

Thought on Tap May 2020 Transcript

Future Visions of Food, Culture, and Community

00:44 Bretton Rodriguez:

OK, so welcome everyone to our first ever online session of Thought and Tap, we're excited you're here. We're excited to do this. We have a fantastic panel of experts to talk about food, culture, and community. So once again, this is Thought on Tap. I do want to start by thanking our sponsors, in particular thanking the CLA— so the College of Liberal Arts at the University of Nevada, Reno— thanking Core Humanities, and as always thanking the Laughing Planet, our home when we are in person. So along with that, I do want to draw attention to how we will provide feedback at the end of this event. At any point during the event, if you want to go to [menti.com](https://www.menti.com) and you should be able to see the code which should be posted at any moment now. If you go to [menti.com](https://www.menti.com) and sign in, you'll let us know that you're here and give us feedback on how we're doing.

01:39 Bretton Rodriguez:

Today we are talking about food and culture, and I wanted to start by introducing our panelists, who, as I mentioned, are incredibly fortunate to have with us today and then after that, I do want to get into the event itself. So, our first panelist is Amanda Burden. Amanda is the publisher and editor of *Edible Reno Tahoe* magazine, which debuted in spring 2010. Throughout it, she celebrates and supports the local food and drink movement which includes farmers, ranchers, chefs, distillers and more for five years, Amanda has helped produce wine and dine events at Dolan Lexus in Reno in the fall and Wednesday, October 14th this year and 100% of the money is used to fund scholarships for local culinary students. She's also board member of the American Culinary Federation's High Sierra Chefs Association with the top Ted X events in the world, based on its more than 60,000,000 video views, which is incredible. This year she joined the board of Soulful Seeds, a nonprofit, dedicated to growing and providing fresh food for those in need, her business and volunteer works allow her to combine our passions for love of food and drink, publishing community, local business and for making a difference. Amanda so we can see you here for a second.

03:02 Amanda Burden:

Hi everyone, thanks for joining us. I'm excited to be here.

03:08 Bretton Rodriguez:

Alright, thank you Amanda. So, our next guest is Mark Estee. Mark is an award-winning chef and restaurateur with over 25 years of experience. He owns Liberty Food and Wine Exchange in downtown Reno, the Union in downtown Carson City, State Louis inside the Nevada Museum of Art, the historic over land restaurant and pub, and recently opened Pacino Lupo in Carson City.

He's also the managing coordinator at Campo Mammoth. He has been featured on the Food Network and Cooking Channel, is a James Beard Award nominee, awarded Best New Restaurant by Esquire, and was honored as Entrepreneur of the Year by the Reno Gazette. A pioneer and champion for United Regional Farmers and Suppliers, with a thriving restaurant scene. His commitment to community is a cornerstone of his ongoing success. Mark do you want to say hello really quickly?

03:59 Mark Estee:

Oh Yeah. That was a really nice introduction. Thank you! I'm glad to be here. Thanks for having me and I'm looking forward to some great conversation in this great forum.

04:11 Bretton Rodriguez:

Awesome thank you, Mark. Alright, so the next guest is Tim Healion and Tim has been involved in the food industry in northern Nevada for about 37 years. He's been instrumental in starting a number of businesses both forward and not for profit, including but not limited to the legendary Deux Gros Nez which was the first coffee shop open in Reno, The Pneumatic Diner and the Tour de Nez Outreach. He was also on the board for the Great Basin Community Food Co-op for a number of years. Tim's current adventures and restaurants are with the laughing Planet Cafe's in Midtown Reno and at the University, which both advocate for locally service and super healthy food. In particular, his focuses are on how restaurants could be used to bring pieces of the community together. In addition, Tim was one of the driving forces behind the creation of Thought on Tap, and he's been an integral partner and sponsor since the beginning of our program. So, Tim, please say hello. Tim, I think you're muted.

05:17 Tim Healion:

Hey here I am. Gotta mute button in the Woods. Thanks for having me very much. I'm excited to be here.

05:29 Bretton Rodriguez:

Great thank you Tim. Alright so, our 4th panelist is Kerri Lesh. Kerri received a PhD in Anthropology and Basque Studies from the University of Nevada, Reno. She is a Linguistic and Cultural Anthropologist whose works lie primarily in the intersection of Basque language, food, and culture. She's also a certified specialist of wine who's worked in the service industry at almost every stage of the winemaking process. She is currently preparing to teach two courses at the University of Nevada, Reno, two summer courses, one of which is on food, drink, and culture. So Kerry, could you say hello, please.

06:05 Kerri Lesh:

Hello everyone, can you hear me alright?

06:10 Bretton Rodriguez:

We can hear you.

06:12 Kerri Lesh:

Excellent, thanks for having me.

06:13 Bretton Rodriguez:

Thanks for being a part of this. Okay so, food what we consume and how it is produced, is an integral part of who we are and it helps to shape our personal identity as well as the larger culture in which we live. From the earliest written records, we see close connections between food, culture and identity. For instance, in the Epic of Gilgamesh, the earliest surviving roots in epic from around 2100 BCE, one of the key aspects that have define civilization as the ability to eat bread and drink wine. So, foods have been produced through agriculture, instead of forging in the wild. In Greek mythology, foods like olives and grapes were literally the gifts of the gods, as well as being markers of civilized society. Similarly, writers from the Roman Republic and early empire disdained those who used buttered rather than olive oil on their bread as uncivilized Barbarians. On the other side of the world in the great creation myth of the Maya, the Popol Vuh, people are literally made out of the food they eat, maize.

07:09 Bretton Rodriguez:

Food has also played a fundamental role in religious identity. Within religions as diverse as Judaism, Christianity, Islam and Hinduism, the food that you eat, how you produce it, and when you eat it all help either to mark you as either a member of the religion, or as an outsider. This focus on food also influences structure of societies around the world. In medieval and early modern Europe, for instance, the food you ate or did not eat could actually determine whether or not you would be accepted into society. Moreover, these boundaries were policed by official institutions such as the Spanish Inquisition and not eating certain foods. In the case of Spain, pork would also mark you is different and quite possibly put your life at risk, which brings us to the presence in many ways we have more options than ever before when it comes to obtaining and consuming food, and there is no official Inquisition to torture us for refusing to eat certain foods. However, just as it did in the ancient, medieval, and early modern world's food and how we choose to eat it helps to define who we are. So, this brings me to my first question for you all and that is: in what ways do you think food, in both its production and consumption, shapes the identity of individuals and communities? So, Amanda, why don't we go ahead and start with you if you don't mind. A nice, easy question to start us off with.

08:37 Amanda Burden:

So, when I think of food shaping identity, I think of culture. You know, when I think of Italy, for instance, I think of pasta and tiramisu. When I think of Mexico, I think of Tamales and Flan and maybe when I think of America, I think of not such a distinct type of identity; there is barbecue and hamburgers and fast food. Then when I think of Nevada and Reno, I think of the buffet and I think that really has colored our identity and our culture here in this area so much so that I think some restaurant businesses have trouble kind of getting over that mentality, that buffet mentality. Some people want that overabundance of food, that diverse selection, and they want it cheap. So, I think I don't know if that answers your question, but those are some thoughts that come to mind for me.

09:29 Bretton Rodriguez:

Yeah, definitely. I think it's great. It's funny when I first moved here and I asked what was good here and everyone was like, "Oh, you should eat the all-you-can-eat-sushi buffet" and I'm like "that sounds like a terrible idea," but apparently that's very Reno. Um Mark, what about you? What do you think?

09:46 Mark Estee:

I think that's a great question. What came to mind hearing that was the fact that of what we eat, what we put in our bodies. From history to now, I think a lot of, uh, at least in my lifetime, I'm 49 years old, I don't think that when I was growing up anyone cared. I was 10 years old in 1980, my parents weren't talking about the lettuce, they weren't talking about the farms where these were raised or they weren't really concerned about, uh, what we really eating, you know. I mean a good meal was SpaghettiOs out of a can and nowadays I think uh, in the last 20 years and you can go back to like the food movement in the United States with Alice Waters and what's happening in California cuisine and then New Orleans. Regionally the United States I think has a really great approach. And nowadays and that's the last 25 years ago, people care about where their food comes from. I'd say in the last 10 years you just have to go to the cities to have to go to LA, San Francisco, Chicago, NYC to get great cuisine, but food became such a ginormous part of who we are as Americans right now and we are as a country. You can go to tiny little Truckee or little Reno or Dickie, Reno or big city Reno or you know, anywhere,

11:18 Mark Estee:

Anywhere for lack of better word, and you can find food and cuisine that people are so proud of and they're so enriching in their lives now. All we do is talk about food these days. I was going to culinary school in 1991 and I had thought I've lost my mind. Everyone was like "what do you want to be a cook for?" And I was like "I don't know, I really love it." I didn't know I wanted to be a chef and now it's like every rockstar and their mother is trying to be a chef. Some of these chefs don't even have restaurants but they're out there making amazing food. So, it's so fun. Now there's so many home cooks that are amazing and there's other people who cook really well and I think it's become such a part of who we are. That's a great time to be alive in America right now. A great time to be around for American World cuisine. So, it's a better position or job for me to be in right now.

12:11 Bretton Rodriguez:

Awesome, thank you. I also just love that you're following your dreams. You're like "This is what I want to do." So, for all of my students who are watching, if you have a dream you should follow it. That's whole another conversation. Tim, what about you? What do you think?

12:28 Tim Healion:

Um, I think eating is pretty much a sport and like Amanda touched on, it's kind of, you know, culturally and internationally. People have sort of worked their food around what was available and that sort of ended up defining them. I think, like Mark's saying, as it's evolved, everywhere

you go, there's like— he said— it was a good point man. People that are making their food and presenting their restaurant are excited about who they are and what they're doing. I know I've always sort of, uh, lent myself towards healthier aspects. My dad, my parents were into nutrition and health from forever, so we got there from day one. My Cousins used to joke about slipping us a coke 'cause my mom never let us have sodas, but my dad was always feeding athletes and working on their nutrition so they perform better on a field and you know, unlike Mark, where there was always fruits and vegetables, and I don't know, maybe that's why I'm some damn skinny all the time, but that stuck with me. I noticed, you know, when I first kind of ventured out into college

13:43 Tim Healion:

There were all these opportunities at University of Massachusetts back in the 70s. That was a new thing, like a health food dining area. So, what was being presented was outside the normal canned spaghetti. Like Mark was saying in the United States back then, there was little concern and thought about what it was that was going into your body and how it worked in your body. I think that's evolved from, you know, to what Mark was talking about now. There's all this great food that comes out of the ground that you can get down the street from the local farm and make it taste really good. Which is, you know he's a master at it, so you know how it's evolved around the world is kind of a really neat thing that we're mixing it up in the United States. From what Amanda was saying about it being regionally specific to going to Truckee now and picking a Restaurant that is really great food.

14:48 Bretton Rodriguez:

Awesome, thank you Tim. It sounds good. So Kerri, do you wanna speak a little bit about this connection between food and community and maybe you can broaden it up beyond Reno to take a little bit to an international approach?

15:06 Kerri Lesh:

Yeah, that would be great. I think everything from our Instagram to Facebook, we can kind of get bombarded, especially now as we're all at home and we're talking about what we're making and eating. I would like to draw for the extension from Reno where we have, you know, past immigration from the Basque country in a big Basque Influence and kind of point to the importance of production and consumption of food. There where their food consumption kind of evolves around very strong— you know there's a lot of solidarity in terms of socialization and the whole concept of what's called the Chicky Teo and the bar hopping, right, is all about how you consume with whom you are consuming with. The availability of these little bites, called pinchos that are out on the counter right now, right?

16:09 Kerri Lesh:

That's how they're used to eating, uhm, how that will continue in the future is unknown, but everything from cider production and cider houses that are, you know, these cornerstones of

Basque culture. Gastronomic culture in a way have changed over the last couple of months, especially. For a country that's currently— as you walk into the airport, right, it's government marketed as the culinary nation, so a lot of their cultural aspects of production and consumption have definitely changed over the last couple of months. I think whether it's this cross cultural— I know there's places in like Austin, TX that they have I think it's called Calimochos. They have a basketball with pinchos which are these little food bites, right, that are kind of laid out for everyone to eat and I think that production and consumption is definitely capable of changing. Though culturally speaking it's kind of important in defining different countries, different nations, and different cultures such as the Basques.

17:19 Bretton Rodriguez:

Awesome, thank you Kerri. So, I do want to kind of look ahead. So, obviously we're in the midst of an unprecedented situation. I do want to think a little bit about this and I would like to ask you all how do you think that the current health and economic crises are going to transform the way that we think about and consume food in society? So Kerri, you mentioned a little bit about Campaigning home cooking. Maybe kind of this idea of presenting food online as well as through Instagram and things like that. But just how do you think things are going to change moving forward and Kerri why don't we start with you and work our way back the other way this time. So Kerri, if you want to start us off.

17:55 Kerri Lesh:

Sure, so how can I kind of rephrase. How will it change? How do we maybe see it changing is the question, correct?

18:07 Bretton Rodriguez

Yes, so basically how do you see the kind of culture around food changing due to the situation? So, looking at the pandemic, looking at more people being at home, eating at home, how do we change how does it change the way that we think about food and its role in society?

18:19 Kerri Lesh:

I think it would be interesting to see how the interest in local production evolves, whether that's in the Basque Country, where I think it's the epitome of local consumption where you have everything from lettuce and beans that are government sponsored with brands like (Basque name of food brand) is an example which is just like Basque label food that is now being delivered to doorsteps as fresh produce. I know a lot of us that are on here listening maybe have talked about an experience with it. I have a friend who is receiving weekly or biweekly produce— fresh produce in boxes from different groups in our communities. I think that's, uh, exemplified very well in the Basque Country, but I think it would also be interesting to see if that local consumption and production increases in the US. too so that a scarcity maybe isn't quite as big of a deal. If things like community gardens are going to increase the local production and just kind of the education to coming from an educational standpoint of learning what your local

products are, seasonally speaking. So that we can appreciate those local seasonal product a little bit more and and you know these guys that are on this panel as well as our attendees.

19:53 Kerri Lesh

I'm sure probably all familiar with going to a restaurant and seeing what's the seasonal menu right that not everything has to be available all times of the year, but in terms of consumption too, in places like Italy in the Basque Country where getting out and having that coffee is away, it's a part of your life. It's not a caffeine boost, simply. Uhm, you know like we might have a little bit more here of in the United States. But how those bar hopping practices, having a coffee, circling around with your friends to communicate around food, I think that'll change a little bit and with a lot of resistance in some in some ways too. But yeah, I think it's very important for anyone. An identity. I spoke with my old roommate from the Basque country this morning actually. And she brought up an interesting example of food consumption where, um, her neighbors refused to accommodate to make things more hygienic. Where you know, the Pinchos. These plates are laid out for everyone to take, but in some touristic parts you have a plate and they kind of serve you these Pinchos as opposed to you picking them up yourself. So the neighbors of my old roommate were saying, well, I'm not going to be like the tourists who use these plates, right? So there's definitely a huge choice involved and not wanting to associate with an outside culture in some situations, and some consumption patterns, that it'll be interesting to see how that plays out to elsewhere aside from here

21:29 Bretton Rodriguez:

Great, thank you. Yeah, I mean there's always that tension between the local way of doing things and kind of what's being done in a global level as well. So Tim, what about you? What do you think? How do you see things change into this dynamic? How do you see kind of the way that we engage with two adapting and changing as we move forward?

21:50 Tim Healion:

I'm kind of – I get a lot of thoughts and I'm hopeful in some ways that the general populous of the planet learns from this and experiences more of what's going on right now, like pulling into the huddle and kind of experiencing more of their participation and their consumption of food, more so than how it's evolved to. You know, in my social circles and in my peers, so many of us spend a lot of time in restaurants and so you know they don't even think about how it is to plan your meals for a week. Okay, I gotta eat for a week as opposed to I mean I'm out of time and I'm just gonna go down to get a burrito, or get a pizza or something. And you know, most people I talk to or hear from are sharing experiences from cooking at home. My next my next-door neighbor was talking to my wife [he said], “so yeah, I’m baking more now” and I thought he was talking about getting high. He was like “Oh yeah that'll make you hungry”. But no I mean, he's baking. He's making food. And so you know, I look at it for a couple of ways. You know, for me as an individual it was – I looked at food as fuel, I looked at food as a sport, and then so much of it was a community experience, you know. And what I've kind of done with the restaurants that I've been to and participated in is created

23:27 Tim Healion:

these environments where people would get together and the coffeehouse aspect in particular, with those groups of regulars. That was all about people hanging out and discussing this or whatever came up, right? And then, you know, with the laughing planet, I created these environments for us to have a forum like this, or for music to take place or other stuff with this idea. So, I don't know – it's a very community aspect. So, I mentioned, this is kind of like a sci-fi movie where you know all of a sudden we're having to do the same thing through a screen and I don't know. I don't know how this will play out for the restaurant business. I know for a long time, the gates will open as far as you know the government's look at our ability to have people inside or not. It's looking like a wrestling match on how to keep people spread out. And keep our numbers up and have it work. So, uh, it's a day by day thing and it's a lot of introspective thought from the restaurant business side of it. Again, I hope the planet learns from it, and I see seem to think that more people are pulling back in the huddle and listening to these whole farm-to-table things at Mark preaches or what Amanda's magazine talks about and just experience that for themselves and participate more in the creation and the eating of their food and how it's sort of evolves into the restaurant world.

25:10 Bretton Rodriguez:

Alright, sounds good, thank you. Hey Mark, what about you? What do you think? How do you see things moving? How do you see things adapting after this pandemic? At once a week and hopefully get out again?

25:22 Mark Estee:

I think that uh.. I'm really friendly with Tim and Amanda. I know them really well and I've known them for many, many, many years, and it is nice to meet Kerri today. Tim and Amanda and I...it's kinda like you wake up in the morning, you have a cup of coffee, you might think to hopefully brush your teeth, take a shower, get ready to go to work, and whatever you do. That's what we do with local food. Someone may say something like. "Oh, I recycle." I'm like, really? Welcome to freaking year of 2020. You know, it's just there's so natural for us to do these things and I don't think that any of us feel that other people have to do this. We don't judge people if they don't, but I will tell you in the last 10 weeks I've spoken to more business owners that are friends of mine who told me... and have become friendly...and you know like the Co-op,

26:16 Mark Estee:

the drop program. I just left Bently Ranch down in Carson City right now. I went to Bently Ranch to deliver \$1000 worth of sausages and salami. And Woody told me that they're having banner sales in last 10 weeks. I mean they've always done well, but the sales have been up so much, and he thought (and I kind of agree with him) that people at home are going to pay more attention to what goes in their bodies. And they're going to want to buy the local. So everyone is

going to need a subscription to Edible Tahoe-Reno. Everyone is going to need to go to the Laughing Planet Cafe and into restaurants that understand where their food comes from, right? Listen, I go to greasy spoons. I love diet places, and I know that I'm eating food - I don't try to eat there that much – but I try to eat food where I know the people and I know where it's coming from. And I think this time – I think the culture change right now – one that I've kind of been a part of for 25 years or 20 years – is that we're gonna wanna know who we're buying our food from. We're going to want to support the people that we align with, that we like, that we know, that we feel have done good things, that we feel are trying hard and giving back to the community, and that'll build social capital, and they're thinking big picture, and they're looking at things like how can they improve their operations. And I know we're just talking about restaurants in foods right now, but

27:26 Mark Estee:

I hope everyone at home is eating well. I mean, there's so many videos and opportunities to eat well at home right now. I think that's amazing. I don't you can eat well at home and then go out and eat like crap. I think you can eat well at home and then you come into the great restaurants and you eat better. You go to better restaurants and better doesn't mean expensive – Better means where does this food come from? How do I know these people? How do I know the team that has this? And we're so lucky in our region and we're so lucky in America that we have a lot of those places to choose from. So I think this could be a boom for restaurants. I think in general as a population, our culture, especially here in Battle-born, we're a bunch of crazy people here in Northern Nevada, you know, they wanna come out just to spend money and be free again. And you know, we wanna be able receive them, but I know for us we're going to receive them with safety, we're going to receive them with guidelines, we're going to fall the governor's lead, we're going to follow our county's lead. You know, and come back slowly from this. This is a long-term game. This isn't "a hey we came out the first day and did 5000 people and blah blah." That's stupid. Yeah I think long term – it is a long-term play. OK, because if you don't think long term, and you're being short sighted, and I hate to say it any business owner or entrepreneur..I have a lot of great friends that are entrepreneurs.

28:40 Mark Estee:

We are thinking. The long game. It's not a short game. Now I also understand we're going to lose a ton of businesses. I mean I've seen a few posts on Facebook already where businesses are saying "we're done." Some people gotta get out because the virus because, some people have got to get out because they've had enough, and some people get out because we're all hanging on by our fingers anyways, right. I'm used to this, I'm used to working on a shoestring budget. I'm used to working onto hanging on for dear life. I think the culture is gonna be – what we are gonna see when we come back will be a thinning of the herd. As long as everyone stays safe, we'll see some customers come back and people gonna wanna know where can they buy? Where can they support local? Because now they understand it 'cause I don't get to go to wherever they used to go to in the last 10 weeks. They have to cook at home. They'll be like "hey what's this Laughing Planet about? They use organic ingredients and they have this really healthy stuff. Amazing. Where should I go? Let's pick up a magazine. Let's find out what does

Amanda say, what is Edible Tahoe Reno..” I’ve heard people say, “oh what's going on on this Facebook and social media thing that they use to help all these people?” So the idea is really, I think this could be a great chance for us to kind of reshape the culture.

29:48 Mark Estee:

Now that may not be the popular look for anyone else. I don't really care. It’s what we're doing in our company, and I implore everybody who's feeling down and out to try to take a different perspective. It's all about perspective. And I think you take that perspective. I think our culture, our situations, we're here to deal with what comes our way and we could do it together. I mean we're all trying to offer help. I'm sitting here talking. I mean, we just got the announcement that we’re able to open. We have a bunch of plans. I’m not talking because I just wanna hear myself talk, but because I wanna try to help other people and give the people the understanding of: hey do you have a problem? Reach out to men and I’ll try and help you. I’ll try my best just to share that the outlook that we have. And I have a restaurant with 225 employees. Five restaurants. We're all going to get ready to go back to work in a safe manner. S. Evo we can do it. If I can do it, then you can do it. I mean everyone’s a lot smarter than me. I mean, you know, we could figure this out together. So, that's my point.

30:39 Bretton Rodriguez:

I think that's great. I think one of the big questions that alot of people have is kind of, what is the food scene going to look like when we come back? What are restaurants like when we come back? So Amanda what do you think? How do you think this time is going to change the way that we think about food in society?

30:57 Amanda Burden:

I just have to echo what Mark said and Kerri already said it. It's already creating a transformation in our local food movement. I'm really excited about it in one way ,because, just as Mark said, you know what he told us about Bentley Ranch Butcher Shop and Bentley Ranch Meats. They’re doing phenomenally well right now. Another farmer, Hole in One local farmer rancher. He's doing phenomenally well. Alpine ranch. All these local farmers are doing really, really well right now and that's so encouraging to see and people are going to the Co-op in mass and they're just selling out of stuff and doing really well and an promoting local food. That's really exciting. I can't wait to get back into the restaurants and bars myself. I know a lot of people are scared and cautious, and all of that, but I trust that our local bars

31:45 Amanda Burden:

and restaurants are going to do the right thing. They're going to keep things clean and as separate as possible. Maybe it'll be a lot more outdoor dining. Maybe the salad bars - self serve salad bars - and family style won't be quite as popular for a little while. But I see, you know, I see a lot of good in this too. I see people, as you all mentioned already, cooking more. This is a great way to, you know, get into your kitchens and learn how to cook. It's not just a spectator sport.

Get out there and do it for yourself and do some healthy foods. I know a lot of people are putting a lot of pounds or two doing baking. Like Tim was saying. I know I've been doing a lot of baking myself. So I think I'm hopeful that it's gonna be - you know it's gonna be great out there. You're right mark, we're gonna lose some people - I've already heard a few rumblings myself and that's really sad, but for the most part I can't wait to get out there and we're going to be promoting everyone to get out there as safely as possible.

32:43 Bretton Rodriguez:

Great, thank you, so I'd like to ask a question about access to food and I think I'm going to open up to all of you once again. So the question I have is this. For a long time many lower income communities have experienced either a lack of food options, what we often call a food desert or an access of unhealthy food options, a food swamp. These communities have found in both urban and rural settings. The current pandemic has not only created a stain in access to food for the entire country, but also exacerbated the situation in low income communities. As we move forward, after this period of pandemic of quarantine, how communities or local governments better address access to food? So why don't we start in the middle this time? If you all, if you don't mind. So I don't know Mark would you want to jump in on this for a little bit and then we'll go around? Cool.

33:31 Mark Estee:

Absolutely. I've been involved in many things over the years. Project [inaudible] when I was up in North Lake Tahoe for over 10 years as the Board President for a while. And food insecurity is a real thing. Not knowing where your next meal is going to come from is very scary. In the last 10 weeks, I've been a lot of touch with the Northern Nevada food bank and I got involved in - just to name a few - something called Nevada Hip. We were feeding out of work, hospitality industry people or any services industry people. I got involved with Feed Our Heroes & Rounds for Heroes, where we get paid to bring meals to doctors and first responders and there's a bunch of restaurants involved with that. A bunch of partners running with that. I've just recently been appointed to lead with the lieutenant governor and United Way Michael Bashir. We're running a program called Delivering with Dignity. And this is us getting meals and connecting with nonprofit organizations. Customers are embedded. There's a big fund that we have going right now. The lieutenant governor's done a phenomenal job

34:41 Mark Estee:

of raising much money. It came out of Vegas and we're bringing meals - we served over 3000 meals this week to people who are homebound due to Covid and due to the high risk. So as that's going on, I think it's really brought a lot of people's minds to this. It's brought a lot of awareness, food insecurity, and I hope that we see legislation. I hope - I know there's a lot more people aware right now that sometimes people are hungry and whether you've been there and you been hungry yourself, or whether you didn't know where to get access or there wasn't enough education on what's going on out there. I think that everyone is well aware now the last 10 weeks to prove that. I think our community is rallying tremendously. I think the percentage is

like over 350% increase from the food bank alone. Not to mention I've worked with different shelters and [inaudible]. We've been over a million different times and get meals and I'm getting calls still all the time. It's hard now. Restaurants

35:36 Mark Estee:

always give away food, but now we have no revenue, so it's really hard to give away food with no revenue. So I think that is gonna cause change and I welcome that. I'm really trying to get together a little group once we come out of this to, "let's change that. Let's change the world around. Let's go to the people who make the food to give us the food." Just raise money for everybody's different charity. You know, so right now I think I'd love to keep it on education and getting the work that we all did to help with this virus and keeping it down. Why don't you apply that same pressure – that same look and feel – so that we can get to helping answer some of these food deserts. Some of these food problems and Insecurities.

36:16 Bretton Rodriguez:

Great thank you. Kerri, do you want to jump in briefly and maybe add a little bit to that as well and we'll just kind of keep going around.

36:25 Kerri Lesh:

Sure, I would definitely echo a lot of the things in terms of you know, Mark brings a lot more experience to the table with the restaurants in the community, but uhm, I would definitely second the education starting from you know, younger ages too – about what is local, how we value it, why it's unique to this area, how it can continue to grow in this area, or why it doesn't grow elsewhere. For example, to create a little bit more of a sense of pride and knowledge. Around what is already around us in terms of what grows naturally. I would also say that from what I've heard, you know I've got a student of mine who works with the homeless shelter, and he's kind of described some of the things that he's had to do with people that are lacking resources. And I do feel like I've seen a lot of articles, a lot of people talking about it. It kind of rallied around the community component of this, in terms of supporting those that don't have food or are trying to find solutions. You know at one

37:32 Kerri Lesh:

point time, I worked with an organization – a community that built a rooftop garden on top of the homeless shelter, and I'm not sure that it's still there anymore, but it used to exist there and some of the frustrations – and I'm not into politics per say by any means – but some of the frustrations that I had found in attempting to plant fruit trees or things around the Reno area were a lot of law related legislation – unrelated things that prevented me from going forth with that. Whether it was legalities with people tripping on fruit that prevented us from planting trees, which I'd never would have expected. Or, you know even on campus, when I looked into it, that bugs would gather around fallen fruit that kept us from kind of making things more accessible to people that would literally just be out on the street, perhaps hungry. If I'm thinking

about the Basque country, for example, and kind of seeing what works in places and different cultures like that where they have a very localized Basque government, an autonomous government, there that helps a lot with this

38:43 Kerri Lesh:

particular label of food, and they invest a lot of money in it. And they try and help people grow this, they try and create access for it. So whether, I don't know, it could be on the state level or city governance, local, you know, governments. I think those resources, and funneling those resources, into the people that are producing it and making it accessible and have these great ideas for collaboration. I think increasing that would be great too.

39:16 Bretton Rodriguez:

Sounds good, thank you. Great and Amanda, what about you? What do you think? Can you build a little bit up on this and talk a little bit about ways that we could think about providing more access to food, moving forward, and kind of using this in a positive means?

39:30 Amanda Burden:

Yeah, you know, the main thing that I think about is trying to teach people on how to grow their own food, and trying to come up with some programs to help them with that, because I think once people get into it, they can, you know have a lot of fun growing their own garden. It's great exercise, they'll be growing their own food, it's healthy, and for instance I'm on the board of Soulful Seeds, and we've got a couple of great projects going right now. One is with the NAMHS campus down on 2nd, Glendale, that hold the big mental health facility there. But it's working with the homeless population to create a big community garden and get the home that the people who will be living on campus to grow their own food and learn how to cook from that food as well. So it's kind of a wonderful three step project with building the garden getting their involvement with that, and then harvesting the food and learning how to cook. So we're doing that and also. At also at the par jail we have a community garden going in

40:38 Amanda Burden:

there and we're going to have the prisoners learn how to garden and cook there as well. So I think more of that more programming like that I think would be helpful. And as Kerri mentioned, the funding, the governmental funding and really paying more attention on this problem. Yeah, so I think that's my contribution.

40:59 Bretton Rodriguez:

Yeah that sounds great. Thank you. Tim what about you? Last but not least. How do you think we can help provide access to the food? More food, better food for people as well?

41:10 Tim Healion:

Continue to teach kids that food doesn't come from a store. This is really deep thing. It's not just about food availability, it's about, you know, economics. It's about people's ability to spend money on something besides rent. A place to live, you know, which is impounding their ability to get nutritious food as opposed to what they interpret as cheap and so back to teaching kids that food doesn't come from the store. There's great programs. I know Mark participated with these guys, but we've done a lot with Urban Roots and they go into schools and teach kids how to farm and then teach kids how to make food with the food that they grow. And you know the Co-Op had a great program. I think it's still going, isn't it mark? The deal where they have a round up program, where every time you go and

42:11 Tim Healion:

you have so many cents you can round it up the next top dollar. And that money, for a while, was going to a program where they have gatherings of the Co-Op that sponsors and teach people how to make food with the you know, nutritious food that was more affordable than they thought. You know, there's this stipulation that really high quality food is going to cost more, and it's not always the case. Particularly when you grow it yourself, but yeah. You know it's an education thing. You know like Mark says, that everybody comes in looking for handouts at the restaurants. And of course we do our best. We just opened again a couple days ago after being shuttered for a month. And now we're back at it, feeding any of the kids in the community that are on meal programs in the schools that don't have access to it. Of course, there's a lot of programs that are providing food for those kids, but just to add another opportunity for them to say I'm not going to get to the Food Bank where the line was a mile long. I'm going to the Laughing Planet and get a couple of meals for my kids so and we're just handing those

43:15 Tim Healion:

out. You know worldwide it's an education thing too. I mean people, in different cultures around the world have experienced hunger basically for a lot of reasons, but a lot of times this kind of morphed outta availability or environmental issues that have created their normal means of procuring food for whatever reason they live in, you know to go away whether it's a famine or a drought or you know. I was talking my daughter about being a vegetarian and saying look you can go to the store and get incredibly nutritious food without having to harm a magnificent being. You know, for me it's become, in my world, it's a pleasure deal. But if you live above the Arctic Circle, all you got is a seal right? And so with the environmental aspects and climate change some of that stuff's going away so. Globally, it's an access deal, and I don't know how to help people up there, but in our little world's down here, again, back to education and teaching people how to access food, do a better job with what food they've got, and to create and grow their own food. I think that's a big, huge part of it.

44:42 Bretton Rodriguez:

That's awesome, thank you. I also thank you for giving meals to students who need it. That's really, that's fantastic. So we're going to open it up in just a minute for questions from the audience. So if you're interested in asking a question, I would ask you go ahead and write your question into chat and we'll go ahead and get to that in a sec. Also, I would remind you too, if you haven't already to go to [mente.com](https://www.mente.com) and go ahead and fill out the survey that we have there. The access code is 554269. That's 554269. Do go ahead and fill it out when you get a chance. So a number of you talked about growing your own food and I think that touches on this issue of sustainability. As well, so really my last question for you all in the midst of this moment of crisis and with the looming crisis that we have with climate change coming as well, I was wondering if you could talk a little bit about ways that we could think about food. Think about eating in ways that are maybe a little

45:37 Bretton Rodriguez:

bit more sustainable, but stuff that we could take to kind of be more sustainable in general. So I would ask that you all be kind of relatively quick with these answers as well as we are running a little bit low on time, but Amanda, why don't we start with you if you don't mind, so we'll start with you and kind of move from there and just think a little bit about sustainability and ways that we could kind of think about sustainability as we think about food and think about consuming food and buying food as well.

46:08 Amanda Burden:

Well buy local, vote with your fork. You know get out there, definitely buy local. I'm big on that. Grow your own food. I already mentioned that. Try not to waste food. Eat more veggies and fruits if you can. The cows in particular extremely tough on our environment. Cook more. And, eat more diverse food, you know, try not to promote them on a culture out there – not all those people growing corn and soy. So yeah, I think those things, especially there's tons of other tips. But those are my favorite.

46:42 Bretton Rodriguez:

That's great, thank you. Oh sorry, I muted myself. Tim do you wanna jump in?

46:50 Tim Healion:

Eat local. I think we're all going to say that, right? Eat less. I mean, I get people gorge – there's a lot of large people out there that eat more than they need to. You go to a restaurant, some restaurants, and you order food and they serve you more food than you're going to be able to eat. And eat more fruits and vegetables. You know it's about eating healthier and in general that doesn't seem to impact the world of the Earth as much as, you know, big institutional eating or I don't know man. I think by eating healthier and a growing your own stuff can have a big impact across the board.

47:35 Bretton Rodriguez:

Great thank you. Yes, eat local, eat less, don't eat as much. Kerri you want to jump in as well.

47:45 Kerri Lesh:

Yeah sure so as to not repeat everything because these are what I think I would 100% agree with are the key answers. Eat local. But you know, some odd jobs that I do on the side include post mates and some services like that and when I deliver food to people, and just like I explain to my students in class, you know a lot of how we eat is also not very sustainable. Whether that's packaging straws, you know, plastic bags, and all sorts of things like this. So to emphasize the element that when you do eat local, especially in places like the The Great Basin Co-op and things like that, you know they discourage a lot of that packaging, which I think is really great. Whether it's that or in just going shopping or postmates. You know in this climate I know that I went into about a two week strand of ordering food to my door step. And it was very nice. It was safer health wise. But it's also probably not very sustainable in the long run. So, uh, looking at all the surrounding elements of eating local too and how it's packaged and the gasoline that spent delivering it to your door, an all that instead of just having it at your own home and learning how to cook and doing a lot of the other things that Mark and Amanda have said.

49:12 Bretton Rodriguez:

Now that sounds good. It's really. It is important to think about the way the food gets to us, right so far. Mark, do you wanna jump in as well?

49:24 Mark Estee:

Yeah, I'll do my best to keep this short because I know how I blar. So before you can eat local, I think you gotta understand that you have to be ready to eat fresh, you gotta eat simple, you have to eat seasonally. I think if you can get those three things down - eating local's very easy, and there's so much access to it these days. One of the things that I could think that could help [inaudible]. The reason why you have to do those three things is that you have to be willing. You can't just say "oh I want to asparagus but it's [inaudible] in season so you can't eat asparagus. It is asparagus season right now, by the way. So you're welcome to come out to the co-op to grab some [inaudible]. The purple asparagus just delivered today. So if you understand, you gotta eat, you have to eat when it's in season. That's gonna help you. That's gonna help you shop better, then you can shop locally. If you do that, you gonna save the food miles and keep the money in the community. One of the things I love to talk about and I'll do it real

50:21 Mark Estee:

quick, is – one of the things I've gone over is this "nose-to-tail" cooking, right? So call it a lamb, pig, or whether it's a beat stock of celery, you know, whatever it may be – we use every single ounce of every single part of it: the stems, the roots, the peels. Everything gets used, nothing gets wasted, and then you end up kind of learning that whole – and this came from Alice

Waters: Seasonal simple, local fresh. Do those processes. It becomes a lot easier. You just have to change your thinking a little bit.

50:54 Bretton Rodriguez:

That sounds great. Amanda I think you're muted. What is it that you wanna –

51:05 Amanda Burden:

So I just wanted to share Mark on the cover of..talking about the, you know, Nose-to-toes and all the you know beefs to the...yeah...edge or whatever... you know what I'm saying.

51:13 Bretton Rodriguez:

No that sounds great, thank you. So I do have the first question from the audience here, and that question is this: How can we help? So as citizens and consumers concerned about unemployed workers and quality cuisine, what can we do in these times to help out? What can we do to help in the community in general? So I don't know who wants to to jump in. Mark, do you feel like jumping in here again

51:44 Mark Estee:

I mean the most the most simple way – I think there's different things, right? You wanna help financially? There's so many things to donate to: Dining with Dignity or Nevada Hip, Delivering with Dignity, Feed our Heroes, Rounds for Heroes. There's so many different things you can donate financially to - \$5, \$10, \$20, \$2000, whatever you want. Go to volunteer your time. I know all those places also have volunteer opportunities. So those are the people that are serving other people. I think if you look at it from an esoteric way, the idea is too – if you really believe in this – is to like Amanda said it already, shop with your dollars. You know, you're voting with your dollars where do you shop, where you eat, What you buy. Whether it's clothing, whether it's you know - going to Junkie, supporting our local businesses. That's one way you can help. And then just kind of telling your friends that may or may not do that right.

52:33 Mark Estee:

[inaudible] way to go shopping, “oh I bought it online,” but Jesus there is store right down the street in Midtown. You could've grabbed that same great T Shirt from – why didn't you go there? I kinda feel like if you can tell your friends to do that, then that would be really helpful thing, because we've been on these pedestals for a long time. I'm sure people are sick of me but I'm saying hey, you wanna help? Tell your friends! Educate your friends a little bit, or share your knowledge with your friends, or share your passion with your friends, and maybe that will you know start that ripple effect. If we all do that then I think we'll be in a lot better place.

53:07 Bretton Rodriguez:

OK, Great. So kind of adding on that a little bit – there's a couple questions here that are more kind of practical questions. They're asking: a) so where can they buy locally? Where can I shop locally? Where can they find things that are in season, and also there a couple questions about maybe what they should be growing as well. So say if there is someone new to Reno, where would you recommend that they go? I feel like I know at least one place that you're going to recommend. Tim let me throw to you. Where do you think that people should go to shop locally?

53:41 Tim Healion:

I'd grab Amanda's magazine. But I mean, that's pretty simple. It's all in there and we're all in there. She's got all the tips of where to get local food. You know, the Co-op is the easiest place and then they get that drop program – it's a food hub where they kind of work with all the farms around the area and they bring the farmers food to a hub, so to speak, right? Which is the co-op or for Mark and I to get this drop program that delivered to our restaurants. And it's fun to work with the farmers, but we get busy doing stuff so we go to the Co-op drop programs.

54:16 Tim Healion:

So Amanda's magazine is great and then so is the food Co-op. Man, they're setting people up and then you know within that if you want to support local businesses, you go to Amanda's magazine. You see which businesses are in there or the ones that she's supporting. And typically the businesses that are in there are supporting local farmers. So it makes it easy for people. That's what I would do.

54:45 Bretton Rodriguez:

Thank you, Amanda. Do you want to jump in and add to that as well?

54:50 Amanda Burden:

I just want to say in terms of growing, people can go to their local garden centers. For instance, Rail City Garden Center in Sparks. It's great. Paul Hollis, he's, you know, he's super busy right now. That's one business that's doing very well. Garden nurseries are packed up, so if you can get somebody to help you, you can ask them, hey, what's growing? What should I grow? What grows well here? Can you point me to some resources? Maybe Master Gardeners can help me figure out how to grow? So that's just one place I would point people.

55:23 Bretton Rodriguez:

OK, great, thank you. So our next question then is kind of the inverse of the first one in a way. What should we not be doing? So we talk a lot about things that we should do. We should shop locally, we should eat local food, we should plant, we should grow our own food. What are

some things that we should avoid doing in this period as well? Kerri, do you want to maybe jump in first here?

55:46 Kerri Lesh:

Sure, just off out of my head. There's, you know, someone on Facebook I noticed (and she's a bit of a friend) who made the announcement through Facebook - you know, if we're talking about sustainability overall, and I've seen one of the questions on here is kind of pertaining to the packaging and all this kind of stuff, you know. She made an announcement to everyone that basically said, "Sorry, we appreciate anything that you may ever give us over our lifetime, but we do not accept anything with plastic anymore. We're really making a big effort, so whether it's food, whether it's gifts, whether it's anything else, make sure that it is I'm completely sustainable." I know that she shops at the Great Basin, you know, using the reusable bags, all of that stuff. She rides her bike everywhere. In Reno, it's kind of nice in that you can get around if you're in the downtown area fairly easily on a bike almost all year round. Maybe not all year round, but I would say those are some helpful things to just kind of remember and integrate into practice if possible.

56:56 Bretton Rodriguez:

Great, thank you. Alright do you wanna jump in as well and maybe talk a little bit about things that we should avoid doing, or things that we should kind of keep from doing?

57:06 Mark Estee:

[inaudible] I was thinking about it. I'm not a big proponent of telling people what not to do. I'm more about that positive kind of thing. I think what not to do is don't be apathetic. Don't sit around and wait for the world to change. If you wanna change it, get involved. If you know - what should you not do...I don't know. You wanna read and see what all the cool people doing, or find somebody that you really admire or like, or find a great magazine, or you know look at a neighbor who's doing something cool like that, like Kerri was talking about, and find out what they do. I don't ever like to tell people what not to do. I always feel like that gets like - I'm not the food police. You know, if you work for me or you work for us, then I'll say what you have to do for sure. But in the meantime, I gonna try and stay with the like, "here's the things we're doing" and share the positivity strand of hope kind of deal. And that's kind of my platform. I mean, my mantra, I guess.

58:03 Bretton Rodriguez

No I like it as a platform. You're like this is what [inaudible cross talk] No, I think I think it's great. So we're rapidly running out of time. So I was thinking maybe we could just end with maybe a brief closing statement. Maybe something along the lines of something you'd recommend eating, something that you ate that is in season that people should look for, maybe some place where they could go and look for fresh food - just maybe something that our audience could take away from this conversation - something positive they could do, that's easy to do, that's

very attainable. Just to kind of end on a positive note, as it were. So Tim, why don't we start with you and we'll go from there. We'll go around once and then we'll call it.

58:43 Tim Healion

My [statement] is brief – it's an offer to people an opportunity to think about more what they put in their bodies and more about where their food comes from. I gotta tell you, one of these lines – you know people say stuff in your life that you can't forget [inaudible] and it was Mark Estee that said at one time, years ago, how we got into this whole thing. He was this restaurant guy. He worked as a cook. He's doing all this stuff and then somebody said, “Hey, so when you're cooking, do you know where your food comes from?” And he didn't know, man it was awesome. Mark, thanks. And so – I mean, it's a great opportunity for people to start considering that, you know? Where does my food come from? What am I putting in my body, and how does it impact my life? Boom, there you go. Go get some asparagus

59:32 Bretton Rodriguez:

Awesome, I love it. Kerri do you want to a last message here, a last take away?

59:38 Kerri Lesh:

No, that's really it. I'm echoing everything that everyone else says, in regards to sustainability. Taking an active effort is very important. We mentioned a lot of the resources, the goals for restaurants, and a lot of the recommendations that Tim and Amanda have made. Also in terms of specifically what to do, where to go, where to grow – they are the Kings and Queens of that domain for Reno. So, those are all excellent suggestions, I think.

01:00:14 Bretton Rodriguez:

Great thank you, Amanda. Last comments. What do you think?

01:00:17 Amanda Burden:

Oh man. I mean, everyone's already said it. Buy local. There's restaurants that are closed still, but there's plenty that are still open for to-go food. I've got a list on our website. There's lists on Yelp. There's lists all over. Just please support local. We all need your help right now. That's it. So, thank you.

01:00:40 Bretton Rodriguez:

Awesome thank you alright and Mark do you wanna take us home?

01:00:46 Mark Estee:

Sure. I've actually started the master cleanse yesterday. So I'm at day 2 with no food, and I'm gonna go 10 days. I'm gonna make the 10 days for sure. I just do it every other year a couple times. So, the point that I would bring out is - and I needed to do that after this being kind of shuttered and kind of craziness. I think the biggest thing to do is - I was trying to make food that makes me think of my childhood or makes me think of memories. I think when you put that next thing that you put in your mouth, maybe it will be something that would be so delicious and make you think of your parents, or you know an old boyfriend or girlfriend, or you know something that really makes you happy. And eat that food. Enjoy that food. You know, we know that it's [inaudible] to be local simple, season fresh and you know - I think that when we come out of this, eating with others is going to be the most important thing. I eat more

01:01:42 Mark Estee:

meals alone. I love eating alone because I'm around people all day. Now that I'm not around people all day and eating alone [inaudible] steaks. So, I really want to get back to work. Get around some people, enjoy some really good food, you know? And just break bread with others. I think whatever that looks like to you, getting back to your first comments about culture and history, I think that when we start to eat now - I know that when I finish master cleanse, everything that goes in my body - I become so aware of it. I think we should all be aware of what we're doing, and echoing what all the three other amazing panelists said tonight, I couldn't agree with [inaudible]. What we put in our bodies is so important, and I just wanna say thanks for having and I appreciate this forum. It's really great.

01:02:23 Bretton Rodriguez:

Thank you and also the master cleanse sounds awful. Sounds like such a terrible, terrible thing.

01:02:32 Mark Estee:

I gotta Facebook if you guys want to friend me. It's like 20 people doing it together. It's called master cleanse and me. Check it out.

01:02:36 Bretton Rodriguez:

Well, I will not be doing that, but no, that sounds great. Thank you. Thank you to all the panelists. I think you guys were amazing. I think this is a great conversation. Thank you for everything. Thank you to the College of Liberal Arts at UNR. Thank you to Core Humanities. Thank you to my fellow committee members who helped plan this event and have planned Thought on Tap this whole year - so Daniel Enrique Perez, Caitlin Earley, Carlos Mariscal, Steven Pasqualina, and David Fennimore. So, thank you all. You all have been fantastic. And yeah, that's it. And thank you to the audience as well. Thank you for listening. I hope you and enjoyed it. If you have other questions, please feel free to follow up with any of us. I'm sure we would be happy to respond. So thank you all. That's it's and yeah goodbye,

01:03:23 Kerri Lesh

Thanks everyone, it was fun!