

**Show Transcript
Deconstructing Dinner
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Title: ORGANIC DAYCARES AND CONSCIENTIOUS COOKS IV

**Producer/Host: Jon Steinman
Transcript: Pat Yama**

“For me the reason we should be deconstructing our dinner is because our food is inescapably tied to a globalized and industrialized food system with very few exceptions.”

“Our connection with the rural 15% of the population that is growing the food has been disconnected and a lot of the urban areas don’t really know where their food comes from.”

JON STEINMAN: And welcome to another broadcast of Deconstructing Dinner, a weekly one-hour radio program and podcast produced at Nelson, British Columbia’s Kootenay Co-op Radio.

Today’s broadcast may come as a welcome surprise for some listeners as it will be focusing on a topic that I can comfortably say is not covered nearly enough here on this program, and that is a look into the food that is made available to infants and children in places such as daycare and preschool.

But it may indeed be most appropriate to focus in on this issue today as Canada is only more recently under the leadership of a government that is systematically dismantling the already minimal support provided for childcare services in this country.

With many parents having difficulty even *finding spaces* for their children in local daycares or preschools, there are a number of parents out there who are also finding it difficult to seek out services that adhere to their values of healthy eating and their desire to see their children receive an education on food.

On today’s broadcast of Deconstructing Dinner we are going to take a look at three innovative programs currently in operation across the country. The first is a network of organic daycares that have been launched by the progressive Quebecois organization, Equiterre based in Montreal and we will hear Nadine Bachand speak about this program. We will hear from an employee of Toronto-based catering company Real Food for Real Kids that is delivering natural and organic meals to daycares and schools throughout the Greater Toronto Area. And we will hear Linda Bonnefoy, speaking about the daycare *she* launched in Whitehorse, a daycare that incorporates organic gardening and food preparation into their daily activities.

Rounding off today’s broadcast we will also introduce Part IV of our CONSCIENTIOUS COOKS series – a series that exposes restaurants and chefs who are going above and beyond the more traditional methods of sourcing their food. And the focus for this segment will be Vancouver’s Pair Bistro, a small restaurant located in the Point Grey neighbourhood of the city, where I sat down a little while back with owner Todd Hodgins and Chef Shaughn Halls.

increase music and fade out

I think it's appropriate to launch today's broadcast with a quote, but it is, indeed a quote that could introduce every broadcast of Deconstructing Dinner, and it was Mahatma Gandhi who said "Be the change you wish to see in the world."

Well a number of the speakers that we will shortly hear on today's broadcast did just that. They recognized that the social environment for their children was not adequate for a healthy and enriching childhood, and took matters into their own hands to create the very environment they had wished only existed.

But what makes the efforts of these three women who we will shortly hear on today's broadcast so important, is that their efforts address one of the major barriers facing Canadians today on becoming more mindful of our food choices, and that is habit. There is certainly no denying that the older we get, the harder it is to break out of those lifelong routines, many of which, are becoming quite clearly unsustainable and detrimental to our planet and ourselves.

It's thereby understandable that one of the most effective tools for encouraging positive social change are those applied in childhood, where habits, beliefs, and perceptions are first formed.

Based in Montreal, Quebec, there is one organization that has chosen to do just that. And it's an organization that I can assure you we will focus more on for future broadcasts because Equiterre is an organization that I would suggest is leading the way in launching successful programs that are truly fostering significant and positive environmental and social impacts. Translating into English, Equiterre means "an equitable earth," and is a group that is "dedicated to building a citizen's movement by promoting individual and collective choices that are both environmentally and socially responsible." Founded in 1993, Equiterre maintains four programs - ecological agriculture, fair trade, sustainable transportation and energy efficiency.

One of Equiterre's projects falling under their ecological agriculture program has been the creation of a model through which daycares across the province can become organic. The project was launched as a pilot in 2002 and by 2006 had been incorporated into 44 daycares serving over 3,000 children across the province.

Back in April 2007, Equiterre's Nadine Bachand spoke at the Growing Up Organic conference held in Toronto and that was hosted by Canadian Organic Growers. Deconstructing Dinner was there to record the conference with most of these recordings having now already aired on the program, but we have yet to air segments from the session titled "Where Words Become Actions: Organic Programs for Kids." The next three speakers we are about to hear segments from were all recorded speaking at this session.

Nadine Bachand has been with Equiterre since 2003 and is currently the project's coordinator of their Ecological Agriculture program. Here she is introducing this exciting organization.

NADINE BACHAND: Just before I begin I just want to apologize for my imperfect English, my big accent and also for, I'm at the end of a flu so I might do some weird noises at some point (laughs). So, we'll present you the project that we named Garderie Organique in French. We can translate it by organic daycare. This project has set the table for us for a larger project we are currently developing to promote responsible eating within larger institutions, namely we are in at schools and hospitals. But my focus will be on the organic daycare project.

So let me begin by telling you a bit about who we are. So Equiterre is a not-for-profit organization which its mission is to promote environmentally and socially responsible choices through four areas. So we work in sustainable transportation, on energy efficiency - we have a climate change campaign. We also work on fair trade and responsible consumption and we work on ecological agriculture which is the program in which I'm working. Our main project in ecological agriculture at Equiterre is our community-supported agriculture network that we formed in 1995 which is now composed of near 100 farms that are in Quebec, nourishing about 24,000 people. We also do public awareness campaigns like the Campaign Moi, Je Mange Bio which you could translate by "I eat organics" which took place from 2001 to 2003. And another area is the area in which I'm working which is to link farms with institutions and other organizations too. I've been at the organic daycare project since 2002. We are at the end of a pilot project with Collective Kitchens to link directly Collective Kitchen groups with organic farms. We're at the end, unfortunately.

Another project which in French is Alimentation Institutionnelle Responsable (AIR), that's our name for the moment which you translate by Responsible Food in Institutions. So it's just starting. It's going to be a three project so maybe I'll be here in three years to talk to you a bit about the accomplishments of this project.

JON STEINMAN: Nadine Bachand of Equiterre has been at the forefront of the organization's organic daycare project that she just introduced and this next segment she introduces what the goals behind this project were.

NADINE BACHAND: The overarching goal of the organic daycare project was to improve the relationship that children, parents, and caregivers of daycares have with their food. In Quebec we have a network of public not-for-profit organization daycares which is called for you who some of you know CPE (Centres de la Petite Enfance). They are at the number of 900 CPEs around Quebec and the beauty of this CPE model is that they have a great autonomy. The parents have reserved seats on the Board of Directors. Each CPE decides for its own budget, etc., etc. So it's really a beautiful model to work with to develop the kind of project like organic daycare.

So the two main objectives were to facilitate the day cares ability to be supplied with organic food by creating a direct link with a local organic farm. It is mainly for their summer and fall vegetables. Some of them are taking winter vegetables but the majority is for summer and fall vegetables. And the other objective is to increase awareness of children, parents and caregivers about the existing links between food, agriculture, children's health and the protection of environment.

JON STEINMAN: The organic daycare project was launched in 2002 as a pilot project funded by Health Canada. As was part of this pilot, daycares were linked up with individual farms who then implemented a CSA model or Community Supported Agriculture. Listeners of Deconstructing Dinner may recall a recent broadcast featuring a segment on a CSA program here in the Nelson area, which essentially sees community members investing in a farm at the beginning of the season when farmers need the money most.

NADINE BACHAND: So we conducted the organic day care pilot project from 2002 to 2004. It was funded by Health Canada's Population Health Fund at the time. The pilot had three areas of focus - food, education, and research. So in the first year of the pilot, there's been five daycares that were linked directly with for Community Supported Agriculture funds. And just to tell you a bit about the nuts and bolts. They were operating bi-weekly deliveries that they were ordering on a weekly basis their fruits and vegetables at the farm because CPEs have menus that are pre-

established months and months in advance. Some of the cooks in daycares are adapting their menus to what the farmers have on a weekly basis, so it's flexible. And two of the daycares were located in low income areas in the first year.

JON STEINMAN: This is Deconstructing Dinner where we are listening to segments of a presentation by Nadine Bachand of Montreal-based Equiterre. An organization who in 2002 launched a pilot project called organic daycare whereby individual daycares in the Montreal area were linked up with farms who supplied them with local organic foods, truly an innovative concept not often seen in such a childhood setting. In 2003, Equiterre compared the budget differences among two of the daycares participating in the pilot project in order to observe whether such a model was more expensive. Also during that year an even greater impact on the communities was found to have come out of this program, as it was then that parents began to use the daycares as drop-off-points where they too could pick up a weekly box of food from the farm.

NADINE BACHAND: On the food side, we asked two participating daycares to compare their fruit and vegetable budget before entering the project to see what is the impact on the financial side.

So, for one daycare there's been no change but before the project they were supplying their fruit and vegetables from a retailer so it might have an impact on that. And the other daycare that compared their fruit and vegetables budget had a 4% increase. There's been a large demand about the project from the daycare's parents since the beginning of the project and from the media too. And one of the five daycares became a CSA delivery point for families and caregivers and also sometimes people that can have a share of the harvest. So, by this way it has a larger impact on the communities.

And for a daycare, the first year, they diversified their food supply by buying organic dry and bulk foods.

JON STEINMAN: And in this last segment from Nadine Bachand's presentation, she highlights what the pilot project helped inspire. And you'll find the results to be incredibly inspiring, and should also instill confidence that daycares can indeed provide children with foods produced in a far more natural and responsible way.

NADINE BACHAND: The next phase was to disseminate the organic daycare model. So, in 2004 we created and introduced a guide to explain why and how to become an organic daycare. We distributed to the 900 daycares in Quebec and also to organic farms and other people involved in organic agriculture. And we toured five daycare associations covering seven regions. So we presented the project to the Directors. We gave a copy of the educational kit to each region so they can lend it to their daycares afterwards. And we distributed the guide also – a copy for each daycare.

The following here is to give you the results for the following years after the pilot project. So in 2004, 19 daycares were in nine regions in Quebec that were linked with an organic farmer. In 2005 it went up to 35 daycares and two family-setting daycares. And in 2006, 44 daycares and family-settings spanning nine regions in Quebec that were touching over 3,000 children. So, (audience clapping) thank you. So they were linked with about 25 organic farms, local organic farms. And several daycares function as delivery points now for summer or winter CSA baskets for the parents and employees. I'd say about a third of them are delivery points. And several daycares also begin to supply themselves with local, organic meats, winter organic vegetables, other organic foods such as cereals, etc. with buying co-ops and other kinds of suppliers.

JON STEINMAN: And that was Nadine Bachand, the project coordinator of Ecological Agriculture for Equiterre, a Montreal-based organization founded in 2003, dedicated to building a citizen's movement by promoting individual and collective choices that are both environmentally and socially responsible. Nadine was recorded by Deconstructing Dinner in April 2007 at the Growing Up Organic Conference in Toronto. You can learn more about Equiterre, which in English translates to equitable earth, by visiting their website at equiterre.qc.ca or by linking to it from the Deconstructing Dinner website at cjly.net/deconstructingdinner where this broadcast will also be archived.

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What was perhaps most inspiring from the Equiterre organic daycare project is how it responded to a number of very pressing concerns facing Canadian parents. For one, it is difficult to find daycares or preschools that offer food choices that supply the growing demand for organic and local foods. But on an equally important level, new parents are, more than others, struck with the difficulties of finding time to purchase food for the home. The organic Daycare program has inspired the daycares to act as locations where parents can also pick up food from the very farm supplying the daycare itself, and this then alleviates such difficulties new parents face. Now such a program truly is creating a completely new model upon which communities can exist, and is one that is challenging the dominant food system that is taking a toll on the planet, on communities and on our health. Nadine also concluded her presentation with the hope that such a model will one day be adopted by various branches of government and be implemented on a much larger scale across the country.

Another speaker at the Growing Up Organic conference who shared her experiences with launching her own organic daycare was Linda Bonnefoy, who operates Alligator Pie Preschool in Whitehorse, Yukon. Alligator Pie has a somewhat different approach to being organic, in that organic gardening and food preparation is actually a part of the daily activities children undertake at the school.

Similar to the goals of Equiterre's organic daycare program, Linda hopes that the Alligator Pie Preschool example can one day be brought to Ottawa as a model to realize, what she calls, "how to grow leaders."

And here's Linda Bonnefoy, introducing her preschool at the April 2007 at Growing Up Organic Conference hosted by Canadian Organic Growers.

LINDA BONNEFOY: Good afternoon. My name is Linda Bonnefoy. I'm from Whitehorse, Yukon. Before I begin to speak I would like to say thank you to Mo who is from the Yukon as well from the Yukon Growers Association. Who, with her support I was able to attend this conference. But especially I would like to thank my children who have given me a reason to be an environmental activist.

I'll give you a little bit of background of how I became involved in early childhood education. My background is in counseling. I worked seven years in family violence, counseling. And then I was brought into the Arctic to work for the Yellowknife Hospital Board, the Inuvik Regional Hospital Board and the Inuvialuit Corporation to go throughout the Arctic and co-ordinate mental health curriculum.

So I specialized in suicidal ideation and then I came back into the Yukon – I had a consulting company at that time, and I was going to put my daughter in daycare. And I started looking

around for a daycare and I couldn't find one that I felt would facilitate her social behaviours and basically afford my daughter the kind of education I thought would create a valuable person as she grew older. So I thought if I can write curriculums for the government, I can write a curriculum for an early childcare program. And so I set to work doing that. I wrote a curriculum that's multi-cultural, inclusive, and looks at organic production. Part of my interest in coming here is to say to the farmers and people that are involved in organic production that it is possible to link childcare centres as my friends here at the panel can concur that it is possible to link children with organic farmers and to revolutionize the way that our future leaders look at food production in Canada.

One of the things that I have really focused on is leadership with children and I wrote my curriculum with the idea that well one day I would like to take my curriculum to Ottawa and say – this is how you grow leaders in Canada. And I have five years of documentation because I worked for the government, I know that it is important to maintain records and documentation. So I began to document with my staff the effects on the children and the effects on the family and also the effects within my own community by using my community to raise the children of my community and territory.

JON STEINMAN: This idea of looking to the local community as a resource to educate children certainly doesn't seem as though it should be that revolutionary. But when observing the curriculums set out with in most of Canada's education system, what children learn is most often set by a provincial ministry not located anywhere near the actual school itself. Alligator Pie makes a very conscious effort to bring in local gardeners, farmers and cooks to teach the children about the importance of food. But Linda Bonnefoy nevertheless remains committed to ensuring the children are connected to the rest of the world, and chooses food as a tool to do so.

LINDA BONNEFOY: So I really didn't know what I was doing when I started the program so I hired two teachers that had a background in early childhood education. And I thought well I need to continue to work as a consultant but I also became very, very interested in children and how they learn. So I implemented an organic gardening program the first year and what we did was we brought the growers, farmers and enthusiasts into teach the children how to grow food. We have a large garden. We have a herb garden and we also have a greenhouse and the children do all of the planting. So I don't just want children to be linked to these mentors, I want the children to grow up to raise organic food.

So I've done crazy things like the City Manager lives beside me. I live downtown on a green belt in Whitehorse and I thought – well, I grew up on a farm and it was really important for me to have animals around so I looked into hatching eggs in my house. So I had – this is where my program is so I have my office for my consulting and the program runs in my home as well. So I got from a local farmer, eggs and we hatched them with the children in the basement and I didn't really remember as a child that they actually start flying around (Linda and audience laugh). And the children were all in a circle. We were photographing the children with the chickens and they started pecking at the children and then all mayhem broke out. So I thought – okay, it's time to get rid of the chickens, so we switched over to butterfly raising after that (audience laughs).

So, in my experience with working with children, I can assure you that children can understand concepts like organic gardening and organic farming. And the children in my program do understand basic concepts in organic gardening. So we start all of the plants from seed. We have people come in and help to do that. And then we transplant those little plants into our garden. And throughout the year or throughout the growing season, whatever we are harvesting we bring in naturopaths or we bring in – part of my program is to bring in multi-cultural guests. And so, every

month we study a different culture. And within the garden we use the herbs and the vegetables to produce the foods from different countries in the world. And this is met with great success in so much as in my community feels like they have ownership of this little program. And I feel like I'm as the Artistic Director, non-profit that I'm opening up the world to children and having causing them to think about not just our backyard but our world.

JON STEINMAN: And this is Deconstructing Dinner where we are listening to segments of a presentation given by Linda Bonnefoy of Alligator Pie Preschool located in Whitehorse, Yukon. What stood out for me upon listening to Linda speak about this school that she created, was how vital such curriculum is especially in this point in time, where children are being raised in a society that is facing the greatest challenge and potential crisis that humanity has ever faced. Such issues being as in the spotlight as they are, are no doubt going to create a very different generation of people who will soon become important decision makers. With as much negativity that children are exposed to, Linda Bonnefoy suggests that what she is doing is giving children the hope that such global problems can be met with solutions and different ways of living.

LINDA BONNEFOY: In Alligator Pie everything we do is based on organic principles. So, we compost and we don't compost with anything that is not organic. And the children can understand the difference between non-organic compost which they ask their parents about when they're at home – is this organic compost or non-organic compost. And these children are three to five years old. But what I want to do is to link to the children with the wilderness and also with other socially responsible people who are looking at our earth and having them believe that there are possibilities for change. And I believe that. We also look at different ways of eating food. And so I have my good friend she comes in and teaches the children how to use chopsticks and sometimes we eat with our fingers because that's also multi-cultural. We have a baking program which uses only organic products. And, they all go home in the fall with baskets of food that they've grown. I can assure you that it's the most self-esteem, confident-building activity when children are bringing home food that they grow themselves and are helping to support their families. And I take them out and we just go and identify mushrooms. We don't eat these mushrooms.

Like we have stories - all of our stories are based around nature and being stewards, good stewards of the land. We have, again in the baking program, the children bake and then they take the baking home to share with their family because I believe that it is important for children to bring that connection that they learn in the pre-school back into their home environment. And we have crab apple trees and blueberries and cranberries. And one of the children in my preschool – I said, so, Leanne, how is it? You know your son is very interested in making...how is it at home? Does he want to help bake at home? She goes – you know Linda, before he started in your program, she said, breakfast use to be a real simple task (audience laughs). Now he's got to find out if the eggs are organic, free-run. He's got to break the egg. He's got to help me make the omelet and we all have to sit down and say a blessing before we eat our food. She says so now breakfast takes four times the time it use to take (audience laughs).

So there are impacts and children are actually the teachers then become the teachers in their homes. So I have it set up in the summer so that there are older children so the older children teach the younger children. So I've been trying to entice Skills Canada into looking at a mentorship program that looks at agriculture in our daycares but also looking at that if we are planting these seeds in children at a very early age then we're going to get the results that everybody in this room is looking for. So I think that it has to come at a preschool level.

JON STEINMAN: And that was Linda Bonnefoy of Alligator Pie Preschool located in Whitehorse, Yukon. Linda was recorded by Deconstructing Dinner in April 2007 at the Growing Up Organic Conference in Toronto. And I'll also remind listeners that all of our recordings from this conference can be found on a feature page on our website, and they're listed as an icon or under an icon on the right-hand side of our main page. And again, our website is cjly.net/deconstructingdinner.

Stay tuned, because when we return we will hear about a Toronto-based catering company that is serving up natural and organic meals to daycares and schools across the Greater Toronto area. And following this segment we will listen in on Part IV of our ongoing CONSCIENTIOUS COOKS series featuring Vancouver's Pair Bistro.

Raffi – In My Garden, One Light, One Sun musical intermission

And you're tuned in to Deconstructing Dinner a weekly one-hour program produced at Kootenay Co-op Radio in Nelson, British Columbia. I'm your host, Jon Steinman. That musical intermission was British Columbia's children's musician Raffi, and his song In my Garden, which appeared on the album One Light, One Sun.

On today's broadcast we've been exploring a very important topic that is not featured nearly enough here on the program, and that is the food and food-related education that can be found in daycares and preschools across the country. Just as our public school system has been taken over by soft-drink manufacturers and food service companies who seek out the cheapest possible ingredients, so too have many daycares. Montreal's Equiterre and Whitehorse's Alligator Pie Preschool are two examples of how such reliance on these sources can be eliminated, and yet another is a Toronto catering company calling themselves Real Food for Real Kids. Also similar to the reason Linda Bonnefoy started Alligator Pie, Real Food for Real Kids, David Farnell and his wife Lulu Cohen-Farnell, launched the company in 2004 to ensure that *their* son would have access to healthy food while attending daycare. The company now provides organic meals to over 2,000 children in 46 daycares and two schools. One of the employees of the company, Kim Crosby was invited to speak at the Growing Up Organic conference held in Toronto in April 2007, and here's Kim introducing how Real Food for Real Kids first got started.

KIM CROSBY: Hello everyone. My name's Kim Crosby. I grew up across South America and the Caribbean. And in Trinidad, there's a dish called Callaloo and in North America it's made with commonly referred to as pigweed. Now it has a really thick, but also runny and it's a deep green, it has a very strange consistency. Now this is next to impossible to introduce to anyone as an adult. But for me, my memories of making this every Sunday afternoon with my grandmother make this food my comfort food. So this is what I'm connected to. And in the same way I think that children who grow up eating real food, eating organic food will continue to do so in their adult lives and they'll be healthier as a result. And that's what I'm here to talk to you about today.

It was in May 2004 that Lulu created an organic snack program to replace the sugar-filled processed foods being served in her son's daycare. The program began by delivering 93 cakes at the YMCA's flagship daycare, The Family Development Centre in downtown Toronto. Encouraged by the support of concerned parents and incredible teachers, Real Food for Real Kids everyday creates and delivers as natural and organic snacks and hot lunches to over 2,000 kids in 46 daycares and schools across the GTA. And it really is just the beginning. By the end of the year, we're poised to double, feeling what we're affectionately calling "the real food movement."

By now we're all aware that our children are facing a crisis with skyrocketing rates of obesity and diabetes. And I'd like to outline for you one of the causes of this problem. For decades catering companies serving kids in daycares have devoted their energies to reducing prices in order to win contracts systematically awarded to the lowest bidder. In much the same way, schools have been using food as a fundraising tool. And on the surface this doesn't sound like a bad idea until you realize that the funds raised squeeze out the funds needed to buy real food and real ingredients and to train staff to do more than just operate a microwave. Many catering companies have essentially become fast-food delivery services choosing factory-farmed, chemically preserved commodity cropped-filled ingredients in order to reduce both food and labour costs. And this is what we'll all agree is called "junk food." Obviously these decisions have had a huge impact on the quality of the food provided and it creates a very unfortunate downward spiral. As more and more catering companies follow each other to the bottom, these extremely low prices become the norm and budgets of schools and daycares adjust to this reality. We all agree that nutrition is a priority but too many people are unwilling or unable to pay more for higher quality food.

So first, let's talk about those who are unable to pay more for quality food. Over 80% of the centres we currently serve are non-profit daycares supported by United Way. They are located in areas like Toronto St. James Town, Parkdale, and Jane and Finch. What's common about these areas is the lack of access to and information about nutrition. The parents of many of these children may not have the means to provide healthy breakfasts and lunches to their kids, however, the larger organizations that serve these communities certainly do. In this case it's about priority. Consider these numbers. A hot natural lunch created and delivered by Real Food for Real Kids in most cases costs about 30 cents more than a typical caterer. This provides natural food from local and organic sources. By natural and local we mean fresh garlic and fresh ginger used for flavour. We mean Ontario tomatoes in the summer and canned Ontario tomatoes in the winter. We mean whole chicken slices sautéed with vegetables and fresh fish fillets. It becomes a question of valuing quality over price when the difference is this small and the quality is so much higher. By choosing Real Food for Real Kids as caterers, daycare groups like The Child Development Institute and the YMCA are providing both.

We cook from scratch using 100% national ingredients with as much organic as their budgets can allow. Beyond the food we send we also provide nutrition education through our grant-funded workshops and will always be pleased to speak with smart and generous philanthropists. So if anyone would like to meet with me after I'd love to talk to you (audience laughs).

JON STEINMAN: And you're listening to Kim Crosby speaking about Real Food for Real Kids, a catering company based in Toronto that is serving up organic meals to daycares and schools throughout the city. As is often an impediment to implementing such programs on both an institutional or even individual level, is that of affordability. Most daycares and schools in Canada are often sourcing their food from whatever company can offer the lowest bid. But the operations being served by Real Food for Real Kids represent groups that are indeed *rejecting* the lowest bid, which as Kim Crosby indicates is working for them on many levels.

KIM CROSBY: Let's talk about those who are unwilling to pay more for higher quality food even though they could. It has everything to do with education and awareness. As consumers we demand a diverse product base and low prices. With the same intensity we have to demand that when a product is a food it must be made through a natural process, a process free of chemicals, free of hydrogenation and free of carcinogens posing as sugar. These are our children and they deserve much more than the lowest bid or sticker price. So that's where the value switch needs to happen in our minds. Food for quality and not just the lowest price.

So now you've heard it but not everyone seems to. And maybe because of all the commercial noise, the marketing dollars wielded by Nestle are in the tens of millions per brand category and we don't see that kind of money behind carrots and brussel sprouts. Real food needs advocates. It needs supporters. It needs parents who are willing to persevere and compete with Ronald McDonald on behalf of organic process and local fresh fruits and vegetables. So how do we do this? We must become a nation that demands organic foods in our supermarkets, in our restaurants, and certainly above all in our daycares and in our schools. And we must be willing to pay the price required to produce them. Organically grown food is one of the natural elements of life and of course, science can make it cheaper and the choice is ultimately ours. We can reject the lowest bid because at Real Food for Real Kids we do this every single day.

Now we understand, it's hard. We have thousands of kids that are bombarded with advertising for heavily processed restaurant food. And often when we begin serving a centre the kids are requesting chicken nuggets and fish sticks. And some refuse to eat or cry or throw tantrums, and we're only serving them one meal a day. But when a school comes on board it's really important that we take the time and prepare them. Our daycare partners work incredibly hard supporting this program by trying the food themselves, encouraging the kids to try everything not once, but twice and again. Every day that we serve these children nutritious, natural and organic food is another opportunity to have a teachable moment around the importance of food from field to table.

And that's why we include stories in our lunch notes and the steady stream of information to our parents. We don't allow kids to call themselves picky eaters. It becomes their excuse for avoiding all new foods. Each day is different and each meal is different and just because they hated it last week doesn't mean they won't love it this week. We're all part of a larger society that pays lip service to proper nutrition but has not been willing to make it a national priority. And we believe that every single child must have access to whole nutritious unprocessed food and understand why it's important. We know that the habits we form in childhood are the ones that will continue into our adult lives. We, at Real Food for Real Kids want to thank all of you for coming to this conference because your presence here shows that you understand what's going on and you want to make it right. So thank you (audience applause).

JON STEINMAN: And that was Kim Crosby of Toronto's Real Food for Real Kids – a catering company serving organic meals to over 2,000 children in 46 daycares and two schools throughout the city. You can learn more about the company by visiting our website at cjly.net/deconstructingdinner.

soundbite

And this is Deconstructing Dinner, where in this last segment of today's broadcast we will air Part IV of our ongoing series CONSCIENTIOUS COOKS – an exposition of chefs who are approaching food in a more mindful way than is often found at Canadian restaurants.

Back in June of this year I had the opportunity to visit Vancouver where the annual National Campus and Community Radio conference was being hosted by CITR, the University of British Columbia's radio station. I found the opportunity to sneak away from the conference and sit down at Pair Bistro, which is a very small restaurant that for the past few years has been showcasing a menu filled with products that are predominantly grown, raised and produced in British Columbia. Created by Janis and Todd Hodgins, Pair Bistro has created a model for a restaurant that has far less of an environmental impact than most, and is equally having a significant social impact by looking to supporting local farmers, fishers and producers who are otherwise in competition with cheap imports. While some farmers are arriving directly on the doorstep of the

restaurant, there are also ongoing visits by Todd and chef Shaughn Halls to Vancouver's Granville Island Public Market, open seven days a week. While one would expect that operating such a model would require an atrociously expensive menu, Pair Bistro keeps their prices not necessarily cheap, but certainly far more modest than the average restaurant focusing on sourcing local foods.

Todd and Janis recently brought chef Shaughn Halls on board, and I sat down with Todd and Shaughn on their restaurant patio to learn more about why it is they do what they do, how difficult it is to operate such an innovative model and what future they see in encouraging other restaurants to do the same.

Pair Bistro refers to their menu as "food with terroir" and Todd Hodgins explains what is meant by such a term.

TODD HODGINS: The term is a wine term. We incorporate it into our philosophy here at Pair with the regional and seasonal program that we incorporate at Pair – being from the earth and from the region, from the soil. It was just a fitting analogy to what we wanted to project to our guests and that sense of pride within what we have in our own backyard, in our own gardens here within the province of B.C.

JON STEINMAN: As this idea of food with terroir is indeed one that is rarely adopted among North American restaurants, Pair Bistro also markets themselves as a restaurant that supports ethical food production. We often speak of the ethics behind the raising of animals for food, but Todd Hodgins uses this term with much broader meaning.

TODD HODGINS: It's not a unique formula. People have been doing it for a very long time. And there are some incredible pioneers here within the city such as John Bishop and Karen Barnaby and some great folks over at Sooke Harbour House using the local producers and purveyors within their immediate area to implement their programs.

Ethical in our minds are people who are really reacting responsibly to the environment. People who are making an action plan to remain organic, to look at sustainable agriculture on a long-term basis and people who we deal with directly as far as the farmers and producers in our local areas as well. Most of our produce, if not hand picked from the Granville Island Market on a regular basis, we are down the market daily. With all our oyster program, all our shellfish program are hand picked as well as local produce and our fish portfolio as well too. But we do have quite a bit of the local farmers that come to our back door that provide us with an abundant amount of our program, such as birch especially mushrooms, Glorious Organics Co-op out in Aldergrove. Local sea asparagus, especially this time of year now, coming into abundance with West Coast Seaweed. So it's those kinds of relationships. It's the people who are actually in the fields doing the farming, putting the sweat equity into their product. Taking pride in that product and bringing to our doorstep in which again we can allow our guests to really enjoy.

JON STEINMAN: The ethical food production that Pair Bistro supports does, as is more commonly accepted, apply to how they source their meat. While the vast majority of restaurants are sourcing their meats from farms that can more appropriately be referred to as factories, Pair Bistro takes a more conscientious approach to planning these components of their menu.

TODD HODGINS: Well I get, it's the suppliers you choose to do business with, it comes right down to that and their philosophies. We're all quite aware of – there's been increase in educational footage out there with some large motion pictures and with some exposés done on the

actual production of our, especially our meat products in North America over the last little while which is extremely disturbing to say the least. We definitely take pride in ensuring that the products that we deal with and that we're bringing into the restaurant are supplied with suppliers who believe in grass-fed programs, free-range programs, take great pride that the animals themselves have a quality of life before they're brought to the table. We're all linked together - you know the human species, the animal species.

JON STEINMAN: Yet another set of concerns facing the source of animal products are those accompanying the origin of seafood. As has been discussed before on Deconstructing Dinner and as will be a more in-depth feature of an upcoming broadcast, there are more species of fish in alarmingly short supply than there are those in healthy supply. Shaughn Halls is one of a growing number of chefs who are using one of a number of organizations providing critical information on which foods from the sea are harvested using the most responsible methods possible.

SHAUGHN HALLS: Well as far as sustainable seafood goes that's something I have been kind of looking at for the past five or six years. Before I moved to Vancouver I was always on the Monterey Bay Aquarium website checking out what is not only in season but what is on the endangered list and what is moving up or down or how it's going. And since I've moved to Vancouver I've used their website as well as the Vancouver aquariums, checking out and seeing how things are doing, different stocks.

JON STEINMAN: What is understandably one of the greatest barriers facing restaurants to adopt such a conscientious approach to sourcing ingredients is that the more commonly utilized method is, simply put, incredibly easy. A truck shows up at the back door of the restaurant with all the necessary ingredients and away the kitchen goes at preparing meals. With the method used by Pair Bistro requiring much more administration, time, and spontaneity, I asked owner Todd Hodgins about the difficulties they face trying to operate such a restaurant model, and he suggests that what he's creating is a community.

TODD HODGINS: It is extremely challenging. I'm going to be perfectly honest with you. I think that the commitment that Pair has made with sourcing in that fashion is not the route that many restaurants financially would like to take because there is a commitment. There's a commitment to building those relationships with the suppliers. There's a commitment to the time and energy spent in doing that sourcing. But how Janis and I have felt and certainly now with Shaughn being part of the program, understanding the philosophies behind it is that they are a community. Pair is very much a community-based program. The people within our community, Granville Island, the suppliers, the farmers outside of the immediate city are all part of our community. To visit our suppliers on a regular basis down at Granville Island and the purveyors we deal with there, it really truly is a privilege but also, it's like seeing friends. So we think of it in that fashion.

But again, it is a little bit more of an unusual situation. Most restaurants can't afford nor are they committed to taking those extra steps and taking the time to be going out and hand picking their product. Being a smaller restaurant in volume as far as only 50 seats here at Pair, we can physically do that. We don't have any producers, outside of our proteins, and the farmers are coming directly with our produce that we source from. It is all hand picked usually from Granville Island or the farm, the local farmers markets which are now in season which are just an abundance of just new things to play with on a seasonal basis.

JON STEINMAN: Chef Shaughn Halls.

SHAUGHN HALLS: I'd have to say that it's also quality as well. But when you get a produce delivered to the back of your restaurant, I use to get so sick of going through a case of something and finding a quarter of it rotten or just not up to spec of what we're looking for. But here, I mean we touch everything, we smell everything, we get a feel of what it is and the quality is much higher because we're hand picking it and that goes with the oysters as well as all of the produce that we pick out down at Granville Island.

JON STEINMAN: And this is Deconstructing Dinner where we are listening to segments of a conversation I had with Todd Hodgins and Shaughn Halls of Vancouver's Pair Bistro. The restaurant has created a model through which they look to source the majority of their ingredients from British Columbia farms and producers, creating a system that is far more environmentally and socially responsible. Now this is no doubt a difficult task to undertake given our Canadian climate, and owner Todd Hodgins comments on how they manage when the colder season hits.

TODD HODGINS: Well it comes down to preparing as people have done for centuries. It's making preserves. A perfect example is, again I get back to the sea asparagus program that we do. Shaughn is in the process right now of pickling all our winter storage for that product so we have it all year round until the next season. But directly with seasonal produce we had to adapt our menus on a seasonal basis in order to reflect what's available. Again the fall program presents itself with some incredible bounties with squashes and some winter vegetables. So it's not so much of a challenge, it's more of an anticipation of what those seasons will be yielding and preparing for those bounties as they get a little bit closer to production dates. It's a fun thing. Now that we're going into our third season it's become routine. And it gets a little bit easier every year now as well too because our guests are becoming familiar with what we do on a seasonal basis. And again they anticipate those menu changes and those developments as well.

JON STEINMAN: As I neared the end of my conversation with Todd Hodgins and chef Shaughn Halls of Pair Bistro, I was curious to hear Todd's perspective on whether it would be affordable for a more conventional restaurant to undertake such a strong focus on supporting local food production. He suggests that it's really only possible with hands-on ownership, and without it, it wouldn't work. This response puts into question the very model that dominates the restaurant industry, whereby most restaurants are now owned by company's not even located in the city where they operate. Todd comments on whether it's possible for the dominant system to adopt such a locally focused model.

TODD HODGINS: For most people I would say no. Again there's a lot of dedication to that program. It would be unachievable if you did not have hands-on ownership and I think that dedication that my wife Janis and I have had to the program and as well as the staff that have grown the business with us. Again, it comes down to time. A lot of restaurants just physically do not have the budgets or time in order to do this kind of sourcing. We are again, we are hands-on ownership. We take pride in being able to provide this. This is a lifestyle for us; is really these routines of shopping and providing for the restaurant to bring that to the tables. So, for the most part economically knowing what I know today, I wouldn't really suggest people start their business that way because it can be a little bit overwhelming unless you are educated and you are truly committed to making that process happen. We are fortunate that we are only 50 seats at this point. If we were a larger room, say 100, 150 seats, it would be extremely challenging.

JON STEINMAN: As I wrapped up my conversation with Todd Hodgins, I suggested that the difficulties faced by the farmers that serve his restaurant could possibly be alleviated if more of an organized system of collaboration were in place - one through which their products could make their way into the city and land in the kitchens of many restaurants instead of just one. Todd

indicates that this is indeed starting to happen but the first step is to have demand and support from the public for such a system.

TODD HODGINS: It's starting to happen. It really is. There's a great organization out there called Farm Folk City Folk that are making things happen, are truly bringing these suppliers and these farmers and purveyors together in an organized fashion. I know the provincial government is looking at some programs to make this a little bit of an easier process for restaurants in being able to bring these products to the door. It's again, it's creating the awareness first and foremost. There has to be a demand from the public first and foremost. Once people are getting turned on to that it's very difficult to go back to having dining experiences that are not executing in such a fashion. So, the more public awareness there is out there the more demand there is out there for it, the more people that are encouraging this kind of philosophy and executing this kind of mentality, there's going to be a lot more opportunity for these people to be able to come out and in an organized fashion, get the product right to your doorstep.

JON STEINMAN: And that was Todd Hodgins and Shaughn Halls of Vancouver's Pair Bistro. You can learn more about the restaurant by visiting their website at pairbistro.ca.

ending theme

That was this week's edition of Deconstructing Dinner, produced and recorded at Nelson, British Columbia's Kootenay Co-op Radio. I've been your host Jon Steinman. I thank my technical assistant John Ryan.

The theme music for Deconstructing Dinner is courtesy of Nelson-area resident Adham Shaikh.

This radio program is provided free of charge to campus/community radio stations across the country, and relies on the financial support from you the listener.

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