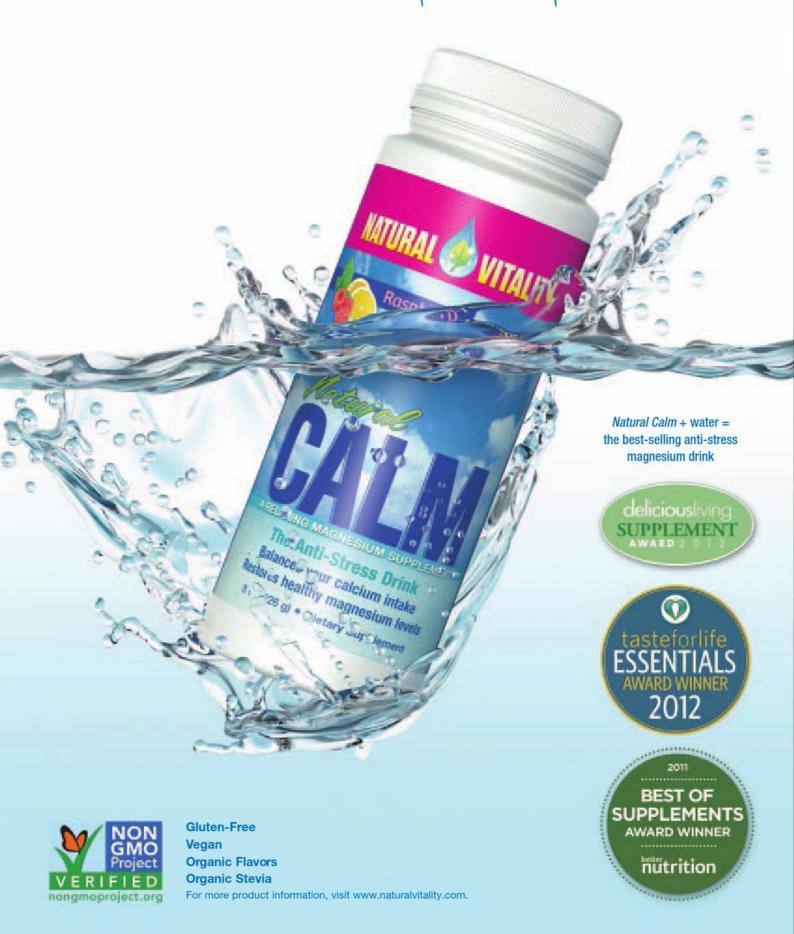


the democratization of de-stressification



Big Food versus Rock and Roll

In this issue



imes change. At one time people liked big-band music and mellow crooners. Then rock and roll made its loud, frenetic entrance. Trumpets and trombones were out and electric guitars were in.

Big-food companies today find themselves stuck in a business model equivalent to the big-band era. These industrial giants are geared to make things "better," faster, cheaper and more efficiently. Lower unit prices come from big-scale production that provides economies of scale. But for that type of production you need standardization, and this is where we get one type of tomato or potato engineered to be shipped long distances.

Consumers today are rebelling just like kids did in the sixties. They want more choice and they're asking more questions. Where does it come from? How is it made? What artificial ingredients are in it? What are the values of the company selling it? So, there are more reasons to potentially reject buying a product.

Growing numbers of shoppers want organic. They want local. They want "full of nutrition." They want variety—different vegetables, different grains. This is much more rock and roll—or, really, iTunes, where you can tailor your choice to what fits you—than one size fits all.

More people are concerned about the production of food products. They want to know what the chickens and cows eat and how they're treated. The old model was to take processed food and add some healthy ingredient and charge a premium price. But consumers are increasingly saying they don't want the processed food to begin with. Rather than adding in something healthy, it's better to start with a product that's healthy at the farm level.

What we're experiencing is a change in values. Once you've seen a documentary like *The Future of Food* or *Food, Inc.* and what goes on inside the industrial food system, you can't close the barn door. We're becoming a more open society, driven by vast social networks of empowered self-publishers, sharing information with friends and others like ourselves.

You can't bully or deceive buyers today and expect to get away with it. The Internet has changed all that. We can share knowledge. People are beginning to understand that cheap food brings with it expensive healthcare.

We're seeing people take back power and proactively seek health and happiness. It's an exciting time to be living in.

What do you think?

Ken Whitman PUBLISHER

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Celebrity chef and man of many passions, Jamie Oliver talks with us about food in schools, picky kid eaters, the need for education in food and cooking, and the importance of family.



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Groundbreaking documentarian
Deborah Garcia focuses her lens
on terra firma in her newest
project, *Symphony of the Soil*.
The filmmaker explains her intent
to pass on to viewers a respect
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Jamie Oliver

Passionate Casual Caring Revolutionary

by Bruce Boyers



Most everyone has heard of Jamie Oliver—either through one of his cooking shows, his many appearances on *Late Night with David Letterman*, his TV series *Jamie Oliver's Food Revolution*, one of his many books, or through any of multiple other sources. But it's one thing to follow such a person from afar—and quite another to be able to communicate directly with him. Even knowing who he is and having seen him as others have, I was quite startled by the sheer optimism, directness and enthusiasm of this chef, entrepreneur, author, food advocate, and all-around casual genius.

I'm sure his humble beginnings had no small influence on his down-to-earth, street-level approach. "I grew up in my parents' pub and I've been cooking since I was seven years old," Jamie told *Organic Connections*. "Cooking was the one thing I did really well. I was terrible in school, so I just kept cooking."

From the Essex pub in which he first worked (still run by his parents, Trevor and Sally), Jamie went on to graduate Westminster Catering College, not long after which he took a job at London's famed River Café. He was there for three and a half years, working with two of his biggest influences, renowned chefs (and owners of the River Café) Ruth Rogers and Rose Gray. "The women really influenced me," Jamie said: "Ruth Rogers, Rose Gray, Elizabeth David and Alice Waters."

It was while at the River Café that Jamie was discovered by a film crew doing a feature on the restaurant—and *The Naked Chef* was born. Jamie has never looked back.

Easy Peasy

The thrust of The Naked Chef, and the many books and television programs that have followed, has been the instruction of others in the cooking of simple but delicious cuisine. Jamie has never believed it difficult-and he has spent a considerable portion of his time trying to convince everyone else of that. 'With just the littlest bit of instruction, anyone can learn to cook tasty, inexpensive and lovely food," said Jamie. "The problem isn't accessibility to food; it's accessibility to food education. Our parents' generation didn't grow up learning how to cook, so they didn't pass on the skills, and the schools have all but stopped teaching people about food and cooking. That's why I'm trying so hard to get food education back into schools. Cooking is a necessary skill."

When one hears the words "Jamie Oliver" and "schools" in the same sentence, one cannot help but think about his many endeavors in this arena. Probably the most public of Jamie's activities has been his hard work in the transformation of food in schools. His initial foray into this arena was in 2005 in the UK, with the series Jamie's School Dinners. The effect from the show was profound: substantial changes were made to the food being served throughout the UK schools.

Cafeteria Revolution

As shown in the series *Jamie Oliver's Food Revolution*, Jamie then came to America (Huntington, West Virginia) to work with the city, which, at the time, was listed as having the highest obesity rate in the nation. Over



the six weeks he was there, he seriously impacted lives and, perhaps more importantly, gave broad public exposure to the crises of food quality within our schools.

For the following season, Jamie chose Los Angeles and began filming the show. In the third week of shooting, the superintendent of the Los Angeles Unified School District pulled Jamie's permit to film the program within the schools.

This did not stop Jamie—in fact it hardly slowed him down. Immediately on the heels of the stoppage, Jamie and his foundation began circulating a petition, garnering tens of thousands of signatures. They created a Facebook page that quickly grew to 10,000 members—the largest Food Revolution concentration in the country. They connected with local organizations and began formulating a plan.

Shortly thereafter, a new school superintendent took over. He was greeted on his first day by representatives of the Food Revolution, along with 10 other organizations in



collaboration, and was presented with an enormous collection of letters from local citizens, including over 500 from school children.

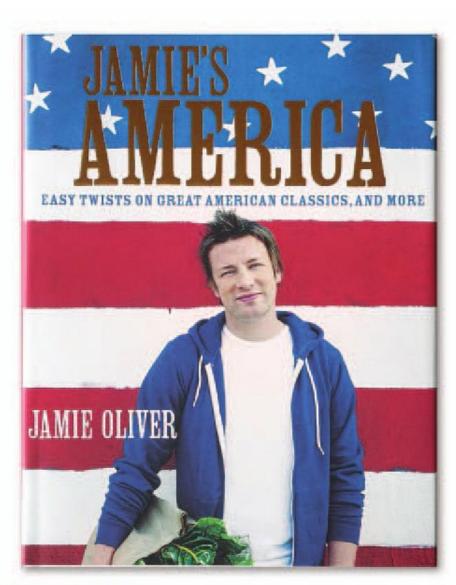
Throughout the following summer, local events were held including a screening of the first episode of the show. In September, when school opened, the school district unveiled a brand-new menu with more fruits and vegetables and less processed food. Some of the least nutritional items were removed, such as Tater Tots and chicken nuggets. The new superintendent appeared with Jamie on *Jimmy Kimmel Live* and agreed to remove flavored milk from

the menu as well—which he then followed through on.

Have we made progress? "I'd like to think so," responded Jamie, "but really it's two steps forward, one step back. In L.A. we got flavored milk out, but they put pizza back in as a vegetable. It's decisions like that

So many parents tell me that their **kids just won't eat anything**. In my experience, whether in the UK or US,
it simply hasn't been true. It takes some effort to get them
to try new things, and they may not like everything, but

there will always be some vegetable or dish that the kids will eat.



that make me crazy. It's absolutely the government's responsibility to feed children properly at school, 180 days a year. *Properly* means fresh food, cooked from scratch by someone who cares. It's not rocket science; it just takes training for the cooks and education for the kids. And yet school boards and governments resist. I give a lot of credit to Mayor Mike Bloomberg in New York City. Banning supersize fizzy drinks is bold and brilliant."

Picky Eaters?

The television series have been but one part of his work with food education in schools. Jamie's Kitchen Garden Project—operated through his charity, the Jamie Oliver Foundation—aims to help schools build the facilities and provide training and resources for teaching children the wonders of growing and cooking their own food. "Kids love growing stuff," Jamie said of the program. "And when they grow fruits and vegetables, they are really happy to eat fruits and vegetables. As the foundation expands, we hope to do more kitchen gardens too. In L.A. we put a garden into a school and the students took great pride in it."

Despite the claims of parents to the contrary, Jamie has always found children open to the idea of healthy food—when patience is utilized. "They are open to everything!" Jamie maintained. "So many parents tell me that their kids just won't eat anything. In

my experience, whether in the UK or US, it simply hasn't been true. It takes some effort to get them to try new things, and they may not like *everything*, but there will always be some vegetable or dish that the kids will eat."

Education and Training

Jamie's training has also extended to older students and young adults. A second program run out of the Jamie Oliver Foundation is the Fifteen Apprentice Program, which each year recruits 18 unemployed young people between the ages of 18 and 24 and puts them through an intensive 12-month apprentice program at the Fifteen London restaurant kitchen.

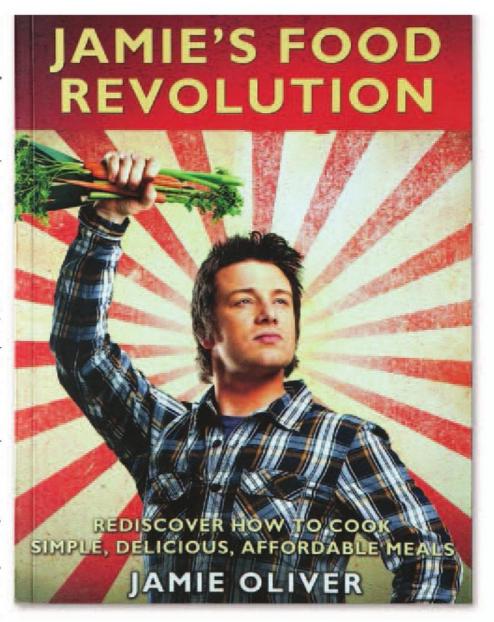
Jamie himself has learned an interesting lesson from this program—that of support for these people outside the program itself. "I've learned that family is so important," he observed. "What we realized is that the program can't just be when the students are 'at work.' We need to create support for them outside of work too. Most of these kids have terrible family situations, and when we've been able to replace those with the Fifteen family and keep the positive messages coming, then the kids are more likely to succeed in the long term—versus slipping back into their old habits."

Another educational approach Jamie has utilized, called Jamie's Ministry of Food, takes its inspiration from a British initiative during the Second World War. At that time of widespread shortages and severe rationing, the government set up a national network of food advisors and cooking teachers to educate the public about food and nutrition so that they would be able feed themselves properly with the rations available.

In 2008 Jamie decided to reintroduce this concept, opening centers around the UK for cooking and food education. According to Jamie's website, the concept has now gone global and there are allied projects in Australia and the US.

"I'm still surprised that the governments aren't funding the programs," said Jamie. "We've shown them how the people love the classes, get newfound confidence, and make significant changes in their lives after just a few lessons. It seems a no-brainer for them to dedicate a little money to putting cooking centers all over the UK."

In Los Angeles, the Jamie Oliver Food Foundation has set up a "Big Rig" Teaching Kitchen, a large mobile kitchen that has traversed the Greater Los Angeles Area hosting



cooking classes for children and adults alike. The big rig has averaged 320 students per week. "The truck is killing it in Los Angeles," Jamie reported. "The US Foundation team has created these fantastic classes that the kids and parents love."

It is evident that Jamie's message continues to spread far and wide. A few months ago, Food Revolution Day saw events standing up for real food in over 500 cities, in more than 60 countries around the world.

One would think, with all Jamie is doing and we didn't mention his two new first-class restaurants and many of his other activities that he would have some favorites.

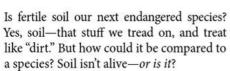
This is not the case, when we directly asked him about it. "Oh, mate, there is no way I could possibly answer that question," Jamie replied. "I'm very lucky because I love almost everything I am doing. I love working with the new restaurants, Jamie's Italian and Union Jack's; I love writing the books and making telly. Although the campaign shows are pretty rough on me, I can look back and be proud of what I accomplished. The foundations are really starting to kick off, which has been fun—the first Food Revolution Day took place in more than 60 countries. I was so honored and proud that people care that much about real food to take the time to be part of it."

For more information on Jamie Oliver and his many endeavors, visit www.jamieoliver.com and www.jamiesfoodrevolution.com.

Deborah Garcia

Giving Soil a Starring Role

by Anna Soref



Experts are beginning to shine a spotlight on what organic farmers have always known: soil is a complex living, breathing organism, which provides nourishment for trees and other plants and a home to millions of critters. These farmers also know that we must treat our soil with the respect that all living things deserve or it will die.

Filmmaker Deborah Garcia's new documentary, Symphony of the Soil, tells us the seeking monopolistic control of the world's food system through GMOs. In 2004, *The Future of Food* set the standard and paved the way for game-changing films like *Food*, *Inc.*, *Forks Over Knives* and *Fast Food Nation*.

The widow of the late Grateful Dead frontman, Jerry Garcia, Deborah Garcia admits her primary filmmaking passion is for storytelling in fictional films—romantic comedy, anyone? But setting passion aside,



take. The first direction was food. "I remember holding this bloody piece of meat in my hands and realizing this thing had just been alive. That was the 1970s and macrobiotics and back-to-the-land were everywhere. I began cooking for myself, and through that I saw how many processed ingredients are in prepared foods," she says. It didn't take long for her to become a lifelong vegetarian and organic fanatic.

At that same time her hands would hold something else that would shape the rest of her life—a movie camera. "My friend owned a movie camera and I asked him to show me how to use it. So he demonstrated the basics and then we made a short film. I realized, this is it for me. Film is just such a powerful and emotional way to tell a story."

The Future of Food

Garcia always knew she wanted to make a film about food. Not a foodie film, but one about organic food and agriculture with a dose of food justice. Following a difficult period after her husband's death in 1995, Garcia decided it was time to embark on a project that was completely engaging. "I wanted to make a really serious film that was different from the other food films around 10 years ago that were obsessed with the perfect olive or peach. I really wanted to create something that would dig deeper into our food system," she recalls.

When Garcia began talking about her film to colleagues and friends, a comment took her by surprise. "I was telling my friend about the film and she said, 'So your documentary will have something about genetic engineering in it, right?' My response was, 'What?' And she went on to inform me about GMOs.

"I was living in Marin County at the time, eating organically, and I thought I was very well educated about food and agricultural issues, but I knew little about GMOs.

There is all of this **connection** and **communication** going on

under the **soil**—all these **relationships** between bacteria,

nitrogen, phosphorus and the plant. It is incredible; it's a **miracle!**

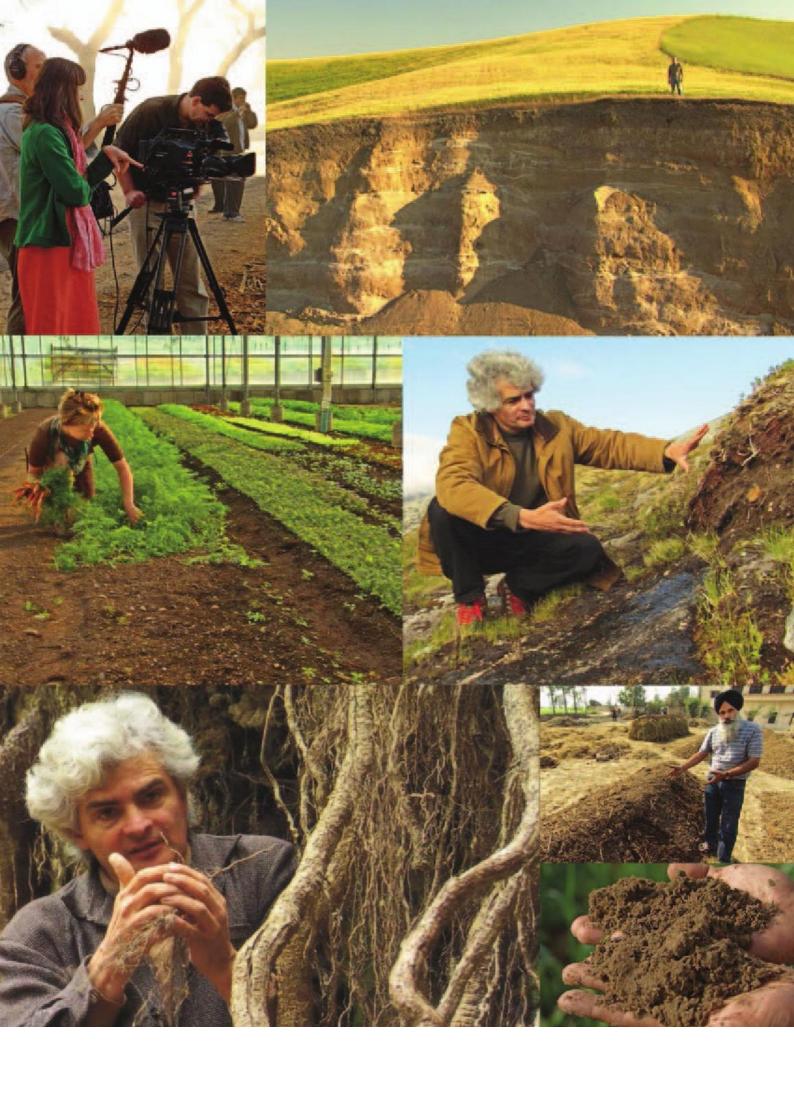
story of the miracle of soil and why our most fundamental of resources is in peril. The message—we are badly abusing our soil—is delivered with breathtakingly beautiful footage filmed on four continents, along with a message of personal empowerment for each individual to change the tracks in the dirt.

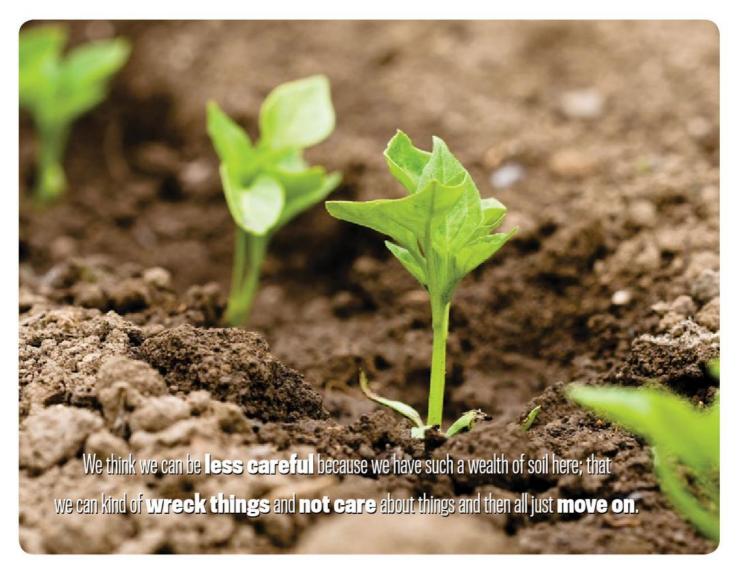
Garcia's first feature-length documentary, *The Future of Food*, was a gutsy deep dive into the complicated issue of GMOs. Before anyone else, Garcia brought to light in film the behemoth multinational corporations

she feels a responsibility, and acts on it, to make documentaries and tackle these tough issues to raise public awareness—and she succeeds. *Symphony of the Soil* brings the viewer through Garcia's own evolution in her awareness and connection with soil, which she calls "the matrix of life."

Film and Food

In college, both film and food served as signposts for the path Garcia's life would





I knew the technology existed; I just didn't know that they were doing it to seeds and that they were selling them and we were eating the stuff—it was just completely under the radar back then. It was crazy that I was as well informed as anybody about these other issues, yet I didn't know anything about this. At that point I knew I had to really focus on genetic engineering. It was something that needed to be pushed to the front of the film to make sure that people understood this was a whole new way of corporate-controlled agriculture."

When *The Future of Food* was released, it received international acclaim from Jerusalem to Oaxaca. "The public were just ready for something other than watching people eat 25-course meals and talk about it forever. Before *Future of Food* came out, there wasn't a food movement. There was a foodie movement; but *Future of Food* actually went into social justice, health issues and so on."

The film would ultimately impact GMO

legislation. Local screenings in libraries and other public forums helped educate voters and contributed to the subsequent success of passing Measure H in Mendocino County, California, one of the first local initiatives in the country to ban the planting of GMO crops.

From Seeds to Soil

The Future of Food succeeded in doing just what Garcia had hoped: it brought GMOs to the public eye. But for this filmmaker there was more that needed to be told. "Because I had gotten so deeply into GMOs in the film, I didn't cover agriculture as much as I had wanted to, so I thought a film about soil was needed. Soil is essentially the matrix of life; it goes from life to death and back to life again. There is all of this connection and communication going on under the soil—all these relationships between bacteria, nitrogen, phosphorus

and the plant. It is incredible; it's a miracle!"

As she began studying soil, the difficulty of the task she had set for herself became apparent. "I started researching soil and I realized how complex it was and how difficult it was going to be to make a film about soil. It was like 'Oh no! I have already told people I am going to do this, so I have to do it.' I understood how hard it would be, but fortunately I like a challenge," she says. The making of *Symphony of the Soil* would take her to four different continents and involve numerous interviews with farmers, ranchers and scientists.

An Evolving View of Soil

As Garcia began a more in-depth investigation of soil while writing the script, her view of its role in an agricultural context evolved. "When I started making the film about soil as an agricultural medium, my angle was, what can we get out of soil? What is in it for us? Then I began to study soil and to see how mysterious it is and all that goes on. In a forest, a leaf falls from a tree and onto the ground and is eaten by microbes and returns to the earth; and then those microorganisms release nutrients that feed plants that are growing, which allows those plants to grow, which then die and go back to the soil. This is a truly amazing cycle of life, and when you put agriculture into that equation you are actually tampering with the soil community. So the theme of what can we get out of soil? became the wrong question."

The view of soil as a commodity, something for us to take and use, is a reflection of American values, the filmmaker asserts. "The American culture has a lot to do with how we treat soil and the kind of soil we are ending up with. We think we can be less careful because we have such a wealth of soil here; that we can kind of wreck things and not care about things and then all just move on. In Europe and other places, they have to be more careful because they don't have the same kind of land resources. In the United States we are far more careless about what we do to our environment. This carelessness carries over to being overly trusting about what we put in our bodies. There are a lot of chemicals that they do not allow in Europe that we allow here; and so I think that we really are a different culture and a different sort of breed and that this has affected, partly in a negative way, what has happened to our food system," she says.

This view of soil creates a mindset that nature is simply a human resource. "When you think of soil as merely an agricultural medium, it turns it into a game where the objective is to farm everywhere," Garcia explains. "Why do we want to farm everywhere? Why can't we simply have a prairie be a prairie? We need to appreciate nature as nature and not just nature with the heavy human hand all over it. I want to celebrate the wildness of nature. In the film we do have quite a lot of agriculture included because that is our primary relationship with soil; but it also shows it is not the only relationship we need to have with the land—that people can appreciate there is a lot of beauty in wildness and we don't have to change that."

Garcia wants viewers to understand that, when it comes to taking care of the soil, there's a vast difference between organic agriculture and industrial agriculture. "Good organic practices return to the soil; they give back with cover crops what the soil is composed of. Industrial agriculture doesn't feed the

soil and so it dies and becomes dirt. We are growing these monocrops, like corn, pouring chemicals into the soil and basically turning it into dirt. These destructive farming methods will have us out of topsoil in 30 years, by some estimates," she warns.

Garcia is hoping that the film will have the same impact for soil that The Future of Food had for GMOs. "I want people to become soil conscious, where they understand that soil is valuable and we have to treat it as if it is precious, and that if we don't treat it right it won't

I would love if people came out of the film and really looked out

at the **landscape** and could deeply **appreciate**

what is going on there—that soil is doing this **amazing** thing,

which is basically **recycling all life**.

For a filmmaker used to shooting people, a documentary about soil was a challenging subject. "The film is really all about life, but soil is essentially in the dark. At the beginning shoot we were out in a field and I pointed out a patch of soil to the cameraman and said, 'Okay, that is the shot. Action!' Well, nothing was happening. There was no action and I'm thinking, what are we going to do? So, the idea of making a film-a medium which is all about movement-when you are just standing there and looking at something with no movement was challenging," she says. But when you watch the stunning shots of glorious cliffs, fertile fields and impassioned individuals working the land, you can see that the film crew resolved these initial challenges.

Symphony of the Soil is actually more than just a documentary; Garcia refers to it as a project. Currently showing at film festivals and special events, this feature-length film is scheduled for release as a DVD in fall 2012. In addition, Sonatas of the Soil, which are short films, each delving deeply into one topic, can be watched individually online; and available also, for free viewing and sharing, are Grace Notes-streamed video clips and outtakes that the film crew couldn't bear to leave on the cutting-room floor. Among the more than 20 of these clips, Dr. Paul Hepperly from Rodale Institute demonstrates the benefits of organic soil management; farmer Klaas Martens describes how beginning to farm organically brought back the smell of soil he remembered from his youth; and acclaimed writer and activist Vandana Shiva speaks about the connection of soil, mud, and the vision of sacred earth for India.

survive. I would love if people came out of the film and really looked out at the landscape and could deeply appreciate what is going on there—that soil is doing this amazing thing, which is basically recycling all life. We don't feel resonance and connection to the earth, and I would like the film to help people to feel that connection and then appreciation.

"I also hope people learn from the film that soil is a community; that you cannot just pick up a piece of soil and say, 'This is soil.' Soil is a process, an organism, and a community. I want to get people to begin thinking about the whole idea of community and that it is valuable, and that you have to give back to community in order for it to continue. So far people who have seen the film are very moved by this way of thinking about soil."

Next Steps

Having tackled and completed two groundbreaking documentary projects, Garcia is finally ready to have some fun. "Now I feel like ... I have been good, I have done my social duty, and the films are out there and no longer simply inside me. They will be out there doing good, and so I am helping," she says.

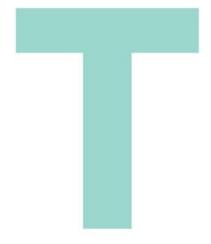
So, what's next? Garcia indicates she is in the mood for a romantic comedy. "Comedy can be very healing, and it's beneficial to take a break. For the past 10 or 12 years I feel that I have been doing a lot of worthwhile stuff. It's as if I have been eating a very wholesome meal and now I kind of need some dessert—a healthy dessert, but a dessert."

To learn more about Symphony of the Soil, including screening dates and locations, visit www.symphonyofthesoil.com.

Chef Jesse Cool

Tireless Organic Pioneer

by Bruce Boyers



Those of us involved in the emerging organic and sustainable food movement owe a debt of gratitude to culinary pioneers like Alice Waters, Nora Pouillon and Jesse Cool.

Chef Cool opened the first organic restaurant in Menlo Park, California, long before it was, well, cool, and also long before the majority of people had even heard the word organic. Today, a tireless sixty-something, she owns and operates three top-rated restaurants and a catering business that source only organic and sustainable ingredients. Jesse is also the author of seven cookbooks, a guest lecturer and teacher of teachers at Stanford University, has made numerous television appearances including on The Today Show and Food Network, and is spearheading a major movement to bring healthy organic food to hospitals.

Restaurateur

The values that Jesse has promulgated for nearly four decades trace back to childhood. "I have an old-world background," Jesse told Organic Connections, "where my father and grandfather grew vegetables in manure, with no pesticides." As a youngster, growing up in a rural town near Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, Jesse helped her parents and grandparents tend their small backyard gardens. They taught her about living heirlooms—seeds brought from the old country to plant in American soil. Additionally they raised their own chickens, and her uncle even owned a slaughterhouse where naturally grazed cattle were processed and beef aged properly.

With a love of food and cooking that carried through from this upbringing, Jesse



opened a locally sourced clean-food restaurant in the seventies, which in those times was quite challenging. "People often think the challenge was about cost," she said. "It was more about being a young long-haired hippy

'How do I protect the people who work with me, my family and my community from these artificial things that they're putting in the food, which someday down the road might hurt them?'

"With that, my company's philosophy was born, and it remains to this day: 'The customer comes last.' We try really hard to take care of where our food comes from, and build relationships with those people like we did in the Old World when we lived in a village and knew one another. We knew the bread baker; we knew the butcher; we knew the farmer. If we keep that connection and then make sure to take care of the people working with us as well as we can, they will take care of the customer."

Hard Times

Though conditions got tough, Jesse stayed the course. "I nearly went bankrupt more times than I would like to admit," she said. "It's often been difficult for my family and friends to figure out why in the world I stayed in it. But coming from a background of not having a lot, I had the ability to shrink down to whatever it took to make it work;

We try really hard to take care of where our food comes from, and build relationships with those people like we did in the Old World when we lived in a village and knew one another.

chick, dressed in lace dresses, who was confronting people about where food came from and what kind of chemicals or preservatives or hormones were added. I guess I should say that I didn't begin with 'organic'—that was not what my cooking was about. It was about no 'artificial' in the food. That very quickly spilled over to organic, but it was more about,

and during those lean times—as those who do survive are tenacious—I found a way to do that.

"I was also helped by other people. There were people who worked with me and purveyors who trusted that I would never betray them or leave them high and dry. The worst near-bankruptcy was after 9-11



I've had the great fortune of still being alive while this movement is really taking root. We're seeing the result of those seeds that were planted many years ago about the connection of food to just about everything.

when Silicon Valley fell apart. According to what everyone in the financial world said, I should have gone bankrupt, but I refused. I couldn't screw my farmers, so I didn't and I had to dig my way out. Now I'm completely debt-free."

Today, it is a whole different scene. "Everything shifted about four or five years ago," Jesse related. "The Omnivore's Dilemma was written and movies like Food, Inc. came out. Now there are so many films and so many amazing books written by both pioneers and the new generation of innovators. The young are finding ways in everything they do to connect food and its production, where it comes from, and cost to just about every element of life.

"I've had restaurants for 37 years, and 4 years ago was the first time I had to pay taxes—because prior to that all I did was lose money. The first year I had to pay taxes I got really angry; then someone looked at me and said, 'It's okay, Jesse. That means things are shifting.' And I've had my busiest 4 years ever. Some of this has to do with management and learning how to be more of a business person, although a lot of it has to do with not being trendy but being part of the trend. I also hired an amazing chef, Carlos Cañada, who embraced the ethics of it all and fell in love with our long-established friendships with farmers, ranchers and fishermen. I trust him, and we work together with care and respect for every element that goes on every dish for our customers.

"The young people who eat in the restaurants get it. They understand that the food is a little more expensive but there's a reason for it. I'm not just charging because we're foodies who are trying to impress them; they understand it's because we know where the salt, the coffee, the butter, the oil, the meat—everything—comes from and they're willing to pay for that."

Of course, the popularity of Jesse's restaurants is due in no small part to the way those curated ingredients are utilized. She is a chef, after all, and specializes in making her dishes flavorful and fun, in addition to being

sustainable. Her cuisine includes superb salads, elegant entrées, sandwiches, signature comfort foods and luscious desserts.

Healthy Hospital Food

A few years back, the popularity of Jesse's restaurants brought her into a whole new arena. "For years, the doctors from Stanford Hospital have eaten at my restaurant in Menlo Park called Flea Street, and they would often say, 'What are you doing that's new, Jesse?' A couple of years ago the head of cardiology, a doctor named Bobby Robins, asked the same question. I replied, 'Do you really want to know?' and he said, 'I do.' So I asked, 'When are you going to give me your food?' And he asked back, 'Well, what do you have in mind?' I told him, 'Please do simple food for people who are sick and scared: a simple purée of organic vegetable soup if

they're on a diet where they can't eat solid foods. Or what about old-fashioned chicken soup, but made from real organic chicken so it actually nourishes people? Or how about a baked apple for dessert?"

That conversation led to an introduction to the CEO of Stanford Hospital, which led to the attempted launch of a program Jesse developed for them called Farm Fresh. But the program stalled. "It didn't quite make it because it was a little bit ahead of its time," Jesse said. "It's a very challenging system that's not wrong; they've always wanted to take care of people. They just have been doing it a little differently. It's more institutional—they feed hundreds and hundreds of people a day. For one thing, they have to learn how to cook food again. When I first started Farm Fresh and put chicken noodle soup on the menu, they had the equipment but nobody knew how to make chicken stock."

Jesse has now dug in for the long haul of bringing healthy and wholesome change to hospital food-and has truly seen what it will involve. "I think it's going to take some outside support," she said. "It's going to take a revisiting of what dietitians and nutritionists see as necessary when someone is healing in a hospital. I also think it's going to take some outside funding and support to help adjust the whole cost issue, since it might be a little more expensive to offer really healthy food. And they might have to adjust their expenditures in order to make that part of a healthy system because they realize food is a path to well-being. I think that is probably the biggest association the medical world is starting to see-the association between taking care of oneself and the high cost of medical services."

Jesse is hard at work on the campaign to get this accomplished and is dealing with numerous entities to bring it about. "The good news is Stanford Hospital is really starting to take a look at what it actually means to use truly local fresh food, and how to obtain it in volume, and how food is connected to healing and well-being," Jesse reported.

"There are other significant issues to address," she continued. "For example, the large food service management companies, from which the hospitals get their food, themselves purchase from large purveyors that have to carry a certain insurance minimum. But I've been talking to the large food service companies—Sodexo, Aramark, Bon Appétit, Morrison Group and others. I've been a keynote speaker with their teams. It's very complex, but they actually do want it

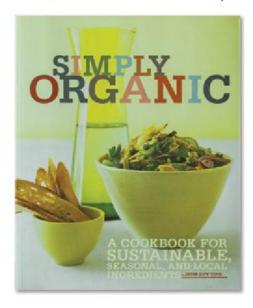
to happen, and they're trying to figure out how to do it.

"Even 'institutional cooking' is now doing what most trends or cycles do: go back to a different way of looking at it. Using frozen processed foods was the best they could do when people started eating that way or the economy changed. Now they're reexamining it and figuring out how to feed people just very simple basic nutritional food again."

Teaching the Teachers

Teaching is also a major aspect of Jesse's mission. Through the Stanford Teacher Education Program, Jesse has been educating Stanford students who themselves will go out and teach. The program is instructive on incorporating other subjects—math and science, for instance—into gardening and cooking, and demonstrating the ease and joy with which both gardening and cooking can be done.

"We teach students who are going into classrooms all over the country," Jesse explained. "We just had our graduation, and some were going to St. Louis, some were going to Connecticut, some were staying in California. We teach four classes a year



from the garden into the kitchen, including lessons about obesity and diabetes.

"By the third class, I've taught them how to cook with seven basic ingredients: olive oil, vinegar (lemon), salt, pepper, sugar, herbs and spices. They learn that fat, sugar and salt can be a good part of making food delicious, and when used consciously, are not a bad part of life. Through these basic cooking elements, they learn to teach their kids to not be afraid



of eating and how, with wise personal choices, they can control obesity and other results of unhealthy eating."

Through her cookbook Simply Organic (Chronicle Books, 2008), Jesse is also educating the public at large. This unique work seeks to assist anyone, in converting their home kitchen, to be completely organic. "One of the new trends is that the young are starting to cook at home," Jesse said. "I believe that the soulful satisfaction we get from cooking at home should be made easier. I set out to write a cookbook that is not over people's heads or just a bunch of pretty pictures, but something that people can actually take home and, without using many ingredients, make something for themselves that is delicious. I actually think that's what every cookbook should be about."

Past Meeting the Future

Jesse continues to utilize the wealth of knowledge she has assimilated to bring us into an organic future. "I've had the great fortune

of still being alive while this movement is really taking root," Jesse concluded. "We're seeing the result of those seeds that were planted many years ago about the connection of food to just about everything. I'm enjoying consulting, being a part of think tanks that are looking at how to take that further into the business world, and am also on some great advisory boards. I love hanging out with the young innovators who think outside the box and have found true passion and soulfulness in an entrepreneurial way with food. I'm now bridging history and the future, however that might land on my own plate."

For more information on Chef Jesse Cool, visit her website at www.cooleatz.com.

Jesse Cool's book Simply Organic is available from the Organic Connections bookstore.

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