



Anka Jhangiani of
Wholearth Farm sells
organic fruits and
vegetables at the
Dupont Circle
FreshFarm Market in
Washington, D.C.

FOOD CULTURE USA

Celebrating a Culinary Revolution

JOAN NATHAN

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In the summer of 2001, when I was beginning to think about a Folklife Festival program devoted to food, the Smithsonian's National Museum of American History added Julia Child's kitchen to its exhibits, alongside some of the country's icons such as Thomas Edison's light bulb and the first Teddy bear. At the opening reception for the exhibit, guests were served not the French dishes that Julia introduced to the United States, but a stunning menu of American food including seared bison filet with pepper relish and *pappadam*, purple Cherokee tomato tartlet with goat cheese and herbs, and a local organic sweet tomato tart with basil and ricotta gelato. This meal was a patchwork of healthy, natural, spicy foods from different cultures that we Americans have embraced in the forty years since Julia published her first book. While, in one sense, Julia Child's kitchen represented the popular American introduction to French cooking, the reception menu showed that its counters, appliances, and utensils had also come to symbolize a series of broader trends—an increased interest in the craft of food in general and in foods that could be considered American.

The decades following the publication of Julia Child's *Mastering the Art of French Cooking* in 1961 and the debut of her television show were a time of momentous change in American food. During those years, the introduction of ethnic and regional dishes to the American palate had opened our mouths and minds to a broader array of tastes; a grassroots movement for sustainability had returned many to the world of fresh, seasonal produce known to their ancestors; and chefs and cooks had become explorers and teachers of diverse traditions in food. This period has been called the American Food Revolution. Whatever it is, this is the best time in history for American food. For those who

Chef Janos Wilder gathers a bounty of radishes at a farm near his Tucson restaurant. Like an increasing number of American chefs, Wilder works closely with growers to ensure that he has the freshest, best-tasting ingredients.

TIM FULLER



This article is adapted from Joan Nathan's forthcoming The New American Cooking (Alfred A. Knopf).



OCEAN MIST FARMS

Workers harvest artichokes at Ocean Mist Farms in California. American agriculture depends on the skills of migrant laborers, who continue to struggle for economic rights and adequate working conditions.

take the time to cook at home or to dine out in ethnic and independent restaurants, the food is thought out and delicious. We have artisanal cheese makers, local organic farmers, even more great grocery and ethnic stores than most of us ever dreamed of. The world is at our fingertips, and it is a pleasure to cook. The very nature of America has become global, and this is reflected in our food. Chef Daniel Boulud calls today's cooking "world" cuisine. He is not very far off.

This revolution has come at a time when much of the news about food is less encouraging. During a visit to the Missouri countryside, I stopped in at a mega-supermarket in a small town surrounded by farmland. To my surprise, in the midst of fields of fresh strawberries and fish streams overflowing with trout, I found that everything in the market was plastic and processed. I thought about the author Barbara Kingsolver's comment, "Many adults, I'm convinced, believe that food comes from grocery stores."

In a similar vein, my son David, when discussing the "American" book on which this Festival program is based, said that I have to include Cheese Whiz and McDonald's. No, I don't. We know about the downside of

American food today—the growing power of fast food chains and agribusiness, people not eating together as a family, food that is denatured, whole processed microwave meals, and the TV couch potato syndrome.

I have instead focused on the positive. In preparation for my forthcoming book, *The New American Cooking*, and the Festival I have crisscrossed this country from California to Alaska and Hawai'i to New England and have entered kitchens, farms, processing plants, and restaurants, seeking out the recipes and the people who have made American food what it is today. I have tried to show a fair selection of what I have seen, interviewing people in 46 states throughout our great country. I have broken bread in the homes of new immigrants such as Hmongs of Minnesota and Ecuadoreans in New Jersey. I have noticed how, at Thanksgiving, the turkey and stuffings have been enhanced by the diverse flavors now available in this country. Accompanying the very American turkey or very American Tofurky will be spring rolls, stuffed grape leaves, or oysters, all holiday foods from an assortment of foreign lands.

That is American food today.

DIVERSITY

More than at any other time in our history, America's food has become a constantly changing blend of native and foreign ingredients and techniques coupled with the most amazing ingredients of all—American ingenuity and energy. The Civil Rights Movement spurred Americans to explore their rich African-American and Native American traditions. In 1965 a new Immigration Act lifted the quotas on immigration from many non-European countries, contributing to an increase in immigrants from Latin American, African, and Asian countries. People from India, Thailand, Afghanistan, and Lebanon brought their culture in the way of food.

This unprecedented wave of immigration made the United States more multicultural than ever before. The figures tell the story: in 1970, of the 4 percent of foreign-born Americans, half came from European countries. Between 1990 and 2000, over 6.5 million new immigrants came to this country, resulting in 32 percent of the growth in the total U.S. population over the same period. At 11 percent, the proportion of immigrants in the United States population is the highest it has been in seven decades. Of these, half are from Latin America, and almost all the rest are from countries not even mentioned in the 1970 U.S. Census, such as Vietnam, Thailand, Afghanistan, and Lebanon. As Calvin Trillin aptly wrote in the *New Yorker*, "I have to say that some serious eaters think of the Immigration Act of 1965 as their very own Emancipation Proclamation."

This increased cultural and ethnic diversity can be found across the country. An hour's drive from that Missouri supermarket and its packaged, processed goods, on St. Louis's loop alongside a Starbucks café and beer and pizza joints, were Ethiopian, Japanese, Lebanese, Persian, and Thai restaurants. This street, in the heartland of America, could have been in Washington, D.C.; Berkeley, California; or Boston, Massachusetts.

The De Kalb Market in Atlanta and the West Side Market in Cleveland are filled with endless

varieties of cilantro, peppers, yams, epazote, and honey melon; and cramped aisles with chestnut and ginger honeys as well as brisket cut for stir-fry, fajitas, and Korean hot pots. In Newark's Iron District, once home to Portuguese immigrants, the demographics are changing. During Lent, I visited the 75-year-old Popular Fish Market. Brazilian immigrants had their pick of eel, clams, corvina, frozen sardines, lobsters, and *baccalhau* (dried cod) piled in wooden crates with a sharp chopper at the end, so that shoppers could cut off the fish tails. At the food concession at the University of California at San Diego students can choose among Peking duck, barbecued pork, and Mexican wraps. In New York one can see pedestrians noshing on vegetarian soul food, Chinese Mexican food, and Vietnamese and Puerto Rican bagels. Brighton Beach, Brooklyn, has turned into a Little Russia with Cyrillic writing in shops and restaurants. Chinatown in New York City is rapidly swallowing up what used to be Little Italy. This kaleidoscope is a portrait of America today—ever changing, spicier, and more diverse.

This diversity has led to interesting juxtapositions. The Asian lettuce wraps I ate at a lunch break with Cambodian refugee farm workers in Massachusetts I've also seen at Chili's and Cheesecake Factories. In La Jolla, California, Mexican workers eat Chinese food while making Japanese furniture. Home cooks frequently integrate dishes from diverse traditions into their menus, making personal modifications and adding their own unique personality to traditional dishes. One result is that an Indian mango cheesecake is now as American as Southern pecan pie. In the West, hummus is now often made with black beans.

For my own family, I make pasta with pesto and string beans one day, Moroccan chicken with olives and lemon another, and Mexican fajitas still another. My family's "ethnic" dishes might have less bite than they would in the Mexican or Thai community, but our meals are a far cry from those of my childhood, when each day of the week was

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America's food has become a constantly changing blend of native and foreign ingredients and techniques coupled with the most amazing ingredients of all—American ingenuity and energy.

assigned a particular dish—meat loaf, lamb chops, fish, roast chicken, spaghetti and meatballs, roast beef, and tuna casserole.

Italian-American Jimmy Andruzzi, a New York fireman who survived the World Trade Center tragedy, is the one who cooks all the meals in his firehouse at 13th Street and Fourth Avenue. Unlike his mother's totally Italian recipes, his are more Italian-American and just American. He cooks in between calls for fires and bakes his mother's meatballs rather than frying them. An Indian woman married to a Korean man living in Washington Heights, New York, is a vegetarian. She makes a not-so-traditional grilled cheese sandwich with chickpeas, tomatoes, and the Indian spice combination, garam masala. Because there is not much cheese in India and that used is not so tasty, the "sandwich" as it existed in India contained no cheese. Since immigrating to America, she has added cheddar cheese to her recipe.

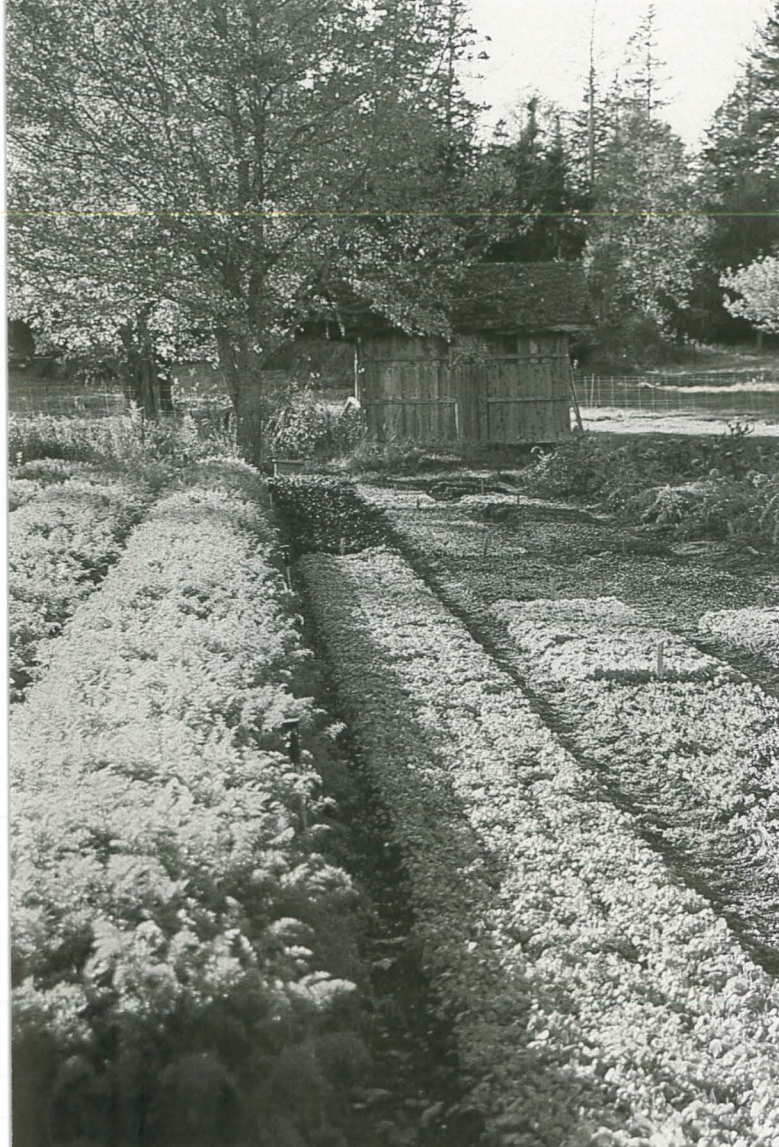
These diverse traditions have also changed the way Americans eat on the run. Quesadillas, *dosas*, and empanadas are eaten quickly by busy people. With mass production, they have become everyday food in this country. "These were foods that took time, individually made, and are ironically harder to prepare at home but easier in mass production," said Bob Rosenberg, a food consultant and former CEO of Dunkin' Donuts. For example, California-born Gary MacGurn of the East Hampton Chutney Company spent 12 years in an ashram in India before opening a small carryout in East Hampton, New York. Gary's paper-thin white lentil and rice-based *dosas*, which he loved while living in India, are filled with such

"cross-cultural-American" ingredients as barbecued chicken, arugula, roasted asparagus, and feta cheese.

At the same time, traditions persist. Delicious authentic Jamaican rum cakes, perfected by a woman and her daughter who have not changed their Jamaican blend for American tastes, have more "kick" than those frequently eaten in this country. While many people bring traditional recipes out for special occasions, this woman features her Jamaican rum cake at her restaurant in Brooklyn.

Sally Chow cooks a steak, string bean, and tofu stir-fry in Mississippi.





BARBARA DAMROSCH

Four Season Farm in Harborside, Maine.

We all know that Americans did not always have such broad tastes. As one person told me, “I was so glad that there was intermarriage into my New England family, because the food had to get better.” No longer can a sociologist write as Paul Fussell did in his 1983 book *Class: A Guide through the American Status System*, “Spicy effects return near the bottom of the status ladder, where ‘ethnic’ items begin to appear: Polish sausage, hot pickles and the like. This is the main reason the middle class abjures such tastes, believing them associated with low people, non-Anglo-Saxon foreigners, recent immigrants and such riff-raff, who can almost always be identified by their fondness for unambiguous and un-genteel flavors.” Today, Americans like it hot (in varying degrees), and Asian stir-fry vegetables and rice are as American as grilled steak, baked potatoes, and corn on the cob.

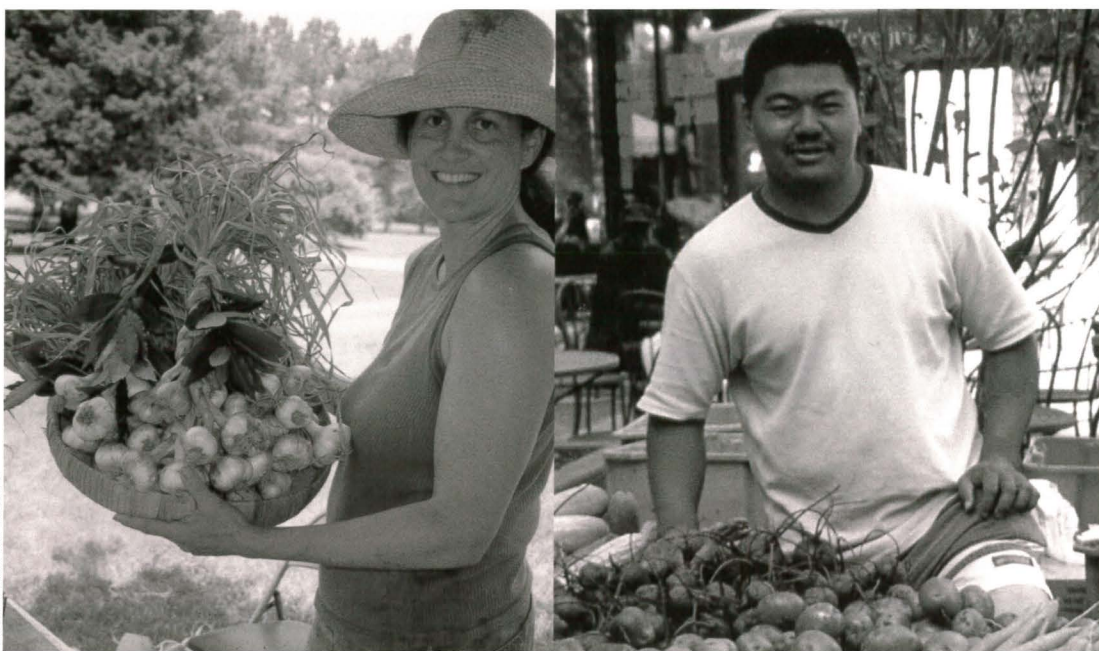
GRASSROOTS SUSTAINABILITY

Supplying the creative cooks, urban markets, and rows of ethnic restaurants are an expanding group of innovative growers. Over the last four decades, farmers such as Ohio’s Lee Jones and his Chef’s Garden have pioneered new models for agriculture. During that period, for cultural, culinary, environmental, health, and economic reasons many chefs, environmentalists, and growers became advocates for locally grown, seasonal, sustainable, and organic food. Today, these models of agriculture have entered the mainstream through grocery stores, farmers markets, and restaurants, altering the American food landscape.

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The backdrop for this shift in growing methods is the consolidation of American agriculture from family farms to a corporate, chemically based commodity model. During the middle of the 20th century, the American family farm fell into steep decline under pressure from an expanding national food market. Chemical fertilizers, mechanization, and hybrid seeds engineered to resist disease and increase yields allowed farmers to produce more food. Highway transportation made it easier to ship food great distances within the United States. Combined, these factors tilted American agriculture to a commodity production model that favored uniformity, transportability, and high yield. This model developed at the expense of crop diversity and small-scale local production—more common modes of agriculture throughout the 18th and 19th centuries.

Over time, the commodity model shifted control from farmer to processor. With a large number of farmers producing the same crops across the country, processors—companies that turn corn into corn chips, for example—had many suppliers from which to choose. As farmers achieved higher and higher yields, prices sank. This spurred a continual consolidation of farms as family farms went bankrupt under the strain of higher equipment costs and falling commodity prices. Larger corporate farms could sustain greater levels of capital investment in machinery and survive on high volume.



Pot Pie Farm manager Elizabeth Beggins sells organic vegetables, garlic, onions, herbs, and cut flowers at the St. Michaels FreshFarm Market in Maryland.

Hmong farmers are thriving, selling their fresh produce at the Minneapolis and St. Paul farmers markets.

Critics argued that while these large corporate farms raising single commodities might have been good at supplying single crops to faraway producers, they undermined rural ways of life, environmental quality, and food diversity. Over the course of the second half of the 20th century, more and more Americans have agreed. They have become increasingly interested in a more diverse food supply and are more engaged in questioning what is referred to as their food chain—the path their food travels from farm to table.

Several trends have supported a return to diversity and sustainability. The wave of recent immigrants from countries around the world has brought their food-growing traditions to the United States. Small-scale growers have sought new models of agriculture in order to remain economically viable and to promote the crop diversity on which the diverse diets outlined above depend. The increased diversity of American food can be seen in crops that are planted in home gardens and on farms. In San Diego, California, Vietnamese gardens cover front lawns with banana trees, lemongrass,

and other herbs. In Maryland, West African farmers grow chilis. With the number of Asian immigrants rising sharply in Massachusetts, the University of Massachusetts's extension service has worked with farmers to ensure that vegetables traditional to Cambodian, Chinese, and Thai diets are available through local farmers markets.

The organic farming movement is another trend that has played a major role. The roots of modern organic farming are in a holistic view of agriculture inspired by British agronomist Albert Howard, whose *An Agricultural Testament* conceived of soil as a system that needed to be built over time. Nutritional and good-tasting food would come from healthy soil. Howard's ideas were popularized in the United States in the middle of the 20th century by J.I. Rodale and his son Robert Rodale through their magazines and organic gardening guides. In the 1960s, the counterculture read Rodale and saw organic farming as a way to organize society in harmony with nature and in rebellion against industrial capitalism.

At the same time, the Peace Corps and the declining cost of travel abroad gave many

Americans a window onto cultures and foodways in faraway countries, leading them to question the distant relationship between themselves and the growing of their food. Like Julia Child, others had become fascinated with French cooking when living in Paris. While Julia strove to demystify academic French cooking for an American audience, Montessori-teacher-turned-chef Alice Waters brought French provincial traditions of buying fresh ingredients locally and sitting down for leisurely meals back to the United States. On her return from France, where she spent a year traveling, she opened the northern California restaurant Chez Panisse. It became the center of a movement to serve only locally grown, seasonal, sustainable food.

By featuring new ingredients such as baby artichokes and cultivated wild mushrooms such as portobellos and shiitakes on cooking shows, in cookbooks, and in restaurants, chefs have brought them to the attention of the public. When people taste them, they want to know how they can cook them and where they can find them. This new demand helps to support more farms. Today, Ocean Mist and Phillips Mushrooms, for example, catering to customers' requests, have offered these products to the retail market.

At the same time, local craft production began to flourish as artisans returned to traditional methods and consumers became increasingly enamored of the tastes that result. In France you get French cheese. In England you get English cheese. In Holland you get Dutch cheese. Today American cheese is being made in boutique cheese-making places all over the country—on the farms where animals are milked by hand—in small batches and by traditional methods.

Similarly, with boutique olive oil makers sprouting up all over California, Americans no longer have to go to Italy for estate-bottled extra-virgin olive oil. Although we have always had Spanish olive oil, now we have American olive oil from Italian olives raised in California. Pomegranates, plump and red, and mangoes, in so many guises, once brought in from abroad for ethnic populations, are now being grown in California and Florida. And artisanal chocolate maker John Scharffenberger is giving European chocolates a run for their money.

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Andy and Mateo Kehler, cheese makers in Greensboro, Vermont, have approximately 150 head of cattle from which they make their highly sought-after cheeses. Mateo traveled through England, France, and Spain learning to make cheese from cheese masters.



Sustainable farmers such as Eliot Coleman are proving that locally grown food is viable in all climates. Here, Coleman harvests lettuce at his Four Season Farm in Harborside, Maine.

The host of companies specializing in craft and sustainable production keeps expanding. Steve Demos, founder of Silk Soy, started out making soy milk at a local farmers market in Boulder, Colorado. Michael Cohen started peddling tempeh for Life Lite, a brand now owned by ConAgra. Ben Cohen and Jerry Greenfield propelled their peace and love ice cream to the mainstream. Stonyfield Farm yogurt, Annie's Homegrown pasta, and California's Earthbound Farms all sell through national chains. Gone are the days of unappetizing macrobiotics, brown rice, and tofu. A whole industry has arisen making veggie burgers and meatless sausage and salami, Tofurkys for vegetarian Thanksgiving dinners, and "not dogs" and "phony baloney" all out of soy. While 25 years ago health consciousness was the domain of the counterculture, and vegetarianism and food coops were a sign of pacifism, today they have become mainstream.

An increasing number of companies and retailers have pioneered nationwide markets. The health-food mass movement was started in 1974 by a 25-year-old hippie and six-

time college dropout named John Mackey, who opened the Safer Way, then one of 25 health food stores in Austin, Texas. Today, while most of those other 24 health food stores are defunct, Safer Way has grown into the largest chain of grocery stores with an organic slant in the country. Whole Foods, with 165 stores coast to coast, are in many places where there is rarely a hippie in sight. The retailer is now the leading outlet for a growing number of national brands that share the store's commitment to health and sustainability. Whole Foods has also spurred other supermarkets to stock their shelves with a growing number of organic products.

This combination of environmental stewardship, flavor, and health is quietly building up around the country in schools, neighborhoods, and cities. As globalism increases in our kitchens and supermarkets, there is a countervailing trend of people who want to see what can be produced in their area of the country. Most people realize, of course, that

coffee and chocolate need warmer climates than America offers, but an increasing number of them are looking regionally rather than nationally for food to eat. Farmers markets, schools, and chefs have been at the forefront of this movement. Eliot Coleman, for example, a farmer in Maine, has come up with an enclosed, natural environment in which he can raise foods all year long. Following his lead, restaurants like Stone Barns in Pocantico Hills, New York, are using the system. Many college food services, spurred by Alice Waters and others, serve local apples in the fall, labeling the varieties. College food service administrators are increasingly visiting farms and farmers so that they can make connections. The American University in Washington, D.C., for example, not only serves local cheeses, but its administrators visit the farms from which the cheeses come.

American consumers are demanding a greater variety of food, and they want to know where their food comes from and how it was produced. Today we can get

Eliza MacLean raises heritage Ossibaw pigs outside of Chapel Hill, North Carolina. She is just one of an increasing number of growers who are helping to preserve the biodiversity of American food.



MARCIE FERRIS

beef from totally or partially grass-fed cows. And we are starting to ask questions about the way these animals were raised. Do they come from a family farm? Are they fed organically? What does “natural” mean?

But the move to sustainable growing goes further, bridging community, environmental responsibility, and taste. As grower Lee Jones said at a recent summit on the American food revolution, “The best farmers are looking at a way to go beyond chemical-free agriculture, they are looking at adding flavor and at improving the nutrient content. They are going back to farming as it was five generations ago. It’s truly a renaissance—there is now a chance for small family farms to survive as part of this new relationship with chefs.”

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FOOD AS EDUCATION: PASSING IT ON

When my mother started to cook, she used the *Joy of Cooking* and the *Settlement Cookbook*, period. Since increased diversity, sustainability, and craft production have brought enthusiasm and energy to American food, there has been an explosion of information about food. According to the Library of Congress, in the past 30 years there have been over 3,000 “American” cookbooks published, more than in the 200 previous years. At the same time, the number of cooking shows has ballooned. In the early 1980s, between television and the discovery of chefs in newspapers and cookbooks, something was happening. The firefighters at one of Chicago’s firehouses and shrimp fishermen in the bayous of Louisiana wouldn’t miss Julia Child’s show for anything, except maybe a fire. It was only after she brought American chefs onto PBS that the Food Network took off with a series of chefs who would become household names—Wolfgang Puck, Emeril Lagasse, and Paul Prudhomme. Now, Americans tune in, buy their cookbooks, and then seek out their restaurants. Chefs have clearly become both major celebrities and major influences in the way many Americans cook.

The number
of programs
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for children
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decade alone.

However, Americans are learning about food traditions in other ways. Founded in Italy in 1986, Slow Food was organized in response to the sense that the industrial values of fast food were overwhelming food traditions around the globe. As restaurants like McDonald's entered markets, they forced producers into their system of production and standards. This reduced biodiversity, promoted commodity agriculture, and undermined hospitality. Slow Food, in contrast, would document traditions and biodiversity and work toward protecting and supporting them. The International Slow Food movement now has over 83,000 members organized into national organizations and local "convivia" that celebrate the diversity and culture of their local foods. Slow Food USA has recently partnered with a number of other organizations—American Livestock Breeds Conservancy,

Center for Sustainable Environments at Northern Arizona University, Chefs Collaborative, Cultural Conservancy, Native Seeds/SEARCH, and Seed Savers Exchange—in a program called Renewing America's Food Traditions (RAFT). RAFT aims to document traditions, produce, and animal breeds, and then help their growers to develop new markets so that they become economically viable.

Farmers markets and produce stands give consumers direct contact with farmers, allowing them to ask questions and learn about what is in season. Personal relationships help to create a community bond between growers and eaters. There are also opportunities for people to become more directly involved in the growing of their food. Local farms called CSAs (community supported agriculture) that are supported by subscribers who pay money for a portion of the farm's produce and who also work periodically planting, weeding, and harvesting help people learn about the source of their food.

The number of programs designed for children has swelled in the past decade alone. Probably the best-known program is Alice Waters's The Edible Schoolyard in Berkeley, California. Begun in 1994, the program is designed to bring the community and experiential ethos of the locally grown-sustainable movement to middle school students. Seeing food as central to



THE EDIBLE SCHOOLYARD

Students harvest kale at The Edible Schoolyard in Berkeley, California, and (opposite) the Washington Youth Garden at the U.S. National Arboretum in Washington, D.C.

building individual health, fulfilling social relationships, and community life, The Edible Schoolyard teaches children to plan a garden, prepare soil, plant, grow and harvest crops, cook, serve, and eat—in its phrasing, food “from seed to table.” Students collaborate in decision-making on all aspects of the garden. Working closely with the Center for Ecoliteracy, The Edible Schoolyard teachers have been on the forefront of designing a curriculum that can place food at the center of academic subjects such as math, reading, and history in order to “rethink school lunch.”



Similarly, the Culinary Vegetable Institute in Huron, Ohio, has launched Veggie U to educate food professionals and the general public about vegetable growing and cooking. Recently, it has developed a curriculum for schools that will soon be in Texas systems. The Center for Ecoliteracy has developed a detailed “how-to” guide for school systems to follow in creating their own programs. Spoons Across America, sponsored by the American Institute of Food and Wine and the James Beard Foundation, sponsors Days of Taste in schools across the country. Local programs also abound. In Washington, D.C., Brainfood teaches children about life skills through food activities after school and during the summer. The Washington Youth Garden gives children from the Washington, D.C., public schools hands-on experience gardening and then cooking their harvest. Programs like these are growing across the country.

Then, of course, there is the time-honored way of passing traditions on in family kitchens and on family farms. Hopefully, many of these more formal programs remind cooks and growers to explore their own family traditions and the foodways of those around them.

This food revolution is about growing and cooking traditions and their adaptation to new circumstances. It is about finding—amid a land-

scape dominated by pre-packaged goods—a closer association with processes such as soil preparation, harvesting, and cooking that previous generations took for granted. And it is an awareness of what a meal is, and how mealtime is a time to slow down, to listen, and to savor food. Perhaps most importantly, it is about sharing these things—or passing them on.

This sharing and understanding take time that today’s busy schedules frequently don’t allow. However, many are realizing that the richness of shared experiences involving food is too precious to give up. They think about the taste of a fresh carrot pulled from a garden on a summer afternoon or a meal savored with family and friends.

The food revolution that we celebrate looks both backward and forward: backward to long-held community traditions in growing, marketing, cooking, and eating; forward to innovations for making these traditions sustainable and passing them on to future generations. It depends on nurturing a physical environment that supports diversity; sustaining the knowledge needed to cultivate that biodiversity; and passing on traditions of preparing and eating. Together, these traditions are the foundation of much of our shared human experience.

Everyone has to eat; why not eat together?

SALAD GREENS WITH GOAT CHEESE, PEARS, AND WALNUTS

This recipe comes from Joan Nathan's The New American Cooking, to be published in October 2005 by Alfred A. Knopf.

One of the most appealing recipes to come out of Alice Waters's Chez Panisse Restaurant in Berkeley, California, is a salad of tiny mâche topped with goat cheese. How revolutionary this salad seemed to Americans in the 1970s! How normal today.

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Alice got her cheese from Laura Chenel, a Sebastopol, California, native who was trying to live off the grid, raising goats for milk. The same year Chez Panisse really caught on, Laura went to France to learn how to make authentic goat cheese. When she came back, she practiced what she had learned, and it wasn't long before a friend tasted her cheese and introduced her to Alice. "All of a sudden the demand was so great," Laura told me, "that I had to borrow milk from others." Beginning with its introduction at Alice's restaurant at the right moment in 1979, the goat cheese produced at Laura Chenel's Chevre, Inc., became a signature ingredient in the newly emerging California Cuisine. Today, artisanal cheese (made by hand in small batches with traditional methods) and farmstead cheese (made on the farm where it is milked) make up one of the largest food movements in the United States. Chevre, Inc., has become synonymous with American chèvre, and Laura still tends her beloved herd of 500 goats herself.

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|--------------------------------|------------------------------|--------------------------------|
| ½ cup walnuts | 1. Preheat the oven to 350 | 4. Spread some of the goat |
| 1 teaspoon Dijon mustard | degrees. Spread out the | cheese on the rounds of |
| 2 tablespoons balsamic vinegar | walnuts in a small baking | French bread and top with |
| ¼ teaspoon sugar | pan and toast them in the | a pear round. Then spread |
| 2 tablespoons walnut oil | oven until lightly browned, | some more cheese on top |
| 2 tablespoons canola | 5 to 7 minutes. Take the | of the pear. Bake in the |
| or vegetable oil | walnuts out of the oven, | oven a few minutes, until |
| Salt and freshly ground | but leave the oven on. | the cheese has melted. |
| pepper to taste | 2. Mix the mustard with the | 5. While the cheese is baking, |
| 2 ripe Bosc pears | vinegar and ¼ teaspoon of | add the salad greens to |
| 5 ounces goat cheese | sugar in a large salad bowl. | the salad bowl with the |
| 6 slices French bread, | Slowly whisk in the walnut | thin pear slices and toss |
| cut in thin rounds | and canola or vegetable | gently to mix. Divide the |
| 8 cups small salad greens | oil. Season with salt and | salad among 6 to 8 plates. |
| | pepper to taste. Set aside. | 6. Place the hot pear-cheese |
| | 3. Cut 1 pear into thin | rounds on top of the |
| | rounds. Peel and core | greens, scattering the |
| | the second pear, slice it | walnuts around and serve. |
| | in half lengthwise, and | Yield: 6–8 servings |
| | cut into thin strips. | |

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JOAN NATHAN, guest curator of *Food Culture USA*, is the author of numerous cookbooks, including *Jewish Cooking in America*, which won both the James Beard Award and the IACP/Julia Child Cookbook of the Year Award. She has been involved with the Smithsonian Folklife Festival as a presenter, participant, and researcher for over 25 years. The *Food Culture USA* program is inspired by the research she conducted for her cookbook, *The New American Cooking* (Alfred A. Knopf, October 2005).

All photographs courtesy of Joan Nathan unless noted otherwise.

