

UCLA Food Studies Minor and the Impacts of Bread on Society



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Introduction

In the New York Times article, "Truly Food for Thought," Jan Ellen Spiegel states, "...food is not just relevant, but critical to dozens of disciplines. It's agriculture; it's business; it's health; it's the economy; it's the environment; it's international relations; it's war and peace." The Food Studies Minor at UCLA captures the interdisciplinary nature of this field by providing an array of food-related classes in different subject areas.

Bread is the culinary cornerstone of almost every society. However, today, it has been transformed into something quite different from the sourdough bread our ancestors ate hundreds of years ago, which consisted only of flour, water, and salt. Many people report gluten intolerance, a possible side effect of the dead, unwholesome, overly-processed, bread we consume today. This year, I started making and selling sourdough bread to UCLA students in hopes of improving the bread climate on campus. In addition, I planted a wheat field in my backyard in order to see a loaf of bread progress from seed, to wheat, to loaf.



Project Goals

Food Studies Undergraduate Minor

- Contact professors interested in teaching courses for the Food Studies Minor
- Contact professors teaching existing food-related courses to see if said courses can be approved for the Food Studies Minor
- Successfully launch Food Studies Minor application

Impacts of Bread on Society

- Make nutritious sourdough bread accessible to students on campus
- Educate students about bread
 - The history of bread since the industrial revolution
 - What is sourdough bread?
 - How to make nutritious bread
- Follow a loaf of bread from seed to loaf
 - Grow wheat in backyard
 - Harvest wheat
 - Make bread with milled wheat



Procedure

Food Studies Undergraduate Minor

Professors were contacted by email in order to gauge their interest in teaching possible food studies courses. In certain cases, we met with professors to discuss coursework further. The same procedure was carried out to contact professors teaching current food-related courses.

Impacts of Bread on Society

I created a bread company, Winslow Bread Co., in order to make sourdough bread accessible to UCLA students. Winslow Bread Co. puts out a bread order form each Wednesday. Twelve loaves are baked each week. Students can select from three different flavors, and can order either a whole loaf or a half loaf. Bread is delivered to students fresh the day the bread is baked.

In order to educate students about sourdough bread, I conducted a lecture on sourdough bread in Professor Nagy's (English Department) Food and Fantasy in Irish Literature class.

I grew a 20ft. x 20 ft. patch of wheat in my backyard in October. I grew four different varieties of wheat, both red and white wheats. Throughout the year, I tended to the field, weeding and watering it. At the beginning June, I harvested the wheat, and at the end of June, it should be ready to mill.

Results

Food Studies Undergraduate Minor

Many professors were interested in teaching courses for the minor, or approving their existing courses. There were only a few professors that did not want their courses approved, however it is possible for students to file a petition to approve those courses for the minor. We were able to successfully launch the Food Studies Minor Winter quarter. Students are now able to apply into the minor. Spring quarter, Environment 25, Good Food for Everyone: Health, Sustainability and Culture, was taught for the first time by Professor Bassett. This course is one of the core courses for the minor.

Impacts of Bread on Society

Winslow Bread Co. has been very successful. I usually deliver to about 10 students each week. The reception has been very positive and I believe it has fostered a sense of community around bread.

When I lectured in Professor Nagy's class about sourdough, many students had questions about the current state of bread and why it was lacking nutrition. I was able to raise awareness that the problem isn't bread itself, but the current state of bread, which is very processed. The students received the information well and I am still in contact with a few of them.

The wheat was harvested in the beginning of June. Much of the wheat was trampled by a cat wandering through the field. I saw first hand the road-blocks that many farmers encounter while growing wheat.



Conclusions

Food Studies Undergraduate Minor

Undergraduate students are very enthusiastic about the minor. I was in the Environment 25 class Spring quarter and almost the whole class, about 60 students, was interested in pursuing the Food Studies Minor.

Impacts of Bread on Society

Although I have only reached a very small percentage of students on campus with my bread, those students have been very supportive of my project. I have educated my customers about the benefits of naturally fermented sourdough bread, and I hope they spread this information to their peers.



Future Goals

In the future, in order to expand the minor, I am hoping to contact additional professors who may be interested in teaching courses.

Winslow Bread Co. will not produce more bread in the future, but it is my goal to reach more students with my sourdough agenda. I will spread the word mostly through social media and possibly promote the bread on Bruinwalk.

At the end of June, the harvested wheat should be ready to mill. These loaves will be sold to customers with a small pamphlet showing how the loaves were made, starting from seed.

Thank You

Professor Joseph Nagy
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