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Food Buzz

Honey Terroir • Grow Benzie Growing
Feeding Nine Billion • Epitaph for a Pigeon
More Bees, Please • Tamale Tradition



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from the editor

May I wish you a happy fall yet? It feels a bit too soon, as if the late spring, the cool August and this early Labor Day made summer pass us by. And yet school's now in session, days are shorter. Pretty soon we'll be enjoying apple pies and bringing in the gardens.

This season of harvest is a fitting time to reflect on the nature of our food supply: its richness but inherent vulnerability. There is a local side and a global side to explore, and integrating the two keeps us moving in a conscious and compassionate direction with our food choices.

Because, while we don't frame it this way very often, the point of a more locally conscious diet is to learn the value of living within our means. As we learn to live within our means locally, we also can learn how to make choices that have a positive impact on the rest of the world.

Here we are blessed with clean soil and deep water, plenty of fruit and fish, tillable land to farm and forests to forage. We cheer about it, we encourage others to come join us and see how good life can be. I do it as much as anyone. It's part good business, part civic pride and part genuine and overflowing joy in our surroundings and good culinary fortune. But enjoying such bounty while also heedlessly shopping the world market for whatever other goods we can afford can seem unnecessary and unwittingly selfish.

We produce so many delicious cherries, couldn't we do without imported raspberries this winter? Our lake fish is so good, could we ease up on how often we buy fish from the ocean? Our farmers can integrate humane pork production into their healthy, diversified, regenerative farm systems, so why buy cheap pork whose production causes more problems than it solves and, because it's so cheap, eat more bacon than is healthy for us?

No one wants others to go hungry and no one wants the world to end. And to make a difference, to help the world heal from its inequities and excesses, it's not like we even need to sacrifice that much. We can have a delicious, exciting, varied and healthy way of eating. But we will need to eat lower-impact diets, keep our honeybees healthy, buy from local farms of all kinds all the time, and always, always improve soil fertility and decrease carbon emissions.

This is my own soapbox speech, but if you like the message, please thank our contributors and advertisers. They have provided us stories to sink our teeth into, stories about the pleasures and positive outcomes of eating locally, sharing food with friends and being grateful to the natural world. Stories that give consideration—inspiration, I hope—for letting go of having it all in order to sink our teeth deeper into having it local, healthy and good. It's not really sacrifice—it's an opportunity.

Enjoy your fall—and help the bees!

Barb



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PUBLISHER Charlie Wunsch

EDITOR Barb Tholin

DESIGN Melissa Petersen

AD DESIGN Robert C. Keller

COPY EDITOR Doug Adrianson

CONTRIBUTORS

Janice Benson • Mary Brower
Ted Gilmer • Tracy Grant
Martin Heller • Gary L. Howe
Fischer Jex • Mary O'Neill
Anne-Marie Oomen • Jim Rink
Teresa Scollon • Patty LaNoue Stearns
Carole Topalian

CONTACT US

Edible Grande Traverse
PO Box 930, Traverse City, MI 49685
231-360-FOOD (3663)
"360° on Local Food"
info@EdibleGrandeTraverse.com
EdibleGrandeTraverse.com
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Table for Nine Billion, Please

BY MARTIN HELLER

The EAT Stockholm Food Forum seeks to marry food, health and environment into an irresistible movement across science, business and policy. Local researcher and farming activist Marty Heller was invited to attend. These are his impressions from the field.

This spring, I had the amazing opportunity to attend the EAT Stockholm Food Forum, a trip that played out as nothing short of a Bioneers fairytale: real and daunting challenges faced with clever, resilient and fun solutions.

Luxury conference hotels taxing to a budget traveler? Stockholm offers clean, respectful hostels mere footsteps away that are perfectly willing to host the thrifty professional.

Major social challenges in need of diverse stakeholder engagement and networking? Brilliant, ambitious, well-connected Norwegian philanthropists rise to the occasion.

Returning flight canceled? Stylish, eco-smart Swedish hotels (now paid for by the faulty airline!) melt away worries with delicious meals and perfectly executed sauna.

Nine billion hungry humans crowding an overburdened dinner table by 2050? There are healthy, sustainable solutions, and each one of us can—indeed must—act to make them happen.

The EAT Stockholm Food Forum is the brainchild of Gunhild Anker Stordalen, medical doctor and health and environmental activist, and Professor Johan Rockström, executive director of Stockholm Resilience Centre. Designed as a “Davos meets TED Talks” platform to interweave a “double triple helix” of food–health–sustainability and science–business–policy, the event rose brilliantly to this lofty goal in its inaugural year.

Speakers included the Prince of Wales (by video address); former President Bill Clinton; Dr. Richard Horton, editor in chief of the *Lancet*; Dr. Walter Willett, chair of the Nutrition Department at Harvard School of Public Health; and Peter Bakker, president, World Business Council for Sustainable Development, to name but a few. Many of the talks are available online. (Eat-Forum.org/talks/)

Central throughout was the idea that issues around food, human health and environmental sustainability are complex and interconnected and that, in seeking solutions, disciplinary and sectoral silos must be brought down. Parallel to the talks, select representatives from academia, business and policy were invited to contribute to topical competence forums to outline the challenges, opportunities and road maps for future action. Plenty of break time was scheduled to allow interaction and networking, and the food ... well, I'll get to that.

Here's the situation: Under-nutrition still exists in the world, while obesity is a major problem. We probably all know that unfortunate truth. But due in part to our successes in curbing communicable diseases, diet—the types of food we eat—is now the top risk factor to health globally. Twenty years ago the top risk was underweight children.

What and how much we eat has a major impact on our health. It is estimated that the U.S. alone would realize a savings of \$130 billion in health care costs if everyone ate a minimum-risk diet. The top 20 pharmaceutical products, representing half of the market, are treatments for non-com-

“Nature and the biosphere is not simply a question of values, something you appreciate or not; it is the prerequisite for all life on this planet.”

—Professor Carl Folke, scientific director, Stockholm Resilience Centre

“We want a world free of the avoidable burden of non-communicable diseases, and nutrition must be at the core of the agenda of sustainable development.

“It is all interconnected: the global economy, food systems and the nutritional status of populations have changed markedly in the past 20 years. If you look at the two faces of malnutrition, malnutrition has the face of hunger and under-nutrition and affects millions of people and children. On the other hand it has also the face of obesity, with 44 million children under age 5 overweight, and an unbalanced diet leading to the increase of non-communicable diseases.”

—Bente Mikkelsen, director, Department of Non-Communicable Diseases, WHO

municable diseases, for which diet is a major risk factor.

Superimposed on this is the exorbitant burden to the environment from producing food for Earth’s current load of 7 billion people: 24 percent of global greenhouse gas emissions and 70–80 percent of all human water withdrawals result from agriculture. Food production is also a major contributor to water pollution and biodiversity loss, and intensified fertilizer use has dramatically disrupted global nitrogen and phosphorus cycles.

As the planet gains another two billion human inhabitants in the next 36 years and developing countries increase their appetite for richer diets, these burdens will only intensify.

So what happened? Between advances in agriculture and reductions in human fertility, we were able to slip past Malthus’ catastrophic predictions of population growth outstripping food supply. Experts now believe that even with nine billion, it is possible to produce enough food to feed everyone well.

But how did we get to a place where our sustenance is killing us, and providing that sustenance is causing significant harm to the planet?

In short, we’ve been sold a food system model that prescribes that cheaper food is better food. Progress has been measured by producing more, faster and cheaper. Food processors cater to our innate cravings for sweet, salty and fatty to get us to eat more. This model has led to problems that it cannot resolve and has created an ever-more-apparent mismatch between food, health, environment and culture.

Well-informed experts such as food policy professor Tim Lang argue that our food system is in crisis and nothing short of wholesale change will right it. Fortunately, there is growing recognition, not just among academics, but also within business and politics, that monumental change is necessary. And there are accessible actions that we all can take that will make major differences.

But first, some foodie talk. If, like myself, your impression of Swedish cuisine is limited to *lutefisk*, *smorgasbord* and meatballs,

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Wine is History

you owe yourself a trip to Stockholm. I was enchanted by this ancient city on the sea. While not a coastal town, Stockholm is an archipelago, so water is everywhere, and so is tantalizing seafood.

I tried to steer toward traditional dishes in my epicurean quests, and everywhere I sat down I was treated to delights exquisitely prepared and presented, and full of flavors. Food was, of course, central to the Food Forum program, with creative alternatives for the tasting, like protein-rich oat beverages and “beat” fritters (a bean-based meat alternative: EatBeat.se/). The four-course over-the-top reception dinner designed and sourced by chef phenom Marcus Samuelsson employed local ingredients and cuisine while sticking to the EAT philosophy. As a Michigander away from home in late May, I was delighted that the main course featured asparagus and morels!

The EAT agenda is all about bridging knowledge to action, and a number of low-hanging but prickly fruits (i.e., solutions within reach but perhaps difficult to execute) echoed throughout the forum. Many of these solutions would require a coordinated effort between policy and business—

informed by science—to bring the necessary change. However, they also hinge on the personal, everyday choices of individual consumers. I’ll outline a few of them here.

1. MINIMIZE FOOD WASTE

According to estimates by the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization, roughly one third of all food produced globally for human consumption is lost or wasted. In the developing world, much of this occurs in storage and handling, but in industrialized nations, the food waste happens primarily at the retail and consumer level: misshapen produce, dented cans, expired sell-by dates, plate scraps, forgotten leftovers, and the like.

The annual carbon footprint of producing the food wasted at the retail and consumer level in the U.S. alone is equivalent to the yearly emissions from 33 million average passenger vehicles¹.

The “what to do” here should be obvious: Be conscious of your food purchases and portions—only take what you can eat. Tristram Stuart, author of *Waste: Uncovering the Global Food Scandal*, has been organizing awareness-raising “Feeding the 5,000”

“I come here out of frustration because I feel there are many threats to democracy that we are used to talking about—authoritarian rule, violations of human rights, poverty—but also the failure of politics to grasp the interconnections of themes that break the silos that we’re organized into. We know that food, health and sustainability are linked, but they are separate agendas in the world of politics.”

—Jonas Gahr Støre, Norwegian politician, leader of the Labour Party, former member of Parliament, Minister of Foreign Affairs, and Minister of Health

“Food@Work: literally a Google of Possibilities... Google Food now fuels over 50,000 people. It brings people together. It fuels their bodies and minds ... Our vision is to inspire and enable the world to make food choices and use food experiences to develop more sustainable lifestyles and communities.”

—Michiel Bakker, director, Global Food Services, Google Inc.

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"We are now as humanity, seven billion people multiplied by the industrial metabolism, a global force of change that surpasses the natural changes that have taken the planet in and out of its stability domains in the billions of years of Earth's existence. This is in truth a new juncture for humanity: the grandest of all challenges.

"This is the EAT agenda: How can we transform food systems so that they improve human health, are resilient and fair, and safeguard Earth's sustainability? ... We're beyond the time of incremental change, and truly in the time of transformative change. In fact, we have just five–10 years to transform the global food system if we want to avoid high probabilities of huge-risk outcomes for coming generations.

"There are synergies which are enormously untapped that healthy and sustainable food systems are a prerequisite, and can be successfully implemented, for human prosperity on a stable planet. This combined agenda is really the key for action."

—Professor Johan Rockström, executive director, Stockholm Resilience Centre

events in the U.K. and globally where free meals for 5,000 people are prepared with food that would otherwise have been wasted. A new trend across European grocery chains is the marketing of "ugly" produce—misshapen fruits and vegetables that don't meet typical regularity standards—and demand has been outstripping supply. Campaigns are underway across the globe to tighten the belt on this obvious inefficiency in our food system.

2. EAT LESS MEAT

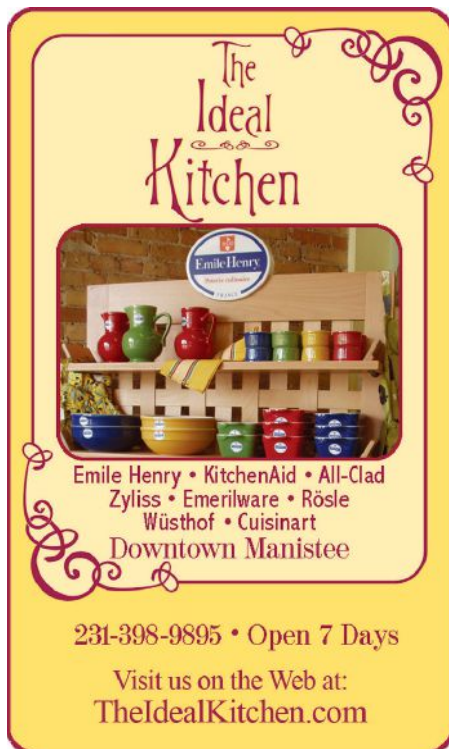
In the developed world, 1.74 deaths per 100,000 can be attributed to diets high in red meat; 34.7 deaths per 100,000 to diets high in processed meat (go to VizHub.HealthData.org/gbd-compare/ for some really cool global burden of disease visualization tools). And nearly any way you slice it, the simple fact is animal-based foods require greater resources to produce than plant-based foods. Frances Moore Lappé made the argument about the wastefulness of meat production in her 1971 book, *Diet for a Small Planet*, and while animals, especially ruminants like cows and sheep, can make use of feed that would not

be edible to humans, the modern trend is predominantly grain-fed livestock.

Even without grain, ruminants produce methane, a powerful greenhouse gas. A pound of beef produces more than 30 times the greenhouse gas emissions of a pound of beans; chicken about six times, and fish closer to three–four times.

So does that mean we all need to become vegetarians? That extreme is probably not necessary. But currently, Americans eat 30–40 percent more meat than is recommended for health reasons. Trends like "meatless Mondays" are catching on. The American Culinary Institute is on board, teaching chefs to think of meat as a condiment, creating dishes with the same *umami* but with less meat (think *bi bim bap* rather than porterhouse steak). And Google is creating "food labs" on its campuses to beta test these and other ways of encouraging diet change.

To my ecologically minded farmer friends raising animal products: Fear not, this is not an attack on your livelihood. Animals have always been a part of stable ecosys-

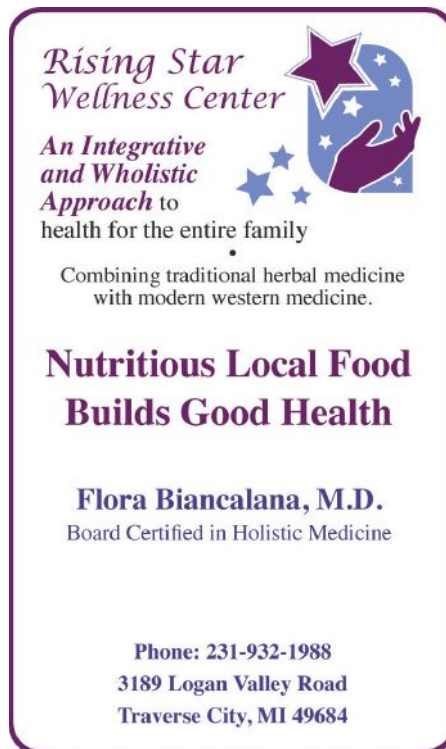


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tems and must continue to be an integrated part of a sustainable agro-ecosystem, especially in our north woods bioregion. Continue to focus on producing premium products, and expect to be compensated appropriately for your efforts in the marketplace.

However, we all could reconnect with a reverence for consuming the flesh of a living being and return meat eating to a celebratory or special-occasion act. There simply isn't room on this planet for cheap, factory-farmed meat marketed to daily, center-of-plate consumption.

3. SUPPORT FARMING BASED ON AGRO-ECOLOGICAL PRINCIPLES

Inordinate resources have gone into developing the plant varieties and corresponding life support systems (read: fertilizers and pesticides) that make up modern conventional agriculture. And yet, repeated evidence shows farming that seeks to model natural ecosystems competing with—and, often under stress conditions, outperforming—“green revolution” agriculture. In the Rodale Institute's 30-years-running Farming Systems Trial, organically managed fields produced 28–34 percent more corn than conventionally managed fields under drought conditions.

Drought already costs U.S. citizens \$6–8 billion a year on average, and according to a study from the National Center for Atmospheric Research, we could face extreme drought within just 30 years. Shifting to agro-ecological farming means building resilience in the face of uncertain weather patterns.

Whether it's certified organic, certified biodynamic, or simply the neighbor down the road who “gets it,” supporting agro-ecological farming with our food purchases helps it grow in the marketplace and indirectly turns more of those development resources toward improving the sustainability and resilience of our food system.

4. ENJOY SEAFOOD, BUT KNOW WHERE IT COMES FROM

This recommendation is perhaps the most controversial because there are real concerns with overfishing of our oceans. In addition to the simple neglect of taking too much, many modern fishing methods produce excessive amounts of by-catch, leading to fishery declines and ecosystem disruptions.

However, it is important to consider that while 70 percent of the Earth's surface is ocean, only 7 percent of protein production comes from the sea, and fish have considerably better feed-to-food conversion ratios than other animals, as well as significant human health benefits.

Industry leaders, and even the Environmental Working Group, see thoughtfully farmed fish as a significant opportunity in the future. Currently, however, aquaculture does have a dark side because, just like terrestrial farming, it can be done poorly. CAFO-style fish farms can introduce harmful pollutants into oceans and your own diet. But the norm in Scandinavian countries is well-regulated farmed salmon, and significant advances have been made in production methods, including dramatic reductions in the amount of animal-based protein in the feed. There is no reason why, with sufficient incentive, fish farms in British Columbia, Chile and elsewhere can't follow suit with sustainable practices.

5. DEMAND CHANGE BY POLICY MAKERS

Yes, individual efforts will make a difference, but the global food system is a massive ship, and to get it back on course will require some steering from policy. Slowly, U.S. citizens are awakening to the fact that the Farm Bill affects much more than farms, that really it's a food bill and affects every one of us. We need an agro-economy that supports healthy eating, rather than an approach focused on supplying cheap inputs for the food processing industry.

The next step is to assure that dietary guidelines, built on the continually evolving science of nutritional health, also reflect environmental concerns. Sustainable dietary guidelines recognize the interconnection between human health and the health of the agro-ecosystems that support us, that what we eat matters to the health of the planet. An advisory committee is currently reviewing the Dietary Guidelines for Americans, and the policy document will be updated in 2015. You can submit your comments to the committee here: Health.gov/dietaryguidelines/dga2015/comments/default.aspx.

The 2014 Stockholm Food Forum was a firmly placed first step in establishing the EAT agenda. Thanks to an impressive network of stakeholders and a compelling and timely message, the EAT agenda will likely be heard at United Nations and other intergovernmental policy platforms in the very near future. Connecting environmental concerns to human health through the lens of food is an extremely attractive strategy; while the political will to tackle environmental issues may vacillate, very few can turn away from pressing health issues. And synergies abound.

As for myself, I'm also hoping for another fairytale opportunity to sample Swedish *lax planka* at the 2015 Stockholm Food Forum! *eGT*

Martin Heller, PhD, (aka Farmer Marty, aka DJ Martoosh) is a senior research specialist at the University of Michigan's Center for Sustainable Systems. Working with ISLAND and the Grand Traverse Regional Land Conservancy, he helped develop the Farmer Residency at Maple Bay, a farm incubator program for beginning farmers. He lives in Traverse City with his wife and new baby.

¹ Martin Heller and Gregory Keoleian, 2014 “Greenhouse Gas Emission Estimates of U.S. Dietary Choices and Food Loss,” *Journal of Industrial Ecology*, in press.