The Food System and the Lake County Ethnographic Field School

OSU Dept of Anthropology
Our Food System

- 100 years ago Lakeview was self-sufficient with gardens, grist mills and creameries.
- Today the average piece of food in the US travels 1500 miles.
- In Lakeview people travel another 100 miles to get it.
The State of Food Producers

- The average age of farmers is over 55 years
- Farmers and ranchers receive only 20 cents of every dollar spent on food
- The flight of rural youth into the cities
Social Movements

Community Food Security Coalition and the Slow Food Movement

- To build strong, sustainable, local and regional food systems that ensure access to affordable, nutritious, and culturally appropriate food for all people at all times. This coalition seeks to develop self-reliance among all communities in obtaining their food and to create a system of growing, manufacturing, processing, making available, and selling food that is regionally based and grounded in the principles of justice, democracy, and sustainability.
Where do anthropology students come in?

- Anthropology is the study of humans in all their diversity.
- Key concept = “Culture”
- Cultural anthropologists focus on living human cultures, while archeologists looks at past human cultures by studying their material remains
- Subcultures develop within cultures based on things like where people live and how they make a living
Ethnography

- the preferred methodology of cultural anthropologists
- It is based on careful listening and observation to try to understand a diversity of worldviews
An ethnographic field school

- Helping to design a research project
- Systematic observation and note taking
- The ethics of fieldwork
- Conducting interviews
- Survey research
- Recording and transcribing
- Photography
- Mapping exercises
- Working with a team
- Analyzing data
The Urban-Rural Divide

- Even though OSU is the land grant institution, most of our students come from urban or peri-urban areas.

- Greater understanding between the urban and rural parts of our state serves everyone.
2007 Ethnographic Field School

- Joan Gross- Professor of Anthropology
- Nancy Rosenberger-Professor of Anthropology
- Ashly Stone- Low Income and Services
- Allegra Gordon- Youth Sports and Health Consciousness
- Ami Allain- Healthcare
- Carly Johnson- Newcomers, Hispanics
- Cole Enabnit- Hunting and Fishing
- Colleen Johnson- Food Traditions
- DeAngela Venable- Elderly, Veterans
- Emily Riley- Youth Activities, Youth Migration
- Peter Little- Institutions, Warner Creek Correctional Facility
- Toan Ngo- Ranching and Schools
- Sharon Thornberry- Churches, Food Banks
Local coordinator and homestays

- Community Coordinator: Judi Steward
- Homestays:
  - Heidi and Clint Albertson
  - Bill and Carla Albertson
  - Jan and Bud Wright
  - Lissa and Bruce Webbon
  - Maxine Myers
  - Sharon Hiatt
  - Connie Smith
  - Kenda and Mike Fuhriman
  - Jamie Davis
  - Dave and Sandy Staub
  - Mike and Donna Newcombe
  - Charley and Carl Tracy
  - Suzy and Greg Larson
Lakeview Food System: Positives

- food share and the pantries
- local meat
- None
- restaurants
- Subway
- you can always find what you want
- Safeway and Stewarts
- no food franchises
Food System Positives

- “At Subway everything’s like open, fresh, chopped up, and you know it’s good”.

- “If you want a really good Mexican meal, go to our Mexican restaurant. You might end up having other people sit with you. It is just wonderful. ...You get what mama is cooking that day”.
Food System: Negatives

Lakeview Food System: Negatives

- food is expensive
- hard to eat healthily
- lack of choice in quantity
- lack of restaurants
- lack of variety
- meat is expensive
- lack of fresh produce
- restaurant cleanliness
- no food franchises
“I think we could have more variety. I think that in the grocery stores for sure, I think things could be a tad cheaper [but] there is a large captive audience here that maybe doesn’t have the ability to drive to Klamath and buy groceries elsewhere”.

Food System Negatives
Lakeview Main Sources of Food

Food Sources

- Klamath / Bend
- Friends
- Canning
- Self raised / hunted meat
- Lake View locker s
- Vegetable garden
- Mexican store
- Stewarts
- Safeway
- Grocery store (none spec.)
Lakeview Main Sources of Food

- “I get all my meat at the lockers, but most of my other products I get here in town at the Safeway or Stewarts”.
- “Canning is huge here”.
- “I love the Meat Locker, I love those guys. I wish they would open up a little restaurant”.
Where Does the Food in Lakeview Come From?

“I think it comes from various directions but, you know, places like Reno, Medford, and Klamath”.

“I suspect somewhere in CA of course, in the valley, and lots of other fruits and veggies probably also come from South America. I would assume”.

“Just because it’s on the shelf in Lakeview, doesn’t mean it couldn’t come from China”
Community meals

- Church
- Elks club
- Future Farmers of America
- Friends
- Master Gardener’s Association
- Parties
- Swim Team
- Red Hat Society
- Senior Center
- VFW
- Rotary Club
- Soroptimist Society
Low Income Food System

- Food stamps and Food pantries available in town
Cooperation

- “A lot of the agencies work together, like family services, Sr Center, pantries, Crisis Center, we all kind of work together.”
- The churches cooperate
- “We advertise a lot by word of mouth.”
The food providers’ side

- “Our goal is to make sure there are no hungry people in Lakeview.”
- “I try to run the pantry as if I were on the other side of the table.”
- Food drives
- Community is generous
Nutrition and education

- Rotary First Harvest: fresh produce from community garden
- Food Pantry Partners: recipe demos
- Makes a more ‘relaxed atmosphere’ so ‘more prideful’ will come
Receiver’s point of view

- “I was embarrassed to go in for food stamps at first…”
- “I would be ashamed to go to the food pantry…”
- “...come in quickly, get your box without stopping to talk…”
Food pantries are too rigid, strict

- “Food should be given to anyone who needs it…”
- “Large families don’t get enough food…”
- “People are petty: Did you deserve it? Did you take too much? Did you take the wrong thing?”
Need for communication

- Why don’t you have brand X?

- “I had to explain to her that we give out what we get...if you take a little time most of these people will understand.”
Limitations even with help

- “Sometimes I get to the store and say, ‘Ah, it is really expensive and I don’t buy meat.’”

- “I always shop the sales”...foregoing preferences
Living with limitations

- “We shop for whatever is cheapest. Safeway has over-priced meat...We often take older foods for cheap or free. We can’t be picky. We try to stay minimalist.”
Community contrasts: local food

- “People are much more willing now to pay more for quality, local food.”

- Some people don’t have a choice because they can’t spend the extra money.
Newcomers: Retired and Latino

- Six Mexican women
- Moved within last 6 yrs
- Why came?
- Family connections
- Work
- “It’s a small town and you can raise your kids, you know, better....”

- “My husband’s cousins said, ‘Come to Lakeview. It is pretty and there is work. The base [of Lakeview] is work. It is what people are looking for...as long as there is work, we are going to be fine.’”
Mexicans, continued

- Most employed by door factories
- Example:
  - Woman with college degree in teaching
  - 2 years at factory
- Carpal tunnel syndrome from lifting large planks of wood.
- “The work is so hard...for me, but I’m not a person who stands by at home waiting for the money. I want to make some to spend.”
Mexican family separated

- Example: wife part-time as maid at motel: $4 per room:
- She does 2 rooms per hour
- Husband commutes to Calif for construction jobs

- “Supposedly we came for work, but right now it is really hard for immigrants… The truth is it is difficult. Sometimes I don’t know if I am going to stay…”
Challenges to living in Lakeview

- Mexicans:
  - Hard to meet basic healthcare needs
  - No insurance
  - Fear of doctors–illegality
  - Return to Mexico for health care needs
  - Bring medicines back
Challenges for Mexicans

“We just have to deal with it. I am going to go to Mexico soon because my husband is sick and I am not going to let him die… I have medical training but… the best thing is to bring him to Mexico.”
Grocery shopping: Mexicans

- Food is too expensive in Lakeview:
  - “When the kids say, ‘I want this.’ And [I say], ‘No, not right now.’ It hurts to tell them that we don’t have money for that right now because they don’t know.”

- Lack of variety like avocados

- Ingredients from Mexico

- Mexican store

- Buy in bulk in Klamath

- Food stamps go farther in Klamath
Making friends: Mexicans

- Small circles of friends
- Friends are family members
- “We have just...a very small social life.”
- Gossip travels
- Fears of illegality
- Limited English
More research needed

- What are the relationships between Mexicans and other townspeople?
- “I am fearful of the community’s reactions to minorities. It is an old-time, good-old-boy kind of town. Everyone pulls together and are supportive of each other, but I have seen people treat someone with little respect just because of their race.”
Retirees:
Non-Mexican and with fixed incomes

- Five women and one man over 60
- Why came?
- Good place to retire
- Friendly
- Low cost of living
- Health services
Retired newcomers

- “Living in Lakeview has been refreshing. I was seriously ill...people I didn’t even know came and brought things...”

- “In 2002, it was just wonderful, for 10.5 acres, it was $15,000.”
Grocery shopping: Retirees

- “Food prices go up and up and up... I really want to shop here, but... about two weeks ago, we decided to go to Klamath and buy meat.”
- “Not fun to shop here...”
- More fruits and vegetables
Making friends: Retirees

- “There are two couples we are really close to, but it takes a long time to develop friendships…People have already made friendships. You have to be forceful enough to get into other people’s lives, but it still takes a long time.”
A retiree says...

- “After a few years, you begin to see the factions... but as a community at large, it is still a down-to-earth, friendly, cooperative town with good integrity.”
Gardening for Retirees and Mexicans

- Retirees:
  - 3 food gardens
  - 4 flower gardens
  - Own their homes

- Mexicans:
  - 1 food garden
  - Busy with children and work
  - No advice in Spanish
Senior Citizens

- Eight elder interviews
- Not hungry here
- Thanks to community ties and support networks
Senior Center: meals important

Problems with food coming from Klamath to Sr. Center:

- “It is very difficult because your expenses are high…”
- “They think that as a small town we don’t need much”
- Government gives $1200 for 1000 meals per month
Isolation of Lakeview

- Elders either go out of their way to get foods they need or want... or they don’t get them
- Example: have to move into Lakeview
- Example: never leave the county for food
Elders not satisfied, but have to settle for what they have

- “Well we only got two stores so we don’t got much of a choice, you go to one or the other...”

- “You don’t know where the food comes from...sometimes it’s out of date on the shelf.”
Wish for fresh food

- Elders have or had gardens
- Difficult as age
- Fresh food is most expensive
Elderly ranchers

- People feel property taxes have risen
- Price of cattle high
- Living alone out of town: can be hard to get food
Ranching

- “A way of life, not a way to riches…”
Hard Work

- Busiest time is when cows give birth, often in the winter, and they must be checked on every couple of hours.
- “It’s like milking cows, you can’t get away from ‘em”
- Dependence on the weather
Frustrations

- The people who pass decisions on the land and affect our livelihood have no idea what it’s like to work on the land.
- The spotted owl population has grown back but the mills remained closed.
- Cheap meat is imported from foreign countries, disadvantaging farmers.
- So many urbanites are vegetarians.
- Many people in Lakeview don’t have a clue about what ranching entails.
The Consumption (or not) of Local Meat

- Most Lakeview people don’t eat Lakeview cattle
- People have developed taste for feedlot beef
- USDA butchering restrictions
- But, donations to local food bank
- Country Natural Beef
Cow Calf Operations

- Mature cows + small number of bulls
- Take the herd to good pastures and have enough hay to feed them through the winter
- Sell calves (increasing popularity of video auctions)
- Your entire year’s earning is based on a day’s worth of sales
- “We’re gamblers”
A risky business

- “Farming and ranching is an up and down business. I call it the business of managing debt… It is a risky business. When the market is down, they struggle. And anything that increases the cost of production makes them struggle. Fuel cost is one right now. Environmental constraints is another one.”

- “If you’re wanting to buy cows, they’re too high, but if you want to sell ‘em, it’s too low”
Hunting and Fishing

Why?

- Protection from varmints, pests
- For sport, not subsistence
- Equipment, tags expensive
Hunting and fishing

- “Nobody thinks they’re gonna save a lot of time or money...it’s for some combination of sport and tradition.”

- Important to families and youth
Hunting and fishing

- Men told most of the stories
- Requires planning ahead for tags—sometimes years
- Hunting gives prestige
Youth Perceptions of Food System: Positives

- Hunting/Fishing: 7%
- Food Availability: 7%
- Many choices: 13%
- Homade Foods: 26%
- Beef: 31%
- Restaurants: 16%
Youth Perceptions of Food System: Negatives

- Lack variety: 11%
- Expensive: 23%
- Lack restaurants: 17%
- No Fast-Food: 9%
- Poor produce: 20%
- Restaurant hrs of operation: 20%
Youth

- Programs:
  - 4H and FFA
  - Jr Master Gardeners
  - “4H is what you do if you live out of town…”
  - School clubs
  - Ford Family
  - Summer swimming
  - Vacation Bible School
Youth

- Smaller school population has led to:
  - Sports less competitive
  - Fewer social activities like ‘Fridays’
  - Less funding options
  - Fewer playmates
  - Less summer jobs
Scholarship funds

- “college focused community” but...
  - “If you are a child who learns differently or isn’t college bound, you are filtered out really early on.”
  - Need for apprentice programs
Youth from Mexico

- Made fun of at first cause didn’t speak English
- School less challenging here
- Thought parents were less involved in student education because few parent-teacher meetings
Youth migration

- Want to stay in Lakeview and raise family
- But feel it isn’t feasible: unemployment
- Some stay for family
- Community needs to change to survive and keep youth
Youth: health consciousness

- "It’s easier to be health-conscious in Lakeview because of the lack of fast food restaurants…"
- "Mainly we’ve got Burger Queen and Subway and we’ve got a lot of like fattening foods."
Youth in sports say...

- “I play sports and stuff so I’m not out of shape.”
- “I try to stick to just one soda a day if I can.”
Youth like local restaurants

- Friendly restaurants
- You know everyone
- “You know kinda where your food is coming from.”
- “I like to support local businesses.”
- “I love the Lakeview Meat Lockers...good, fresh meat...variety.”
Youth don’t like high prices, low quality of fresh food

“If you’re willing to pay the price you can get it…but not organic.”

- “If we have specialty items here, people will still go out of town and get them cheaper…so they don’t carry them here because it doesn’t sell. So I really don’t know if it can change.”
Restaurant variety

- Youth enjoy diverse restaurants in Klamath
- “We go to Klamath for Applebee’s and to Alturas for the Black Bear.”

- Wishes for Lakeview:
- Italian restaurant, fast food
- But…“We’re a meat and potatoes town!”
People find variety in home cooking

- “We tend to be fairly healthy...we’re trying to hit those basic food groups.”
- We try to “vary it out” at home
School Food: 5 school cooks

- Increase in use of commodity foods
- Increased number of free and reduced price lunches (63%)
- Schools have more recently been serving breakfast as well as a mid-morning nutritional snack at the high school

- Much purchased through various vendors (Safeway, K & K)
- Cooks can shop at Costco and get reimbursed.
- Rarely do cooks shop in Lakeview because they cannot get discounts
“It is really necessary for the kids to have a hot lunch at noon and to have a good breakfast, because we feel that that enhances their educational opportunity.”

“Kids are required to have 3 of the 5 food groups on their trays when they get their meals, but as soon as they walk out the door, they can throw that in the garbage.”
Contradictions

- The kids are used to just meat and potatoes at home
- They reject vegetables or seafood at school
- Cooks stop serving ‘exotic’ food
- Soft drink vending machines removed
- Walk off campus and buy soft drinks.
- School lost vending machine income
Faster Food at School

- Trend to get rid of kitchen help to avoid labor costs (disposable paper trays)
- Leaning toward fast-food style meals for “convenience” and “efficiency” (even frozen peanut butter and jelly sandwiches)
- Hamburgers are the favorite. They come pre-cooked as a commodity
School cooks: A changing job

- Cooks now worry less about cooking and more about paperwork
- Emphasis on nutrition, rather than creativity
- “It didn’t use to be so structured...I used to be able to bring in vegetables and other goodies from my garden to cook for the kids”
However: worry of food contamination from outside

- “Because of the spinach scare, everything has to be bought locally and prepared by hand”
School food: Cultural Diversity

- Hispanic families usually eat their big meal in the middle of the day, so their children will often skip lunch and eat at home after school.
- “...they always have the same thing—hot dogs and hamburgers. What kind of lunch is that?...And they might hate me, but I don’t care. I say it’s for your future because the more healthy you feel in your childhood, the more healthy you will be when you’re older.”
Healthcare in Lakeview

- “There is a wonderful healthcare system here”
- “The doctors are good and I get good treatment”
- But, lack of local health specialists
- Lack of health services for low income
- VA Vets go to Medford for care
Healthcare and Food

Adult Foster Home
- “We don’t get a whole lot of local other than what we grow out of our garden. We grow a garden every year”

Hospital
- Garden in courtyard (tomatoes, squash)
- Patients water/pick vegetables from garden
Where does the food come from for the hospital?

- Trucks come from Klamath Falls, Bend and Alturas every week
- “Last year we had one of the fellows on our board of directors who had a huge garden and he brought us lots of fresh zucchini, fresh tomatoes, etc. He kept us in that till late Fall and of course we served them every day to the patients.”
- “Not so much local, but I would say we do seasonal”
Special considerations at the hospital

- Food to gain weight and lose weight
- Menus with calorie counts from a book
- Patients enjoy looking at the hospital courtyard garden; not just source of food, but aesthetics
Prison Garden

- Warner Creek Correctional Facility

- “They get fresh produce and they just love it. So really, you have just a general boost in morale. They are like ‘hey, we have fresh vegetables and fruit.’ That is huge. That is just huge.”
Prison Garden

- “It is so therapeutic. The garden is just so therapeutic for these guys. They go up there and they want to stay up there.”

- “Inmates work so hard and everything they do reflects on all of us. What some of these guys really need is a sense of self-pride in them and to know that they have accomplished something. That is good for them. So, it is not just about food. I just like to see everyone happy.”
Prison Garden

““They are getting better produce than you can get at Safeway. They don’t get produce that is wilted, so the nutritional value is great. Just the idea that they grew it themselves is just great. They take real pride in it. They are weeding it, fertilizing it, growing it, harvesting it, and eating it.””
Food Traditions

- “This is Beef Country”
- Men grilling at BBQs
- Youth raising animals for 4H—also sheep, pig, goats
- “Oh, I had one that I would make, a ham casserole that I send with my husband when he would go hunting every winter with corn bread and raisins on the top”.
Ethnic Food Traditions

- “I like to have those things, you know, that you do traditionally every year”
- “My husband’s family is German. Once you try our homemade sauerkraut, you will never buy the stuff at the store. There is no comparison.”
- 10 years ago there were few Mexicans and absolutely nothing Mexican in the grocery stores…For example, if I wanted to make enchiladas, they couldn’t have cheese because there was no cheese. If I wanted to make chiles rellenos, there were no chiles, not one kind of chile…The only beans were in cans.
Meat Processing Entrepreneurs

- Lakeview Lockers
- Outback Butcher Shop
From Home to Marketplace

- Xmas Bazaar, Farmers’ Market, Stores
- “Selling my food makes me feel connected to the community”
- “And it didn’t take long before I developed a following and then there was a demand”
- Mail-order organic food available via local woman
Gardening and Canning

- Gardening? “Love it! Know what we put in it. Eating what we have raised.”

- Canning and preserving? “You know that it is clean and pure and as a rancher, you know, we are very strong on North American produce and foods”

- Canned bread
So what did the students learn and take away from this field school experience??
Student Comments

- “I think it was a great experience to get out in the field, while still being in Oregon, and interview, observe, and really become immersed in a rural community”

- “I really enjoyed my family and will miss them. I plan on keeping in touch”

- “I liked volunteering...It made me feel useful rather than just like an outside observer”
“Being in Lakeview did get me inspired to try and know my food more by becoming familiar with the processes and effort it takes to make my personal food traditions. I also came out of the field school with a few more recipes to try and a few more people to thank for getting food that I love on my plate”
Thank you Lakeview 😊