

LiveWell #68, Why Study Food_

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SPEAKERS

Dr. Wendy Slusser, Julia Rhoton, Laila Adarkar, Kayleigh Ruller, Dr. Amy Rowat



Kayleigh Ruller 00:01

Hello my name is Kayleigh Ruller, I produce Semel Healthy Campus Initiatives's LiveWell podcast that Dr. Wendy Slusser usually hosts but today I am lucky enough to get the chance to walk you through this special episode dedicated to UCLA Food Studies. The program, the meaning, the why. I'm a food writer and a journalist and I'm particularly obsessed with food as a meaning making activity. So, why study food? And also, how do we study food in higher education. UCLA is a public university that in my experience, strives to provide a well rounded interdisciplinary education. I know there's the whole South Campus / North Campus identity conflict. But I also know that when I was a student, I rarely felt like any class I took was just about microbiology or just about genetics or the nitty gritty science. I was lucky enough to have professors that grounded each one of these topics. In reality from different viewpoints. They put into context these dense topics with social, environmental and political perspectives. And I'm thinking specifically about the courses I took in the Food Studies minor. In winter of 2016. The Food Studies minor was created in the fall of 2016. The Food Studies graduate certificate program was two and recently in 2022, the Rothman Family Institute for Food Studies began several healthy campus initiative has weaved support through all of these initiatives. On the Food Studies minor website it's described as this Food Studies minor uses food its production, preparation, sharing, consumption and disposal as a lens for understanding individual socio cultural and global issues. The study of foods role in multiple complex aspects of life builds bridges across all areas of the academy, including arts, anthropology, Environment and Sustainability, folklore and mythology, geography, history, humanities, law, psychology, public health, public policy, and other fields. These programs have established an interdisciplinary path, connecting dimensions of food across the UCLA community, Los Angeles and beyond. Pretty cool, huh? how food is this force for connecting seemingly disjointed fields. And that remains true not just in the academic or higher education world. It has had this connective force for centuries on the ground for the people follow it, of course connect strangers and friends at the dinner table. It's an important means of cultural reproduction for various communities and cultures. So this special episode today, we're here to uncover this. What is food studies? What does it look like? And why is it important? To begin, we called up Dr. Amy Rowat. Dr. Rowat is a physicist at UCLA with a research lab studying cellular biology and alternative meat proteins. She's the vice chair of the master's program in integrative biology and physiology. And as the Marcie H Rothman, presidential chair and Food Studies. She's really

pioneered the use of food to teach sophisticated science concepts, and has been a favorite professor for the students with her core science and food, the physical and molecular origins of the food we eat. Here's our LiveWell host, Dr. Wendy Slusser interviewing her here, take a listen.

D Dr. Wendy Slusser 03:52

So let's just get started. So let's start with the first question, which is when we talk about food studies, or students says they've graduated with a Food Studies minor, or you say you are the Rothman, presidential chair and Food Studies. What does that mean?

D Dr. Amy Rowat 04:10

Well, Food Studies broadly refers to the study of food and that can span many disciplines, from science to culture, to history to art. I think studies of food also encompass food at different points in the food cycle to so and so for example, how food is is grown, produced, prepared, consumed or even disposed of, you know, food waste is another major topic of food studies as well.

D Dr. Wendy Slusser 04:37

So in what other realms is food, a tool, or a lens for navigating complex topics?

D Dr. Amy Rowat 04:44

I love this question. It's a perfect setup, actually to talk about a new class that I developed over the past couple of years. So this really built on the science and food class the model of using food as a tool to engage students in thinking more about science. And in this new food studies 181 class that I developed in the past couple of years, we really focused on using food as a tool for interdisciplinary education, because food naturally touches on many different fields of study. And so in this class, which I developed with a focus on soil, land and transforming food ways, we were able to discuss many of these bigger societal challenges that span across disciplines that really need experts from different fields to really address. So some of these grand societal challenges might include social justice, how food intersects with the environment, community health, and also as, as well as indigenous food ways and the transition to urbanization. So I think that food is a great way for students to access these complex topics, and provides a really great vehicle for understanding how we can bring in use different disciplines to address really complex problems that that we're facing.

K Kayleigh Ruller 06:05

Food is an entry point for understanding the value of collaborative and cross disciplinary problem solving. And one lens that Dr. robot has embraced is teaching very tactical skills, like culinary skills. A barrier in higher education is providing students with all of this information, right talking about food issues, and discussing solutions, but not actually providing tangible

skills or actionable items, individualized solutions for the issues at hand. It's true food issues, food, apartheid, food deserts, the lack of food and culinary education. These are deeply systemic issues. But what is also true is that food can be an agent for change and for self empowerment. And as Dr. Slusser, Wendy has taught in the past, as healing and as medicine, in both society and for the individual. Here's our host, Dr. Slusser, talking to Dr. Rowat again.

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Dr. Wendy Slusser 07:13

You know, one of the things that when I first met you that really struck me from your discipline of you know, engineering and physics, and I've mentioned it before on our podcast, but your knowledge of the cellular wall, and the whole concept of why kale is so tart unless you break it down and, and how you can massage and break down that cell wall and make it less bitter. And that really not only resonated with me from a scientific point of view to understand that it made me very patient when I made kale, because I knew that cutting it very finely would actually make it taste better. And that's the whole art, isn't it in the field of the chef's these days is taking on what you do every day and in your lab. So you want to elaborate on that and how you've been able to intersect science with the chef world.

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Dr. Amy Rowat 08:08

I think having chefs involved in food education has been really pivotal for our programs and classes here at UCLA. Students in my experience have really, they really love hearing how professionals in the industry are thinking about food are applying like knowledge to food, maybe how they wish they knew more about the science as well, so they could understand more about the transformations that happen when cooking. So I think for all of these reasons, having chefs involved has been really pivotal, having chefs especially that represent different cuisines and cultures as well as really enables I think students to identify with some of the chefs that we've invited into the classroom and can really sort of see themselves in or maybe their favorite cuisine from childhood, you know, that's on sort of on the stage so to speak. And so I think that's been a great way to be able to engage diverse students in in undergraduate education.

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Kayleigh Ruller 09:15

Chefs are involved not just in course curriculum, but in day to day Student Life. Chef Julia Rhoton is one of those chefs whose students and faculty value immensely, she oversees the UCLA teaching kitchen, which is a food education hub. It's both the physical space and an overall mission for something deeper with the Teaching Kitchen collaborative, a network that uses teaching kitchens as catalysts for change. At UCLA chef Julia runs of culinary boot camp, partners with both staff and students alike, the UCLA Farmers Market group for example, to do educational cooking workshops, the Teaching Kitchen concept The primary one which can be found at the LA tennis center on campus, and the new one located at the tip of Warren, a lobby has a real industrial kitchen. But don't let that fool you don't let that scare you. Chef Julia's courses and instruction are warm and very accessible. Here's Chef Julia, giving an overview of what the Teaching Kitchen entails.

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Dr. Wendy Slusser 10:24

Well, it's our pleasure and honor to have you as part of our team and contributing so much to us. And you've really had, really, you were the inaugural chef for the Teaching Kitchen culinary arts program. And you're actively creating an ecosystem responding to different forces and things in on campus and off campus, given COVID hit almost right after you got hired. And the food system has a central and valued in so many ways, not just in our own lives, but also in the branches of education that we're pursuing at UCLA, can you give us a quick overview and understanding of the goals of the teaching kitchen?

J

Julia Rhoton 11:08

Originally, the mission was to create sort of an interactive space where people from the community could come and learn culinary skills as well as nutrition information. And that just sort of has expanded exponentially and is still growing. We serve so many different departments and groups and academic programs on campus that I'm not sure we're even dreamed of when the programming was first started, and the kitchen was first built. We provide extracurricular programs to the department of recreation for all UCLA community members. These programs teach fundamental cooking and baking skills, and also just try to bring people into a place where they can start getting those life experiences that they may not have had before. But we also support a lot of the different academic programs on campus from the School of Nursing and the med school and their health professional programs to the Food Studies, minor and grad certificate program, as well as lots of different requests from lots of different professors and programs. And we try to make sure that if there's a connection to food in any way, or even if we could dream of that connection to food, then we try to provide a place where that hands on experience can happen.

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Kayleigh Ruller 12:21

So what are some of those specific on campus programs and resources supported by the teaching kitchen?

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Julia Rhoton 12:28

We have a catalogue of recipes that we've been adding to over the years since we started, it's got hundreds of recipes that are available and open to everyone in the community. With access to the internet, we try to provide resources through the CPO the Community Programs Office, we work a lot in tandem with the services and resources they provide on campus. So if they're providing a food donation box, we try to provide recipes that tie in to the ingredients found in the box, we try to work with the food closet to put together donations and services that people can not just pick up a snack but take something back to their apartment and maybe learn how to make it. We also provide resources for those in our community who don't necessarily have access to a kitchen, whether they're living in a dorm or some other place that doesn't necessarily provide that resource. We offer Instagram microwave cooking resources we teach and a lot of our staff and faculty wellness programs. So we're not just focusing on students, we work with a lot of our grad school, especially with the Resource Center themselves so that they can create their own programming and we support the list goes on.

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Kayleigh Ruller 13:42

Clearly, Food Studies at a university setting can't just exist in the classroom. There must be hands on resources in place like UCLA, CPO, Community Programs Office or Bruin dining or the Teaching Kitchen, right? To complement the education to make it feel well rounded and lasting. But what would it look like if we were to incorporate these hands on programs into the classroom, kind of this magical combination, right, the academic arm to the teaching kitchen. So here's chef Julie again discussing her partnership with the UCLA School of Nursing to create a culinary curriculum, which encourages a holistic food focused approach to care.

J

Julia Rhoton 14:27

I think that learning all of the different facets of food systems food science, food law, agriculture, food, access, food, justice, all of these things are so important, because we need so many young brilliant people to help step up and reshape some of the systems that we're working with. And I think that like some of the people I see coming through some of the programs at UCLA or I'm, I'm expecting to see great things from I'm very excited because it's it's at the core of these systems, especially local and Civil systems, I think that really needs to be reworked. And UCLA has so many different inroads to that kind of work. And I think it's really important that that classroom education is occurring. But when those students get to then take their academic and sort of book learned knowledge into a physical space, and while cooking something delicious and learning a basic life skill for themselves, they're tying it into the data or the knowledge that they've previously learned. And that happens in all of the different programs, whether it's with the nursing school, they've already learned about how nutrition can affect a patient with type two diabetes, then they come into the kitchen, and they learn a recipe specifically designed for a patient with type two diabetes, but also with a little life skill skills been built in for the nurses so that they can learn how to meal prep, so that they can learn how to feed themselves while they're trying to help the world around them. So we build all of these different things into these programs so that they can tie it into their academic education. But then when leaving the kitchen, they have a little bit more of a substantial and practical way of using that knowledge. And then maybe paying it forward and putting it to use in other people's lives, especially when it comes to the health professionals, but also food law, and food justice and all these things when we cook together. And we talk about different recipes and different ways to change food access, then those conversations, start new group work and new research studies and all of these different things that have kind of grown out of the last few years.

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Kayleigh Ruller 16:36

So alongside these new skills, students are learning new ways of thinking, how our food system is very interconnected to policy and directly to planetary health and most certainly a human health. It's only been in the last decade or so that food studies have been taken seriously at a higher education level. Now, as research has increasingly shown how food relates to disease prevention, to improving community agency, and how certain agricultural methods like carbon, sequestering farming methods can actually prevent climate change. What other types of new knowledge beds can students expect to learn in Food Studies courses, may be those that are taught by Dr. Rowat.

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Dr. Amy Rowat 17:25

A great example of some learnings about food that that have been exciting and and surprising for students has been learning about the role of the microbiome in food preparation, but also in, in human health and in the environment, as well. And so we've had folks like iron mayor and Suzanne devkota, come to speak in my class who've really kind of illuminated the whole world of microbiome of the microbiome and both, you know, food preparation, but also in human health. And I think, understanding the role that all of these diverse micro organisms play and inflammation, for example, and how this really depends on on diet as well, and can help to explain some of the origins of, of health disparities in diverse communities across Los Angeles region and beyond. I think this has been something that's been really surprising for students learn more about

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Kayleigh Ruller 18:26

The curriculum and a lot of these food courses, explores issues, food issues at various points of view, points of access, really contextualized them in a political or social sphere, which is really pointing to that interdisciplinary approach that food has. And Dr. Rowat says those diverse perspectives are actually one of her favorite parts about teaching Food Studies students,

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Dr. Amy Rowat 18:52

I love it when students feel like they've gained a totally different perspective that they're thinking about food in a completely different way now than they did before the class. So maybe a good specific example is like thinking about the impact of food and specifically livestock agriculture on the environment. And this is something that we talked about a lot in my class and the students watched different documentaries that presented like completely different viewpoints on this topic, and I think for some students, it was real transformation to understand from some viewpoints, you know, the devastating impacts of conventional agriculture, on animal welfare and the environment, and for other students to understand the environmental benefits that raising livestock using regenerative methods can bring to the human planetary health aspects as well.

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Dr. Wendy Slusser 19:55

And that's brings in a lot of social justice as well which is what you're I'm describing is a real magnet for a lot of students to be attracted to food, right? Absolutely.

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Kayleigh Ruller 20:07

These types of curiosity driven and perspective shifting conversations about the microbiome and agriculture, for example, coupled with cooking skills, is bolstering the food literacy of UCLA. I'll let Dr. Slessor and Dr. Robot, discuss what that means. And if food literacy is even the best term to describe all encompassing food knowledge.

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Dr. Wendy Slusser 20:32

You were the lead author on a paper to try to define what does food and I know you see mean, and what does what do people want to know about food? But also what draws them there? Absolutely.

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Dr. Amy Rowat 20:45

One of the important take homes, I think, is that, you know, different, different people will be motivated to learn about food, or not for different reasons. And so some people might be really motivated by the environment. And so that for them would be a great entry point, to understanding the intersection of food in the environment. You know, I think another important messaging that we discussed also was the role of the even terminology that we use to thinking about food literacy, more in terms of food knowledge, so that I think, doesn't create labels of being literate or illiterate, but but rather embraces I guess, how we can all kind of embrace knowledge and and promote knowledge of good food. One of the overarching themes was really the role of different disciplines and in the importance of bringing different perspectives from different disciplines into our understanding of food, and how we talk about food with our communities.

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Kayleigh Ruller 21:49

Alongside her various roles, Dr. Rowat also co leads the EatWell pod, a subset of the Semel Healthy Campus Initiative. And she has a role in shaping the priorities around food education and food justice on campus. So Dr. Slusser asks her what equals priorities are this upcoming year? The answer to which is a key and to the why behind the question, Why study food? And why prioritize it now?

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Dr. Amy Rowat 22:17

I think one of the main themes that I'm very excited about is using food to build community across UCLA campus. And this is really especially pertinent I think, on the other side of COVID. The there's a really strong need to build community and sense of belonging. So to address that need, one of the main themes of this coming year is to, to plan programming and also curriculum that builds on students sharing recipes, for example, which can also help to build cultural connectedness. And I'm also very excited about a new project that we've been working on to use food and cooking as a way to strengthen community, for cohorts of graduate students at UCLA, with their faculty, mentors, we know that that sense of inclusion and and sense of belonging are really important for retention of graduate students. And more broadly, students in higher education institutions. This is a real issue is especially for students from historically minoritized communities. And so having ways that we can practically like build community together, eating cooking together are, you know, tried and tested cornerstones of our cultures.

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Kayleigh Ruller 23:38

There's a key point there, food education as community as a sense of belonging. Certainly

community has proven to be important post COVID. But likely this desire for community was always a need. I mean, it's ingrained in our DNA. Not only is it essential that students have access to food education as future health care workers and policymakers, but they must also have access to culinary gatherings that contribute to a sense of belonging, which according to research, is a huge driver for overall health and well being. Here chef truly a talking about that deeply human need for a sense of community, and how food is a tool for creating that.

J Julia Rhoton 24:23

New evidence shows fossil records, humans, maybe were deliberately setting fires to cook their own food together, up to 780,000 years ago, we've been doing this as long as we've been doing almost anything. That's it brings us to sort of an ancient human place that I think all of us can, can go to no matter where we come from, no matter what our previous food access or food knowledge or cooking experience or cultural background or regional cuisines, that sort of place of you know, food, fire, eat. It's it's really connecting and I can break down walls. I've seen a lot of people just sort of form instant bonds and connections in those programs with Dr. Rowat. I've seen professors and grad students and faculty and employees, you know, work on a completely even playing field, sometimes even reversing roles where the students get to teach their teachers, and I don't, I can't think of anything that can create that kind of competence and that kind of different learning experience and place for open dialogue and do thinking, you know, when you're when you're sort of introduced to smells and flavors, you start thinking in new and fun and different ways. I went to a slightly smaller college, but even then, you know, knowing that you had a group or sort of a tribe was really vital to me, especially as someone who went back to school kind of later in life, I felt a little out of place at such a vast University was such a huge community like UCLA, I can imagine it would be easy to feel small, or to feel a little bit lost. And so any opportunity to come together and find your, your humans, you know, I think this is one of the best ways.

K Kayleigh Ruller 26:14

That's why research projects like this community cultivation with graduate students are so important. But this sort of community activation around food can be implemented not just in the classroom or the teaching kitchen by staff or faculty, but it can also be by and for students. One such student a Food Studies minor herself, is Laila Adarkar. Laila is a recent 2023 UCLA grad, who has a passion for food education, cooking and doing this specifically amongst her peers. Throughout her undergraduate time, Lila worked directly with Chef Julia and will continue to do so this year as a culinary educator for the Teaching Kitchen. Laila created the Cook This Kit program when she was an undergraduate student. It was a program supported in collaboration with the farmers market at UCLA and the subtle, healthy campus initiative. Cook this kit was a meal kit program using ingredients from local markets, which was then followed by a fun instructional video on Instagram where Laila would teach viewers how to chop an onion sauteed mushrooms and so on. Here is Wendy talking to Laila about this project.

D Dr. Wendy Slusser 27:31

I'd like to talk about one of the areas that you talked about cook this kit. You ran that program for two years at UCLA. They'd like to understand where did that idea come from?

L

Laila Adarkar 27:43

Yeah, so in COVID, paralleling kind of when I was also starting to think more about possibility of food as a career and I was like reading a lot of books and listening to like cool podcasts. And I started writing recipes last kind of like articles for spoon University. Yeah, oh, use this ingredient. Or here's this how to make a salad or something like that. And I was also starting at that time have sort of like dinner parties, friends just like cooking for them. Because that was the first time I had my own apartment. Gradually, I guess. I think different people would ask me like, Oh, I wish I could cook this XYZ I'd be like, oh, like you can it's and I think that I realized, especially for college students that because of like the time and money and accessibility and cooking and kind of falls to the wayside when other things like take priority. And I think there's I realized like a lot of misconceptions to that like, oh, it takes a really long time to cook a good meal for yourself or Oh, it is super expensive to get to the farmers market or Yeah, the idea like slowly came to my mind rather than well what if I could get people or students everything they needed, like make recipe and I'll give them show them how to do it on. I'd test the recipe for them I'd make it under 30 minutes and require not that much equipment.

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Kayleigh Ruller 29:09

Laila says she made recipes that she herself would like to eat, largely plant based, using reusable jars instead of plastic and sourcing locally and sustainably from the nearby Brentwood farmers market. As a Food Studies student, she understands how one can't separate initiatives around food from the movements around climate and planetary health and farmworker conditions.

L

Laila Adarkar 29:33

Roasted rainbow carrot and red onion couscous with mint and almonds. We did like a kale pesto pasta with cherry tomatoes pretty white first recipe was soba noodle with lemon tahini sauce and cucumbers snap peas. Yeah we did like a mushroom taco these like really beautiful choice. She is like very California like a lot of herbs. Lots of like lemons and limes and stuff like that. That's also the easiest transportable form of acid.

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Kayleigh Ruller 30:04

Laila also mentioned the importance of asking questions and staying curious. Throughout this whole process. She relied on the expertise of those around her specifically the farmers at the market. And Food Studies courses at UCLA do the same. You know, they have Master Gardeners teach classes and they invite farmers and soil experts as guest lectures and they offer a plethora of courses in regenerative agriculture and ethical purchasing. They tap into diverse voices of the food system. And overall, they implore students to lean into what Laila describes. Curiosity.

L

Laila Adarkar 30:42

Also the biggest thing, I think, which is especially like farmers markets are kind of conducive to like ask questions, like, I'm not, I don't know, probably 90% of the vegetables that are at a farmers market. I'm like, oh, like, what's this? Like, today? There was this cucumber melon or something? I'm like, oh, what does this taste like? Like? How would I use this? How would I cook with this? Which I think is like, yeah, part of the beauty of farmers market, that they are all experts in their field. And I think people forget that, and even there don't always sometimes go.

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Kayleigh Ruller 31:20

Along with taking inspiration from the farmers around her and her food heroes like Samin Nosrat, and Alice Waters. Laila had an intuitive awareness of the needs of her direct community. Cook This Kit was a response to those needs, a need for confidence in the kitchen, you know, in a need for improved access and affordability to fresh healthful produce. And obviously a need for this all to be easy and delicious. Lila's ability to establish a fully fleshed out meal kit program demonstrates how impactful it can be when a university system deems food education to be equally as essential to other education initiatives. There's so much more than talking the talk with food, it's cooking the kit. This program was taken seriously and got campus wide recognition, offering about 12 different recipes over several quarters to hundreds of UCLA students. Here's Dr. Rowat again, describing how education gives students like Laila a sense of power and agency in solving food problems. From a campus wide scale to eventually a global scale. Universities have a massive privilege and responsibility in shaping the efforts of current students and future activists.

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Dr. Amy Rowat 32:41

Having education centered around food that's available in a university setting, I think is really crucial, it can provide a really great way for students to kind of gain a foothold and understanding how they can talk and think through complex problems that involve many different disciplines that involve people from all different backgrounds, cutting across society. So I think also universities are really important sources of information in society. And that's especially true around food where a lot of the discourse that we see is really led by industry. So I think that is another really a crucial role that universities have to play in educating students and activists of tomorrow to be knowledgeable around food and some of the really pressing issues that food sort of intersects with.

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Kayleigh Ruller 33:33

So how do you keep programs like cook this kid alive? After Laila graduated Cook this Kit went with her. And while the legacy stays and the farmers market is still as vibrant as ever, let's talk to Chef Julia about what sort of infrastructure and resources must be created, maintained and encouraged by the university for food programs like this to exist and thrive.

J

Julia Rhoton 33:57

I think that access to those spaces is the number one thing that can move this kind of education and these kinds of programs forward for sure. We have an incredible support system on campus. I'm going to shout out the CPO again they do such incredible work in making sure

on campus. I'm going to shout out the CRC again, they do such incredible work in making sure that our community has access to the food that they need if they don't through other resources or other routes. And there's a lot of other student orgs on campus that are trying to help make sure that that's done to like Bruin dine and swipes for hunger. And so all of these different groups, we try to make sure that we're supporting them, so that the work that they do can be even easier. And in that, like you said, teaching folks to be able to feed themselves in the most affordable but also nutritious way, I think is the foundation for any of the future progress, give them food, we can give them money, but if they're not educated on exactly what to do with it. We're not again giving them as many of the resources as they might need.

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Kayleigh Ruller 35:01

And ultimately, the goal with all of this food studying is for it to not remain insular, to not just live and stay at UCLA, but for the education around food to permeate in Los Angeles and beyond, to inspire change and thought leaders. Graduates from UCLA who are involved in food studies in some way are pursuing monumental and revolutionary work in the food space. They work in food product innovation through technology. They work as local policymakers on food councils, as managers for restaurants as valuable members of a food access nonprofit, as writers and public health officials. Truly, the list goes on. Here's Dr. Rowat reflecting on where some of her former students are today.

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Dr. Amy Rowat 35:49

I've had the pleasure of teaching many different students over the years. And I'm delighted to follow the evolution of their careers. And some have gone into the food industry working in, for example, flavor companies or companies like Beyond Meat or Impossible Foods, building alternative proteins. I've also had students who've gone on to higher education in graduate programs in food science, or public health, and even one who's gone on to become curator of Life Sciences at the California Science Center, who now leads the helm in designing effective ways to be able to communicate with the general public around critical issues in human health and how we intersect with food and the environment. So lots of great students out there and always excited to follow the evolution of the new graduates and where the world of food will take them.

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Kayleigh Ruller 36:47

I liked that thought, wondering where the world of food will take people? It's a question because the world of food is so big and there's no clearly defined path as it weaves through most every industry and hopefully enters most every body. Structures like the Rothman Family Institute for Food Studies and the teaching kitchen and dining halls like Bruin played with truly the freshest of college dining to be had. And all of the campus food advocacy groups really reflect the breadth of spheres that food touches, and a UCLA newsroom article announcing the new Marcy Rothman Institute for Food Studies. Dr. Wendy Slusser said this food can heal. The institute is looking at food from a system based interdisciplinary perspective, to contribute to the health and well being of the individual community and the planet. We've just heard the stories of community and the planet. But we can't forget the impact made on the individual and the individual, small community, their family and their friends. At least it is for Chef Julia.

J Julia Rhoton 37:56

I think that we're really unique because not only are we supporting academic and health professional programs, we have our recreation offerings, and that has given us a glimpse into what cooking is as a form of self care, in terms of addressing mental health issues in terms of addressing stress, just in terms of addressing basic life skills that certain people may not have been privileged enough to access previously in their lives. We think that the diplomas and the education that people get at UCLA are some of the best in the world. But if you can't make a simple nutritious meal to feed you or your family, then we're not really providing our people with a well rounded and whole life education. Since I'll always be a chef. I think when I get to cook with people and teach them to cook, it's especially the person who walks into the kitchen and immediately says, Oh, I can't cook at all that I don't know how to cook. It's usually that same person by the end, who is smiling, the biggest and exuding the most pride because they've made something that tastes really good. And I make sure that they remember that they made it not me, if they thank me for their food I saw I had nothing to do with it. You actually cook that yourself. And so, way to go, you're a cook now, watching that transformation and sometimes an hour, hour and a half is it makes me really proud and also just really excited for their future. I love those moments. So

K Kayleigh Ruller 39:25

There you have it, why food studies? What does it look like and what are the shapes it takes. It's serious and it's also empowering, it's philosophical, and it's also one of the most basic human needs that should be easily and readily accessible, health promoting and culturally appropriate. UCLA isn't the only university doing this type of work. Many leading global universities are tackling socio political and health issues by way of food or tackling food issues by way of socio political and health modalities. But But for current UCLA students, it may be a cool opportunity to just take a Food Studies course at UCLA, maybe food, culture and food politics making films about food, food and language and myth, food justice in Los Angeles, and for incoming students. The food cluster called Food a lens for Environment and Sustainability is a great place to start understanding how food is situated in the world beyond the plate, and that's also a great way to meet people as an incoming first year. For folks interested in learning more about food resources, visit the basic needs committee, the Community Programs Office, the teaching kitchen, or reserve a plot at the jane b semel community garden at sunset Rec. And lastly, I'd like to thank Dr. Wendy Slusser, for allowing me to guide you all throughout this episode, I'd also like to give a big thank you to our guests, Dr. Rowat, Chef Julia and Laila, for being such active community members and thought leaders in the food space at UCLA. We're so grateful to have you on. And thank you, listeners for joining us on this journey today. I hope that it sparked some curiosity, like we mentioned, maybe some questions, and maybe some interests. I hope that if you're a UCLA student, you can get involved. Or if you're not, maybe you can bring some of these ideas to your own university. Thank you all for joining us on the live well podcast. Have a wonderful day. Oh, and one more thing. There are lots of links in the episode description, links to the minor to different programs to different resources on campus. So don't be shy and go explore those things again.