

FOOD: Eating & Drinking

The matter of food sustainability and consumption has become one of the most important topics for me to consider, not to mention debate, since I moved to Los Angeles and was immersed in the simplistic lifestyle that as interns we are encouraged to live. I used to view food as just another piece of the puzzle that permits the preservation of the type of life we may be leading at the time. It wasn't too long ago that I was ignorant about sodium, fat, and sugar content in food, how the number of meals in a day affects hunger, why desserts are supposed to be eaten on a full stomach, and why the most common ingredient in most processed foods is high fructose corn syrup. I know you might be curious as to what the answers to these questions might be, but that there is the problem. I had to do a ton of research via Wikipedia, online articles, magazines, and other random sources out there to actually begin to figure this whole eating healthy thing out. I wasn't just told outright. It took the desire to make a change, an environment in which I felt I could make that change, unrelenting commitment, time, and patience without a doubt. There weren't too many people around me who were totally on the diehard fitness and nutrition bandwagon with me when I decided to jump on, so I had to discover a number of things through many successes and plenty of failures in order to really solidify healthy eating habits.

Therefore, when I learned that we were having a Second Sunday gathering around this topic I was inexorably elated. I was also amazed to find out that the TED talk Suzanne had assigned for me to watch addressed the conflicting thoughts, which are around the nation's relationship with food in comparison to the rest of the world's, that have been running through my mind lately. In the TED talk, Louise Fresco addresses the recent regard for bread by many Americans as unhealthy calories and a source of obesity throughout the nation. She probes the audience, by asking for a show of hands, which bread do individuals prefer: handmade bread or wonder bread. It was no surprise that just about everyone raised his or her hand in favor of the handmade loaf because it is healthier than the wonder bread. However, she states that ironically some years ago many people would've picked the white bread because they didn't have the knowledge on bread that they have now. Our belief nowadays is that there is a level of authenticity that comes with homemade bread that no corporation can reproduce in its own bread. This is most clearly due to the processes that they must use in order to produce the amount of bread they need to supply a nation. The industrialization of food has allowed for many more people to be fed in the world. And thus, a lot more ingredients have been added to bread in order to take it from a simple food to a support for calories. Now, bread is associated with obesity. A staple in most households has now become a source of calories and source of modernity.

She begins to stress that once we go back to understanding what our food is about we will regain that genuine appreciation we had in the beginning. We need to comprehend the simplicity of bread through knowing exactly how to make it, the price for a simple, pure loaf, and utilizing small bakeries that stem from small-scale farming. Wheat is the basic, most fundamental and important crop we've had in 10,000 years, and yet the costs to domesticate and grow it today have been tremendous. The mass production of food from wheat has posed threats to biodiversity, caused destruction to natural habitats, water pollution, and a host of other concerns.

The problem is the disparity between the poverty-stricken populations around the world and the modern, first world populations. The populations that are poverty-stricken

want the resources to grow foods on a wider production in order to be fed while our own communities want the opposite because the outcome we've gotten is not what we first envisioned. We have grown accustomed to being adequately, and even over adequately, fed with the foods that corporations produce, so with recent information about the low nutritional value of these foods we want to revert back. Simply put, our food lacks the essential, pure nutrients that our bodies need to lead healthy lives. The fact is, the large-scale mechanization that we sought to incorporate in our society years ago has gotten completely out of hand and now that we have achieved our goal of keeping a nation fed we want to undo it because it doesn't fit our current needs; thus, confirming our spoiled-like desires. "Small-scale is not the solution to the world food problem. It's a luxury solution for us if we can afford it, if we want to afford it," Louise emphatically states. She goes on to say,

"Clever, low-key mechanization will avoid problems of the large-scale mechanization that we currently have. We journeyed into large-scale mechanization with very high control, but we need to keep up the science and go to a regional scale in food network. If we think differently about agriculture science, then we will realize that there can be an integration of our innovations into the farming of the land."

Take home message for me? Food is about respect! Mahatma Gandhi once said, "Food in the end, in our tradition, is something holy. It's not about nutrients and calories. It's about sharing. It's about honesty. It's about identity." Here is where the issue was created that caused us to develop a negative attitude towards mass industrialization. Never before have we had the luxury of taking food for granted because it is so cheap. Therefore, I now understand that we as a society can stand to look at food as an opportunity to be together as a people and not as a commodity on which to capitalize. That's how we got here. Once we change the way we view food, we will finally be able to actually enjoy the raw, unfiltered, simplistic ingredients that makeup that which we rely on for sustenance. Through Mahatma Gandhi's words, Fresco concludes her presentation and rests her argument, "To those who have to go without two meals a day, God can only appear as bread." So...

ENJOY THE BREAD. APPRECIATE IT. AND FEEL PRIVILEGED!