

**Show Transcript
Deconstructing Dinner
Kootenay Co-op Radio
Nelson, B.C. Canada**

September 14, 2006

Title: Conscientious Cooks II

**Producer/Host: Jon Steinman
Transcript: Paula Bailly**

Jon Steinman: And you're tuned in to Deconstructing Dinner, a weekly one-hour program produced at Kootenay Co-op Radio in Nelson British Columbia. This program is heard on radio stations across Canada, and each week on Deconstructing Dinner, we look to better connect ourselves to food, and we do so by exploring the impacts our food choices have on ourselves, our communities and our planet.

Back in April of this year, 2006, we launched an ongoing series here on Deconstructing Dinner called Conscientious Cooks. Now the name of the series speaks for itself, but it is of course one where we hunt down chefs and cooks who go above and beyond the common restaurant practice of only ordering ingredients from a distributor. As such a method does not allow for much traceability, where your restaurant food is coming from and what impact it has on your health and the planet is that much more difficult to know.

And so today's broadcast marks the second of this Conscientious Cooks series and my guests for this week represent two very unique approaches to preparing and sourcing food, and both of these approaches address a number of recurring topics discussed here on Deconstructing Dinner.

Joining the program today is Chantale Roy, a raw food chef, instructor and consultant located here in Nelson, British Columbia, and also joining the program is another Nelson local known as Daveq who is a manager, chef, farmer and member of an intentional community that operates the Preserved Seed Café – a restaurant that sees a portion of their ingredients being sourced directly from their own farm.

increase music and fade out

Jon Steinman: One of the common directions taken by many broadcasts of Deconstructing Dinner leads to the topic of community and the importance of community in creating a food system that responds to local economies, local politics, local environmental concerns, and especially local culture. We often arrive at this topic of community, after observing how much of the food we find in

grocery stores and on restaurant menus, has very *little* to do with community. Simply look at the many chain restaurants that appear in almost every Canadian city. As with almost any chain restaurant, an order form is filled out and sent off to a company who then delivers all of the necessary ingredients from one truck. But as customers, that leaves us wondering how far did this food travel, how was it grown, and how were the cows, pigs, and chickens treated throughout their lives? When such a large system of distribution is practiced, the ability to find out this information is almost non-existent. And so this is where a community food system comes into play, one where those within a community, whether it be Nelson, Vancouver or Victoria, are connected to the food they eat. And as our food system here in British Columbia and across North America is far from fitting such a description, there is one restaurant located in Nelson that provides a glimpse into how a community can help create a more sustainable approach to food. And that restaurant is the Preserved Seed Café, a restaurant that sources many of their ingredients right from their own farm. Both the farm and restaurant are operated by what is known as an Intentional Community. This term is an inclusive one that encompasses living in environments such as eco-villages, co-housing, residential land trusts, communes, student co-ops, urban housing co-operatives, and any project where people strive together with a common vision. Here in British Columbia, there are many intentional communities that are all exploring unique approaches to daily human interactions. As there is much we can learn from these projects, I recently visited Mount Sentinel Farm located just outside of Nelson, where I learned more about their approach to fostering a community, one that embraces farming and operating a restaurant. Taking me on a tour of the farm was Daveq – who has been a part of the roughly 30-person community since arriving in the area from Winnipeg, Manitoba.

And as Daveq explains the history of the farm, he describes how the restaurant and farm have come together and how much of the community grew from the ground up.

Daveq: Well I arrived here about four years ago, and at that point there was nothing more than a fledgling community here. At that point we had just moved onto the farm as renters. We had already acquired the house in town where the Café is now. At that point, there wasn't a café there yet, the first time I was out here. We needed a place to live, so we could open the Café. And while we had kind of thought about a farm, it wasn't like a concrete plan, we didn't say, we need a farm, and then do this, do that, it's really grown organically. We talk a lot about that amongst ourselves, that organic growth, just letting things unfold and see how things work. And so what's grown, is this. When we first came out here, the old garden was about maybe to this telephone pole. (*sounds of sheep bleating and cows mooing in background*)

It was a Doukhobor farm, for a number of years, and the man who owned it when we got here had been renting it out, and he'd had a lot of problems with the renters, because he was having issues and having a hard time finding someone

he could just trust. Because of something in his heart, his father really loved the land and he put that into his son, his son loved it here, and he wanted to see somebody come in here who would take care of it, who would make use of the land, not just live here. And he wanted to see a life here. And so, when we first came to rent it, there was a moment of decision where he was kind of sizing us up, and we're kind of looking, and he said, "Okay, c'mon in," and he found out that we were a community and he said, "Well, it's all right, I've got a good sense about you."

So we rented it for a few years, and then, it was a year ago in January when we actually took possession. And so since then we've really been released to really press forward with our vision for this land. It was a little bit restrained, not owning it, but since we've owned it we been able to just go full speed ahead.

Jon Steinman: So you're saying you wanted things to organically evolve, but you also had a vision. Was the farm and the restaurant all part of that vision, or have things evolved differently than you imagined?

Daveq: Well, loosely, that was the vision. We've always wanted to have a place in town with the farm outside of town, but we didn't know how that would work or how it would unfold. And just with the timing of it, with us finding a place to rent that was the farm, it was really ideal. And it gave us the opportunity to be close enough to town that it's not much of a commute, we're only 15 minutes away, which compared to any major city is pretty minor. And, we're right on the highway, so it's really accessible, it's easy for people to find us. And then, the part that's evolved is how we're able to use some of the things from the farm in the Café and how the two are tying together, which is really amazing.

Jon Steinman: So, did you have experience farming before you came here, were there people in the community who had experience farming, or has that kind of evolved as well?

Daveq: That's evolved. I mean, there are people here who had done some work on farms, but to say that they had been farming – no. I mean, there are people here who had relatives who had farms, so they'd be on the farm for the summer or something like that, so they had some familiarity, but it's really been a learning process from the get-go, like starting from the ground up, really. *(sounds of chickens in background)*

Jon Steinman: And you're tuned in to Deconstructing Dinner, where we are taking a glimpse into an intentional community that operates a restaurant in Nelson, British Columbia called the Preserved Seed Cafe. What stood out from this point of my tour at the Mount Sentinel Farm, was how most of those who arrived on this land, had very little experience in growing food, and so for those who perhaps believe that introducing city dwellers to farming is a lost cause, well this community has proven otherwise, and as we made our way by the

community's chicken coops and two of their cows, Daveq explained their philosophy when putting the Preserved Seed's menu together.

Daveq: As a network of communities, we have a 35 year history. And so part of our philosophy in planning every menu is based on that. And that is putting as much care into everything we do as possible. And so, we feel like there's no detail that's too small to do that. We want to pursue that as much as possible, so as far as the menu, we always want the freshest ingredients, and we want to balance that with being cost-effective, so that we don't exclude people, that people wouldn't be able to come and get good food just because it's so expensive. So we try to find that middle ground where we're providing as much fresh, wholesome good food and maintaining a cost level where, like I say, people aren't excluded just because they don't have as much money.

Jon Steinman: One of the more unique extensions of this philosophy is the restaurant's ability to source food directly from their farm. While much of this food is grown for consumption within the community, I asked Daveq how much of their menu uses ingredients from the farm, and whether they are working to increase that percentage.

Daveq: We are working to increase it. As far as how much now, maybe 25% (*ingredients from the farm*). A lot of the greens, like we don't grow enough romaine here, for example to meet the need for the salads. But we do grow enough mixed greens, and so our salad mix is half mixed greens from our farm, half romaine lettuce from, well we get it through the Kootenay Co-op.

On the other side of these blackberry bushes there's more of the greens beds. Most of the greens beds now you can see across the lawn there, that smaller garden, which are now getting fairly overgrown, and up on top of the hill as well. But there's stuff coming out of here too, on the other side we've got some cabbage, we've got different things that we've used for garnish. We use a lot of parsley, a lot of basil out of here. My brother's the gardener, so he does a lot of yellow beets, and he does a beet that's got red and white rings, which if you've eaten at the Café you might have recognized it, they'd be on the side of the plate.

Jon Steinman: As the community has yet to arrive at the ability to provide the Preserved Seed Café with *all* of the menu's ingredients, they do aim to support local growers as much as possible. This cuts down on the distance the food travels and further emphasizes their respect for our planet and for the greater community in which they operate.

Daveq: Spring through now is obviously the time we can get the most available in the Café from the farm, because that's when everything is growing. Outside of that, we just try to work with what is available as much locally, and so we end up doing a lot of our shopping through the Co-op, as far as things like that. So people that have green houses going and things like that, we'll go there. And then beyond

that we have to start looking to sources that are a little further away. We get our chickens and our turkeys through a connection that we have in the Similkameen, that we got through friends of ours in Kelowna, who run a little business there.

Jon Steinman: In addition to ensuring their chickens and turkeys come from a farm that treats their animals well, the restaurant further ensures that the beef on their menu originates from grass-fed cows only. And why is grass-fed good? Well, cows are designed to only eat grass, and the most *common* forms of cattle feed are grains and animal products. As has been discussed on previous broadcasts, the latter ingredient in cattle feed is one of the very reasons mad cow disease has become such a concern. Grass-fed beef is also said to be higher in nutritional value and allows the animals themselves to spend their lives in open pasture. And so here is yet another illustration of the Conscientious Cooks at the Preserved Seed Café in Nelson.

But as the restaurant is only a few years old, there is still much the community at Mount Sentinel Farm is working towards, and one example, is the newly constructed oven that will be used for baking bread. Another member of the community, Isaac, was eager to share this new addition with me.

Isaac: They've tried to improve on this, they can't do it, they cannot improve on this oven. It originates I think, in old Europe, in France. We just finished building it. And what it is, is an oven, a wood-fired oven, you light a fire, you heat it up to roughly 1,000 degrees, and for three days you can bake everything from pizzas, breads, all kinds of things can be baked in this oven. As the heat descends and goes down, you can bake the things that are baked at less temperatures. And this whole thing is suspended on this base that you can see, this stone right off the farm here. And then this is a special cement, it's called fondue cement, and it can withstand incredible heat. And then over the whole top of this thing is going to go vermiculite and it'll be totally enclosed, and we're going to build a wooden bar around it, so people can sit here.

Jon Steinman: So you're saying this stone right here was actually right from the farm itself.

Isaac: Yes, right off the farm. All this stone, look there's some left, we've got plenty of stone. If you sit at our Café, you'll see the same stone down there, we rebuilt the wall down there.

And then when this oven gels, at one point it's just going to start holding that heat, and it's gonna be just perfect, and then we'll close in the top here, and we'll put our chimney up, and then we'll start baking with this.

Jon Steinman: And then this bread will end up at the Preserved Seed?

Isaac: Uh, well, at this point we're still in an experimental stage, so we haven't really perfected it. So we're going to learn how to use it, but ultimately we'd like to sell this bread at markets and in our Café, wherever. Of course, we have to get an approved bakery here, and so on. But, for now, we're going to use it for ourselves and we'll see where it goes from there.

Jon Steinman: And you're tuned in to Deconstructing Dinner and our second installment of the Conscientious Cooks series. This program is produced at Kootenay Co-op Radio in Nelson, British Columbia, and you can find out more about the program or listen to an archived version of today's broadcast by visiting cjly.net/deconstructingdinner.

We are currently listening to clips from my visit to Mount Sentinel Farm located just outside of Nelson, British Columbia. The farm is home to an intentional community of roughly 30 people and off the farm is the Preserved Seed Café, which is also owned by the community.

The Café is a unique one in that roughly one quarter of their produce is sourced directly from their own farm. But the restaurant has the desire to use more than just fruits and vegetables from their farm, but is unfortunately limited in doing so. Just as the viability of small-scale meat production in British Columbia is currently threatened due to looming regulation changes, here provides yet another example of how small-scale agriculture and environmentally friendly food systems, can easily be discouraged in this province from operating in the most sustainable way possible. And here is Daveq of the Preserved Seed Café, speaking to me on this issue.

Daveq: I think the main difficulty that we've seen is just the limitations as far as what you're able to produce and supply. For example, we were making yogurt for a while and it seemed like a lot of people really wanted the yogurt. But then we were told, very graciously, that we couldn't have yogurt in the Café, for sale, unless it had come from a certified dairy, something that had been provincially or federally approved. Well, we would have needed to have a dairy that would have met their specifications, there would have to be a weekly submission of raw milk submitted to a central laboratory, a lot of paperwork. We would have to build the structure in the dairy room that would have met the specifications, and then we would have had to invest the time, and somebody set apart to do the paperwork, to make sure the tests were being done every week, submitting the test to the central laboratory, receiving those, marking them, it all has to be done by lot, it has to be all this tracking, when you're dealing with 6 or 8 gallons of milk a day. It's just ridiculous, it's not worth it.

Jon Steinman: Now are you consuming that milk here?

Daveq: Yes.

Jon Steinman: In the community? Has anyone ever been sick?

Daveq: No, no. Au contraire mon frère. (*laughing*) No I think common sense, people recognize that if you have commonsense and you're clean, like we're doing it for our own people, so of course you want to have care because you don't want to make your own people sick. (*chickens clucking in background*)

I think it's a lot like what you were talking about earlier, about the meat, we just can't afford to do that, so we don't do it. You know, same thing with any kind of the milk, there's a huge, huge market for raw milk, but you're not allowed to sell it. So what can you do? So we're really limited to, you know, effectively what we're supplying the Cafe is the produce. That's really what we're limiting it to, because of that. But we have recognized that there's a huge market and a demand for real food, people are looking for real food. I mean, they're catching on to the homogenized and the pasteurized, and they don't want that stuff. But it's impossible to get it (*real food*). People have been eating this stuff (*unpasteurized foods*) for hundreds of years, and have been healthy and have led full and active lives. It's a little bit like the open market, if the open market were allowed to function I think it would deal with things like that, I think that people that were selling bad milk, people would realize it and stop buying milk from them. But, instead government regulation is involved and they're making sure that nobody is doing anything bad before anybody has the chance to do anything bad, and as a result you can't even get either.

Jon Steinman: And this is Deconstructing Dinner. As Daveq described the way in which they *could* be utilizing their animals to support a local food system in the Nelson area, their animals are nevertheless used by the community living on the farm. And as I stood on the farm with Daveq, below us, was a field of well-manicured grass, and he spoke to me about organic methods of farming and the benefit of animals when growing food.

Daveq: We let the sheep graze it, the sheep graze it, and in the springtime we let the cows on it, and we just use it for ourselves. The cycle's complete when you have the animal on the land, because the animal is eating off of the land, first of all the grass, and then also things from the garden that we're not using. I mean, a lot of it gets composted as well, but then the manure that's produced goes back into the soil. So, we've seen an increase, since we've been here and had animals on the land, of the quality of the land. I mean now it's pretty dry, because it's been dry for the last two months. But we've seen a building-up of what has been able to grow here, since we've had the goats and the cows on the land. So there's definitely, they're definitely a part of the cycle. There's no way around it. I mean, that's the manure pile there, in the centre of that field, and that'll all be used, that will all be gone, some of it will be sold, but most of it will be used in our gardens.

Jon Steinman: And so, ultimately, you're practicing organic methods of farming here.

Daveq: Yes.

Jon Steinman: Has that ever posed any sort of difficulty?

Daveq: Uh, not more than the difficulty of having to do a little more work. But I think that anybody who's conscientiously feeding themselves and their own family, you're going to want to do the healthiest you can do. It's not so much about being organic, in that sense. We're not, "Oh, we're organic!" Yeah we're organic, because it's healthier, we were that way before it was organic. Certified organic, we're not, but luckily here in the Kootenays, or thankfully maybe I should say, people seem to recognize that that's not as much of an issue, as being able to judge and discern someone's integrity. And so it's a really good area for that, because there's a lot of local producers who are producing organic that aren't certified. But people aren't hung up on that because they recognize that yeah, it's clean food.

Jon Steinman: And do you see that being sort of integral then, to an actual local food system that, there's that sense of community, where without that potentially, that level of trust wouldn't exist?

Daveq: Yes, yeah. I think it's absolutely important, and it goes back to what we were saying. I think at the grassroots, that's where that can begin to function, because you don't have the need, or maybe the space, for that involvement of bureaucracy that we were talking about before. It's allowed to exist on a local level, and I don't think you can work much beyond that. I think once you get beyond that, it's going to start breaking down.

Jon Steinman: As Daveq believes that a food system that does not begin at ground level will ultimately break down, globally speaking, we have already begun to witness the breakdown of our very food system – one that is relying on environmentally unfriendly ways of producing and transporting food. And lo and behold, climate change is perhaps our greatest threat.

But another environmentally friendly approach, is another way of breaking down, but in this case it's the restaurant's approach to breaking down waste in the form of compost. And Daveq explains.

Daveq: What we do with the waste from the restaurant, some of it there's no way to reclaim, but what we can reclaim for the chickens, we bring home for the chickens, and everything else goes into the compost, like food waste. We sort out what we feel is okay for the chickens to eat, and what we don't want them to eat, and the rest of it goes. So yeah, we do truck a lot of stuff back to the farm,

because it's got a value. And, otherwise it's just going to go into a garbage bag and down to the dump, and that's less than ideal.

Jon Steinman: In further adding to the restaurant's approach to fostering a local food system, they additionally take full advantage of their kitchen by preparing baked goods and lunch items for one of Nelson's local grocery stores.

Daveq: Yeah, we sell some of the baking that we do at the Café. We sell wraps, and we sell some of the desserts, we do the coconut-cream pie, and I think date squares, and the Monte bars and things like that. Beyond that, we haven't been able to sell too much because we're not certified organic, so as far as the produce and things like that, we haven't been selling a lot there. But we have been able to sell that stuff through the Café, over the counter, to customers so that's worked out pretty well.

Jon Steinman: One of the many difficulties here in Canada when trying to source food from as close to home (or to the restaurant) as possible, is that posed by our seasonal growing conditions. And as many Canadians have adopted strategies of extending the harvest by either canning, drying or freezing food, the Preserved Seed is working to do just the same.

Daveq: Last year we did a lot of pesto, with the basil that we grew, and we incorporated that into the menu. We froze a lot of the produce that we had, even the produce that we were able to get through friends we have in the Okanagan, like peaches, and things like that, use that in the menu through the winter. Different things that we've preserved, tomatoes, yeah, different vegetables, squash, things like that we've definitely managed to get in there. It helps, it helps a lot and it's nice to know that you're able to sell something to somebody and say, yeah, I know exactly where that came from.

Jon Steinman: And you're tuned in to Deconstructing Dinner as we listen to clips from my tour of Mount Sentinel Farm – an intentional community that also operates the Preserved Seed Café in Nelson. Having visited the restaurant on a number of occasions, I have always been intrigued with the way the restaurant does not overemphasize their organically sourced ingredients from their own farm – a rarity in an industry that jumps on promoting anything that is anything but normal. And Daveq explains why they stay away from promoting their organic and local side of growing and sourcing food.

Daveq: I think it more speaks for itself. I don't know that we've ever made a conscious effort to educate people about what we do. A lot of people ask, but most people seem to recognize it more than need ask about it. We get a lot of compliments, about whoa, this food's vibration is very good, things like that. But people comment a lot of times, saying hey, I know there's a lot of love in this food, I know there's a lot of consciousness in it. So it seems like people are open and appreciative of it. And I haven't personally felt a need to do a lot of educating

in that regard. I think people in this area are pretty educated as to what is good food and what's good for them. It's kind of a unique area, I think that's got a lot to do with the success that we've had here, is that the market is very keen on what we're doing, and we've meshed into it very well. So we're really glad for that. I think it speaks volumes to people that they can come to your farm. Our farm, people can come here and they can come and see the gardens and they can come and work with us if they want to, and people do do that. And I think that goes a lot further than having an organic label. But I do think a lot of people do get a sense of security from something that says "certified organic" at the same time.

Jon Steinman: As there is much to learn from the approaches Daveq and the Preserved Seed take to sourcing and preparing food, the community at Mount Sentinel Farm is in itself, one we can perhaps learn from. While communities in North America see individuals specializing in various skills, at Mount Sentinel Farm, there are no specialists.

Daveq: Well, we have both. Everybody gets involved in the Café, and everybody gets involved in the farm. But there are people who are primarily in one or the other, because that's where their giftings are. Like I mentioned my brother, he's the gardener and there's a crew here, they kind of support that. There's a crew that are primarily builders, and there's a crew that's primarily Café. But everybody cycles through those places, because it's all part of our life. So, we want to have our hands involved in everything, there's no specialists in the Community.

Jon Steinman: As I neared the end of my tour of the Preserved Seed's Mount Sentinel Farm, Daveq spoke to me about the community-based aspect of operating a restaurant. As was mentioned earlier, roughly 30 people live at Mount Sentinel Farm in what is known as an Intentional Community, and Daveq believes that this approach to valuing human relationships as they do, is part of what makes their food so good.

Daveq: Well, probably the most unique aspect is just that we are a community. And so, everything that's done, is done together. We believe quite firmly that what makes the food outstanding is the spiritual connection that we have with each other. But people have said that, they come in and I think it's true. I think that what makes us outstanding is that we're able to love each other and stay together through a multitude of circumstances. Anybody who's been in a relationship knows that when you start living with somebody, all kinds of things come into play, because you're with that person all the time, and so everything about that person becomes evident. And that's true for us. And the spirit that we've been given is enabling us to overcome those things and stay together. And so, we believe that this is our purpose, it's our goal really, is that everything we do would manifest that unity, that peace that we have with one another. We believe that. And so, I think that is what makes our restaurant outstanding, if it's

something that makes it outstanding, is that the life behind the food is what it is. It's not that we have a more clever menu, or better cooks, or better ingredients, even, because there are other restaurants that have better cooks and better ingredients. It's the physical manifestation of spiritually what's going on in the kitchen, which is also linked to what's going on here on the farm. So, it's all tied together.

Jon Steinman: In further illustrating the importance of community and local food systems, Daveq addresses the current food system, the one that sees chain grocery stores selling food from only a handful of suppliers, the one that sees food being trucked and shipped from all corners of the planet, and the one that sees food increasingly being separated from people.

Daveq: You know, there's been a move away from the grassroots. And so, it brings all kinds of dynamics. We can't say, we're not strictly organic in the Café, because we can't afford it. I don't know how people do afford it, because we're not paying our workers, in a monetary wage. I mean, their time is definitely worth money, and we have to recognize that and we have to consider that, but we're not paying wages in the traditional sense. And so, we still are not able all year long, to be 100% organic. We can't do it. We would just not be able to realize the profit margin that we need to realize to keep it running. I think that's largely to do with the move away from the grassroots, that people have gotten caught up in the big-city mentality, being able to live a life that's disconnected from where your food comes from, being able to live a life where I want to eat good food and I want to know that it's good food, but I don't want to have to grow it, I don't want to have to produce it, I want to be able to do my thing, and still be able to tap into this. And to me, I don't even know if it's a downside of the system. It's a side effect that is definitely a downside, though.

Obviously we're not claiming to have a monopoly on sustainability or anything, but it's definitely something but we talk about it a lot, a lot. And getting into the nuts and bolts of it, what are people prepared to do to have a life that's sustainable. And that gets into, like, composting toilets, and things like this that people don't want to think about, but how do you deal with your waste? Where do you get your food? What are you gonna do with what's left over? All these things are really critical issues if you want to get serious about sustainability. But beyond that, the relationship between human beings is even a greater issue, in what is sustainability and what is sustainable, and I think that's connected to the breakdown of the food system, is the breakdown of the human relationship. I think that's what's behind the move, we talk about, or people talk about sometimes about how, 50 years ago there's a certain percentage of people that lived on farms, and how that declined because of the cities, dadadada, but that's really a reflection of the breakdown of the relationship between parents and children, that the children didn't want to live the life that the parents lived. And so, that's probably the underpinning of the breakdown of the food system, is the

breakdown of the human relationship. There's a move toward self-interest as opposed to what's good for the community.

Jon Steinman: And that was Daveq, who is one of the thirty community members living at Mount Sentinel Farm outside of Nelson. He spends his time between working at the farm and working at the Preserved Seed Café located in the downtown area of the city. And there will be more information about the farm and about intentional communities located on the Deconstructing Dinner website and listed under the September 14th broadcast, and that website is cjly.net/deconstructingdinner.

soundbite

Jon Steinman: And again, you're tuned into to the second installment of the Conscientious Cooks series here on Deconstructing Dinner, and further to the mention of the website, there is a link to a Conscientious Cooks page on that website, where previous broadcasts featured on this particular series are located, and that link is off the main page. We're going to take a quick musical break, and when we return, we'll visit with Chantale Roy – who puts into question the title of this series, because while Chantale is very much a chef, she's not really a cook. And stay tuned to find out why.

music break

Jon Steinman: And you're tuned in to Deconstructing Dinner a weekly one hour radio program produced at Kootenay Co-op Radio in Nelson, British Columbia. And that musical intermission was courtesy of David French and Louis Semal, off their album "Fire."

For today's second installment of the Conscientious Cooks series, we will next hear clips from my conversation with Chantale Roy, someone who I should more appropriately refer to as a Conscientious Chef and not a Cook, and that is because Chantale specializes in preparing Raw Vegan Food and thereby never does any cooking. The raw food diet contains no processed foods, and never any foods that are heated above a certain temperature, as doing so is said to destroy the natural enzymes within the food. From an environmental perspective, raw food understandably, uses much less energy to prepare, and in a world grappling with climate change, any transition towards eating more raw ends up becoming an environmental transition as well.

Chantale just recently arrived in British Columbia from Quebec, and has now set up a business in the Nelson area. Chantale offers a range of prepared foods – all of which contain completely raw and vegan ingredients – no cooking, no processing, no dairy, no meat, and even, no gluten or legumes. She refers to her business as Cuisine Plenitude and she sat down to share her story with me, but that was after first, providing me with a vegetable wrap that was wrapped in a

dried vegetable leather that was made in a dehydrator – it was almost like a fruit-roll-up. So how did Chantale begin on this path to raw vegan food? Well, she explains.

Chantale Roy: I grew up in Quebec, I grew up on a farm. And I think the beginning of all that story about raw food was when I was five years old, and I was looking by the window in my home, and I could hear that noise, the noise of a weapon. And I could see from the window a cow falling down, it was killed by my stepfather. I could hear him calling my mother to get the blood, to pick up the blood of the animal. And that's what was happening, year after year, that created a strange feeling inside of me. I just felt that it was confusion inside of me, I didn't know. I could see that for people it seemed normal, but it didn't feel natural to me. So I grew up with those images. Twenty years later, when I first gave birth to my son, my first son, I've learned the difference between normal and natural. That was the beginning about my research about food, about nutrition, about health, about our natural needs.

Jon Steinman: Having been raised on a farm, Chantale eventually began her own style of farming, using the principles of permaculture and community-supported agriculture. Both of these approaches to farming have been discussed on recent broadcasts of Deconstructing Dinner, and Chantale describes how farming and motherhood pushed her into adopting a raw food diet.

Chantale Roy: I grew all my vegetables. I did a lot of community-supported agriculture and permaculture, and I had a couple of businesses in the food industry, the vegetarian, vegan food. And when my second son was born, I became vegan. I had so much work in my gardens, and I had two children, so I didn't have time to cook. *(laughing)* So I just found out that I could eat right away, in my gardens. So I have a lot of energy and at a certain moment I discovered that it was related to raw food, because I didn't cook my food, I had a lot of energy. Then I went to Florida, in a health institute, where people are cured only with raw food and wheat-grass juice and everything. And then I wanted to go further in that field, so I went to California to learn about becoming a raw-food chef.

Jon Steinman: After Florida, Chantale visited California where she studied at the Living Light Culinary Arts Institute, and from there was led to Costa Rica before returning to her native Quebec. And while the raw food diet has recently caught on in many parts of North America, many raw foodists point to such a diet as being much more natural, as no other animal on the planet cooks their food.

Chantale Roy: Eating raw food is our natural way to eat. The human beings would always eat raw, and all the beings, the living beings in nature, they eat raw, all the animals eat raw. Lately, I think it started in California, on the West Coast, where it's very popular, many, many people are aware about the raw food diet, some countries, some European countries as well. And now on the west

Canadian coast, it becomes more popular. People are very conscious about their health, about food.

Jon Steinman: As this argument by raw foodists suggests that the human body is designed to only consume raw food, many critics of such a statement point to the earliest concrete evidence of the use of fire in preparing food, and this dates back to approximately 350,000 years ago. These critics point to evolutionary evidence that indicates how the human jaw has evolved away from forms most suited for eating very tough raw foods. And it is for this reason that many argue that modern humans have long adapted to eating cooked foods. Similar debate to this topic can be found on a number of websites.

But one common perception that exists when hearing of a raw food diet, is that in order to adhere to such a diet, one must eat only raw food. But “raw foodists,” as many are referred to, look to balance a percentage of raw food, with cooked food, but then, can it really be referred to as a raw food diet. Would someone who eats 75% fruits and vegetables and 25% meat still be a vegetarian? And herein perhaps lies the problem when labeling diets. And as Chantale indicates, in the end, a raw food diet is one that each of us can experiment with on whatever level satisfies us.

Chantale Roy: It's a very interesting question, because there's many theories about it, about raw foods. So there's authors that suggest that we should eat only 100% raw, some others who say that we should eat 80% raw and 20% cooked food. There's many, many views about it. But, from my point of view, I like to think that we are completely free to experiment and see what works for everyone. And for me, it was a gradual process, a fifteen year process. It's natural for me to eat completely raw, and it was a need, a natural need for me to go completely raw. But it depends on the person, it depends on our path, it depends on our needs.

Jon Steinman: And you're tuned in to Deconstructing Dinner as we listen to clips from my conversation with Chantale Roy – a raw food chef located in Nelson, British Columbia. And as is perhaps the key question surrounding such a diet that discourages eating cooked food, why eat raw?

Chantale Roy: The first thing is about enzymes. When we cook food, all the enzymes are killed, I mean above 115 degrees fahrenheit. Some others suggest that it's above 108 degrees. For myself, when I dehydrate food, I go under 108 degrees. And cooked food, there's no more enzymes, so our body needs to produce all those enzymes to digest properly the food, so it takes more energy to digest food, cooked food. In cooked food there's no more oxygen, there's no more water, or less water, the vitamins and minerals are partially destroyed. It's sad to see a beautiful organic vegetable or fruit with all those nutrients, and cooking it, it's so sad.

Jon Steinman: These enzymes that are contained in food and within our bodies, are ultimately, the basis for justifying such a diet – a diet of raw food. As Chantale points to the enzymes found in food as being integral to digestion, she further suggests how the enzymes found in our bodies, exist in a limited supply, and the more we cook food, the more these enzymes within our body are needed.

Chantale Roy: Enzymes are more a kind of living cells, in the food. It's to allow the body to function, to allow the organs to function well. When we were born, we were born with a bank of enzymes, and year after year, when we waste those enzymes eating cooked food, our bank of enzymes will decrease, and so the ageing process will appear and sickness, and everything.

Jon Steinman: Yet another term used in conjunction with raw food, is what is known as living food, and Chantale describes the difference between the two.

Chantale Roy: It's two different things. Raw food is more like a food that will maintain the life in the cells, in our cells, and living food is an element, or food, that will increase the life in the cells. So, we need raw and living food. And for example, raw food could be like a carrot or a strawberry, and living food would be like sprouts.

Jon Steinman: As Chantale mentioned earlier, the raw food diet does not follow any rigid set of rules as many trendy diets frequently suggest, but in her own personal diet at home, Chantale eats only 100% raw food, that is additionally, only vegan – no dairy, no meat – and I asked Chantale if being vegan is often part of a raw food diet.

Chantale Roy: I have met many, many raw foodists, and most of the raw foodists I've met were vegan. But I also have friends who are not vegan, but they are raw foodists, so they include in their diet raw meat, raw cheeses made of animal milks. They also eat raw fish and raw eggs. But, I'm not into that. I just want animals to be alive and I don't want to take the baby animals away from their mother for us to have their milk. It's just a personal choice.

Jon Steinman: Yet another restriction Chantale has placed on her diet is one that not all raw foodists embrace, and that is the avoidance of any wheat – so no breads, or no pastas. And she explains why.

Chantale Roy: For myself, I've studied in California, in raw nutritional sciences with Dr. Douglas Graham, and what we've learned about starches is that we are not physiologically designed to properly digest the grains. So what happens is that when we eat grains, so starches, we don't digest it completely. There's residues of food that will be stuck in ourselves, and from those residues toxins are produced. So sometimes I will use as a transitional path, to go raw with my clients, I will use for example, buckwheat, sprouted buckwheat. When we eat

something that is not well designed for our physiology, our immune system will react like there was an invader inside of us. So it is proven that when we eat cooked food, for example, our white cells will increase. So our body really reacts like it was an enemy. That's why the immune system is exhausted, and there's so much allergies and everything. That's a part of the answer, I think. And the other part of the answer about gluten is that the seeds have been so much selected, they are looking for the flour that will produce bread that will rise, so they selected the seeds for that, and they selected the seeds that are higher in gluten. So it's too much for our physiology to assimilate all that gluten, we are not made for that.

Jon Steinman: To better understand how Chantale Roy goes about preparing some of her foods, I asked her about the pasta she has on her menu, an item that threw me off given most pastas contain wheat gluten.

Chantale Roy: In fact in my pastas, since I don't use starches, since I don't use flours, my pastas are not made of flours, they are made of vegetables, so most of the time I use zucchinis. I have a special appliance, a simple appliance, that I could make some noodles out of the zucchinis. It really looks like noodles, and spaghetti. It's just fun, and we can add some marinara sauce and pesto. We can also prepare some cheeses out of nuts, with pine nuts, with almonds, we can do anything we are used to eating (*as*) cooked foods.

Jon Steinman: And you're tuned in to Deconstructing Dinner as raw food and vegan chef Chantale Roy describes some of the foods she offers to her customers in the Nelson area. Yet another item on her menu is a Caesar salad with croutons and parmesan cheese. And when all of these items traditionally contain either cooked or non-vegan ingredients, I demanded that Chantale explain.

Chantale Roy: In my Caesar salad, for example the croutons, I won't use flour and so I will use almond pulp, which I use when I prepare some almond milk. So the almond pulp combined with, for example, zucchinis, I use lots of zucchinis, (*laughing*) and herbs and everything. So we can prepare the mixture and dehydrate it at very low temperature, and yeah, it creates some wonderful almond croutons. And in the dressing we will use some other ingredients to reproduce the typical dressing we are used to eating in the Caesar salad. And we can also prepare some parmesan cheese with pine nuts.

Jon Steinman: If the pasta and Caesar salad on Chantale's menu was not enough to throw me off, Chantale additionally has a wild rice pilaf available on her menu, and having often pictured rice in a pot of boiling water, Chantale proves that rice does not have to be cooked at all.

Chantale Roy: It's my youngest son's favourite, he could eat it all the time. (*chuckling*) So I use wild rice, I let it soak many days, yeah. We need to be

patient. In that kind of cuisine we tend to have more respect for the food, and we honour the food as we honour ourselves eating that precious food. About the wild rice, yeah, we just let it soak maybe 3 to 5 days, and we rinse it every day. At some moment, the wild rice will bloom, like if it was cooked, but it isn't. And we will add some seasonings to it, some other vegetables, some seeds, some nuts.

Jon Steinman: Much of the justification for Chantale's diet comes from identifying what feels good to her when she eats. And as most of us for example know what happens when we eat too many beans, Chantale is quick to point out that our bodies are telling us, no, this is not easy to digest, and it's for this reason that Chantale does not consume any beans, peas or lentils – foods that are often staples of a vegetarian diet.

Chantale Roy: What I've learned about it is that all those kinds of vegetables or fruits or nuts or seeds that grow in our nature, it doesn't mean that we are designed to eat it. So we try to force our nature at some moments. For example, legumes - peas and beans and chickpeas, it's always used in the vegetarian diet, but we are not really designed to digest it. So I prefer not to force it, and just accept that it's not really made for me. And we can see it, and we can try it, we can experiment with it and see what happens in our body. And most of the time, people have a hard time digesting those legumes.

Jon Steinman: While many of us who eat the traditional diet of boiled, roasted, toasted, braised and barbecued food, making such a transition to a raw food diet is not one that will occur over night, and Chantale is quick to stress how important it is to choose a diet that feels right to you. Her comments are very much in line with the goal behind this radio program, and that is to expose the story behind food, and to expose the sides of food production that are hidden from public view, and in the end, provide you with a greater resource base from which to choose the diet that suits your own values and beliefs.

Chantale Roy: That question is very important because sometimes people would just go into that because it's popular, but it's not a real calling. (*chuckling*) I think that we need to clarify, to be clear with ourselves and to identify what is our real motivation about it. And if it's not a real motivation, it won't work. Yeah, the first thing is to clarify the motivation.

Jon Steinman: In wrapping up my conversation with raw-food and vegan chef Chantale Roy, I asked her what she believes is the first step anyone can take to adopting more raw food into their daily diet.

Chantale Roy: I think the first step could be easy. Just adding some more fresh fruit in our diet, and being here in B.C, it's easy. And it's one of the reasons I came here, because living in Quebec, it's harder to go raw. We can do it, of course. But when we are in a place where there is beautiful, delicious, fresh fruits, it's a big advantage. So that would be my first suggestion, to add some

more fresh fruits, and then maybe having at least one big green salad every day, and maybe learning about it.

Jon Steinman: That last suggestion by Chantale to first learn about raw food is the very reason she has launched a number of different classes offered to the public that help expose participants to preparing raw food at home. And there will be contact information on the Deconstructing Dinner website which is cjly.net/deconstructingdinner and she can additionally be contacted at the phone number 250-229-2243. For those in the Nelson area, you can find Chantale at the Saturday and Wednesday markets where she sells her prepared foods that are equally available through home delivery. And as I was lucky enough to receive a few samples before our interview, I can safely say, that her food is phenomenal.

ending theme

Jon Steinman: That was this week's edition of Deconstructing Dinner, produced and recorded in the studios of Nelson, British Columbia's Kootenay Co-op Radio. I've been your host Jon Steinman. I thank my technical assistant Dianne Matenko.

Deconstructing Dinner is heard on radio stations across British Columbia, and is also available in a podcast. All of those affiliated with Kootenay Co-op Radio are volunteers, and financial support for this station is received through membership, donations, and sponsorship from local businesses and organizations. Should you have any comments about today's show, or want to learn more about topics covered, you can visit the website for Deconstructing Dinner at www.cjly.net/deconstructingdinner.

Till next week...
