

BFI Foodscape Mapping Project – Oral Histories
Category: Food Spaces

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Transcript of interview conducted with

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Organizational affiliation: GradFood

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Personal history questions

MUNOZ: This is Nathalie and Natalia speaking with Chrissy Badaracco on Tuesday April 6th, 2016. We are in Wellman Hall in Berkeley CA. So Chrissy, we just want to start off: what does GradFood do? and what is your role in GradFood?

BADARACCO: Grad food is an interdepartmental group of graduate students at UC Berkeley, that organizes and plans events for graduate students related to food. So that includes events that might be educational, we might have panel discussions, documentary screenings, we've also had some volunteer opportunities, we've had more casual, potluck style dinners where we discuss topics of interest, we've done workshops before. We pretty much are driven by the interests of our members and then plan events around that.

MUNOZ: And who are your members?

BADARACCO: So we have representatives from departments and programs all throughout campus. I'd say historically we've been most represented by the professional schools on campus, although we do sometimes have some PhD students who are involved as well.

MUNOZ: Do you see more popularity with certain kinds of departments?

BADARACCO: We always have representation from public health, always from public policy, always from business, usually from law, so those are the most frequent.

MUNOZ: How did you get involved?

BADARACCO: I was first connected to it by a graduating public health student when I was starting at Berkeley. She added me to the Facebook group and said 'keep an eye on this group, there are a lot of great announcements about events and jobs and other resources, food related news'. And then when I came to campus I started attending events and then I became a co-chair by the end of my first year here on campus.

MUNOZ: And how has your experience been with GradFood?

BADARACCO: Overall, very positive. I'd say it's been very different year to year as we have different students and leadership. Some groups of leaders are more committed to planning and hosting more regularly than others, but we've had a lot of really great exciting events over my last three years here and I've gotten to meet a lot of really interesting students and professionals through our events.

MUNOZ: How has GradFood been funded?

BADARACCO: Let's see, so until about, actually potentially until this year, I think most of our funding came from the professional schools. So the school of public policy, the law school and the business school. The co-chairs who came from each of those schools would receive student group funding that we would use for our GradFood events. I think just about a year and a half ago, over the summer I think, we first received funding from BFI for one of our events, which was wonderful. And a couple other events have been funded by BFI since then. And then I believe just starting this year we became a registered student organization, so we had access to funding from the GA for our events.

MUNOZ: How long has grad food been around?

BADARACCO: I would guess about 5 years. It was started by a student in the Goldman school. Originally it was going to be focused on food-related policy and then I think that student realized that there was broader interest, especially knowing students from public health and then we sort of incorporated other students and so it became much more interdisciplinary.

MUNOZ: So you mentioned you have worked with BFI before, but what other food organizations has GradFood worked with at Berkeley or collaborated with, in the past? Have they done any collaborations?

BADARACCO: Not to a very significant extent. We co-sponsored an event with the Haas Culinary Club, which is now known as Food at Haas. We have helped to promote events for some other student groups, I know that the Food Science and Tech and Feed and a couple other events I've helped to promote. Let's see, we did a volunteer day once at the Student Organic Garden. So that was maybe a year and a half ago or so. So we collaborated with their leadership for that.

MUNOZ: Was that a successful event or did you feel like there... would you like to work more with them in the future?

BADARACCO: Sure, I think we'd be happy to. Anytime we do an event off campus, it's always a little bit harder to recruit a sufficiently sized group. But that day I guess we had a couple hours we were volunteering there, and had a potluck lunch on the weekend, and just happened to have a lot of people who were interested. So we got together a group that day, but yes we'd be interested in that in the future. Well I'm about to graduate this year, so I would say I *think* we are, I can't promise that, it depends on the new leadership.

MUNOZ: What are some current projects underway or planned in the future for GradFood?

BADARACCO: So it's a little hard for me to say since I'm no longer one of the leaders; I'm on my way out. There are two new co-chairs: Mikaela from the school of public health and Olga from the business school. And I know that they are planning some event towards the end of the year that was brought to their attention by Rosalie from BFI. So they're moving forward with that, but I don't know the details; I'm not involved.

MUNOZ: Where does GradFood meet? Do they have official meetings or is it more of a facebook group?

BADARACCO: We have a Facebook group, don't have official meetings. We just meet for the events or workshops or whatever comes up throughout the year, so we promote whatever event is about to happen very heavily via Facebook and our listserv and word of mouth as always; that's always big too, but we do not have official meetings.

MUNOZ: How often are those events? What's usually the time gap between them?

BADARACCO: When I first started as co-chair we aimed for about once a month. I think this year it's been a little bit less than that, but my last two years it was about once a month.

MUNOZ: Do you feel like that was enough time or would you have liked to have seen more events in between? or is that enough time to create a big enough event for your members, for all of your members to be able to come?

BADARACCO: I think given the amount of commitment put on a co-chair to secure funding, secure a room, plan catering, advertise, I don't think any of us has the capacity to do more than that and also the effort put into, and coordinating with the speaker, panel or documentary or something, there has to be a lot of back and forth to coordinate with that person and plan a schedule for the event and that sort of thing. I think a month is a good amount of time.

MUNOZ: What kinds of outreach have you done and how effective has it been do you think? Or do you think there are better methods of outreach that you haven't yet or that you think GradFood could tackle?

BADARACCO: As I said, our main media for communication are email and Facebook and then more casually by word of mouth, just among friends and graduate students. I think for most of our events in the past we've always had a good turnout, especially when we've had speakers or panels or something. You know, when Mark Bittman is going to come talk to GradFood we certainly get a big turnout and other things like that, Marion Nestle, that sort of thing. I guess I don't really know of another way to reach students, beyond email and Facebook. I don't think we're really eager to try to compete with some of the postering that I know a lot of the undergrad student groups do on the south end of campus, I'm not sure that's really a way to reach grad students, since we are so dispersed throughout campus. I'm not sure there really is another way, but I guess if I were to hear that another interdisciplinary group like ours has found an effective way to communicate we'd be certainly willing to.

MUNOZ: So now we're going to ask a couple of questions based on food equity and inclusion. Have you yourself faced food insecurity?

BADARACCO: I guess food insecurity, defined as not knowing where my next meal comes from, not having reliable consistent access to food, I would say no. I'd say at this point in my life I've been very blessed

so myself no, but that's not the case of all grad students.

MUNOZ: Is that something that is discussed within GradFood? Is food security in general?

BADARACCO: In general or among our staff?

MUNOZ: Both?

BADARACCO: Among ourselves, no. In general, I'd say it just depends on the topic of discussion at the given event. So there was an event, I think about 2 year ago, a sort of lightning talk event where different graduate students were invited to give 5 minute presentations about their research. And there were some students there who were eager to present about their work with local food banks, or some other aspect of food insecurity. So it came up there, but I'm not sure it's something that is a consistent focus of the group.

MUNOZ: Are you interested in pursuing a food issue related career?

BADARACCO: Yes, absolutely.

MUNOZ: What kind?

BADARACCO: I am a graduate student in the school of public health and I am about to graduate this May. I'm also studying dietetics to become a registered dietitian, so I will begin my internship at Massachusetts General Hospital beginning in September. I don't know exactly the trajectory for my future career, but I'm very eager to reduce the prevalence of chronic disease in the United States through food and diet. So I'd like to figure out how to empower Americans to improve their own health and food and nutrition. So that's what brings me to the world of food.

SEMERARO: You mentioned before about how equity and inclusion play into GradFood, just beyond food insecurity, it would be great to hear a bit more about that.

BADARACCO: I think, as I said, our group of graduate students includes a very diverse set of people from throughout the university with different interests, different cultural backgrounds, different focuses of study. I'd say it's not necessarily intentional, but our events and the content of our events, the venues for our events, are always very diverse, I think, and welcoming for students from all backgrounds and with all needs, I'd say, and throughout campus.

MUNOZ: Lastly, how would you define food equity and security?

BADARACCO: For GradFood specifically or just in general?

MUNOZ: Just in general.

BADARACCO: The two terms are slightly different. So food security refers to an individual or a group having consistent reliable access to food over the course of time, and the ability to use and prepare food. And food equity would refer to equitable access among different groups of people.

MUNOZ: I think we are good to go. Thank you so much for meeting with us. We really appreciate you taking the time out of your day to do this. And like we said we will let you have access to this audio.