

Art of Food Artist Convening Session Notes 3/14/17

Artists Shared their Food Stories

- We have to capture the attention of youth and get them interested in greens, veggies and their health
- Youth are seeds!!- working with them to plant food, drum-exercise/culture/social benefits, we use generational teaching older to the youth and vice versa
- My great aunt was a baker, the town Griot, story teller, taught history to youth while cooking and that's what I do when I cook with young people- teach them the history
- I remember being in the kitchen with mom and grandparents- they loved to cook, I got to experiment with cooking and that's why I love it now. I liked deep frying with my father's welding gear on! I look at eating healthy through creating, not just eating "healthy foods" but getting the feeling of creating helps too. Kitchen is the heart of the house.
- I remember my grandmothers kitchen stories- idea of making the home as a woman, giving love, the love part of food
- I had a cooking grandma, as soon as she came over she went right to the fridge and started cooking. That's how she showed her love.
- My grandmother gardened, when I was with her I grew stuff with her, where I learned to respect it, that it's something people do
- Food was at the center of making the home, women doing that often, no small thing
- I used to work with my wife on an urban farm with youth, at a food justice org in NY, we had big dinner coop as spaces to eat, talk, organize, as a tool to solve problems and address challenges as a community.
- I remember seeing this artist- his piece was a time-lapse of a cabbage growing. I think it reminded people that food comes from the ground. I also remember gardening with my mom as a young person, I didn't always like it, it was hot and not fun, labor is not always pleasant, have to find ways to make it entertaining with youth
- I remember going to the farmers market with my family. I loved the display of food, meeting the vendors, smelling different smells, new foods, colors and shapes. Love the feel of the open air markets
- I remember a neighbor talking fondly about her experience as a migrant farmer- hard to believe that it was pleasant but that's how she talked about it, sometimes food memories aren't as we assume
- I've been around food most of my life. I'm a refugee, picked produce with my family, we were day laborers. We couldn't afford a lot. I remember wanting fast food, McDonalds because I saw the other kids with money buying and eating it, it was like a status symbol, fitting in. My family owns a restaurant, it's a close-up perspective on labor of food. It's a lot of work.

Artist Shared Convening Ideas for Art and Food

- To make a Dumpling house- Communal Shared food craft, temporary space at Wormfarm, having a repeatable event, a place where food is a way to talk about immigration, different cultures, teach cooking techniques, etc.
- Communities sharing Food Festival, culturally specific, colorful, fun
- I loved the craft and special touches put into the CREATE meal. I remember the placemats that were made from plants in the neighborhood. It made the meal feel like ritual, special experience, it is, artists use deeper processes, make elements more sacred
- I was with AEDA and ran their retreat, I thought we should just cook together, we cooked, ate, everyone really felt it was an excellent team building experience, food is a common experience to all, gives good insight to culture
- I worked with summer youth and we took them to the different fruit and vegetable related festivals- strawberry festival- we had youth cooking with the ingredients, it was fun. There's people that come from around the country for cultural festivals. We have so many cultures here, we are lucky, on our street in Frogtown we have so many cultures
- Artists are good at archiving culture. I worked with Umbra Search- for African American history- images, written documents. I did some work in the archive and found slave narratives, actual interviews with African Americans who had been slaves, talking about how the garden had been a place of autonomy on plantations, where black people chose what to grow and cook, used their cultural foods to influence American food. How West African food traditions, shows how history is impacting, food reveals that.
- We work with youth and give them positive experiences socially and with food/nature. We can do so much of that with food. Teaching them cooking, we made organic cupcakes, gluten free, cookies. We sold the baked goods, did taste testing. If we give youth challenges, they will rise to the occasion and often go above and beyond expectations. Youth need to learn things while they are young- how to eat and take care of their bodies. We showed youth how to grow organic since its often expensive to buy organic, we got affordable produce from Frogtown Farm for our youth program to help bring down our costs. We also do drumming with youth. Drum is a therapy method, soothing, it brings good energy, its active dancing, percussion brings good energy, helps develop muscles and burns calories, in addition to being cultural, a way to communicate.
- Art is a language to understand the world
- We need to acknowledge the unpleasant things about food, labor, doing creative things to help make the labor go easier or more fun
- Music is good for the soul- it's such an important tool

- Youth want to be contributors, if we give them purposeful tasks to learn, they will blossom.
- I did an interesting experience with youth and Cumquats tasting. We held a circle to talk about their experience eating Clementines slowly, how they taste, feel, how these little things grew and all the things (wind, water, soil, hands, rain, etc.) that touched them to make them what we are experiencing. Thinking about that deeper experience with food and all the processes related to it as part of it. Sharing space and moments with food that connects us all
- I think it would be great to create a map of grocery stores- past and present, why are they no longer here? Corner stores, groceries, delis, food coops, what groceries stores were demolished by the 94? Id like to do infographics- how to create a home garden, urban farm. Where are the past and present community gardens/ farms. Heart gardens, growing gardens in the shape of hearts. People could plant and grow in a coordinated fashion to have complimentary foods and have a meal together, or sell together, collective growing
- I think we have a lot of divisive signage. We could make better signage that supports collective, cooperative culture, we could cover up the rigid, separational signage and make spaces more inviting- “please pick me”-gardens
- I was part of the 40 days of giving- well known artists used their social/political capital and networks to raise food and funds for hunger relief
- Worked with youth to create jingles for food companies, making music about food, Public service announcements, there’ s a lot could be done, AFC song about food, etc.
- Think creatively about how to tell the story of food
- Timeline about the food system in the US
- App designed by KAYSC for finding food and healthy food in Frogtown- Frogtown Food Access Map (FFAM) it has a rap the youth made to help people remember it. Its an android app created by the Bits to Bites crew- Oanh Vu-staff. Roi Ward-staff is developing a Aquaponics and food venture with youth there are well.

Artists BreakOut Groups for Reflection and Discussion on Community Listening Comments/Needs

History of Frogtown and Rondo

- Land ownership--taken from people of color, given to white immigrants—grow wealth
- Homestead Act
 - Originally Dakota Land and other tribes
- Continuum of people attached to these places—not the developers
- Highway planners didn’t care about the people who lived there
- Community show commitment to the actual soil

- Highway divides Rondo/University-Frogtown
- Community is a thoroughfare/diversity
- Legacy of activism and collective work throughout history
- Achieved 3 additional stops on the Green Line because of activism
- Bridges are important—links to Rondo
 - Land Bridges
 - Spiritual—connects people to their churches

Themes from Community Meals/Food Events

1) Community Values

- Family
- Youth
- Recipes
- Food as medicine
- Work and eat together—work out problems, stay connected
- Youth are seeds
- Tradition, celebrate, home
- Economic opportunities around food—food business as stepping stone for families
- Sharing food cultures, stories, and identities help to break down inequalities
- Important to think about people's abilities, broader idea of what health looks like—different senses
- Literacy issues
- Resilience and sustainability, place-keeping/keeping people in the community

What Are We Doing and Could Do?

- Diverse input
- Programming and reconnecting community through food
- Mostly on Frogtown
- Ritual ways of connecting with growing season
- MN State Fair—how to connect
 - Undoing racism that's part of State Fair
 - Use some of Fair's practices (friendly competition, foster ownership etc...)
 - Seitu was State Fair champ for his plums!
Tacoumba is designing a poster for the State Fair

- Frogtown as a hub
- 5 gallon buckets and container gardening
- At Harvest Festival—contest for growing best tomatoes, greens
- Greens cook-off as touchstone
- Skill shares—how could artful approaches make them more accessible?
- Making tastings more mobile—tomato tasting
- Tomato truck
- Scavenger hunt—try tomatoes at different gardens, meet neighbors
- Animate school gardens w/ contests and scavenger hunts
- Make food special by growing, fosters sense of pride
- Signage to invite people in to the underground food economy
- Find structures that already exist and use that to push forward
- Building on what's already there/annual series/not just one-off events
- Foster participation/ongoing

2) Challenges and Obstacles

- Mobility, time, lack of food traditions, money, resources, lack of culturally specific foods
- Micro-lending
- KIVA
- Recipe sharing—“Rondo Recipe Rescue”
- Series of events for people to get together to cook/prepare, “The Chop it Up”
- Share resources
- Community CSA—Share the “shares”
- Intergenerational opportunities—older people may not have kitchens, younger people may not have knowledge
- Garden allows older people to share and educate—“garden mentors”
- Healthy food branding—make good associations w/ food like kale, how to prepare
- Pipeline, pathway to shared common space to sell food
- One restaurant building w/ several restaurants that rotate weekly or daily