

Julia Sheng, Luis Gomez
Podcast Script

(background music)
(Noise from Lower Farinon)
L: Hi, I'm Luis Gomez.

J: And I'm Julia Sheng. Welcome to our podcast. We're broadcasting live from Lower Farinon at Lafayette College.

L: Today we're exploring consuming nature through the food provided and served at Lower Farinon.

J: We will begin by conducting interviews of Lafayette students who regularly eat here.

(interview recordings)

J: Most students don't think about where their food comes from, or how far it traveled to end up on their plate just like the chicken Caesar salad or their burger with fries.

L: If you picked up any of these products at Lower Farinon, such as this Back to Nature brand of mac and cheese for example, would you know how it got here all the way from Fresno, California? (insert sound effects)

J: According to the World Watch, American food travels an average of 1500-2500 miles from farm to table.

L: What? That's crazy!

J: Yeah, that's why local farms have a better impact on our consumption since we know where the food was grown or raised, and we can go directly to the source if we have any concerns regarding the process.

L: So we should grow our own crops? Can we do that here in Easton?

J: As a matter of fact, we've already started doing just that with LaFarm, which is the student run farm at Metzgar Field, where students learn about sustainable agriculture, as well as provide a small portion of food that we eat in our dining halls through Bon Appetit Services.

L: Oh yeah, I think I read something about Bon Appetit's sustainability by issue and sustainability by product policies. I read that local farming supports the local economy: Farms contribute more in taxes than they require in services, whereas suburban development costs more than it generates in taxes, according to several studies. (Bon Appetit website)

J: That's right. Also, local farming is more nutritious. Did you know that fresh produce is highest in nutrients just after harvest? Foods that are just harvested and then frozen and canned are more nutritious than some "fresh" produce that has been on the truck or supermarket shelf for a week. (Bon Appetit sustainability website) As a matter of fact, I had a conversation with Sarah Edmunds, who is the Metzgar Environmental Projects Coordinator and LaFarm Community Garden & Working Farm Manager.

(insert Sarah Edmonds interview)

L: Not only is vegetation benefitted through local farming, but animals are also treated better. Through the Bon Appetit services at Lafayette, all of the ground beef supplied is humanely raised. Also, they use no foie gras or crate-raised veal, and eggs are certified cage-free. Turkeys and chickens are raised without routine antibiotics in water or feed, and milk and yogurt come from cows not treated with rBGH.

J: Wow, I didn't know that our dining services made the extra effort to provide us with healthier food products. This just solidifies my claim that local farming is much better than industrial farming. Based on an episode of This American Life, the way industrial pigs are treated with no room to move in a pen is inhumane. They never get to see the outdoors until they get slaughtered. Their longest walk they will ever take is down the aisle of the building to the vehicle that takes them to the slaughterhouse.

L: I'm definitely going to be thinking more consciously about what I'm eating. I hope others will follow in my footsteps. Speaking of conscious eating, let's ask some of the students if they consciously think what they're eating here at Lower Farinon:

(recording of interviews)

L: Although most students knew what it means to be a conscious eater, many admitted that they don't really think about what they're consuming or where it came from.

J: In the words of Wendell Berry, "eating is an agricultural act." This means that eating is a part of the food cycle, which begins with planting and birth. The process of farm to fork and knowing where the food comes from is the foundation of conscious eating. People should be aware of where their food comes from, how it was grown or raised, and how it ends up at the supermarket or diner where they buy and eat it.

L: However, many don't realize that they are part of this process; they see themselves as the consumers who purchase the packaged goods without questioning the quality of what they're about to put into their bodies. Wendell Berry points out in his article, "The Pleasures of Eating" that for most consumers, "food is an abstract idea – something they do not know or imagine – until it appears on the grocery shelf or on the table." Most people just go along with what's on the labels of the packages, accepting them to be good things without actually knowing what they mean.

J: Yeah, like the USDA labels. People think that since the product has the USDA label on it, it means it's better for them or healthier. According to livestrong.com, the USDA label is very strict, with the permission to use certain pesticides, but those chemicals are not listed on the labels. Also, the lack of preservatives to elongate shelf life makes more produce go bad faster than products with preservatives.

L: According to Brittany Shoot from Religion Dispatches magazine, genetically modified foods are not required to be labeled in the US, so it's hard to determine whether or not the produce is genetically modified.

J: A genetically modified organism is an organism whose genetic material has been altered using genetic engineering techniques. Some of the benefits of genetically modified foods are resistance to diseases, drought and cold tolerance as well as tolerance against herbicides and pests, and nutrition. Plant biologists are working to create plants with genetically-engineered resistance to diseases from fungi, viruses, and bacteria. Developing tolerance to weather, insects, and weed-killers can make farming more efficient and create more food for consumers. According to ProQuest, crop plants genetically-engineered to be resistant to one very powerful herbicide could help prevent environmental damage by reducing the amount of herbicides needed. Another good thing about genetically modified foods is that researchers are trying to find ways to enhance the nutritious value of crops so people have a more healthful diet from eating crops such as rice, especially in impoverished countries.

L: Whoa, whoa, whoa. Hold up. Yeah, those all sound like good reasons to grow genetically modified foods, but you're not mentioning any of the bad things about them.

J: Oh yeah? Like what?

L: There are some unintended causes related to genetically modified foods, like harming other organisms, and crops genetically engineered for herbicide tolerance may crossbreed with weeds, which would result in those weeds being herbicide-resistant. Also, there may be a higher resistance of insects to the pesticides produced by the plants themselves. If you wanna know some of the adverse human health risks, there is a growing concern that introducing foreign genes into food plants may have an unexpected and negative impact on human health. Introducing foreign genes into crops may have a negative consequence in the digestive track. An economic perspective on this issue is that the more advanced the genetically modified foods get, the more it costs to buy the seeds, and it will be too expensive for small farmers or third world countries, which will increase the gap between the wealthy and the poor.

J: Ok, I'll admit you had a few good points. But I still think genetically modified foods are more helpful than harmful. Anyway, all this talk about food is making me hungry. I think I'm gonna grab some food from Lower.

L: Yeah, that sounds like a good idea. I'm Luis, thanks for listening!