

The New York Times

SUNDAY BOOK REVIEW

Cooking

By Williams Grimes
May 30, 2014

Nina Planck, an American farmer's daughter who opened several farmers' markets in London and, for a contentious few months, ran the Union Square Greenmarket in Manhattan, spreads the gospel of real food in her latest cookbook, **THE REAL FOOD COOKBOOK: Traditional Dishes for Modern Cooks (Bloomsbury, \$32)**.

The idea is simple. Whether it's animal or vegetable, high-fat or low-fat, if it comes from a farm run on traditional lines, eat it. The point is to use high-integrity ingredients, put them together in pleasing combinations and let the flavors shine. Planck doesn't care for fad foods. She's suspicious of innovation, especially when it comes to vegetables. "Sexy and original combinations do not emerge from my kitchen, and my repertoire has not grown noticeably more sophisticated in 20 years of cooking," she writes. "Where vegetables are concerned, I'm not a subtle person." That's all right. Case in point: her recipe for sweet-onion custard, rich and amazingly versatile. She proposes variants that incorporate capers, chopped olives or diced shrimp. It can even be rolled out on puff pastry, cut into squares and served with drinks.

http://www.nytimes.com/2014/06/01/books/review/laura-b-russells-brassicas-and-more.html?_r=1



The Real Food Cookbook: Traditional Dishes for Modern Cooks

Planck promotes her “good and simple” philosophy of eating (*Real Food: What to Eat and Why*) in a collection of 150 straightforward, trend-bucking recipes. In this green-market driven cookbook, the Virginia farm girl and creator of London’s first farmers market shows home cooks how to bring authentic, traditional dishes to the table. Planck’s recipes celebrate the thrifty, seasonal, local, and home-made approach to cooking. Simple, yet sophisticated dishes are the result: chicken (free range) dishes include Coq au Vin; Poached Thai Chicken Curry; and a White Chicken Stroganoff with Dill. Planck reveals the “secrets of the pumpkin family,” and features many dairy-based desserts as well as instructing cooks how to prepare stocks and demi-glaces and serving cheese as a main course. She also provides a chapter on the essential breads. Beverage recipes praise home-crafted fruit sodas, fermented teas, and kefir. How to prepare Passover seder and a small farm barbecue gives readers a glimpse of Planck’s family table on two special occasions. Recipe notes compare from-scratch versions of dishes with grocery versions, and Planck’s personal narrative reflects her Virginia farm roots; she also includes essays that inspired her viewpoint. Proper foodstuffs for the basic pantry, the glories of cooking with cast iron, and a “shopping list” sharing favorite purveyors and producers are included. Planck reminds cooks that traditional methods for producing meals from authentic foodstuffs are, in fact, a truly modern culinary approach. (*June 2014*)

<http://www.publishersweekly.com/978-1-60819-675-3>

HANDPICKED NATION™

June 2014. Editor's Note: We met Nina a little over ten years ago, when she was heading up the [Greenmarket Farmers Markets in New York City](#). Her husband Rob once told us that essentially, Nina is a food scientist, and we agree! Her knowledge about the many facets of food is vast and we have learned so much from her in the intervening years. We spoke with her recently about her life, her family and her passion for real food. Her new book, *The Real Food Cookbook: Traditional Dishes for the Modern Cook*, is to be published on June 10, 2014.

Your latest book, [The Real Food Cookbook](#), seems to be your most personal writing to date. Tell us from where this book came.

Nina Planck: *Well, I honored my mother and father by starting farmers' markets in London, honored my mother by writing [The Farmers' Market Cookbook](#), honored my mother again by writing [Real Food](#), honored her one more time by writing [Real Food for Mother and Baby](#), and with this cookbook, I honor my husband and the way I cook and eat today. I've been cooking for twenty-six years, and the only thing that has not really changed is the way I cook vegetables: in large quantities, with plenty of salt and butter. My mother taught me that.*

With three kids, two households—we all know [your cheesemonger husband](#) needs, shall we say, attention—how did you find the time and energy to produce this gorgeous book?

NP: *I tend to knock things out. The idea hits me as if fully formed and then I write a proposal. If it sells, I write a draft quickly, from top to bottom. I wrote my first two books—*The Farmers' Market Cookbook* and *Real Food*—as a single, childless person in one year apiece. But I need editing for quality, clarity, and even quantity. I had to cut forty percent of the *Real Food* manuscript not once but twice, at the wise suggestions of my editor at [Bloomsbury](#), Kathy Belden.*

*After my son Julian was born my general productivity slowed a bit, but I knew what I wanted to say, so when I rented a tiny office and wrote *Mother and Baby*, which is much shorter than the others, the writing work took just a year.*

*Once again, there was lots of mandatory editing after. By the *Mother and Baby* book tour, I was pregnant with Rose and Jacob, eating seven meals a day, puffing and panting a lot, throwing up once a week, and falling down all the time. Those symptoms lasted 38 weeks; after being pregnant, giving birth to and breastfeeding twins for two and a half years was a great physical relief.*

*Once we had three children, it took me three years, six photo shoots, and the help of three friends (Emily Duff, Martha Wilkie, and Michele Pulaski) to write *The Real Food Cookbook*. And this project waited ten years to be born. I have notes dated 2004 from my dear friend Wendell Steavenson on the idea for this cookbook...*

Read the complete interview: <http://www.handpickednation.com/nina-planck-the-real-food-cookbook/>

The New York Times

A Choice With Definite Risks

April 17, 2012

OP-ED CONTRIBUTOR

By Nina Planck

They say everything can be replaced.

—Bob Dylan

The modern American is fierce about his or her right to choose a particular “lifestyle.” So it is with vegan diets for children. In 2007, when I argued in *The New York Times* that a diet consisting exclusively of plants was inadequate for babies and children, the response was dramatic, and at times, even vicious. I believe that babies and children require a better diet. The American Dietetic Association asserts that a “well-planned” vegan diet — by which the experts mean one with many synthetic supplements — can be adequate for babies; I disagree.

Nature created humans as omnivores. We have the physical equipment for omnivory, from teeth to guts. We have extraordinary needs for nutrients not found in plants. They include fully-formed vitamins A and D, vitamin B12, and the long-chain fatty acids found in fish.

The quantity, quality and bio-availability of other nutrients, such as calcium and protein, are superior when consumed from animal rather than plant sources. It’s quite possible to thrive on a diet including high-quality dairy and eggs — many populations do — but a diet of plants alone is fit only for herbivores.

For babies and children, whose nutritional needs are extraordinary, the risks are definite and scary. The breast milk of vegetarian and vegan mothers is dramatically lower in a critical brain fat, DHA, than the milk of an omnivorous mother and contains less usable vitamin B6. Carnitine, a vital amino acid found in meat and breast milk, is nicknamed “vitamin Bb” because babies need so much of it...

The greatest error of modern industrial life, which celebrates the lab and technology, is our love affair with the facsimile. It is time to face the music. Some things cannot be replaced. Real food is one.

You may choose to be a vegan. Your baby doesn’t have that luxury. Let her grow up omnivorous and healthy. Then watch her exercise her own freedom of choice with justifiable pride.

Read the full article: <http://www.nytimes.com/roomfordebate/2012/04/17/is-veganism-good-for-everyone/a-choice-with-definite-risks>



Interview with Nina Planck, author of *Real Food for Mother and Baby*

A food writer dishes on child nutrition.

By Nancy Davidson

March 22, 2009

"It's nice to be in control of lunch, because most of motherhood you cannot plan for," Nina Planck says in her new book, *Real Food for Mother and Baby* (Bloomsbury, \$17). She juggles a busy Manhattan work life while sharing the care of her toddler, Julian, with her partner, Rob Kaufelt, owner of Murray's Cheese. Her experiences growing up on a farm and running urban farmers' markets, as well as her intensive research on nutrition, inform her philosophy that the best diet for babies consists of breast milk and whole, unprocessed foods. Planck sat down with *Time Out Kids* recently to share her ideas.

What advice would you give on weaning and first foods?

Introduce real food at six to nine months, with no particular agenda, no goals or milestones. If you can, continue to feed your baby breast milk up to one year or older, because it helps to establish the immune system and smooth out nutritionally uneven periods.

Babies should be able to eat the same food adults are eating. Start with a little egg, meat, fruits and vegetables instead of a bland, starchy diet of rice and other grains. We fed Julian chunks of whatever we were eating—we didn't stick our spaghetti and meatballs in the blender. Babies are remarkably adept at keeping whole chunks of food at the front of their mouths. Why have teething toys but puree the food? Why not give them a chunk of melon or a pea or a piece of meat?

Many people consider peas and other small bites to be choking hazards.

Of course any parent has to pay attention to make sure the baby doesn't choke, as you would no matter what he was eating. Julian gnawed on chicken bones as some of his first food.

You express some other potentially controversial opinions in the book, regarding heart disease and red meat and butter.

The science was never convincing when it charged that red meat and saturated fats and cholesterol would give you heart disease. Dietary cholesterol is not the cause of unhealthy blood cholesterol level, and the nutritional and medical establishments are now having to face the real science. So times are changing; eggs have been rehabilitated.

How can families eat healthfully without breaking the bank?

Buy foods in their natural state—whole chickens instead of just breasts. Smaller fish, such as herring, anchovies and sardines, are lower in mercury and less expensive than other fish. If you radically simplify your ingredients, making the same frugal meals over and over again, you can then spend some extra money on the better ingredients. The easiest thing in the world is to buy a whole roasted chicken and have vegetables and a salad. We have meat and two veg pretty much every night.

<http://www.timeout.com/new-york-kids/food-drink/interview-with-nina-planck-author-of-real-food-for-mother-and-baby>

London Evening Standard

THE 1000

LONDON'S MOST INFLUENTIAL PEOPLE 2009

EXECUTIVES | OWNERS | INNOVATORS | ANALYSTS
DESIGNERS | BUYERS | CONSULTANTS | TREND LEADERS

October 1, 2008

Times are tough on the high street as the economy slows sharply yet some are still flourishing — the discounters, internet retailers and the well-defined upmarket brands. These are the people who will steer London's vital retail world through what looks like difficult trading ahead.

Nina Planck, 37

LONDON FARMERS' MARKETS, FOUNDER

The queen of the London farmers' markets movement and former speechwriter to an American ambassador to Britain. This daughter of a Virginia farmer set up London's first farmers' market in Islington because "I was not thrilled with New Zealand Granny Smith and American Red Delicious". London Farmers' Markets now runs 14 sites.

Read the full article: <http://www.standard.co.uk/news/retail-7280974.html>

The New York Times

Death by Veganism

May 21, 2007

OP-ED CONTRIBUTOR

By Nina Planck

WHEN Crown Shakur died of starvation, he was 6 weeks old and weighed 3.5 pounds. His vegan parents, who fed him mainly soy milk and apple juice, were convicted in Atlanta recently of murder, involuntary manslaughter and cruelty. This particular calamity — at least the third such conviction of vegan parents in four years — may be largely due to ignorance. But it should prompt frank discussion about nutrition.

I was once a vegan. But well before I became pregnant, I concluded that a vegan pregnancy was irresponsible. You cannot create and nourish a robust baby merely on foods from plants.

Indigenous cuisines offer clues about what humans, naturally omnivorous, need to survive, reproduce and grow... There are no vegan societies for a simple reason: a vegan diet is not adequate in the long run.

Protein deficiency is one danger of a vegan diet for babies. Nutritionists used to speak of proteins as “first class” (from meat, fish, eggs and milk) and “second class” (from plants), but today this is considered denigrating to vegetarians...

Responsible vegan parents know that breast milk is ideal. It contains many necessary components, including cholesterol (which babies use to make nerve cells) and countless immune and growth factors. When breastfeeding isn't possible, soy milk and fruit juice, even in seemingly sufficient quantities, are not safe substitutes for a quality infant formula.

Yet even a breast-fed baby is at risk. Studies show that vegan breast milk lacks enough docosahexaenoic acid, or DHA, the omega-3 fat found in fatty fish. It is difficult to overstate the importance of DHA, vital as it is for eye and brain development. A vegan diet is equally dangerous for weaned babies and toddlers, who need plenty of protein and calcium...

An adult who was well-nourished in utero and in infancy may choose to get by on a vegan diet, but babies are built from protein, calcium, cholesterol and fish oil. Children fed only plants will not get the precious things they need to live and grow.

Read the full article: <http://www.nytimes.com/2007/05/21/opinion/21planck.html>

The New York Times

Leafy Green Sewage

September 21, 2006

OP-ED CONTRIBUTOR

By Nina Planck

FARMERS and food safety officials still have much to figure out about the recent spate of E. coli infections linked to raw spinach. So far, no particular stomachache has been traced to any particular farm irrigated by any particular river. There is also no evidence so far that Natural Selection Foods, the huge shipper implicated in the outbreak that packages salad greens under more than two dozen brands, including Earthbound Farm, O Organic and the Farmer's Market, failed to use proper handling methods.

Indeed, this epidemic, which has infected more than 100 people and resulted in at least one death, probably has little to do with the folks who grow and package your greens. The detective trail ultimately leads back to a seemingly unrelated food industry — beef and dairy cattle.

First, some basic facts about this usually harmless bacterium: E. coli is abundant in the digestive systems of healthy cattle and humans, and if your potato salad happened to be carrying the average E. coli, the acid in your gut is usually enough to kill it.

But the villain in this outbreak, E. coli O157:H7, is far scarier, at least for humans. Your stomach juices are not strong enough to kill this acid-loving bacterium, which is why it's more likely than other members of the E. coli family to produce abdominal cramps, diarrhea, fever and, in rare cases, fatal kidney failure.

Where does this particularly virulent strain come from? It's not found in the intestinal tracts of cattle raised on their natural diet of grass, hay and other fibrous forage. No, O157 thrives in a new — that is, recent in the history of animal diets — biological niche: the unnaturally acidic stomachs of beef and dairy cattle fed on grain, the typical ration on most industrial farms. It's the infected manure from these grain-fed cattle that contaminates the groundwater and spreads the bacteria to produce, like spinach, growing on neighboring farms...

There remains only one long-term remedy, and it's still the simplest one: stop feeding grain to cattle... So give the spinach growers a break, and direct your attention to the people in our agricultural community who just might be able to solve this deadly problem: the beef and dairy farmers.

Read the full article: http://www.nytimes.com/2006/09/21/opinion/21planck.html?_r=0



The New Puritans

By Holly Brubach
May 7, 2006

We were already beating ourselves up about the damage we've done to our arteries. Now along comes "The Ethical Gourmet: How to Enjoy Great Food That Is Humanely Raised, Sustainable, Nonendangered, and That Replenishes the Earth" (Broadway Books), by Jay Weinstein, which would seem to offer all the fun of a guilt trip with a tour guide...

And "Real Food: What to Eat and Why" (Bloomsbury), by Nina Planck, poses a convincing alternative to the prevailing dietary guidelines, even those treated as gospel...

In the course of educating readers, the authors' personalities emerge... Of the group, it is Planck who is the most companionable. Her capacity for humor and self-deprecation makes for good company, and her intelligence and skepticism inspire confidence. To those who proscribe dairy products on the premise that milk was designed for newborn calves, not humans (a popular, if somewhat bizarre, argument), she retorts that a tomato was designed to make more tomato plants, not pasta sauce. Cataloging her own history, which spans a series of draconian regimens, including vegan, vegetarian, low fat, low saturated fat and low cholesterol, she labels one category "New Foods I Tried to Love" and lists "Various imitation foods made with soy and rice." Planck now eats and, even more outrageously, advocates grass-fed meat and whole dairy products...

Fat, cholesterol, carbs, red meat — none of these, Planck contends, is the problem. Instead, she lays the blame on chemicals and industrial food, including "new" fats, many of which are often hydrogenated. Industrial food, she says, is to blame for the steep rise in rates of disease, especially heart disease, diabetes and cancer. Planck arrives at this incendiary conclusion via Darwin and research into Stone Age eating habits, which flies in the face of widespread myths and confirms that, contrary to popular assumptions, humans used to be more carnivorous, not less. "I doubt that foods we've eaten for millions of years cause cancer," she writes...

The "Think globally, eat locally" message comes across loud and clear, and these books provide invaluable online resources for information and hard-to-find "real food." ... Radical as Planck's ideas may be, the case she makes for them strikes me as eminently sensible...

Read the full article:

http://www.nytimes.com/2006/05/07/style/tmagazine/t_1_1426_1427_talk_books_.html?pagewanted=print

The Washington Post

Chew on This

By Jonathan Yardley
Tuesday, July 11, 2006

... In other words, she's a cross between Alice Waters and Martha Stewart -- genuinely committed to healthy, organic food but no less genuinely committed to making a buck off it. What she's selling is basically old-fashioned food, what she calls "real food," which she defines as "foods we've been eating for a long time -- in the case of meat, fish, and eggs, for millions of years." About these *'traditional'* foods she writes:

'To me, *traditional* means "the way we used to eat them." That means different things for different ingredients: fruits and vegetables are best when they're local and seasonal; grains should be whole; fats and oils unrefined. From the farm to the factory to the kitchen, real food is produced and prepared the old-fashioned way -- but not out of mere nostalgia. In each of these examples of real food, the traditional method of farming, processing, preparing, and cooking *enhances* nutrition and flavor, while the industrial method diminishes both.'

Read the full article: <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2006/07/10/AR2006071001112.html>
<http://www.washingtonpost.com/wpdyn/content/article/2006/07/10/AR2006071001112.html>

Los Angeles Times

A Convincing Case for Getting 'Real'

Hannah Wallace
July 24, 2006

In 1939, a Canadian dentist named Weston Price published "Nutrition and Physical Degeneration," a seminal work of nutritional anthropology that purported to show why isolated cultures had no tooth decay and less arthritis, diabetes, cancer and heart disease than people living in industrialized nations... his principles... are enjoying a renaissance among a small but growing legion of nutritionally savvy citizens.

Nina Planck is one of Price's foremost disciples. In her new book, "Real Food," Planck, who grew up on a vegetable farm in Virginia, cites an array of studies that have, in the intervening 70 years, supported the prescient dentist's theories. It is a highly readable (if at times repetitive) summary of the current scientific evidence for her thesis that "industrial" foods are to blame for ailments as varied as heart disease and infertility.

Planck's overarching premise -- that trans fats (mostly derived from partially hydrogenated oils) are to blame for our epidemic rates of heart disease and cancer -- is hardly shocking. More controversial are her assertions that many of the "real foods" we've been taught to fear are harmless...

A writer making such claims should have a solid pedigree. Although not trained as a nutritionist, Planck has firsthand experience with real food. Raised on grass-fed beef, raw, unpasteurized milk and the nutritional advice of whole foods pioneer Adelle Davis, she founded London's first producer-only farmers market in 1999 and returned to New York City to run the Union Square Greenmarket...

More controversially, Planck takes on the mainstream cholesterol establishment, arguing convincingly that LDL, or bad, cholesterol does not actually cause heart disease but rather is a symptom of heart disease... harder to digest (forgive the pun) is Planck's fervent ode to raw, unpasteurized milk... In general, Planck's assertions are backed up with copious evidence: books by nutritionists and doctors, quotes from experts and physicians, studies from respected medical journals. And she has a talent for presenting hard-to-grasp biological processes in plain English...

Planck has written an important book, and her timing may be perfect. With any luck, "Real Food" will resonate with Americans (starved for so long on low-fat diets) and bring Weston Price to a much larger audience than he could ever have imagined.

Read the full article: <http://articles.latimes.com/2006/jul/24/health/he-bookreview24>

The New York Times

The Great White Way

February 12, 2006

OP-ED CONTRIBUTOR

By Nina Planck

HEALTH officials in New York City are right. The typical bodega in the city's poorer neighborhoods is not brimming with healthy foods, and the residents who rely on these stores suffer for it. The unhappy results are higher rates of obesity, diabetes and heart disease among poor New Yorkers.

Thus the city is enlisting bodegas in central Brooklyn, the South Bronx and Harlem (where obesity rates exceed the city average) to encourage the sale of low-fat milk. Participating bodegas offer discounts on low-fat milk and tout its benefits. "Mooove to 1 percent milk," say the T-shirts worn by workers at El Barrio Superette in Harlem.

And it doesn't stop there. Earlier this month, city education officials announced that they had decided to remove whole milk from public school cafeterias. Unfortunately, city officials have identified the wrong culprit in our health woes. Whole milk is one of the best foods in the average corner shop — and a vital part of a nutritious diet for public school children, who may not eat well at home. Whole milk is what is called a complete food, because each ingredient plays its part. Without the fat, you can't digest the protein or absorb the calcium...

The all-important vitamins A and D are found in the fat... What about recommendations that we should drink low-fat milk to prevent heart disease? A federal study released last week, the largest study of its kind, found that low-fat diets do not prevent heart disease. Instead, scientists are increasingly finding that whole milk and saturated fats have been given an undeserved bad rap... Whole milk doesn't make you fat. The main dietary causes of obesity are white flour and sugar...

The health commissioner is right to discourage New York City restaurateurs from using trans fats... What New Yorkers need is a citywide campaign to shun foods loaded with white flour, sugar, corn syrup, corn oil and trans fats...

Meanwhile, if a bodega is your only option and you want to eat well, buy canned fish, beans, eggs and whole milk. That's what the health commissioner should encourage New Yorkers — rich and poor — to take home for dinner.

Read the full article: <http://www.nytimes.com/2006/02/12/opinion/nyregionopinions/12C1planck.html>

The New York Times

Organic and Then Some

November 23, 2005

By Nina Planck

WHEN I first sold my family's vegetables at farmers' markets in Virginia in 1980, Slow Food hadn't been born, and the phrase "local foods" was not yet in the lingo. The word "organic," however, was in vogue, and our customers always asked the same question: Are you organic? Nine years old and barefoot, I tried not to appear flummoxed. I stumbled over answers, most of them beginning, "No, but" These replies failed to satisfy. People wanted to know in a phrase whether our food was clean and safe. I'm still grateful to the customer who said, "Explain how you do farm." Soon our signs read "No Pesticides" or "Our Chickens Run Free on Grass."

We had always used ecological methods, like mulching to keep weeds down, but we also used chemicals on a few crops. By the early 1990's, we gave up all those poisons, but we never sought organic certification -- even as organic foods, with sales growing 20 percent a year, became the hottest niche in the \$500 billion food market.

The truth is that we didn't need an organic label. Customers trusted our signs and sales were brisk. In 2002, when the Department of Agriculture's National Organic Program established federal organic standards, amid dire predictions that small farmers would lose market share to organic behemoths, the effect on our farm and income was zilch. The organic rules are irrelevant to farmers like us who sell to chefs, shops and consumers -- and can talk to buyers directly.

Don't get me wrong. The organic standards -- which ban synthetic fertilizer, antibiotics, hormones, pesticides, genetically engineered ingredients and irradiation -- are good for farming, the environment and health...

That's why it is a shame that the Organic Trade Association -- a food-industry group whose members include such giants as Kraft, Dean Foods and General Mills, which own national organic brands -- is seeking to dilute the organic standards...

Whatever the outcome of that fight, consumers should look beyond the organic label and seek out producers that exceed the federal rules... If the organic label loses its meaning, farmers with higher standards will have to devise new ones...

Read the full article:

<http://query.nytimes.com/gst/fullpage.html?res=9C02E3DE1631F930A15752C1A9639C8B63>

The Telegraph

Savvy shopper: butter versus margarine

Rose Prince

November 6, 2004

How to buy good food with peace of mind and a clear conscience. This week, Rose Prince gets to the bottom of the butter debate

Butter is bad for you and margarine is good: this has been the mantra since hardened vegetable oil spreads have been in mainstream use. But there's now evidence that spreads, margarines and lard-based shortenings contain fats that could be more harmful than saturated fat.

In her forthcoming book, *Real Food* (HarperCollins, July 2005), Nina Planck fights back on behalf of butter. She shows how butter beats low-fat spread in the nutrient quality stakes. But it isn't a simple matter of right or wrong. Whether opting for butter or spread, savvy shoppers face other quandaries – dilemmas that spread across farming practice, animal welfare and the environment.

Which is more healthy, butter or 'spread'?

Spreads contain varying levels of trans fats. Butter – indeed all dairy produce – does not. Trans fats are known to raise the type of cholesterol in the blood that increases the risk of coronary heart disease. The Food Standards Agency admits the effects of these trans fats may be worse than the saturated fat found in both butter and spreads. Trans fats "are harmful and have no known nutritional benefits", it says.

What's so good about butter?

Butter may contain saturated fat, but it has plenty of natural goodness. Planck's research reveals that butter made from cows' milk contains unique acids that protect the body against viral illness, fight tumours and guard the gut from pathogenic bacteria and the negative effects of microbes and yeasts. Butter is also rich in vitamins A and D, which help the absorption of calcium, benefiting bones and teeth.

Read the full article: <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/foodanddrink/3316034/Savvy-shopper-butter-versus-margarine.html>

The New York Times

How New York's Greenmarket Went Stale

April 24, 2004

OP-ED CONTRIBUTOR

By Nina Planck

In 1979, when I was 8, my parents sent me to sell vegetables at roadside stands near our 60-acre farm in Loudoun County, Va... The next summer the first farmers market in the area opened, in the parking lot of the county courthouse... Since then my parents have earned a living from "producer only" farmers markets, where all the food is local and you are allowed to sell only what you have grown.

Working in Britain in the 1990's, I was homesick for local foods and started London's first producer-only farmers markets... Once the markets were up and running, I felt homesick once again -- this time for American local foods. So I returned to Washington, where I started a nonprofit farmers market, the first on public parkland in the capital.

Farmers markets -- and all they represent -- are dear to my heart. It was exciting, then, when the fabled Greenmarket... hired me last July as director... Unfortunately, not six months into the job, I was fired. And although this story is about food, it's not about sour grapes. It's about the growing demand for local apples, butter, beef and other fine foods -- a demand that is not being met by Greenmarket.

For many years, Greenmarket... set the standard for American farmers markets... But in the last 10 years, Greenmarket had lost its way... Greenmarket was failing in its mission "to support local farms and preserve farmland" in other ways...

When I arrived at Greenmarket, I hoped to address these problems. With the help of the young, hard-working staff, we began to clean up the markets, make the assignments fair and enforce the producer-only rule... Sadly, old habits die hard. These and other reforms were rejected... In December I was fired. I never understood why. My boss even said the Council on the Environment shared my vision for a vibrant Greenmarket. Perhaps I was guilty of too much enthusiasm....

But I also still believe that if Greenmarket is to survive, it must change... A New York institution, once great, is failing them. Perhaps it is time Greenmarket itself had some competition.

Read the full article: <http://www.nytimes.com/2004/04/24/opinion/how-new-york-s-greenmarket-went-stale.html>