

**Show Transcript
Deconstructing Dinner
Kootenay Co-op Radio CJLY
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**Title: Deconstructing Dinner in our Schools III (Ryerson University) /
Backyard Chickens VIII**

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Transcript - Sarah Sherman**

Jon Steinman: And welcome to Deconstructing Dinner, produced in Nelson, British Columbia at Kootenay Co-op Radio CJLY. I'm Jon Steinman and today we'll be revisiting with *two* of our ongoing series here on the show, Backyard Chickens as part of our Farming in the City series and Deconstructing Dinner in our Schools – a series that admittedly does *not* receive as *much* attention as it deserves.

But having just returned from a two-week trip to Ontario and Quebec, I had the opportunity to sit down with Cecilia Rocha an Associate Professor in the School of Nutrition at Toronto's Ryerson University. Cecilia teaches Food Policy and Economics of Food Security. Listeners of Deconstructing Dinner are likely familiar with Ryerson University, as it's the University's G. Raymond Chang School of Continuing Education that has been a long-time supporter of the show. The school offers a certificate in food security and we'll be learning about that and some of Cecilia's work at the beginning of today's episode.

And then we'll move on to the familiar Bucky Buckaw and his Backyard Chicken Broadcast. Bucky produces his backyard chicken segments out of Radio Boise in Boise Idaho and we've been featuring his segments here on the show since March 2008. Today, Bucky will share his wisdom on topics such as swine flu, how to approach neighbours before beginning to raise your backyard flock, and some interesting facts on the Serama chicken – said to be the world's smallest.

increase music and fade out

Jon Steinman: A few mentions before we visit with Ryerson University's Cecilia Rocha. One section of our website at deconstructingdinner.ca that *might* be of interest to check out and which has *never* been mentioned here on the show, is found on the "about" page of the site and under the heading "in the news". Since this show first began airing, we've been documenting, as much as we possibly can, the instances where Deconstructing Dinner *itself* contributes to or becomes a component of *other* media, instead of our more usual role of creating it. A wealth of links to news articles and radio and podcast interviews are linked to

from that section and it's certainly something to check out, again, that's the "about" page at deconstructingdinner.ca

And we also continue to encourage listeners to contact us and donate your time to transcribe broadcasts. For about a year now, we've been doing our best to transcribe some of our most *important* episodes in order to offer them in print formats. The one's now posted on our site have all been prepared by volunteers from around the world and if this is something that *you too* would like to contribute your time to, send us an email at deconstructingdinner@cjly.net and we can work with you on how to get started.

And if it's not *time* you have to donate, we are of course always in need of financial support from our listeners as well and we view listener support as the most sustainable and secure form of funding to ensure we can continue producing this unique radio show covering such an important subject. A number of options on *how* to donate are available on our website including a *subscription* option that makes it easy to automatically donate to the show each month. Info on those options is found on our site deconstructingdinner.ca, or you can call 250-352-9600 to learn how to send a cheque or money-order.

soundbite

Jon Steinman: For a number of years now, Deconstructing Dinner has received support from Ryerson University in Toronto and their G. Raymond Chang School of Continuing Education. The school is one of only a few in the world offering a *formal* education on the same subject matter of Deconstructing Dinner – food security.

To learn more *about* the school, I sat down with Cecilia Rocha, an Associate Professor in the School of Nutrition. Cecilia is also very active in initiatives involving collaboration between academia and practitioners in Canada and in Brazil (her native country). She has volunteered as a member of the Oxfam-Canada Food and Trade Policy Working Group (2003-2005), is a member of the Toronto Food Policy Council (since 2006), the coordinator of the Betinho Project, a partnership between the University, the Stop Community Food Centre, the Toronto Food Policy Council, FoodShare, and a number of volunteers from the Brazilian community in Canada.

Her current research interests include assessing the social efficiency of food security initiatives and programs, the role of civil society in governance for food security, and food security issues among immigrant groups in Toronto. Cecilia is *also* the Director of the CIDA-UPCD project known as *Building Capacity in Food Security in Brazil and Angola*, and is a collaborator in the CIDA-UPCD project *Urban Food Security and HIV-AIDS in Southern Africa*, led by the Southern African Research Centre at Queen's University.

Much of her work, as will be the focus today, revolves around her role as the Director of the University's Centre for Studies in Food Security – established in 1994. The Centre takes an interdisciplinary and systemic approach to social justice, environmental, health and socio-cultural aspects of food security. It's one of the only centres with such a devoted focus to the subject and we'll learn more in just a moment about its role in *contributing* to the creation and ongoing support of the on-line distance education certificate program, but first, a glimpse into the Centre itself and Cecilia's work. Among the many topics we discussed, she shared what is likely one of *the* most interesting topics out there in the world of food security today and one we've mentioned here on the show before, Belo Horizonte, Brazil – a city of 2.5 million people said to be the only one in the world that is aggressively tackling food issues on a *policy* level. Cecilia has been very involved in working with and researching the efforts there for over ten years and this story provides just one example of the many subjects addressed as part of the certificate in food security offered at the school.

Cecilia Rocha: At the center we have a number of different projects that we work on and I am from Brazil and so I have been developing a research project with Brazilian partners for a number of years now. One of the projects I'm involved in is the study of the City of Belo Horizonte and the food security programs that that city government has developed since the early 90s. It has been very interesting because I don't think there's any other city in the world that has had such comprehensive programing developed.

Belo Horizonte has turned into a, I wouldn't say a model, because it's difficult to translate everything everywhere in the world, but as an example of what can be done. In particular in terms of policy, in terms of local policy.

Jon Steinman: It's certainly a rather foreign concept - to imagine a municipal government tackling issues of food security, but indeed this is exactly what Belo Horizonte is in the ongoing process of doing. Cecilia shares her thoughts on this unique role being taken by their municipal government.

Cecilia Rocha: It is unique first of all because it's policy. I think there have been a number of cities, including Toronto and many other cities, in North America and other places where you have had some very interesting programs in food security but they are not part of a comprehensive effort. Belo Horizonte is the only one, the only place I've ever heard of that has a comprehensive policy in food security.

They started in '94 with a new government that was elected in the city that had a platform of food security as a priority. And the mayor was very much behind that. And through that they created a department that developed all those policies and programs. Through that, they have had a number of very interesting results such as reduction in infant mortality rates, reduction of malnutrition in the city. They are one of the few major cities in Brazil where the sale of fruits and vegetables

increased instead of decreasing. They developed a number of alternative ways of people accessing food. For example they have popular restaurants, they have about four popular restaurants government run that are example of how to run government programs efficiently with nutritious food for everybody.

They have alternative outlets for sale of fruits and vegetables where they control some of the prices for some items. So there are a number of different programs. And this was all possible because of very conscious government policy.

Jon Steinman: Cecilia has of course worked with many *other* academics and researches throughout the 10 years she's been involved with the work in Belo Horizonte, and *one* of those researchers has been Jahi Chappell, a recent *guest* on Deconstructing Dinner and co-author of the University of Michigan study – Organic Agriculture and the Global Food Supply. When I spoke *with* Jahi *about* that study, he spoke about his thesis research *in* Belo Horizonte, and the impact that those municipal policies have had on local *agriculture*.

Jahi Chappell: My actual thesis research myself was on the food system in Brazil in a city of two and a half million people called Belo Horizonte, and they have a food program that they started about 15 years ago, a series of food programs, that have really cut hunger by 50% if not 75% and increased the amount of equity in the city as far as access to food across the different income classes. And they work with local farmers in the Atlantic rainforest. So I was looking if their work with the local farmers has actually had a positive effect for the environment while at the same time helping people get better access to food. The short answer is it looks like it does, though that definitely is an early result.

Jon Steinman: Jahi Chappell of Cornell University.

With the city of Belo Horizonte leading the way among cities of the world who are addressing food security at a local level, the question for those of us *here* in North America becomes, could such a model be applied here as well? Cecilia believes it could, *but*, not until various levels of government *first* believe that they *should* be assuming a greater responsibility within the food system

Cecilia Rocha: I think it's always possible. I think that what the example Belo Horizonte says is that it's always possible. But it requires a number of things and one of which I believe is an acceptance of a larger government role in the food system. We don't have that yet here. We don't have this mindset that it is acceptable to have a more proactive government in the food sector.

What happened in Belo Horizonte was to early on recognize that there are a lot of things that will not happen without the government. I don't think we got to this point yet. I think we're still hoping we're still trusting that the market system, or whatever way the food system is structured can solve the problems that we have.

I think in Brazil people were more willing to accept that this was not the case and that there was a need for government intervention.

So it is a model but we need to have the ground ready for it.

Jon Steinman: This is Deconstructing Dinner.

Now we've already seen the rather intense response to this idea of more government involvement in regulating and influencing the market. Of course this opposition has come from the private sector and those who support so-called free-market capitalism. And so in light of the efforts in Belo Horizonte to *construct* and *manage* four restaurants *in* the city that offer cheap and nutritious food to any resident *of* the city, I asked Cecilia what type of opposition took place there *to* this government-led competition.

Cecilia Rocha: Yes, there was. Now, this is very much local right? So it's in one city and so the opposition that they got was from, for example, when they were trying to set up the popular restaurant, which is government run. The opposition was from small businesses around that area because they were going to lose their customers. You have to have very strong public policy argument for those things. You have to be ready to respond to this, saying that the gains outweigh the losses and that's how you proceed with policy. And I think they did. I think they did their homework. They had a very, very good group of people in that department. Some of them were academics. The first director of the department was an economist and she knew public policy and she knew the arguments for efficient and effective public policy.

Now, of course, this is ongoing in Belo Horizonte and we don't know if some of this were to be extended, more nationally as the current government is trying to do in Brazil, how much of an opposition we would have from industry, from business. But I don't know, in Brazil they seem to be able to do much more than we have been able to do here. And I think again it's because there are more people there that accept this role of government.

Jon Steinman: Certainly an inspiring example of the role governments around the world might choose to play so long as political will is strong.

Here in *North America*, there are too *many* cities who have, in a smaller way, begun to pay *attention* to this topic of food security. One of those cities is Toronto, and Cecilia is now involved with a newly-formed committee there examining how a city-wide food security strategy might be formed. I asked her if her work in Brazil might assist her as part of her efforts in Toronto.

Cecilia Rocha: The committee was set up by the Medical Officer of Health in Toronto to look at recommendations for a Toronto food strategy. It's a steering group composed of individuals not organizations that will advise the Toronto

public health on developing a document to be presented to the board, the board of health, and eventually to Toronto city council.

There are parallels in the sense that it is supposed to be a city strategy, so it should be comprehensive. But again, I think we are dealing with the different times and different places so how much we can accomplish in Toronto, of course the needs are different as well so we'll see. But yes, I see parallel.

Jon Steinman: Cecilia Rocha of Ryerson University's Centre for Studies in Food Security in Toronto.

Cecilia's work in Brazil and Toronto act as just a couple of examples of the type of subjects that the Centre addresses and as was the focus for our conversation – the Centre collaborated years ago with Ryerson's G. Raymond Chang School of Continuing Education to form a *certificate* program in food security. The predominantly *on-line* courses were developed by Cecilia alongside other notable Canadian food security leaders, Mustafa Koc, Rod Macrae and Jennifer Welsh.

When the program was conceived, the group scoured the globe to find out if any *other* like-minded programs on food security might help them in creating *their* curriculum.

Cecilia Rocha: We looked at some other programs in North America, in Canada, in the United States and even some programs in Europe. And there are very few educational programs, either undergraduate or graduate that deals with this interdisciplinary aspect of food and the food system and food issues in general. So this was unique. And I think it continues to be. I don't think that there are that many programs out there that offer this systemic interdisciplinary and in a way I think also policy driven type of program that we have here.

Jon Steinman: Cecilia shares how the certificate program is structured, who it's for, and why it's so important for the content to be able to reach out across disciplines.

Cecilia Rocha: The structure for the certificate is that students would take three core courses and then three electives. It is intended as post-degree certificate meaning that you have to have at least two or three years of undergraduate university. But it is intended as added education to undergraduate education. So most of our students are either senior undergraduate students. So we do have a number of students in Nutrition or Social Work, Environmental Studies. But they have to do some extra courses to get the certificate. But also people that have been working in areas related to food security. So we do have a few students that we evaluate their work experience as a requirement to get into the certificate.

The intention was, at the time, we were recognizing this need for some form of education in an area where people were working but never had any formal education on. So we think we created the opportunity for people to come together, to see where what they were doing could fit in a broader set of knowledge or thinking. So that was the idea.

Being online also created the opportunity not only to have students from without Canada, but also international students and that was an added bonus, we thought, to the program.

I still think that most of our students are from the Toronto area but we have had students from all over Canada and even from other countries. It brings something quite unique to the courses because discussing a particular issue from the perspectives of different localities, it's quite interesting.

Jon Steinman: The courses offered as part of Ryerson's food security certificate program are very much determined by the level of enrollment and the *interests* of those enrolled. Cecilia provides examples of some of these courses.

Cecilia Rocha: First just a general idea of principles and concepts in food security. So this is our core course. All the students will come and take that course. We tend to divide this into the five "A's" of food security and by the systemic approach. The Availability of food, Accessibility, Adequacy, Acceptability and Agency, which is where we want to get at.

The second core course that we have is the one of policy. Policy and programs in food security. And the third is one on methodology and some of the ways that people try to research and study food security issues.

Once students complete those three core courses we have a number of electives. Depending on the students interest, they can either go more toward, for example nutrition, or we have a number of courses in urban agriculture, so students can take those. So there are a variety of electives. We have one that's very popular now that we didn't have when we started, since we introduced it two years ago. The gender and food security. It's a very important and good elective as well.

Jon Steinman: The on-line courses are led by a handful of instructors and Cecilia Rocha does instruct *one* of the core courses titled "Concepts and Principles in Food Security."

Cecilia Rocha: In my own course, the course is structured so that we cover issues related to availability of food. So the production of food, agriculture and things like that and accessibility and all this. Topics it varies depending on the student's interest. We have covered, for example, the issue of localization and globalization seems to be a popular one lately. There are lots of students that

have looked into food security issues of aboriginal peoples in Canada. Some students looked at the organic food movement, GMOs, I had some students looking at food advertising to children, for example.

Jon Steinman: Cecilia Rocha.

This is Deconstructing Dinner and Part III of our ongoing series Deconstructing Dinner in our Schools. This episode is learning of one of the show's longtime supporters Ryerson University and their G. Raymond Chang School of Continuing Education's Certificate in Food Security.

Based in Toronto, Cecilia Rocha is the Director of the Centre for Studies in Food Security and an Associate Professor in the School of Nutrition. As I wrapped up my conversation with Cecilia during my recent visit to Toronto, she commented on the role of educational institutions abroad in addressing this increasingly important subject of food and the systemic issues facing our global and local food systems.

Cecilia Rocha: Even though there is a greater interest in food and a greater understanding we are dealing with the questions that are systemic, that's not punctual. The education institutions have not responded as fast and that's because they are institutions and it takes a while for them to get the right structure to move on on new issues and new things. So I think we still need more on that, we still need more education, more research, more discussion on those issues. I think the certificate has played and continues to play a very important role here. And in particular for people who are already working in this area. And have not had the opportunity to get any type of formal education and feels this need to get a little bit more knowledgeable about those issues. And the certificate is there and we'll continue to be there for those. But I would say that the students just coming out of high school, may be very interested in studying food and they don't have yet a clear path to follow. And then more graduate programs that would focus on this as well. So I think there is room for quite a lot still to come in terms of education.

soundbite

Jon Steinman: Today's broadcast of Deconstructing Dinner is archived on our website at deconstructingdinner.ca and posted under the June 18th 2009 episode. You can learn more about the G. Raymond Chang School of Continuing Education's on-line distance-education certificate in food security by visiting ryerson.ca/ce/foodsecurity and more information on the *Centre* for Studies in Food Security can be found at ryerson.ca/foodsecurity.

Taking us to the end of today's episode we drop in on another one of our ongoing series, Backyard Chickens – a subject we've been covering as part of our Farming in the City series. Regular listeners likely are already quite familiar with

the *star* of the backyard chickens episodes – Bucky Buckaw of the Sagebrush Variety Show based at Radio Boise in Boise, Idaho. Episodes are *sometimes* recorded in New York City.

In light of recent fears over Swine Flu and the *connections* such an outbreak might have to the factory farming models dominating our food system, the subject piqued Bucky's interest, and he prepared a humorous analysis on this latest question mark that's been placed above the global food supply of industrial meat and animal products.

Bucky Buckaw: This is Bucky Buckaw with the Backyard Chicken broadcast. Recently I was walking down a New York City street during my lunch hour and I confess for once I wasn't thinking about Backyard Chickens until someone sneezed. Why did someone sneezing make me think of Backyard Chickens? Well I'll get to that. The poor fellow who was sneezing into his hands was immediately scolded by two random passerbys apparently not associated except by age and coinciding time and space factor. They simultaneously spoke "Sneeze into your sleeve!" "You are going to give us Swine Flu." In New York style the Sneezer replied, "You gotta problem with my sneezing style?" Really. Just like that. Senior citizens came back and said, "Don't you know if you sneeze into your hands and then go and touch everything, you'll get your germs *everywhere*? There's Swine Flu going around! There's Swine Flu going around!!" "Yeah" I couldn't resist jumping in, "Everyone is sneezing. It's the pollen count, not Swine Flu." They all glared at me and walked off in their separate directions. What I was about to say, and wouldn't mind explaining why a New York city sneeze and insult exchange made me think of Backyard Chickens, is this:

It's mind boggling paranoid to walk around, especially in a population centre like New York city, worrying that everyone is going to sneeze or breathe Swine Flu on their hands and then rub them all over a handrail which will then transmit the disease to whoever. But what's worse is that it's useless and unfounded. If you have to point the finger for virulent flu strains you should point it at factory farms and the people who support them with their consumer dollars.

That might be you. What we've mostly been hearing, ever since this strain of Swine Flu hit New York City and caused human fatalities, is something like, "Although this aggressive flu strain that should keep you glued to our news network in desperate fear for breaking info is called 'Swine Flu' there's no *known* connection to pig farms and you should keep on buying meat. Wash your hands a lot." Of course, that's my paraphrase of the mainstream media reiteration of what the United States and Mexican government spokes people were saying after they talked to industrial pork sellers. WIRED magazine scratched around a little more than some of the rest and in May 2009 printed an article that found plenty of credible science that said otherwise. Geneticists recognized all along that the DNA composition of viruses taken from Swine Flu victims revealed its parentage to a union of North American and Eurasian Swine Flu strains. Then

Columbia University biomedical informaticist, Raul Rabadan posted to ProMed, a public health mailing list, his discovery that six of the genes in Swine Flu look to be descendant from H1N2 and H3N2 Swine Virus, isolated since 1998 in North Carolina pretty much right at the moment when the state raised its hog production from two million to ten million annually on a handful of immense confined farms.

By the way an informaticist is a new profession for folks with lots of training in computer data analysis, medicine and medical treatments. It's interesting to note that the outbreak first spread near a ginormous hog factory in La Gloria Mexico owned by the largest US corn producer with a history as a notorious polluter. As I've said on the Backyard Chicken broadcast before concerning Avian Flu, it's well known that Flu mutates and spreads with glee in crowded, stressed conditions. We've known it at least since 1918 when trench warfare was the breeding ground for the Spanish Influenza, which is related to our contemporary Avian Flu of recent legend.

Why a centralized means of food production, reproducing those conditions, is used today is one of my main questions to anyone doubting the wisdom of backyard chickening. But industry does not acknowledge this reality. Indeed, they may manage to secure the cooperation of the World Health Organization, former supporters of decentralized agriculture, in responding to flu outbreaks by discouraging small scale agriculture and speaking incessantly of wild birds, even though wild birds with flu don't fly because they're dead or nearly dead. And avian flu has been shown to follow the rail lines transporting fowl from factory farm to factory farm. Backyard chickens ain't in it.

Now that celebrities like Jim Carry are spotlighting the possible link it's getting a little more attention and the denials on the other side are ramping up. But ultimately the argument about who first got the Swine Flu and who gave it to who, just like the germ gossip around the water cooler, is really not the essential part of the story. It just seems like common sense to me that there's something wrong with the model of creating a mass production, centralized form of food production that's basically a disease laboratory and treated with antibiotics that in the end culture ever stronger pathogens.

So the best response to bird flu, swine flu, whatever flu you got, and there will be a new one before long, is to stop buying grocery store meat from factory farms and start getting ones protein from vegetable sources, backyard eggs, or if you can stand to slaughter your own cute little chickens, backyard chicken meat. As for swine flu, I know few backyards are suitable for pig raising, even for those so called miniature pot-bellied pigs, they're certainly not as "neighbour friendly" and much less frequently legal as chickens. And although pigs will eat chicken scraps, they require more than a small family is likely to produce, and they sure don't eat ear wigs out of your garden the way chickens do.

There are many good reasons why, even though I've always found pigs adorable, I never tried raising them in any city. And why my name is Bucky Buckaw, and not Oinky McSquiggle. But if you can't get pig meat from some small farm nearby, which is probably near impossible now-a-days, you should, as I just said, consider getting your protein from vegetable sources, backyard eggs, or if you can stand to slaughter your own cute little chickens, backyard chicken meat. Unfortunately, the New York second a person has to explain a thing to a stranger in this city, and many others, was not enough to pass that info along the day I witnessed the sneeze. It does give me hope however, that many New Yorkers do understand about small and local agriculture as evidenced by their profusion of farmers markets and community gardens, many with chickens, here in New York, and many cities, where the Backyard Chicken broadcast is syndicated from Vermont to New Hampshire from Idaho to Oregon, I get email that reminds me the path of true food security is being pursued nationwide. And that makes me think that even if I am preaching mostly to the converted somehow the word is getting out. So keep on chickening and make sure your friends and neighbors know *why* you're chickening, that'll do a lot more than training yourself to sneeze according to germaphobic specifications.

This has been 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.

Song – “Food Scandal” by Macka B, from the album *Buppie Culture* recorded in 1989

Now I get to understand that the majority of eggs in England contain Salmonella and if you don't cook the egg good

Food Scandal, hey hey hey, in England (repeat)

The egg get em problem (repeat)

Englishman, when you cook the food you must cook the food good.
No eat the real meat with the blood, when you cook the food you must cook it thoroughly.
No me find Salmonella on the egg properly
Come on the tele, the whole of England worry,
She say “most of the egg in this country have a little bit of Salmonella in it.
Said they bad for the young and for the elderly them say only eat the egg if it cooked properly.”

It affect mostly white people not no black because most black people cook their food properly.

Soft boil, no we don't eat like that. 10 second and it's scramble, we no eat like that. 10 second and it fried, we no eat like that.

When black people fry the egg, and it's both side blank, me say first fry the bottom and then fry the top.

Some white people fry the egg one side, then stop.

Food Scandal, hey hey hey, in England

Salmonella in the egg, listeria in soft cheese, bacteria in other food. Can't even trust the tap water.

We want quality and not quantity. We want the food to be bacteria free. Just give me the food that is more natural 'cause sometimes we're eating pure chemicals. Stop, fill up the food with artificial additives AND those unnatural substances, then not think about the consequences, until the people catch diseases.

Food scandal, hey hey hey, in England.
No ideas you have in mind.

Food Scandal, hey hey hey, in England.
No ideas have you in mind why.

Next time you go shopping at the supermarket don't just put it in your trolley look on the packet, take off your eyeglasses and read it. Have a look at what the people are putting in it. If it having too much additives no bother with it. Put it back on the shelf, choose a different packet. Pollution everywhere you can't get away from it, that no mean you no add more to it.

Food Scandal, hey hey hey, in England.

Jon Steinman: Food Scandal by the UK's Macka B recorded in 1989 on the album Buppie Culture.

This is Deconstructing Dinner a weekly one-hour radio show and podcast produced at Kootenay Co-op Radio CJLY in Nelson, British Columbia. I'm Jon Steinman. You're tuned into Part 8 of our ongoing Backyard Chickens series featuring Bucky Buckaw of Radio Boise. Bucky maintains a pretty committed agenda of enlightening the masses to the threats of the industrial food system. Bucky believes Backyard Chickens are a powerful answer to the environmental, health and animal welfare concerns stemming from the factory style raising of eggs.

Now Deconstructing Dinner was just on the road, delivering a few talks in the cities of Kingston and Ottawa, Ontario and it was there in Ottawa, that my hosts had just adopted two backyard chickens in the heart of the city. As this was a rather dense and urban backyard with many neighbours, the first question to fly

out of my mouth was, what about the neighbours, what do they think? Sure enough, the neighbours were not only ok with it, they regularly come by for visits and they bring the kids too. This neighbourly topic forms the basis for this next episode of Bucky Buckaw and his Backyard Chicken Broadcast.

Bucky Buckaw: This is Bucky Buckaw with the Backyard Chickens broadcast.

I was at a little soiree with a couple of New Yorkers recently who knew about the Backyard Chicken broadcast. One of them approached me and said, “Dude, I really want to get chickens in my backyard. My wife’s involved in the community supported agriculture in our neighbourhood and we want to live sustainably and all that. We’re just figuring out how can we talk our neighbours into it?”

This is one of the five most common remarks people make to me. And it’s really a combination of all the most common remarks. Meaning, “I’m worried that chickens in my backyard will be noisy, unsightly, unhygienic, or chaotic.” As far as the neighbors are concerned, I’m no psychologist, but it sounds like those folks are projecting. Because if you really know your facts about chickens and are truly confident about getting started with them, I suspect you wouldn’t be worried about neighbours at all. The only time anybody needs to worry about how your neighbours feel about chickens on the property is if you live in one of the cities, towns or neighborhoods where chickening is prohibited. Most cities do allow chickens. The list of chicken friendly cities include Boise Idaho, Portland Oregon, San Francisco and New York and many more. You can google “chicken laws” for a list. In the case of places where it’s not strictly legal like, surprisingly, a lot of Canadian cities, you might, depending on your personality, want to be an outlaw chickener until those ill-informed laws and codes can be changed. And if so, you will definitely want the cooperation of your neighbours who, if disgruntled, can put an end to your chickening ambitions with one phone call.

In cases where you really do need your neighbours blessing, I’ll get to what you can say or do to try to get them on board the Bucky Buckaw agenda. But first, I’d like to pose the rhetorical question, “would you ask your neighbours or would your neighbours ask you for permission before: planting a rose garden? installing a swimming pool? buying a motorcycle? adopting a dog? or having children?” If not, why not? Because the fact is, all those things I mentioned are potentially noisy, smelly, a public health hazard or simply chaotic. And as with chickens, when approached responsibly, none of those choices *are* an intrusion on the rights of neighbors. People don’t ask for permission because those things are the norm. And a Buck Buckaw agenda is that small flocks of chickens in suitable yards and gardens across North America should be the norm as well. It was the norm in towns, cities and even suburbs until as little as half a century ago and is still the norm on much of the planet. Chickens provide non-toxic pest and weed control, super charge a garden with their nutrient rich and compost accelerating poop and are charming as heck. And they provide fresh, nutritious, delicious eggs. And sometimes meat, without the need for factory farms, and corporate

distribution networks that waste energy and generate pollution. Why should you ask permission from your neighbours for improving your own, and even their, quality of life.

I understand wanting to be on good terms with neighbours. But from a strategic point of view, if you ask for permission first, you'll be putting ideas in their heads that there will be noise, odor, germs or chaos. If you discretely start up with chickens, chances are they won't even notice right away. I know of many chickeners who raised two or three hens for weeks, or even months, before the neighbours figured it out. When they do figure it out you can say, "Well, you haven't noticed yet, if you have a complaint let me know and we'll address it."

The worst case scenario would be that you would have to abandon your experiment, finding new homes or even eating your flock. But I think that's highly unlikely and you'll never know if you don't try.

What's more likely is that your neighbours will be fascinated and delighted with your chickens and will even take pride in the fact that they live in a chickening neighbourhood. In some neighbourhoods, such as the Red Hook neighbourhood in Brooklyn New York who I plan to profile in a future show, they will be inspired by your example to have chickens of their own. One suggestion I hear from other chickeners is "offer to share the eggs with them." I'm not entirely keen on that because in my experience, 3-4 hens laying an average of 5 eggs a week, roughly 10 months of the year will not lay enough for you to share. Especially if you get the smaller breeds of chickens I usually recommend for urban chickeners. Perhaps you can offer to share some of the increased vegetable yield you'll get with them. Or offer to share some of your chicken poop fertilizer. Personally, I wouldn't make any promises I might not be able to keep. Bribery is rarely a sustainable strategy in community building. I'd focus on allaying their fears and maybe surprise them with a gift later.

Now, my replies to the most common fears.

Noise. Only roosters are noisy. I've done a broadcast in defense of roosters but for the vast majority of city and town birders you should only be raising hens anyway for legal and practical reasons. Remind your neighbours you do not need roosters to protect hens or for hens to lay eggs. Hens do not crow loudly and mostly just make a gentle cooing sound, slightly louder, but even more soothing than a kitty cat's purr. Occasionally they cluck excitedly but at their worst, they're still only a fraction the decibel level of dogs, teenagers with stereos or amplified instruments, airplanes and car traffic, and other urban noises we all learn to ignore.

Smell. A properly maintained coop does not smell. Chicken poop dries quickly in an open air coop and is incorporated into the soil either naturally or by enthusiastic gardeners. Chickens eating bugs, weeds, kitchen scraps and

organic feed generate poop that contains a fraction of the ammonia that's in the poop of massive flocks fed processed, additive laden kibble.

Vermin. Coops that are kept clean, with the minimal amount of hygiene required by small flocks do not attract vermin. Only rotting food, broken eggs or sick chickens generate the scent that will attract bad critters and you will not let those things happen.

Bird flu. Bird flu erupts in overcrowded conditions and is spread from coop to coop by industrial distribution networks. The last time there was a major outbreak of bird flu that spread to humans was 100 years ago when it was cultured and spread by trench warfare. Currently maps of bird flu outbreaks follow rail lines where factory birds are transported. Wild birds very rarely spread flu because sick and dead birds, don't fly. Indeed the best way to eliminate virulent bird flu would be to replace factory farms with micro flocks nationwide. But just in case, follow the USDA's simple hygiene recommendations.

Ugly structures. Chicken coops can be quite lovely. Heck Martha Steward has chickens. You can easily print out pictures of coops from the website at mypetchicken.com or an issue of Backyard Poultry magazine. Show that to your neighbours. Personally, I recommend keeping it cheap and simple but if you're trying to please your neighbours you may want to invest in one of those trendy little coops. You'll still eventually get your money's worth in eggs, better gardening and fun.

If you need more details, I've done at least one broadcast focusing on each of these issues. My shows are archived on radioforall.net and the shows are labeled by topic. If your neighbours don't believe what you say to them, I'd humbly suggest you can try to get them to listen to my broadcasts. I think of myself as a radical but I've found that most people find my shows amusing, and non-threatening and very persuasive. Another idea for skeptics is to take them to a working coop that you admire. Show them first hand that their fears are unfounded.

Finally, as a chicken promoter, chicken propagandist and as some even call me, chicken evangelist, I submit to you that you owe it to your neighbours to open their eyes to all that chickening has to offer them. Don't shirk your community responsibility to lead by example towards a food sustainable, food secure and food fun future.

This is Bucky Buckaw, I had a good time.

Jon Steinman: Bucky Buckaw here on Deconstructing Dinner.

Now on one of our recent episodes of this Backyard Chickens series, we learned of the many different breeds available to the backyard chickener. While most

factory eggs are produced from only a few breeds, there are seemingly infinite options, with many being quite beautiful. In fact here in Nelson, B.C, one of the local vendors who sets up at the weekly market retails earrings made with the feathers of her own backyard chicken flock. But this next segment introduces yet another breed – the Serama – known as the world's smallest chicken. Bucky learned of the breed while at an urban chicken lecture and that lecture was also attended by two Seramas and the President of the Serama Council.

Bucky Buckaw: This is Bucky Buckaw with the Backyard Chicken Broadcast. Last week I had the opportunity to give a talk on chickens at a charming little neighbourhood watering hole in Brooklyn New York, known as Pete's Candy Store for their open city dialogue series of lectures by New York City's most colorful characters.

I was honored to be selected as one of those colorful characters by the series host, Jamie Hook, a filmmaker, theatre director, journalist, a tropical bird in his own right. I had a very good time due to the engaged and gracious audience of urban intelligencia. Mostly young all full of youthful adventurousness who came to hear about chickens because they were thinking about keeping chickens themselves or just because they thought it'd be interesting.

Now I love to talk about chickens with other humans almost as much as I love communing with hens in the garden. And I do everything I can to entertain my captive audiences rather than lecture with my chicken tales and small local agriculture propaganda. So I was fully expecting a thrilling evening but what made this night particularly magical for everyone, probably most of all me, was an unexpected visit from Sam Traden, chickener extraordinaire who brought along a couple of regal specimens from his personal flock of Serama chickens.

Serama's, S.E.R.A.M.A.S. originating from Malaysia are the world's smallest chickens by breed. Barely bigger than a can of soda pop but possessing positively enormous charisma. Seramas with their upright carriage, proud breasts and nearly vertical wings and tail feathers, when posing or not, they're simply stunning. Technically, for those enmeshed in the detailed world of North American show chickens and American breed standards. The Serama is not a breed, but a type because of the diversity of colors within the Malaysian spectrum of gorgeous chickens. The agenda of President of the Serama Council, Sam Traden, is to share the joy of Serama keeping with North American poultry lovers in order to introduce their beauty, quality, health and vigor to the world of American show chickenery. Promoting Seramas shouldn't be too difficult based on how compelling the birds and their breeders are. Especially, considering that, for all there splendor, the Serama chickens, hens and roosters alike, are neither conceded nor prissy. Their temperaments are calm and self-possessed. The Seramas that joined me on a small stage in the back room of an exuberant bar were adorably comfortable and well behaved, perching on my hands and the hands of other strangers, being stroked and cooed and awed over.

The Serama is a relatively new breed to the United States, imported from Malaysia in 2000 by the legendary Louisiana born Cajun, Jerry Schexnayder. Who, after retiring from a lifetime of banking and public office made a sizeable investment in the importation of a large flock of Seramas. Under current international regulations such an importation is no longer possible. Meanwhile Serama's were nearly culled to extinction because of hysteria over bird flu. As I've discussed on previous issues about bird flu, it's often misunderstood that backyard chickens, rather than factory chickens, are responsible for virulent strains of the flu. In any case, every Serama in America has some relation to Jerry Schexnayder's original imports. Later this month Jerry will host a Serama only show in Vacherie Louisiana. More than 350 birds will be in competition among plenty of authentic Cajun culture. If you can make it there, I'm sure you'll get the full 'let the good times roll treatment.'

One could argue that the Serama is not the ideal agricultural chicken. Seramas are very small so they are particularly vulnerable to predators and warmth and shelter are a bit more challenging to provide. Their eggs are small, approximately 1/5th the size of a so called, grade A large egg from a supermarket, and they don't lay as many of them as other breeds. For those reasons and others they are trickier to breed. And although many believe their meat to be an aphrodisiac and an effective asthma treatment, you won't be supplementing your caloric intake much from keeping Seramas on a small scale. On the other hand the Serama makes a beautiful garden companion. Their diminutive stature requires very little space and a pair or trio can comfortably be caged in as little as 24x18 inches of enclosure. Despite their calm, Seramas are very verbal when a threatening animal comes within range. So if you're nearby you'll have plenty of time to come out and intervene. And yet the crow of the Serama cock is one third the volume of a regular chicken, so noise complaints from neighbours are reduced substantially in the case of urban roosters. They love to be out while you work on your vegetable beds, or just sit and watch the sunrise and sunset. Their mere appearance enhances the aesthetics of any garden and they're inexpensive to rear as each Serama consumes only about one pound of feed per month. Even better set free in your garden to eat their share of bugs without trampling your plants.

Regardless of their value in certain small agricultural contexts, they're a more sustainable pet than cats, dogs, or ferrets in any case, requiring less processed food, fewer trips to the vet and pet store and poop that rather than creating a disposal problem is a real boon if you simply put it into your garden. Indeed the Serama is the most popular household pet in Malaysia surpassing cats or dogs.

At Pete's Candy Shoppe I talked about the Buckaw agenda of decentralizing agriculture for aesthetic and ethical reasons by raising food on all suitable land. Most importantly, in my opinion, in suburban and urban settings. Small flocks of chickens are an essential part of that vision as they provide non-toxic pest and

weed control, soil improvement through tilling, compost acceleration and fertilization, fresh eggs and for making it so fun to be in your garden, you're gonna be out there working your vegetables more than ever.

In an email exchange after the talk, Sam remarked that his agenda is a little different than the Buckaw agenda. It's true that my focus is on urban agriculture for food, self-reliance and safety and security. But the ultimate motivation for every variety of chickeners is having fun. From the Martha Stewart set to urban hillbillies, from the peak oil prepared to the self-identified foodies, from unorganized breeders to show standard husbanders, for none of us is chickening something we *have to* do, because for all of us chickening is about having a good time.

So I'd like to thank Sam, and the Serama council for sharing with me and with all of us their passion for Seramas and for introducing us to Serama chickens.

This is Bucky Buckaw. I had a good time.

Bucky Buckaw's Backyard Chicken Broadcast was produced by the SageBrush Variety Show with support from Boise Community Radio and the Green Institute.

ending theme

Jon Steinman: And 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 www.deconstuctingdinner.ca or by dialing 250-352-9600.