

# FOOD STUDIES NEWS

Volume 4 - June 2018

## A.S DEGREE IN FOOD STUDIES CONTINUES MAKING STRIDES

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The 2017-2018 academic year brought a wide range of new initiatives into the Food Studies program. In addition, the number of students opting for an A.S. in Food Studies has increased. Forty students took our classes, six students participated in internships, while twenty-eight formally declared FS as their major. We offered four of the required six FS courses this year, and the level of student engagement has flourished with the launching of the Food Studies Club.

One of the greatest initiatives of this past year was made through our participation in the project, Fight Hunger - CUNY Food Advocacy program, which is sponsored by CUNY-SPH Graduate School of Public Health and Health Policy. Through this initiative, Hostos students and students from the John Jay School of Criminal Justice participated in internships. Six Hostos students were able to participate under the umbrella of the course FS225 Food Studies Careers and Internships.

This year we also introduced a novel system for growing plants indoors, the aeroponic towers. Students grew edible greens while learning about such things as: botany; plant physiology; plant structure and development; environmental principles of agriculture in urban areas; cultural practices related to food consumption; and the importance of plants in human nutrition. This participatory practice supports one of the core principles of the program: making learning active and meaningful.

Our students were involved in several outreach activities. They attended the Annual “Just Food” conference at Columbia Teachers’ College, and the Annual Green Thumb’s “Grow Together” event at BMCC. A field trip took us to Stone Barns Farm in the beautiful surroundings of the Westchester area, where we learned about farm life and enjoyed the camaraderie of cooking and eating together. We also visited the Swale, a floating farm, to learn about creative ways to practice urban agriculture. The Hostos Food Studies Club contributed greatly to promote the program within the college community.

The program is making great strides, while students are becoming more aware about the significance of career options and their ramifications. We are looking forward to promoting more initiatives. We would like to extend an invitation to colleagues from other disciplines to design courses with a Food Studies component so as to enhance the academic formation of our future graduates.

# HOSTOS SECRET GARDEN

By Anna Ivanova

I've been passing by the labroom A-511 frequently and every time I pass, I look through the small window in the door. The towers are so attractive and it is always so tempting to go inside the room and explore that little garden. So, I thought for myself, that it would be nice if my students from Environmental sciences (ENV 120) could visit this lab and learn about the tower gardens. We have studied with students the "Food" section of the course and coming to the garden appeared to be a great complement to the knowledge they have gained. I asked Prof. Henderson if my class could come to the lab for the "indoors field trip." My initiative was accepted with much support from her and thus feeling encouraged, I next asked if my students could maybe also plant something. This is how our small pilot project started.

Each student had a choice to plant cherry tomatoes, basil or lettuce by planting the seeds of the same plant in both the regular soil and in the rock wool environment. The idea was to see the possible difference in progress between the plants planted at the same time but in different environments. Moreover, we sought to observe whether the growing progress of the plants planted in the tower would be affected by the absence of the constant light. Our tower was placed near the window, so it was getting only the sunlight. The outcome revealed that the plants planted in the rock wool grew much faster and generally showed better results, even though the tower didn't have access to the constant sunlight.

This project was met with much excitement from my students! They got a chance to learn something new, as well as having their research presented during the Earth Day celebration.

We are so lucky to have our own little "secret garden" right here in the building! I'd like to thank Prof. Henderson for establishing such an amazing program! Our students benefit so much from this opportunity to have a chance to observe and learn about the growth and development of the plants first hand. This is especially exciting when considering the fact that we live in the city, where any chance to have such an experience is simply wonderful!

Lastly, I would also like to give special thanks to Ms. Karin Contreras for her enormous support and help with the project.



# SUPER STUDENTS RUN SOUPER MARKET

By Andy Connolly

The SL English 110 in Food Studies held its traditional Hostos Souper Market this semester on Wednesday, March 28th. The market, which is always stationed in the Memorial Garden between the B and C buildings, serves as a great example of alternative food access in our otherwise barren food desert here at Grand Concourse and 149th street. It sells three wonderful flavors of nutritional soup, as well as providing organic bread and pastries to members of the Hostos community who are happy to take full advantage of a one-off reprieve from the usual array of high-calories and low nutrients contained within the processed foods that encircle us every day.

Most remarkable about the Souper Market is that it is student-led. Not only did our wonderful student cohort during this semester take on the task of running the market and informing clientele about the organic sourcing of the food stuff, but it also spent the evening beforehand preparing the vegetables and cooking the soups at the kitchen in the Hostos G Building. The cooking class was led by Patti Wood of Grassroots Environmental Action and Adelphi University, who

was gracious enough to volunteer her time to work with our class while also sharing her invaluable knowledge about various issues to do with sustainable farming and environmental hazards.

In total, the preparations for and running of the Souper Market this semester helped to prove its continuing significance as an activity that links classroom theory with community action. Such a combination of learning and practice, after all, is the vital goal of service learning at Hostos.

A note of high praise must be sent out to Professor Elyse Zucker, who took time out from her sabbatical to help run the market. As the founder of the Souper Market, Professor Zucker is an instrumental contributor to the wider group of hardworking and conscientious people that continues to spread awareness within the Hostos community about how to recognize and tackle pressing issues to do with food justice.



Cooking healthy soups under the direction of Patti Woods.



The Souper Market at Hostos Memorial Garden.

# AEROPONIC TOWERS: POWERFUL EDUCATIONAL TOOLS IN URBAN ENCLAVES



Members of the Food Studies team posing in front of aeroponic towers. L-R Fabian Wanders, Anna Ivanova, Flor Henderson, Olga Steinberg, and Debasish Roy.

**By Flor Henderson**

**A**s a botanist and ethnobotanist, I am always looking for ways to teach students about the amazing world of plants. My goal is to highlight the relevance of plants in our daily lives. The first steps towards attaining these goals was to design a course with botanical content; a course that would appeal to students with broad interests. The course Plants and Society was offered for the first time in the fall of 2015. Against all the skepticism about the impact of the course among a population of students without inclination to the sciences and students that saw science courses as difficult and unnecessary for their careers, Plants and Society has become one of the most popular courses for non-majors.

This course paves the way for a journey of botanical discovery. Every lab meeting involves an array of fresh plant products that helps students understand structural botany and see plants as living organisms. One week is flowers, the next fruits, the next seeds, then spices, etc. As the popularity of the course has increased, so has the level of challenge and the need to include new experiences.

It was during the summer of 2017 that the course received an influx of new energy. I introduced a modern way to grow plants in indoor conditions by using aeroponic towers. Aeroponic towers are modern devices that allow plants to grow in water rather than in soil. The initial steps consisted of conducting simple experiments using a single tower while learning its

mechanism and monitoring the nutritional and physiological needs of sample plants. The following semester, two more towers were added. Currently, we are running six fully active towers.

The experiences have been fulfilling. My teaching has been greatly impacted by the positive feedback I receive from my students. I have noticed that their perceptions about the plant kingdom have increased and their curiosity sparked anew. This course allows students to ‘see’ plants for what they are: living organism with life cycles that can be altered by their ability to access nutrients and light.

I have designed a lab experience that reaches completion within the constraints of a 15 week semester. In the second week of the semester, groups of 4 students each select one plant species to grow and

monitor. They check the developmental stages of their plants from seed to adulthood. They collect qualitative and quantitative data for later analysis. The information they gather, is used to prepare a poster and present it orally at two college-wide events: Earth Day in the spring and Science Day in the fall.

The towers are elegant, simple, clean, silent, and easy to maintain. Their presence is imposing, eye catching, and inviting. The service the towers have been providing is not limited to the teaching of botany. Several colleagues have taken the tour with their classes, while other colleagues have implemented lab activities for their courses. The towers are without a doubt one of the best investments in the education of our students.



Gourmet lettuce harvested by professor Henderson’s students.



Karin Contreras leading a tour to the Tower Gardens.



# HOSTOS FOOD SECURITY ADVOCATES AT WORK!

By Kathleen Delgado

## Just Food Conference - March 25<sup>th</sup>

Every year, the Just Food Conference convenes urban and rural growers, social justice activists, food entrepreneurs, CSA core group leaders, farmers' market managers, youth justice leaders, food policy advocates, and many more stakeholders from across the nation to share their work in creating a more equitable food system. Food Security Advocates from Hostos were among the attendees, participating in workshops like "Latinas in Food: Identities, Challenges, and Impact," "A Better Farm Bill: How to Engage Your Elected Officials," and "Changing the Food Justice Narrative."



Hostos Food Justice Advocates Joel Rivera, Sandy Herrera, Professor Kathleen Delgado, and Hilary Monegro attend the Just Food Conference.



Meet and Greet! Keynote Speaker, Karen Washington shakes hands with Hostos Food Security Advocate and student, Joel Rivera.

## The 34<sup>th</sup> annual Green Thumb Conference –March 31<sup>st</sup>

Hundreds of attendees flocked to the event to learn more about fresh food programs and activities. Local hero, food justice activist, and co-founder of the Black Urban Growers, Karen Washington delivered the keynote address. She visited the Hostos Food Studies Program table, where lab technician, Karin Contreras and Food Studies Professor, Kathleen Delgado set out information for attendees.

## Food Studies Club - April 19<sup>th</sup>

Food Security Advocates at Hostos Community College collaborated with the Food Studies Degree program, the Single Stop office at Hostos, and the Food Studies Club on April 19<sup>th</sup> to start a month-long collaboration of pantry food giveaways on the bridge. Items distributed included fresh greens and herbs that were harvested from 10 aeroponic towers housed by the Natural Sciences Department, foodstuff such as rice, dried beans, pasta, and canned vegetables that were purchased by the Food Studies Club, as well as harvested greens. In addition to this, the Food Studies Club donated \$200 dollars toward the Food Pantry at Hostos.



Hostos Food Advocates Arlenny Cruz, Joel Rivera, Whitney Duncan, and Namizata Kamagate giveaway food items from the aeroponic towers along with rice, beans, and canned vegetables.



Hostos Food Security Advocates and guests who attended the May 2<sup>nd</sup> event.

## Photovoice Project - May 2<sup>nd</sup>

On May 2<sup>nd</sup>, Hostos Food Security Advocates presented photovoice projects to Professor Christopher Paskoff's Food Studies 101 class. Students were asked to interpret two questions: "What does food insecurity mean to college students" and "What does food justice mean to college students?" Student interpretations of issues concerning urban food access, hospitality, stigmas associated with food insecurity, and global food access were among the themes that emerged. Professor Flor Henderson and Professor Iris Mercado were among the attendees.



## ENGLISH REFLECTIVE PIECE

By Fatima Choudhury

Professor Zucker's Service Learning Expository English course has helped me grow mentally and socially, as well as academically. The service learning experience helped me gain an understanding of both English concepts and environmental issues by way of linguistic as well as kinesthetic learning. The experience of working with La Finca del Sur farm, attending the Climate Change March, and selling the soup our class cooked for The Hostos Souper Market helped further my understanding of the positive effects humans can have on their environment and community.

I grew up in the bustling borough of Brooklyn with no experience or knowledge of farming. I had always assumed before this course that to cook with locally grown food would not only harm my pockets but also that it would also take long hours to do. However, after visiting La Finca del Sur, otherwise known as The Farm of the South Bronx, I learned of many alternative, easy cooking methods and ingredients. I also learned about the history of farming and the goals of members through the Sofrito Workshop that I attended. The La Finca del Sur farm became a nonprofit organization in 2010; its main goals today address issues of food access and environmental justice in the Bronx. As I worked with a fellow farmer in digging holes to plant plants, I found I had a connection with the Earth. I perceived the positive influence I could have on the world and environment as I fumbled with the shovel while the farmer spoke of the past of the Bronx.

I discovered a passion for working with my hands as a form of healing after years of eating processed foods. I was reminded of the power of growing when we read "These Green Things" by Catherine Sneed. The article describes the process of healing that comes about by growing natural food, as well as showing how individuals in Sneed's story awakened to their own potential. After personally experiencing this

connection, my knowledge expanded both academically as well as spiritually. I learned about the passion I have always had to help people, which I overlooked in the past. My day of work on this farm, as well as being welcomed by the familiar enthusiasm and passion of Professor Zucker, created a broader sense of community for me. I built an admiration for those who continue to advocate relentlessly while enlightening individuals like myself.



Weeding and cleaning up at La Finca del Sur

The experience of selling Soup on a frigid Thursday afternoon was one of perseverance and triumph. We were met with warm smiles as we sold soup while educating many customers of the benefits of choosing to eat healthier. In the food desert of the Bronx this was a great shift from the chain of fast food restaurants east of the college. I discovered delicious fresh vegetables in comparison to my typical meal of potato chips. This English course taught me to think critically about major corporations and how, through education, our choices can change society for the better.

# A CASE FOR INTERSECTIONAL FOOD STUDIES

By Allie Pisano

**F**ood Studies is an interdisciplinary field of study. It is a relative newcomer among many well-established interdisciplinary fields, such as Women’s Studies, Gender Studies, African-American Studies, and Latin American / Caribbean Studies. As with all interdisciplinary fields, Food Studies crosses traditional boundaries between academic disciplines to create new schools of thought. It incorporates many different professions, technologies, and organizations to provide new perspectives.

Because Food Studies is relatively new, its scope is still rather nebulous. Today’s Food Studies scholars will establish the structure and breadth of the discipline’s reach tomorrow. I believe that, as Food Studies grows and builds upon itself, we should develop an approach that is intersectional as well as interdisciplinary.

Intersectionality is a form of thinking by which we consider how different forms of oppression interact in people’s lives. It is grounded on the belief that individuals have multiple identities, and that the oppression they experience arises from the mixture of those identities. Audre Lorde, a writer, civil rights

activist and intersectional feminist, stated in her 1982 address, *Learning from the 60s*: “There is no such thing as a single-issue struggle because we do not live single-issue lives.” Intersectionality is the idea that all our fights for justice are interconnected, since everyone has multiple identities they bring to the table. All fights for justice must incorporate all those identities, and the ways in which they overlap.

Food Studies must be intersectional as well as interdisciplinary. We should study not only how food contributes to an individual’s identities and communities, but also how food contributes to systems of oppression and inequality experienced by those identities and communities. We must examine how access to food and systematic oppression are highly interconnected, which requires an intersectional approach. We must recognize that individuals possess multiple identities that all contribute to their food access, ethics, choice, and preparation. We must realize that this field is intrinsically politicized, as food issues directly intersect with issues such as labor rights, racial justice, economic inequality, environmental justice, sustainability, and more.



We must recognize that individuals possess multiple identities that all contribute to their food access, ethics, choice, and preparation.

# AEROPONIC FARMING: AN INDOOR REVOLUTION IN UNDERGRADUATE EDUCATION AT HOSTOS COMMUNITY COLLEGE



Students are analyzing their results at IR Spectrophotometer.

By Debasish Roy

**A**eroponic Farming and biochemical analysis of its products are becoming popular research topics among Hostos students. Although such activities are part of the Food Studies Program, they create an interest among various groups of students from different disciplines of the Natural Sciences. Initially, students learn about the growth of different plants in aeroponic towers. Then they study their biochemical properties in order to compare such plants with respect to their organic counterparts. This is becoming a unique practical experience for students to learn in a hands-on manner about both biology and chemistry at the same time. Student participants have expressed their feelings in different ways:

<p>“Working with Prof. Roy over the past several months has been a memorable experience. To have a mentor so passionate about the work being conducted is inspiring from my perspective as a student. It gives me inspiration to further research topics that I traditionally would not have been interested in otherwise”</p> <p>-Hector Colon</p>	<p>“Since this was my first research project ever, I had an interesting time applying scientific methods learned in class into the real world.”</p> <p>-Zaid Ibrahim</p>	<p>“This research allowed me to improve my knowledge. It was a very interesting research topic that was fun to do in the lab.”</p> <p>-Haithm Alhashdi</p>	<p>“I really enjoyed working on this project and I am fascinated by the concept of growing aeroponic plants to meet our daily needs.”</p> <p>-Mohosina Islam</p>
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# REFLECTION ON SERVICE LEARNING EXPOSITORY WRITING

By Carolina Santana

I grew up in a rural area, where most of the people used to cultivate fruits and vegetables in their own back yard, and raise chicken, goats, cows, pigs. Everything was fresh and natural, without pesticides and chemicals to alter the food or animals or damage the environment. When I came to New York City, I was in total shock. I no longer saw the green of the trees, or felt the warm tropical winds caress my skin or saw blue skies. Instead, all was grey and gloomy, the trees looked lifeless, the tall buildings and the sky were almost matching grey tones. Everybody seemed to be in a hurry and in a bad mood. I had to start from scratch here, learn the system, the language, the customs, the food, and the quick changes in the weather. The city lifestyle had its benefits, but I didn't see anything good about it; I wanted to be back home.

But here I was, living in a food desert, the South Bronx, surrounded by fast food and consuming what was in the supermarket and small stores without wondering where it was coming from. The few choices in healthy food were out of reach in comparison to fast food.

After taking Service Learning Expository Writing, however, I noticed that much of the problem is the lack of knowledge and misinformation that we have about food. I learned that we subconsciously let the food industry turn us into thoughtless consumers without care about how important real agriculture is for our health and for the environment. This class has opened my mind on how the consumption of meat affects the animals and the environment. Because of the high demand of meat, the farming industry has implemented methods that are horrible for the animals. This class has also taught me that there *are* accessible healthy choices for us; we just have to find them.



Service Learning at La Finca del Sur.

Something else we can do is eat better and healthier by growing our own fruits and vegetables which I learned about when I went to do service at “La Finca del Sur”, a local farm comprised of people of color. Nancy taught us how we can start our own “green things” in a small space like a window sill. Thanks to Prof. Zucker, this class helped me with my writing and understanding of what I read. I’m more critical now and see other points of view, which makes me feel as if I’ve grown more in my way of thinking. Before this class, I never understood what was meant when I read that the pen is mightier than the sword. Now, I get it. It means that writing is a tool and if I learn how to use it, I can conquer any obstacles.

We cannot let the food system decide for us. We have to be aware that the food industries’ main goal is to make money, no matter how or what the consequences will be. Our health and the planet’s health is in our own hands.

# THE FUTURE IN FOOD

By Marissa Morales

On 14th April 2018, students from the Hostos Food Studies and Plants Society went on a field trip to the Stone Barns Center for Food & Agriculture farm.

Stone Barns is in Westchester County, New York. The farm has Green houses, livestock, a wonderful staff, and plenty of learning opportunities. The first thing we learned was about a hill-top where plants are grown in rows. There, the tour leader, Rene Marion, talked to us about monoculture and why species diversity is important. For example, if the soil in one area is used repeatedly to grow the same crop, the nutrients in the soil will get used up and new plants won't flourish anymore. Therefore, crop rotation is important.



Green house at Stone Barns Farm.

Stone Barns has 13 farming plots and each year plants are rotated to make sure the nutrients in the soil don't get over used. Each different plant requires different nutrients.

Another important place in the farm is the woodland area. It is a natural area where the forest invites pollinators to come. Pollinators in turn help the plants propagate.

While we were on our tour of the farm's gardens, we started collecting ingredients for our lunch. We picked up wild garlic leaves and some other ingredients that were found in the wild. We later cooked these with other natural ingredients like quinoa, lettuce, ginger, and many others.

Going to Stone Barns was an experience I will never forget. I met other students who had similar gardening interests. One of the moments that stuck out for me was when we all worked as a group in the kitchen. We broke into groups of 3 or 4 and received instructions to work on a particular ingredient. That experience reminded me of the ecosystem and of how the workers at Stone Barns have made the farm a niche for themselves, where one thing cannot work without the other parts. Although we all just met on the day of the trip, we had to trust each other with the preparation of our food.



Sharing food with new friends.

I also learned how important plants are to society. Without plants, the world would be out of balance. Each animal that we have on earth needs the plants to survive and they help continue the life cycles of plants and animals alike. We, as humans, have a powerful role in society. We can help the environment thrive. But if we do the wrong thing we could also destroy it. I think everyone should learn how important horticulture is in our society.

# THE HOSTOS FOOD STUDIES CLUB

By Joel Rivera

The mission of the Food Studies Club is to bring awareness about food and food access to the school community. No student should go hungry and hunger must not go unnoticed. However, HUNGER does not have a face. We as a college community need to be more vigilant. We need to reach out to students' service programs and disseminate the information among our peers.

This semester I acted as the vice-president of the Food Studies club. The experience I gained, the people I met, and the activities we organized inspired me profoundly. I will take the presidency of the club in the fall of 2018. This semester I was also an Intern

in the CUNY Food Security Advocate initiative. Both responsibilities encouraged me to target food insecurity on campus, and help in some way to ameliorate the incidence of hunger faced by students at Hostos.

Sixty-six thousand students at CUNY experience hunger, which unfortunately goes unnoticed. Some students do not have the means to sustain themselves financially. Many struggle to keep a roof over their heads, while others simply are not familiar with the system. We all live in America, the land of opportunity where food should be free for all. But that is not always the case.



The official initiation of the club, spring 2018.



End of the semester celebration.

## Food Studies Committee – Fall 2017

**President:** Sandy Herrera  
**Vice-President:** Maria Echevarria  
**Treasurer:** Hillary Monegro  
**Advisors:** Professors Flor Henderson and Chris Paskoff

## Hostos Food Studies Club – Spring 2018

**President:** Whitney Duncan  
**Vice-President:** Joel Rivera  
**Secretary:** Namizata Kamagate  
**Treasurer:** Lazare Dada  
**Advisors:** Professors Flor Henderson and Kathleen Delgado

# PLANT LIFE THROUGH THE LENS OF MY CAMERA

By Raymundo Garcia

Throughout my semester in Professor Henderson’s class, I acquired a greater deal of knowledge about plants than I previously had. I always understood how plants thrive and survive. However, I never had an appreciation for how integral and vital plants really are in our modern society, and indeed have been throughout our history. During the course of the semester, my classmates and I were tasked with growing our own plants in order to experience the process of growing a plant from its seed all the way until the day we were able to harvest and consume it.

I was fortunate enough to go on an educational trip to a farm where everything grown was on the land itself. Our class participated in harvesting and preparing our lunch from scratch, using only what was growing on the surrounding lands. Also, we had a presentation to show what we learned while growing our plants. The pictures I selected to share are just a small part of the amazing experience I lived this semester by taking a science class.



Hill-top farm land



Enjoying the fresh aroma of basil



Stone Barns Farm main house



At the green house



Red Wattle



Preparing lunch



Enjoying the outdoors



Late spring in Westchester



End of the semester presentation

# REAL OR FAKE FOOD? THAT IS THE QUESTION!

By Iris Mercado

“Fake Food” probably impacts your life and you don't even know it. Food fraud is when a manufacturer intentionally misleads the consumer into thinking they are buying food different (usually better) than the actual product they are getting—the result a \$50 billion annual industry in the U.S.

There's a general impression that the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) is policing and regulating food fraud, but in reality nothing could be further from the truth. The FDA regulates how products are labeled based on their ingredients, making sure that all labels are accurate. However, it doesn't dedicate many resources to illuminating upon the integrity of the foods you eat every day. The most common offenders are: Parmesan cheese cut with wood pulp; imitation Kobe beef; extra-virgin olive oil blended with vegetable oils; honey diluted with corn syrup and water; dried spices "extended" with chopped weeds; and lobster rolls filled with shrimp and cheap fish.

What we think is a 100% Parmesan cheese is often cut with “cellulose,” which is an anti-clumping agent made from wood pulp; this is especially true in the pre-grated options. The FDA allows adding up to 4% of “cellulose” but most companies add far more to increase volume and boost their profit. The “real” Parmesan cheese is a pricy delicacy from Parma-Reggio, an area in Italy, and is called Parmigiano-Reggiano—look for the “Made in Italy” stamp and the PDO or DOP seal.

Extra Virgin Olive Oil (EVOO) is one of the most commonly “faked foods” in the U.S. About 60-90% of the olive oils in grocery stores and restaurants are adulterated with oils that don't have the same health benefits as EVOO. It is diluted with a cheap soybean or peanut oil or mixed with lower-grade olive oil that's been chemically refined, which can be problematic for those with allergies. The best way to tell if your EVOO

is the real deal is to taste it— it should have a fruity and then a peppery taste.

The common assumption is that the best olive oil is from Italy. However, there's ample room for deception along the production chain as olive oil extracted in one country is often shipped to another, usually Italy, and then blended with olive oils from yet more places before being bottled and shipped off again. Never buy anything marketed as light, virgin, pure or blend. Stick to Extra Virgin Olive Oil. Also, ignore the “best by” and “bottled on” dates because they don't mean much. Instead, look for the “pressed on” or “harvest” date. Lastly, look for certification seals like those of the European Union's Protected Designation of Origin (PDO), Italy's DOP, or the COOC from the California Olive Oil Council for California-made oils.

Coffee shortages caused by climate change have increased the likelihood that the coffee grounds we use have “fillers” like wheat, soybean, brown sugar, barley, corn, seeds, chick peas, and even sticks, twigs, cereal, starch or acai seeds. This practice can cause allergic reactions in people with sensitivities to these undeclared fillers, like the gluten in wheat. Another common practice is repackaging cheaper coffee into bags labeled Hawaiian Kona coffee, which is one of the most famous gourmet coffees in the world. When the coffee is ground up, it's hard to tell if there are foreign ingredients in it, making powdered instant coffee the most adulterated of all. It is best to buy the beans and grind them yourself.

Finally, let's discuss fish. Between 2015 and 2017, according to records from the Florida Department of Business and Professional Regulation, 51 administrative complaints were filed against a local restaurant group. The violations involved the sale of one type of fish and labeling it another, as when red snapper or grouper is substituted with cheaper, less regulated ones like Asian catfish or tilapia. Another

example is escolar, a fish found in many sushi restaurants that contains a naturally occurring toxin that acts as a laxative in some people. It's been labeled a toxin in Japan and banned since the 70s, and is on the FDA's "do-not-eat list" for sensitive groups such as children and pregnant women. Rule of thumb: if the fish is expensive and you don't see it displayed whole, there's a good chance it's an impostor.

If you want to avoid being shortchanged by products that allege to be something they really aren't, you need to get knowledgeable about the topic, read labels accurately, and stop assuming that the government agencies have your back...or your stomach!

## GUEST SPEAKERS

We were honored to count on the presence of professionals from different areas of Food and Food Systems speaking to our students. Their personal and professional experiences contributed to increasing the interest of our students and helped them to visualize future occupations in the field.

<p><b>October 19, 2017</b></p>	<p><b>Food Systems in America Failed our Basic Needs</b>  Patti Woods  Executive Director, Grassroots Environmental Education</p>
<p><b>October 21, 2017</b></p>	<p><b>Food Justice and Climate Change</b>  Nancy Romer  Emerita Professor, Brooklyn College/CUNY: People's Climate Movement, NY and PSC Environmental Justice</p>
<p><b>November 6, 2017</b></p>	<p><b>Food and Cultural Resistance</b>  Rene Marion  Director of Education, Stone Barns Center for Food and Agriculture</p>
<p><b>February 14, 2018</b></p>	<p><b>Environmental Impact of Food</b>  Claudia Lifton  Factory Farming Awareness Coalition</p>
<p><b>May 17, 2018</b></p>	<p><b>Job Opportunities in the Food Industry</b>  Meriterese Racanelli  GOYA Foods</p>
<p><b>April 24, 2018</b></p>	<p><b>Impact of Hurricane Maria on Local Bee Populations</b>  Armando Esteves Nieves</p>

# GROWING AND LEARNING TOGETHER

By Karin Contreras

**F**ood Studies (FS) is a wonderful program and I feel very proud to be a part of it. I have been working as a College Lab Technician (CLT) at Hostos Community College for two years. In June of 2017, I was assigned to work 20 hours for the FS program. This was a new experience for me. At the beginning, I was a bit nervous because, although I worked with plants before, I was not familiar with the program and its demands. However, I knew that I had to be constant in my dedication and show results periodically.

My main responsibility is to look after the aeroponic towers. I help Professor Henderson's Biology labs, which involve planting selected seeds 2 weeks prior to the first day of classes. Seed types vary from semester to semester. So far, we have worked with lettuce, basil, Swiss chard, arugula, parsley, Kale, and cilantro. Seed germination takes around 10 to 14 days, depending on the species. The process starts in modules called germination trays. After germination, we wait until the roots are sufficiently rigid and strong before the seedlings are moved to the towers, which is a part of the process conducted by the students. Once in the towers, the small plants receive the amount of nutrients and light necessary to grow. My job is to monitor the towers, while checking that the water and nutrient levels are constant. The watering process is calibrated in cycles of 15 minutes on and 15 minutes off, which is enough to aerate the nutrient filled water. The water falls vertically as raindrops, thereby keeping the roots wet. So far, the process has been successful.

I also had the chance this semester to work with Professor Roy's chemistry group. His students conduct research to analyze the nutrients of plants grown in hydroponic conditions. His students visit the lab every week to make different observations. They compare their results with nutrient contents of average plants available in super markets. In March, professor Ivanova's Environmental Sciences class also visited the towers. She was impressed by the whole process and decided to conduct some research with her students. I helped her to install the experiments and monitor the students' plants.

Starting on February 28 of this year, I had the delightful opportunity of conducting the Garden Tower Tours. It was a rewarding experience because I was able to teach students about the mechanisms of the towers by explaining the irrigation processes and talking about the care these plants need in order to survive. It was very gratifying to answer their questions and help enrich their learning.

The aeroponic towers help us raise awareness among students about new ways to improve their food choices and quality of life. We have learned to grow plants and we will continue to do so because this is the future. New York City cries out for a change in our eating habits, and we at Hostos are doing our part. My greatest satisfaction this semester came from seeing the plants grow day by day, helping students do their work, and sharing the produce of the harvest with the food pantry and the college community. I want to thank Professor Flor Henderson, the driving force of this beautiful operation, for teaching me about the importance of this program in our community and for giving me the opportunity to play an active role in the lives of the students. I feel very fortunate to be a part of the Food Studies team, and of the efforts to create awareness about food quality in our lives.



Spring 2018 Urban Farmers.

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.*

The program is open to:

- Freshmen students
- Current or transfer students with less than 22 credits

**Support provided by:**



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