

Food Glorious Food....

By Katherine Leiner

Snob that I am about food, many years ago I promised myself that if I could help it I wouldn't eat with anyone who didn't fully appreciate food.

So, what an honor it was for me to be invited to be a presenter at the 2009 Colorado Art Ranch Symposium in Delta County. The weekend was called Dinner Stories. Three days of sublime 80 degree weather with workshops that centered on good food and culminated with the kind of communal spirit that felt like grace.

Our first stop that weekend was for cocktails in Hotchkiss at the Creamery Art Center where we were treated to an array of delicious hors d'oeuvres and art. We had our first taste of Surface Creek Wine and home made goodies from local faire. Then the three presenters were introduced in the order in which they would present the following afternoon, all of us coincidentally from big cities. I was up first (from New York City and Durango, Colorado), followed by Howard Dubrovsky (Toronto, Canada) and Catherine Bouzide (Chicago).



The following morning we were all up early and a good number of us had breakfast together before we went off to our workshops, which were all over Delta County. We drove through areas that took us either down into the sensuous sand dunes of the Dominguez Canyon that emptied out into a fertile fruit orchard—New Leaf Fruit—next to the Gunnison River (some call it the Little Grand). There, we learned from the inside out about peach, pear, apricot and cherry fruit and the way growing it has influenced the poetry of Rosemary Trommer whose poetry to the ears is like her sweet pears to the mouth. My roomie raved about the potatoes she dug at John Cooley's Rivendell Farm, a biodynamic farm based on the teachings of Rudolf Steiner. From my own experience, I know that biodynamic is the next best step beyond organic and if one does a taste test—believe me, you can even tell the difference between the two. This great taste allows one to suspend disbelief at the complicated procedures of that kind of farming. Frankly, biodynamic food on a number of levels, is simply divine. For lunch, both groups dined on local food. The group I was in had

listened to the poetry of James Wright, Wallace Stevens and Rosemary Trommer as we made our way through the orchard, so for lunch we sat down by the river and while we ate, wrote our own poems.

After lunch we met at the Stolte Apple Shed where I was first up and spoke rapidly and nervously about my newest book, *Young and Hungry: A Road Map to Sustainable Eating, A LOVE STORY*. For four years I traveled across America, interviewing over 150 young people between the ages of 20-38 who are involved in some manner of sustainable eating. Fifty of them are profiled in the book with photos. I spoke of what I had learned, how it had given me the understanding I needed in order to allow my youngest child to individuate; how the people I had met had given me hope for the future of food in the United States and how I had ultimately fallen in love. Howard Dubrovsky took us on a tour of a new kind of cuisine—really an extension of a cuisine we already know, called Molecular Gastronomy and how this new tilt and chemistry—which sometimes changes the way food appears, affects our smells and impacts our tastes. We were treated to examples of this fascinating new way to approach food. Catherine Bouzide calls herself “The Corn Lady” but she is much, much more than that. She is a fine artist who illuminates a deep sense of place through her work, which is as diverse as corn sculpture tables, weavings, high-fired plates, artist books along with a continuous string of story-telling that led us through the delights of her life and work.

For dinner Saturday night, hats off to Jim and Jeanne Durr who are Surface Creek Winery—where we were treated to their selected wine-pairing with each course (including local goat cheeses to start), scrumptious food including local elk for the meat eaters, and local vegetables and tempeh for the vegetarians. The whole meal was delectable with dessert made by Nancy Gore from “Just Desserts.”



The next morning we divided up into groups: some going with Howard Dubrovsky to the old time Redlands Mesa Grange where we were carefully instructed by Howard and managed to put together 7 different parts of a perfect meal—beginning with carrot soup, celery slaw, spaetzle—colored by beet juice, onion tart with a pear compote, julienne beet salad over greens, lentils, and a fine grouper ceviche as the center piece. The others went off with either Nancy Gore to make our desserts or Jim and Jeanne Durr who apparently turned grapes into wine—although what we got for lunch was a delightful grape juice!

It was a weekend full of simple delights proving once again that food, glorious food, has a way of uniting us in the deepest manner. Good food and talk about food by its very nature extends into our psyches, making us family. It was my dream group, and by the end of the weekend, if we hadn't before, everyone had considered deeply where their food had come from and the life it had before it made its way to our plates. Amen.