

FOOD STUDIES NEWS

Volume 2 - June 2016

FOOD STUDIES AT A GLANCE

Hostos Community College, offers a professional opportunity for those interested in food and its pathways to our tables. The program includes a wide variety of disciplines that will fit well with a range of talents. Students with a strong interest in policy can find a place to pursue social justice in food production and distribution. If they have an inclination to learn about the effects of food consumption in health and the community, students can become knowledgeable in areas of nutrition and explore alternatives to achieve healthy living. If their interest pertains to the impact of our dietary needs or eating habits on the environment, or the technologies behind food processing and preservation, then the science behind food production may be the field of choice for study. These and other areas of interest can be found in the Food Studies Program, which not only offer a myriad of opportunities for enhancing students’ talents, but can guide them towards novel careers.

This past academic year, faculty and administration involved in the program organized and conducted informational activities to both spark interest in the program and to introduce the many professional possibilities a Food Studies student may pursue. Guest speakers, such as Claudia Lifton-Shwener from the Factory Farming Awareness Coalition, Louis Sorkin from the American Museum of Natural History, and Judy Villeneuve Nicole Scarangelo and Simone Martin from the New York City Department of Education visited the school to talk to students about different professional paths for Food Studies graduates. Representatives of several local organizations met with members of the Food Studies Committee to discuss internship opportunities. Film screenings on food production and differing health themes were shown to a number of students. Field trips to an organic farm and a rooftop farm were unique and new experiences for many participating faculty and students.



Contents

Food and Our Environment	2
Let’s Eat Bugs	3
Just Food Conference	4
Green Thumb Grow Together	6
<i>In Defense of Food</i>	7
The Food We Eat – <i>Cowspiracy</i>	8
English with a Service Learning Component	9
The Hostos Garden Market Farmers’ Market	10
Fieldtrip to Bethel Hobbs Farm	11
Fieldtrip to Brooklyn Grange Farm	12
CUNY TV	14
About the A.S in Food Studies	14
Fall Courses	15

FOOD AND OUR ENVIRONMENT

by Elyse Zucker and Flor Henderson



Claudia Lifton-Shwener addresses English and Biology students

Claudia Lifton-Shwener, an outreach member for the Factory Farming Awareness Coalition (FFAC) visited Hostos Community College on two occasions and talked about the Environmental Impacts of our food. The FFAC is an organization dedicated to educating communities around the country about the complex mechanisms behind the scenes of the food we bring to our tables. Ms. Lifton-Shwener's presentation provided a holistic overview of the impacts of industrial animal agriculture on everything from climate change to social justice.

The FFAC serves to voice the views of both animal rights advocates and environmentalists about the negative effects of contemporary animal farming on human diets and the environment.

The FFAC promotes a plant-based diet, not only as a healthy alternative to animal products, but as a practice that is beneficial to the environment. Several members, including Ms. Lifton-Shwener, give presentations in schools across the country, educating audiences with factual data and sparking their curiosity about these little known but prevalent practices.

English and Biology students attended the event and many reacted with awe and surprise when they learned about the carbon footprint left by animal agriculture. These reactions included eye-opening horror and amazement at images depicting of how animals are treated at meat, poultry, milk and egg farms. The attending

students informed both their professors and Ms. Lifton-Shwener that though rendered uncomfortable to learn of these dynamics, they were grateful to have their eyes opened about the processes that lead to the food products we all eat. The students wrote about the event and indicated their gratitude for attending it.



Entomophagy. Audience members are curious about edible larvae

LET'S EAT BUGS!

by Vladimir Ovtcharenko and Flor Henderson

The Natural Sciences Department celebrated the Science of Food during Earth Day 2016. The keynote speaker was Senior Scientific Assistant Louis Sorkin, an entomologist and arachnologist at the American Museum of Natural History (AMNH). Dr. Sorkin's presentation, *Entomophagy: A Little Bit of Everything – Food, Feed, Recycling, and More*, attracted a massive audience comprised of students and faculty.

What does an entomologist have to do with food and food studies? – Dr. Sorkin's area of research and personal hobby focus on edible insects. At the AMNH he classifies collections of

insects, spiders, harvestmen, scorpions, mites, ticks and other arachnids from all over the world. He also maintains a living collection of insects and spiders to observe their behavioral patterns.

He has organized the very famous *Traveling Spiders* exhibition in the American Museum of Natural History Collection. In addition to this, Dr. Sorkin has expanded his interest to the area of Alimentary Initiatives, in which diets based on insects as a food staple are novel.

After the presentation, the members of the audience were invited to taste samples of dried grasshoppers, various larvae, dragonfly naiads, and other representatives of insect fauna.

Some participants were delighted to partake in the unusual experience, while others took the stance of being careful observers. Overall, it was

a fantastic experience for students interested in food science, or willing to taste and enjoy new flavors.

JUST FOOD CONFERENCE

By Flor Henderson and Elyse Zucker



Professors Elyse Zucker and Flor Henderson accompanied by Environmental Club members Monique Maselli, Sierra Lebron, and Princess Smith, attend *Just Food* conference

For the second year in a row, Food Studies faculty and students attended the annual conference orchestrated by *Just Food*, an organization that involves more than seven hundred community organizers, urban and rural farmers, Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) members, educators, and local food enthusiasts.

The day-long event includes interactive workshops and presentations related to food. This year, the event took place on March 13th at Columbia University Teachers College. The

topics included in sessions covered a vast range of subjects, including food production in local communities, soil quality, modern technologies of food production including aquaculture and hydroponic gardening, social implications of food in a multiethnic society, food as an educational tool to reach out to often neglected sections of the community, policy rules to ensure food justice in poor neighborhoods, food consumption for healthy living, edible wild plants in New York, and many other current food-related issues.



GREEN THUMB GROW TOGETHER

by Flor Henderson and Ronita Ghatak

On March 16, thousands of community gardeners and green professionals from all over New York City met at Hostos Community College for a day of learning, sharing, networking and greening inspiration. Members of the Food Studies Committee and one student attended the event to network with representatives of local communities and to promote the Food Studies Program. One of the presentations was about aquaculture –the novel practice of growing plants and fish simultaneously in an artificial environment. Aquaponics or aquaculture consists in growing plant crops in water rather than in soil.

The aquaculture device presented at the event consisted of a container divided into an upper and lower compartment. Plants absorb nutrients from underneath the aquatic environment. The aquatic lower level is used to raise fish. Fish feeding is regulated; plants obtain the nutrients from the

organic waste produced by fish. Aquaponics devices are designed for indoor planting and therefore plants must depend on artificial light.

Another presentation related to the art of selecting nutritious and healthy foods. Fermented foods were exhibited as healthier and easier to digest, containing preventative medicines against life threatening diseases. Pink salt was advocated as a healthier option than natural salt because it contains 80 nutrients. The audience was advised to add a few grains of pink salt to their water bottles, and to drink this water every day. The presenters also recommended the consumption of a variety of fresh fruits and vegetables, as an alternative to processed food.

Overall, the event was well organized and well attended by members of all the boroughs. Participants were rewarded with goody bags, t-shirts, and free plant seeds.



Student Sierra Lebron sampling seeds of flowers and garden vegetables



IN DEFENSE OF FOOD – FILM SCREENING

by Ronita Ghatak

The Hostos Food Studies committee hosted a screening of the film, *In Defense of Food*, on April 13, with students in several classes packing the room. Cutting through confusion and busting myths and misconceptions, *In Defense of Food* shows how common sense and old-fashioned wisdom can help us rediscover the pleasures of eating and avoid the chronic diseases so often associated with the modern diet.

According to the documentary, Pollan believes that ‘nutritionism’ –which he says is the belief that food is the sum of its parts— is an ideology. Pollan's journey to this discovery takes him from the plains of Tanzania, where one of the world's last remaining tribes of hunter-gatherers still eats the way our ancestors ate, to Loma Linda, California, where a group of Seventh Day Adventist vegetarians live longer than almost anyone else on earth, and eventually to Paris, where the French diet, rooted in culture and tradition, proves surprisingly healthy. Along

the way he shows how a combination of faulty nutrition science and deceptive marketing practices have encouraged us to replace real food with scientifically engineered “food-like substances.” He also explains why the solution to our dietary woes is, in fact, remarkably simple, and can be summed up in seven words: “Eat Food. Not Too Much. Mostly Plants.”

The documentary showed a part of the Bronx community not choosing healthy selections and becoming victimized by false nutrition science and the media. Our students, themselves residents of the Bronx could relate to this and were therefore inspired to educate the community.

The documentary also highlights that omega-3 fatty acids, for example, are “essential for optimal brain growth, heart health, and immune function.” As Dr. Joan Sabaté points out in the film: “[a] single nutrient or food is not the magic bullet. It is the combination of foods that’s the most important determinant of health.”



THE SECRET BEHIND THE FOODS WE EAT - *COWSPIRACY*

by Flor Henderson

According to tradition, every year the Natural Sciences Department celebrates Mother Earth. This year's theme was "Climate Change is Here, Be Part of the Solution." The Food Studies Program contributed to the celebration with activities led by several instructors. One of the events was the screening of the documentary *Cowspiracy: The Sustainability Secret* by filmmaker Kip Andersen.

The film focuses on the most destructive industry facing the planet— agroindustry. Drawing on the raw footage and exposure rendered by several of the world's leading environmental organizations, the film lays bare the truth about the methods employed by the food industry.

The film screening was attended by students, faculty, and staff, and made us question how many of our basic food staples, such as meat, milk, and eggs are processed in route to becoming products for consumption. It unmasked the exploitation of living organisms

for the gain of one species, *Homo sapiens*. Some of the most inhumane scenes were left to the imagination of the viewer, while a few scenes were shown in all their crude and violent reality. The film also gave viewers fodder to question pervasive practices in food production and exposed names of corporations involved in food trade.

The ninety-one minute documentary was an eye opener and signaled the starting point of a life change for many of its viewers. Students wrote reflective statements about their experience attending the screening, such as Iana Jimenez, who encouraged everybody to "at least minimize meat consumption to help the planet that provides for us." Another student, Amadou Diallo, had a hopeful wish and a question: "scientists are coming up with alternative food products that are healthier for us and the environment—are these alternatives for or against the survival of our planet?" Yet another student, Safiyah Silvera, declared that "human beings need to wake up and observe what they

have been doing to the beautiful planet that we call home.” We all fully agree.

Earth Day should not be the only platform to allow students to become enlightened about and ponder controversial themes, for they are to inherit our pervasive ways of life, traditions, and

practices. They have every right to know more in order to make educated decisions about their future and the future of the planet, and should be allotted more opportunities, in and out of classrooms, to do so.

Class Activities



English 110 (ENG 110) students visiting Bethel Hobbs Farm with professor Elyse Zucker

ENGLISH WITH A SERVICE LEARNING COMPONENT

by Elyse Zucker

The Food Studies section of English 110 Expository Writing is a designated service learning section of the course that is

centered on the theme of agriculture, which students learn and write about in response to reading selections by such authors as Wendell

Berry, Bill McKibben, Katherine Sneed, Alfonso Morales and Rachel Carson –authors who consider agriculture in relation to the environment, social justice and physical as well as mental and spiritual health. Yet what students learned in these texts became enhanced, enlarged and brought to life by visits from guest speakers and excursions that took students out of the class to attend activities and have experiences related to their learning.

The activities and experiences in this class vary from semester to semester.

In February, writer and educator Claudia Lifton of the Factory Farming Awareness Coalition visited the class and gave a talk on and showed footage of the impact industrialized farming methods have on both the animals raised for consumption and the environment in general.

Also in April, several students participated in the Service Learning Day event, in which they

spoke to faculty and students in the audience about their experience doing service learning by going into local communities to ask questions they created to find out how the topics studied in class (such as food deserts and social justice or processed vs. unprocessed food) impacted residents' lives, and, in turn, did secondary research addressing the concerns those residents encountered, to help rectify the problems.

Students also took a cooking class in which they participated in making a variety of organic soups, while being instructed on the value of the ingredients and importance of participating in processes be it cooking or writing. Typically, these soups are sold at the Hostos Garden Market students run and at which they distribute a brochure compiled with the findings of their research, but this semester the market was rained out

THE HOSTOS GARDEN MARKET FARMERS' MARKET

by Elyse Zucker

Part of the requirement for the designated service learning section of Expository English is that students run, several times a semester, a farmers' market called The Hostos Garden Market (HGM), which is held in the Memorial Gardens between the B and C Buildings.

The HGM is a venue for the students' service learning, since students sell at the market, at a nominal fee, organic soups they themselves make in a cooking class (from ingredients donated by

Whole Foods Market), soups which offer to the Hostos and local communities an alternative to food desert options. Yet the HGM is also a place where students educate others about what they themselves have learned, since they distribute there and talk about the brochures compiled of research they have done on agriculture and social justice topics. And this research is itself guided by knowledge local residents have revealed they are lacking in, something students have learned from the

interviews they created and conducted in the community.

Students invite the Hostos community and interviewees to attend the HGM. The HGM last ran in the fall, 2015 (it was rained out in the spring 2016) and will again open in the fall 2016

semester. Students from Professor Henderson's plant biology course and Professor Figueroa's business communication course have also utilized and/or helped out at the HGM for educational purposes.



Students buying produce and conducting lab assignments at the Hostos Garden Market (HGM)

Fieldtrips

FIELDTRIP TO BETHEL HOBBS FARM

by Elyse Zucker

In April the English 110 class took a field trip to the Bethel-Hobbs Farm in Centereach, NY, the first African American owned charity farm on Long Island, one devoted to helping and feeding those in need and one which grows vegetables organically, employing sustainable farming practices.

The students who attended were given an educational tour of the farm and its history and they did some farming as well. Several students brought their children along, and they too got the chance to farm and take home, as did everyone else, tomato plants which they learned how to best nurture. Doing some actual farming

in addition to reading about the value of participating in agricultural processes in Wendell Berry's "The Pleasures of Eating" and Catharine Sneed's "These Green Things" added, for students, an experiential element to their understanding.

Many students wrote reflective pieces about the experience, exalting it and stating

things such as Abdoul Gouem did, when writing "I got the opportunity [at] Bethel Hobbs farm to touch the soil and get my hands dirty and breath the natural fresh herbs. We have learned also how to grow things without using any chemicals."



Students and their children enjoying the outdoors at Bethel Hobbs Farm

BROOKLYN GRANGE ROOFTOP FARM

by Flor Henderson

Two groups of Biology students visited the Brooklyn Grange Rooftop Farm during the summer of 2015 and spring 2016. The trip was an experiential course component intended to enhance the themes of sustainability and urban agriculture.

The Brooklyn Grange Rooftop farm is a magnificent installation of one acre (43,000 square foot) covered with vegetables such as kale, tomatoes, sunflowers, lettuce, carrots, corn, etc. These crops are sold to the local community, to local restaurants and businesses, and to local farmers' market stands.

The farm is tended by local farmers and a crew of volunteers. It is also an educational center that receives a flow of visitors from all boroughs. The farm has increased the variety of crops they produce since its origin and has also added chicken coops and bee hives to its many attractions.

The building's sturdy design of reinforced concrete can uphold the weight of the soil, crops, and watering system. The layered system of soil, filter fabric, and drainage plates do not only allow farming, but the design also contributes to rainwater usage and serves as insulation. The produce is grown organically with no synthetic or chemical fertilizers added to the soil, nor the use of insecticides or herbicides to prevent insect or fungal outbreaks.

This was a memorable fieldtrip for the participating classes, not only because the

experience took them outside the classroom's boundaries but because it was the materialization of theoretical concepts learned in class. Student Safiyyah Silvera said she was very excited and intrigued to visit a real rooftop farm— she did not think it would be as large as it was and able to hold that much capacity. She said: “I am really glad that I went – I was able to share some knowledge with my mother and others who didn't know about the farm.” Her classmate John Ogunbiny thinks there should be more urban farms throughout the city to produce healthier crops; for him, the fact that these farms have been created in response to adversity and that they are sustainable is something that people in the cities should not ignore.



Summer students in a tour to Brooklyn Grange Rooftop farm

In February, CUNY-TV, The City University Television, included the Food Studies program in its series *Study With The Best*. Dean Felix Cardona and Professors Flor Henderson and Elyse Zucker highlighted the importance of offering a new professional alternative to students in the community. They also emphasized the interconnected relations between food, policy, social issues, health, nutrition, the environment, and culture in a multiethnic metropolis such as New York City.

A.S. IN FOOD STUDIES

The Associate in Science (A.S.) Degree in Food Studies at Hostos Community College consists of 60 credits, which include the following courses: Common Core courses required by the City University of New York; Food Studies core courses; a career practices course; and a required internship. During the first year students select a track in one of four areas: food policy; food and social issues; health and nutrition; or environment and sustainability. These tracks prepare graduates to transfer into four-year bachelor's programs in food studies and related fields such as political sciences, urban studies, nutrition, and environmental studies.

El programa Asociado en Estudios Alimenticios de Hostos Community College consiste en 60 créditos, que incluyen cursos básicos requeridos por City University of New York; cursos en Estudios Alimenticios; practica pre-profesional; e internado. Durante el primer año de estudios, el estudiante selecciona una de cuatro líneas de especialidad: política alimenticia; alimentación y la sociedad; nutrición y salud; o medio ambiente y sostenibilidad. Estas áreas de especialización preparan a los graduados para transferencias a programas de bachillerato de cuatro años en estudios alimenticios y otras profesiones relacionadas, tales como ciencias políticas, estudios urbanos, nutrición, y estudios medio ambientales.

For more information about the Food Studies Associate in Science program or enrollment in Summer and Fall 2016 courses at Hostos, contact us via email at foodstudies@hostos.cuny.edu or by phone:

Para más información sobre el Asociado en Estudios Alimenticios o acerca de matrículas para el ciclo de Otoño 2016 contactarnos por email a foodstudies@hostos.cuny.edu o por teléfono a:

- Dr. Felix Cardona, Dean, Office of Academic Affairs (718) 518-6664 (English)
- Dr. Flor Henderson, Professor, Natural Science Department (718) 518 4142 (English/Español)
- Dr. Elyse Zucker, Associate Professor, English Department (718) 518-6801 (English)



FS 101 Food Studies I

3 credits. 3 hours. Pre-Req. ENG 091, ENG 092. Co-req. ENG 110

This course provides students with fundamental knowledge of the food system and all of its components (e.g., agricultural production, consumption, regional linkages, food and agricultural policies).

FS 120 Food Studies II: Food, Environment, and Justice

3 credits. 3 hours. Pre-req. FS 101; Pre-Co –Req Bio 110 or BIO 130 or ENV 110 or BIO 210 or BIO230

FS 101 Food Studies I

3 credits. 3 hours. Pre-Req. ENG 091, ENG 092. Co-req. ENG 110

This course provides students with fundamental knowledge of the food system and all of its components (e.g., agricultural production, consumption, regional linkages, food and agricultural policies).

FS 120 Food Studies II: Food, Environment, and Justice

3 credits. 3 hours. Pre-req. FS 101; Pre-Co –Req Bio 110 or BIO 130 or ENV 110 or BIO 210 or BIO230

This course is a continuation of Food Studies I, delving more deeply into environmental aspects of the food system from natural science and environmental justice perspectives.

ENG 110 Expository Writing with Service Component

3 credits. 3 hours. Pre-req. Passing CUNY ACT Reading and Writing, or Exemption

English 110, a foundational writing course, is designed to strengthen students' composing skills so that they will produce increasingly complex and better-structured essays.

This section of English 110 is a designated Service Learning section. Service-learning is a method of teaching that combines classroom curriculum and reflection with meaningful service provided to the community.

BIO 250 Botany of Food

4 credits. 6 hours (3 lecture; 3 lab) Pre-req. BIO 210 and/or CHE 210

The focus of this course is the study of plants as main source of food for humanity. It includes an in depth study of the history of domestication, nutritional value, propagation and cultivation of the most commonly consumed and commercialized plants in urban settings.

BIO270 Microbiology of Food

4 credits. 6 hours (3 lecture; 3 lab) Pre req. BIO 210 and/or CHE 210

This course is designed to introduce students to general principles of microbiology with an emphasis on structure, function and growth control of microorganisms important in food processing, food spoilage, and in causing food-borne illnesses.

Support provided by:



Newsletter contributors:

Ronita Ghatak
Flor Henderson
Vladimir Ovtcharenko
Elyse Zucker

Editors:

Elyse Zucker
Flor Henderson

Layout:

Flor Henderson

Photo credits:

Flor Henderson
Nayelis Peralta
Mst Sultana

Food Studies Committee

Dr. Felix Cardona, *Dean of Academic Affairs, OAA*
Dr. Francisco Fernandez, *Chairperson, Natural Sciences Department*
Dr. Ronita Ghatak, *Consultant, Food Studies Program*
Dr. Flor Henderson, *Professor, Natural Sciences Department*
Dr. Elyse Zucker, *Associate Professor, English Department*
Dr. Monica Stanton-Koko, *Substitute Assistant Professor, Natural Sciences Department*

