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Objectives 8-10 address major, interrelated challenges that communities of color face in shaping food system policies, practices, and narratives, as well as building resilience against risks that threaten everyone.

OBJECTIVE 08

Black, Indigenous, and people of color are underrepresented and excluded from political, business, and nonprofit leadership positions. As those who are most directly impacted by inequities across our food system, we need to listen to communities of color, respect their wisdom, and follow their lead.

OBJECTIVE 09

The local food movement has largely been driven by corporate interests and White-dominant culture. As we confront pandemics, climate crises, increasing economic inequality, and entrenched racism, many are realizing that fixing our systems requires deeper reflection and a profound examination of power.

OBJECTIVE 10

In the face of increasing natural disasters, public health crises, and growing inequalities, our food system is showing deep vulnerabilities and testing our resilience. Planning for a resilient food system will require coordination and collaboration to prepare us for future crises. We will need to cultivate working partnerships with Indigenous and other marginalized communities, strengthen our local food economy, and develop bold sources of funding.

OBJECTIVE

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Build a Local, Sustainable, and Equitable Food Movement

STRATEGIES AT A GLANCE

- Support coordinated efforts and collaboration to build a local, sustainable, and equitable food movement
 - Reconnect urban and rural communities
 - Increase food system education and storytelling
 - Build community power
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Introduction

As long as there has been injustice in the food system, there has also been resistance.

For centuries, resistance has taken the form of spirituals,¹ protest poetry, civil disobedience, [restaurant sit-ins](#), worker-led strikes, boycotts, and taking to the streets. In redlined neighborhoods, tribal communities, and immigrant enclaves across the United States, the acts of growing and sharing food have been ongoing forms of resistance, demonstrating self-reliance, sovereignty, mutual aid, and survival. Writing, remembering, gathering, skill-sharing, and organizing are all forms of resistance that continue to challenge injustices in the food system every day.

In the last few decades, more voices have emerged, each calling for actions to reshape the food system in a positive way. Many have advanced their messages to the mainstream: buy local, grow organic, support farm-to-table, vote with your fork. Built on solidarity, these popular movements are often lauded as another form of resistance to the unjust food system. And while they may provide respite from some of its impacts, the question is, respite for whom?

Ironically, the leaders and members of popular food movements are largely those who have historically had the most wealth, representation, and power in the food system—White people. The solutions that have been put forth, as a result, tend to revolve around using this group's consumer power to create markets for food they deem as healthy, sustainable, or ethical.

Creating escapes from the industrial food system—for those who can afford to participate—will not address its larger issues of deepening injustice, accelerating climate change, or inhibiting resilience.² In fact, to borrow words from Beatriz Beckford, longtime organizer for

¹ Greenidge, Kaitlyn, March 5, 2021, "[Black Spirituals as Poetry and Resistance](#)," The New York Times.

09 Increase Leadership by Black, Indigenous, and People of Color Across the Food System



the [National Black Food and Justice Alliance](#), "It is critical that anyone engaged in the food movement—or any movement for that matter—have a racial justice analysis and further, a racial justice practice. Any movement devoid of that practice is not a movement at all."³

As the nation confronts the COVID-19 pandemic, climate crisis, increasing economic inequality, and entrenched racism, many are realizing that fixing our systems requires deeper reflection and a profound examination of power.

Research on food system narratives and messaging conducted by the Rockefeller Foundation for their [Reset the Table report](#) shows that across the general public, the concept of "food systems" is generally well understood. There is significant consensus that current policies prioritize big food and agriculture companies' profits over people and the environment. Most view systemic solutions as important, and nearly 70% of the population surveyed showed signs of readiness to take action for transforming the food system, with increased exposure to messaging increasing their likelihood to engage on the subject. Most importantly, the research concluded that there is a "sense of hope that change within the food system is possible, despite the fact that people see the system as big and complex."⁴

² Philpott, Tom, 2020, *Perilous Bounty: The Looming Collapse of American Farming and How We Can Prevent It*, New York: Bloomsbury Publishing.

³ The Civil Eats Editors. "Leaders of Color Discuss Structural Racism and White Privilege in the Food System." *Civil Eats*, 16 Nov. 2016.

⁴ The Rockefeller Foundation, 2021, "[Messaging Guide and Research Findings](#)," *Reset the Table: Transforming the U.S. Food System*, 2021, pp. 18–31.

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Increase Leadership by Black, Indigenous, and People of Color Across the Food System

A number of major companies, publishers, and media outlets have, too, begun to use their influence to bring food system stories from the fringes to the mainstream, following smaller entities that have led the way for decades. Social media and the Internet have also allowed disenfranchised groups—small business owners, people of color—to rise to prominence in food media and reach millions.^{5,6} Long-held worldviews, myths, stereotypes, and values are constantly being challenged.

This momentum for engaging in conversations about food systems and power is promising, but it is only the first step. Cultivating a movement that continues to build this understanding, strengthens a common vision across diverse sectors, unflinchingly addresses issues of race and class, empowers those most impacted, and unifies the abundant, yet fragmented efforts that have brought us to this critical inflection point, requires extensive social, economic, political, and tactical organization—not to mention significant funding and deep relationship-building.

By cultivating relationships across the food system and outside of it, we can capture this moment to advance the food movement beyond its historically limited outcomes. We can amplify more stories, create a coherent strategy, and position movement actors in a way that enables them to be part of governance processes beyond simple policy advocacy. A new norm is possible.

We live in an era defined by crisis, but also great promise. Climate change, economic inequality, and racial injustice threaten our food system and our future. Yet, in the face of these challenges, there is a vibrant, visible resurgence of movements, of communities rising up against entrenched economic and political power, to pursue a common vision: a food system that belongs to all of us.

¹ Durand, Faith, August 9, 2020, "The Green, Magical Wild World of Alexis Nikole Nelson, Forager and TikTok Star," Kitchn, Apartment Therapy, LLC.

⁶ Betancourt, Bianca, November 24, 2020, "Don't Call Sophia Roe's New VICE Series, Counter Space, a Cooking Show," Harper's BAZAAR/

HISTORICAL MOVEMENTS FOR JUSTICE IN FOOD SYSTEMS

There is a long and rich history of food movements, both nationally and globally. Below are a few movements that have been led by communities of color and essential food workers.



CIVIL RIGHTS SIT-INS

In 1960, [four Black college students sat down](#) at the Whites-only lunch counter at a Woolworth's in Greensboro, North Carolina. The civil rights sit-in was a peaceful technique—sit quietly and ask for service—to highlight longstanding discrimination.



DELANO GRAPE STRIKE

In 1965, organizing against chronic poor pay and working conditions, Filipino workers led by Larry Itliong, and Hispanic/Latinx workers led by Cesar Chavez and Dolores Huerta, [joined forces to strike against table and wine grape growers](#) in Delano, California, in 1965. Using nonviolent tactics like marches and hunger strikes, workers organized a grape boycott that ultimately led to the first union contracts between growers and workers.



COALITION OF IMMOKALEE WORKERS

Formed in 1993 to combat modern-day slavery in Florida's tomato industry, the [Coalition of Immokalee Workers](#) has organized fair wage and boycott campaigns against major corporations and created the [Fair Food Program](#), an agreement between farmers, farmworkers, and retail food companies that ensures humane wages and working conditions for the workers who pick fruits and vegetables.



LA VIA CAMPESINA

Formed in 1993, [La Via Campesina](#)—The Peasant's Way—is an international farmers organization dedicated to campaigning for food sovereignty, including farmers's rights to seeds, farmer training, and the rights of peasants.



BLACK FOOD SOVEREIGNTY

Many organizations across the United States—[National Black Food & Justice Alliance](#), [Black Food Sovereignty Coalition](#), [National Black Farmers Association](#), Soul Fire Farm, have formed to build visibility and institutions to support Black food sovereignty.

Core Challenges

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Plan for a
Resilient Food
System

The core challenges to building a local, sustainable, and equitable food movement are:

- Transforming Our Relationship with Food
- Changing Public Perceptions and Narratives Around Food
- Creating Cohesion Across Food Movements
- Rebalancing Power

■ Transforming Our Relationship with Food

There is a profound disconnect between people and food. Although food is central to our lives and connects us to one another, our cultures, and the earth, most individuals take their relationship with food for granted. For many, their experience with food revolves around convenience, either shopping at the supermarket, dining out at a restaurant, or eating a meal on the go.

The distance between people and food has grown significantly in response to increasing national and global consolidation within the food system. In the 1800s, 90% of the population lived on farms; [today it is 0.6%](#). Over this same period, we have witnessed steep declines in the number of farmers coupled with a dramatic increase in farm size. The result is fewer farmers, fewer people growing food, and fewer people understanding where food comes from and the complexities involved in producing food. As people have migrated away from rural areas into urban and suburban communities, they have become ever more disconnected from food and agriculture.

The food supply chain is also a mystery to most people. When you purchase food at a grocery store or at a restaurant, the steps involved in getting food to your plate remain hidden, including storage, aggregation, processing and distribution.⁷ As do the people, and their stories. When the people producing food are invisible, their work and livelihoods often go underappreciated. It also becomes easy to simply view food as a commodity rather than an essential source of nourishment and integral part of survival.

According to a survey conducted at Michigan State University, 48% of people say they never or rarely seek out information about where their food was grown or how it was produced.⁸ This lack of connection to food often results in a lack of care and support for local food producers and the ways in which they steward our environment.

⁷ Lorr, Benjamin, 2020, *The Secret Life of Groceries: The Dark Miracle of the American Supermarket*, Avery: New York.

⁸ Kirshenbaum, Sheril, September 15, 2020, ["Americans Are Confused about Food and Unsure Where to Turn for Answers. Study Shows,"](#) Cornell Alliance for Science.



People are also dining out and cooking less than ever before.⁹ When purchasing food for home, more and more people are signing up for prepared meal boxes and ordering food online. As our insatiable appetite for convenience grows, we also become disconnected to our cultures and the role of food traditions.

Transforming our relationship with food will require us to break down the divides that have been created between farmers versus nonfarmers as well as urban communities versus rural communities. It will also require us to recognize the ways in which food shapes our lives, influencing both the commonalities and differences across people and their cultures. Transforming our relationship with food will be essential to building a local, sustainable, and equitable food movement.

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■ Changing Public Perceptions and Narratives Around Food

Public perceptions and narratives are powerful. Narratives are commonly understood ideas or beliefs that are reinforced over time by stories. They shape perceptions of social issues, and create the conditions that make it possible to imagine solutions.¹⁰ Narratives explain how society or systems should work. They establish norms and compel people to either perpetuate these norms or change them. Narratives shape and reshape the boundaries of what is possible.

In our food system, the dominant narrative is created and reinforced by those in positions of power, which are primarily [large, multinational corporations](#). They have the power and resources to influence narratives that are spread through mainstream marketing channels and media. They also influence policy decisions and the allocation of resources. These narratives, however, rarely reflect the voices and stories of those most impacted by inequities: family farmers, fishermen, farmworkers, food workers, small food business owners, and residents of low income communities and communities of color.

Changing public perceptions and narratives in support of a local, sustainable, and equitable food system requires contending with the dominant narrative. The dominant narrative about our food system reinforces the idea that bigger is better, and that large-scale, highly mechanized food production is the only way we can feed the world. This narrative dismisses the value of small family farms, food producers, food businesses, and food and farm workers. It also undermines the importance of regenerative agriculture, local food economies, diversity, and food sovereignty.



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⁹ USDA Economic Research Service. See the [Technical Bulletin](#) by Abigail M. Okrent, Howard Elitzak, Tim Park and Sarah Rehkamp, August 2018, *Measuring the Value of the U.S. Food System: Revisions to the Food Expenditure Series*.

¹⁰ Renken, Elena, April 11, 2020, "[How Stories Connect and Persuade Us: Unleashing the Brain Power of Narrative](#)," NPR.

USING GOOGLE TRENDS TO ANALYZE CHANGES IN PUBLIC PERCEPTIONS

[Google Trends](#) is one easy to use tool that can provide insights into search terms that people are using related to food systems. Figure 1 shows that national interest in the search term "local food" has increased over the past 15 years as the local food movement has grown, but interest in San Diego is more erratic. Figure 2 shows national interest in "regenerative agriculture" which has risen steadily since the term became more mainstream several years ago.

FIGURE 1

U.S. and San Diego Region Google Trends for "Local Food"

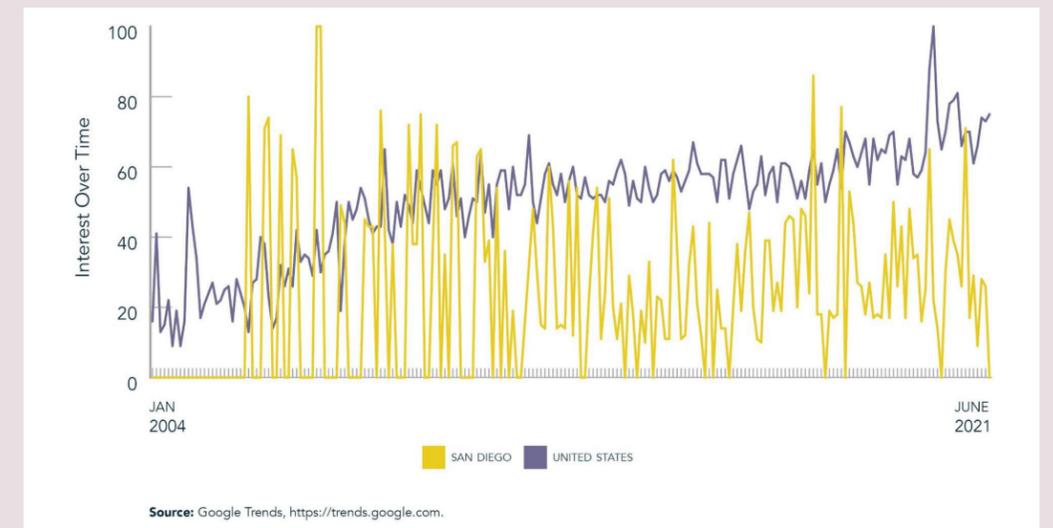
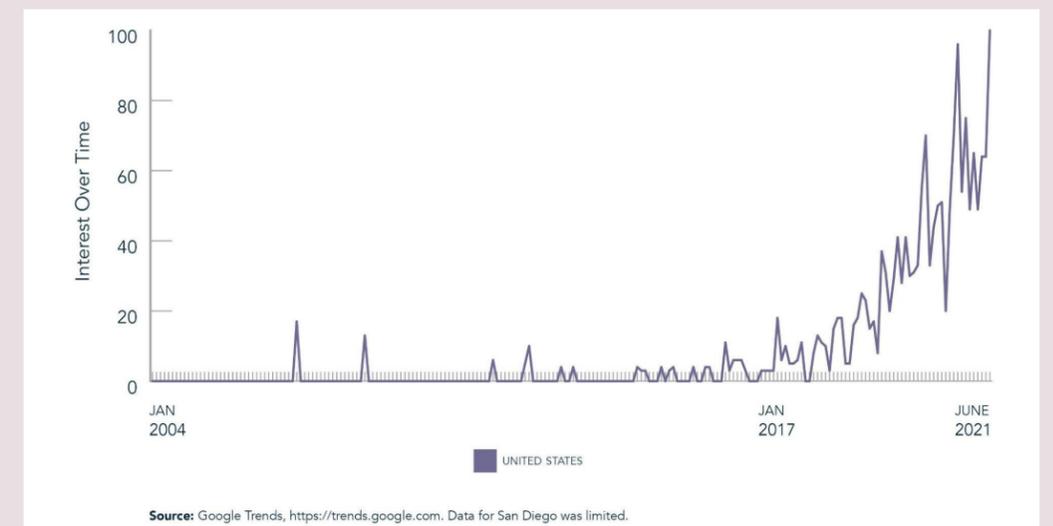


FIGURE 2

U.S. Google Trends for "Regenerative Agriculture"



Building a local, sustainable, and equitable food movement requires transforming dominant narratives. This work is not easy. It is always an uphill battle for social justice narratives to gain widespread traction. To take on dominant narratives and shift public perceptions, social justice advocates need to work together in a strategic and sustained way, build alignment, and invest in infrastructure over the long haul. They need to harness community power, build consensus, and amplify their stories. In *Changing Our Narrative About Narrative*, Rashad Robinson of [Color of Change](#) explains, “Narrative power is the ability to change the norms and rules our society lives by. Narrative infrastructure is the set of systems we maintain in order to do that reliably over time.”

Although we all have the right to communicate, historic patterns of privilege, injustice, and marginalization means that some have inequitable access to the tools and resources necessary to fully exercise this right. Investing in communications and organizing infrastructure for those most impacted by inequities within our food system is essential.

While there have been food movements over the years, such as the local food movement, organic food movement, and farm-to-table movement that have begun to shift the dominant narrative, these movements have been led by affluent and predominantly White communities.

To truly build a local, sustainable, and equitable food movement in San Diego County, farmers, fishermen, food producers, food business owners, food workers, and low income communities and communities of color must be the creators and drivers for changing the narrative around food and shifting public perceptions.

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■ Creating Cohesion Across Food Movements

There are many food movements. In the last several decades, local food movements, organic food movements, farm-to-table movements, slow food movements, regenerative agriculture movements, and many more have emerged. There are also movements around saving heirloom seeds, brewing craft beer, baking artisan breads, and growing food in urban environments. And of course, traditional movements around food sovereignty. All of these movements include different actors, but the theme of pushing back against the dominant, industrial food system is shared.

Building a local, sustainable, and resilient food movement that unifies the many smaller, independent food movements will be essential for taking on the larger forces of our industrial food system. Building a successful movement requires power in numbers. Although each of these movements may be gaining traction, true power is more likely to be realized if we are able to create cohesion across food movements.

It can be challenging to create alignment within any movement, and the challenges are amplified when trying to unite across movements. While we may each do a great job running a food bank or pantry, organizing a farmers market, raising wages for food and farm workers, or advocating for Congress to add more money to SNAP, when it comes to working together to truly cultivate a healthy, sustainable, and just food system, we need more practice. Even at the national level, groups have been struggling for decades to unite agriculture, environment, energy, climate, food security, and human health issues into one cohesive food policy.

Each smaller movement—for example, local food, anti-hunger, community-based food education, food waste—has evolved its own methods and tools over time through processes of trial and error, and sometimes each with its own distinct subset of funders, conferences, and professional associations. While this has led to some powerful innovations, it has also hindered the development of a shared understanding of the root causes affecting our food system. It has also resulted in thousands of organizations vying for funds, resources, and members to develop programs and policies.

Building a larger and more effective movement will be a massive undertaking that requires in-depth collaboration and social, economic, and political organization. This realization is familiar to many food movement leaders. The strategy for implementing cohesion across movements however, is more elusive. Ultimately, we need to move beyond passing fads, weak reforms, or collections of isolated food and agriculture projects, and make the food movement a political force for transformative change.



■ Rebalancing Power

Effective movements that truly engage people in thinking critically about, advocating for, and creating beneficial systemic change are built from the ground up, not the top down. Building from the ground up requires **building power**—people power, alliance and relationship power, narrative power, and governance power. Manifesting our vision for a local, sustainable, and equitable food system will not be easy. It will require a fundamental rebalancing of power in favor of those most directly impacted by the food system.

PEOPLE POWER

People power is about building and sustaining a base. Building people power involves developing leaders, and organizing at scale and in innovative ways. Those most impacted by the food system, including essential workers, communities of color, and other marginalized communities must be at the center of any food movement. Their leadership is essential for building a diverse and multi-racial movement.

Shifting power from corporations to people is at the core of building a local, sustainable, and equitable food system. As highlighted throughout Food Vision 2030, however, current trends are moving in the opposite direction. Corporate power and inequities across our food system continue to rise. Disrupting these trends will require significant investments in people power.

ALLIANCE AND RELATIONSHIP POWER

There is power in relationships. Building alliances and coalitions, especially among essential workers and communities of color, is an essential element of movement building. Organizations forging alliances play an important role in mobilization and policy advocacy. Support and capacity building for these organizations is essential for increasing the collective power.

Alliances, however, often face many challenges. Resources and infrastructure are generally limited. The work of building relationships and mobilizing people tends to be underappreciated and underfunded. In particular, alliances that organize within communities of color or other marginalized communities, face even greater limitations. Increasing resources for these organizations is essential for effective movement building and transformative change.



NARRATIVE POWER

Narratives hold significant power. As highlighted above, they shape and reshape the boundaries of what is possible. They influence public perceptions and have the power to transform societies. Supporting, investing in, and lifting up the voices and work of Black, Indigenous, and people of color and essential workers is necessary for harnessing the power to shift the dominant narrative.

Changing dominant narratives is not easy. They are dominant for a reason, and are often supported by people in power. The work of shifting narratives and elevating the stories of those who have been marginalized or those who remain unseen requires tremendous resources. Increasing investments in communications and storytelling across the food system will be essential to building a local, sustainable, and equitable food movement.

GOVERNANCE POWER

Policies shift power. Transforming institutions and decision making structures is a core element of movement building. When those most impacted by the food system are able to govern or influence policies, true transformations can occur. Effective organizing and leadership development to cultivate new political leaders that represent impacted groups and communities is an important goal of building a people-centered food movement.

Transforming political leadership, however, is challenging, especially at the federal level. Furthering a policy agenda at the local level holds more promise, but is still not easy. Centering community-led advocacy and leadership development across underrepresented communities will be key for shifting governance power.

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BUILDING COMMUNITY POWER

Power is an integral part of the food system, movement building, and everyday life. It plays a role in shaping most relationships and in determining who gets to make important social, economic, political, and environmental decisions that affect entire communities of people. Often, we can see power at work in very direct and obvious ways. More often, power operates in subtle, and even hidden ways, through cultural norms, ideas, and practices that perpetuate existing power relations and discourage questioning or challenging those relations.

The consolidation of power in our food system has reached untenable levels. This is often hidden from us through the illusion of having a myriad of brands to choose from at the supermarket, but the reality is that our food system is controlled by a small handful of companies.

Imagine the food system as an hourglass: At one end, there are the millions of farmers and fishermen growing and catching food around the world, and on the other, there are the millions of people who eat that food. But the process of getting food from farmers and fishermen to consumers is dominated by corporate monopolies at every step along the supply chain. Four companies account for 52% of seed sales; 73% of beef processing; 82% of soft drink sales; 58% of bread sales; and on it goes.¹¹ The largest 100 firms control 77 percent of processed food sales worldwide, a share that is growing.¹² The immense profits these corporations amass gives them significant power over the global food system—from being able to lobby governments to forming policies about land and health, dominating narratives about food, to deciding what brands and varieties we see on supermarket shelves.

Taking on existing power structures can feel disenchanting, because the systems that need to be confronted seem indestructible. Consumers have been told that the most they can do is change their purchasing habits; buy organic or fair-trade; go to the farmer’s market; buy local, grass-fed meat or start a garden. These are fine places to start—if one has the means to access them.

The truth is, we have much more power than that. Through building power and solidarity in people, alliances and relationships, our daily narratives, and in governance, we can lead change from the ground up and model the power shifts needed in our food system.

Community power-building engages the people most impacted by this imbalance of power in setting an agenda toward changing systems to create and sustain healthy communities—and build their leadership, skills, and expertise to achieve and oversee that agenda. A guiding principle of community power building is that community members are themselves experts in their own lived experiences and problems that their community faces. As such, community power-building organizations place members in the driver’s seat in the design and implementation of collective efforts to improve their day-to-day lives.

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¹¹ Hendrickson, Mary K., Philip H. Howard, Emily M. Miller, and Douglas H. Constance, 2020, *The Food System, Concentration and Its Impacts*, Family Farm Action Alliance.

¹² Clapp, Jennifer and Gyorgy Scrinis, 2016, “Big Food, Nutritionism, and Corporate Power,” *Globalizations*, 14 (4).

Commentary

The Power of Journalism That Uplifts

KATIE STOKES, [EDIBLE SAN DIEGO](#)

If you ask them, most people in San Diego County would probably agree that it’s good to have access to fresh, seasonal, and local food. On a daily basis, however, a variety of factors makes this the exception rather than the rule. Access, convenience, price, habits, preferences, skills, or knowledge can stand in the way of connecting people with local food and those who grow, procure, and process it.

For 13 years, Edible San Diego has produced a magazine—and more recently, digital content and events—to bring people together and build a movement around local food. The need for journalism that uplifts local people, programs, and places has never been more important. Edible San Diego finds thoughtful writers who seed inspiration and offer practical information by telling stories elevating the passion, knowledge, and experiences of our community. We believe that both inspiration and education are critical for changing behavior.

As a mainly free platform in a competitive, global media market, we do a delicate dance to educate readers about our food system,

balancing the desire for immediate gratification, coupled with short attention spans, with the need for deep education. Edible San Diego is continually expanding our audience, appealing to ever broader circles of people to spark interest in local food, build enjoyment of whatever aspects of food

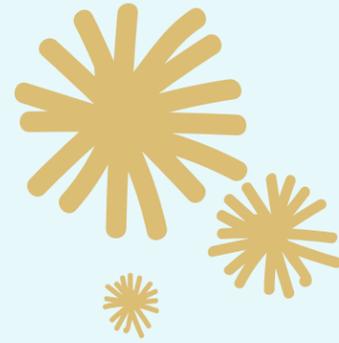
appeal to them (beautiful photography, recipes, personalities, etc.), offer opportunities to deepen their knowledge, acquire practical skills, and ultimately develop a profound connection with our local food system.

To ensure the magazine remains free, we rely on advertising revenue, primarily from businesses—many based in San Diego County—who want to get in front of our readers. For this reason and many others, we view the owners, workers, supply chain participants, and countless other relationships across the business community as an inherent part of our mission.

Edible San Diego shares the vision of a healthier, more sustainable and more just food system in San Diego County with the many other organizations and people across the San Diego Food System Alliance. We invite ever more diverse people into this conversation about the wellness of our region by connecting with their hearts, their eyes, and their palates. Our articles, videos, and events complement the great work happening across the County. We create warm and welcoming narratives, and build connections with diverse San Diegans in an effort to uplift the intersectionality of the food system. Our door is open and we invite you into this conversation and shared movement to build a better local food system.



The Opportunity



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Strategies

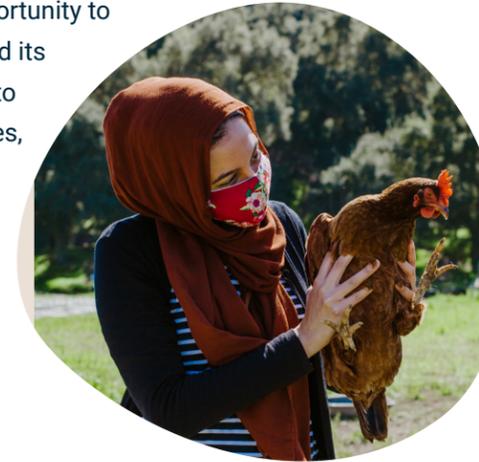
- 01 **SUPPORT COORDINATED EFFORTS AND COLLABORATION TO BUILD A LOCAL, SUSTAINABLE, AND EQUITABLE FOOD MOVEMENT**
- 02 **RECONNECT URBAN AND RURAL COMMUNITIES**
- 03 **INCREASE FOOD SYSTEM EDUCATION AND STORYTELLING**
BUILD COMMUNITY POWER

Confronting the challenges within our food system will require a bold, multi-racial movement. It will require people to take action in support of a local, sustainable, and equitable food system in San Diego County. Ultimately, it will also require fundamental shifts in power.

Although there is momentum for engaging in conversations about food systems and power, building effective movements that create systemic change is hard work. Cultivating a movement in San Diego County that support local farms, fisheries, and food businesses, understands the complexities of our food system, strengthens a common vision across diverse sectors, addresses issues of race and class, empowers those most impacted, and unifies the many, but fragmented efforts within our region, will require extensive social, economic, political, and tactical organization. It will also require significant funding and deep relationship-building.

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To truly realize this vision, we will need to transform our relationship with food, change public perceptions and narratives around food, create cohesion across local food movements, and rebalance power across communities. We have an opportunity to capture this moment to advance the food movement beyond its historically limited outcomes. We can work better together to reconnect urban and rural communities, amplify more stories, and build true community power.



Strategies

01 SUPPORT COORDINATED EFFORTS AND COLLABORATION TO BUILD A LOCAL, SUSTAINABLE, AND EQUITABLE FOOD MOVEMENT

“Transformative movements recognize that everything gets done through relationships and nothing gets done without them. At their heart, movements are about people, and cultures are about people and our relationships to each other and to the earth. Through deep listening, breakthrough conversations, and cultivating radical connections, movements are making leaps previously unthinkable.”

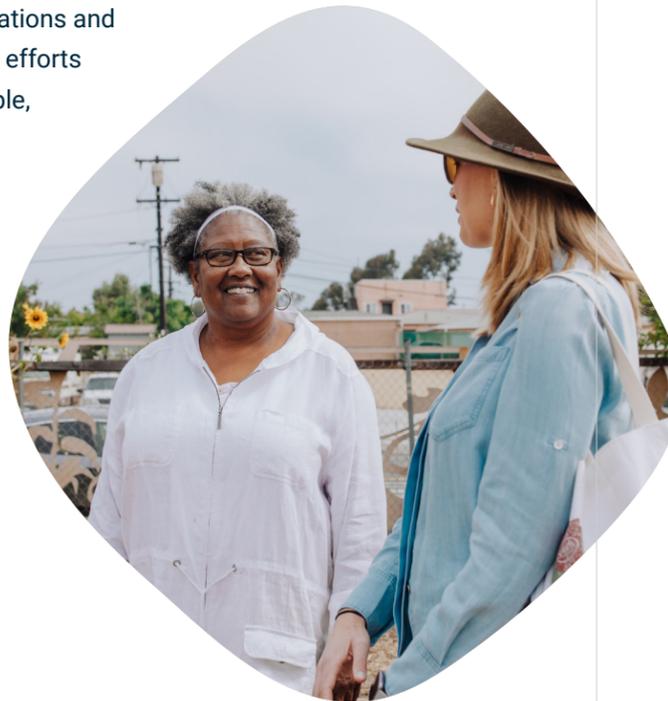
— [Movement Strategy Center](#)

Increasing coordination and collaboration is essential to movement building. The heart of building movements is relationships. To strengthen the food movement in San Diego County, we will need to cultivate strong, trusted relationships between residents, essential workers, nonprofits, businesses, media, government, and philanthropy.

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We are fortunate in San Diego County to have an abundance of people and organizations working to improve our food system. We also have several coalitions specifically focused on food, including the [San Diego County Farm Bureau](#), [Foodshed](#), [San Diego Fisherman's Working Group](#), [Kitchenistas](#), [San Diego Hunger Coalition](#), the [UCSD Center for Community Health](#), the [Childhood Obesity Initiative](#), [Farm to School](#), [Farmworker Care Coalition](#), [Good Food District](#), the [San Diego Food System Alliance](#) and many more. There are also countless other coalitions whose work deeply intersects with issues within our food system, including [Center on Policy Initiatives](#), [Mid-City CAN](#), [Employee Rights Center](#), [Climate Action Campaign](#), [Climate Science Alliance](#), [Business For Good San Diego](#), [Southern California Tribal Chairmen's Association](#), and several others.

Strengthening the relationships across these organizations and coalitions, building new relationships, and uniting our efforts will be central to our efforts to build a local, sustainable, and equitable food system in San Diego County. This work of building relationships and activating communities is vital for building a strong, effective movement. It also tends to be underappreciated and underfunded so moving forward, it will be essential to ensure that organizations are supported in their efforts to work together to build collective power.



10 Plan for a Resilient Food System

Strategies

02

RECONNECT URBAN AND RURAL COMMUNITIES

The distance between urban and rural communities has grown dramatically over the past several decades. As a result, people have become increasingly disconnected to farms and food.

Across many conversations as part of Food Vision 2030, there was a perception of an urban-rural divide in the region, where many San Diegans are unaware of local farmers, products, and values and the economic, ecological, and regulatory challenges they face. One contributing factor for this disconnect is that most San Diegans (84%) live in metropolitan areas, while a much smaller number (16%) live in unincorporated areas of the county. It is in these rural communities where the majority of agricultural activity takes place in San Diego County.

Overcoming the urban-rural divide and reconnecting people to their food will require intentional efforts to bridge these communities. Strategies include increasing interactions, cultivating relationships, and providing opportunities for authentic experiences with farmers, the land, and growing food. Below are examples of additional strategies to foster stronger connections between people and food.

Strategies for Reconnecting People to Food

Create digital platforms that highlight local farms, fisheries, and food businesses: Use social media and develop online resources to learn about local farmers, fishermen, and food businesses like [Sonoma County Farm Trails](#), [Michigan Farm Fun](#), and [Dig In Vermont](#). Similar to the [San Diego Brewers Guild](#), make it easy to celebrate, promote, and find local products.

Invest in urban gardens and place-based learning centers: Develop and expand gardens and place-based learning centers in urban settings like [Project New Village](#), [Mundo Gardens](#), [Community Roots Farm](#), [Bayside Environmental Learning Center](#), [Coastal Roots Farm](#), [Olivewood Gardens](#), and [Wild Willow Farm](#), and others to host events, expand customer base, and amplify messages.

Expand support for farmers markets: Develop and increase support for [farmers markets](#) in San Diego County as they provide important opportunities for directly connecting with farmers, fishermen, and artisan food producers.

Increase opportunities for agritourism: Expand agritourism opportunities such as [Epicurean San Diego](#), a culinary tour and events company in San Diego County. They offer a variety of experiences, including pop-up farm dinners, cooking classes, and culinary tours to connect people to local food producers. Consider developing a San Diego County ["Open Farm Week"](#) that includes tours, open houses, music, arts, kids' activities, classes, and on-farm workshops



Coastal Roots Farm

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Since 2014, [Coastal Roots Farm](#) has been on a mission to cultivate healthy, connected communities through sustainable agriculture, food justice, and ancient Jewish wisdom. “We practice organic farming, share our harvest with those who lack access, deliver unique farm-based educational programs, and foster inclusive spaces for people of all backgrounds to come together to connect, learn, and celebrate in ways that catalyze a healthier, more vibrant community and a more sustainable environmental future for our region,” said Kesha Dorsey Spoor, Coastal Roots Farm’s Director of Philanthropy, Program Strategy, and Communication.

These goals are met through a pay-what-you-can Farm Stand and educational programs and events, including a popular Farm Camp offered seasonally in the fall, spring, and summer that gets kids in the garden planting, harvesting, cooking, and eating. “Youth have the opportunity to get outdoors and become environmental scientists for the day, learning where their food comes from, why it matters, and how they can improve the world,” explained Kesha. In the midst of COVID-19, Coastal Roots Farm decided to expand the program to include After-School Farm Camp, which has the added benefit of providing stability for families in need of affordable childcare. “I can’t imagine a better program for young kids,” one parent commented. “The way they are able to teach them to be good citizens and build character in a fun and engaging way is remarkable.”

In addition to providing affordable childcare and teaching the next generation about sustainable farming, Coastal Roots Farm is addressing the needs of local food insecure individuals right now, and are increasingly serving BIPOC communities, including Indigenous and

Hispanic/Latinx families. The farm also serves military/veteran families, many of whom identify as BIPOC.

“We are honored to donate more than half of our organically-grown harvest to community members in need and will continue to feed as many individuals as we can,” Kesha explained. “We believe that local food systems that value sustainability and justice reduce inequities. Central to our mission are the principles that we must care for the world we live in and that all individuals deserve dignified access to nutrient-dense food to nourish their bodies, equitable education that engages and inspires, and inclusive and fulfilling opportunities to engage with food, the land, and the community.”

Coastal Roots Farm aims to continue to expand access to food and support the development of healthier communities in years to come. “We believe the opportunity to grow our educational programming for youth and adults is exponential,” said Kesha. “Through it, we hope to continue educating and inspiring others to take actions that will sustain the food system we so deeply rely on and to share our appreciation for the natural world.”



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Epicurean San Diego and Chinita’s Pies

Stephanie Parker, the founder of [Epicurean San Diego](#), and Christina Ng, chef and founder of [Chinita’s Pies](#) are, first and foremost, ambassadors for local farmers, producers, and artisans. Together they’re working to help preserve the circular food, farming, fishing, and market communities that make San Diego County unique.

Stephanie, a SoCal native, began her career in restaurant management here in San Diego before moving to San Francisco. “I had been involved with Slow Food in San Francisco, so I dove in when I moved back to San Diego to try to cultivate my network and forge partnerships, both professionally and personally,” she said. “I have never encountered such a warm welcoming network. There is a collaborative spirit here and I appreciated that as someone moving back.” She was captivated by the stories of the artisans and producers in San Diego. “I was learning about the drive behind their passions, and my ultimate goal became connecting people to how things are being made—how their coffee is being roasted, how their bread is being baked—and to humanize the makers through cooking classes and culinary tours. It is important to make the connection between food on the table and food in the soil.”

Christina was one such maker and educator who has since become an Epicurean San Diego partner. Her business, Chinita’s Pies, began as a small collaboration with a local coffee cart. Before that, most of her professional culinary experience was making savory dishes in restaurants, pies were her side project, especially around Thanksgiving. At the encouragement of friends and peers, she began to expand her hobby into pop-up events and fundraisers where she was able to promote the principles of sourcing responsibly grown, local

produce and meat. “I found like minded partners through these events, which led me to work with nonprofits like Olivewood Gardens, BGFF, Slow Food Urban San Diego, and Stephanie. Food education has really come to light for me as one of my true passions.”

“We are both working for the common good, towards a common goal,” said Stephanie. “And I can always count on Christina, knowing my guests will be taken care of with her delicious food and warm demeanor.”

The pair are united in their passion for the San Diego County food community. “The accessibility factor of being close to a producer or farmer is very tangible in San Diego,” said Christina. “Literally eating slow food, but also encouraging diners to slow down.”

“We have gotten innovative and our food scene is worth celebrating,” said Stephanie. “People want a relatable story, and there are so many out there, like Luke of Cyclops Farm. He made a fully functioning farm out of two acres, while balancing his role as a father. He makes farming approachable to those who are trying to grow with only a windowsill.”

“Our obligation, if we are branding ourselves as working on behalf of the people who are the source of food, is to emphasize the pathway as much as the meal,” said Christina. “You have to know where to find the food, and then how to tell the story, whether through emails, in a short talk before service, or in classes.”

With both of their businesses built around in-person experiences, the last year presented a unique challenge. “The model looks really different now due to COVID, but people’s desire to connect with food is even stronger,” said Christina. “My pivot came along the lines of what style of service we offered. My model went from full-service onsite

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Plan for a Resilient Food System

catering to drop-off delivery services. In the beginning of March it was terrible to x-out all those events on the calendar, but then I did a couple virtual food system education cooking classes and one beekeeping cooking class for a kids' birthday party. COVID doesn't change that children need to learn, and it pushed me to realize my role as a food educator."

"At the beginning of the pandemic, all of our farmer partners were bananas crazy. Everyone was in panic mode, and people were turning toward local sourcing," Stephanie explained. "In terms of our partners, with all of the policy changes, some businesses are doing better than others. We haven't hosted experiences since last March, and I wasn't passionate about virtual, so my support to our partners had to shift. The silver lining was relaunching our Sunshine Boxes. In each box we're supporting anywhere from eight to ten businesses to whom we're providing both financial and marketing support. And people can send some locally-made, San Diego sunshine."

Both agree that the challenges of the last year have helped them to refine their missions. "My baking and beekeeping class was at a super affluent house in La Jolla, and yes, those kids needed that information, but so do kids in other demographics," said Christina. "I realized I want to be accessible to everyone in San Diego and to get information to pockets of people who might

not be the first people addressed."

"My dream is to see San Diego become a food destination, and that includes more deep dives into indigenous food," said Stephanie. "Seeking out the people in your own backyard is step one in preserving what we have. Then we have to create a whole experience that goes beyond the plate. Even if you can only influence one person, to have one conversation, that's how we can move the needle forward."



Another important strategy for reconnecting urban and rural communities is to cultivate stronger partnerships between organizations and policymakers working across San Diego County. Similar to [California Climate & Agriculture Network's](#) efforts to connect urban legislators with rural communities, there are many opportunities for building bridges and greater urban-rural collaboration around food and farm issues facing San Diego County.

Moving forward, to truly reconnect people to food and farming, we will need to adopt a new philosophy, one that sees urban and rural as connected communities and focuses on their commonalities rather than their differences.

Strategies

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INCREASE FOOD SYSTEM EDUCATION AND STORYTELLING

In addition to reconnecting urban and rural communities, increasing food system education is an essential strategy for building a local, sustainable, and equitable food movement. Greater understanding of issues within our food system along with increased awareness of the people, places, and programs that are transforming San Diego County's food system is core to shifting public perceptions and dominant narratives.

There are many aspects of our food system that would benefit from increased consumer education. Specifically, the following ten areas emerged as priorities for educational efforts in San Diego County:

- Understanding racial and ethnic disparities in our food system
- Exploring cooperatives, land trusts, employee ownership models
- Understanding the value of our local farmers, fishermen, and food businesses
- Implementing traditional land practices, and increasing plant knowledge and indigenous food sovereignty
- Highlighting the benefits of urban agriculture
- Composting, reducing food waste, and eating plant-based and sustainable food diets
- Cooking and preparing healthy foods
- Gathering, gardening, and growing your own food
- Learning about volunteer opportunities within the food system
- Understanding how our food system can cultivate justice, fight climate change, and build resilience



The goal of educational efforts in the region should be to increase awareness, understanding, and engagement in our food system. This includes knowing the people who produce and cook your food, learning to gather, grow, and prepare your own food, reducing your food waste, supporting the local food and farm economy, changing purchasing habits, volunteering, donating, advocating for policy changes, and actively working to reduce inequities across the food system.



Olivewood Gardens & the Kitchenistas of National City

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[Cooking for Salud®](#), a program of [Olivewood Gardens and Learning Center](#), is an 8-week bilingual English and Spanish nutrition education program that teaches participants how to make healthy changes at home. The program provides participants with tools to change their cooking and eating habits.

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Upon graduation of the Cooking for Salud® program, new [Kitchenistas](#) make a commitment to being leaders in their families and community. Many Kitchenistas come from communities that have been impacted by decades of systemic and institutionalized racism, disinvestment, and resulting social inequities. Through the Kitchenistas program, Olivewood strives to address health and environmental equity, focusing on education, access, and advocacy to improve the local food system, inspire community leadership, and bring resources to National City and San Diego's South Bay region. Kitchenistas are changemakers. They are dedicated to leading and supporting local efforts, and they understand the needs and desires of the local community intimately from lived and observed experiences.

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Kitchenistas share their skills and knowledge of nutrition and healthy cooking through presentations and food demos at local schools, community centers, and events. They have advocated for healthy food policy and healthy food

business development in National City, and have provided input to inform the creation of new programs and visions that reflect the needs and desires of the community. Kitchenistas are a diverse group of multilingual, multi-national community members that include small business entrepreneurs and co-op owners, health advocates and leaders, school wellness champions, documentary film protagonists, and elected officials.

The Kitchenistas represent and demonstrate what it means to be a thriving community - to truly support one another and seek collective growth, success, and wellness. Diversity is celebrated among the Kitchenistas, and there is a shared culture of advocating for a better and healthy community.

The Kitchenistas are always in the process of growing, both personally and professionally. Much of the growth is inspired by their peers who generously share their talents and skills with one another, as well as their learnings from programs.

Olivewood's vision is for each Kitchenista to reach their highest expectations personally and professionally, and to be active citizens and leaders within the community. The staff are endlessly inspired by the Kitchenistas along with all of the incredible people who make up their community, and embody resilience, generosity, dedication, ingenuity, creativity, and love.



Strategies for educating the community and facilitating behavior change include developing educational campaigns, podcasts, publications, films, workshops, newsletters, events, and more. Below are a few examples of effective consumer education campaigns that may serve as inspiration for San Diego County.

Examples of Educational Campaigns from Around the Country

One Fair Wage: [One Fair Wage](#) is a national organization of over 200,000 service workers, over 800 restaurant employers, and dozens of organizations nationwide all working together to end all subminimum wages in the United States and improve wages and working conditions in the service sector in particular.

Good Food Purchasing Program: The [Good Food Purchasing Program](#) is a campaign that encourages large institutions to direct their buying power toward five core values – local economies, environmental sustainability, valued workforce, animal welfare and nutrition.

Seeds of Native Health: The [Shakopee Mdewakanton Sioux Community](#) formed the [Seeds of Native Health](#) campaign, a five-year, \$11 million national campaign to improve Native American nutrition through grant-making, sharing of best practices, capacity-building, sponsored research, advocacy, and educational initiatives.

Save the Food: [Save the Food](#) is a national campaign launched by the Natural Resources Defense Council and the Ad Council to raise public awareness about the environmental and socio-economic impacts of food waste. The initiative encourages consumers to reduce the amount of food that gets trashed, thereby saving the water, energy and money that are lost along with it.

Lowcountry Local First: [Lowcountry Local First](#), a buy local campaign, cultivates an economy anchored in local ownership. Through the campaign, they educate the general public on why it's important to choose local, they work with elected officials, decision-makers and opinion leaders to foster a better environment for creating and sustaining local businesses, and they deliver resources, programming, networking, mentorship and more to local businesses.

Patagonia stories: In 2012, outdoor apparel giant Patagonia entered the food business. It launched an offshoot company called Patagonia Provisions that sells a range of healthy, ethically sourced, and shelf-stable products, including wild salmon, bison jerky, ancient cereal grains, soups, chilis, snack bars, and more. Patagonia has voiced their strong belief in the need to rethink global food production—not so far off from fabric production—in an effort to stave off climate change. Known throughout the industry and amongst the public as thought-provoking storytellers through film, social media, and long-form articles, Patagonia has created many educational campaigns about the food system in its short time on the scene, including its latest, *Hasta La Raíz* (Down to the Root) in partnership with ALBA, about farmworkers, which reached 1 million views in its first few weeks of streaming on YouTube.

Fishful Future: The Fishful Future project is a newly launched collaborative effort joining seafood processors, fishery scientists, local fishermen, and renowned chefs. The project explores opportunities for San Diego's fishing, seafood processing, and culinary industries to move toward a zero-waste seafood supply chain by fully using each fish, through educational campaigns on their website, blog, shared recipes, video gallery, species guides, and more.

Strategies

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BUILD COMMUNITY POWER

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The foundation of any movement is people power, or community power. Creating a local, sustainable, and equitable food movement in San Diego County must include residents.

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As the most impacted by inequities in our food system, residents from marginalized communities and communities of color need to be leading the movement.

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There are many organizations working across our region to elevate the voices of the underrepresented in our food system and build true community power. Some examples include [Project New Village](#), [Mundo Gardens](#), [Olivewood Gardens](#), [Mid-City CAN](#), [Center on Policy Initiatives](#), [Farmworker CARE Coalition](#), [Employee Rights Center](#), [Foodshed](#), and so many more. Expanding support for these organizations and others to activate their own communities and align with other communities is essential for building power. Developing opportunities for resident leadership development is equally important.

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There are also several national organizations that support movement building efforts and efforts to build community power, including [Color of Change](#) and [Movement Generation](#). These organizations are leading effective campaigns to build community power and serve as models for building multi-racial community-led movements. There are many more organizations across the country and globally that are working to ensure that communities have voice and power in the decisions that directly affect them, but to the right are a few examples of organizations that are building community power in the food system that may serve as inspiration for San Diego County.

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Learning from and investing in organizations that are activating their communities and promoting food sovereignty is how we will build community power. Supporting alliances and coalitions across communities and sectors is equally essential moving forward.

Examples of Organizations Building Community Power

Soul Fire Farm: [Soul Fire Farm](#) is an Afro-Indigenous centered community farm committed to uprooting racism and seeding sovereignty in the food system. They bring diverse communities together on the land to share skills on sustainable agriculture, natural building, spiritual activism, health, and environmental justice. They are training the next generation of activist-farmers and strengthening the movements for food sovereignty and community self-determination.

Brooklyn Movement Center: [Brooklyn Movement Center](#) (BMC) is a Black-led, membership-based organization of primarily low-to-moderate income Central Brooklyn residents. They build power and pursue self-determination in Bedford-Stuyvesant & Crown Heights by nurturing local leadership, waging campaigns and winning concrete improvements in people's lives. Through intersectional organizing, BMC centers a full range of issues and Black identity that define a whole community.

HEAL Food Alliance: [HEAL Food Alliance](#) serves as a platform to build collective power that advocates for a fair food system. Led by member organizations, HEAL amplifies the experiences of frontline communities who are affected by the current system. To achieve a vision of transformative change, the organization's programs focus on three areas: growing community power, developing political leadership, and exposing harmful policies and power structures.

National Black Food & Justice Alliance: The [National Black Food and Justice Alliance](#) represents hundreds of Black urban and rural farmers, organizers, and land stewards based nationwide working together towards an intergenerational, urban/rural movement to map, assess, train and deepen the organizing, institution building and advocacy work protecting Black land and work towards food sovereignty.





Chia Café Collective

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“Mesquite, acorn, and nopales—three foods that are native to this region, sustainable, and good for you,” says Abe Sanchez, a member of the Purepecha Tribe who works with scholars and culinary experts to preserve and pass on traditional foodways. “These sustainable foods are widely available, yet underused. Our cultures have lost their connection to the food that is native to this land, and to their history, but now we are trying to revitalize it. My goal is to advocate for the decolonization of diets by promoting Native Californian and Southwestern plant-based foods.”

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He and other members of the [Chia Cafe Collective](#) are dedicated to restoring the place of indigenous ingredients in the Native diet through food workshops and classes; gathering, processing, and distributing plants to elders and others; transplanting native plants in areas slated for development, and cultivating them in gardens in order to share seeds and cuttings.

“I would see people in our workshops hand-writing down the recipes, and saying ‘I want that recipe!’ so we decided it was important to write a cookbook,” says Deborah Small, one of the ten authors of [Cooking the Native Way: Chia Cafe Collective](#). “We are all educators, so it wasn’t about making a profit, it was about sharing information and preserving these Native foods and Native medicines.”

“Sustainable foods and Native foods have been a hot topic over the last few years, and that opened doors for us to present what we are doing,” says Abe, who added that their work is about more than just the recipes, but also about relationships with the natural environment. “I’ve been most excited about Native American ingredients, like the mesquite bean. It’s a superfood that grows in the desert and is only watered by monsoons. It’s a super nutritious

food that has sustained indigenous people for thousands of years, but we aren’t utilizing it,” he says. “The question becomes, how do we get people to like these foods, to actually eat them?”

At workshops, the Collective members present Indigenous foods in modern applications. While chia seeds were traditionally roasted and ground into gruel, they now can be added to cornbread mix to increase the nutritional value. Acorns are another sustainable, local food source that people don’t know what to do with. The Collective is teaching how to grind acorns into flour that can be used in place of masa. “The tortillas have a little hint of acorn flavor,” says Abe. “Some people ask why we aren’t just teaching traditional cooking methods, but my experience is that ‘decolonizing’ our diet is pretty tough to do. We first need to source the ingredients, and then we have to help people develop a palate for them.”

The Collective is taking an active role in providing community access to gardens and teaching people how to gather legally and safely. “All members of Chia Cafe Collective have gardens so we can educate ourselves, grow the plants ourselves, and then offer in-depth learning,” said Deborah. “I have a 50-foot prickly pear fence which is open for anyone to gather, my neighbors and everyone in the area.”



“You really don’t even have to be a savvy gardener to grow nopales,” Abe says.

“But you have to eat them to grow them, because they grow so fast!” Deborah adds with a laugh.

Abe shares that the Collective is trying to solve the challenge of accessing some of these Native foods. “There are a lot of ornamental plants in the city, and acorns in the park are just as good as acorns in the wild, but if you are going to be gathering, you need permits. We teach people how to get permission.”

Decolonizing an indigenous diet can sometimes require a contemporary approach. “Americans are finicky, privileged eaters. So the question is, how do we bring them back?” Abe continues.

“It’s very interesting to see the ways we can encourage a positive reintroduction to local foods. A big part of reviving the availability of native foods is getting people to like them.”

Deborah is confident native foods can be normalized in modern diets. “I really wanted a healthy alternative for a mocha cappuccino from Starbucks, so, one of the recipes I created for the cookbook used mesquite flour, chia,

and some cacao blended with ice,” said Deborah. “It tasted delicious and satisfied my desire for a milkshake. The key for me was not only to indigenize things we already enjoy, but also to make them healthier.”

The Collective hopes to continue to grow their efforts, scaling up access and availability of Indigenous ingredients and popularizing them. “My vision would be to coordinate with people who are farmers and know what they are doing in mass quantities so we can offer pick up CSAs featuring traditional foods,” says Deborah. “Food as medicine is a Native perspective and the medicinal uses of so many local plants are hugely significant. So I’d also like to see our diets re-indigenizing using nettle and chia and mesquite powder.”

“I want to ignite the idea or energy within the Native community, so we are mentoring people on relearning to gather and to harvest. Mesquite is comparable to almonds, but it grows in the desert. I’ve been encouraging youth to sell roasted mesquite flour and acorn flour, like they do in Arizona,” says Abe. “We are reteaching in hopes that they take it can make it their own and can go on to educate others.”

From Building a Food Movement to Planning for Greater Resilience

Building a local, sustainable, and equitable food movement is vital as we move toward an uncertain future. Transforming our relationship with food, creating a new narrative, unifying efforts, and rebalancing power are all essential for bringing us together to collectively plan for resilience. Developing a food system that is adaptive, inclusive, and resilient—that protects itself against future public health pandemics, climate change, and other threats—is highlighted in the final Objective.



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