying to integrate that information into their daily lives. These individuals are supported by groups that are also looking to instill and foster this knowledge, whether it is a local foodstuffs store, community organization, or governmental agency. Here, the hope is for these individuals to create new habits and new family norms that reinforce a more traditional food culture. That is the only way for their efforts to

⁷⁶ Gabrielle Milch, October 2013.

⁷⁷ Gabrielle Milch “What is the Gardening Expo” *What is the Gardening Expo Seminole County Master Gardeners*, accessed October 2013, http://www.seminolecountymastergardeners.org/2013-_what_is_the_garden_expo.pdf.

⁷⁸ Gabrielle Milch, October 2013.

be sustainable on a long-term basis and for themselves and their families to benefit. This is not a one-month cleanse or a quick three-recipe repertoire; it is a continuous, conscious cultivation of skills and habits that are necessary for this shift to become a permanent feature in our community. As these individuals who are working to attain new knowledge and skills grow and begin to create a stable personal food culture, they can become more active in our local food community—visiting local farms, buying more exclusively from local producers, attending local festivals, and more. As they do that, they are engaging in our community food culture and move into the next Tier, Tier Three.

Tier Three—Engaging in Our Local Community Food Culture

As individuals in Tier Two continue to take a stronger interest in where their food comes from, how it is produced, and its long-term impact on the community, they begin to engage in the local food community in various ways—through consistently patronizing local producers and restaurants that support local producers, attending community food events, and seeking out other ways to learn about and connect with the local food community. Local producers and community educational groups are also targeting these individuals in an attempt to deepen their knowledge about the local food products available and the skills needed to procure them, as well as continue to support their connection to the local food community.

The Central Florida area offers quite a few different venues for individuals interested in procuring food from local producers. One of the most ubiquitous is

from local farmers' markets. Farmers' markets, over the past twenty years, have evolved into local social marketplaces of substantial proportions—even though farmers' markets were “originally designed to aid the family farmer, these local markets have evolved into socially and economically rewarding enterprises for consumers, farmers, entrepreneurs, and urban storeowners.”⁷⁹ Many municipalities now hold small farmers' markets on the weekends, and a few can grow quite large—especially during peak seasons—spilling out onto the streets and into adjacent public spaces, brimming with produce, baked goods, local craft foods, plants, and crafts for people to peruse. These public markets allow consumers to interact directly with local producers in the open, not only providing a venue for exercise and fresh produce, but also fostering the connections between the people producing the food in the community and the people consuming it—a connection that is difficult to grasp in the supermarket, even the most informative, well-stocked store.⁸⁰ Individuals in Tier Three interact more with the community through these farmers' markets than individuals in Tier Two and it is worth examining the local market phenomenon through the lens of Tier Three.

These local markets do provide a much-needed place for consumers to attempt to engage in the local food community by connecting with local producers—and some local farmers' markets do just that; however, many of our local farmers' markets are currently plagued with an influx of pseudo-producers—vendors that set up their stalls and sell products, mainly produce, that is obtained

⁷⁹ Kathleen Bubinas, "Farmers Markets in the Post-Industrial City," *City & Society* 23, no. 2 (2011): 155.

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, 155.

from a wholesale distributor at a wholesale price, not grown by the vendor or even purchased from a local farmer. These distributor-vendors often have a wider variety of produce available because they bring it in from around the world, just like a supermarket, and offer their produce at a cheaper price than the local producers can, because of their volume-based, wholesale economic system. In my interviews with local producers and local food advocates, this is one of the most common criticisms and issues they have to deal with when it comes to farmers' markets—how can they (the producers) at these local markets educate the average consumer (either Tier Two or Tier Three) about these pseudo-producers in a way that highlights the benefits of the local products as well as the value of contributing to the local economy.

One farmers' market in the local area does make a substantial effort to work with local producers in a way that allows them to highlight their products as well as help them make a substantial contribution to the local economy—Audubon Community Market. This local market—a collection of “growers, ranchers, fishermen, chefs, artists, handcrafters, musicians and neighbors”—is extremely selective when it comes to granting participation permits to vendors.⁸¹ This wonderful market—open Monday evenings in the Winter Park/Audubon Park Garden District, has certain guidelines to ensure that their vendors are offering the best fresh, local, high-quality foods to the marketplace. These guidelines include a priority given to vendors and products with the following characteristics:

⁸¹ A Local Folkus, “Audubon Community Market,” *A Local Folkus*, accessed October 14, 2013, <http://alocalfolkus.com/audubon-park-community-market/>.

a) Regional farmers and producers who bring products that are 100% grown, harvested, produced or caught within 150 miles of Orlando, FL. Organic/sustainable production methods are preferred. b) Products that contain local, seasonal ingredients to the fullest extent possible. c) Products that are handmade from scratch (without the use of packaged mixes or fillers) and include local ingredients when available. d) Products not already being sold at the Market⁸²

These guidelines also require that the goods are sold by the producer who made them (or an authorized agent), that all value-added products should incorporate local products whenever possible, that prepared foods are made from scratch, and the guidelines require an annual business/farm visit and/or inspection by the Audubon Community Market Team.⁸³ A focus for this market is authenticity—a true local, sustainable, producer-focused community farmers’ market that allows the consumer and the producer to connect and exchange goods and ideas in a way that grows and strengthens our local Central Florida food culture.

Unfortunately, it is one of the few true farmers’ markets in the area and for many, Monday nights is not conducive for shopping. It would take a restructuring of habits for many Central Floridians for them to be able to take advantage of this market. For an individual who is looking to expand their personal food culture and begin to engage in the growing community food culture however, the Audubon Community Market, as well as many of the other farmers’ markets in the Central Florida area, is a good place to start.

⁸² A Local Folkus, “Audubon Community Market Application, Rules & Regulations,” *Audubon Community Market*, accessed October 14, 2013, <http://audubonmarket.com/wp-content/uploads/2012/09/APCM-2012-2013-Application-and-Rules.pdf>.

⁸³ A Local Folkus, “Audubon Community Market Application, Rules & Regulations,” <http://audubonmarket.com/wp-content/uploads/2012/09/APCM-2012-2013-Application-and-Rules.pdf> and A Local Folkus, “Apply to be a vendor,” *Audubon Community Market*, accessed October 14, 2013, <http://audubonmarket.com/apply-to-be-a-vendor/>.

In addition to the outdoor farmers' markets in the area, a variety of co-ops, Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) groups, and local food product shops are also joining the Central Florida marketplace and providing a resource for individuals in Tier Three to begin moving out of the supermarket and engaging in the wider community food culture. These outlets often not only provide a venue for shopping and procuring foodstuffs, they often also offer classes and workshops that bring in local producers and experts to teach, inform, and connect with locals interested in learning more about producing their own products at home with local ingredients. For example, the Wild Hare Kitchen and Garden Emporium, located in Longwood, occasionally offers classes on beekeeping, homemade soaps, and jam-making, to name a few, all run by local producers and experts on the subject. These classes, as well as classes offered by other merchants and organizations allow consumers in Tier Three to continue to engage in the local food community and broaden their knowledge base as to what is available, in-season, local, and sustainable.

Local CSA groups also offer another way for Tier Three individuals to expand their personal food culture and engage in the wider Central Florida food community. These CSAs are sometimes run through the local farmers' markets—for example, the pickup for one such CSA is Monday nights at the Audubon Community Market—but sometimes they are run directly through the local farmers themselves. A unique local CSA, Sundew Gardens in Oviedo, is an exclusive u-pick CSA that allows members to fully appreciate from where their food originates.

I was able to go visit Sundew Gardens one bright, warm, Saturday morning, just as u-pick was starting up and chat with Tom Carey, organic gardener and proprietor. According to Tom, his customers are excited to find his farm, a vibrant mix of suburban soccer moms from the local area and students, professors, and administrators from the University of Central Florida, a short distance away.⁸⁴ Part of his CSA requires members to come out to his farm and pick their own produce, actually bend down and ground themselves with the earth to procure the food that will feed themselves and their families.⁸⁵ He likes this method, as opposed to participating in the local farmers' markets for a few reasons, one being the educational aspect of having non-farmers engaging in the gathering of their own food from the land—"the beauty of my customers coming to me is I can educate them," notes Tom, as we were talking about the unique aspects of his CSA.⁸⁶ There is a shallow learning curve out in the garden—each individual plant has a unique method of harvesting and that is something that Tom likes to take the time to teach his customers.⁸⁷ Not only does it allow him to make sure they are treating the plants in a way that will allow them to stay healthy, but it also exposes his customers to the producer of their produce in a unique way—how many times do you get to stand in the field with the farmer who planted it, pick out the produce you are interested in, and learn about how it is grown and best consumed? This educational-consumption model also allows Tom to begin to overcome one of his biggest challenges when it comes to his

⁸⁴ Tom Carey (Organic gardener and Proprietor of Sundew Gardens) in discussion with the author, October 2013.

⁸⁵ Tom Carey, October 2013.

⁸⁶ Tom Carey, October 2013.

⁸⁷ Tom Carey, October 2013.

customers' expectations—the reality of the seasons and crops that actually grown in Florida. Florida's growing seasons are different than most of the rest of the country. For example our “off-season” in Florida is summer, when it is too hot for most plants, excepting the weeds of course, to thrive, as opposed to the snow-laden winter “off-season” of the North.

In fact, one of the biggest educational efforts I encountered in my investigations (whether in vegetable gardening classes offered by the UF/IFAS extension office or by local farmers trying to reset customers' desires for certain types of produce at certain times) was this desire to teach consumers what plants grow well, when, in Florida. For example, I learned that tomatoes do not often set fruit when the night temperatures do not drop below seventy-five degrees Fahrenheit—a condition that would preclude many traditional farmers, as well as individuals looking to grow their own tomatoes, from growing tomatoes in the heat of summer in Florida, a “traditional time” (as in when they can be grown up North and shipped to grocery stores across the country) that tomatoes are expected by consumers and often included in many dishes.

Consumers that are interested in learning more about the unique aspects of Central Florida and our food culture can also engage in the local community by attending one of the many events that occur throughout the year that spotlight different aspects of our local Central Florida food culture. From the vegetarian-centered Central Florida Veg Fest and decidedly-not vegetarian friendly Festival of Bacon, to organizations and producers that partner to throw farm-to-table dinners and breakfast-in-the pasture events, and even the annual Winter Park

and Winter Garden Harvest Festivals, local events that spotlight the best of our local cuisine keep multiplying.

The 4th Annual Winter Park Harvest Festival, held this year on November 23, was a fantastic opportunity for members of the community to experience and get involved in the developing Central Florida food culture. This festival offered booths with local producers—from farmers and local honey to bakers and other artisanal food products created locally—as well as seminars, workshops, and demonstrations, local food-trucks and food vendors, and even featured a display of the mobile grow boxes that have been planted and tended by school children from local area schools. Located in the heart of Winter Park, it brought many of the local producers to an area where people are becoming more concerned with the quality and level of sustainability of their diet. As I strolled through the festival, I could not help but marvel at the number of people purchasing local food products, discussing the products with the local producers, and truly engaging in our local food culture. With such a beautiful day and convenient location, it seems like many of the patrons were truly enjoying the opportunity to be part of this annual festival—one of many festivals and community events that arise in Central Florida throughout the year, many of which feature local food in some fashion. Many individuals who are looking to reeducate themselves and engage in the community, a characteristic of Tier Three individuals, can attend local festivals like the Winter Park Harvest Festival.

One of the easiest ways for those individuals in Tier Three who are looking to engage in our local food culture and learn about the many events,

producers, and products that can be found in their area is to pick up an edition of our local food magazine: Edible Orlando. Edible Orlando is a quarterly magazine, available free at local businesses and also through subscription, that spotlights local events, producers, and products and educates their reader about what is seasonal, fresh, and local. They feature recipes using simple, fresh, seasonal ingredients that their readers will be able to find at local markets. For Kendra Lott, publisher of Edible Orlando, this is a major need her magazine helps fill. Her readers already have an awareness of seasonality and local food products, they are interested in how to use these ingredients in their own kitchen, as well as where to find them in local restaurants and hotels.⁸⁸ Every quarter, copies fly off the shelves of the local restaurants and markets that carry the magazine as readers look to learn what is fresh, new, and exciting in the Central Florida food culture scene.

The consumers in Tier Three are working to expand their own personal food culture and incorporate more of the Central Florida community into their eating, shopping, and socializing patterns. As John Rife, founder and owner of East End Market and A Local Folkus family of community organizations noted, “People are looking for something that’s not a commodity.”⁸⁹ What people are looking for is an authentic experience; they are looking to reengage not only with their food, but also with their food-based community, and reclaim their local food culture in a way that will bring them closer to the foodstuffs and producers than

⁸⁸ Kendra Lott (Publisher, Edible Orlando Magazine) in discussion with the author, November 2013.

⁸⁹ John Rife (founder and owner of East End Market and A Local Folkus family of community organizations) in discussion with the author, August 2013.

they have ever been in their lifetime. As Central Floridians engage in their local food community and expand their personal food culture, some even begin to become producers themselves and join an entirely new group of individuals and organizations looking to expand and reclaim our Central Florida food culture.

Central Florida Food Culture: The Changing Landscape

Chapter 4—Tier Four: Producers of our Local Food Economy and the Future of Central Florida Food

“Handling these plants and animals, taking back the production and the preparation of even just some part of our food, has the salutary effect of making visible again many of the line of connection that the supermarket and the ‘home-meal replacement’ have succeeded in obscuring, yet of course never actually eliminated.”⁹⁰

Tier Four – The Producers of our Local Food and Their Community

As more and more consumers look to reeducate themselves about their food and engage in our Central Florida food economy, a larger and more varied market for local foodstuffs is created. This demand for more is readily filled by the variety of food producers in Central Florida—farmers, bakers, specialty-food producers, as well as fishermen, to name a few. This diverse group can be found at the local farmers’ markets and in their own shops and farms and are doing their part to work with the local consumers to educate and inform about their products and the Central Florida food culture in general. As the community grows, many of the producers in Central Florida are also seeking out each other and working together to continue their own educational process, reach out to more individuals in the community, and continue to expand the local food culture.

While many of the producers’ businesses in the local area are still in their infancy—growing and establishing themselves along with our growing food

⁹⁰ Michael Pollan, *Cooked: a Natural History of Transformation*, 7, Kindle Edition.

culture, some of our local producers established themselves in Central Florida quite some time ago and have witnessed the explosion of interest in our food culture over the past few years. Tom Carey, of Sundew Gardens, established his farm in Oviedo in the late 1980s. According to Tom, five years ago he was still explaining the idea of local food to those who came across his farm, but the change over the past five years has been staggering—the interest in the local food community has grown from “almost absolutely zero to where we are now.”⁹¹ When I asked him about the competitors in the marketplace now, he notes that he really is just starting to even see competitors—a sign that more and more producers are looking to enter our growing marketplace.⁹²

As our food culture shifts in Central Florida, as more and more consumers look to purchase some or all of their food products locally, producers in our area are working together to grow their businesses as never before and are beginning to shape the food culture with their endeavors. It is not uncommon to see local producers helping each other out at local farmers’ markets and supporting each other at harvest festivals; however, they are also working together as they educate themselves about local issues, consumer wants and needs, and how to grow their businesses.

There are many resources in Central Florida for established or new producers to educate themselves and find support from within the growing community. The county extension offices have specialists on-site to work with farmers and help them with agricultural problems. Also, these extension offices

⁹¹ Tom Carey, October 2013.

⁹² Tom Carey, October 2013.

often work together to put on small conferences and workshops to benefit the local producers in the area. For example, the extension offices work specifically with small farms and alternatives enterprises through their Small Farm Extension team to help guide, support, and provide assistance to those looking to join the producer community.⁹³ This team organizes a variety of workshops throughout the year on topics of interest to local producers and even organizes a Small Farms and Alternative Enterprises Conference locally that allows the producers in the area to not only learn about a variety of topics—from beekeeping to the basics of pasture raised pork and aquaculture to food safety regulations—but also to network and socialize with one another and build relationships within the local community.⁹⁴

In addition to the Small Farms team, the Orange County UF/IFAS extension office also organized a Local Food System and Urban Farming Conference in October to bring together local producers to begin to shape the local food culture:

It is time for us, as responsible citizens, to ensure our food is produced in a socially and environmentally responsible manner. Orange County needs food security from Farm to Table. The *grow local / buy local* movement can make that dream a reality. This conference is a forum for local producers, businesses and residents to invest in their community's food and economic security.⁹⁵

⁹³ Small Farms Extension team, "About Us," *Small Farms & Alternative Enterprises*, accessed November 2, 2013, http://smallfarms.ifas.ufl.edu/about_us.html.

⁹⁴ Small Farms Extension team, "Small Farms and Alternative Enterprises Conference," *Small Farms & Alternative Enterprises*, accessed November 2, 2013, <http://conference.ifas.ufl.edu/SmallFarms/index.html>. and Small Farms Extension team, "Small Farms and Alternative Enterprises Conference Agenda," *Small Farms & Alternative Enterprises*, accessed November 2, 2013, <http://conference.ifas.ufl.edu/SmallFarms/agenda.pdf>.

⁹⁵ Orange County UF/IFAS Extension Office, "Local Food Systems Urban Farming Conference Flyer," *Orange County Extension Services*, accessed November 2, 2013, http://orange.ifas.ufl.edu/uf_workshop/pdffiles/Urban%20Farming%202013.pdf.

This conference provided opportunities for producers in Central Florida to learn about the local food systems, livestock-raising, beekeeping, as well as producing and marketing organic crops, and more.⁹⁶ Not only are these extension office-driven resources necessary for producers to be able to educate themselves about the basics and network with others in the area, they also provide a sort of “continuing education” for local producers that is critical so they can stay as competitive as possible in the extremely competitive environment that is the food marketplace.

In addition to the extension office programs, local organizations also host programs that allow the producers in the community to network and learn how to grow their business. One such event that I attended was the Food and Farmpreneur Freelance Fair, hosted by one of the newest additions to our local food community, East End Market, on September 19, 2013. This event brought together local food producers and consisted of a series of workshops on branding their businesses, creating effective business websites, conquering social media, and pitching their stories to local media outlets. The presenters stressed that even though most of the producers in the room were extremely small, their ability to market themselves in the local community was critical to their own financial success and the future success of the local food movement. These businesses, whether already established local farms and artisanal-product producers or initiatives that were just looking to get started, will be competing with local supermarkets and the heavily-marketed processed-foods available in them—stores and items with marketing budgets in the millions of dollars as

⁹⁶ Ibid.

opposed to hundreds. In this case, it is critical that our local producers are as prepared as possible so they can work to remake our local food culture and capture as many customers as possible.

The host of this event, East End Market, is part of the A Local Folkus group of organizations that is “working to grow the good food movement in Central Florida.”⁹⁷ Recently opened, it is a place where local producers and consumers can come together and continue to impact the Central Florida food culture. The market currently houses twelve merchants, an event space, a demonstration kitchen, an incubator kitchen, offices and retail, as well as a caterer and restaurant.⁹⁸ I was able to discuss the importance of the local producer community with several of the merchants and learned how critical the community is to their success and the future of the local food movement.

For Tonda Nazario, owner of La Femme du Fromage, a specialty cheese shop at the East End Market, the community is critical to her success and the spread of the local food movement.⁹⁹ For her, the East End Market is a wonderful venue that gives producers like her a “home” where everyone is so passionate and supportive of each other and their ventures.¹⁰⁰ Besides selling specialty cheeses to her clients and offering catering services for local residents and businesses, Tonda also offers classes in wine and cheese pairing to help educate the community—something she feels is critical to help develop new

⁹⁷ A Local Folkus, “About Us,” *A Local Folkus*, accessed November 2, 2013, <http://alocalfolkus.com/about/>.

⁹⁸ East End Market, “About Us” *East End Market Press Kit* (2013) 2. <http://eastendmkt.com/about/press/>.

⁹⁹ Tonda Nazario (Owner La Femme du Fromage) in discussion with the author, November 2013.

¹⁰⁰ Tonda Nazario, November 2013.

tastes and introduce people to new experiences.¹⁰¹ As the local food movement expands, Tonda is seeing a growing awareness of the value of good food, an interest in more education, and a concerted effort by many as they take a vested interest in what they are eating.¹⁰² As part of the interest in more education, she recently offered her inaugural wine and cheese pairing class at the East End Market—a class I was fortunate enough to be able to attend.

The inaugural class in the East End Market's Audubon Exchange, their event space, was a wine and cheese pairing class featuring some of the specialty cheeses that Tonda offers in her shop along with a selection of wines curated by Local Roots Farm Store also located in the East End Market. The class, which featured five pairings, was attended by at least eighty very enthusiastic people who clearly enjoyed the fantastic cheese and wine brought out by Tonda and her crew. The highlight of the night was the headliner of this wine and cheese pairing class. Tonda was able to secure Max McCalman, a Maitre Formager and world-renowned, cheese expert and advocate, to speak about the joys of cheese—the cheese-making process and the history and tasting notes of the individual cheese and wine pairings offered that night, as well as answer any and all questions about cheese in general for the audience. In addition, Tonda's local wine expert was available to help explain the wine choices and guide the tasters through the notes of the individual wines. For the eighty people in attendance, the cheeses offered were a testament to Tonda's love and passion for good, wholesome food—they definitely did not disappoint—

¹⁰¹ Tonda Nazario, November 2013.

¹⁰² Tonda Nazario, November 2013.

and the line at her shop afterwards filled with people looking to stock up on the amazing offerings of the evening demonstrated that my opinion was not the minority. Afterwards, Tonda described how she plans to expand her classes to include wine makers, cheese makers, and others in the industry, hopefully one class every month for the community.¹⁰³ All in all, it was a wonderful event and a fantastic way for the local producer community to contribute to the food culture of Central Florida.

For many producers in Central Florida, the producer community that surrounds them is vital. From helping each other out when tragedy strikes to surprising each other on celebratory occasions, the people they interact with at farmers' markets becomes almost like an extended family.¹⁰⁴ But there is still work to be done—no small producer or group of producers can do it alone. The work to educate the consumers, to combat the misinformation sent out by the food manufacturers, takes effort and time; effort and time many of them do not have. But, more and more people are actively looking for local, it is even beginning to be recommended by some doctors, for example, local honey to treat allergies, as Gary Eavey, owner of St. Johns River Honey Co. pointed out.¹⁰⁵ For him, education is important—getting people to recognize the quality in his product and value it as the special commodity it truly is.¹⁰⁶ It is this struggle, this demand that producers not only create the most delicious, nutritious, and often

¹⁰³ Tonda Nazario, November 2013.

¹⁰⁴ Patricia Reimitz (Owner, Sista Susies Organic Garden, a U-Pick In College Park), in discussion with the author, November 2013.

¹⁰⁵ Gary Eavy (Owner, St. Johns River Honey Co.), in discussion with the author, November 2013.

¹⁰⁶ Gary Eavy, November 2013.

most sustainable products available, but also convince a sometimes wary public of the benefits of their products that often requires them to come together to help spread the changing local food culture.

The community of producers in Central Florida—the network of farmers, artisanal-food creators, local shop owners, and venues—that work to service the demand in Central Florida for wholesome, well-curated, non-industrially processed food is growing everyday. These local business owners rely on each other and the community for support and often reach out through educational opportunities as they look to connect with each other and their broader community in the hopes of strengthening and spreading our growing Central Florida food culture.

Conclusion—Where are We Headed? The Future of Central Florida Food

The Central Florida food culture is undergoing a period of change where more and more people are looking to reeducate themselves about the food they eat and then engage in a diet that is less processed and more locally and sustainably sourced. An Orange County Public Library event lecture, *How Foodies and Farmers are Revolutionizing Orlando*, conducted by John Rife of *A Local Folkus*, described why more and more people are choosing this lifestyle. John concluded that people are looking for many things from their food supply system, including:

1. Accountability from producers (Much easier when buying directly from them)
2. Freshness (Produce picked ripe and at the peak of season)

3. More sustainable and ethical methods of farming and livestock production (Polycrop, fewer chemicals/chemical free, more variety)
4. Seasonality in their produce (Leads to more thoughtful and memorable food experiences)¹⁰⁷

While these conclusions can be witnessed and verified at almost any farmers' market in the area, simply the fact that the Orange County Public Library System would offer a lecture on a topic like this is evidence that there is a growing group of people interested in the changing food culture of Central Florida. It is a good sign that the movement is gaining real followers and beginning to impact people on many levels; however, the question remains: Will enough Central Floridians make the switch for this to shift our entire culture?

In Central Florida, this movement to change our food culture for the better is separated into two distinct types of advocacy groups who together are working to impact the eating of people in Tiers One through Four. One group targets the uninformed—those consumers looking to get on Tier One and potentially those on Tier Two. These groups concentrate on selling this new way of eating via the obesity epidemic or other health-related issues. They target many populations in Central Florida with limited means—residents with lower incomes, children, and the elderly. There is a lot of momentum behind many of the organizations and programs that administer to these residents and many of the programs are extremely successful in achieving their goal of putting healthier, less-processed food in the mouths of Central Floridians. Even with all the groups' success to improve the health and diet of the residents of Central Florida, there is a limited

¹⁰⁷ John Rife, "How Foodies and Farmers are Revolutionizing Orlando" (presentation, How Foodies and Farmers are Revolutionizing Orlando, Orlando, FL, October 15, 2013).

impact from these residents to the growing movement outside of the grocery stores. The targeted residents of most of these programs, while benefiting from the education they receive and the new, healthier habits they develop, are not the main drivers of the growing local food economy. To be that, they would have to at least spend more of their money at the farmers' markets and local artisanal product and produce shops, a shopping habit that is usually prohibitively expensive for those of limited means. It will take more initiatives from the local governments, more incentives for shopping-habit change for these residents to be able to fully participate in our changing food culture in Central Florida. It also remains to be seen if the habits they begin to build and the information they learn at these workshops, classes, and seminars is long-lasting. Will this just be another trend, another blip on the "problem of the day" radar that shifts with the next big issue to break on mainstream media?

One such initiative that would help integrate many who cannot afford the local farm produce would be to not only encourage local farmer's markets to accept SNAP debit cards, but also to provide some level of matching funds to help encourage community members to shop for their families at farmers' markets and fill up their baskets with fresh, wholesome fruits and veggies. Many municipalities around the country are already experimenting with this initiative and various levels of matching funds at their farmers' markets. For example:

- Double Up Food Bucks matches up to \$20 in farmers' market purchases by SNAP users at participating Michigan farmers' markets.
- Boston Bounty Bucks funds EBT terminals at farmers' markets, teaches staff how to use them, and provides up to \$10 in matching funds for SNAP clients at participating Boston farmers' markets.

- Health Bucks offers a free \$2 coupon for every \$5 of SNAP benefits spent at participating New York City farmers' markets.
- Fresh Exchange offers a dollar-for-dollar match for up to \$5 of SNAP benefits spent at farmers' markets in Portland, Oregon.
- Evanston, Illinois offers 50 cents of credit for every \$1 of SNAP benefits spent at downtown farmers' markets.¹⁰⁸

These benefits, while seemingly small, would help to encourage the integration of the lower-income strata of Tier One into our locally-sourced Central Florida food culture, increase demand for local products, and help keep dollars spent on food, a growing proportion of many families' budgets, in our local economy in the hands of local farmers, artisanal-product producers, and local business owners. The Sanford Farmers' Market in Seminole County does take SNAP/EBT debit cards, but imagine if every local market was able to process food stamp vouchers—how many more low-income customers would they be able to service? How would that help to build even more demand for locally grown and produced food products? Would that encourage more lower-income people to shop at farmers' markets? Would they know what to do with the produce they purchased or would it go bad in the crisper drawer as their family ate delivery pizza for dinner?

The other advocacy group that is impacting our food culture is comprised of people of wealthier means who are driving many of the main structural changes in our local food community and economy. They are demanding local and/or organic, healthier, more sustainable food for their families and are willing to invest the time and money to secure it, whether that is through shopping at local markets, eating at restaurants that use local ingredients, attending festivals

¹⁰⁸ Snap to Health, "Snap at Farmers' Markets," *Snap to Health*, accessed November 10, 2013, <http://www.snaptohealth.org/snap-innovations/snap-at-farmers-markets/>.

and local events that spotlight the food culture, or even pressuring municipalities to pass more local agriculturally-friendly laws. For entrepreneurs like John Rife, this is where it starts. He and others in the food community recognize that this group of people is looking for food experiences that are not commodities; they are not looking at low-cost to be a measure of value for them anymore.¹⁰⁹ The producers and those supporting the producers in this group understand that the movement started in Central Florida as a premium price for a premium product.¹¹⁰

Only those with the means and desire to secure the premium price were initially able to participate in the movement, but as they did, their dollars and advocacy was the foundation for the growth of the movement—the new producers and venues and programs that we are beginning to see explode on the marketplace today. Is this the future of Central Florida food? Will we see an even bigger stratification of society when it comes to food and access to quality nourishment? Will local municipalities and school boards step in to address the inequalities, even just on the education side? Who will continuously teach us how to eat?

As I spoke with those in the community, I often posed the question “What do you see for the future of Central Florida food?” The answers usually varied around a singular theme—as access to more high-quality and local ingredients, through farmers’ markets, CSAs, local shops, and producers, grow and as people become more educated as to the benefits of eating in a way that is

¹⁰⁹ John Rife, August 2013.

¹¹⁰ John Rife, August 2013.

healthier, sustainable, and less-processed, we are going to see an even larger number of people becoming responsible for what they feed themselves and their families. The pace of expansion is quickening, the interest is growing, and organizations and producers in the area are beginning to build sustainable, successful followers. It will take more education—groups and individuals working together to continue to reach out into the community and teach people about the benefits of reforming our food culture—for this movement to reach sustainability.

For the Central Florida food movement as a whole to capitalize on this growing momentum, work needs to be done not only to bridge the gap between the two main groups of organizations and producers that influence Central Florida's changing food culture, but also to continue to work to impact not only the way the entire Central Florida community thinks about what is for dinner, but also how the community interacts with the idea of food on a daily basis—we need to continue to remove the line between food and eater, producer and consumer so that food loses its commodity label and is reintegrated into our culture as a basic staple of living, as a fundamental part of our culture as a whole.

One way to do this is to rethink how we plan our urban spaces. We are blessed in Central Florida with quite a few municipal parks and recreation areas that are beautifully landscaped with gardens and carefully trimmed hedges, trees, and lawns. How impactful would it be if we began to include produce in our local parks as part of the seasonal landscaping? Fruit trees, branches heavy with ripening fruit, seasonal produce such as pumpkins in the fall or watermelons in the summer, all growing abundantly in small beds, would serve to remind our

citizens not only of the seasonality of our food and the connection our food has to the earth, but also of the potential beauty and variety of our local food crops. How much more would the average community member learn about the local flora if we just incorporated more local food crops into municipal plantings? It is a shame we only think about our landscaping efforts as framed by our local big box home improvement stores—the same twenty to thirty hedges and flowers and trees in everyone’s yard shield us from the fact that what we grow has not only the potential to be an attractive addition to our perfectly trimmed verge, but also has the potential to nourish our families and communities.

As I write about the potential power of transforming urban spaces with more live, seasonal produce, I think of the pumpkin patches that spring up around this time in many church and school parking lots around the area. People flock to these to buy pumpkins—usually for a premium price compared to what they could find in a local supermarket or farmers’ market. They go, walk around the pumpkins, take pictures with their children, and try to evaluate exactly which ones would be the best for their jack-o-lantern plans for this Halloween. In short, they make it an event, a shared family time to go “pumpkin picking” in our artificially created pumpkin “patch.” It becomes almost an instinctual event, a tradition that activates within us the farmer, the gardener, the cultivator that just a few generations back, would have been picking our pumpkins from a real pumpkin patch either in their own backyard garden or a local farm. This reconnection with our food would reach a wider audience and have the potential to be significantly more sustainable if we became used to seeing the bounty of

our area when we were outside—it would make food from the earth normal, and return the grocery store rain spritzers in the produce section to the category of oddity, the replication of where “real food” comes from.

There are concerns, as Darrin Nordahl describes in his *Public Produce*, such as a common fear of public officials over food drop and liability (as fruit and nut trees drop their bounty, it can be messy, slippery, and cause a real liability issue); however this can be solved in a number of ways—often these ways involve the community and encourage more interaction with real food and where it comes from.¹¹¹ One suggestion is to encourage community “harvesting” of the fruit when it is ripe.¹¹² Imagine if there was a harvest festival that coincided with the ripening of a certain public grove of fruit or nut trees—people could come and harvest the fruit or nuts (for free, hopefully) and local public officials could even encourage local community groups to come out and harvest the remaining to be used in local food kitchens and by groups such as the Second Harvest Food Bank in Central Florida. Think of the interaction, educational opportunities, and engagement local individuals, families, and community service organizations could have with the food and environment around them as they work to reeducate themselves and their families about what to eat. Local producers could set up booths to share complementary products and local educational groups could distribute recipe ideas and tips for growing and harvesting their own fruit and nut trees at home. Other strategies include planting trees that the local municipalities could then use to produce their own “brand” of locally sourced

¹¹¹ Darrin Nordahl, *Public Produce The New Urban Agriculture*, 96-97.

¹¹² *Ibid.*, 97.

good.¹¹³ For example, the University of California at Davis uses their own olive trees to produce hundreds of gallons (800 gallons in 2007) of olive oil to sell to the local community with financial returns (\$80,000 of profit in 2007) that help support their UC Davis Olive Center—an educational and research facility that focuses on the production of olives and olive oil.¹¹⁴ Why could we not see an effort by local municipalities to turn areas of local parks, as well as unused or poorly-used land, into their own venue for locally produced products. To start, they could even partner with the local producer community and possibly share the work—the municipality provides the land and crops, while the local producers harvest and create products with the produce, with a share of the profits going to both. This would help create a vested interest on both sides to encourage the growth of our local food community.

Our food paradox in the United States—an abundance of calories that over nourish millions while simultaneously making (and leaving) many more mal/undernourished because of the lack of quality of the overly processed food regularly consumed, is ridiculous. We can think of this problem in production like we would an economic system—“one that, like all economic systems, has winners and losers, suffers periodic and occasionally profound instability, and is plagued by the same inherent and irreducible gap between what we demand and what is actually supplied;” however “food itself is not an economic phenomenon...the underlying product—the thing we eat—has never quite

¹¹³ Ibid., 97-98.

¹¹⁴ Ibid., 97-98.

conformed to the rigors of the modern industrial model.”¹¹⁵ As much as the major food corporations have tried to manipulate nature to produce exactly what our taste buds, bodies, and wallets demand, they cannot truly improve on what nature produces naturally, readily, and with (often) little effort on her own part. More and more people around the country are recognizing this and the food culture in the entire United States (including Central Florida) is beginning to gradually shift away from these processed foods and back towards a more traditional diet.

But, the sustainability of this movement has not been proven yet. The movement is growing, that is true, but for this to become a permanent shift, much more work needs to be done to truly create a culture that values the time and effort that goes into a daily meal, not just a special occasion meal or restaurant meal with flashy ingredients. We need to make cooking dinner in the evenings just as important and valuable as catching up on our favorite television show or spending hours browsing the internet—a few activities that our current culture seems to value more than anything. The hope is that this will be an eventuality, that people will come to realize that their current life and culture do not represent what is best for them and their families, but that is a hard sell in our current marketing-saturated environment—even in a community like Central Florida, especially in a community in Central Florida.

In our Central Florida community, as more and more people understand the benefits of eating in a healthier, less-processed, more traditional way, the demand for locally-sourced, small batch, and artisanal products will continue to

¹¹⁵ Paul Roberts, *The End of Food*, xii-xiv.

rise. We have many areas of progress that we should be extremely proud of. The groups in our community that are raising food awareness work with a variety of demographics and their efforts to build nutritional knowledge as well as cooking, gardening, and home food-processing skills encourages and reinforces the idea that a more traditional, locally-sourced, home-centered approach to eating creates a more sustainably healthy family. Our local producers and farmers' markets are in the process of building an extensive network of community supporters—consumers, municipalities and government-supported organizations, as well as private businesses—to advocate for the continued support and spread of our burgeoning food culture. As time moves forward and the movement spreads, the hope is to see increased participation in the local food culture from people of every walk of life. More people eating locally and artisanally grown, sourced, and created products, growing and raising more of their own food, and taking ultimate responsibility for the food they feed their families and the impact that their chosen food has on the world around them.

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