

## Chapter Gives Green Light to Green Grub

by Kay Bushnell

The Loma Prieta Chapter became significantly more green in November 2006 when the Executive Committee (Ex Com) established guidelines for food served at catered chapter-sponsored (paid for) events. From now on we will enjoy “earth supporting food that is low on the food chain,” “generally plant based” and “if possible, locally grown and organic.” Members are encouraged to provide the same earth-supporting food at all chapter events where food is served.

For many of us these guidelines come as no surprise. The Sierra Club is the leading environmental organization in this country. It often sets standards that others follow. Serving sustainable plant-based food that conforms to the highest environmental standards is an important positive example and an opportunity to have food that tastes great at our events.

Numerous sources express strong support for the new policy. The True Cost of Food Guide produced by the Sierra Club’s Sustainable Consumption Committee states unequivocally: “Plant based food, ideally grown locally and organic, can be produced with minimal use of scarce resources and have minimal negative impact on the planet. Even when raised in the most sustainable way meat usually requires a greater investment of resources than most plant-based food. Cutting back on meat—even sustainably raised meat—is a wise choice. Eating as low as possible on the food chain is the most sustainable way to eat.” (*truecostoffood.com*)

Eric Schlosser, author of *Fast Food Nation*, begins his article in *Sierra* (Nov/Dec 2006), the official magazine of the Sierra Club, by stating, “Bad [food] choices can lead to obesity, diabetes, and heart disease for us, and pollution, loss of biodiversity, and climate change for our favorite planet. Turning farms into factories has given us cheap chicken nuggets and burgers, but at enormous cost to livestock and the rural environment...changing your eating habits can send ripples far and wide in support of agricultural practices that are humane, diverse, and sustainable.” says Schlosser.

In “An Inconvenient Truth,” the film featuring Al Gore, one is led to the website [www.climatecrisis.org](http://www.climatecrisis.org). There under “Action You Can Take at Home” is the suggestion, “Eat less meat. Methane is the second most significant greenhouse gas and cows are one of the greatest methane emitters. Their grassy diet and multiple stomachs cause them to produce methane, which they exhale with every breath.”

The Sierra Club Atlantic Chapter’s publication, “How Animal Agriculture Contributes to Global Warming” and Worldwatch’s Paper 103 point out that belching, flatulent cows are responsible for about 16% of methane and that additional methane is emitted from the massive pools of untreated animal manure at factory farms. These septic pools can burst as they did in 1999 during Hurricane Floyd in North Carolina, flooding waterways with excrement and causing massive fish kills.

The editors of *Worldwatch* ( Jul/Aug 2004) describe the human appetite for animal flesh as “ ...a driving force behind virtually every major category of environmental damage...deforestation, erosion, fresh water scarcity, air and water pollution, climate change, biodiversity loss, social injustice, the destabilization of communities and the spread of disease.”

Mammalian flesh is not the only animal food produced at a high environmental cost. Roughly two thirds of the world’s major fish stocks are now fished at or beyond their capacity and another 10 percent have been harvested heavily. It will take years for the fish to regenerate, according to Brian Halweil in the *Worldwatch* Institute’s “Vital Signs 2005.” An article by Kieran Mulvaney in *E Magazine* (Jan/Feb 2002) describes a major problem with fish farming, which is often touted as a panacea for the over-exploitation of fisheries. The production of one ton of [carnivorous] cage-reared salmon requires approximately 5.3 tons of [other] fish. With the depletion of wild fish schools virtually all growth in the global catch comes from farmed fish.

**Ordering plant-based food for Chapter-sponsored events is easy.** Contact the Chapter office at 650-390-8411 or (email address) to receive:

- a list of caterers who offer plant-based food,
- tips on dealing with caterers,
- a list of past Chapter events at which plant-based food was served (with the names of the caterers used, the menus, and evaluations of the food.)

The same information is available in a binder in the Chapter office. Many caterers can provide outstanding plant-based menus, and some use locally grown and organic ingredients.

#### **HELPFUL RESOURCES :**

##### **Suggested Reading:**

**Diet for a New America**, John Robbins, H.J. Kramer 1998

**Fast Food Nation: The Dark Side of the All-American Meal**, Eric Schlosser, Houghton Mifflin, 2001

**The Omnivore’s Dilemma: A Natural History of Four Meals**, Michael Pollan, The Penguin Press, N.Y. 2006

**True Cost of Food Guide**, Sierra Club Sustainable Consumption Committee, [www.truecostoffood.com](http://www.truecostoffood.com)

##### **Recipes from past issues of the Loma Prietan:**

[www.sierraclub.org/sustainable\\_consumption/recipes](http://www.sierraclub.org/sustainable_consumption/recipes)

**Plant based cooking classes:** Visit [www.bayareaveg.org](http://www.bayareaveg.org) and [www.compassionatecooks.com](http://www.compassionatecooks.com)

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