

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

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**Hosting a Community Dialogue on Local Food Systems II / Backyard
Chickens VI**

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Transcript – Carol Elliott**

Jon Steinman: And welcome to Deconstructing Dinner, produced at Kootenay Co-op Radio CJLY in Nelson, British Columbia. We broadcast on radio stations around the world including 101.9FM CFRC Kingston, Ontario and 106.5FM KOWA Olympia, Washington. I'm Jon Steinman.

Continuing on from where *last week's* episode left *off*, today we feature Part II of our series titled "Hosting a Community Dialogue on Local Food Systems." With the widespread acceptance that food systems should *indeed* become more localized, the "*how-to*" part of the equation is of course that critical next step.

In March 2009 and through *our* involvement with the Nelson-based group Community Food Matters, Deconstructing Dinner was involved in hosting and recording a gathering of over seventy people who are somehow involved in the local food system. Last week's full one-hour of programming featured only a *sampling* of the over *thirty-five* presentations that made up the event. From farmer organizations to farmers' market organizers to hands-on gardening courses, the Community Food Matters Gathering provides a snapshot of what the fostering of a local food system *might* look like to *any* North American community.

For the next forty-five minutes of *today's* Part II of the series, we'll continue listening in on those presentations. The content you're *about* to hear lends an even greater representation of the sheer diversity that can be found within the food system of just *one* small community.

And in the final *fifteen* minutes of the show, we'll revisit with the familiar and entertaining Bucky Buckaw and his Backyard Chicken Broadcast. As we approach the Easter holiday, Bucky has some interesting insights to share on what *he* refers to as the "*ill-conceived*" tradition of giving chicks to children on Easter.

increase music and fade out

Jon Steinman: If you missed last week's Part I of our series featuring recordings from the 2009 Community Food Matters Gathering, it has been archived on our website at deconstructingdinner.ca and posted under the March 26th episode. Today's broadcast will *also* be archived there under the April 2nd episode.

As we continue listening in on some of the presentations that made up the Community Food Matters Gathering, here's a quick summary of some of the projects and groups that we're *about* to hear from on this Part II:

The concept of community farms introduced *last* week has already been put into practice, and we'll hear from one individual spearheading that project. We'll hear of *one* innovative idea to address the *labour* concerns of farmers by linking farmers up with the *unemployed*. We'll learn of two ambitious Nelson residents who will be starting an urban agriculture business based on the SPIN model that we covered here on the show back in 2006. We'll hear from some local businesses who support the production of locally produced food. We'll hear from one Nelson resident eager to change the city's backyard chicken bylaw, which currently prohibits the raising of poultry within city limits. We'll hear from the Kootenay Lake Sailing Association that was featured less than a month ago here on the program. They have some ambitious plans for the coming year. And we'll also hear from a number of individuals who are looking to link up with *other* members of the community to launch some innovative food security projects.

And so first we hear from John Alton, who, alongside a group of Nelson residents, has decided to launch a community farm.

John Alton: It came out of this thinking that I had that I'd like to be involved in a farm. But I don't want to go out and buy a farm and do it by myself. I just couldn't imagine it. So I think it came out of working for many years with the Carshare Co-op in Nelson. I helped get that going. So I could see how we could work together with a group of people in a co-op to do something that is really good to have a bunch of people to collaborate on.

So I thought, "Why don't we do this with a farm? Why don't get a bunch of people get together to work on a farm?" Amy had a conference here a little while ago - very successful. A bunch of people came together and said, "Why don't we do a community farm?" Right away some local people with a farm in Beasley came forth and they said, "Look, we want to share our farm." And a bunch of people that wanted to get involved in farming showed up. So, it seems like it's off and flying. We've got a farm that's very close to town that these folks want to share with us, and it's all set to go. We've got about ten people that want to work together.

Jon Steinman: John Alton. Also speaking at the Gathering was Florence Christophers of the Nelson CARES Society. With farmers often lacking adequate

access to affordable labour, Florence proposed *one* idea for how *her* line of work might be able to contribute *to* the local food system.

Florence Christophers: I'm going to talk about supported employment. It's another branch of the Nelson CARES Society. My job is to find work opportunities for individuals with disabilities in our community. They have a long history of being connected to our community through work and, in particular, they seem to do really well in gardening, landscaping and mowing their lawns.

In these times when it's tough for lots of people to get work it can be really tough for people with disabilities to find work. And so it forces me to think, "How can I create opportunities in the community for my clients?"

So one of the ideas that came up was actually through someone who approached me named Nancy Lee from Bigby Place. She said, "It would be so great. There are so many farmers out there who can benefit from their incredible dedication; their ability to focus; their love of being connected to the earth; of growing food; of feeling like they are doing meaningful work. But how do we connect these people to the farmers, and how do we connect people to community gardens?"

Basically we have about forty people looking for work. They work anywhere from two to ten hours or more a week. So as soon as you might know that you're looking for someone who can step in. We pre-screen, we do job supports, we support employers. I'll screen my clients, set up interviews, and then we set up supports for both the employer and the employee until you've got a match and it's working. Then you're off and running.

You'll rarely find an employee more grateful and more loyal. So I hope you connect with me if you have opportunities to hire people. Thank you.

Jon Steinman: Florence Christophers of the Nelson CARES Society. Back in August of 2006, we aired the first of our Farming in the City series featuring Saskatoon's Wally Satzewich. Wally has become well known for his role in helping launch what is known as SPIN farming – a model that continues to catch on throughout North America. Perhaps the most *recent* group to take up the model are Nelson's Christoph Martens and Paul Hoepfner-Homme of the *newly*-launched Nelson Urban Acres.

Paul Hoepfner-Homme: My friend Christoph Martens and I are starting an urban farm in Nelson this year under an acre in size. We are following a system of farming called SPIN farming. And the idea: SPIN stands for Small Plot Intensive. There's a few benefits of doing farming in the city; it's kind of geared toward the city. In SPIN method in general you don't have to own the land - that's the idea. You use land that's available close to where you are living, that's otherwise not going to use, and you take advantage of it. So you don't have to own the land,

which is one of the big barriers of getting into farming, especially for young people. So often your agreement with your landowners is an exchange of vegetables for a small rental fee. It's really nice to be able to run the farm and have your customers, your potential customers, see what you're doing and be more connected to their food, and hopefully inspire others to do the same. I really think it's very important that more of us start growing a lot more food in the cities.

So what we have planned for this year is a half-an-acre farm spread across several properties. We'd like to keep it as close to the city as possible – within the city if possible. We're planning to sell our vegetables just at the farmers' markets in Nelson and maybe in the future we'll do CSA or something like that.

Jon Steinman: Paul Hoepfner-Homme of Nelson Urban Acres. This is Deconstructing Dinner. If you would like to learn more about any of the topics and groups heard on today's broadcast, we *are* providing links on our website to these groups. Again, today's episode is archived under the April 2nd 2009 broadcast.

Also presenting at the Community Food Matters Gathering *in* Nelson was Paul Craig, who proposed *another* urban farming idea.

Paul Craig: I guess a few years ago I was inspired by what Cuba did – growing forty per cent of its food in urban areas. I see a lot of lawns and a lot of lawnmowers out there: I would like to see food, not lawns.

So part of the thing would be to bring gardening clubs together where people can get together and share land - as in sharing their yards; share info; extra produce; tools; seeds; and mostly experience about getting the people that don't really know what they are doing together with the people who do. I think it would be a good way to bring the community together. Hopefully, it will morph into a program where we can have community gardens and education. Get the kids in the garden, digging in the dirt.

I think for me the most important way for food security is to bring the community together and know what's in your neighbours' root cellar. And if there is nothing in there then fill it up. Anybody interested in helping me on this project – anybody who wants to get growing – just email me and let me know.

Jon Steinman: Paul Craig. The 2009 Community Food Matters Gathering was hosted as a means to bring all of those involved in the food system together as a way to learn, to network, and *perhaps* to collaborate. But also at the event were individuals with *new* ideas, such as Paul Craig's sharing backyards project. It was hoped that, through hosting such an event, these newly-formed ideas might be able to link up with *other* groups already formed, or other *individuals* wishing to be a part of the project. Another new idea shared *at* the event came from Jesse Phillips.

Jesse Phillips: We were coming up on spring and starting to get some local veggies in – some asparagus and soon summer will be here, and with it brings many fruits and vegetables and many delicious foods. And autumn comes, and harvests. But winter comes along and we seem to have a problem finding local food. I mean, we can't get everything local all the time, but maybe with the help of canning we could do this all year round, setting up some kind of cannery where the community can come and share their ideas and share how to can safely and properly.

I don't really know how to get this going yet. I just moved here. Hopefully, I want to do this for the summer or maybe long-term, where we can have a kitchen set-up in Nelson where anybody can come and help teach others how to can and show each other recipes. But I do need some support in starting this because I don't really know what I'm doing.

Jon Steinman: Jesse Phillips. Also lending to the diversity of interests found at the Community Food Matters Gathering was Community Futures – a national network of branches that support economic development within Canadian communities. The branch operating in *Nelson* was invited to share how *they* might be of assistance to the local food system. Here's Joe Karthein.

Joe Karthein: Community Futures is very strongly supportive of local food-based businesses. In fact, two out of the three present self-employment counsellors have owned their own food-based enterprises.

At a recent annual visioning session consisting of all Community Futures staff, Community Futures Directors, and the Community Futures Self-Employment Committee Board, there was unilateral support for community-based agriculture and food-related initiatives.

I was at that meeting, it was on the 8th of January. Every single person in the room - it kept coming up, the food thing - so we really are behind it. If you guys have ideas, bring them forth, because it is not always easy to determine our place and how we can help. But we can - I'm confident of that.

We all agreed on the importance of locally produced food and processed food for increasing the livability and sustainability of our region. And we would like to further assist our community by supporting these ventures in any way we are able.

Community Futures can help local food producers in a multitude of ways. We can offer general business counselling that's vital for those new to operating small businesses. One of the key things about sustainability is making it economically sustainable. So what we do is we force you to look at things that you might not want to look at, like bookkeeping or whatever, just to make sure that you're in

business the next year. We also have a business book library that has information that's specific to market gardeners and food processors.

Since 1984 Community Futures has assisted approximately seventy food-related businesses in the Central Kootenays that ranges from farmers to value-added food producers, retail distributors, restaurants - you name it.

Community Futures gave me my start in business ten years ago. I started an organic sauerkraut manufacturing business. It ran for eight years and then I sold it a couple of years ago. So I have got some knowledge base from that as well that you are welcome to tap into.

Jon Steinman: Joe Karthein of Community Futures. While Community Futures seeks to support *newly*-formed businesses, there are of course many established businesses in our communities *already* involved in the local food system. One of those businesses operating in *Nelson* and in attendance *at* the Community Food Matters Gathering was Ellison's Market.

Here's SueAnne Smith.

SueAnne Smith: So I'm currently employed with Ellison's Market in Nelson. It's a retail and wholesale outlet. Ellison's has been in business in Nelson for twenty years and it's seen many changes. It's sold lots of different things over the years. And now it primarily sells a big organic produce section. We have quite a few local growers that bring their food in. Right now we have got the famous Spicer carrots there.

What we'd like to see for the future is to have more and more local produce available there, and particularly things over the winter, which is as we all know is one of our challenges here.

Currently as well as the food - which we emphasize organic and natural - we have a big bulk section. We also have a lot of gardening supplies. We're continually expanding our sources for open pollinated and heirloom seeds. We have a huge number of seeds this year, and we have a few local seed producers that we have their seeds supplied through the store. Then, of course, because not everyone is a large-scale farmer with a truck, we have available manures and worm castings and various soil amendments that people can carry out to their car.

And certainly last Spring was my first Spring at Ellison's. The number of people coming in of all ages who have never gardened in their life and want to garden - it was quite remarkable. It was very warming for me to see the interest.

Jon Steinman: SueAnne Smith of Ellison's Market. Yet *another* business at the event was a unique one that we've featured here on the show before as part of our ongoing Conscientious Cooks series.

Nelson's Preserved Seed Café is run by a community of roughly thirty-five people that live and farm at Mount Sentinel Farm just outside city limits. Sharing their work at the gathering were Nadiv and Chets-Rashone.

Nadiv: Locally, some of you probably know us through our café – the Preserved Seed Café – and through Mount Sentinel Farm out at the Slocan Junction.

In the background of that - we're a spiritual community. We're about seven families right now, somewhere around thirty-five people, including children and single people. We're a very tight-knit community.

We have a manifesto that we published a little while ago. I'm just going to read you a few lines from that:

We're made up of people from different backgrounds and races from all over the world. We've all left everything behind to form tight-knit communities. The work is shared, the money is shared, and the possessions are shared all for the sake of the movement. In this environment there's amazing healing going on.

So locally ... well, actually we started as a people a little over thirty years ago. Locally, we came here to the Kootenays as one family eight years ago. We lived in a trailer and lived in a campground with the intentions of finding a place where we could live and start to build a community. We got a hold of a house that's now the Preserved Seed Café. We lived there for a very short time because it's a pretty small place. And then shortly after that we founded the farm that we call Mount Sentinel Farm now, it's a hundred and thirty acres.

During the eight years that we've been here, we've grown into a community which has become a pattern that we believe is part of a new paradigm that we think is essential to be able to deal with the root of the food issues on the planet. We believe that it is a cultural issue more than a food issue, but food is very important aspect of that. We all know that food is a social thing, too. People love to eat together and get together over food.

We've restored this farm partially. There's a lot more work to do. Our café is intricately connected with the farm. All of the food waste from the café goes back to the farm and is used for feeding chickens, composting. It sustains the land there so there's nothing wasted in the café.

I'm going to pass the baton to Chets-Rashone. He's going to tell you about the future.

Chets-Rashone: Nadiv, he touched on it: that we believe that food security has everything to do with community - has everything to do with the commitment to our relationships. That apart from that committal type relationship that a community has to have with each other, that food security is hard to find. We have what Nadiv was expressing: the relationship between our café and farm, that there is a certain amount of security there that we are learning how to build upon and grow – a certain pattern of bringing food from the farm that we run into the café and exchange back and forth.

And part of our long-term vision for this pattern that's been established out on Mount Sentinel Farm and at the café – as amazing as it might may sound – is to have hundreds of communities of this sort based on this same pattern in this regional area in which the same exchange will be taking place between businesses, farms and communities: people that are focused on learning how to be in committal relationships with each other. As a by-product, a food security would come from that. As a by-product, good soil would come from that. As a by-product, good food being served to the local populace comes from that.

There's so much to say but really at the core, like I said, what we believe is that sustainability is a commitment - a commitment to the community that is involved in food security.

Nadiv: One thing that I just wanted to add as well and, in just going a little bit further about what Chets-Rashone was talking about:

We have our own curriculum for teaching our children that is totally based on every aspect of our life. One of the things that we see as the greatest need to address this huge problem on the earth is there needs to be people who can lead in these realms by example and teach others. And so everything we do revolves around that which is raising up our children. And also people who come into the community – teaching them how to be those that can go out and bring people together and facilitate effective communication and cooperation and working together. So this is a little bit longer range but it's absolutely essential to just going beyond our generation.

Jon Steinman: This is Deconstructing Dinner – a weekly radio show and Podcast produced at Kootenay Co-op Radio CJLY in Nelson, British Columbia. We can be found on-line at deconstructingdinner.ca. I'm Jon Steinman.

We've been listening to the voices of the many groups and individuals who shared their work at the 2009 Community Food Matters Gathering in Nelson. On March 24th, and through our involvement with the Nelson-based food security group Community Food Matters, Deconstructing Dinner helped host and record the full-day event where over seventy people involved with the local food system gathered together to learn, to network and collaborate. Deconstructing Dinner chose to record the event with the hope that it *might* act as a resource for *other*

North American communities who are, just like Nelson, working on enhancing their local food system.

Part I of these recordings aired last week and if you missed that show, it has been archived on our website under the March 26th episode. Today's Part II of the recordings will take us to about the forty-five minute mark of the show, at which point we'll hear from the familiar Bucky Buckaw and his Backyard Chicken Broadcast.

Those last two voices you heard were Nadiv and Chets-Rashone of Mount Sentinel Farm and the Preserved Seed Café. They also are a part of one of the many positive outcomes that arose *out* of the Community Food Matters Gathering. As we heard on *last week's* episode, hotel and restaurant owner Ryan Martin commented on the *large* amount of compostable food waste produced by the two hotels he operates: the majority of that waste was being trucked out of the area by a disposal company. And when the Preserved Seed *Café* heard about this, they approached Ryan and have *since* been picking up that waste and bringing it out to their farm. Of course some of the food grown *on* that farm will end up *back* in the Café, thereby contributing to a much more sustainable food system than existed *pre-event*. And as *another* benefit, Ryan Martin's Hume Hotel and Best Western Hotel can now *forget* having to pay an *out-of-area* waste disposal company to pick up the waste, thereby *also* contributing a positive *economic* impact to the business community.

soundbite

Jon Steinman: If any of the presentations heard on today's and *last week's* broadcast are of interest to be explored further, we have posted *un-edited* audio *from* the event featuring the full five-minute presentations delivered by the over thirty-five groups who shared their work. Links to many of the groups are *also* posted on the site.

Well, in light of the backyard chicken craze that is now *sweeping* North America, any gathering of local food system advocates would *not* be complete without at least *one* backyard chicken enthusiast. And when Nelson resident Valerie Sanderson took the stage, it was clear that she *wasn't* the only one!

Valerie Sanderson: I've taken on spearheading an effort to legalize backyard chickens in Nelson. (*audience:* applause) All right. It's going to happen.

Okay. So currently there's a bylaw under animal control that allows only cats and dogs to live in the city limits besides humans. But chickens are legal in a number of B.C. municipalities including Victoria and now Vancouver. The bylaws in these jurisdictions – and that this group will be advocating for – have limits to the number of chickens allowed. They don't allow any sort of commercial ventures - so no selling eggs or meat and they don't allow roosters.

Some of the reasons that I decided to take this on are because my household wants to raise chickens and enjoy fresh eggs.

So far in this effort I have talked with two Councillors – Donna Macdonald and Kim Charlesworth, who's here. And I've spoken with the Mayor.

So Donna Macdonald and Kim Charlesworth are very much in support of backyard chickens. And I spoke with the Mayor, who was neutral and expressed concerns about how city departments would be affected by complaints; impact on local businesses; and that chickens could attract skunks and raccoons.

So we do need to deal with these issues. But in researching backyard chickens in other municipalities I've just found a remarkably low incidence of issues around them so it just seems like something that we need to do.

Jon Steinman: Valerie Sanderson. Also at the event was a familiar person to Deconstructing Dinner, Abra Brynne. Abra refers to herself as a Foodshed Animator.

Abra Brynne: I prefer the title of Foodshed Animator to other ones that I have been given, such as octopus - because I have a tentacle in everything going around food. And, basically, it's a great conversation starter as a title. It relates to the fact it was given to me by Cathleen Kneen a number of years ago, and to the fact that pretty much since I moved to the Kootenays in 1990 I have been involved with community development work of some sort, and focused pretty much exclusively on food and agriculture for about the last fifteen years. Having been doing it so long, I'm just connected to a heck of a lot of different things. I'm on more boards and committees than I can ever remember and do far too much volunteer work. But it's all so very important, this food stuff.

I support my activist habit through various paid contracts and I've been fortunate to pretty much always have them relate to food and agriculture. I am going to tell you about the two that I am currently working on. One has been titled the "project from hell" simply because it was incredibly ambitious and since I've started it last March it has completely taken over my life waking and sleeping. But it ends at the end of this month and I get to have a nervous breakdown on April 1st.

But the project is amazing. It's called "Building Community Food Security with Bits and Bytes," and the idea was to use technology across the region of Interior Health. It's an Interior Health project to support people doing food security initiatives of whatever sort in their community - not by moving people around but by using technology to do the knowledge transfer.

So we've worked with five communities in the Interior Health, including here in Castlegar - the Kootenay Food Strategy Society. We've developed a whole ton of

amazing resources over the course of the project – from instructional videos to a really great website. It is like the “be-all/end-all” food security website. It is a highly searchable website with a spider that looks at every word and every document so that if you’re looking for something as obscure as “compost tea” you can put it in there and you will find it. It’s bitandbytes.ca.

Other things that I have to tell you very quickly: I am a founding member of the B.C. Food Systems Network and the Communications Co-ordinator, and it is very much a bona fide network on the provincial level. And we have a website, a listserve and an annual gathering. This year it will be in Chehalis.

We also are developing an election tool kit for people that are both running for the election as well as those who are wanting to vote for them about food security. And that will be up on the website shortly.

Last but not least – and there are many more - I am one of two B.C. Animators for the People’s Food Policy Project, which is a national food and agriculture policy development project that was launched by Food Secure Canada based on the People’s Food Commission that took place in the seventies, I believe.

Jon Steinman: Abra Brynne. Now *some* of the groups represented at the 2009 Community Food Matters Gathering were co-operatives. And in light of Deconstructing Dinner being part of a co-operative and our ongoing coverage of the model as it relates to *food*, we made sure to invite the *newly*-formed Upper Columbia Co-operative Council to share *how* co-operatives can contribute to a viable local food system.

Here’s Board member Robert Agnew:

Robert Agnew: I was just going to come here to listen because I thought, “Boy, this is a good chance to find out what was going on.” And then yesterday I was asked to speak on behalf of the Upper Columbia Co-op Council, so I wrote a speech. But after listening today I think I’m going to have to recycle the speech because there’s a lot of really interesting ideas that have come here.

My name is Robert Agnew. I live on the Eastshore on a heritage farm. I’m a delegate from the Kootenay Lake Eastshore Eldercare Co-operative Association to the Upper Columbia Co-operative Council. And I’ve been a community and co-operative development person for about forty years. This heritage farm – I’m just taking a break from transplanting ground cover, and cutting fence posts, and doing rock work - but I’m not going to talk about that.

I’ve also been involved for fifteen years in the community’s garden project and recycling and composting and worm farm, and getting ready to move into our new LEEDs gold school that’s being built on the Eastshore in the next month or so - but I’m not going to talk about that either.

My main interest is in urban to rural migration, where urban expectations come into conflict with rural values - but I'm not going to talk about that either.

What have I got here? I've got a whole bunch of stuff. Oh, this is neat: *The Co-operative Model: How Credit Unions Survived the Crash* by Ralph Nader. "While the reckless giant banks are shattering like an over-heated glacier day by day, the nation's credit unions are a relative island of calm largely apart from the vortex of casino capitalism." And it goes on and on - you know Ralph Nader. But it points out that co-operation actually has the capacity to survive our economic challenges.

So, let's see. I have a question for you: how does co-operation improve the quality of your life? How does your co-operation with natural systems make your relationships to the land and the natural environment sustainable? How does co-operation improve the quality of the social relationships in your communities? Think about it.

The Upper Columbia Co-op Council was created a couple of years ago and incorporated last fall to help you think about co-operation, and how to connect you with others who are building co-operation in their daily lives.

And it says here, "Co-ops 101 – read fast." Oh, okay. A co-operative is an institutional expression of that value of co-operation. It's a way of extending the individual values of self-help and self-responsibility by working together with others towards a common good. The way those individual values are extended into an organization is through various forms of democratic participation. Through membership meetings each of you can exercise your right and responsibility to participate in decisions that will affect you and your community.

The measurable values that increase the level of that participation are equality, equity and solidarity. The ethical values that increase the quality of that participation are honesty, openness, social responsibility and demonstrated caring for all the people associated with the co-operative, and care for the physical environment and the community in which it operates to ensure sustainability.

Over the years a lot of creativity has been applied to generate a wide variety of co-operatives. There are over eighty incorporated co-operatives in the Kootenays. There are consumer co-operatives; for example, the Kootenay Country Store Co-operative. There are worker co-operatives, like the Kootenay Bakery Café Co-operative. There are producer and marketing co-operatives, like Craft Connection Co-operative.

In the next couple of years we hope to: *Hold events to bring together emerging, evolving and established co-operatives; Share experience, resources; Learn*

skills; Help build businesses, services and communities through co-operation. This could help landowners, farmers, affordable housing; Take initiatives to bring the wisdom of elders and the energy of youth together; Provide meaningful work, processing, increase capacity; Establish partnerships between the B.C. Co-operative Association, the B.C. Institute for Co-operative Studies, Selkirk College, the College of the Rockies, Columbia Basin Trust, and Community Futures to determine business feasibility and planning, and organizational viability. How co-operation could work on a practical level; Develop templates for land sharing, resource sharing, skills, security of tenure, barter, trade.

Co-operatives have a triple bottom line: economic; environmental; and social. So they are businesses but businesses that have social responsibility.

Jon Steinman: Robert Agnew of the Upper Columbia Co-operative Council. Again, links to all of the groups featured at the Community Food Matters Gathering will be posted on our website at deconstructingdinner.ca

Next up, we can look back to our March 5th episode and our Local Grain Revolution series. It was on that show when we featured members of the Kootenay Lake Sailing Association. And given their *new* involvement as part of the food system in the Nelson, B.C. area, they *too* were invited to share how they wish to *continue* to be involved.

Here's David Oosthuizen and Jay Blackmore:

David Oosthuizen: After hearing Robert, I think we're going to be known as the Kootenay Lake Sailing Co-operative from now on. (*audience:* laughter)

I just wanted to I guess introduce everyone to the Sailing Association and just go over a little bit of our history. We have been involved with the grain co-operative and transporting produce from Creston Valley up to Nelson, and Jay is going to talk about that.

But I just wanted to say that there's a large number of people in this area who are interested in sailing. With my involvement with the Sailing Club I know a huge percentage of those people are very much in support of the type of activities that are being discussed today. I think that sailing really lends itself to the type of understanding that a lot of the people here have. And that comes from the nature of the activity: being out on the lake and in tune with the elements. Sailors as a group – they very much care about the values of the people around them and the health of the ocean and the environment. I think that's where a lot of that care comes from.

And I'd like to introduce Jay Blackmore, who is the person who is coordinating our events around the food matters. I'll let Jay speak to that.

Jay Blackmore: It was close to a year ago last spring when Kelly and I just wrapped up our first winter here with our kids and we eagerly joined the Sailing Club. We wanted to get out into the community a little more. The racing was great and the cruising and sailing on the lake was fine but we felt that there was something more.

Last fall we were reading the local newspaper and saw that the Grain CSA was quite successful and they were projecting bringing many pounds of grain back to Nelson. And I started thinking, "Why truck it over the highest mountain pass in Canada, or come around on the big ferry and that, when we have this natural transportation corridor?"

So I talked to Jennie Barron and she put me in touch with Matt Lowe and really it all just fell together quite naturally from that point on. It came together rather quickly, just over a couple of weeks. We had probably seven or eight boats that were very interested in participating but because of other commitments and time constraints we were only able to get four boats.

As for the future, I think we are looking at a large number, or a larger number, of boats wanting to participate this year. So, if the Grain CSA will have us, I think we can move if not all then a very large proportion of the grain that will be coming this way.

One last thing that we have been discussing that hasn't proceeded past that but there are Sailing Club members that would be interested in moving other produce down the lake to Nelson if there are farms or growers that are interested. Please feel free to contact me and I would like to... well, I know my wife and I are really interested in doing that. With the sailors on the lake here, any excuse to go sailing is a really good excuse. (*audience:* laughter)

So there are possibilities. We would be willing to move any type of produce down the lake – once, twice, three or four times this summer. Maybe we could hook up with the local farmers' markets or sell it off the municipal dock - anything like that. So if there is any kind of interest, do please contact me.

Thank you all for all your efforts. It's been really appreciated.

Jon Steinman: Jay Blackmore and David Oosthuizen of the Kootenay Lake Sailing Association. And if you haven't yet heard our recordings *from* the October grain sailing trip, be sure to check it out under the March 5th 2009 episode.

And the last presenter we'll hear from as part of our series of recordings *from* the Community Food Matters Gathering is Jennie Barron. Jennie is a parent and volunteer at Nelson's Central School, and has been instrumental in helping create a school garden for the students.

Jennie Barron: We've been working on this since 2005. And Central as you know - some people think it was closed. I mean, it was closed as a regular school, but now it houses some alternative programs. So mainly there have been four classes of wild flower students – alternative program students - working on this garden.

In the space of, I don't know, a couple of years - but in terms of visibly, on the ground, just over a year - we transformed it from an all asphalt surface to a six thousand square foot grassy playing area, and vines on the fences, and nine raised garden beds and a shed and a tree. Four of those garden beds are for food production and the teachers have taken on the sort of perennial responsibility of using those and using the whole garden there as an outdoor classroom.

So we have four beds that are perennials and shrubs and things, and that does include some food producing things, like blueberries, and Saskatoon berry, and heritage cranberry, and some medicinal plants. Then in our food garden last year the kids grew garlic, nasturtiums, pole beans, corn, pumpkins – all heritage varieties. We were particularly delighted to see a couple of volunteer tomato plants come up and volunteer raspberries just come up. That's probably actually thanks to the compost that we got from Earth Matters. This is a part of our project that we were particularly proud of, just making all of these community connections but using the compost produced by Earth Matters Urban Composting Project, in which they got food waste from Baker Street from grocers in town and restaurants in town, took it down to the transfer station, composted it, and then we brought it up to Central. So it went like a couple of blocks that way and then a few blocks up this way. And it nourished our gardens so well. Between that and the donations of horse manure that we got, we had a very wild and overgrown garden last year, and it was perfectly suited to the type of students that go there.

Anyway, all of this culminated in making pumpkin pie, and so we have some great pictures and video. We just recently made a little twenty-minute sort of Movie Maker movie that is called "Recipe for Pumpkin Pie." The very first slide - very first cooking instruction - is "start with a hard, pre-baked crust." And that shows the asphalt, and it ends with kids eating the pie. They did everything - they were involved in every step of it: from tearing up the asphalt to baking the pies themselves. So that was really inspiring.

Anyway, as I leave, I just wanted to mention one more hat. I've been active in a little group called Kootenay Citizens for Alternatives to Pesticides for the last few years. We've been lobbying for this bylaw to restrict the cosmetic use of pesticides on lawns and gardens in Nelson. That is now in place, and we're doing some education around that.

As part of that we have got Carole Rubin coming to town on May 5th. She is the author of *How to Get Your Lawn & Garden Off Drugs* and *How to Get Your Lawn Off Grass*. And I think she's working on probably a new one.

So I would like to invite all those people that are interested in lawn conversion - turning your lawns into vegetable gardens and food-producing gardens - to come and see me because we will make it possible for you to bring a little display and promote what you're doing at that event. So it's about avoiding pesticides in the biggest possible way by avoiding lawns. Thank you very much.

Jon Steinman: Jennie Barron speaking about the garden at Nelson's Central School and her involvement in lobbying for the municipal pesticide ban now in place in the city.

Now there were a number of other presentations *not* heard as part of our recordings featured *from* the Community Food Matters Gathering. Of course, one of those presentations was from the familiar G.E. Free Kootenays campaign, which regular listeners of Deconstructing Dinner should already be familiar with. And again, if you *would* like to listen in on *unedited* audio from the event, you can do so on our website at deconstructingdinner.ca, posted under the March 26th and April 2nd episodes. You'll also find links to the many groups featured at the event.

The 2009 Community Food Matters Gathering would *not* have been possible without the support from the Community Food Action Initiative in partnership with Interior Health, as well as the Kootenay Country Store Co-operative, Oso Negro Coffee and the Preserved Seed Café.

soundbite

Jon Steinman: Rounding off our broadcast today, Part VI of our ongoing features on backyard chickens that we've been airing as part of the larger Farming in the City series.

We'll hear once again from Boise Community Radio's Bucky Buckaw, who will share insights into what *he* says is the "*ill-conceived*" tradition of giving chicks to young children for Easter.

And to *introduce* Bucky Buckaw, here's a quick tune from the well-known Ray Stevens. This one appears on *The Best of Ray Stevens* released on Rhino Records.

Song – “In the Mood,” by Ray Stevens, from the album *Best of Ray Stevens* (Rhino Records) (*a clucked rendition*)

Bucky Buckaw: Bucky Buckaw here with the Backyard Chicken Broadcast. Easter's round the bend, and baby chicks as a theme and decorations and a commodity for sale are suddenly appearing everywhere. Now I really don't know how the Christian holiday of Easter and baby chicks got tied up together, but it's pretty obvious there's no formal relationship. I do know some people make credible claims that decorating eggs and giving them as gifts or hiding them for kids to find, as well as various other activities with newborn fowl, are rooted in Pagan celebration of Spring and fertility - even if such claims are contested by people who like to keep their traditions and beliefs strictly segregated.

At any rate, I will say that the seasonal interest in chickens does make a certain amount of common sense. Most of us backyard farmers are starting to see a regular supply of eggs as a part of the change of season. Even with Easter coming a bit early during a cold winter, some hens have been laying just long enough to gather a clutch and attempt to hatch them. For many small and hobby farmers the first chicks of the year will be born just around now, and that alone certainly is cause to celebrate. It's also time to start planting one's vegetable garden. And getting started with chicks means they'll be doing a lot of the prep work for you - preemptively eating earwigs, doodlebugs and other pests; tilling soil with their hunting and pecking; and fertilizing the soil with their poo.

If you're serious about getting started with chickens - seriously ready to start raising chickens for life as companions for their valuable manure, for pest control and for eggs - Spring and Easter is a pretty appropriate time for just that new beginning. On the other hand, I do hope that anyone who gets started on chicks is truly committed to the responsibility. Ideally, anyone adopting or buying a chick is ready to pursue the Bucky Buckaw agenda of resisting the corporate takeover of our ability to feed ourselves through the pursuit of backyard chickenry. Either way, I must discourage you from buying a chick on an impulse as some kind of disposable toy of the week for a young child. There are things that are perfectly appropriate to do on impulse: spontaneously showing affection to a loved one; buying a copy of Pravda at the news stand to read the editorial on American foreign policy and find out about the bat-boy of Siberia; doing an impromptu piece of anti-genetically modified food performance art in the aisles of your local grocery store. But not buying a living thing as a gift for somebody; that is not a good thing to do on impulse.

If you know chickens like I do, you know that baby chickens are needy and full of fear. They need a lot of attention and, although easy to raise in many ways, can also be too delicate for a young child. I shouldn't have to tell you that it's cruel to give a living thing to a small child as if it's a toy that the child might squeeze to death or kill from neglect. It's also cruel to raise a chick for awhile as a sort of experiment and then when it gets too big abandon it somewhere where it will not be able to fend for itself.

And although the process of dyeing baby chicks unnatural colours is shrouded in mystery, and it is unclear just how cruel it really is, it certainly is an insult to the natural beauty of the many colours and varieties of chicken breeds available in the world. Is this the season to turn your back on nature's diversity in order to create a Kool-Aid coloured animal? No, chickens deserve respect and proper treatment in exchange for all the benefits they provide humanity.

Finally, I'd like to say a few words about the source of any chicks you may choose to adopt. I've talked about the abuses of factory farms on this show several times before so I won't go into too much detail. But just in case this is your first time hearing it: conventional hatcheries, egg farms and meat producers who all do side businesses in the seasonal pet store trade are guilty of extreme overcrowding, painful and senseless debeaking, substandard diets, and excessive medication. And you don't want to support that, do you?

And you should also know that birds from factory farms run a high risk of salmonella. So that cute baby chick from a factory farm is likely to make you pretty sick just from handling it.

The same goes for any eggs you might think about colouring. Do you really want to celebrate the renewal of life that is Spring or the Christian holiday of Easter by buying a bunch of factory eggs that are brought to you at the cost of animal suffering? And do you really want to commit to eating all the factory-produced eggs that you coloured knowing that those eggs are going to be lower in nutrition and higher in cholesterol than eggs raised the proper way - in a true free-range environment?

Now, don't get too down. And don't go saying Bucky Buckaw doesn't know how to entertain whimsy or have fun. What's a lot more fun and in the spirit of the season is to pass by the sterile fluorescent-lit store and visit instead a small-scale or hobby farm where you can see chickens in the kind of setting that inspires, or adopt a bird that needs a home from ASPCA. These places might not be as easy to find as the local pet or feed supply chain store but a quick look in the paper or a few inquiries from your friends and neighbours and I guarantee you'll find a backyard chickener just a stone's throw from wherever you live. Believe me, we're everywhere.

And in a season that for much of the population takes note of a purported miracle, consider the modern day miracle of raising food in the midst of a suburban or urban environment. Because having chickens in your outdoor space is legal in more places than not, from Portland, Maine to Portland, Oregon, including big cities like San Francisco and New York.

This is Bucky Buckaw. I had a good time.

Bucky Buckaw's Backyard Chicken Broadcast is produced by the Sagebrush Variety Show with support from Boise Community Radio and the Green Institute. For more information, visit Buckybuckaw.org.

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.

Support for the program can be donated through our website at deconstructingdinner.ca or by dialing 250-352-9600.