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Olivia Katz

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Making Local Food Viable in Atlanta: From Farms to Restaurants

by

Olivia Katz

Jonathan Crane
Adviser

American Studies

Jonathan Crane
Adviser

Craig Hadley
Committee Member

Peter Wakefield
Committee Member

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Abstract

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Building on interviews with nine chefs in Atlanta and research on food systems, this work explores if, why, and how chefs in Atlanta source local and sustainable food for their restaurants. This study investigates the obstacles chefs face in procuring local and sustainable, and techniques they have adopted to combat these difficulties.

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Table of Contents

<i>Introduction</i>	1
<i>Chapter I: Background on Chefs + Sourcing</i>	3
Section A: Literature Review.....	7
I. Local Food Systems.....	7
II. Chefs and Sourcing Local Food.....	9
a. Structural barriers	11
b. Relationships.....	13
c. Motivations for Sourcing Local Food.....	15
i. <i>Quality</i>	15
d. Access	16
e. Restaurants as opinion leaders	17
f. Network associations.....	18
Section B: Atlanta.....	19
Section C: Hypothesis	22
<i>Chapter II: Methodology</i>	24
Section A: Sample Population.....	24
Section B: Recruitment and Data Collection	24
Section C: Development of Interview Questions.....	26
Section D: Analysis of Interviews.....	27
<i>Chapter III: Results</i>	28
Section A: Codes for themes	28
Section B: Qualitative Findings.....	28
I. Do Chefs Source Local and Sustainable Food? Why or why not?	28
a. Experience & Training	28
b. Balance Values.....	31
i. <i>Balance Values: Local v. Sustainable</i>	33
c. Concept of the Restaurant.....	35
d. Relationships.....	36
e. Quality	37
II. Challenges in procuring local and/or sustainable food	39
a. Economic Costs.....	39
b. Consumer Expectations	41
c. Time.....	42
d. Transparency.....	43
e. Access	45
III. Navigating the Challenges.....	47
a. Creativity	47
i. <i>Minimizing Waste</i>	47
b. Availability	49
c. Network of Relationships	50
i. <i>Chef-Chef</i>	52
ii. <i>Chef-Farmer</i>	53
d. Local Distribution Companies	54

Section C: Limitations	55
<i>Chapter IV: Discussion</i>	57
Section A: Structural Barriers	58
a. Economic Costs	59
b. Time.....	59
c. Distribution Logistics.....	60
Section B: Motivations	61
a. Past Training	62
b. Creativity	63
Section C: Relationships	63
a. Chef-Chef.....	63
b. Chef-Farmer.....	64
c. Chefs-Customers.....	66
<i>Chapter V: Conclusion</i>	68
<i>Appendix</i>	72
<i>Section A: Participants Interviewed</i>	72
Section B: Interview Questions	73
Section C: Interview Details.....	75
Section D: Code Definitions	76
<i>References</i>	77

Introduction

Food systems are highly complex and intertwined; they affect every individual on the planet. Not only is food a basic human need, it has environmental, social, and economic consequences. Environmental effects of food systems include but are not limited to animal and plant health, biodiversity, carbon emissions, and soil health. Cultural traditions, workers' rights, animal welfare, and physical and emotional health are all associated with the social impacts food systems can have. Economically, food systems influence jobs, taxes, and trade. These three dimensions overlap and influence one another. As a result, food systems are multifaceted and should be studied holistically.

Although food systems are multidimensional, they are commonly examined from a single perspective. The limitation to this type of analysis is that it fails to consider important outcomes that can be generated across linkages. For example, as the food industry became commercialized, people were largely unaware and ignorant of the negative consequences a conventional food system would produce for the environment, communities, and small businesses; society was primarily concerned with the positive outcomes it was generating.

From an inclusive perspective, in this paper, I investigate the growing movement towards reestablishing regional food structures. I begin by reviewing the elements that characterize a local food system and why regional food structures can be valuable for communities. Next, I consider the position that chefs play in local food systems, and examine how and why chefs source local food. Then I focus on chefs in the Atlanta Metropolitan area; specifically, their experience with sourcing local and sustainable food. In conducting my research, I analyze and discuss the results from nine interviews with chefs in Atlanta. This analysis reflects both the motivations and challenges chefs face in sourcing local, sustainable food. I then evaluate

techniques chefs have used to circumnavigate these obstacles. Finally, I connect my findings with the existing academic literature on food systems and make recommendations for how Atlanta can potentially broaden its local food system.

Chapter I: Background on Chefs + Sourcing

The food system is constantly evolving. In the past three centuries there was a cultural shift from traditional agriculture towards industrial agriculture. Traditional agriculture primarily consists of small, medium sized family farms, while the latter is characterized by mechanization and efficiency. This agricultural transition led to a disconnection between individuals and their food; this is a foreseeable and perhaps unintended product of the multiple players in the food supply chain— the producer, the supplier, the processor, and the retailer/consumer. In a traditional food system, individuals commonly knew where their food came from, who grew it, how it was grown, and how it got to them. Now, we live in a globalized society where individuals are largely unaware of where their food comes from, how it was produced, by whom it was produced, and how it got to them. As Thomas Lyson, an influential rural sociologist explains, “The linkages between local production and local consumption have been broken for virtually all commodities.”¹ This separation is a result of people being removed emotionally and physically from their producers. The average individual buys their food from a grocery or corner store. Food travels long distances before reaching the markets and people do not know the farmers who produced their food.

As Lyson notes, in reaction to the conventional food system, there has been a movement toward civic agriculture. Individuals are becoming increasingly aware of the costs that have resulted from an industrial food system. In response, individuals are putting more thought into their food choices and demanding alternative food choices; this has led to a rising interest in supporting and restoring local, sustainable food system.

¹ Thomas A. Lyson, *Civic Agriculture*, (Medford: Tufts University Press, 2012), 30.

Throughout the countless transformations in food systems, cooks have never ceased to exist. Although their role and status has altered, cooks have been a part of society for hundreds of years. Cooks are universal, and exist throughout all parts of the world; they express their culture and history through their cooking. Chefs, a professional cook, typically the chief cook in a restaurant or hotel, came into existence later in history.² In 1754, French Chef Antonie Beauvilliers, was born; Beauvilliers is credited with having the first real restaurant.³

In recent years, the restaurant scene has expanded and many chefs have gained a celebrity status. For instance, there are a growing number of television shows, documentaries, books, magazines, podcasts, and blogs dedicated to chefs. Chefs' influence in society is intensifying and consequently, chefs have the potential to be powerful agents of change. Anne McBride, author and professor at New York University, discusses how chefs are currently regarded as experts. A group of renown chefs, such as Dan Barber and René Redzepi, have become interested in topics beyond cooking. They have become opinionated and educated on matters related to sustainability and politics. McBride states, "A culinary education is not just about cooking anymore."⁴ Because they are considered experts in the hospitality industry, individuals often trust chefs.⁵ Chefs have a diverse set of outlets at their disposal to help spread awareness and educate others about supporting local, sustainable food systems. Some channels chefs can use to educate individuals are social media, their restaurant, social events and gatherings, documentaries, and books.

Restaurants are a place where community members come together. Moreover, they are an operation that can support a variety of local businesses. Chefs build relationships with both

² *Oxford English Dictionary*, s.v. "chef".

³ "History of Cooking," All That Cooking.

⁴ Olivia Terenzio, "How the Role Chefs Is Changing, Evolving & Expanding," *Open Table*.

⁵ *Ibid*.

farmers and customers, and as a result, they serve as an intermediary. Restaurants are not just a place people go to, to eat, but also a place where people come together, have conversations, enjoy their time, and express their values. Farmers and chefs can establish relationships which are mutually beneficial– they invest in each other’s businesses. Moreover, by working together they can introduce consumers to quality, seasonal produce that they may not otherwise access. In addition, chefs purchase more produce than the average consumer and they can introduce unique produce to diners to help rebuild connections between people and food.

Currently there exists scholarly information about the conventional food system, including how and why it began, and the harms and benefits that have transpired as a result of the system. In reaction to the industrial food system, literature has been published on local food systems and the Slow Food Movement. But the influence and role chefs play in local, sustainable food systems, as well as their experiences with accessing and sourcing local, sustainable food have received limited scholarly attention. Because of the wide network chefs have access to, their purchasing power, and their expanding influence in society, it is reasonable to conclude that chefs and restaurants can play an important function in reestablishing local food structures.

This project looks at if, how, and why chefs in Atlanta source local food for their restaurants. Three central questions I address are: 1) Do chefs source local, sustainable food? Why or why not? 2) What are the biggest challenges chefs face in sourcing local sustainable food? And 3) Which practices most efficiently allocate/distribute food from farms to restaurants? No previous research has completed an in-depth qualitative analysis of chef’s experiences in sourcing local and sustainable food in Atlanta. It takes ingenuity to access a population of chefs; they work long hours, they are not always easy to get in contact with, and they are not always

willing to participate in an interview. The wide network of connections that Emory University has with individuals in the Atlanta community assisted in establishing these introductions.

By talking to chefs, I hope ultimately to determine how to better link farmers and restaurants to increase the amount of local, sustainable food available in Atlanta. Doing this research is important because it could help improve food democracy and make Atlanta more food independent. When there is food justice, communities exercise their right to grow, sell, and eat healthy food. Individuals have self autonomy over their food choices. This food is fresh, nutritious, affordable, culturally appropriate, and grown locally with care for the well-being of the land, workers and animals.⁶ This research aims to help not only the businesses of farmers and restaurants, but also the economy of the community. Communities will benefit socially by creating systems of mutual support and cooperation. For instance, individuals can form relationships with their farmers/purveyors and ask them questions regarding labor and production methods. People can get to know each other and build connections by participating in community supported agriculture (CSA), farmers markets, and community gardens. In theory, each person within a community can play a role in making sure its local, sustainable food system thrives; it is a collective effort. In addition, greater food democracy will enable individuals to eat healthier, more sustainable foods that are not processed and transported long distances. Lastly, moving away from conventional agriculture towards more sustainable agricultural practices can help improve our ecological landscape, which is crucial for the survival of our planet.⁷

⁶ “Justice from the Ground Up,” Just Food.

⁷ Erin Tegtmeier and Michael D. Duffy, “External Costs of Agricultural Production in the United States,” in *The Earthscan Reader in Sustainable Agriculture*, ed. (London: Earthscan, 2005).

Section A: Literature Review

I. Local Food Systems

In order to critically understand the procedures chefs go through to procure food, it is important to consider the United States food system at large. The food system is influenced in a variety of ways, including governmental policy and regulation, international development and globalization, economics, trade, communication and coordination, culture, and the environment. Because of its complexities and many influences, food systems can be difficult to comprehend in entirety. Food systems are not constant, they continue to evolve as society, politics, economies, and the environment change.

There is a variety of existing academic research which discusses local food systems and the impact they have across the supply chain, from production, to distribution, to consumption. Thomas Lyson, a researcher on community-based food systems, calls the relocalization of agriculture and food production, civic agriculture. Moreover, Lyson considers how local food systems are connected to the social and economic development of a community.⁸ The organization of a local food system differs from a conventional food system, in that it focuses on the sustainable wellbeing and development of a community. The scale of production, distribution, and consumption is smaller in a local food system and there is a shorter supply chain. The people in this system think of new ways to produce, process, and distribute foods to people within a community. Producers, distributors, and consumers are viewed as part of a circular network; they all influence one another. “Civic agriculture embodies a commitment to developing and strengthening an economically, environmentally, and socially sustainable system

⁸ Ibid., 1.

of agriculture and food production that relies on local resources and serves local markets and consumers.”⁹

An important aspect of civic agriculture is sustainable agriculture. Sustainability can have different meanings depending on the circumstance and person you ask. In this paper, sustainable agriculture means a holistic outlook on farming that reflects not just the interrelationships of social, economic, and environmental processes, but generates positive or neutral outcomes across these activities.¹⁰ The environmental quality improves from sustainable agriculture; this include features, such as soil regeneration, biodiversity, and limited-to-no use of chemicals. Socially, there is a focus on cooperation and community identity. And, economically, there is an emphasis to promote food production activities within a community to produce jobs and encourage entrepreneurship.

In a local food system, the supply chain is shortened; the players in this grid are more connected. Civic agriculture involves thinking of new ways of connecting producers and consumers. “Smaller-scale, locally oriented production and distribution systems require a broad set of infrastructural institutions and services to coordinate relationships among economic actors”.¹¹ Local food systems are helping rebuild links between farmers and consumers. There are varying levels of connection in this system and ways of participating. Civic agriculture enterprises are visible in many forms on the local landscape.¹² CSA, farmers markets, specialized agriculture districts, alternative food stores, and consumer cooperatives are all examples of types of civic agriculture. In CSA individuals invest in a farmer. In return for their investment, individuals receive a box every week or so with fresh produce. There are different ways of

⁹ Ibid., 63.

¹⁰ Ibid., 79.

¹¹ Ibid., 69.

¹² Ibid., 85.

participating in CSA. Sometimes an individual picks up a box directly from the farmer and other times there is a set location that a person picks up their box. Furthermore, at farmers markets people can directly get to know and form personal relationships with their producers and farmers. Farmers markets offer a space for specialty producers and smaller farmers to reach consumers. These types of linkages are not possible at your average grocery store.

Individuals participating in local food systems are thinking of both old and new ways to build and reinforce the types of frameworks among community stakeholders. Chefs and restaurants can be a valuable source in fortifying these relationships. Chefs can aid in shortening the supply chain in local food systems by establishing partnerships with local farmers and purveyors, and then serving this food to guests.

Limited academic research exists regarding the factors which motivate restaurants and chefs to purchase local food and their reasoning behind why they decide to follow certain buying practices. In the literary review section, I will evaluate two studies which investigate restaurants, chefs, and the purchasing of local food. The two studies are “Restaurant’s decision to purchase local foods: Influence of value chain activities” by Amit Sharma, Joonho Moon, and Catherine Strohbehn, and “Restaurants, chefs and local foods: insights drawn from application of a diffusion of innovation framework” by S.M. Inwood, J.S. Sharp, and R.H. Moore. While each study follows a distinct set of methods, a variety of concepts coincide, including network associations, structural barriers, relationships with both customers and farmers, and the quality of food.

II. Chefs and Sourcing Local Food

In the study “Restaurant’s decision to purchase local foods: Influence of value chain activities” Amit Sharma, Joonho Moon, and Catherine Strohbehn examine how restaurant

managements' motivations influence whether or not they purchase local foods from a value chain framework perspective. A value chain analysis considers how a firm can gain competitive advantage by generating additional value to their product by either lowering its cost or differentiating it from its competitors. Moreover, a value chain consists of all the categories of activities performed, including all stages of the supply chain, from production to consumption. Consequently, a value chain is an interdependent system of connected linkages. Each activity within a chain must be coordinated and managed efficiently.¹³ Elsewhere, Sharma found that processing time and uniqueness of the product were the biggest determinants for purchasing food locally.¹⁴

In the article "Restaurants, chefs and local foods: insights drawn from application of a diffusion of innovation framework" S.M. Inwood, J.S. Sharp, and R.H. Moore assess the characteristics of chefs who purchase local foods. This includes understanding their values and motivations for buying local food, their role as leaders in both the restaurant and the community, and barriers they face in acquiring local foods for their restaurant. The researchers found that:

1. Chefs cared about taste and freshness more than production standards;
2. Chefs used signage and wait staff to promote local food;
3. There is limited diffusion between restaurants and producers as result of limited network associations;
4. Structural barriers were prohibiting greater adoption of local foods. ¹⁵

¹³ M. Porter, *Competitive Advantage: Creating and Sustaining Superior Performance*, (Free Press, New York, 1985).

¹⁴ Amit Sharma, et al., *Restaurant's decision to purchase local foods: Influence of value chain activities*, (International Journal of Hospitality Management, 2014).

¹⁵ S.M. Inwood, et al., *Restaurants, chefs and local foods: insights drawn from application of a diffusion of innovation framework*, (Agric Hum Values, 2009).

In this section, I discuss the main findings of these two studies and them with information on conventional food systems. Six main themes will be reviewed.

a. Structural barriers

Many of the barriers chefs face in sourcing local food is a consequence of the conventional food industry. While food systems have evolved since the beginning of life, from the 1850s, when the agricultural revolution occurred, until now, food systems have undergone unprecedented transformations in growing practices, farm management styles, methods of production, and distribution channels. During the rise of the industrial food system, the goal was to standardize the production process of food.¹⁶ Prior to this uniformity, agriculture was largely operated by small-scale, family farms and varied from one another.

Conventional agriculture is a result of advanced technology and mass production techniques. The mechanization of agriculture allowed for more efficient production techniques, lower food costs, and the need for less labor. The goal was to maximize yield and profitability. This allowed the food industry to produce more food, for a larger population. Simultaneously, the mechanization of food came at a cost. Agricultural production focused on such economic issues as efficiency, effectiveness and homogeneity at the expense of other factors, such as social relationships in a community and a home, farmer livelihoods, environmental consequences, and animal welfare, livelihoods, environmental consequences, and animal welfare.¹⁷

Simultaneous to the expansion of mechanization, was the use of chemicals, and consolidation—an increase in the size of farms and a decrease in the number of farms. A limited number of large multinational corporations control agricultural production. In 1910, there were approximately 6.4 million farms in the United States and in 2012, there were less than 2 million

¹⁶ Peggy F. Barlett. *Economic Anthropology*, (Stanford U. Press, 1989).

¹⁷ Lyson. *Civic Agriculture*.

farms.¹⁸ Concurrent with this consolidation was specialization and concentration. Modern transportation systems led people to have access to foods year-round. Furthermore, the modern food system led to an increase in distancing and food miles. In a conventional food system, there is a separation between the players of the supply chain; there is a detachment between the production and consumption of food. Moreover, there is a lost knowledge in a food's origins. Food miles calculates the distance a fruit and vegetables travel from the moment it was grown to where a consumer buys it.¹⁹

Large distribution companies, such as Sysco and US Foods have made it a cheap, quick, and easy process for chefs to get produce. Chefs can purchase all their food from one large distributor, at a lower cost. This means that chefs do not need to spend time making out orders to multiple parties; after placing the order, a food order is delivered directly to them. This relatively easy process may sound appealing to chefs. It can take up a lot of time to purchase products from numerous farms and distributors.

Sharma found that “the primary reason for the fragmented acceptance for local food in hospitality was the convenience of out-of-state food deliveries, non-local foods and lack of awareness of the availability of local ingredients and sources”.²⁰ Moreover, there were barriers in payment procedure conflicts, reliable suppliers, year-round product availability, lack of knowledge about local sources, inconvenient ordering, limited availability and amounts, inadequate distribution systems, and additional time to process foods in the operation.²¹

Ordering procedures and processing times differ from both national suppliers and local farmers. Many chefs have become accustomed to the supply chain and infrastructure which

¹⁸ Ibid., 31.

¹⁹ Shannon Shea, “Explore with a Localvore,” *New York State Conservationist* 62, no. 6 (June 2008): 2-6.

²⁰ Sharma, *Restaurant's decision to purchase local foods: Influence of value chain activities*, 131.

²¹ Ibid., 131.

exists within a conventional food system. Consequently, a conventional food system has led many chefs and restaurants to have expectations about sourcing food and they may struggle to adapt to a new set of ordering practices and behaviors. In a conventional food system chefs are used to placing orders online from one or two distributors. Additionally, they have year-round access to foods that they will not have from a local farmer.

A chef may want local food for their restaurant but be unaware of how they can source this food. Moreover, there may not be the infrastructure and distribution channels in place for a chef to connect with local farmers and place orders from them in an efficient manner. If the proper infrastructure does not exist, chefs will not be at a competitive advantage, and therefore, decide not to purchase local food.

b. Relationships

Relationship management matters, too. “The preference among restaurants for sourcing their local foods was to have a relationship with one or a small number of reliable local distributors versus multiple farmers or a non-local, large-scale distributor.”²² Not all chef want to spend hours placing orders from a variety of farmers. Chefs and restaurants prefer to work with a middleman who can deliver them food more efficiently and consistently.²³ This suggests, that there is a need for new distribution channels; local/regional distributors can work with both local farmers and chefs, to make the ordering and purchasing of local foods more time efficient. Building relationships and trust among these local players can help create a value chain, where all activities be coordinated and managed properly.

²² Inwood, *Restaurants, chefs and local foods: insights drawn from application of a diffusion of innovation framework*.

²³ Ibid.

The type of relationships a chef has with his or her farmers, distributors, and customers helps determine the success of his or her business. Trust and communication are the key to healthy relationships. In an industrial food system there is a lack of trust because of the limited transparency. The absence of transparency is the result of the asymmetry in information shared between the players of the supply chain, from production, distribution and aggregation, processing, marketing, purchasing, and preparation until consumption. In a conventional food system, chefs become separated from the steps in the supply chain and they cannot always be certain of production standards. The general finding in Sharma's study "was that farmer relationships with hospitality businesses are weak. Lack of communication and interaction between farmers and businesses appeared to be a critical reason for these weak relationships."²⁴ Additionally, there is misuse of language and false claims made by players in the food industry. This is because there is a lack of regulation and policy regarding terms food corporations can use; this creates confusion and ambiguity for chefs and consumers. For instance, a farmer may state that their beef is grass-fed, but this claim can mean that the animal was fed grass for only part of its life cycle. Moreover, a poultry farmer may state that their chicken is cage-free, but this classification does not take into consideration the amount of time a chicken spends outdoors or how much space it has to move. As one can see, because of the range of terms and the limited amount of regulation in the food industry, it is not a simple task to learn, understand, and trust food labels. Consumers are unaware whether they can trust the statements made regarding production practices.

When chefs work with local farmers they can build relationships with them and ask them questions regarding growing practices, animal welfare, and labor; they can even visit the farm if

²⁴ Sharma, *Restaurant's decision to purchase local foods: Influence of value chain activities*, 132.

they desire. Chefs foster strong relationships with local producers and suppliers to access local ingredients.²⁵ These close connections help build greater transparency and trust in the food they are purchasing. When chefs source locally, they can be more confident that a farmer is following a certain set of production standards and confide in the quality of the product they are purchasing. Moreover, a chef knows that he or she is supporting local businesses and giving back to the community. In short, chefs have diverse reasons or motivations for choosing to source local foods for their restaurants.

c. Motivations for Sourcing Local Food

i. Quality

A chef must determine the set of values he or she wants to prioritize when determining from whom and where they are going to source food. “Chefs were cognizant that quality was contingent on season, climatic conditions and individual growing styles. But among those preferring local foods, there was a perception that food ‘tastes better when it’s hand crafted.’”²⁶ The benefits of local food often include better quality, freshness, and taste.²⁷ As a result, it seems that the biggest reason chefs choose to source food locally, is that they are expecting better tasting produce.

A chef may prefer to work with a farm out-of-state whom they have a relationship with and trust the quality of their product, versus a local one that is not of the value they are seeking. For instance, local and sustainable are two features of a food that may overlap, but not always. A farm may be local, but follow unsustainable, conventional practices. Worse, a local farm can be

²⁵ J Murphy., Smith, S., *Chefs and suppliers: an exploratory look at supply chain issues in an upscale restaurant alliance*, (International Journal of Hospitality Management, 2009).

²⁶ Inwood, *Restaurants, chefs and local foods: insights drawn from application of a diffusion of innovation framework*.

²⁷ A Casselman, *Local Food Movements in the Iowa Catering Industry*, (Iowa: Iowa State University, 2010).

harming the environment, its workers, its community, and its animals. A chef may not come across a local farmer that adheres to set of practices that they desire for their restaurant.

Additionally, the very notion of “sustainable” is not uniform. The production practices a chef considers sustainable varies from person-to-person. A chef must determine his or her own definition of what he or she considers sustainable and then make the decision of who they want to work with. It is important to consider the modes a farmer uses to raise his or her poultry, what chemicals he or she uses to grow fruits and vegetables, whether the produce is organic, and more.

It is important to understand that a chef can support a small, medium-sized scale farm from a region that is not his or her own and it can still be beneficial. By working with and buying from a sustainable farmer in another state, chefs can assist in the growth of other local, sustainable food systems. Farmers and individuals from different communities can build relationships and work cooperatively to simultaneously improve their local food systems. We are fortunate to be living in a time were individuals can easily communicate and share knowledge with each other via technology. Technology can assist communities in expanding and improving their food systems by learning from others and building networks of trust. Through technology, chefs have been able to have greater access to information about food systems. Access and availability to farmers is an important aspect to consider in whether a chef chooses to procure food locally.

d. Access

A chef may want to source food locally for their restaurant, but have limited access and availability to farms. Some areas may not have farms that a chef can purchase ingredients from or offer the volume of product a chef needs to buy for their restaurant. It can be difficult for

small to medium sized farms to compete with large scale farms. It is expensive to meet safety standards and qualify for certifications that the government has set in place. For instance, a farm may use organic, sustainable practices, but not have the capital to request a organic certification. Because of the economic costs, farmers may not want to engage in sustainable farming and as a result, an area may only have a limited number of, say, organic farms.

In addition to economic costs, it is also important to consider the local context and location of a restaurant. It may not be feasible for a chef to source all food products locally. Each area can grow a diverse set of crops because of environmental factors, including terrain and weather. For example, specific grain varieties cannot grow as well in Georgia as they can in other states in the Southeast region. Moreover, rapid changes in climate are drastically affecting the livelihood and production of farmers; severe weather conditions can wipe out a farmer's entire crop yield. Weather ranges throughout regions and seasons, influence the amount of available fresh food a chef can acquire; in regions with severe winters, there may be a limited supply of obtainable ingredients. Chefs who do not have access to local food producers, may choose to work with large distributors. The conventional food system has made foods available to the average consumer year-round; this is not the case when people eat seasonally.

e. Restaurants as opinion leaders

In "Restaurants, chefs and local foods: insights drawn from application of a diffusion of innovation framework" Inwood, Moore, and Sharp evaluate how restaurants engage with their customers about serving local food. The researchers hypothesized that restaurants that source local food would convey this information to their customers through signage and waitstaff. Instead, the study found that some chefs were hesitant about including information regarding local foods on signage. Chefs expressed that they "don't want to overload the customer with too

much info or be pushy.”²⁸ Moreover, customers may not be interested in knowing where their food comes from; they are more concerned with how their dish tastes. Restaurants prioritized using waitstaff rather than menus to inform consumers about buying practices. Restaurant management can educate staff, who can then communicate information onto customers.

f. Network associations

Sharma and Inwood address the role that network associations have on chefs and their purchasing habits. Network associations can assist in the diffusion of innovation.²⁹ This diffusion of innovation refers to the flow of information and resources. Through formal organizations, chefs, restaurants, and farmers can establish relationships, foster conversations, and create future opportunities to increase the flow of local foods. “Perceived tangible and intangible benefits have prevailed in certain situations, notably when an onsite champion or strong organizational support are present. Farm to School programs are one example of initiatives in which the infusion of curricula into local sourcing activities such as school gardens or class field trips has resulted in “win–win” situations.”³⁰

Inwood found that chefs preferred to meet a farmer through a local organization rather than joining a statewide membership organization. He goes on to suggest that there is opportunity in cultivating local rather than state-wide organizations.³¹ Smaller organizations can focus on the context and needs of the local community. Each place has its own set of conditions and a local food system should be tailored to best-fit that environment.

²⁸ Inwood, *Restaurants, chefs and local foods: insights drawn from application of a diffusion of innovation framework*.

²⁹ T.W. Valente and R.L. Davis, *Accelerating the diffusion of innovations using opinion leaders*, (The Annals of the American Academic, 1999).

³⁰ *Farm to School Team 2010 Summary Report*, (U.S. Department of Agriculture).

³¹ Inwood, *Restaurants, chefs and local foods: insights drawn from application of a diffusion of innovation framework*.

Section B: Atlanta

In the past 20 years the Atlanta local food scene has expanded. More restaurants started opening throughout the city, and there was an increased support and push for the farm-to-table movement. The push for farm-to-table was synonymous with the development of local and nationwide organizations and programs in Atlanta. A participant in one of my interviews, expressed that in the 2000s very few restaurants sourced locally. In 2010, the local food movement started to progress as local and national organizations started hosting conferences, planning events, and partnering with chefs in Atlanta to bring together the local community and reconnect people to their food. Organizations founded include Chefs Collaborative, The Slow Food Movement, and Georgia Organics.

In 1989, the Slow Food organization was founded to prevent the loss of local food cultures and traditions. “Slow Food has developed into a global movement that involves millions of people in over 160 countries. The organization works to ensure that everyone has access to promote good, clean, and fair food.”³² Slow Food has local chapters throughout the United States, including Atlanta. The Slow Food Atlanta chapter was founded in 2000. The chapter hosts events where individuals come together and rebuild their connections to food. For instance, in February, Slow Food Atlanta hosted an event in collaboration with chef and food activist, Steven Satterfield, where he taught a cooking demonstration on how people can use all parts of a vegetable in their home and prevent food waste. Steven Satterfield is a prominent figure in the Atlanta community. Not only is he a James Beard award-winning chef, but also committed to Atlanta’s progressive culinary community; Satterfield is on the board of both Chef’s

³² *About us*, (Slow Food Atlanta).

Collaborative and Slow Food Atlanta, and a member of the Southern Foodways Alliance and Georgia Organics.³³

Chefs Collaborative is a nonprofit network that hopes to inspire, educate, and celebrate chefs and food professionals to build a better food system.³⁴ The local chapter hosts dinners, fundraisers, field trips, workshops, and speaking events where chefs come together and have conversations about a range of topics, such as employment and staffing, mental health, and foraging.

Georgia Organics is a nonprofit organization in Georgia that aims to increase the amount of organic, sustainable farmers, the number of kids participating in farm to school programs, and the number of Georgians eating, local organic food. Georgia Organics hosts a series of events throughout the year. Their biggest annual gathering is the Georgia Organics Conference & Expo. The conference brings together farmers, ranchers, chefs, environmentalists, educators, eaters, home gardeners, and community organizers with the goal of working together to build a better agricultural food system. The organization also hosts a series of events throughout the year. For instance, in July of 2019, in partnership with chef Ford Fry, Georgia Organics hosted the 11th annual Attack of the Killer Tomato Festival, where chefs, mixologists, and local farmers joined to create tomato-based foods.

In 2019, Georgia Organics launched Farm to Restaurant, an initiative to increase the consumption and sales from local organic farms in Georgia to restaurants in the state. The organization plans to achieve this in two main ways. Firstly, the Farm to Restaurant farmer cohort program helps small-scale organic farms plan how to enter the restaurant market. The program teaches farmers on business management, on-farm systems, crop production, post-

³³ “About us,” Miller Union.

³⁴ “About us,” Chefs Collaborative.

harvest handling, and record-keeping tools. Farmers must apply to be in the cohort. Secondly, the program works with chefs. Through a branding campaign the program gives restaurants the recognition of Farmer Champion, if at least 5% of their total food costs come from local and organic producers in Georgia. There are multiple tiers to differentiate types of certification and annual awards. Furthermore, Farm to Restaurant is planning a series of networking events to connect farm members and chefs.³⁵

Programs like the ones discussed are valuable for a variety of reasons. They educate individuals about food systems and the importance of local food structures. The organizations bring people together in a series of events, where they are actively participating in their community. Additionally, there is a focus on increasing access to healthier, more affordable food for everyone. Moreover, organizations, such as Georgia Organics are helping build connections between farmers and restaurants in the area. Additionally, programs can provide farmers with the planning, tools, and skills needed to efficiently sell and distribute their products to restaurants. Georgia Organics is assisting chefs combat some of the structural barriers they confront is buying local food from farmers for their restaurants.

In addition to the development of these organizations and programs, Georgia is unique in its geographical location. Because of its varied soil, there is availability to grow a high yield of an array of fruits and vegetables. Additionally, the weather conditions allow for a long growing season.³⁶

After investigating and understanding the food system as a whole, and the differences between conventional food systems and civic agriculture, and then considering the Atlanta food

³⁵ "Farm to Restaurant," Georgia Organics.

³⁶ "Georgia Grown Produce," Produce Business.

environment I have developed a series of hypotheses about chefs in Atlanta and procuring local, sustainable food.

Section C: Hypothesis

Based on the existing academic research, the existing food environment in Atlanta, and chef's expertise in cooking, I anticipate that chefs want to work with and source from local, sustainable farmers because of the freshness and quality of the food products they have to offer, but they face a variety of challenges in this process. These difficulties are linked with structural barriers, and the expectations and practices that have become customary in a predominantly conventional food system. The sub hypotheses I will be testing in my research are:

1. A major challenge in sourcing local, sustainable food are the economics costs.
2. Chefs face difficulty in accessing local, sustainable food. Local farmers may not have the quantity of food a chef needs to purchase or offer the quality they are seeking.
3. There are differences in the availability of sourcing specific food groups. For example, it may be easier to source sustainable vegetables than it is to source sustainable poultry or fish.
4. Chefs face difficulty in forming and maintaining strong relationships with farmers.
5. Chefs struggle with the amount of time it takes to place orders from multiple farmers.
6. Chefs question the legitimacy of claims made by farmers and distributors regarding production practices.
7. If chefs' source local, sustainable food, they want to promote this information to their customers.
8. While chefs face challenges in the processes of sourcing local, sustainable, there is an increasing amount of local, sustainable food being served in restaurants in Atlanta.

9. Chefs and consumers alike are conscious of the impact their food choices have on the environment, their health, the community, farm laborers, and animal welfare.

Chapter II: Methodology

To answer my research questions, 1) Do chefs source local, sustainable food? Why or why not? 2) What are the biggest challenges chefs face in sourcing local sustainable food? And, 3) Which practices most effectively allocate/distribute food from farms to restaurants?, and test my hypotheses I completed scholarly research on food systems and conducted qualitative interviews with chefs in Atlanta. This research gave me the background knowledge to determine whom to interview, what questions to ask, and how to analyze the responses.

Section A: Sample Population

My sample population includes nine chefs in Atlanta. There are many restaurants in Atlanta that differ across cuisine and price point. I specifically chose to only include chefs from Atlanta in my sample population for a variety of reasons. First, I needed to focus on one location to best answer my research questions. Each city's local food system varies and keeping my sample population within the same city would minimize variability. Second, since I live in Atlanta I have physical access to many restaurants and chefs in the area. Getting in contact with chefs and conducting interviews in-person would be easier in Atlanta than elsewhere. Third, within the growing local food scene in Atlanta, chefs could provide valuable insight on the procedures of procuring local food.

Section B: Recruitment and Data Collection

Data for this study was collected from doing structured qualitative interviews with nine chefs in the Atlanta Metropolitan area in an informal setting. In my study, I only interviewed chefs; I did not interview farmers, distributors, diners or other players within the supply chain. I wanted to focus my research solely on chefs and their individual experiences in a local food system. Chefs have the professional expertise on how to use foods in creative and alternative

ways that the average consumer does not have. Chefs perspectives on procuring local foods provides insight on dimensions related to local food systems.

After compiling a list of twenty-five restaurants in Atlanta, I started to contact them through email. There were various steps I took when assembling the list of restaurants I was going to contact. First, I Google searched for restaurants by neighborhood and examined each of their individual websites. I also added to the list restaurant which I had eaten. Moreover, I attempted to get a range of cuisines and price points, and chefs from diverse backgrounds. Some restaurants on the list were part of a restaurant group and others were not. In this study, a restaurant was considered as part of a restaurant group when two or more restaurants were owned or managed by the same entity. Finally, I included restaurants that promoted themselves as being “farm-to-table” and others that did not. All the factors considered when compiling my list, such as price point, neighborhood, and cuisine could potentially contribute to a chef’s decision to procure food locally or not. Exclusion criteria included restaurant chains and restaurants that did not have email contact information on their websites. The results of these searches produced twenty-five eligible restaurants.

After compiling my list of qualified restaurants, I contacted over sixteen restaurants. I got a response from nine—and these were the chefs/owners I interviewed. 78% of the interviews were completed in-person, while the other 22% were done over-the-phone. Two of them were done over-the-phone because of scheduling conflicts. All interviews were voice recorded, with permission from the interviewee. I did not contact more chefs to interview because of a constraint in time.

Once, I had my sample population I generated a list of variables to compare the participants and their responses. These variables were: gender, cuisine, neighborhood,

ownership-whether they were an owner of the restaurant or not, restaurant group- if the restaurant was part of a restaurant group or not, and “farm-to-table” marketing- whether they promoted themselves as sourcing local or not. Promotion of local includes any reference or use of language on a restaurant’s website that stated they source food locally and/or seasonally. Refer to the Appendix for a list of the participants interviewed. To protect the identity of the chefs interviewed, I will not use their name and not include the name of the restaurant they work at or own.

Section C: Development of Interview Questions

I conducted structured interviews, in an informal setting, using open-ended questions. Depending on the engagement and responses of the participant, the interviews lasted between 30-50 minutes. I entered each interview with a set of predetermined questions, but there was slight variation in the actual questions asked. I chose these questions based upon my three main research questions. I asked a question in several ways to see the multiple ways a chef would respond; I did this by creating both broad and specific questions. For instance, I began the interview with big picture questions, such as general information about their restaurant, and as the interview progressed, I asked more fixed questions, such as how they source food for their restaurant? And whom they source food from? Furthermore, I wanted to make the questions personal and understand each chef’s individual experiences and outlooks on local, sustainable food. Ultimately, I wanted to ask questions that looked at the entire process of sourcing food rather than one instance. At times I asked a question that was not on my list as a follow-up question to better understand the participant’s thoughts and experiences. The list of the guided questions used is in the Appendix.

The questions were developed to understand the philosophies of the chefs interviewed. This included reasons why or why not a chef chose to source food locally and/or sustainably. I designed the question to identify the challenges chefs face in sourcing local, sustainable food and techniques chefs use to combat these obstacles.

Section D: Analysis of Interviews

To analyze the information collected in the interviews, I first transcribed them, using an online audio transcription service called Rev. Then, I used a software called MaxQDA, to code the transcriptions. Moreover, I developed codes for themes that appeared throughout the interviews. This type of analysis was both inductive and deductive; I commenced with themes that appeared in scholarly readings and that I could recall from doing the interviews, but then added themes as I coded the interviews. Once I coded the texts for topics, I identified how the themes were linked to one another. To make these connections, I took notes while coding the texts and compared answers across codes. In analyzing the interviews, I took the interviewees responses at face value. The goal was to understand the challenges and processes that chefs go through in sourcing local and sustainable food; I wanted to understand their experiences. That being said, there may have been biases in some responses. A chef may have felt the need to give a certain response to my questions. In the next section, I present a summary of the patterns that emerge from the data collected in the interviews.

Chapter III: Results

Section A: Codes for themes

I developed three main sections to categorize my codes. The first category considers motivations for sourcing local, sustainable food. The second, involves the processes and challenges of sourcing food that is local or not local. And the third main section, focuses on ways of combating difficulties in sourcing local, sustainable food. Within these main themes, there are sub codes for different topics discussed. The code definitions can be found in the Appendix.

Section B: Qualitative Findings

I. Do Chefs Source Local and Sustainable Food? Why or why not?

A number of common themes arose in chefs' explanations for whether they chose to source food locally and/or sustainably or not and their reasoning behind such decisions. Five of these themes are discussed here.

a. Experience & Training

Throughout all of the interviews, chefs discussed their previous work experiences in the restaurant industry. Chefs who had previous experience working in a restaurant that procured food locally and/or sustainably knew the processes involved in this type of purchasing. This type of sourcing differs from the conventional ordering processes' from a large distributor, such as Sysco or US Foods. Participant I demonstrates how these ordering procedures differ.

To be frank, it's so much easier to just order through Sysco. They're a system, and I don't know how interested you are in how restaurant accounting works, and things of that nature, and cashflow. And working with the bigger companies makes life easier. If you just sit in front of the computer, you have your order guide, you just say I want five pounds lettuce, I want five pounds tomato. I don't care where they come from. I don't care if they're in season or not. I just need them for my recipe. And you just sit there and go boom, boom, five minutes your orders for the week are done. When you work with so

many farmers, you have to physically pick up the phone and make 10, 12 phone calls like three, four times a week to get all your ingredients.³⁷

When a chef orders from one large distributor, such as Sysco they only need to place one order with everything needed. Comparatively, when they work with various farmers, they must determine who they are going to order what products from, place all those orders separately, and make distinct checks for each order.

The participants who had familiarity sourcing ingredients unconventionally were familiar with the amount of time and work it takes to purchase from multiple farmers. These participants were also knowledgeable about information regarding production practices and knew what types of questions to ask farmers and purveyors. For example, they ask questions regarding what an animal was fed throughout its life, how much time it spent outdoors, and how it was killed. Other questions a chef can ask could be directed towards fish purveyors. These questions can include information about where, when, and how a fish was caught.

Chefs with experience sourcing local, sustainable food had an existing network of farmers to do business with. They did not need to build farmer-chef relationships from scratch. Forming strong relationships with farmers takes time and effort. Participant V said,

I find that really understanding a long-term partnership with somebody, which is another important thing I went through. Understanding that to get to that long-term partnership, it's going to take months to do. And that's really one of the driving factors of trying to stay with people, is even in their hard times, you need to buy from them. It may be hurting on your purse, but in the end, that relationship with that farmer or that relationship with that vendor is going to be much more... It'll come back to you ten-fold.³⁸

A farmer and chef do not establish trust in each other from one day to the next. Continual support and collaboration between the two parties build confidence and assurance.

³⁷ Participant I, interview by Olivia Katz, December 17 2019, interview 5.

³⁸ Participant V, interview by Olivia Katz, November 18 2019, interview 2.

Chefs with previous experience knew how to administer and maintain these relationships with farmers. Participant VIII expressed that, “All the farmers needs are different, our needs are different for what we use the products for, and everything.”³⁹ Chefs need to be able to work with farmers in diverse ways depending on their partnership with them. There is not one distinct technique for ordering from and working with farmers. Ways of maintaining this cooperation are by communicating regularly, respecting the farmer and their product, and making payments on time.

One participant who sources food locally explains how this relationship can be difficult. “You have to know how to work the game of sourcing through farmers because I mean it's a very, very hard job. I just want to do like I've been doing because I do feel like Canoe kind of stuck that in my brain that source really good food and be conscientious who you're buying from, where you're buying it from.”⁴⁰ Comparatively, another participant who does not source a majority of food locally said “I wasn't taught sustainability. I wasn't taught local in my first job. I was taught how to cook and how to cook the best food in the country, no matter where it came from.”⁴¹

The management and motivations of a restaurant also plays an important role in whether a chef buys local and sustainable food. For instance, some restaurants value sourcing food locally and sustainably. Consequently, the management of the restaurant follows these values. The management team educates kitchen staff on how to work in this type of environment and teaches waitstaff about the farms they work with. For instance, Participant VI expresses how he teaches his staff about the farmers and products the kitchen works with, so they then can have the tools

³⁹ Participant VIII, interview by Olivia Katz, January 23 2020, interview 6.

⁴⁰ Participant III, interview by Olivia Katz, December 11 2019, interview 4.

⁴¹ Participant IX, interview by Olivia Katz, February 2 2020, interview 9.

to relay this information to guests. He says, “For the most part we try to educate our staff on where everything comes from. So, they meet a lot of the farmers. We talk about where we're sourcing from in lineup. We talk about individual items on dishes. So, the staff is that way armed with all the information so that they can tell the guests.”⁴²

Moreover, restaurants that have been in business for a long time and have sourced locally for years have already established long-term relationships with farmers. Participant II, the corporate chef of a restaurant company, expressed: “Yeah, I mean, the cool thing is we're sort of in a position from the company that's been around Atlanta for such a long time that we've developed relationships that we can rely on.”⁴³ Additionally, a chef who starts working for a restaurant that already procures local food is fortunate enough to be in a setting where they have a pre-existing network of farms they can work with. Participant VIII articulated, “I think starting the relationship is the challenge. I'm lucky enough that, before I got here, a lot of relationships were already started, like I said, because we just followed the same mentality.”⁴⁴ The experience and training a chef has influences their purchasing practices.

b. Balance Values

There are many factors a chef must consider when determining from whom and from where they want to source food. These factors include such elements as price, quality, and volume. Price in relation to the cost of the product; quality regarding the production standards, taste, and consistency of the product; and volume in terms of the quantity of the product

⁴² Participant VI, interview by Olivia Katz, January 30 2020, interview 8.

⁴³ Participant II, interview by Olivia Katz, January 28 2020, interview 7.

⁴⁴ Participant VIII, interview by Olivia Katz, January 23 2020, interview 6.

available. Throughout the interviews, the chefs expressed that they attempt to find a balance when it comes to purchasing. Participant III said,

When I run out of chicken from Sam, you have Grateful Pastures who does promote pasture poultry. And he's almost at like I mean \$6 dollars a pound. So, it makes it impossible for a restaurant. So, I find balance. So, there's Joyce Farms out in North Carolina and they have a really good practice of how they farm their chickens and feed their chickens. It's a middle point for me. So, I go back and forth and that makes up for my costs and then there's other things on the menu that might not cost as much that you charge a little bit more for them to find that balance.⁴⁵

Here one can see how a chef needed to adjust his wants and find a compromise, in regards to the quality and price of the product he was searching for, and still earn a profit. Chefs make trade-offs in their purchasing endeavors to sustain their businesses.

Participants also said that to find this accommodation, they sometimes chose to *not* buy food locally. A chef may not find a local farmer to do business with; the farmer may not have the standard of product they are looking for, the product may be too expensive, they may not have a strong relationship with the farmer, and/or the farmer may not produce the volume of product they need to purchase. For instance, Participant III said,

Methods that are healthy for you and good for you. So, in other words, if someone's local and they're not using good farming practices, I'm not going to buy from them just because they're local. That's not going to work for us. You got to have both. And if that means I've got to go further distance to get a particular product that is being grown properly and is healthier for our guests then that's what we're going to do and that's what we're going to choose.⁴⁶

Additionally, chefs explained that they may choose to source some of their ingredients locally and/or sustainably, but not others. Participant V discussed that he prioritizes buying high quality products for ingredients he uses in large quantities versus products he does not use in bulk. He continued to explain that he buys commodity dairy products, but purchases meat from

⁴⁵ Participant III, interview by Olivia Katz, December 11 2019, interview 4.

⁴⁶ Ibid.

local, sustainable farmers that follow a certain set of practices. These commodity products are not local or sustainable. Moreover, Participant V said “There are certain farmers I need to get certain things from, and there're certain things I can't use. I have to make my law of unintended consequences. Do I get dairy from here? Is someone going to... Is it going to matter that much? Or getting meat from another place, where it's really going to matter. So you weigh those.”⁴⁷ This technique allows him to balance his costs and still be able to buy a portion of his food locally and/or sustainably.

Participant IX had a different outlook than most of the other participants and is not focused on buying local and/or sustainably. His main concerns when buying food were getting the best price for a good product, that consistently look and taste the same. He says, “We buy olive oil from Chile because I think it's delicious and I've been buying it for the last 10 years and I think it's a good price and I like the guy who sells it to me. I decided to go with certified Angus beef because it was, hands down, the best product for the best price, you know? I would go up a little bit in price and I wasn't even finding stuff that was similar. And it's consistent.”⁴⁸ Consequently, each chef has their own set of needs and values for their restaurant. The values and needs he or she chooses to weigh in importance will determine how they purchase and distribute their costs.

i. Balance Values: Local v. Sustainable

Participants continued to emphasize that local and sustainable are two separate ideas and that each chef evaluates them in their own fashion. Local and sustainable have a variety of meanings. Throughout time and space, the terms evolve and will have distinctive meanings from individual-to-individual. Local to one person may mean anything produced within the state and

⁴⁷ Participant V, interview by Olivia Katz, November 18 2019, interview 2.

⁴⁸ Participant IX, interview by Olivia Katz, February 2 2020, interview 9.

to another it may be anything produced within a 300-mile radius. Moreover, participants articulated that a food product may be local, but be unsustainable. For example, Georgia is the number one producer of poultry in the United States, and as a result there are many concentrated animal feeding operations (CAFOs). CAFO's are animal feeding operation with more than 1000 animal units (an animal unit is defined as an animal equivalent of 1000 pounds live weight.)⁴⁹ Therefore, a chef may prioritize buying from a farm out-of-state, that they trust follows sustainable practices, over buying from a local farmer they do not confide in. Participant VI expressed, "I think there's a little bit of overuse of the phrase, local and sustainable, where people talk about it without actually knowing what it means. And people always say, "Eat local because it's more sustainable, when that's not actually necessarily true. Eating beef from a local cow farmer could be incredibly less sustainable than eating beef from a cow farmer in the Midwest."⁵⁰

Participant II is the executive chef of a restaurant that specializes in seafood and serves a variety of Mediterranean fish. Although he is not sourcing fish from the region, Participant II prioritizes buying sustainable, wild-caught fish. This participant is part owner of a restaurant group that started its own wholesale seafood company. This feature allows Participant II to serve fish 18 to 36 hours out of the water. Most restaurants do not have the opportunity to serve fish this fresh. Typically, fish takes longer to arrive to because it is distributed through an outside distributor. Since fish cannot be local, participant II focuses on serving sustainably raised and caught fish. He stated, "So, that's a great example of something that I think we've done very well when it comes to sustainability. Buying seafood that is 100% sustainable, comes from... it's right there within the... right there on the seafood charts and we're following all the right rules and

⁴⁹ "Animal Feeding Operations," United States Department of Agriculture.

⁵⁰ Participant VI, interview by Olivia Katz, January 30 2020, interview 8.

making sure that we're getting it as soon as possible. Now that, something that would be not sustainable for your guests, responsibility sustainable serving them a piece of fish that's four or five days out of the water and longer and some people can't help it, but that's all they can buy in the city of Atlanta, but we don't have that problem.”⁵¹ As one can see local does not always mean sustainable. There are many characteristics a chef must consider when determining how they want to purchase food.

c. Concept of the Restaurant

The concept of a restaurant emerged as another theme related to where from and what a chef orders. Two participants that work at restaurants with specific concepts emphasized that their menu needs to follow the cuisine of the restaurant. A concept of a restaurant is the overall idea or theme that define the restaurant. Customers who eat at restaurants expect food from that cuisine to be offered. Participants expressed that to respect the concept and cuisine of their restaurant they need to include specific dishes and options on their menu; this feature sometimes constrains them from procuring food locally. For example, Participant V is the executive chef at a Basque tapas restaurant and diners expect Spanish foods to be on the menu. As a chef, s/he needs to be sure that the guest is pleased. Participant V illustrated this type of scenario, “When you talk to someone like ... or a ... (names left anonymous), they're going to say they can literally buy a lot of stuff from the farms, because certain things on their menu can be focused just around that. Whereas mine have to be integrated into a specific culture. So, I can't just be like, "I'm just going to use cheese from this farmer only, because..." an American cheese, and people are like, "Why the fuck do you have an American cheese on, where you're a Spanish or

⁵¹ Participant II, interview by Olivia Katz, January 28 2020, interview 7.

Basque restaurant?" You have to balance both."⁵² Participant V feels a sense of obligation to serve foods that are part of the traditional Basque cuisine.

In comparison, other participants discussed ways they try to not limit themselves to a particular cuisine in order to be able to source local food. Participant VI who owns a Provencal French restaurant, articulated: "Look, what we tried to do is take the cuisine of Provence as a jumping off point and look at it through the prism of what we have available here. So, for a dish like a bouillabaisse, which is traditionally made with a bunch of Mediterranean fish, we're not going to fly fish in from the Mediterranean, we're going to find fish that are here, and then make like the soul of the bouillabaisse but with local Georgia shrimp and Sapelo Island clams, and stuff like that. This outlook allows him to not feel restricted to serving certain dishes and be able to source produce more locally."⁵³ By opening and managing the restaurant with the mindset that he is going to alter the traditional Provencal French cuisine, Participant VI has been able to not limit himself to making dishes with a certain set of ingredients.

d. Relationships

All but two of the participants discussed their relationship with farmers as being a motivation for sourcing local and sustainable food. Participants mentioned the significance of there being a sense of mutual support between themselves and a farmer. They view one another as integral parts of each other's businesses and need to help sustain each other; there is a shared respect. Moreover, participants expressed that they are proud to work with farmers because of the product they are creating. Working with local farmers allows chefs to develop personal relationships with them and visit the farms. Participants acknowledged that they work with farmers because they like them as individuals, not just because of the product they are selling.

⁵² Participant V, interview by Olivia Katz, November 18 2019, interview 2.

⁵³ Participant VI, interview by Olivia Katz, January 30 2020, interview 8.

Participant III said that a reason he works with local farmers is because he knows he is putting money in people he knows and trusts. He went on to say that he wants to sustain community relationships and businesses.

Visiting farms allows chefs to see the production practices of a farmer. Participants expressed that this assists them in building a sense of trust in the farmer and the product they are purchasing. It takes time to establish a long-term relationship between a chef and farmer. There is commitment to maintain this association. Once the trust has been founded, a chef can become involved in the growing practices of the farmer; they can personalize what the farmer is growing based on what they are seeking. The importance of developing this chef-farmer relationship is demonstrated when Participant IV said, “I just like the people in it, you know what I mean. The food is not what you're after, it's the relationship with the people that grow the food.”⁵⁴ This friendly connection between a chef and farmer motivates chefs to work with farmers they can rely on and respect. Establishing relationships with farmers and purveyors enables chefs to learn about the quality of a product.

e. Quality

All chefs said quality was a main reason for choosing to work with local and/or sustainable farmers. Quality is a subjective term and varies from chef-to-chef. Quality can include aspects related to farming practices, freshness, and consistency. Participant II expressed that she wants to source from farmers and purveyors that she knows, and swears by their quality. If a farmer or purveyor is not supplying the quality of a product they he or she is looking for, the chef may choose to not work with them. To this participant, a quality product is associated with a farmer following a set of farming practices that align with her own philosophies.

⁵⁴ Participant IV, interview by Olivia Katz, November 15 2019, interview 1.

Over 75% of the chefs interviewed valued working with farmers who they believe will deliver the quality of a product they are expecting. One way they develop this reliance is by learning and researching a farmer's production practices. Participant's IV and VI said it is worth investing in a product that may be slightly more expensive, if you believe in the quality of the product and the farmer. Participant VI went on to articulate, "we try to use, and we try to really investigate our farm partners to make sure that they're using good practices, and we really trying to support the ones that are." This mentality sometimes leads restaurants to earn a lower profit. Participant VI illustrated this type of circumstance. "They (referring to a seafood supplier) only source sustainable and they're interested in it as a company. So, that's why we try to support them. Even though they might be a dollar more expensive here or there, or something like that, it's worth the investment to have a partner that aligns with you because you can trust what they're doing a bit more."⁵⁵ For participant VI, fish quality depended on the product being sustainably sourced and wild-caught. Moreover, he believes in the mission and values of the company.

Not all restaurants will prioritize spending more on a product if it means earning a lower profit. Participant IX has this mentality. He said, "On a business level I think very much like a business person because I'm running a business. And 90%, if not more, of our produce and the things that we produce for sale, to sell, or for customers is not local. It's the things that are wonderful, it's the things that are consistent, it's the things that are affordable that we can make wonderful things with. Do we buy local vegetables? Every week. You know? Because we can afford to. If we were buying everything local, we wouldn't be in business."⁵⁶ For participant IX,

⁵⁵ Participant VI, interview by Olivia Katz, January 30 2020, interview 8.

⁵⁶ Participant IX, interview by Olivia Katz, February 2 2020, interview 9.

quality has a distinct meaning than most of the other participants. Quality for participant IX is related to consistency of a product and its price.

Furthermore, participants expressed that buying food locally can help with the freshness and flavor of a product, especially when it comes to produce. This is because a product grown locally spends less time traveling and reaches a chef closest to the time it was picked. Participant II explains such a scenario: “The most important thing when it comes to local and sustainable, is focusing in on local farms, purveyors that are helping to get you product that is either grown longer on the vine or at the right age and you have to rely less on longevity of the product.”⁵⁷ The closer an ingredient is to the time it was harvested, the more flavorful and nutritious it is.⁵⁸ When chefs can access freshly picked produce they can create tasteful dishes for their guests. Though chefs want to serve their guests superior ingredients, they face a variety of obstacles in doing so.

II. Challenges in procuring local and/or sustainable food

A number of challenges were discussed by participants regarding the processes’ involved in both procuring ingredients from local farmers and serving local, sustainable food at their restaurants. Five of these themes will be discussed here.

a. Economic Costs

All chefs expressed economic costs as being the biggest challenge in sourcing food that is local and/or sustainable. The economic burden falls onto all players of the supply chain, not just the chefs who do the purchasing. Over 80% of the chefs discussed the diffusion of economic costs. Chefs expressed how it is expensive for a farmer to follow a certain set of production practices. They explained how one must consider a variety of elements that go into the price of

⁵⁷ Participant II, interview by Olivia Katz, January 28 2020, interview 7.

⁵⁸ Shannon Shea, “Explore with a Localvore,” *New York State Conservationist* 62, no. 6 (June 2008): 2-6.

certain products, such as the costs of feed, transportation, time, and labor. For instance, organic feed costs more than nonorganic feed and raising an animal over a longer period time builds more expenses for a farmer. Consequently, a farmer needs to charge a higher price for a superior product to be able to have a financially sustainable business. This increase in costs then falls onto the chef and the restaurant. Subsequently, the chef must pass this cost onto the customer. When reviewing the obstacles chefs encounter in dealing with higher costs, Participant III expressed, “So if you do the math in the food costing of it you'd almost have to sell that chicken for close to \$50 dollars. Now, the average consumer, they think you're just crazy. They're like, ‘No way. How can you justify me buying a \$40 dollar, a \$50-dollar chicken when I can go to the store and I can buy one for whatever, 99 cents?’ I don't even know how much they are in, \$2 a pound maybe.”⁵⁹ This quote illustrates the transmission of costs across the different players in a local supply chain, from farmer, to chef, to customer. A chef may not find it reasonable to buy a more expensive product if the guest is not willing to pay a premium price for it.

Another participant voiced that fine-dining restaurants face less difficulty with higher costs because customers are expecting to pay a higher price than people who go to a casual restaurant. For example, Participant I said that at her restaurant, which serves fast-casual Italian food, the hardest part of maintaining the local philosophy is cost. At her other restaurant which is fine-dining, she does not face as much of a challenge because people are expecting to pay a premium. Another chef, Participant IX explained that costs are the greatest barrier to his restaurant serving local and sustainable food. He explained that if he were to source a majority of his food locally his restaurant would not be in business. Being able to maintain and balance costs is crucial to the success of a restaurant. If the economic costs of sourcing food locally and

⁵⁹ Participant III, interview by Olivia Katz, December 11 2019, interview 4.

or/sustainably exceed a chef and restaurant's budget it may not be feasible to procure such ingredients.

b. Consumer Expectations

Customers help keep restaurants in business. Their support and business are essential to the success of a restaurant. Chefs explained that they face a variety of challenges when it comes to their relationship with guests. Price is extremely important to diners; many customers will not be satisfied if they are being charged exorbitant prices. Participant III said, "The consumer is only as interested in sustainability as their pocket will allow."⁶⁰ Not all customers are literate about the food system, including the differences between types of production and costs. Consequently, they may not be aware of the impact their food choices have on the environment, their health, and their community. For instance, CAFO's pollute the air, land, and water around them. Moreover, in these operations, there is no preoccupation for the welfare of the chicken.⁶¹ Individuals are not always concerned with the production standards of their food. Rather, participants conveyed that the average customer is predominantly searching for a dish that consistently appears the same and tastes delicious.

When chefs source seasonally they are continuously changing their menu and rotating ingredients. Participants articulated that customers can become upset with the lack of uniformity in menus. A guest who has tried a dish at a restaurant that sources food seasonally may not have the opportunity to order it again. Chefs explained that the average consumer expects to have access to ingredients year-round, and they face difficulty in dealing with diners' presumptions. Participant VIII mentioned an occasion in which this type of encounter took place. At the time of

⁶⁰ Ibid.

⁶¹ Kelley J. Donham, *Community Health and Socioeconomic Issues Surrounding Concentrated Animal Feeding Operations*, (Environmental Health Perspectives, 2007.)

the interview the burger on his menu did not include a tomato because it was not in-season. Guests got upset by this and he needed to navigate how to respond to them that he did not want to serve a tomato that was bland.

Some restaurants, such as the one participant IX owns, do not base their menu around foods that are in-season; he has a standardized menu and serves the same dishes year-round. Participant IX communicated that a reason he does not alter his menu is because of diners' expectations. When customers eat at his restaurant, they seek consistency; they want to know they can order the same dish every time they visit the restaurant and for it to be of the same quality.

c. Time

Participants voiced that chefs need to be committed to taking the time to source food locally and/or sustainably. Procuring ingredients from a variety of farmers and purveyors takes time and effort that is not required when sourcing from a large, conventional distributor. When a chef works with multiple farmers, they need to determine what they need to order, what is available to buy, and who they are going to source what from and how much they will purchase. Chefs then need to place each order separately, receive each order at a distinct time, and write out a check for each purchase made. It is much simpler for a chef to place a single order from one large distributor. Participants stated that you cannot be lazy when it comes to sourcing from multiple farmers. Participant's III and VII described the differences between ordering from a large distributor and from multiple farmers.

We have made it so easy to bring in food. So, we're kind of locked in our way. So, like for a restaurant, you pick up the phone and you order whatever you want from a big box like a FreshPoint or whatever, Royal or whoever. It is very easy. What's not easy is to

take an hour or two hours out of your day and figure out who you're going to buy this food from. Who you're going to buy this food from. (referring to farmers)⁶²

So, if you're not farm-to-table it's because, one, you're lazy and you don't feel like doing the work every week, because it's a lot. You've got to call the farmers. What do you have? What don't you have? What do you have available? What don't you have available? And that's just vegetables. When you get to meat and fish, forget it. You're on a whole different spectrum.⁶³

It takes time to research farms and purveyors to learn about their production practices.

Once a chef deems a farmer/purveyor fit, they must then contact them and establish a relationship with them. This time commitment can be a challenge for chefs who already work long, difficult hours. Consequently, a chef may not have the desire to dedicate the time to source food locally. Participant's III and VII mentioned that we live in a society where individuals are accustomed to always having access to food. Buying food has become effortless and mechanical. A person can place an order for food on a mobile application and get it delivered to them within minutes. This sense of ease in acquiring food also applies to the way some chefs want to source and receive food for their restaurants. Participants conveyed that chefs have the option to buy ingredients in a conventional way, and at times this can be more efficient and profitable for a business. While it may be more practical to purchase food within a conventional system, there is a limited flow of information.

d. Transparency

A difficulty in sourcing local and/or sustainable food for chefs is the lack of transparency in the food industry. Farmers and sales representatives can deceive chefs by manipulating their terminology and falsely advertising their product. While this is not always the case, it does occur, and chefs must be cautious. Representatives misguide consumers through packaging and

⁶² Ibid.

⁶³ Participant VII, interview by Olivia Katz, December 18 2019, interview 3.

misinforming chefs about their production practices. Participants explained that it is hard to navigate the existing information in the food industry and know what statements are true or false; this creates vagueness and misconceptions in relation to food labels. Participants mentioned that a chef needs to do his or her own research to comprehend production practices and designations. Participant VIII conveyed that he needs to do his own research to verify that fishermen are following a set of standards; he does not solely rely on a purveyor's declarations. The ambiguity in terms and declarations in the food system is evident in this statement:

I think if I could do one thing, it would be to demystify some of this stuff. So, if you care about sustainable seafood, you can look at a green list, a yellow list, and a red list without necessarily truly understanding what you're talking about, because you might see Gulf yellowfin tuna on the green list, but then you also have to find out what its catch method is and all kinds of different things to make sure that when you go to your supplier, you're saying the right things like, "How is this caught? When was it caught?", all that stuff. And then, even within those lists, why they are green listed, yellow listed and why they change, because you can buy this item for four months, and then all of a sudden it will go away.⁶⁴

The food supply chain has multiple processes to consider, including production, distribution, processing, packaging, distribution, and consumption. Each of these steps requires a variety of participants. In a conventional supply chain, there is a separation between these steps and players. Chefs conveyed that the distance between these activities creates a limited flow of information and communication, and consequently, a chef has a lack of control over what product they purchase and receive. Participant II stated that it can be hard to assure that he receives the product he is expecting because of the lack of policy within the food industry. He said, "The biggest challenge is always making sure that you are getting exactly what you are hoping for and that is products that are, especially when it comes to agriculture, products that are being grown with good practices and they're not being sprayed with chemicals and things that are

⁶⁴ Participant VII, interview by Olivia Katz, December 18 2019, interview 3.

toxic and bad for your health. I mean that's really the biggest challenge.”⁶⁵ Verifying that a farmer is following a certain set of practices can be difficult.

e. Access

Chefs illustrated the types of differences that exist when sourcing diverse food groups. For instance, some food categories are less available to access locally than others. In this section, availability of food groups is related to its quality, price, and quantity. All participants voiced that produce is the easiest type of food to access locally. Reasons for this include that Georgia has a long growing season and there are many available vegetable farmers to work with. In addition, sourcing fruits and vegetables is relatively cheaper than other foods, such as meat and fish. Participant VI articulated that in addition to there being more farmers now than there were 15 years ago, they also do deliveries multiple days a week. This creates additional opportunities for chefs to be able to access fresh produce on a consistent basis.

Sourcing seafood, meat, and grains locally and sustainably presented the most difficulty for the interview participants. Participant's I, III, and VI mentioned that while there are an abundance of poultry farms in Georgia, there are only a few that follow the set of practices they request, that sell a product at a reasonable price, and that produce the quantity of chicken they need to purchase. Participant III, expressed that he wants to serve pasture poultry, but he faces difficulty in finding a farmer in Georgia who follows this criterion.

An important component associated with accessibility is the quantity of a product that is available to purchase. Participant V is the chef at a restaurant that serves a high volume of guests and moves a lot of product. Consequently, he needs to work with farmers who can regularly allocate a large volume of product. Participants went on to articulate that it can be difficult to

⁶⁵ Participant II, interview by Olivia Katz, January 28 2020, interview 7.

find a farmer who meets all their demands. For example, participant V found a Georgian cattle-farmer he wanted to work with, but the farmer could not supply the amount of cattle participant V needed, and as a result he could not purchase the farmer's product. Consequently, a smaller restaurant who serves a reduced percentage of guests may find it easier to work with local farmers.

Seafood is another food group chefs encountered obstacles with when sourcing food locally and sustainably. Because of the limited traceability in the fish industry, participants expressed that it is difficult to find a distributor they can trust. Chefs often cannot validate the information fishermen and purveyors convey to them. Participant VII expressed "It's a little harder with fish, because there's only like three or four companies, but there's only one or two that we do business with to the point where we actually know the boat of the fish it's coming off of. All the other ones are bigger ones, saying it's coming from Florida or South Carolina. But how do you know? You don't."⁶⁶

Three of the participants went on to explain that they choose to work with fish purveyors that are not local because they have a greater level of confidence with them. The participants trust these purveyors because they believe they are following sustainable practices and will deliver the product they are expecting. Chefs expressed that they develop this confidence through their personal relationships with purveyors and by becoming educated on their practices. Participant VI explains that he chose to work with a supplier that has a similar ethos to him; this purveyor only sources sustainable, wild-caught fish from the Gulf.

Participants also discussed their accessibility to grains. Three of the participants mentioned that there are not many high-quality organic grain growers in Georgia that produce

⁶⁶ Participant VII, interview by Olivia Katz, December 18 2019, interview 3.

the quality and quantity they demand. While they are not prevalent in Georgia, they do exist in the Southeast region of the United States. Participant III and IV typically get their grains from South Carolina or Danielsville, Georgia. Furthermore, participant IV noted that it can be costly to support organic grain growers because their product is expensive and one needs to place bulk orders. One reason the price of quality grains is high is because it is costly to harvest.

Accessibility is an important element to consider when understanding why or why not a chef decides to source food locally; food categories may not be available to purchase in a region, and in addition they may not be of the quality or quantity a chef demands.

III. Navigating the Challenges

The participants in my study expressed a number of strategies they have used to navigate some of the obstacles they confront in sourcing local and/or sustainable food for their restaurant. Three of these tactics will be reviewed here.

a. Creativity

i. Minimizing Waste

Over 75% of the chefs expressed innovative ways they are able to maintain their food costs to be able to source local, sustainable food. Six participants voiced that they strive to not waste any part of a food product. The participants were inventive and used ingredients in a variety of ways. By being smart and creative, the participants are able to sustain and make use of what they have available to them. A chef upholds an ingredient's integrity by preparing it in unique ways. Participant IV explained that he "stretches the ingredients in ways that don't typically occur to you." Chefs can do this in a range of ways including fermentation, pureeing, foaming, preservation, and dehydration. Some of the chefs in the interviews knew techniques to

be resourceful and incorporate ingredients in diverse ways. For example, participant III repurposes ingredients by using them as vegetable scraps. He uses vegetable scraps to make a powder mix for the ‘everything bagel’ on his menu. Moreover, he preserves fruits and vegetables by jarring them, and creating jams or fermented foods. Additionally, participant VI, expressed that he integrates food scraps into his bar program. For instance, he uses citrus peels to make syrup for his cocktail menu.

Using 100% of a product allows a chef to buy a product that may be more expensive.

Participant I’s restaurant makes everything in-house; she explains how doing this assists in sustaining costs. She illustrates,

So, we’re kind of using everything that we get to ensure less waste and higher yield, and that’s also a way for us to minimize food costs, because maybe the product that we are buying will have a higher cost to it, but we are able to use 100% of it without throwing anything away, in different recipes. So that approach has been proven to be very helpful in maintaining our costs.⁶⁷

This mentality allows a chef to use an ingredient in not just one dish, but rather throughout their entire menu. This multipurpose usage of an ingredient in a variety of dishes makes it more worthwhile for a chef to purchase a more high-quality product. Participant I explained how the parts of animal she does not use for the porchetta dish, she incorporates into sauces and stocks. Participant VII also illuminated a similar approach to investing in an expensive product, and being smart and diligent in how he used the product. For a cow to be raised and finished the way he wanted, participant VII needed to purchase an entire cow. This purchase is expensive, and in order to make money off the investment participant VII needed to use the cow in diverse ways throughout his menu. Participant VII expressed that he needed to be artistic in this endeavor in order to be able to charge a dollar more for a dish. His restaurant came up with the idea to have a

⁶⁷ Participant I, interview by Olivia Katz, December 17 2019, interview 5.

dish on the menu where a candle made from beef fat was placed in the middle of the table and once the dish was served the beef fat from the candle would be sprinkled over the dish.

b. Availability

Planning their menu around what was available to purchase was one technique chefs used to source food locally. Chefs were able to secure better prices by communicating with farmers and seeing what products they had available. Participant III illustrates that a farmer may call and offer “imperfect produce” that will not sell elsewhere; a chef can then purchase this product at a lower price. Furthermore, Participant VII explains that he communicates with fishermen to see what by-catches they have available and then bases his menu around those catches. Incorporating a by-catch into his menu rather than buying a mainstream fish, such as tuna allows Participant VII to manage his costs and make a profit.

The produce that is available to chefs is continuously changing because growing seasons are short and last around six weeks. By being adept and adaptive, chefs manage these fluctuations. Participant VIII said, “We update this whole thing daily (the menu), it has a date at the bottom, so it changes every day. If a component of the dish is not available, it's not going to affect us much because we'll just add a different component that works well with the dish, that we can source.”⁶⁸ Participants expressed that restaurants who modify their menu regularly can better deal with variability in available ingredients because they are not restricted to a specific set of dishes. Chefs who source locally have the opportunity to be artistic and open to change with what they have available to them.

⁶⁸ Participant VIII, interview by Olivia Katz, January 23 2020, interview 6.

c. Network of Relationships

Chefs expressed ways in which the existing network they have surrounding them can assist in navigating some of the obstacles they face in sourcing food locally and sustainably. This network consists of the interactions that a chef has with other people and other businesses, such as other chefs, farmers, and community members. Participants expressed that the Atlanta community and local establishments collaborate and work in unison to promote the growth of the local food system. Participant VIII explains his thoughts on the potential of working together to aid in this development “I think just navigating through this niche together, is pretty powerful on its own.”

There are a number of local and nationwide organizations in Georgia that have created an environment where chefs, farmers, and community members join together and discuss topics concerning the food system. Participants expressed that these organizations have brought foodies together in news ways and have helped reestablish a community bond. Furthermore, the organizations have developed a space where people can make introductions and launch connections.

Over 50% of the participants discussed a variety of existing organizations and how they have aided in building social networks. One organization mentioned by Participant III is the Farmers Coalition. The Farmers Coalition which was established in January 2017, is a group for farmers in the metro Atlanta area to come together. In the past three years the coalition has established a buying co-op, participated in conversation with politicians, hosted fundraising events, and hosted Georgia’s first CSA Fair.⁶⁹

⁶⁹ “Atlanta Farmers Coalition,” National Young Farmers Coalition.

Chef's Collaborative, another organization that has a local chapter in Atlanta, was discussed by participants. This organization hosts events four times a year, where chefs unite and pick a topic to talk about. During this time, chefs can converse about a variety of topics that are germane to their experience in the restaurant industry, such as employment, sourcing, and mental health.

Participants also demonstrated how the local organization, Georgia Organics, has been influential in connecting farmers, chefs, and community members. Moreover, participants discussed numerous ways in which Georgia Organics has engaged in a variety of activities and programs to help the Georgia food system; they host conferences, events, and fundraisers. Participant III expressed how through the launch of their conferences, Georgia Organics helped lead Atlanta into the slow food movement. He said, "Georgia Organics started to be a little bit more through their conferences and there was a lot more talk about it and then I think like 13 and 14 it started just the rise and more. You had the, I think the good food movement was just starting to just really trying to push."⁷⁰

Beyond hosting yearly events, they have long-term programs to help schools, farmers, gardeners, restaurants, and eaters.⁷¹ A particular program Georgia Organics has started, focuses on connecting chefs and farmers; the organization has contacted local farmers and matched them with chefs. Moreover, Georgia Organics host networking events for chefs and farmers to meet. Participants expressed that Georgia Organics can be a valuable source for chefs who want to source food more locally and form business associations with farmers. Participant IV said, "When you do source locally it's a really small space and we'll go out with like Georgia Organics. That's kind of the arm, it's (referring to Georgia Organics) pushing, pairing up, chefs,

⁷⁰ Participant III, interview by Olivia Katz, December 11 2019, interview 4.

⁷¹ "About," Georgia Organics.

the farmers too, yeah, they host events for chefs and farmers to talk about what's around.”⁷²

Organizations can be valuable in not just connecting chefs with farmers, but also chefs within the restaurant community.

i. Chef-Chef

Over half of the participants mentioned the chef community in Atlanta and how the bonds they have developed throughout this restaurant network has assisted in generating dialogue. Five of the participants discussed how it is a close-knit community and how all the chefs know each other. They communicate and share information about farmers and suppliers they like working with. Participant III voiced that there has been increasing cooperation between chefs in the past ten years than there was prior. Referrals assist chefs in forming new connections with farmers and sustaining old ones. Chefs explained that farmers appreciate it when they refer them to other chefs and in response, it creates a better relationship between themselves and the farmer.

One participant demonstrated how by working with other chefs he was able to acquire a unique, high quality product. Participant VI found a sustainable supplier for Iceland char that he wanted to obtain for his restaurant, but knew it would not be sustainable to air freight a product that was not widely available in Atlanta. To help address this problem he told other chefs about the product and made it more acquirable at local restaurants. While over 75% of the participants were willing to share farmers with other chefs, Participant II had a different outlook. He said, “are we picking up the phone and calling our competitors and saying, ‘Hey man, I've got some great greens.’ No. We're not.”⁷³ Participant II works for a large restaurant group and expressed that while he is happy to make referrals within his company, he will not communicate this information to his competitors. He wants to keep the restaurants resources within the company.

⁷² Participant IV, interview by Olivia Katz, November 15 2019, interview 1.

⁷³ Participant II, interview by Olivia Katz, January 28 2020, interview 7.

ii. Chef-Farmer

All of the chefs mentioned a variety of ways they initiated their relationships with farmers and how they have sustained them. The four main approaches voiced were referrals, attending farmers markets, doing research, and by farmers knocking on their door. Participants expressed that in the past, when the internet was not as accessible, there was less information circulating for chefs to learn out about farms. Previously, chefs were largely reliant on referrals and farmers visiting their restaurants. As technology has progressed, chefs expressed that they can more easily discover farmers and contact them. While technology has assisted in these connections, referrals and personal relationships still remain valuable. Participant II illustrates how the process of meeting farmers has transformed over the years.

So, I would just say that 20, 30 years ago, a lot of the farmers would actually come to your door and they'd bring their trucks and you got to meet them. And if you liked what you saw, then you start to do business with them. And then as we got more sophisticated with websites and emails, took a little while for the farmers to actually get that sophisticated, but eventually they did and now you're able to source right on the internet. So, before it was more you had to kind of rely on farmers to come to your back door, otherwise it's kind of hard to figure out who was doing what and how. Really, I mean no one was even Googling back then. So really it was about these guys knocking on the back door. You ask the questions and you start networking.⁷⁴

Furthermore, the growth of local organizations and farmers markets assists in the process of making contacts and referrals; there are additional opportunities and outlets for chefs and farmers to establish relations.

Participants expressed that once relationships between chefs and farmers have initiated it is imperative to preserve them. These interconnections can be complex and difficult to manage. They can be complicated because both players are passionate about their work, there is vulnerability to changes in their operations, and they require a lot of coordination. Upholding

⁷⁴ Participant II, interview by Olivia Katz, January 28 2020, interview 7.

these bonds is about establishing a foundation of trust. This trust is developed by their being a sense of shared respect between the two parties. Participant I demonstrates this mutual respect when she said: “We have a personal relationship with them. It's not like a Sysco or a big truck that pulls in, they unload all that boxes of produce. It's something better than Sysco. We work with different farmer or different vendor for each ingredient, and we specifically have a relationship with them where we feel as they are part of our business as much as our employees are.”

Moreover, continual communication, and reliability on orders, deliveries, and payments, farmers and chefs are essential to this relation. It is about making a commitment to a long-term partnership. Participants expressed how once they have built this confidence, they can work with a farmer to customize a product. Participant II expressed, “You can develop relationships with farmers that you can actually visit, go see, talk to more frequently. You can sort of get involved with the growing of the vegetables or decide when you want to pick them and all that good stuff and kind of customize it for your needs.” The bond between farmers and chefs can be special, and they are often valued by chefs who source food locally.

d. Local Distribution Companies

Over half the participants discussed a growing local distribution company called Farm'd. Farm'd is a company that focuses on delivering food from local farms to restaurants. The company contacts local farms and coordinates to get their products into restaurants. Participants demonstrated that Farm'd is helping farmers reach a market they would not otherwise have access to. Not all farmers have the resources to distribute their own products and consequently, Farm'd is aiding in the delivery stage of a local supply chain. Participant VI explained this development:

Being able to have Farm'd do it for them [farmers] and Farm'd gives them a wider customer base, and it's a lot of farmers that we already used. That simplifies the process of getting from those farmers because you can get it a little bit more consistently or with a little bit more forethought as opposed to the farmer just showing up and be like, "You need arugula?", but then it's also introduced us to some new suppliers, and things like that.⁷⁵

Another participant expressed that he loves using Farm'd because it lets farmers focus on their work and allows chefs to buy from smaller farmers they could not otherwise work with. Local farmers are able to grow their clientele through this small, local distributor. Moreover, a chef can save time and place a single order rather than having to make multiple purchases.

Section C: Limitations

There are various limitations to my methodology. One drawback concerns the sample of participants interviewed in my study. Firstly, only nine chefs were interviewed; representing a small percentage of the chefs in the Atlanta community. Secondly, the participants interviewed are not very diverse and consequently, there are no comparison groups. A diverse sample would include chefs from all genders, socioeconomic status, race, and ethnicity. It would also comprise of chefs working for restaurants from a variety of neighborhoods, that are different price points, from a range of cuisines, and from all types of food service— self-service, semi-self-service, and waiter service. Most of the chefs interviewed promoted their restaurant as sourcing food locally. A reason for this could be because a chef who sources food locally and sustainably may have been more biased to participate in an interview than one who does not. Additionally, 8/9 of the participants were male, and 8/9 chefs worked for waiter service restaurants.

Moreover, the results were specific to the questions asked; I did not ask chefs to verify their statements by showing me purchasing orders and invoices. I also did not speak with farmers and

⁷⁵ Participant VI, interview by Olivia Katz, January 30 2020, interview 8.

purveyors to get their insight. For the reasons discussed, the two variable groups I intended for my research was not obtained; the sample was imbalanced, potentially biasing and skewing the data. Consequently, my results may not provide a complete representation of where, how, and why chefs in Atlanta source and allocate food.

On the other hand, given the nature of this undergraduate study, it was not my goal to be exhaustive of all permutations of chefs/restaurants available in the Atlanta market. Rather, this project offers preliminary insights into some of the challenges and opportunities chefs in Atlanta face, and some of the ways they think through these issues. The high percentage of participants in my study that follow local, sustainable buying practices, provide valuable information on techniques and resources they have adopted to be able to follow such procurement practices. Consequently, restaurants and chefs who do not source food locally can learn from these chefs.

Chapter IV: Discussion

This study investigated if and how chefs in Atlanta source local and sustainable food for their restaurants. The findings indicate that chefs buying practices are contingent on many factors, such as access, quality of the product, consumer expectations, personal values, restaurant management, and relationships. Chefs prioritize local and sustainable as an ideal; but it is not always feasible. They must adapt their buying practices to fit the existing circumstances and environment. Personal factors, including their experience in the restaurant businesses; and culinary skills – being creative and innovative with ingredients, influenced their decision-making process in procurement. Moreover, structural features facilitated and sometimes frustrated chefs' goals in sourcing locally. The growth of network associations assisted in the reestablishment of local food structures. Although these results overlap with Inwood and colleagues, and Sharma and colleagues, findings in some ways, they also present new insight into chef's experiences and thoughts on the procurement process.

These findings can be linked with the ideas and concepts expressed by Thomas A. Lyson in *Civic Agriculture Reconnecting Farm, Food, and Community* where he reviews civic agriculture, and how sustainable agriculture can help communities. In civic agriculture, there is a relocalization of agriculture and concern for the sustainable wellbeing and development of a community; there is a motivation beyond economics. The local food system is viewed as a circular network– there are positive or neutral outcomes across the activities performed (environmental, economic, and social.) Participants in the interviews had a similar outlook on supporting community wellbeing. Chefs expressed that they want their restaurants to be a place where community members can come together and build relationships. Moreover, they want to support local businesses and keep money circulating within the area. Within a local food system

there is a shortened supply chain, and the practices and systems in this chain differ from a conventional supply chain. I will now discuss how these procedures differ and how they present barriers for chefs to source local and/or sustainable food for their restaurants.

Section A: Structural Barriers

Conventional food systems have made purchasing ingredients easy and convenient. People have become accustomed to purchasing inexpensive and quickly prepared food. Beginning in the 1950s, families preparing fewer meals in their homes and began buying more food at restaurants, mostly fast food chains. The rise of fast food changed the food industry. In 2000 Americans spent over \$110 billion on fast food.⁷⁶ The fast food industry took business from smaller establishments, eliminated regional differences, and started making undistinguishable stores across the country. Moreover, the fast food industry allied with the government to both limit food safety and minimum wage laws. The fast food industry also gained control and established monopolies across different levels of food production. In partnering with the government, fast food companies took control of agriculture and generated uniformity and mass production of products. The conventional supply chain created by the fast food industry made food cheap and effortless. The fast food industry helped consolidate food supply chains into large conglomerates, which made it difficult to source foods outside those systems.

Chefs working for fast food chain restaurants must follow a standardized set of procedures. The menu in these restaurants are homogenized and do not alter. The food options consistently look and taste the same. Chefs working in this environment lack autonomy over purchasing decisions and have no creative authority.

⁷⁶ Eric Schlosser, *Fast Food Nation*, (Boston: Mariner Books, 2001), 3.

Fast food chains are not the only restaurants who function within a conventional food system. High end restaurants can operate within a long supply chain and source from one national distributor. These high-end restaurants also follow a standardized menu. Chefs in this environment may have slightly more creative autonomy than chefs working for fast food chains.

A chef at any restaurant has the option to place a single order from a large distributor, with all the ingredients he/she needs. Chefs who source food locally divert from working within the global supply chain. In this study, Atlanta chefs articulated how it costs more, in relation to time and economics to source food locally and sustainably.

a. Economic Costs

Economic costs were the first structural barrier identified by participants in attempting to source food locally. Chefs expressed that the price of sourcing food products from farmers that follow a certain set of production standards is more expensive, especially for meat, fish, and grains; they face less difficulty in being able to pay for sustainably grown fruits and vegetables. For a farmer to follow a certain set of sustainable production practices it is often expensive. Chefs articulated that one of the greatest challenges with higher food costs, is that they need to increase the price of some of their dishes, and customers may become upset by this. With the rise of fast food restaurants and access to cheap options, consumers have become comfortable with paying less money for food, and as a result may not find it justifiable to pay a premium price for a meal.

b. Time

A second structural barrier illustrated by chefs in sourcing locally and sustainably is the amount of time and work it takes to place orders from multiple farmers/purveyors. Chefs explained that they must determine what each farmer/purveyor has available, then determine

what they need to buy from whom based on what they already have in stock and what is available to purchase, then place each order separately, and lastly make a separate check for each account. While it is a time intensive process, participants expressed that past experience sourcing this way, assisted in learning the various steps involved in buying from multiple farmers/purveyors; with practice it becomes more routine.

As expressed by the chefs in my interviews, Sharma and colleagues found that processing time of orders was a primary reason influencing restaurants decisions to purchase local foods or not. The study found that there was mixed acceptance from hospitality businesses to buy local food. The reason for this was the convenience of out-of-state food deliveries and the lack of knowledge on available local food sources.⁷⁷ The planning required for acquiring local foods from many farmers in my study as well as Sharma et al. 2014 is much greater than from buying from a single supplier. I will next discuss the differences in distribution logistics and how this presents a potential obstacle for chefs.

c. Distribution Logistics

Distribution logistics were a third hurdle mentioned by participants. Participants articulated that chefs who do not have experience placing numerous orders weekly, may find this process complicated, hard, and stressful. Even chefs who have this knowledge may find it burdening. Inwood and colleagues found that restaurants prefer to source local food from one or a small number of reliable local distributors rather than ordering from many small farmers or a large distributor. As mentioned by Inwood and colleagues, small reliable local distributors can make it simpler and more efficient for chefs to source local and sustainable food.

⁷⁷ Sharma, *Restaurant's decision to purchase local foods: Influence of value chain activities*, 131.

Farm'd, a small local distributor in Atlanta, was mentioned by participants as a type of solution to concerns about distribution logistics. Farm'd, works with local farmers and specialty producers to distribute food to restaurants. Chefs went on to explain that Farm'd is helping smaller farmers reach the market and helping restaurants work with new farmers. It is making the logistical process of ordering from farmers easier for chefs. Farm'd is shortening the supply chain by connecting producers and restaurants in the Atlanta community. By shortening the supply chain and being closer to the point of production, it may be easier to verify information regarding food production practices. Local distribution companies, such as Farm'd can take the initiative and inquire into such practices, and share information with their clientele about the farmers they are working with. Additionally, Farm'd could potentially negotiate with farmers to acquire their product at a lower price; helping lower some of the economic costs for chefs. They can consult with farmers by scheduling their purchase order in advance. If the company works with farms and guarantees that they will buy set amount of a product, at a certain price, the farmer may be inclined to do business. The farmer is ensured that they will sell their product and it will not go to waste. While there are numerous structural barriers impeding chefs' adoption of local and sustainable sourcing, chefs also possess a diverse set of motivations that encourage them to work around these issues.

Section B: Motivations

Although chefs face obstacles in sourcing local, sustainable food for their restaurants, a majority of participants expressed that they value following such buying practices. Participants expressed various motivations they have to be able to procure local and sustainable foods. These drivers include their past training and their creativity in the kitchen.

a. Past Training

Participants expressed how their previous experience and training in the restaurant industry influenced whether they sourced local foods or not. While working at various levels within a kitchen, chefs who were taught how to order from various farmers and manage alternating menus, knew the procedures of how to procure, prepare, and serve local foods at a restaurant. This included being able to do research and understand production methods, knowing how to connect with farmers, understanding how to place orders, and being adaptive. Participants articulated that with experience they became accustomed to the time and work it takes to source local foods and over time it becomes routine. When chefs had previously worked at a restaurant that sourced local, sustainable foods, they were more conscious about the impact their purchasing habits could have on an entire food system. This awareness was established by becoming educated about production practices and the existing food system. They wanted to source locally because they valued helping the environment, animals, workers, local businesses, and community members.

Inwood et al. and Sharma and colleagues, address the effect that training can have on restaurants and sourcing local, sustainable food. Chefs can impact other restaurants over the long-term through the education of kitchen staff, who may one day head their own restaurant or kitchen.⁷⁸ Sharma and collaborators illustrate how training is important in the acceptance of purchasing local foods. Kitchen staff needs to be trained on how to process incoming products and innovative with changing menu offerings and ingredients. A restaurant who uses local foods needs to have a staff that is capable and creative in dealing with fluid options.

⁷⁸ Inwood, *Restaurants, chefs and local foods: insights drawn from application of a diffusion of innovation framework*.

b. Creativity

By being inventive in the kitchen, chefs can find diverse ways to use local foods.

Participants expressed how creativity allows them to use ingredients in multiple ways and to not be wasteful. Participants expressed that they alter their menu according to what they have access to. They do this by being imaginative in their ways of using ingredients; this includes preserving fruits and vegetables by using them in sauces, powders, broths, and jams. Furthermore, it includes incorporating ingredients into a variety of dishes rather than one. Chefs in my interviews were motivated to use and serve local foods to their guests. The culinary community constantly seeks to identify new flavors and trends in a quest to creatively meet customer demands.⁷⁹ Chefs who were devoted to using a high volume of local foods in their menus, viewed seasonality in creative ways.⁸⁰ Chefs need to be resourceful with the foods that are available to them. Next, I will consider how chefs have been able to achieve their objective in buying local, sustainable foods.

Section C: Relationships

A major idea expounded on by chefs is relationships. This includes their connections with farmers/purveyors and their guests. These relationships can help chefs overcome some of the barriers they face in sourcing local and sustainable food. While they can be a bridge to some of the challenges, they can also contribute to some of the difficulties.

a. Chef-Chef

Previous studies have not investigated the impact that chef-chef relationships can have on local food systems. Based off my findings, I insinuate that a chefs willingness to share or not share information with other chefs can help promote or pause the distribution of local food. Over

⁷⁹ Ibid.

⁸⁰ Sharma, *Restaurant's decision to purchase local foods: Influence of value chain activities*, 132.

50% of the participants expressed that there is collaboration between the restaurant community in Atlanta. This cooperation is determined by many factors. Some reasons may include that some of these chefs have worked together in the past, most of the participants were owners of the restaurant, personal values— a desire to help local farmers and businesses, and Southern culture. Chefs in Atlanta collaborate in a variety of ways; they make referrals to one another, they host events with local organizations, they eat at each other's restaurants, and they have dialogue around a range of topics related to the restaurant business.

b. Chef-Farmer

Chef-to-farmer relationships are essential in a local supply chain. The two actors work collectively to increase the amount of local food in a community. These relationships develop through a system where farmers and chefs have faith in each other personally and professionally. This confidence is gained by establishing long-term partnerships, where both the farmer and chefs are committed to one another and their business endeavors. Farmers must be consistent and reliable with making deliveries, and chefs need to be punctual with payments. Moreover, participants expressed that they do research and educate themselves about farmers production practices, and sometimes even visit a farm to assure that farmers are following a set of production standards, they do not just take a farmer's word. Participants expounded on the idea that they view their farmers not just as business partners, but also as friends. They want to work with farmers they enjoy personally. Inwood and collaborators also found that some chefs visited the farms and wanted to cultivate personal relationships with a farmer.

Inwood and colleagues found that chefs were primarily concerned with food quality rather than production practices. They put their faith in a farmer to create a quality product. For instance, Inwood states that only a few restaurants required farmers to have a certification label.

Based on their relationship with the farmer, they would trust the farmer to follow a set of practices. The chefs, Inwood et al. interviewed had a high level of trust with their farmers. These findings differ from mine in that my participants expressed that in order to establish a relationship of trust, they first needed do their own research and ask farmers/purveyors questions regarding production practices. Just as in any business, there are both honest and untruthful farmers. Having personal relationship with farmers can help chefs verify some of the claims farmers/purveyors make. Additionally, being a relatively close distance away, in comparison to the distance a farm could be if a chef bought food from a large distributor, gives chefs the opportunity to potentially visit a farm they work with. While chefs spend time researching farmers, they must rely on that faith they have with a farmer, that they will continue to follow a set of practices.

Participants proceeded to explain how there is a close network of farmers and chefs in Atlanta. They went on to express a variety of ways they have been able to connect with farmers, including farmers markets, local organizations, local distributors, referrals, and research. Farmers markets, a type of civic agriculture discussed by Lyson is one way chefs can meet farmers. Chefs explained that the easiest, quickest way to meet farmers is to go to your local farmers market and start talking with farmers. Local organizations are another useful tool for chefs to learn about and meet farmers. In interviews with chefs, Inwood found that chefs preferred to meet local farmers rather than joining a statewide membership organization. This suggests an opportunity for enhancing engagement in local rather than national structures.⁸¹ Chefs in my interviews explained that there are a number of local organizations in Atlanta that are serving as local chapters to connect these food players and aid in this relationship building process. Two of these

⁸¹ Inwood, *Restaurants, chefs and local foods: insights drawn from application of a diffusion of innovation framework*.

organizations are Georgia Organics and the Farmer's Coalition. Not only do chefs connect with farmers through these local organizations, but also with chefs from other restaurants and individuals in Atlanta. Local organizations offer a space where individuals can discuss topics and become more informed and educated about topics related to a local food system.

c. Chefs-Customers

Participants in my study continually expressed the importance of pleasing their guests and providing them with a positive experience. Participants who based their menu on local, seasonal foods verbalized that some of the obstacles they faced in their dealings with guests were related to consumer expectations. This included anticipations about menu options and pricing of dishes. While there are challenges in this interaction, chefs have been able to overcome them by educating waitstaff on how to mitigate consumer concerns.

Participants in my interviews expressed that many customers were not worried about information relating to farmers and production practices. They repeated that customers only care so much about the source of ingredients and care more about price and taste. Inwood and colleagues, investigated if and how restaurants use signage and waitstaff to communicate to guests that they serve local food, and they had similar findings to mine. Restaurants expressed they were cautious when using menus to communicate information to customers because they did not want to overload them with words.

Waitstaff play an important role in guests dining experience.⁸² Participants in my research expressed that they take the time to educate their staff about the farmers they work with and farming practices. This gives employees the tools to communicate information to guests. Through enthusiasm and their contact with a guest, waitstaff can help promote a product and

⁸² Ibid.

educate/inform customers.⁸³ Moreover, staff can be an intermediary for guests who have preexisting expectations about a menu. Participants expressed that customers sometimes become upset that they cannot have the same dish twice or have the option to have a certain ingredient on their dish. Chefs expressed that many customers expect that the restaurant will have ingredients available all-year long. Through training, waitstaff can help ease customers and inform them about the way a restaurant sources food.

⁸³ Ibid.

Chapter V: Conclusion

Although there are obstacles to rebuilding local food systems and the conventional food system remains predominant, my research suggests that Atlanta's local food system has expanded in the last twenty years and will continue to grow. Individuals in the community have become more interested in supporting community businesses for a variety of reasons, including that it helps the local economy, generates autonomy over food choices, builds community relationships, and it helps the environment and individual health. Relative to before, there is greater availability for individuals of all socioeconomic backgrounds to purchase locally grown produce in Atlanta. For instance, various farmers markets, such as Fresh MARTA markets, accept SNAP benefits. In addition to accepting SNAP, Fresh MARTA markets, are located at five MARTA public transport stations, making it easier for consumers who might not be able to make it to a farmers market to access fresh, local produce.⁸⁴ Additionally, local organizations have founded programs, such as Farm to School, to bring locally grown food in the hands of more people.

Chefs have played a valuable role in the development of Atlanta's local food system; they operate as opinion leaders. I acknowledge that this claim is controversial because chefs may feel constrained from procuring all their food locally and sustainably for a variety of factors including consumer expectations, economic costs, and availability, but I hold the statement for the following reasons. Firstly, chefs collaborate with local organizations to host a series of food related events. Through these events chefs educate and inform members of the community about topics relating to food systems. In addition, chefs who source locally have shortened the supply chain and demanded more transparency; they often buy directly from farmers rather than a large

⁸⁴ "Market," Community Farmers Markets.

distributor and can ask farmers questions regarding production practices. Chefs help keep farmers in business; chefs have more purchasing power than the average consumer; they buy more variety of products than the average consumer. The COVID-19 quarantine has displayed how much purchasing power businesses, such as restaurants and hotels have. Farms have needed to destroy millions of pounds of fresh goods because they have no businesses to sell to. Even though retailers have seen an increase in food sales, it is not enough to make up all the food that farmers previously planted for businesses. And thirdly, when consumers dine at restaurants, where a meal is prepared for them by a chef, they consume a larger variety of vegetables than they would prepare at home.⁸⁵ Chefs have the culinary expertise on how to use ingredients in a variety of ways.

While a majority of the chefs interviewed source directly from farmers, they voiced that the process can be time consuming and challenging. There are a variety of chefs can attend to some of these obstacles to make the practice of sourcing local and sustainable food easier. A chef and restaurant must be motivated to source food locally and sustainably. Ordering from a conventional distributor is often more convenient and economically practical for a restaurant than procuring food locally and sustainably. Nevertheless, one cannot ignore the social, environmental, and economics costs that are generated by procuring food conventionally. A food system that has structures in place to aid in the purchasing of local foods, can motivate chefs and restaurants to source food more locally. For example, a chef must have access to farmers and purveyors that produce the quality and quantity of product they need for their restaurant. This requires resources and a network to meet with and work with farmers. In Atlanta, local organizations, such as Georgia Organics, farmers markets, and local distributors have assisted in

⁸⁵ David Yaffe-Bellany , *Dumped Milk, Smashed Eggs, Plowed Vegetables: Food Waste of the Pandemic*, (New York, New York Times, 2020).

connecting farmers and chefs. The growth of local distributors, such as Farm'd can generate a new market of restaurants to procure food more locally. Farm'd is giving chefs who perhaps do not have the resources or the time, the option to place one order, and still source food locally and sustainably. Farm'd is responsible for contacting and forming relationships with local farmers and then distributing their products to restaurants. While a chef will not establish a direct personal relationship with a farmer when they purchase food from a local distributor, they will still be able to support local operations and get the quality of product they desire. Not all chefs will choose to work solely with a local distributor, because some treasure the personal connection they have with farmers. But, having multiple options for how an operation/individual can source food locally, can help expand Atlanta's local food system.

In addition to having access to farmers, a chef needs to have the creative capability to source food seasonally. When a chef procures food seasonally they need to be adaptive with their menu and dishes. To do this they must be knowledgeable about how to use ingredients in diverse ways. In addition to being innovative, a chef must have the support of the management team of the restaurant they work at to source food locally and seasonally. Not all restaurant owners want their menu changing; they want to have a standardized menu, where guests can order the same dish, at the same price every time they eat there. Consequently, a chef who does not have authority over his/her menu, may not have the choice whether they can source food locally or not. Procuring food seasonally generates creativity and imagination for a chef in their cooking endeavors. If consumers become more accepting to variability in dish options, restaurants may be more willing to source food locally and seasonally.

Chefs can use their voice to educate consumers on the importance of supporting local food systems and introduce their guests to new ingredients. In a competitive industry, chefs

should continue to find ways to collaborate and have dialogue. Sharing of information between chefs can help restaurants better inform and connect with their guests, form relationships with distributors, farmers, and purveyors, and resolve some of the issues they face in their operations. There is no one-size fits all model for how a local food system should operate; having a network where players within this system can come together and have conversation about obstacles they encounter and ways they can combat them can help develop new and old structures. Mutual support between all operations and individuals in a community will help Atlanta's local food system will thrive.

Further research is needed in understanding the processes that all players within the Atlanta local food system undergo— farmers, purveyors, distributors, chefs, and diners. Interviewing each of these individuals can provide valuable insights into each of their experiences, opinions, needs, and the challenges they face. Having a diverse population of individuals interviewed in each of these categories would provide greater representation of the Atlanta food system. For instance, chefs from all types of restaurant service, in all neighborhoods; farmers that work in all types of farm production, and of different ethnicities; and diners from all backgrounds and neighborhoods. This knowledge can provide guidance on how the food system can move forward, to continue to build local food structures, to supply local products to a wider population of individuals and more restaurant establishments.

Appendix

Section A: Participants Interviewed

Participant	Gender	Cuisine	Owner	Restaurant Group	“Farm-to-table” marketing
I	Female	Italian	Yes	Yes	Yes
II	Male	Greek	Yes	Yes	No
III	Male	Rustic New American	Yes	No	Yes
IV	Male	Southern Bakery and Café	Yes	No	Yes
V	Male	Basque	No	Yes	No
VI	Male	Cuisine de Provence	Yes	No	Yes
VII	Male	Italian farm-to-table	Yes	Yes	Yes
VIII	Male	Brewpub	No	No	Yes
IX	Male	New York inspired deli	Yes	Yes	No

Section B: Interview Questions

1. Tell me more about your restaurant? What is its genre? How many meals do you serve in a week? What days and times are you open? Who are you mostly serving in your restaurants?
2. My project is studying “local sustainable” food and I want to understand what “local sustainable” means for you? To what degree does your definition align with the restaurant you are working at?
3. What are the biggest challenges you face in sourcing local sustainable food for the restaurant?
4. Have you identified any processes to overcome these difficulties?
5. I understand that there are probably differences in relation to where you source different types of foods, such as grains, poultry, vegetables, fruits, and fish. Can you tell me about the differences between sourcing these different food groups?
6. Where do you source produce from for your restaurant?
7. How do you source “local sustainable food” for your restaurant? What are the processes involved?
8. Tell me more about the farms you are involved with. Why do you source from these farms?
9. How did these relationships begin? (make it specific when asking ex. Tell me about farm a, b, c)
10. Do you inform your customers about where you source your food from? If so, how do you communicate this to them? If not, why?
11. Throughout your time as a chef in Atlanta, how have you seen the local sustainable food scene changing? Not just in the community, but also for restaurants?
12. What do you think the barriers are to the sustainable movement in restaurants?

13. If you could do one thing or are doing one thing to make it an easier process for restaurants, what is it or what would it be?
14. What type of information can chefs can share with each other to promote sustainable food in their restaurants?
15. Can you give me a 3 sentence summary of your own philosophy on serving “local sustainable” food for your restaurant?
16. I totally get this a tough business to be in, and a lot of pressure but for you personally, to what degree do you feel the way you source the food for your restaurant aligns with your personal values?

Section C: Interview Details

Participant	Date	Length	Location (Atlanta, GA)
I	12.17.2019	31 minutes	Over-the-phone
II	1.28.2020	34 minutes	Over-the-phone
III	12.11.2019	43 minutes	At the restaurant
IV	11.15.2019	43 minutes	Over-the-phone
V	11.18.2019	70 minutes	At a café
VI	1.30.2020	32 minutes	At the restaurant
VII	11.18.2019	64 minutes	At the restaurant
VIII	1.23.2020	54 minutes	At the restaurant
IX	2.14.2020	43 minutes	At the restaurant

Section D: Code Definitions

Main Category	Sub Category	Definition
Motivations		Reasons for sourcing locally and sustainably
	Community	Circulating money in the community. Supporting local businesses. People's individual health.
	Environment	Climate change: carbon footprint, greenhouse gases, chemicals, fossil fuels.
Processes/challenges		
	Economic costs	Price of buying local, sustainable food
	Time	The time it takes to order from farmers versus distributors. Convenience.
	Experience	Lack of experience in sourcing from local farmers. Involves relationships, education, previous employment, and restaurant management.
	Quality & access	Availability of food products. If the product is of the quality, standards they are looking for.
	Consumer expectations	What the diner wants and expects out of his or her meal when they go to a restaurant.
	Transparency	Clarity on production methods and standards.
Combating challenges		
	Experience	Previous experience with sourcing local, sustainable food. Involves relationships, education, previous employment, and restaurant management.
	Relationships	Communication and collaboration among chefs, farmers, and customers. Establishing and maintaining those relationships.
	Creativity & innovation	Finding ways to use produce in unique ways.
	Balance	Determining how they want to balance their values when it comes to purchasing.
	Local organizations and networks	Organizations where chefs and farmers come together and have dialogue, such as Georgia Organics.
	Local distribution companies	Smaller, middle size local distribution companies, such as Farmed.

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