

Donna Defoe is currently a cook at one of the schools in Lakeview. This interview was conducted in her living room. Behind her stood a TV that had a baseball game on, the whole thing was muted for my benefit.

Toan Ngo [00:00]: Okay, this is Toan interviewing Donna Defoe at... 1 o'clock... 1:36 on July 19<sup>th</sup>, 2007.

TN: Well, Donna... We'll start out by something really simple... What is one of your favorite foods?

Donna Defoe: Hmm... my favorite food... Corn on the cob. [laughs]

TN: How often do you eat it?

DD: Only... probably... maybe... four times a year...

TN: Oh really?

DD: Yeah.

TN: Is there any reason why that is?

DD: Cuz I only like it fresh from the garden.

TN: Okay... that makes sense. And what is your least favorite food?

DD: Pork and beans.

TN: Pork and beans? How often do you have to eat that?

DD: Never. I never eat 'em now, ever.

TN: Okay... well... what did you have for dinner that night?

DD: We had corn on the cob... [laughs] and spare ribs...

TN: And thinking about the food system more broadly... what are three things that you appreciate about the food system in your community?

DD: Well... one thing is... more so now, but not... not necessarily Lakeview... is... the wide variety of things that are now available year-round, instead of just like... you know seasonal or whatever... you know, so... I... I like that...

TN: Anything else?

DD: No.

TN: Okay... what are the things you don't like about the food system here?

DD: The limited... you know, there's no comparing... You know, we've got... Safeway or we have Stewarts... There's, you know... you can't comparison shop or you get, you know I have read or seen for years where ladies have spent... two hundred dollars or two hundred and fifty dollars on groceries and what their coupons and everything else... They may spend ten dollars, or you know... of their actual money... You can't do that here... You can't do that, you know, in small places because there's no... com... you know... They know you're locked in... so... But you know...

TN: And so... how... how does your household get their food?

DD: I go buy it at the store... [laughs] or... my husband grows it in his garden.

TN: Okay... do you guys hunt at all?

DD: My husband does, yeah...

TN: And... so... how often does he do that?

DD: Well... usually once a year...

TN: What kind of... what things do you grow in your garden?

DD: Kevin!

Kevin: What?

DD: Come here, sweetie!

K: Okay.

TN: Well that's alright if you don't know...

DD: I have no idea... But I mean I know we eat it... I mean we use it but I know cabbage... I don't know what he plants... he plants weird stuff... and he likes weird... I mean... I keep... what did he plant one year we wouldn't even try it... Oh! Purple green beans...

TN: Oh! Interesting!

DD: Yeah... he likes... he likes to try things that are... you know... I think he did red carrots one year... see... I don't like food that's not the color it's supposed to be... If it's supposed to be orange, it's supposed to be orange...

DD: [to Kevin] What are some of the things you have in your garden this year?

K: My garden?

DD: Yeah.

K: Well let's see... start from this end... gourds, not edible, but... I have carrots, tomatoes, peas, onions, more carrots, beets, lettuce, strawberries, green beans, different varieties of summer squash, raspberries, sweet corn, cucumbers, winter squash, grapes... [he turns and look at the ground, spinning and pointing to virtual spots where his vegetables would be in the garden]

TN: Wow... that is one big garden. Well thank you, Kevin!

K: Sure. [walks off]

TN: You must have a very varied dinner then...

DD: Yeah... yeah... well, you know... now, see I had six kids... So... but now it's just the two of us... so... a lot of times now when there's too much, cuz you know, everything comes on then we take it to like... church and... put it out in a basket and... for free. People just... and they do that a lot here... Other people do it in their gardens or plentiful, they'll take it to church and people swap and... trade and... our neighbor across the street, she tried to get David to be in the farmer's market here in town but... usually it just falls at a time where either he's really busy or we're gone... so... we have a... we haven't done that before but I know she's trying to... get him to be in that...

TN: Okay... Do you or your family face any challenges in getting the food that you want? Well... I... I have lots and lots of recipe books. And sometimes there's different recipes I like to try cuz my husband... it's hard to find anything he doesn't like... Yeah, I mean, he just likes variety... but there's a lot of time you can't find what they ask for in a recipe here... Yeah... there was one time I... it was... this new recipe for lemon chicken and it called for lemon curd. I couldn't get it here... I couldn't even get it in Klamath... my friend just happened to be in Reno... And then she got me a... a small... bottle of it... I ask them about it and then they said "Oh, we... only carry that at Christmas time, only" Well so I look at Christmas time, they didn't even have any at Christmas this last year. So that, yeah... that is one thing that's really, you know... not everything you... you know, you wanna try... you can try because... you can't get it! Just don't have it... And I heard somewhere and I can't remember... where I heard it at... that supermarkets are designed, or made, you can only have so many products in there... so in order to bring a new product out they have to pull one off the shelf. And I thought that was silly, I thought "Why? Why can't you put as much as you want?" But I don't know if that's true or not, that's just what... I heard one time. So...

TN: Okay... Okay... what is your history of your family, or your family's involvement with food in the past?

DD: What do you mean my involvement?

TN: Did you guys produce, or sell food or just... your family in general?

DD: Just for family, in general.

TN: Okay... Let's see... are... are there any stories connected with food in your family. Any good stories, funny stories? [she laughs]

DD: Well... let's see... funny stories... No... I don't... I really can't think... the only thing that I know is my husband is an excellent... And it's the one thing my kids remember the most... My husband's a very good dutch oven cooker... and we'll go out in the woods... and he'll cook in the dutch oven for the kids and that's one thing... And the Boy Scouts... Yeah he could probably tell you stories about, cuz you know... he was a Scout Master for years... about... You know, the boys were supposed to bring this and the boys were supposed bring that and he has... brought his stuff and, he learned very quickly to start bringing lots of extras cuz the boys... didn't bring enough or... they burned their food and then they wanted to eat his... And... and stuff, yeah... So... he's a very good... In fact, in fact... all my kids... except for... two... are all very good cooks. Yeah... In fact, my son's married, my oldest son's married and he does the cooking at... and... [I point outside, indicating a son of hers I saw earlier who left when I arrived] my youngest son...

TN: Oh, he's the youngest?

DD: My youngest, yeah, that just left, he does the cooking in both of them, in their house...

TN: Okay... are there any special recipes...

DD: Oh [inaudible], we have lots!

TN: Lots?

DD: Yeah [laughs] we have lots! Yeah... we have... the... in the fall we have... which... what we call a Dutch oven squash and potatoes and my kids absolutely loved it... and... and it's actually something I've kinda contemplated trying at school, I just don't know time-wise you know you're just kinda... sucked in there time-wise about certain things... but it's my kids absolutely loved it... and I've often wondered if the kids at school would like it. You give 'em, they want me to try to start serving a little bit more squash but... Squash is not something kids really... you know, go for... So... but that's one of my kids' favorites, squash and potatoes. Yeah...

TN: You can name potato surprise and they wouldn't know...

DD: [laughs] Yeah... "Surprise! The squash is in there!" Yeah... and then... I think that's... the thing was all kids so... is... you know, if they would just try it... once... My old boss said that you had to serve something to a child fourteen times before they would decide if it they would like it or not... and that's a lot of times... that's a lot of waste. So, you have to be kinda careful about... about certain, but yeah...

TN: Okay, well... are you or any of your family members... involved... in processing, selling, or doing anything with food for the public?

DD: No.

TN: And do any of the groups you belong to eat together? Like you said, you were in a church?

DD: Yeah, we do. And I just... I... that's not right... I just thought... I just forgot. My son, my youngest son that just left... he used to work for a caterer in Utah.

TN: Okay. And he absolutely loved it. Just loved it. But... when... they had the baby, he was never home so they had to re-think because it was such a... you know... he would go to work sometimes at five in the morning and wouldn't get home until twelve o'clock at night. So... yeah... it was... it's a... grueling, long hard... But oh yeah... we have church potlucks or church dinners and... yeah...

TN: Do they offer meals to others?

DD: Well... let's say like... at church... let's say one of the ladies was pregnant and have a... had a baby... we usually take meals in for a week after she's had her baby and comes home. Or if someone's sick or... invalid and can't... then we take meals out too...

TN: And which church do you belong to?

DD: But... Church of Jesus Chr... the Mormons. [laughs]

TN: Cuz the name's too long, huh? [jokingly]

TN: And... how do you think that farmers and ranchers are faring in the community?

DD: Not good.

TN: Not good? And why do you say that?

DD: Oh well... cuz one of the [inaudible]... at school... her husband's a rancher and she tells me... we're not doing very good. [laughs] There's so many... beef restrictions and new beef stuff that she says... you know... she's always afraid they're gonna go under or... you know... go... she... That's how I know they're not, you know... the beef industry... and he doesn't seem to be doing very good from her, you know. Other than that they don't really raise a lot of food food, you know... in this area.

TN: What do you know about the elderly and low-income and disabled people, here in this community... and how do they get food?

DD: Well... I don't know how they get food... when school's out... but when school's in I take care of the little kids' breakfast and lunch and then... sometimes I worry about... dinner because, you know... I know... I mean they make comments... they say... "I'm hungry. I didn't have dinner." Or... you know, so you know... you know...

TN: And this is for little kids?

DD: It's for little kids, yeah... And then I know... I have some old... elderly friends that go up to the senior city... citizens and they always seem to enjoy that... the food up there, so... you know... but, yeah...

TN: Well do you know where the food that's eaten in this community comes from?

DD: Yeah... K&K... K&K from Alturas or Klamath... fruit... from Klamath... a lot of it... it's a... it's a vendor. It's where I order my food when I'm working at school. So I know... a lot of it comes from them because they tell me "Oh, I've got to drop this off at Safeway" or "I've got to drop this off..." you know, so that's how I know. A lot of it comes from them.

TN: Okay... Do you eat any local food?

DD: You mean at the restaurants?

TN: That... or at home when you buy things, you... go to the Farmer's Market and things like that.

DD: I don't go to the Farmer's Market. Cuz I'm usually never here but... but you know I buy, you know... stuff at the local grocery store but... you know... I've often thought... the greenhouse out of town, you know... if they grew food, a lot of people would... you know... would probably buy it but... it... you know, he's getting old and wants to retire so... I don't think it's gonna happen. But...

TN: What is that greenhouse?

DD: It's just a greenhouse, it's just plants and stuff like that... he doesn't have any kind of food but I always thought... I've often thought that if Lakeview, if anything happened like... occasionally. It happens once since I've lived here and of course they... they said at the time... it's happened in four... where you can't get anything in or out in the winter. The roads are blocked or this or that, you know... and I've often thought Lakeview could probably be a little self-sustaining if it had to be because of the big greenhouse out there. Yeah, I mean... we wouldn't a lot of things but we could sustain life if we had to... you know, but... you know, depend on how people go... could work, if they would work together and stuff but you know, I don't know... but, you know... now I know a lot of people get a little scary here when... you know, the Safeway truck can't come in and... you know. My sister used to... be in the military and she was stationed in Texas one year... and she said it was really scary because... they got a tornado warning and she said "I went to the store..." she had just a small, little girl... at the time, to get some diapers and stuff, she was... "It was gutted." There was nothing left. They got that tornado warning... and the time she could get to the store everything was gone, she said diapers, water,... all that stuff, she goes "I've never seen this store gutted so fast." Cuz people being afraid that they wouldn't be able to get to the store... or... you know, the store get hit by a tornado, you know... and I, I've never really thought of that before but I've thought about it, you know... since! I thought "Oh wow... but see now, I don't worry so much cuz I don't have... little kids, I don't have kids I'm responsible for... which makes a big difference. Yeah...

TN: Thank you. Have you heard or read about how people are changing their food system... in other places?

DD: No.

TN: And... are there any other things about the food system here that you want us to know about?

DD: Well I know... where I work... my boss is very... up onto, everything that comes, you know... cross the internet, or on the news... and like... I used to be able to buy... lettuce, you know... salad mix... and that's already been chopped, washed... cuz I can't do that anymore.

TN: How come?

DD: Because it got poisoned, last year... the spinach... remember the spinach? Came... came across, I think it was in California, but I can't remember so I'm even allowed to buy that kind of stuff... If I buy it have to buy it locally, then I have to do all the chopping and everything ourselves instead of buying it prepackaged... any... anything like that... you know... and if I can't do it, usually at school... then I'm real cautious even about my own house... you know... I try to make sure all my kids have meat thermometers... emphasize, washing your hands, you know, so they are... more... aware of being food safe than, you know... before.

TN: What's... what's your view of this community... in... in... in another twenty years?

DD: I don't see it changin'.

TN: Yeah?

DD: Yeah.

TN: Well... that was it for the... community questions... (Okay.) And this is the school questions.

TN: Okay. How do you guys get a budget for your food? How are you financed?

DD: It's pre... it... my budget's pre-set... so... this is how much I have... and... it's somewhat flexible... because... we never know for sure what the enrollment's going to be so it's... it's a little flexible, they work with me somewhat. And plus, like with the price of gas... groceries went up and they understood that it wasn't... you know, anything I could help or, the people we get food from could help... you know, when gas goes up... everything else goes up so... they're really good about being flexible.

TN: And... and who's they?

DD: The school district. [laughs] Yeah. Cuz I... it's... it's like... I have the school district boss, then I have the principal boss... you know, so it's kind of a... a mixture of people, so...

TN: Do you deal with the school district directly or through the principal?

DD: Both. Both. I can go down and talk to the manager or... I can talk to the principal... just depends on... which... what it... what it involves and what it's about.

TN: Does your food have a lot of diversity? Ethnic diversity, say?

DD: No.

TN: Who creates your menu?

DD: I do.

TN: Just by yourself?

DD: Uh hmm.

TN: Okay. How many cooks are there?

DD: Just me and one other lady.

TN: Okay.

DD: Well at our school.

TN: Okay.

DD: The high school has two cooks, and then Nover has one cook out there so... actually there's five of us but there's only... two at the school I cook at.

TN: And... what's the name of your school?

DD: Olson School.

TN: Olson School.

DD: Yeah.

TN: And... what's the age of kids...?

DD: It's kindergarten through sixth grade.

TN: Okay. And... what... what are the kids' favorite foods, in the menu... usually?

DD: This last year... it was... breakfast for lunch and pizza on a bun.

TN: Do you guys have a... a guide for nutrition?

DD: Yes we do.

TN: And... what... what would that look like?

DD: Well... you can... we can throw 2 ounces of protein everyday... we have to serve them... a cup of fruits and vegetables. They need... have to have at least 1 ounce of bread... everyday... and then they have milk. That's what I have to put on their tray. They only have to take three.

TN: Oh... interesting...

DD: Yeah. So it's more of a choice thing, it's no more the... "you have to eat this, you have to take this." And then... the new rules are too is... you can't... we can't force them to eat it... If they take it... and they say, "I've taken a bite, I don't want anymore, I'm done, I'm outta here." They can leave! Because we've actually a parent saying "You can't make my kid eat if they don't want to." So...

TN: Interesting...

DD: Yeah. So they have to take three out of the five, but they don't have to eat it.

TN: How do you feel about that?

DD: I've never been a component because of pork and beans... to force a kid to eat... Because there's a lotta things when I was a kid I didn't like that I like now. But because I was made to eat pork and beans I still can't take them. So I'm not a component of forcing a kid to eat... something they don't want. I would like them to try it... but... usually... you know... Do you eat things you don't like?

TN: I... I try 'em a few times and then... if I still don't like...

DD: Like it... you don't eat 'em... see? So... I'm not a component of forcing a kid to eat somethin' they don't like.

TN: Right. Are there vending machines in the school?

DD: Not in my school there isn't.

TN: None at all?

DD: None at all.

TN: Interesting. Is that recent?

DD: No. Well... they have one pop machine is for the teachers only, the kids can't... yeah... but no, there's never been any in our school.

TN: I see, okay. Do you use the pop machine?

DD: No, I don't like pop.

TN: Okay, that's good. [laughs]

TN: How many meals or snacks do you serve a day?

DD: At school? There's breakfast and lunch.

TN: Okay. But besides those times, can kids get food?

DD: Well... I'll put it to you this way. If a kid has missed the bus... if a kid is late... and they know he hasn't eaten, yeah. We... they always get fed. And we have like... a young man last year that was diagnosed as... as... type one diabetes, he came in any time... if he needed it... it was available, for him... whenever he needed.

TN: That's very nice.

DD: So... yeah. And that is no charge to his parents too... we just gave it...

TN: Are there kids that bring their own food from home?

DD: Yes. Yes.

TN: Is that pretty often?

DD: Yeah. Yeah.

TN: And... do you guys have... free, reduced lunch program that...

DD: Uh hmm. Yeah.

TN: How many kids would you say are on that program?

DD: I have no idea. It's not information that... they give me. So I have idea.

TN: And... this is a question... that they put on there... but I don't really know what it is... But... is there a summer lunch program?

DD: No. Used to be... I would work... four weeks in the summer doing summer school and I would provide breakfast, for the early ones and a snack for the... younger ones. But they said "no more..."

TN: What is it? What is a summer lunch program?

DD: Well for them it was just kids coming to summer school but my old boss... her... one of her relatives worked in a school district where they strictly did that... they bussed the kids in to feed 'em and then bussed 'em home. But we don't do that.

TN: Okay. And the food that you buy... for the things that you make. Are they seasonal foods?

DD: Well... I try to get seasonal foods but it's really hard to get stuff there. We got to go a couple of years ago over to Bend... and their food service person actually shopped from the local orchards and stuff like that... I don't have stuff like that... so... you know... I do the best I can when I can but... you know... it just depends on... what's available... and the price!

TN: Yeah, yeah... Well you know what? These... these are all the questions that we came up with... well thank you very much, Donna.

DD: Oh you're welcome! No problem!