

yes! magazine

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Positive Futures Network
P.O. Box 10818
Bainbridge Island, WA 98110-0818
206/842-0216
www.yesmagazine.org

FAX: 206/842-5208
subscriptions: 800/937-4451
email: yes@yesmagazine.org

Building a Just and Sustainable World

DISCUSSION GUIDE | ISSUE 49 | FOOD FOR EVERYONE

YES! Discussion Guides are designed to help you explore your own experiences, opinions, and commitments as they relate to material found in YES! magazine. Use them in group discussions, classrooms, or study circles. We believe that when people discuss with mutual respect and caring the critical issues of our time, they create a powerful avenue for constructive social change.

You can find the articles mentioned below on our website at www.yesmagazine.org. You are welcome to download and photocopy them free of charge. If you'd like to purchase multiple copies of YES! or subscriptions for your class or group, please phone 800/937-4451 and ask for the Discussion Group Discount.



Not long ago, people ate a huge variety of fresh, tasty food, most of it local. In the last hundred years, industrial food has taken over and we've sacrificed flavor for convenience, driven small farms out of business, and consumed increasing amounts of pesticides and chemicals. We move food across the world and, in the process, pump vast clouds of CO₂ into the atmosphere, contributing to global warming. It's time to take the best of the old ways and the best of new knowledge and rebuild a food system that can feed us all while bringing back varieties adapted to local conditions. In Issue 49, "Food for Everyone: How to Grow a Local Food Revolution," YES! Magazine looks at the people who are working to restore flavor, nutrition, and joy to our food, and to

make it available to everyone.

This discussion guide focuses on the following articles:

1. **The Good Food Revolution** by Claire Hope Cummings
2. **Oasis in an Urban Food Desert** by Roger Bybee
3. **Restoring the Range** by Madeline Ostrander
4. **Rajinder's Remarkable Rasoi** by Madhu Suri Prakash

The Good Food Revolution

High yield + fast turnover = more profit. This gluttonous equation has caused a severe disconnect between Americans and our agriculture system. In "The Good

Food Revolution,” Claire Hope Cummings explains how humans and technology have destroyed and degraded our land, food system, and traditions. With eroding soil, polluted rivers, and chemically contaminated crops, the American commodity agriculture system needs to change. Cummings solution: Remember the traditions, lessons, and history of those who came before us.

1. Cummings explains how the Hopi and Christian creation stories have influenced many people’s views on food and agriculture. What stories, traditions, or values have shaped your views?
2. How might you develop a connection with the land you live on or the food you eat?
3. What values and ethics should guide our use of agricultural technology and science? What decisions would our country make if we followed those values? What personal decisions would you make?

Oasis in an Urban Food Desert

Roger Bybee’s article “Oasis in an Urban Food Desert” talks about how Will Allen, his daughter Erika, and their Growing Power projects in Milwaukee and Chicago have proven you can have fresh, healthy food even in an inner-city neighborhood. With his 14 greenhouses, 10,000-gallon aquaponics tanks, and 6 million pounds of compost, Allen helps feed his community, fights “food racism,” and each year teaches thousands of youths and adults how to grow similar systems in their communities.

1. How does this article change your views on what it means to grow and purchase food?
2. How does our current food system create or reinforce social and health inequalities? How might Will Allen’s projects be applied on a larger scale to address those inequalities?
3. Does your city have access to healthy food? What might you do to make healthy food available to others

in your community?

4. If you’ve experienced any of the things in this article —composting, growing a vegetable or herb garden, buying from a farmers market or CSA, running a nutrition education program—how has that experience affected you? Have any of those experiences led you to deeper relationships with the soil, with your food, or with other people?
5. Allen talks of composting food waste from a local brewery and coffee shop. Can you think of other ways communities can work together to make their city’s food more sustainable?

Restoring the Range

In the article “Restoring the Range,” Madeline Ostrander tells the story of the Mortenson family and their successful endeavor to restore the rangeland of their South Dakota ranch back to its original landscape. These sixth-generation ranchers are proud to have adopted a holistic management style of ranching that produces lush grasses and wildflowers, healthy soil, and twice as many head of cattle.

1. What parts of this article do you find surprising? How does it affect your views on ranching? On meat consumption?
2. What do you think the role of animals in our food system should be? Would your opinion change if more meat was produced using sustainable techniques?
3. Jeff shares his grandmother’s lesson of looking at the land as an interconnected whole. What might American agriculture look like if more farms and ranches adopted that ethic?

Rajinder’s Remarkable Rasoi

Parathas, naan, lassis. Even if you’ve never tasted these traditional Indian foods, in “Rajinder’s Remarkable Ra-



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soi” Madhu Suri Prakash paints a delicious picture of her mother’s slow food, inviting you to imagine the sights, sounds, and tastes of her mother’s kitchen. Here in the United States, instead of taking time to carefully prepare a meal, Americans rely on quick, inexpensive, and unhealthy fast food for many of their meals. In an effort to restore the integrity of slow food, schools across the country have started buying local food, growing their own gardens, and teaching students to farm.

- 1. Who are some people in your life who bring out the rasa in food?
2. How do you feel (before, during, and after) when you take the time to prepare a full meal as opposed to grabbing something on the go?

3. What differences do you notice when, instead of digging right in, you pause before you eat--enjoying the sight and smell of your food?

4. Prakash talks of the relationships built between her mother and the ingredients she used, the peddlers she purchased from, and the food she created. What kinds of relationships are created when people share recipes, food, cooking tips, and meals?

5. What foods connect you with a sense of home? Does your family have any cooking habits or rituals that bring you together? What would rasoi mean in the context of your family’s kitchen?

6. Prakash leaves us with a vision of schools infused with leisure. What do you think a “slow food” school lunch would look like in your community?

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