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Nourishing Community: the value of commensality in urban farms

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Nourishing Community: the value of commensality in urban farms

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This thesis would be nothing without my community. With this journey finally coming to a close, I am lucky to think back to all the people who have helped guide this thesis and my graduate studies. Thank you to Carrie, our fearless leader, for answering my constant questions with an open door. To Claire, you have provided me with the confidence and knowledge I needed to create this project. Your enthusiasm and long talks pushed me out of my comfort zone and into a path that fit my vision. To David and Erica, I feel so lucky to have received your wisdom throughout this journey. It would be impossible to write this without thanking my friends, cohort members, and roommates at 842 Eureka Ave. Throughout our endless talks, you all supported not only my Third Place, but also my productive thesis space. To my sweet family and friends who have been my shoulder to cry on, thank you. Sighs of relief will echo all over the world the night this gets submitted. Lastly, thank you to my partner, Thomas, and our pup. Thank you for the long walks and all the emotional support. I would not have this title without the nourishment of my own community. Thank you all.

ABSTRACT

This research examines urban farming practices in California to highlight the importance of eating together on urban farms. In order to look closely at the social benefits of urban farming, I utilize the theories of Third Place and commensality to help understand the connections that are made on urban farms when people are able to eat together. Throughout this research, I unpack the nuances behind urban farming and respond to the critiques that neglect original narratives of urban farming that support BIPOC communities and neighborhoods. Yisrael Family Farms in Sacramento County and Urban Adamah in Berkeley were interviewed about the various commensal programs that take place on the farms. These programs varied from youth fellowships, elder cooking classes, to religious ceremonies, and family harvest days. To demonstrate these concepts, I designed a proof-of-concept meal that brought to light the power of a commensal event on an urban farm. Using qualitative analysis, this study shows that commensal events have value on urban farms that transcend production and increase social benefits and connections.

PROJECT BACKGROUND: Nourishing knowledge

Growing up, my dad was always working on something in the backyard–he was growing veggies to pickle, tomatoes to make sauce, or making sausage from scratch. Food was always around me and I wanted to tend to the land within the realms of a city, where I knew I would always find myself. Settling into Berkeley, I discovered that urban farming was something I wanted to continue to learn. I found myself on the corner of Virginia and Walnut Street near downtown Berkeley, right in the center of it all, at The Student Organic Gardening Association (SOGA). I took every class they offered from basic gardening to food inequalities. I eventually became the Garden Manager and began teaching the classes myself. I dove deep into urban agriculture and started working on research farms and taking every workshop I could.

Being a cis, white, and middle-class woman, I had never understood what it was like to be without food. With this background of food being accessible always, being a hobby, and being a passion, I was bright eyed and bushy tailed and enamored with urban farming. I was naive enough to believe that it could help to end food inequalities in the city. The more I dove into the communities, the more I realized that there are many traps that people like me fall into, for example, believing you know what can help other communities or thinking that one solution of urban farming can help to solve decades of explicit food inequalities. These are traps that I fell into and ones that I am still working my way out of for years to come. It has been about six years since my first day on the Berkeley student urban farm, and a lot has changed.

During my deep dive into urban farming, I read works that critiqued these farms, especially those by Julie Guthman, and felt discouraged from my previously loved craft. Guthman's work focused on the negative effects of urban farming and urged those who were

interested in changing the food systems to work in policy and create systemic changes there. I took on that mission of Guthman and applied to city planning master's programs with a hope of learning more about policy and food systems in order to make a "real" difference.

Thanks to my advisors and professors in my graduate program, I learned that urban farming is not black and white. It is not wrong or right. There are nuances that need to be discovered and unearthed. These critiques of urban agriculture and farming are also not solely negative or discouraging, but they allow for challenging my own self-interests and limitations in my knowledge. I hope to continue to look at the complexities of urban agriculture and call it out for its faults, while also uplifting its positives. This thesis is just that. I will not sit here and tell you urban farming is going to solve food injustices, but you will also not be told that it cannot make any impact on communities and neighborhoods in cities. Both are true simultaneously and both are important. This thesis has come to a head based on my passion for discovering how connecting to the earth through food can create real change–in ourselves and in our communities. I believe that urban farming has the ability to connect people and places to food and empower communities. The process of doing this research was one of questioning knowledge I learned previously, but ultimately, I am still hopeful in the power of urban farming and I believe that through communal food sharing, we can increase the social benefits of urban farming.

INTRODUCTION

As urban agriculture takes on a larger spotlight every year, research on the topic continues to grow and highlight the pros and cons of these projects. For the purposes of this paper and the future research that I hope it brings, I utilize Claire Napawan's "urban farm"

definition and will be referring to the farm projects mentioned throughout this paper as such. This definition includes a broad range of urban farms that range in size and production value, which is described as a "range of programmatic activities that balance food production with demonstration farming, sustainability education, urban composting, stormwater management, and community gathering…[that] is designed and planned holistically" (2015 pg 39).

(Photo taken from Napawan, 2015)

Initially, most research done on urban agriculture was largely positive and focused on benefits of green space, education, social network building, and food access (Barron; Francis 1987; Galt 2014; Okvat 2011) Although we now see an increase of critiques examining what happens when primarily white farmers come into vacant urban spaces and begin to farm in hopes to increase food accessibility and create more localized food systems in a community that is largely BIPOC (Black, Indigenous, People of Color) or low income. Many critiques of urban agriculture start here– "In terms of activism, we need to think a lot more about the ethics of 'bringing good food to others' in alternative food. My underlying concern is that because alternative food tends to attract whites more than others, whites continue to define the rhetoric, spaces, and broader projects of agrifood transformation" (Guthman 2008).

Many scholars critique the idea of localism and see this as a bandage to the systemic issues of food accessibility in low-income neighborhoods (Dupuis 2005; Guthman 2008; Slocum 2007). There is an urgency to change the local politics instead of changing the local food system (Born 2006; Guthman 2008). These authors correctly assert that no real change will happen when you put trendy bandages on large structural inequalities. Urban food researchers are shifting their attention away from urban farming and onto systemic policy changes. It is important to recognize that many of these critics are white themselves, and although these critiques are important to note, they do not include the robust field of literature that expands to Black Indigenous People of Color (BIPOC) scholarship that surrounds BIPOC-run urban farms and urban agriculture. As these critiques are often coming from outsiders themselves, they are becoming more of the past as we are seeing much more research from BIPOC authors who highlight the agricultural innovation that is happening in Black and Brown communities or communities the authors are part of.

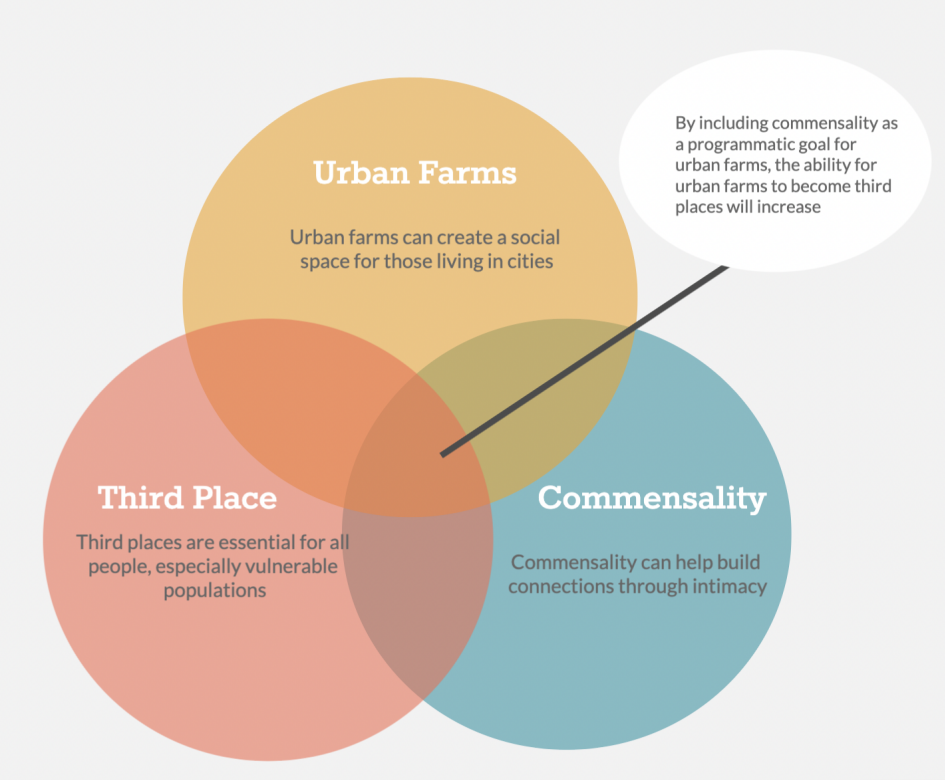
Many argue that within the current definition of urban farms, we see a productive space that serves the neoliberal agenda, which is an economic philosophy that highlights the importance of markets with little government regulation (Alkon 2008; Alkon 2012; Barron 2017 Guthman 2008). It relies on the people within the market to attend to human needs (like food) and takes pressure off the government to mitigate these accessibility issues. “The movement’s decision to address hunger solely through the creation of markets is problematic. Community food security projects, she argues, are dependent on farmer participation to continue. For this reason, despite their laudable goal of increasing food access, they tend to prioritize farm owners’ needs for profit over those of low-income consumers, and to not consider the needs of farmworkers” (Alkon, 2012 p, 350).

What about the alternative food spaces that are maintained and managed autonomously? It is imperative to note when examining urban farms that each farm, garden, or community plot will be created for different reasons. In order to properly critique urban farm projects, we need to examine the reasoning behind and locations of the farm's creation. (Butterfield 2020; London 2020). Looking at this context can help reveal what kind of benefits will come to the community and what community members will be able to have access to these (McClintock 2014).

What brings this thesis together is the practice of sharing. I am using this overall method as my base to answering the question: what happens to urban farms when we allow for or uplift food sharing events? I use interviews in which farmers share their memories, stories, events, and opinions on the question. Through a pot-luck, proof of concept event, my community members and I shared food and stories from our lives that helped to discover how food can connect us through vulnerability and intimacy. In order to attempt to answer my main questions, I aimed to uncover the differences between feeding and nourishing. To me, feeding allows for basic needs to be met, you can be fed something without substance, something that will cause hunger shortly after it is consumed, or you can be nourished and fed substance that you will hold for hours, or a lifetime. I believe that using the various methods of sharing–events, food, stories, and memories, I have uncovered an amazing opportunity that can enhance urban farms in the US, an opportunity that many other cultures already practice constantly.

Utilizing theories of social benefits of urban farms, commensality (eating together) and third spaces, this paper will attempt to aid researchers, planners, and urban farmers in creating a new program and system for shared eating in urban farms. Urban farms have been harshly criticized by many researchers who argue policy is the way to activate change in neighborhoods,

but these critiques leave out the strong spaces that work within the neoliberal system in order to fight for their community. Although they may be working on the sidelines of our capitalist, hegemonic system, they are still creating change in their communities. I believe by including commensality, sharing food together, as a programmatic goal of new and existing urban farms, the ability for these farms to provide third places and support the neighborhood community could be increased. This thesis will demonstrate how urban farms can provide social benefits that help to nourish communities beyond just food access.



A NOURISHMENT OF LITERATURE: Urban Farms, Third Spaces, and Commensality

There is countless literature on the benefits of urban farms that look at educational, community, and localized food value, but very little looks at how people utilize urban farms as a third place that allows for structural change and social networks. To take it a step further, the literature present on commensality shows that eating together often allows people to become more emotionally available and helps them to create more intimate relationships with their community (Marovelli 2019; Fischler 2011; Franck 2005). We are not presented with research that looks at food that is shared communally in a safe space with community members that feel comfortable. Existing gaps in literature include research investigating commensality's role in creating third places or commensality's impacts on urban farms and their affiliated community members. Utilizing the review on these three strands of existing literature, I will look at the bridge connecting social benefits of urban farms, third place, and commensality.

Social Benefits of Urban Farms

For the purposes of this paper, I will focus on social benefits in order to understand the value of urban farms beyond productivity. Scholars have noted many benefits of urban farms that surpass production such as green space, educational spaces, health benefits, and more (Barron; Francis 1987; Galt 2014; Okvat 2011). This literature review will not directly address these benefits. Instead, the direction of social benefits of urban farms will be the driving force behind understanding the power of urban farms.

The Original Urban Farm Narrative

"How [UA] is mobilized and by whom…can make all the difference in whether it serves to bolster racial capitalism or undermine it" (McClintock 2018 pg 9).

Jonathan London (2020), a professor in the Human Ecology department at UC Davis, looks at three "taproots" or intentions behind urban farming–justice oriented farms, market oriented farms, and health oriented farms–and attempts to discover their connection with racial capitalism which he defines as follows: "capitalism is racial, and was never not racial; and that racism enabled capitalism's rise to dominance in Europe via a globalized system of chattel slavery and settler colonialism" (206). Through this theory, London looks at the true narrative behind urban farming in which Black and BIPOC farmers are attempting to transform and fight against racial capitalism. These are justice-rooted urban farms. London does note that many times, the roots or intentions behind farms can be entangled and have some aspects that fight against racial capitalism and some that uplift it.

The practices of urban farming in cities by white people often uplift racial capitalism by disregarding the efforts of people of color in urban farming traditions. "Uncritically proclaiming the universal benefits of these foods and foodways often has the effect of reinforcing whiteness in the food movement, ignoring the experiences and contributions of people of color" (London 2020 pg 208). These farms are not the original narrative of urban farming, but one that has been co-opted by those often looking at urban farming in the market or health oriented taproot. These white farmers who take up a large aspect of the narrative within urban farming devalue the work and farming traditions that Black and brown people have been creating for themselves for much longer than the trend of "farming foodies."

Sociologist Butterfield's 2020 study examines the current studies and articles pertaining to community gardens and argues that it is predominantly focused on the "new wave" of community gardens that have been brought about by white, middle-class, and educated residents. These gardens are focused on localizing the food system in response to climate change and other environmental factors. Butterfield puts a large emphasis on the intention of the farms and expresses that the start date, communities in charge, and location of the garden will help determine the reasons behind the formation of the space. "Research suggests that the demographic makeup of gardeners involved in this movement may shape who "belongs" in the garden or its constitution—for example, white and well-educated newly arrived residents of an ethnically diverse community may be more likely to participate or take an active role in shaping local community garden development, goals, and outcomes, including political narratives and regulating use of space within gardens" (740).

Butterfield found that most of the gardens were present in Black and Latinx neighborhoods and had an earlier start date, whereas the large number of gardens started by white, middle-class, and educated people were established much later and present in more well-funded areas. The more recent trends of urban agriculture seem to have focus on local food access, environmental, and sustainability concerns. Butterfield describes this idea as "green gentrification," where urban farms are bringing middle class, white, and educated people to predominantly black and brown neighborhoods. In their study, Butterfield found consistency within the literature that newer farms in the New York City area were primarily started by white middle class educated people with the intention of mitigating environmental and sustainability concerns.

Communal Nourishing and Organizing

Donna Armstrong was an early researcher on the topic of urban farms. Armstrong's study published in 2000, focused on urban farm benefits of neighborhood development and health promotion. The study examined a total of 63 farms in New York City and focused on the importance within low-income communities. In the twenty farms that Armstrong surveyed, 46% were located in low-income urban areas and over 30% of gardeners were BIPOC and 35% of the farms were maintained by a bi-racial group of gardeners and the remaining gardens had primarily white gardeners (322). Garden coordinators reported in their survey that 51% of their farms gave residents more pride and positive attitudes towards their neighborhood (324). Over 30% of the garden coordinators reported to have additional community organizing efforts that were made possible because of the garden itself such as neighborhood events, beautification, and crime-watch efforts. Farms in low-income areas were four times as likely as farms in higher income areas to address other neighborhood issues. "Also, many of the community gardens lead to further neighborhood organizing by providing a physical location for residents to meet each other, socialize, learn about other organizations and activities/issues in their local community" (325). Armstrong argued that these farms are a catalyst for community involvement and organizing and could be used as a public health strategy to encourage community empowerment.

Heather Okvat's 2011 study explores urban gardens from a psychology perspective and focuses her empirical study on stresses in the neighborhood, community development and organizing. Okvat utilizes several surveys done by other researchers to examine the likelihood of people gathering on any greenspace vs. urban farm spaces. The study found that because these farms allow for more intimate interaction between community members, they are more

likely to form bonds and continue to come back to urban farms as opposed to other greenspaces in the area. “Community gardens, in particular, bring residents together into a denser network than their urban roles normally allow, decrease isolation through sharing of seeds, tools, knowledge, ideas, produce, culture, and recipes, and offer a participatory approach to community development” (378). Okvat also found that these close ties led to more neighbor-to-neighbor assistance and care when someone was ill, injured, or busy. These systems of empowerment can aid communities in becoming more resilient during difficult times like economic downturns, pandemics, or community adversity.

Third Places

A Description of Third Place

“Third place” was first introduced as a theoretical concept from Raymond Oldenburg and Dennis Brissett. Oldenburg then published his book *The Great Good Place* in 1999, which presented the idea of “first place,” “second place,” and now “third place.” Within our first place (home), we are developing our sense of being through our family and our close relationships. Our second place (work or school), helps to inform our professional goals and grow ourselves in an academic or professional setting. Oldenburg and Brissett felt that there was a lack of research done on places that existed outside of these realms, which they labeled “third places.” These places help us to explore our individuality and help us to further our wellbeing (Manzo 2003; Crisp 2013). The third places are where we find social engagement and self-expression– churches, theater, sports, parks, etc.

Leo Jeffres, a professor of communications at Cleveland State University, took the Oldenburg and Brissett research a step further and looked at the impact of third places on

community well-being instead of solely personal growth. This research (2009) stemmed from an emerging conversation between planners and urban designers who were starting to discover the importance of community spaces or "third places." Jeffres utilized a national telephone survey from 2005-2006 with 477 participants, in which people were asked about their involvement in "third places." Jeffres' research showed that the quality of life for people who did not have a third place reported a lower quality of life. Those that did showed to have a higher quality of life within the survey's assessment. They also found that they felt more connected to their community and their neighborhood. Jeffres' notes that the third place varied greatly amongst respondents from coffee shops to churches to nature or parks.

Third Place and Healthy Communities

Although the concept of third places proves to be important in people's lives, the idea of third places and how planners, architects, and governments look at this idea is changing rapidly. While initially this research made third places very trendy for planners and government officials to promote and create, they are now threatened with real estate prices and effects of the internet. Stuart Butler, is an economic senior fellow at the Brookings Institute. In his 2016 article, Butler highlights that poverty among cities and suburbs is increasing and the addition of third places would strongly benefit the communities' quality of life and help aid communities out of poverty. Oldenburg blames "unfunctional zoning" for the lack of third places, and we can see that with current gentrification and rising real estate prices, third places are not the top priority of planners and government any longer. This is especially true in marginalized communities who are often left out of planning processes. Butler gives recommendations for planners and government officials to utilize laws like The Affordable Care Act, which requires non-profit

hospitals to analyze local health trends and needs in the community. Butler argues that expanding the availability of third places and social networks can help to address many health concerns.

Third Places in Marginalized Communities

When people are unable to live within the spaces that are created for them by the government or third parties, Lefebvre (1974) explains that people must make these spaces themselves. Within our neoliberal environment, third places are often made out of necessity. The necessity to have a space that is not only for goods or amenities, but also for gathering and coming together as a community. Although he did not directly use the language of first, second, and third places, we look to Lefebvre when we see the importance of third places in a political environment. Lefebvre explains that often these spaces transcend just social spaces and become political spaces. When third places are run entirely by the community they wish to serve, the space becomes necessary for people to gain political understanding and form a union for policy changes in their community and neighborhood.

Paul Hickman (2013) who is a researcher at the Centre for Regional Economic and Social Research in Sheffield examines third places in marginalized communities in Great Britain. Hickman argues that it is not enough to look at how people interact with each other in third places, but essential to examine where they are able to form these third places within their neighborhoods. Hickman explains third places are more crucial for marginalized communities because funding for these neighborhoods is lacking. Because funding for marginalized neighborhoods is often lacking, these third places fulfill two functions: the first provides essential resources, amenities, or goods for the community and the second looks at the social

function which offers a space for people to interact. This study showed that people who were unemployed, of poor health, and elderly were more likely to utilize third places for social interaction. Those who were part of low-income neighborhoods visited third places frequently as well, as their homes may not have been suitable for interaction or play for their children. Many noted that the importance of third places became more symbolic and showed a sense of vibrancy in the neighborhood. Hickman takes their research a step further with policy suggestions and an overall push for funding so these third places can be properly lit, maintained, and utilized for and by the community.

To assume that all people can move freely within spaces and choose the places they want to be involved in is detrimental to the idea of third places. Littman (2021) pushes the idea of "collapsed places" as a new way to look at third places within marginalized communities. Littman has developed this theory within the realms of their Masters of Social Work research. In this theory, first, second, and third places are more entangled with each other and less distinct. Some people might be literally or figuratively imprisoned within the confines of institutional barriers such as prison or poverty. Many people do not have the ability to physically move through spaces by themselves because of disabilities or lack of access. People who are unhoused may not share the same definition of what is home versus what is their community space. Although Littmam says that the idea that people in marginalized communities "do not find places to call home (first place), places of purpose (second place) and places of play (third place) would be an act of dismissal and erasure" (pg 1231). These places just have a less traditional idea of distinct places and the lines of each place are often blurred.

Urban Farms as Third Places

Clara Irazábal (2009), a planner and professor at the University of Maryland, explains the importance of community spaces within the city. The elite use forces that limit the use of space for marginalized people that are not within the limits of "consumerist citizenship" or economically beneficial for the city. Irazábal explains that this speculative look at the city takes away rights from marginalized people who are unable to participate in the neoliberal economy that forces spending within community places. The right to the city should not only be an access to what city officials and planners dictate, but an active ability to change the city and create places and spaces that hold meaningful interactions. Irazábal looks at the South Central Farm in Los Angeles as a case study to these ideas. Not only do urban farms offer some relief to food inaccessibility, but they also provide a space for holding traditions surrounding farming seed saving and growing culturally important herbs, fruits, and vegetables. They not only have farm days, educational workshops, and produce pickups, but they have community dinners where they discuss the political climate. As mentioned previously, because marginalized communities are so often left out of planning decisions, the SCF created an opportunity for a presence at City Hall. Community members created more formal decision-making processes that led them to fight for their farm at City Hall and became a "democracy workshop" to show its community members how to be present and actively fight for change in the city.

Efrat Eizenberg (2012), a professor of urban and regional planning, recognizes that in our current state, we give place to those within the hegemonic culture, which directly pushes out communal places for marginalized groups. Urban farms and gardens can help to give space to silenced cultures and reappropriate places that would otherwise continue to go towards the hegemonic white culture in the US. These spaces are managed by the community and for their

community, which helps them to continue traditions and ceremonies from their culture. Eizenberg looks at casita gardens which originate in Puerto Rico. These gardens are important cultural centers that allow gardeners and community members to cook food, make music, and grow produce from Puerto Rico. These spaces become more like collapsed spaces as you have an entangled space with a garden, an outdoor kitchen, a communal eating area, and event space. Eizenberg also points out the distinction community members have between the gardens and other public spaces. "Beyond this opportunity to voice suppressed cultures, they afford and actualize a lived experience of space that emphasizes diversity, celebration, aesthetic expressions, attachment and belonging, and connection to collective and individual history" (773).

Commensality

Defining Commensality

Commensality is the act of eating food together at the same table. The word comes from the Latin, *commensalis.* The prefix of com means sharing something with others and mensa, which means a table that is used for food. In this case, commensality would mean sharing a table that is meant for food. When we look at the prefix, we also see that commensality could also be linked to community, which has its origins in sharing food together, such as *comer*, to eat, in Spanish. Community now holds its meaning in sharing interests or qualities with others (Jönsson 2021). Connecting the idea of eating and coming together has been part of our world since the medieval times and most likely further (Jönsson 2021; Marovelli 2019).

Commensality can take on many forms. There is domestic commensality, which usually refers to the act of eating with the people in your home, or your first space sphere (Marovelli

2019). There is also public commensality, the focus of this paper, which describes eating with other people that are in your first, second, or third places.

This thesis is going to examine how eating together in the second, or third places, the urban farm site, can affect the community that is part of that space. This paper will be what happens when community members come together and eat on urban farm land. What happens when we eat on soil where the food was grown? What happens when we eat with people from our community? What kinds of conversations happen when eating is involved? This paper will examine public commensality on urban farms.

We will not solely examine commensality, which is sharing a table for food, but also food sharing as a whole, which the Oxford University Press defines as "having a portion [of food] with another or others; giving a portion [of food] to others; using, occupying or enjoying food [and food related spaces to include the growing, cooking and/or eating of food] jointly; possessing an interest in food in common; or telling someone about food" (2014). The urban farm is a perfect example of food sharing in all aspects of this definition. People can occupy a space where food is central in regards to the growing, cooking, and/or eating and they do it as a community (Davies 2017).

Examples of Public Commensality in Cities

People have grown, sold, and eaten food within city boundaries for centuries. To stop your busy life in the city and take time to eat with your neighbors continues the sense of intimacy and community that often gets overlooked in an urban environment. Not only can people feel connected to others, they also feel connected to their space and their city itself (Fischler 2011; Franck 2005). Whether you are just grabbing street food for the road or sitting

down with friends for a coffee, you are developing connections that are essential to the city's development (Franck 2005). "Food venues give us a sense of intimacy, a place to pause at an eminently human scale. When the food we eat, grow or buy is local, we also experience a connection to the region, the seasons and the ground we inhabit. Our connection to organic life, within all the abstractions of the modern city, is strengthened" (ibid pg 8).

Brigida Marovelli is a Trinity College post-doctoral fellow and founder of The Dinner Exchange London, a community interest organization that holds food sharing events to bring light to food poverty, waste, and distribution practices. In their 2019 paper, they utilize three case studies of public commensality spaces in London in order to show the value and importance of commensality in a public setting–a community farm/kitchen, a community kitchen, and a non-profit focused on food access. Marovelli looks at the importance of these places for vulnerable communities. They note that these food sharing organizations make a great effort to include people left out of traditional third place planning. "For instance, Be Enriched and the Skip Garden offer training for kids with learning disabilities, who join the kitchen team and the volunteers to prepare and serve the meals" (pg 199).

Marovelli found that the intimacy of the act of eating the same food together helped to relax people's anxiety and create a safe place where people were able to engage with new members of their community and form new connections. Marovelli also notes that many vulnerable populations often feel loneliness because of lack of places in which their social and cultural values are allowed. The study also found that with the space for vulnerabilities, personal or communal difficulties to be shared and empathized with, the participants found food sharing or commensality places essential. Marovelli argues that although people may come into

these community places as just community members, through the use of commensality, cooking together, and conversation, they became friends and family.

Going back to the idea of general food sharing, where the meal itself is only one aspect of community building, Marovelli talks about the enriching process of cooking where knowledge gets past and people are able to cook more complex or entirely new meals. “Guests and volunteers enrich the repertoire of dishes by sharing recipes from their own cultural backgrounds, bringing in ingredients and occasionally taking over the collective kitchens to cook for special events. The meal and its preparation become an occasion for exchanging knowledge and creating memories around culinary production” (ibid).

House-lot gardens in Mexico represent a much more collapsed space of eating, cooking, residing, etc. and do not follow the traditional models of “first,” “second,” or “third” places. Maria Christie, a professor of Geography at Virginia Tech, describes a traditional “meal for all the neighborhoods” where María Teresa hosts the yearly celebration of the Day of the Holy Cross and invites three other barrios from the surrounding areas to join (2004). Hundreds of guests ate together in the small house-lot garden space where the distinction between home, community, garden, or kitchen is blurred. A place where the private space of the home borders the garden, the garden holds an eating space, and the semi-private backyard space holds a kitchen where women work on the food as the men tend to the garden and play music. There is no distinct separation between the home, the garden, the kitchen, or the community and family. All who come to this space are connected and intertwined with a job that links them to the eventual meal. She emphasizes the ability for the community to come together and discuss growth or changes that need to happen in the neighborhood.

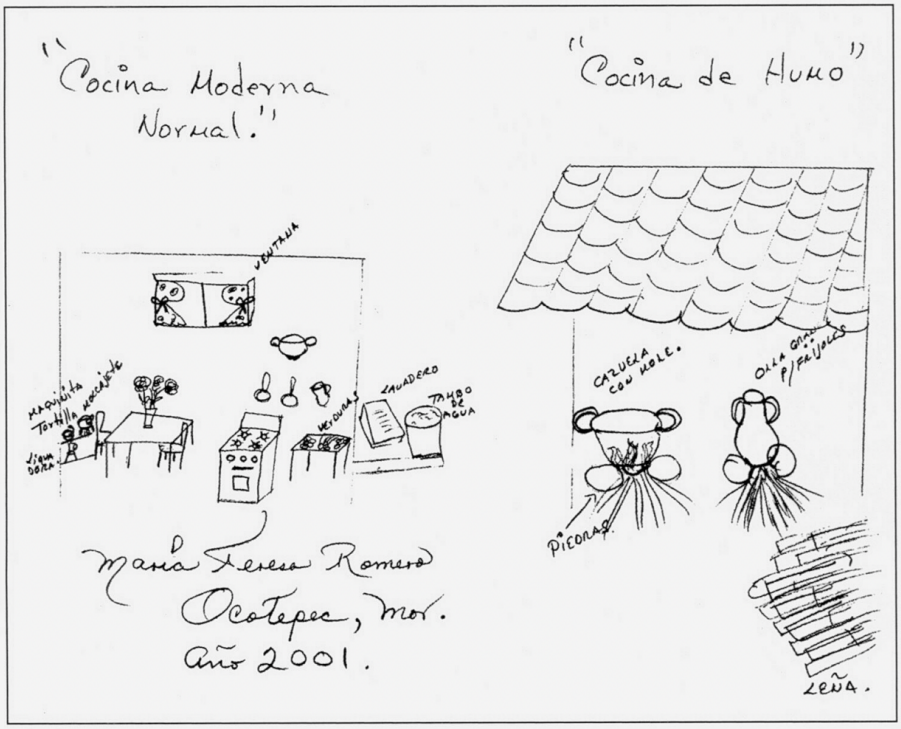


FIG. 7—María Teresa's sketch of her dual kitchenspaces in Ocotepec, Mexico. (Reproduced courtesy of the *Journal of Latin American Geography*).

(Photo taken from Christie 2004)

METHODS: How do we nourish?

This thesis is aiming to answer the question of what happens when we eat together on urban farms? How is community shaped and grown through these food sharing events? In order to answer these questions, mixed qualitative methods were used, starting out with semi-structured interviews with farmers and information taken from their websites. Later a proof-of-concept meal with members of my community at UC Davis. This proof-of-concept meal offered different opportunities for communication with the community–written notes and a story circle were used to gain insight into the importance of eating together on an urban farm.

While I was putting the questions for the interviews and story circle together, I had discussions with the International Review Board of UC Davis to figure out whether or not my

thesis would need an International Review Board (IRB) approval and oversight. These interviewees were asked questions that allowed them to talk about only what they felt comfortable with and did not cause any trouble to their lives. I had full written and verbal consent from the interviewees that they would be fine being part of the process. With the story circle and potluck, I used the Landscape Architecture 216 class as the participants for our community gathering. As this project was connected to the course, their participation did not qualify for IRB approval. I received recorded verbal consent from all the participants that they were fine being recorded for this research. The IRB of UC Davis allowed the study to be exempt from needing approval.

These methods were used in order to find a deeper understanding of why the farmers put these events on and why the community attends them. What do they do for the farms? What do they do for the community members themselves? Initially, I was going to pull data from all the farms in the area and record how many had these events and how often, but that neglects to answer the question of why. Using a survey to talk to the farms would result in some insight into the why, but I wanted the questions to stay open ended for the farmers, and for the farmers to fill in anything that was not present in the questions I had written. The proof-of-concept meal with the story circle allowed for community members to share whatever they felt was important within our conversation. I did not want to limit the possibilities or force anyone to recount a traumatic or personal memory or experience.

Two farms were chosen based on the definition of urban farms presented by the author, "range of programmatic activities that balance food production with demonstration farming, sustainability education, urban composting, stormwater management, and community gathering…[that] is designed and planned holistically" (Napawan 2015 pg 39). The events that

are held on the farm, and the proximity to the author in Northern California were essential in choosing Urban Adamah and Yisrael Family Farms. I had previous connections and relationships to the farms and hoped the interviews would build upon existing rapport and further my relationships with these farms. As previously stated, the farm must hold food sharing events present on their space or facilitated near the farm. These events must include some type of eating and gathering together with food present. Examples of a commensality event are harvest meals, holiday celebrations, cooking classes, and youth groups. Two farms were chosen based on this criteria and interviews of about an hour took place with each farmer.

The interviewees were chosen based on their knowledge of the events on the farms. In some cases, this was a designated role on farms that were more established in their funding, such as an event manager. In other cases, the interviewee was the farmer, the event coordinator, the teacher, the main point of contact, and many more roles.

I used semi-structured interviews in order to ensure the farmers were able to tell the stories and memories they felt connected to. Interviewees were all asked for written and verbal consent to be recorded and part of this project using their own names and farms' names. Each interview lasted about an hour and the location was up to the choosing of the interviewee. For the interview with Urban Adamah, Debbie requested we meet at the farm. She pruned the fruit trees and did other labor at the farm while I was asking questions and recording the conversation. She needed to work on the farm while being interviewed, as Spring left much work to do on the farms. COVID-19 presented many challenges to this project, one included interviewing the farms. Yisrael Family Farms preferred the interview to take place on zoom for social distance practices and convenience. Yisrael Family Farms was in the process of reopening their farm to community members on site after the interview took place.

The semi-structured interview questions were formulated attempting to find the connection between commensality, third place, and urban farms. The questions are listed below, but many questions transformed based on the conversations with the farmers.

1. What is your position at the farm? What is your involvement with the planning of the events?

2. How would you describe food events in your community?
    - What kind of food do you eat?
        - Do you find it important to eat harvested food?

3. Why do you hold food events at your farm?

4. Where are the events held? Paint us a picture :)
    - What kind of physical accommodations are needed for having these events? Kitchen space? Tables? Flat land?

5. How often do you hold food events for your community?
    - Is there a reason you do it that often?
    - Are those occasions to celebrate something in particular?
    - How do you spread the word?

6. Who usually comes to these events?
    - Are they members of the neighborhood? Community?
    - Are they interested in farming or the farm? Do they volunteer?
    - How often do new people come to these events?

7. What kinds of connections are made at the food eating events vs. other events that you have?
    - Are there any special social interactions you notice? Any vulnerabilities shared?

8. What do these events provide for the community? What do they provide for the farm itself?

9. What kind of obstacles do you have when planning these events? Zoning? Codes?

After the interviews, I utilized the farms' websites in order to find further information that I felt would benefit this study, such as background, other programs and events not mentioned, founders, and much more. This information can be found in the Project Context Section in the farm background sections. I decided to find information on their website because

the interviews did allow for the farmers to choose where the conversation would go. I did not want to push certain questions because of all the valuable information that was brought by the farmers without my direction or intervention. This allowed for some unanswered questions that I did not recognize until after the interviews were transcribed and looked over. I felt that the background, and mission statement of the farms would help to give context of their answers to the interview questions.

Finally, with the questions answered from the farmers, this thesis would be nothing without the community themselves. The community that the author focused on was a community she was already part of–a class on food and agriculture in cities called Landscape Architecture 216: Food in the City. The class was taught by Claire Napawan, the author's advisor and mentor. This class was chosen because the students self-identified as being interested or involved with the greater research topic of urban food. The author used the listserv from the 216 class given by the professor, Claire Napawan, and created invitations for the event and invited all the community members in the class.

In order to gain the understanding of communal eating on farms from community members, the author designed a proof-of-concept meal which utilized an established community that the author is part of. The meal took place on the UC Davis Student Farm, a place that all the community members were familiar with. The proof-of-concept meal was a potluck, so all community members brought food that they wanted to share. In order to create easy conversation for members, the author created prompting questions, definitions of key concepts, fill-in-the blank cards, and brought paper, pencils, and coloring utensils in order for people to draw, write, or communicate their feelings that day.

(Photos taken by author)

Along with food, the community members were asked to be ready to join a story circle, popularized by John O'Neil and the Free Southern Theater and Junebug Theater. In this format, all members of the circle must share a story that was prompted by the facilitator, which was the author in this case. Story circles are often presented as an alternative to focus groups in order to create space for all people to feel comfortable sharing their perspectives and ideas. Each person is responsible for adding in some sort of memory, story, or perspective and because of this, the narrative grows and the larger story is able to build off of the others. The idea that all will share their story encourages others to feel comfortable sharing and creates empathy surrounding others' pasts (Capital Public Radio). Studies show that the story circle method allows for people to make new connections, increase their awareness of social issues, and act on their newly found perspectives and beliefs (Capital Public Radio). For the purposes of this thesis, the story circle was created in order to strengthen an existing community and provide resources for

students in this community to feel seen and heard during their time in graduate school. This story circle focused on memories that are tied to food and third places in hopes to strengthen our community through stories and shared experiences.

The story circle prompt was very open-ended, in order to not force any community members to share something that is too personal, traumatic, or triggering. The facilitator presented the question of "share a story, memory, or feeling about a third place, a community, meal, or food that has impacted your life." This prompt was passed throughout the circle and all attendees brought a new story, emotion, or memory into the circle. The conversations were recorded, photographed, and actively listened to. The notecards, drawings, and ideas were all collected by the author in order to collect the personal stories or feelings that were not shared in the story circle. This allowed people to write feelings they needed to work out or did not feel comfortable sharing with the rest of the group. It also allowed those who preferred other means of communication, like drawing, doodling, or notes, to actively participate.

In hopes to better understand the connections that food brings, the memories it creates, and the vulnerabilities it brings, I recorded all the conversations with my interviewees and my story circle community. I used an app called Temi to record and then transcribe the interviews. Of course, I had to go back and often change words or fill in blanks that the transcription did not catch. To process the interviews, I used the themes from my questions and from my literature review in order to help put sections together and highlight the important conversations. For the story circle, the open-ended prompt allowed the participants to choose what they felt comfortable talking about. I saw several similar themes and used those themes as guides for my findings and discussion sections. I felt like it was difficult to look at all of these interviews and

discussions as one because they all presented different perspectives, but allowed for greater themes that the questions helped guide.

PROJECT CONTEXT

COVID-19

The COVID-19 pandemic has changed things quite a bit for the results of my thesis. The methods had to change and the results were largely discussed as "before the pandemic." For the purposes of this research, we will be utilizing the events and practices on the farms before the pandemic in order to really dive into the importance of eating together communally on urban farms. The pandemic stopped many farms from having these events and because of this, most of the events discussed have happened before 2019. Yisrael Family Farms stopped most of their public cooking classes, youth programs, and farm tours altogether until very recently. They have just reintroduced their Project G.O.O.D. to the youth starting this summer, 2022. Urban Adamah started having masked tours a little bit earlier, which I was able to attend for our Landscape Architecture 216 class, and once more for my interview. Their youth programs, workshops, and events have started up again as well, masks required.

Case Studies and Proof of Concept Background

As mentioned previously in the methods section, I utilized two different case study interviews and one proof of concept meal in hopes to answer the question: what happens when we eat together on urban farms? I first interviewed Debbie Harris, the Farm Director at Urban Adamah in Berkeley, California. A few weeks later I was able to interview Chanowk Yisrael, founder of Yisrael Family Farms in Oak Park, California, right outside of Sacramento. After my

interviews, I was able to gather some classmates from my Landscape Architecture 216 course, Food in the City. We were unable to hold our final class due to COVID-19, so this proof-of-concept meal allowed us to come together and discuss food formally before many of us graduated from our Masters and moved out of Davis, CA. Below I have included background on the class that I invited to the proof-of-concept meal and both of the farms that I interviewed. I found this information either from the websites of the farms, and class, or from interviews that were done with the farmers. I believe that background information will be essential in understanding the context of the farms before getting into the interviews.

Landscape Architecture 216: Food in the City, Background and Syllabus

Landscape architecture 216, Food in the City, is a graduate seminar class taught by Claire Napawan at UC Davis. This class has been taught a few times and happens every other year in the fall. The author took this class in Fall 2021. The class consisted of around 20 graduate students in many different departments and one undergraduate student. Many class days were spent out on the field, touring urban farms, agri-hoods, and other models of alternative food systems. The class also had many discussions on the history of the systemic injustices of the food system and why so many alternatives began to arise. Excerpts from the syllabus are provided:

"These sustainable practices also improve a community's food resilience, by providing networked and adaptable alternatives to the conventional model. However, these practices are often attributed to a particular race or class, and the racial and ethnic diversity of alternative food narratives overlooked."

"Next, the course will explore case studies of environmental design practice that integrate alternative and/or sustainable food systems into new development models. This includes local and regional examples of agrihoods, urban agriculture, agri- or rural tourism, and other models."

Yisrael Family Background and Mission

"Transforming the hood for G.O.O.D."

Yisrael Family Farms is located in the South Oak Park neighborhood of Sacramento County, California. It is located on a double lot and is around a half-acre. The farm is home to a healing and culinary herb garden, fruit trees, vegetable beds, chickens, worm composting systems, beehives, and greenhouses. Yisrael Family Farm currently has four members of their team that include Judith Yisrael: Director and Chief Culinarian, Chanowk Yisrael: Chief Seed Starter, as well as an education coordinator, and an outreach coordinator/urban farmer.

Chanowk Yisrael became interested in growing their own food during the financial crisis of 2007-2008, where the desire to eat healthy organic food became much harder because of food prices. It all started with a few garden beds in Chanowk and Judith's Oak Park backyard. In 2011, the garden grew and so did their desire and knowledge. Chanowk left his office job and decided growing food was a lifestyle that he wanted to be the center of his life. Their garden was packed with veggies and even bees. After the garden began flourishing, Judith worked on Chanowk's harvest by inviting neighbors over to enjoy their bounty with canning classes and ways to preserve the harvest. Chanowk and Judith started getting help from their children with the garden, and then eventually with the cooking of the produce, which led to them eating together. Their organization continued to grow and they offered cooking classes to elders and

people around the neighborhood, as well as youth programs that taught gardening, cooking, and teamwork.

The pandemic has paused many of their in-person programs, but they are starting to get back into all four of their programs at Yisrael Family Farms. Project G.O.O.D. (growing our own destiny), brings youth together to teach them about where their food comes from, how it is grown, and how to cook it. They do this with team building exercises, hands-on projects in the garden, and field trips. They are able to cultivate a community within the youth that feels pride in what they eat and how they nourish themselves and their community. The cooking classes at Yisrael Family Farms are offered to youth, adults, and families and include recipes from all over the world using the produce grown on the farm. Through their cooking classes they "support the building of community engagement, foster healthy behaviors, and cultivate cultural diversity" (Yisrael Family Farms website). They also offer Field Lessons which allow for groups to come and learn from the farms. These classes can range from a tour to the farm or active participation in planting, harvesting, and even cooking. Yisrael Family Farms also offers farm tours which have highlighted themes like: How to Heal Communities Using Urban Agriculture, Why Grow Food, History of Systemic Food Injustices in the United States, and more. These tours are welcome to 7th graders and above and range from 90 minutes to 2 hours, where the participants will be given a talk on the specific topic, a Q & A, and a farm tour.

Urban Adamah Background and Mission

"Ground. Connect. Grow. Reconnect to what most nourishes: breath, body, earth, community."

Urban Adamah has settled on a two-acre site in Northwest Berkeley, California. Their farm is booming with perennial flowers, a wide variety of vegetables, chickens, goats, and a

large community. They have around 15 staff members that range from farm manager, kitchen manager, to education coordinator and many jobs in between. They have built out the farm thanks to many funders and donors and now have a 54 bed retreat lodge, a 2,400 square foot community hall, and facilities for the farmers like greenhouses, aquaponics, showers, and offices.

Urban Adamah began in 2010 with Adam Berman. He initially founded the Adamah Fellowship, a three month long farming residential leadership program at the Isabella Freedman Jewish Retreat Center, in Connecticut. Adam became interested in transferring the program to an urban setting in order to reach more people and diversify the population, while also helping to build and strengthen urban communities. With the help of a few donors, Adam was able to recreate the fellowship program in West Berkeley, California on a plot of undeveloped land, which was initially leased for three years and extended to five. The fellowship program launched in 2011, with 30 campers. Then came a free farm stand that was initiated in the summer of 2012. Shabbat and other holiday celebrations opened up the farm to the rest of the community and drew in hundreds of people. Urban Adamah finally landed in their permanent home in May of 2016. Now more than 15,000 people participate in their summer camp programs, festivals, Shabbat celebrations, workshops, and the young adult fellowship.

The programs that Urban Adamah holds are extensive and they bring in people of all ages. They hold spaces for families including the family volunteer days, the family camps, and the Tot Shabbat, which is for children to celebrate Shabbat with music, dancing, and picnic. They have several summer camps for children as well. Urban Adamah also holds a CIT (Counselor in Training) Leadership Program for youth in grades 7th-9th. This training fosters leadership skills while youth take care of the animals, plants, and help to take care of the

younger campers. Finally, one of the farm's biggest and most extensive programs is the Urban Adamah Fellowship, which like its predecessor, Adamah Fellowship, is a residential program that lasts two months, where 14 young adults (ages 21-30) live on the farm and learn to steward the land. They are immersed in farming practices, while also learning about intentional community support and Jewish rituals and traditions. Urban Adamah holds events frequently (masked) that include a weekly Shabbat with dancing, singing, and ceremonial foods; a Passover Seder meal; singing circles; guided psychedelic meditations; and many workshops for all.

FINDINGS: Digging up Knowledge

This results section is split into three sections: examining intentions of the farms, results from my two interviews, and the stories from the proof-of-concept potluck. I have separated these because although they are connected, they are all their own stories that can be told separately. They all give different insight into how eating together on farms empowers community. They have different ways they go about this community, and each interviewee provides a unique perspective.

Although they all tell separate stories, there are several similarities and themes that came about during all three discussions. Firstly, is the knowledge that is passed down through food and farming. Both farmers that were interviewed expressed the importance of using food as a way to pass down knowledge of religion, spirituality, or of family stories and traditions. They pass down these traditions and knowledge from their commensality events that they have on the farm. Some are spent tending to the land and teaching farming and traditional foods from their cultures. Other commensality events are directly related to spirituality and religion and food is the central part of these ceremonies.

Through commensality, connections are made, which was a recurring theme throughout all three interviews. Chanowk and Debbie discussed primarily positive connections that people are able to make through commensality–Chanowk talked about the youth connections that are made through his youth programs and Debbie brought up the connections made between families in the community during their family farm days. Many members of the story circle potluck recalled meals eaten with family members that they are physically distant from and utilized food as a way to connect with their ancestors and culture. Others brought up the important reminder that connections through food are not always positive. The vulnerability that food creates can cause beautiful intimate relationships, but it also holds the power to harm others and bring trauma into their lives. A few members of the story circle had to forge new relationships with commensality to feel comfortable being vulnerable through food.

Interviews with Farms

Urban Adamah–Debbie Harris

Stepping onto the Urban Adamah farm on a misty May morning, I met with Debbie Harris, the Farm Director of Urban Adamah. Debbie and I already met previously when she gave the LDA 216 class a tour of the farm in the fall. It was exciting to see the farm at such a different time of the year–the farm was transitioning to summer veggies and looked barer than the fall time growth. When we had visited in the fall, new infrastructure was being built for the youth programs and in order to expand their community work. Debbie and I discussed what these spaces look like on the farm and how to make them a safe space for community members to gather and share food. "[On where the events are held]... Mostly in the tent. We're in the process of building a community hall. I think the space needs to feel good. So whether it's music

or lighting or the setup, I think just creating a beautiful space for people to feel welcomed into and that kind of holds a container for people's experience."

Urban Adamah has a close connection to the Jewish community and honors the rituals that take place during communal celebrations. Debbie discussed the gatherings that happen during the celebrations and also mentioned how food is always integrated into the ceremonies.

> Way to bring Jewish ritual in because there's so much ritual and connection to food. There's specific foods you eat on certain holidays and there's ways you eat those foods. There's blessings. We do Shabbat once a month. That involves a meal. We have high holidays that usually involve meals.

Although many of the urban farms do not have direct religious affiliations or connections, these events at Urban Adamah are an example of how gathering with food on an urban farm space helps to bring communities together. Especially within Jewish traditions, most holidays and gatherings involve a meal and the event is centered around the specific foods that are eaten. Because Urban Adamah is trying to bring the Jewish traditions of tending to the land and community gathering surrounding food, it is a perfect example of what happens when people gather on urban farms to eat together. Debbie explains why she finds eating communally at Urban Adamah valuable and what differentiates eating at a place that grows food versus other event spaces.

> I think it's just a common denominator And it's a way to connect to the food that is grown here. And it's also just like a thing to do together. Growing things and having people appreciate them and see them and ask questions and feel inspired by them is certainly part of the function on the farm. I think beauty, I think remembering that our food comes from a place.

Yisrael Family Farms–Chanowk Yisrael

Within the realms of our current times, Chanowk and I log onto zoom, on a day that the Yisrael Family Farms is drenched in sunlight. Normally, Chanowk performs these interviews on-site, but just like their farm events, they must be changed in order to accommodate our "new normal." Chanowk starts off the interview offering me an idea of what "urban farming" is to him and how it is connected to immigrants, people of color, and descendants of slaves.

> It's usually what they're calling urban farming is usually the tool of oppressed people. As well as people, Mexican people or Latin folks that that come here or, for example, descendants of slaves. And even during slavery, there we are. We've all been excluded from the traditional ways of getting food. So what we're calling urban farming is something that's been taking place for a very long time by marginalized populations in order to be able to eat, period.

When asked about the current events or programs at the farm that include communal eating and gathering, Chanowk discussed their youth program, Project G.O.O.D (growing our own destiny).

> We do what's called concentric circles. So it's more than like I said, so it's more than just so once they get into the program, they think, oh yeah, we're just going to be learning about food and all this, which is true. But there's also development that's taking place. They plant seeds. They get to harvest. They harvest some of the meals for the lunches. Most of their lunches are made and many times they help make the lunches.

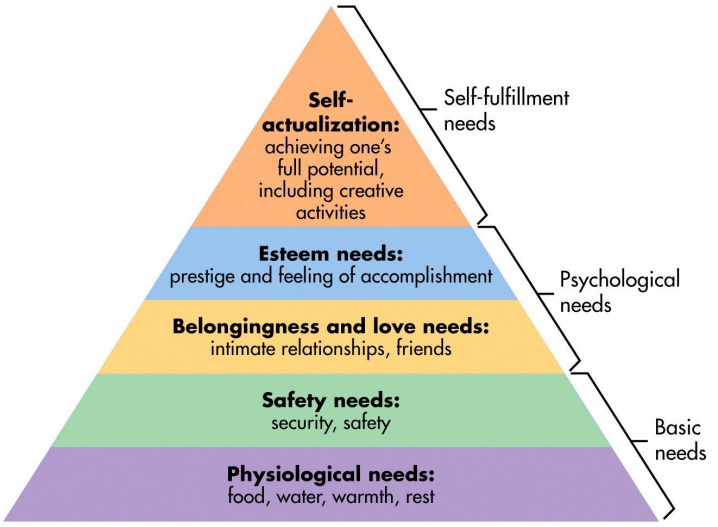
Chanowk and I discuss what happens when the youth start to eat together during their program. We talk about the importance of a shared meal. Within this conversation, I ask him if he notices similarities in the literature surrounding communal eating within the youth programs. He brings up what happens during their shared lunch:

> But eventually, as they start to open up, get to know the people that are there. And then as we start to talk about the food system, why this is, why that, you know, all these different things, then it becomes something different. Some of them are like, wow, this is probably the first time I've ever eaten a meal with people all in the same room. Because at my household, when people get food, we just go in our separate rooms or go wherever and eat. We don't eat together.

Something that slipped my mind when thinking about **why** communal eating helps to support growing relationships and trust was brought up by Chanowk in our interviews. He mentions what happens when the Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs is met. This theory was created by Abraham Maslow in his 1943 paper, "A Theory of Human Motivation." The bottom tier of this theory includes what this paper is centered around, physiological needs, such as food. Maslow argued that once some of these more basic needs like physiological and safety needs, love and belonging can be fostered.

> Of course, you're fulfilling Maslow's pyramid, the first two levels. Then, you know, when you start eating, it feels good. So–pleasure. Along with fulfilling those needs, you don't have any choice but to kind of let your guard down and then as you let your guard down and you start to get to know people and then along with the different activities that we do to help them get to know themselves, to get to know the people that are around

them, there's I mean, they then you've got the next level, which is relationships, belonging, all those different types of things.



(Photo taken from simplypsychology.org)

We then dug into the traditional ways of passing knowledge through work and through our elders. Chanowk not only passed down knowledge to the youth, but shared knowledge with the elders in the community from different cultures. He explained that through the cooking classes, more connections form and knowledge is traded. Chanowk argued that this knowledge is usually passed down surrounding food. This can be during the hunting and gathering process, cooking, and of course, eating. He explains that because our guard is down during these times, we can pass down and receive knowledge from one another and thus the community grows.

And while the cooking was taking place, then that would be the conversation. Time to talk about. Okay, this recipe came from here. Rice came from this part of the country. The grains came from this part of the country. So we've got the whole entire world on our plate here. And then of course, we then eat. They don't need the Western academic model of teaching. Yeah, you just need to be there. And that's the whole thing. It's like, I don't need to teach somebody anything. If you put a plate of food in front of them and

> they eat it and it tastes good, yeah, they're going to then become curious and say, What is that? Where did that come from? How did you make that? Where'd you learn? So we're like facilitators. And so it's something that's very important because once again, if you go into traditional cultures, wisdom and knowledge of how to survive in the future was passed from elder to younger in two places during hunting and gathering and during eating.. And then while you're eating, because now your guard's down, you're able to bypass the conscious mind and then start to implant these things in the subconscious mind.

Chanowk discussed the neighborhood that the farm is located in, Oak Park in Sacramento. His family has been in the neighborhood for 50 years. The neighborhood has primarily Black residents, but many are moving out due to rising costs. It is more important now to create strong community ties. Chanowk discussed the ways in which he provides support for the community. He mentions that most of the people who attend his cooking classes and youth groups are other Black community members. He not only takes care of the community members, but also supports the services within the community. During the pandemic, the school that his son attended needed help maintaining their garden without any in person staff and he and his family decided to take this project on for their community.

> My family's been in this neighborhood probably for the last 50 years, so I just kind of know my son went to the school before it closed. So we have a little history here. So it was like, yeah, we're a farm, we're right across the street, nobody's taking care of it. So we'll take care of it and we'll just like an easy, easy enough to be able to do that.

As our discussion came to a close, we both reflected on what urban farms had the ability to accomplish in a community, especially when these eating events are able to take place. Chanowk explained the limits and the benefits of these spaces for communities.

> Urban farms are not the saviors of the world. The idea is that urban farms become the catalyst to then ignite and activate other people, to then start to do things, which then just like pollinating other peoples like bees and pollination it attracts. We've got the honey, we bring the people in, they get pollinated, they go out and then they pollinate other people. When the conditions are right, the seed will grow. It's our job to plant the seeds. And that's one of the main things of urban farming that we need to understand, is that the catalyst there's urban farms that want to take the savior model, like we're going to grow everybody's food and we're going to feed this whole neighborhood. So it's a revolutionary act? Yeah. In essence.

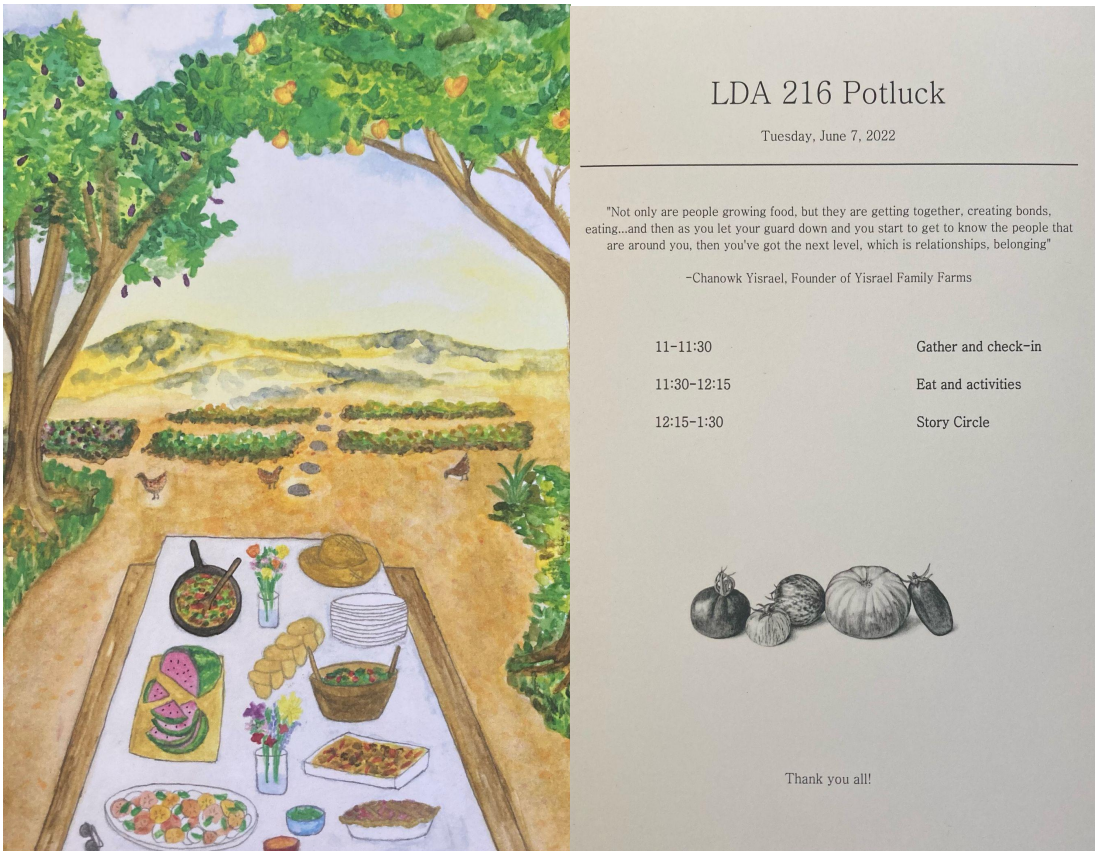
When asked about the obstacles that the farm faced, Chanowk shared the issue of selling the farm's produce to the neighborhood. They were not allowed to sell the food unless they had certain zoning permission. Chanowk realized this was stopping them from sharing their food and their mission with their community. He was able to generate power with the help of other community members to form a coalition to fight the city and county of Sacramento on this issue. Through Chanowk's ability to bring together community members, they were able to utilize their strength as a collective and create laws that helped to bolster their community and their farm.

> So the only obstacle that we faced is when we wanted to sell our food, and that was because it was illegal. And so we got together to form the Sacramento Urban AG

Coalition. And with that coalition, we were able to get it legal to grow food and sell it at a farm stand on your front yard for a certain period of time

Potluck and Community Gathering–LDA 216

Landscape Architecture 216, a graduate class titled "Food in the City," created a community that was dedicated to learning more about alternative food movements that were happening in the Northern California region. Utilizing this community as my "proof of concept" meal felt ideal. Most of the community members already knew about my research passions and goals, and my advisor, Claire Napawan, was the professor and facilitator of the conversations and tours. We utilized the UC Davis Student Farm because it was a farm that not only had we all been to previously in the class, but we were already part of that community being UC Davis students. Pictured below is the invitation that was created for the potluck that included the agenda and a quote from one of the interviewees, Chanowk Yisrael. The painting on the front of the invitation was done by one of the community members, Nellie Graham.



(Photos taken by author)

We started the potluck off talking about our food that we brought. Some people brought food specific from their backgrounds or cultures, and some brought food that was refreshing for the extremely hot day. We had dumplings from Kazakhstan that Gulnara brought, an avocado pie that is Alexi's grandma's specialty (which contained very little avocado and a delicious amount of condensed milk), a corn soup from Jayna that she loves to eat with her family in Guam, spring rolls that Nellie's Vietnamese sister-in-law taught her how to make, an abundance of fruit from Gwenael's friend's farm, and many different types of salads to help cool us down with the hot weather.

(Photos taken by Shannon Kelli)

I placed topic cards on every table to help the different groups with conversation that surrounded food and community. Some of the topic cards had definitions to key concepts that pertain to my thesis such as Third Space and Commensality. The tables also held markers, crayons, and paper to allow people to draw or write about what they were feeling, along with optional question cards for responses or self-reflection.

(Photos taken by Shannon Kelli)

After our communal food and thought sharing, we all came together in a group of nine to begin our story circle. I began the story circle with the prompt "share a story, memory, or feeling about a third place, a community, meal, or food that has impacted your life." Members of the community were able to pull from their smaller group discussions, or bring a new reflection to the circle. As previously mentioned, the prompt was kept very open ended so that there was room for everyone to share what they felt comfortable bringing to our group.

(Photo taken by Shannon Kelli)

Third Spaces in Graduate School

I started with the prompt discussion of Third Spaces and an explanation as to why I felt compelled to ask others where they find third spaces in grad school.

> The reason that I came up with the card that said, do you have a third place in grad school is because I felt like, for me, all of the places [in grad school] are kind of connected, especially at my house, we all live together and we're in the same cohort. So we're constantly talking about school and it's almost hard to get away from that. Also, Alexi and I were talking about these little moments in between classes of like three minutes where we're walking to and from classes and how special they are. We have this built in community with grad school, which is so nice and it also feels challenging sometimes because it is surrounded around productivity and school. I think that's probably the third place that I have in grad school. Just being able to have a space and a

builtin cohort, but still trying to figure out how to, take time, to not think about productivity all the time.

Mayra Concepcion discussed her third place as well and discussed her new home as a place that she finds not only peace, but also activities that help her thrive in grad school. Mayra also mentioned that one of our fellow community members, Nellie Graham, had helped her find housing when she had reached out looking for help. To me, this feels like another strong example of what happens when a community comes together to support each other. In her home, Mayra uses gardening as a way to disconnect from grad school and support her community at her home. Her favorite tree is the primary spot of reflection and also a teacher for how to take time for yourself in grad school.

> Honestly just like a few, selective pruning, like collecting the old fruit and doing a little maintenance kind of reminds me like what I need to do with myself in grad school. And so I keep thinking that the tree and I are like living parallel paths in grad school. I'm like, okay, remember to collect the old fruit, don't let it waste your energy for this season.

Mayra's tree is a reminder of how powerful it is to have an urban space that grows food. She not only utilizes the space for food growing, but for self-growth. For food growing, community building, and a third space.

(Photo taken by Shannon Kelli)

Gemma Waaland reflected on her Third Space in grad school that also is centered around eating, her home and more specifically, the kitchen. Her home, in graduate school, is also mine and four others who are part of the same graduate program. She discusses how the kitchen is the central point of community in her home and also a transformative space for her where people open up and talk honestly about how they are feeling. Even if they are not sharing the same meal, the shared space surrounding food is enough for Gemma to let her guard down and have important conversations with her roommates and friends.

> I feel like I'm cheating a little bit because my third place is also our house, but specifically our kitchen. I feel like I've had so many transformative conversations with all of us or one of us at a time just like standing or sitting in the kitchen. And, it's been such a healing space for me to have that and food is happening around it. Or like the times that we make dinner, it might not be the same thing, but like we'll steal an ingredient or two from one another to put in our stuff or we'll all be sitting and eating at the same time, even if it's not the same meal.

Community Building and Food

Still thinking about the connection between third places, food spaces, and community in the home, Alexi reflects on her past of not always feeling comfortable in her home. She mentioned that she created little places and hide-outs with her sisters where she felt like she could be herself and have fun. Alexi mentioned that she is now able to see her home she built with her partner and dog as one of those third places. She talks about the communal dining area, which is nestled into the kitchen, where her and her partner host Sunday night dinners weekly. She now uses the kitchen and eating space to continue to grow and build her community within and outside of her home.

> And so in the last couple years, especially all being in school, it's been like having our dining table as being this space where we, my partner, Ben and I, and Rusty the dog (who many of you have met) share that space with other people, and making food. We've been doing Sunday meals quite often with some friends and family. And it just has become this kind of unspoken ritual where Ben and I kind of take the lead on making, making food and sharing the space and the kitchen table is in the cooking area. So we're all together. And I don't know, it feels like something I didn't have growing up or that felt maybe kind of forced and a little traumatic at times.

Pooja reflects deeper into Alexi's comment that "growing up…that felt maybe kind of forced and a little traumatic at times." She discusses that because food is such an important part in people's lives, sometimes it can create stress or trauma for people, especially when they are told they must eat with people who they do not feel comfortable sharing that space with. She

talks about an author that she read who digs into these feelings of how eating with your family can be traumatic.

> Eating together brings family together. Like, you know, if you sit around a table, your whole family for dinner, it's gonna bring you closer, you know, that has been the mainstream notion for so long. And so the work that I was reading, the author, that was never the case for them because they always felt so forced to do it. And the family dynamic was not always healthy. So I think that's really important to like, acknowledge that food for some of us may, might not have been that safe space growing up or like the memories connected to it. So now, for me I always ask people when they come over 'Hey, you wanna have chai' because that's my initial welcoming, connecting thing for me.

Because sharing food can be such a sacred tradition for so many of us, it can often be forced upon us. As mentioned in the literature review and the interview with Chanowk, you let your guard down while you eat, which creates more vulnerability. Food is such a powerful tool in building relationships, but it can be used to create traumatic relationships as well.

(Photo taken by Shannon Kelli)

Often food can help us connect with others that are no longer in our physical lives. They can live far away or they could have passed away, but many of us find comfort in creating the foods that we did with our community members when they were present physically. Nellie discusses this while figuring out what was so important about the food that she brought. Her sister-in-law taught her how to make spring rolls when her mom was sick and she had to cook for her mom. She now remembers that dish, and many others, as a way to connect with her mom and her other family and community members.

> And then any story that I tell like that it all ends in the same place, which is that my mom died when I was 19. And so everything comes back to recreating memories of her or like what it was like to recover from that. I was like, okay, so where does this recipe come from? Where do I trace it back to? And then I think, oh yeah, my mom, like how my mom fits into this, this is all my mom. And so, um, I think that's what food is for me. She cooked a lot and we would pick blackberries together and make Blackberry jam

every year and we'd pick apricots and make apricot jam. And she would always make iced tea and I opened up the tea bag that brand and I smelled it and I was like, oh yeah, there she is. Um, so yeah, I think I have other food experiences where I was like, oh, creating all this beautiful community. And then I always think like, oh yeah, but this is meaningful to me because of my mom.

Jayna was able to use food as a way to connect closer to her family members and life in Guam. She expressed how much she misses her life and community there and every time she takes a bite of her favorite foods from her home, she can taste the memories and feel her elders. She laughed while telling the story of her corn soup that she brought because her brother always tells her she only eats old people's food and in Guam that corn soup is only enjoyed by the elders. Her story reminds us that although we cannot be physically present with our community, food can be used to bring us together and remind us of our home. Jayna ends her story with a smile as she tells us that her brother is coming to visit in a few days.

It just makes me think how food is memory too. I brought the corn soup because in Guam that's kind of a staple at a lot of gatherings. Even though if I don't have like my elders or relatives around me, I feel them. So that could be with like the birds or the trees. I'm just thinking of my brother because he kinda laughs at me sometimes because he says a lot of the foods that I like or will make, from Guam, he says are like old people food.

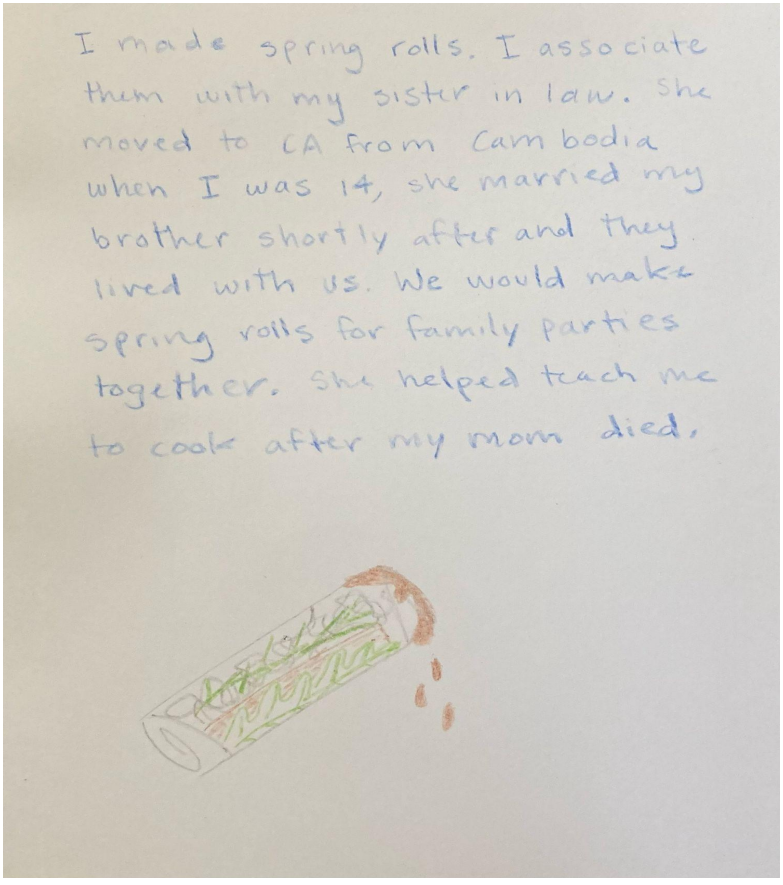
(Photo taken by Shannon Kelli)

Claire Napawan, our professor and my advisor, tied many of the conversations together in discussing the differences between feeding and nourishing. She talks about the importance of building land that is based on nutrition and not calories. She uses different farms from our class visits as examples of some farms that produce nutrition and some that count the pounds of food they are putting out. Claire talks about how we need to nourish people in order to create community and the community will then nourish back and give back.

> We talk in the class about the problem of how we value agriculture and we commodify it exclusively to the product that it brings. And so the conceptualization of how you manage agriculture is to maximize productivity and that productivity is again quantified through calories. Right? And we talk about the difference between nutrition and calories. And I think one of the things I'm trying to use more is nourishment, but to use it in terms of practice and research and design and teaching is nourish as opposed to feed. To make sure that that's part of your practice, that you're producing nutrition and not calories. And that is why love farms are because they are the perfect metaphor. And

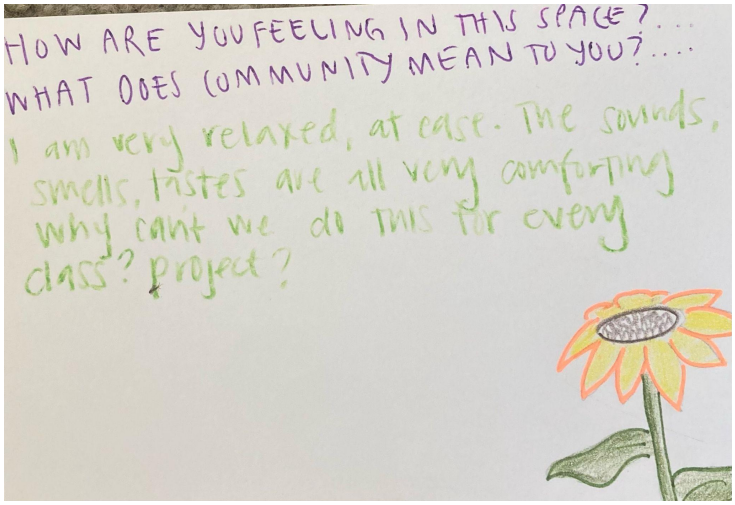
> I think that so much of understanding value, values and ecology and people and community often comes from thinking about how we manage land in a way that nourishes us not just feeds us. And I wrote, oh, community means people who share something, it could be a place, values, history, maybe even trauma. So it makes sense that sharing food can create community.

This "proof of concept" meal became much more than just attempting to prove my point that coming together for a meal on an urban farm helps build community. It began new friendships, became a way for some of us to vent about struggles, and created a mutual interest in food and community. These quotes are just part of what our group talked about and shared. Below are some of the conversation cards that people wrote and doodled on during our shared meal.



(Photo taken by author)

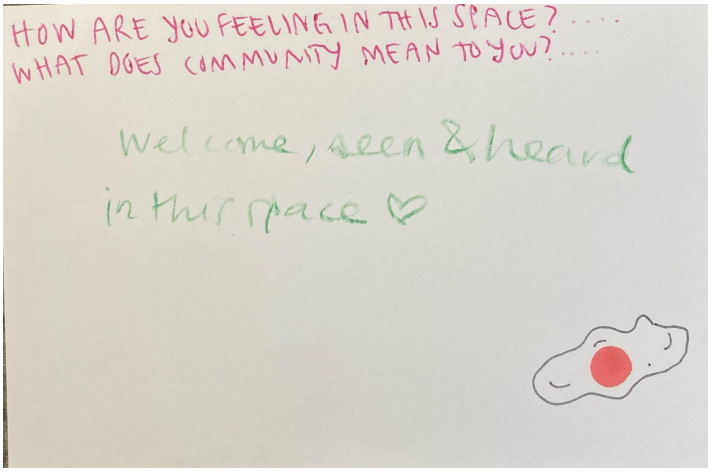
"I made spring rolls. I associate them with my sister in law. She moved to CA from Cambodia when I was 14, she married my brother shortly after and they lived with us. We would make spring rolls for family parties together. She helped teach me to cook after my mom died."



(Photo taken by author)

How are you feeling in this space?... What does community mean to you?...

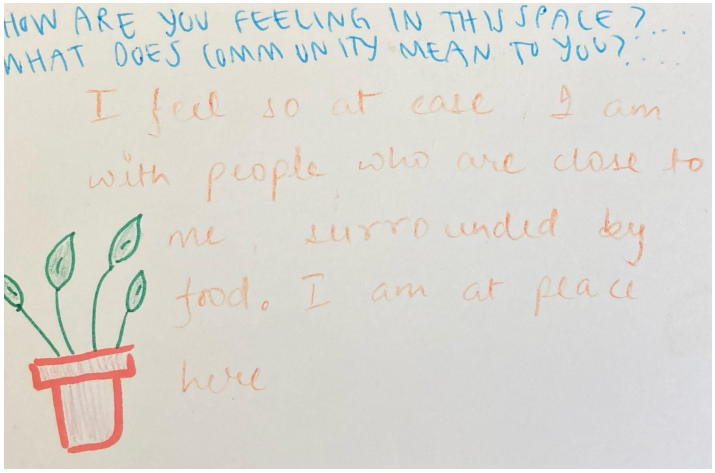
"I am very relaxed; at ease. The sounds, smells, tastes are all very comforting. Why can't we do this for every class? Project?



(Photo taken by author)

How are you feeling in this space?... What does community mean to you?...

"Welcome, seen & heard in this space."



(Photo taken by author)

How are you feeling in this space?... What does community mean to you?...

"I feel so at ease. I am with people who are close to me surrounded by food. I am at peace here."

(Photo taken by Shannon Kelli)

Connecting the Literature and Findings

Community Building Benefits of Urban Farms

Both farmers expressed in their interviews that they saw great community benefits to urban farms that do not happen in other spaces. These farms both hold space for their communities of primarily Jewish or Black families and community members. As the literature shows, urban farms are often started by marginalized communities in order to hold space for themselves and create a stronger community network (Ghose 2014; Okvat 2011). Most of these experiences centered around food sharing.

One of Urban Adamah's primary goals is to pass down Jewish traditions of tending to the land and importance of food in ceremonies and holidays. Most people in cities do not have this same opportunity to learn these sacred Jewish traditions and practices because they do not have the same access to farm space. Adam Berman, the founder of Urban Adamah wanted to create a space where Jewish families, children, and all Berkeley community members can celebrate Jewish holidays, learn how to tend to the land, and create stronger communal ties.

Although there are spaces for Jewish traditions to be practiced like temples, or family homes, the garden space gives families the opportunity to learn about traditions that must be taught with the help of the land. The youth programs not only teach the farming techniques and traditions, but also teach youth how to take care of the children in their communities by teaching summer camps and supporting the family events and Shabbat. The garden provides a space for beauty and peace, as Debbie described, that is not present at traditional temples. This space is also available for all local community members to celebrate Jewish traditions they may not be aware of. It opens the doors to teach the ideologies of Judaism to all local people.

When Chanowk Yisrael and I first began our conversation, he expressed to me that urban farming had been around for decades, but it did not get the same notice that these new farms receive. “We've all been excluded from the traditional ways of getting food. So what we're calling urban farming is something that's been taking place for a very long time by marginalized populations in order to be able to eat, period” (Chanowk Yisrael). Like Chanowk mentions, these farms often began as a productive space where marginalized people grew their own food, but they became spaces where communities come together and support each other.

During the pandemic, the school that Chanowk’s son attended needed help maintaining their school garden and he took it upon himself to help them. Because of his strong ties with his neighborhood, Chanowk wanted to help maintain connections and the neighborhood. Yisrael Family Farm also allowed Chanowk to connect with other farmers in the Sacramento area. Chanowk brought the local farmers together to start the Sacramento Urban Agriculture Coalition. This coalition helped change zoning ordinances that eventually allowed them to sell their produce. Chanowk’s mission continues to be for the community in Oak Park and the black and brown folx that primarily live there.

Our potluck was held in a small section of the orchard on the UC Davis Student Farm. We were shaded by plum trees and oriented our tables in a circle so we could be closer together. Several people expressed how at peace they felt in the garden surrounded by good food and good company. Others expressed wanting to be in this space for every class. The farm was a safe space for our group to gather and further build our community.

Third Place

A lack of Third Places, as Oldenburg puts it, is a result of "unfunctional zoning," where planners, designers, and government do not find fiscal value in establishing third places where people can interact and make community. Many scholars take this a step further and find that third places are especially important for marginalized communities, where funding is often lacking (Lefebvre 1974; Hickman 2013; Littman 2021; Marovelli 2019). These third places need to be created by community members and for communities, instead of places designed by planners who do not have insight into the neighborhood. The places that are formed by the community are the places that bring vibrancy, life, and spirit to the neighborhood.

Urban Adamah provides a third place for Jewish families, youth, and all local community members in Berkeley. They have multiple family events that welcome all members of their Berkeley community. Every Saturday they hold a Shabbat meal that celebrates the sabbath and brings the Jewish community together through food at the farm. Because of all of their community events surrounding food, they have an on-site kitchen where they make all of the food for every event and hold classes for the youth. Their youth programs bring in many Jewish community members who stay on the farm full time in dorms and take care of the farm and even teach younger children during the summer camps. Debbie continuously expressed that their farm would be nothing without their youth programs and the Jewish community in Berkeley supporting them and their programs. This farm serves as a place where people can come and grow their knowledge and their relationships.

Chanowk Yisrael's family has been part of the Oak Park neighborhood in Sacramento for over 50 years. His family has grown their community there and he wants to continue that legacy with his children. What started as a way to have his children eat more fruits and

vegetables during rising costs of produce, turned into an urban farm that serves the community. They have a youth fellowship program that pays all the youth who enter the program. They are taught how to farm, how to feel more connected to food and each other, and about food justice within their neighborhood. Third Place literature shows that youth need a third place to be with one another that is outside of their homes. Especially in lower-income neighborhoods where they may not feel safe playing or interacting with each other (Hickman 2013). Chanowk uses his garden as a third place for youth in order to "transform the hood for good."

Chanowk also puts on cooking classes for all community members, but primarily the elders in the community. They get to learn to cook and eat their creations together free of charge. All are welcomed to come and learn about different cooking methods and eat food harvested from the farm. Chanowk says it brings the community together and many elders make new friends and come weekly. Chanowk gives a third place to elders, who are often overlooked in our society, especially when it comes to creating third places. As Hickman noted, elders utilized third spaces often as they may not be able to do activities or host their community in their homes (2013).

Within the potluck story circle, many brought up examples of their third places. Mayra brought up the garden in her home and a tree that she tends to. This tree is a reminder to take care of herself the way she takes care of this tree. Although it is her own garden space, she still sees the beauty and peace of having a food growing space in the city, which she utilizes as her third place. Several other members of the group brought up eating places as their third place and many of these places were their homes. These places are examples of collapsed places, where first, second, and third places are connected and maybe come together (Littman 2021). Gemma and Alexi both brought up their kitchen and dining spaces as places where they connect with

their friends and families while people are cooking, gathering, and eating together. The collapsed spaces are especially important for people who cannot move through spaces in conventional ways, like grad students who often study, eat, and hang out in the dining room. Alexi even brought up that these spaces did not always feel like a third place, but now has transformed them in her own home where she hosts weekly Sunday night dinners with her friends and family.

Commensality

Commensality is the act of eating together. When we think of commensality, we often think of family dinners, or eating together in a familial sense. Commensality can be much larger than this and often in other cultures and countries, commensality happens in a public setting much more regularly (Franck 2005). Urban farms provide a safe space for community members to eat together in a peaceful, beautiful environment that is centered around food.

Food is a central part of Judaism and is incorporated into every holiday, from weekly Shabbats to yearly celebrations like the Passover Seder. Urban Adamah takes the communal eating celebrations a step further by growing a lot of the food that is used in the food sharing ceremonies. It is maintained and harvested by the community members, especially their youth fellows. The food at the ceremonies is all cooked on-site and blessed by a rabbi to ensure it is kosher. Debbie expressed that food helps connect us and it is a common denominator. It is something we share, especially when we are all sharing the same meal. Commensality can help us feel more comfortable around each other and creates a safe space that allows for vulnerability. (Marovelli 2019; Davies 2017)

As mentioned previously, Chanowk Yisrael talked about the importance of eating together in creating community and connections utilizing the hierarchy of needs theory. He

argues that once your food is taken care of, you can let your guard down and get to know the people around you. This is especially true for low-income people who may need help with accessing nutritious and nourishing food. Yisrael Family Farms provides the food for the communities as well as the knowledge to grow food, maintain relationships, and fight for food equity.

During our conversation, Chanowk mentioned that traditionally, knowledge had been passed down during food events–hunting and gathering, harvesting, cooking, and eating. This knowledge is not just about how to do these things, but about life, and community. He argued that because we do not eat together as frequently anymore, this knowledge is not passed down. Literature shows that food spaces are avenues for knowledge to grow and be shared (Marovelli 2019). Yisrael Family Farms provides a space where knowledge can be shared and passed down to youth. He teaches youth about food justice and why their communities eat what they do and why their neighborhoods have less access to grocery stores. He also teaches the elders in the neighborhood new recipes from different cultures. Chanowk believes that through food sharing, knowledge can be spread, like planting seeds.

The potluck brought amazing conversation and the student farm provided us a space where we all felt comfortable to share in our story circle. Our conversation was a safe space for everyone to share, but we realized during our story circle that food sharing is not the only factor for creating a safe space around food. Because sharing food can create a vulnerable setting, some people had the opposite reaction to food sharing growing up. Pooja's story brought to light that in fact commensality within the family was the time that some felt most scared. Alexi also brought up that sometimes sharing food together felt forced. Honoring the intention behind the shared meal is essential in creating a safe place for people. Food sharing can be used as a

performative tool to show that the family is connected, when in reality, it is used as a way to control the family members. Both Pooja and Alexi rewrote their narratives around food sharing now. As previously mentioned, Alexi hosts a weekly Sunday dinner for her friends and family. Pooja loves sharing food with her community and always offers chai to visitors when they come in. She said this was a way for her to connect with her guests, roommates, or anyone else in her home.

Some stories celebrated food as a way to connect with those who are not physically present in our lives. Nellie talked about her mom, who died when she was 19, and their shared love of preparing food. They made jam from fruit they harvested and pickled veggies together and made beautiful meals. She mentioned that whenever she tries to think of a story about food, it all comes back to her mom. Nellie talked about how much food has created a community for her and she said the reason it is so meaningful is because of her mom's love of food. Jayna shared a similar story of missing her family in Guam. When she makes the corn soup she is reminded of them and her time with her family. She said even if she is not physically with them, she can feel her elders all around her, especially when she is in nature. These stories show us that you do not need to audibly share your stories to connect with others through food, your food has the ability to teach others who you are and where you come from.

Going back to the intention and power that food sharing has, during our discussion, Claire brought to light an important distinction between nourishment and feeding. She says that you cannot just count calories, but look at the food you are feeding. This can be used in many different avenues of sharing food. It ties in the previous discussion that eating together is not inherently connecting, we need to nourish our conversations, not feed them. We need to have

intention behind commensality and how we are using that sacred and vulnerable space. Is it to have power over people or is it being used to connect and strengthen relationships?

Within a small group of nine, our intentions were clear. We were there to strengthen our connections to each other and share a meal and our stories. We came in with open hearts and hungry stomachs. This goes back to the importance of intentionality in creating urban farms and holding food events. If we are creating them to feed, we will not see the community nourished. If our intention is to strengthen our community and create safe spaces, we will see our community nourished and fed.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUDING REMARKS

Nourish vs. Feeding: Recognizing the power of nourishment

One of the most important lessons I learned from this thesis was the difference between nourishing and feeding. I learned from all the interviews, story circles, and discussions that there is a difference between these two seeming synonyms. As I was trying to name this thesis, I kept going back to the word “nourish” and it wasn’t until the potluck was shared and the interviews concluded that I realized I did not include feed into the title for a reason. Nourishment goes far beyond food and far beyond productive urban farming. To nourish is to provide with substances necessary for growth, health, and well-being. These substances often transcend food, but include knowledge, ancestral history, stories, meaningful connections and relationships, and love. Many times, the substances that nourish us do not have a physical form, and they are often overlooked when we look at the benefits of spaces. Third place literature provides us with a definition of these places that nourish without physical substances. Urban

farms are often looked at as providing physical substances, food, but when we open the door to provide nourishment instead of solely just feeding, urban farms can hold the power to pass knowledge, grow ancestral roots, pass down stories, connect others, and be filled with love.

Recalling back to the critiques in the beginning of this thesis, I can now ask myself, are these critics reviewing farms that nourish or feed their community? Several critiques looked at farms started by outsiders, who came into low-income, often BIPOC, communities and wanted to create a supplemental and sustainable source of food for those in the neighborhood. They wanted to provide a resource, food, to the community they wanted to serve. These farmers are unable to nourish the neighborhood, as they lack the knowledge of and connection to the community. If we look at farms that nourish, do these critiques brought by professors and researchers still hold true? These critiques that are brought by primarily white, middle class, and college educated professors are forgetting the backbone and the original narrative of urban farmers. The story of black and brown communities who farmed in urban areas as a necessity and began to transform these spaces into third places, into spaces that nourished. We do not need to look at urban farms as a deficit like these critiques are arguing, but we should look at the ways in which BIPOC farmers and farms do create food cultures, third places, and nourish their communities. Several examples of these BIPOC farm spaces were unearthed during this thesis: the casita gardens in Puerto Rico or the Mexican house lot gardens and of course, Yisrael Family Farms, one of the case studies I examined and interviewed.

Case Studies vs. Critiques:

Yisrael Family Farms represents a farm that has created a third place for many of its local community members. Through various commensal events, like cooking classes with

elders, youth groups, and family celebrations, Yisrael Family Farms proved to be a space that held nourishing events for community members that are often overlooked. We know that third places in black and brown communities often get created through creative place making and through the necessity to create space on their own. Although Yisrael Family Farms was initially created as a way for Chanowk to feed his children more organic produce, it now has turned into a place for not only plants to thrive, but for youth to gain knowledge, elders to gain community, and neighbors to connect through food.

The critiques mentioned in this thesis are doing exactly what they are arguing against; they are overlooking the power of black and brown communities in helping and uplifting themselves. These farm spaces are meant to nourish community members in hopes that activism will follow. Chanowk talked a lot about the knowledge that is passed down to his youth at their fellowship and said the information that is given to his youth is meant to help them understand why they are in a certain position in the food system. They have discussions about food inequalities and accessibility and although many of the children do not know or understand the legislation and policy behind these issues, they have felt the repercussions. Legislation may create governmental change, but knowledge and community activism is what empowers communities. Often these progressive, Marxist looks at urban farms are so focused on changing policy and restructuring government, they forget there are amazing people and organizations creating change in their neighborhoods. Not all farms are instrumental in change, and I believe we must look at how the farm nourishes its community to show the true intentions and dedication towards change.

Although Urban Adamah does provide a space for Jewish people, who have historically been subjected to prejudice, it is a very wealthy farm in a predominantly middle class, white

area of Berkeley, CA. This farm nourishes the Jewish community that is present in Berkeley and the surrounding areas by providing a safe space for ceremony, tradition, worship, and the sharing of sacred foods. I do think the farm can fall into some of the traps and critiques that many researchers have about urban farms. They have a lot of free programs and events for families, but also quite expensive summer camps, classes, and a youth fellowship that can cost anywhere from $800-$3,600 depending on the income of the family (taken from website). Although these opportunities are able to nourish the community, it is limited by who can actually afford these programs and events. Urban Adamah is able to nourish its community, while it also may play a role in neoliberalism like many critics fear. It is able to provide ancestral knowledge to Jewish youth, but only with a price. I believe with the criticisms becoming much more prevalent in the urban farming community, Urban Adamah is taking steps to make their farm more accessible to all people by providing sliding scale pricing and free programs and events. Is it a farm that nourishes or feeds? I think this question can be left unanswered. It lies within the nuances of urban farming that do not need to be black or white, positive or negative.

Commensality moving forward in urban farms

Looking at my two case study farms and the proof-of-concept potluck, you may think they are all incredibly different, and they are, but one thing holds them all together: commensality. When I was finished collecting my data and putting it all together, I felt anxious that some aspects of my project may have fell into the very critiques I was trying to disprove, but I realized that although these critiques are important to acknowledge, they do not define whether or not a space nourishes its community. I was also expecting that all forms of

commensality would be positive for community members. After looking at extensive research on the benefits of sharing food together, I neglected to realize that the reason commensality has such large impacts on communities is because of the power eating together holds. That power is not always used to uplift communities or people.

I now recognize the importance of intention once again. The intention behind commensality is essential when attempting to implement commensal events on urban farms. Just like the intention of urban farms, are the commensal events present on the farm to nourish or feed the community? Commensal events that are nourishing are ones that tell stories, give space for traditional ceremonies, pass down ancestral knowledge, and create positive connections. Eating together creates a space for vulnerability and connection, but that vulnerability is not always used for positive connections. The space that we make for commensality must be one that is safe.

Different commensality events can support different programmatic goals at urban farms. Chanowk discussed the importance of the youth commensal practices, where they all harvested, cooked, and ate together at the farm. Eating together created a connection between the youth and they were able to open up and feel more comfortable around each other. The stressors of food were not present, and as Chanowk mentioned in his interview, Maslow's hierarchy of needs was being met and they were able to find a place to belong with each other. Urban Adamah's fellowship also allowed for commensal activities, which connected the youth to each other and to traditional Jewish land tending practices. Cooking classes at Yisrael Family Farms helped to support the elder community in the area and allowed for older people to connect and learn new cultures through food. Urban Adamah holds many religious commensal events that aim to pass down the Jewish traditions to all who join the ceremonies. With the potluck

commensal event, everyone brought their own dish which allowed sharing cultures and is also much more practical for younger adults like graduate students. Although these events all have different structures, foods, and community members, they are all able to create connections.

Urban farms do not need to create policy changes or disprove any critiques in order to nourish and build community. Although urban farms were initially started out of necessity, they have now become a place that creates relationships and connections. They are now a place where traditions can thrive and knowledge can be passed on. From the literature review, we know there are many examples of commensal events on urban farms outside the United States and present in other black and brown communities in the U.S. I believe that because the U.S. prioritizes relationships in a nuclear family, we do not often see examples or research of commensality outside of a familial context. The examples from the literature review and case studies show how other cultures value eating together and forming deep connections with people outside their family. This thesis showed how powerful commensality is in places other than familial homes. In order for urban farms to reach their full potential, we must start creating structures for commensality at urban farms in order to create new benefits that are outside the critiques.

Concluding ideas and recommendations

Recommendations for future research…

As mentioned in the methods section, this research was done in California based on a convenience sampling. All the farms I interviewed I had connections with, which allowed for an ease of access to the farmers. I believe this research could benefit from a wider sampling, one that is outside of California, where we know laws surrounding urban farms are more prevalent. I also believe that a larger sample of interviews with farms would be helpful in better

understanding the benefits of commensality. Keeping in mind that the farms should be varying sizes with varying funding levels. I also believe that attending some of their food eating events and interviewing community members would be extremely beneficial. Unfortunately, because of COVID-19, most of the farms I was attempting to interview had put many of their events on hold, primarily their food sharing events where people would be in close contact. Because most of the farm events are outside, I believe more farms will be hosting these events that can be attended and used for interviews.

I also believe that putting together more proof-of-concept events would be greatly beneficial. I think doing different styles of events or having someone else put one together would help strengthen the sample. Our event was small, so I only talked with nine people on their stories of third place, community, and commensality, but talking with more people would be insightful. Using community members who have not been on urban farms or are new to commensality events on urban farms would allow for interviews and conversations that are fresh. Overall, I believe that a larger sample for all interviews would benefit this research.

When I had initially started this thesis process, I was determined to go through all the policies that prohibit or aid in communal eating and how urban farms can be included in these policies. I realized later on that research like that would need to be an entirely separate paper. There are so many zoning codes and small laws that urban farms must deal with. I believe for further research, examining policies that allow urban farms to have food or make it difficult for farms to host food eating events. It would be beneficial to the research to further create a policy brief for governments to understand the benefits of commensal events, while also creating a guide for urban farms on what they need to accomplish in order to host these events. There can

be much more added to this research in order to reach all communities looking for a safe place to eat and build a third place.

Final thoughts

This thesis aimed to answer the question: what happens when we eat together on urban farms? Through the beauty of sharing stories, I utilized two interviews with urban farms and a proof-of-concept meal to help understand the importance of commensal events on land that grows our food. These interviews and story circles brought to light many positives and negatives that eating together can have on people–the power that it holds. I wanted to prove that eating together creates community, but I did not realize that community may not always be a positive thing. Intention continued to creep back into my thesis as I listened back to the interviews, and the difference between nourish and feed felt like the best way to decipher intentions.

As the literature review highlights, the original narrative is often taken out from urban farming, and a new one of white, middle class, college educated farmers are taking over (London 2020). Therefore, the critiques that are placed on urban farms are often critiques of the new narrative of urban farms, which completely disregards all of the beautiful activism and work that BIPOC people do on urban farms. The idea that urban farms are solely a cog in a neoliberal machine negates the policies that change, the communities that are formed, and the knowledge that is passed because of urban farming. Urban farms provide a third place for people in cities to have a safe place to work and make connections. These farms were often built out of necessity for supplementing food supply and they have transcended this productive state and have now become productive third places. They are able to produce food for their community, but that does not need to be the main purpose or goal. Giving these farms the

opportunity to solely be third places allows farms to play a different role. It alleviates pressures to “fix” something wrong in our government or policies, and instead allows farms to focus on nourishing the community with knowledge, stories, connections, and power.

The use of commensal events in urban farms creates a new program opportunity to connect and grow in an urban farm space. With good intentions, farms can provide a space for people to further connect through food. People let their guards down when they eat together, which allows for more vulnerability and deeper connections. Both Yisrael Family Farms and Urban Adamah prioritized their commensal events at their farms and stressed the importance of eating at farms. They expressed the ability to connect further with food and with the people around you, as you are all eating the same thing, from the same place. The potluck gave me the ability to see one of these commensal events in action and see what kind of connections can happen when you eat together on an urban farm. Everyone was able to share their stories and experiences of feeling closer to their classmates. Many felt connected to family members who were not physically present and were able to share their stories as well.

Although the recommendations for further research are extensive, I believe that I was able to find some answers to the research question of what happens when you eat together on urban farms? The power that urban farms have to transform and nourish a community goes far beyond the abilities of policy.

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