COVID & Cuisine: Can a Global Pandemic Lead to Social and Sustainable Food?
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Background:
• The US food system is highly specialized and centralized.
• The intensity of such a system has many detrimental environmental impacts.
• The specific organization of this system also leaves it vulnerable to system shocks, such as COVID-19.
• To combat these issues, the food system needs to be come more sustainable and equitable.

Research Questions:
1. What kinds of changes, if any, have people made regarding their food choices during COVID-19?
2. How has COVID-19 impacted people’s awareness of the food system?

Internship and Methods:
• I worked with Elena Spasova at the Organic Farm School during summer 2020 to create a regenerative agriculture podcast titled Dishing Up the Dirt.
• We researched how to create a podcast, curated content, and recorded our own episodes.
• I interviewed City Fruit and the Beacon Food Forest to gain insight on local, urban sustainable agriculture.
• To enhance the podcast, I conducted a survey regarding my research questions and received 86 responses.

Results:

Personal Changes:
• More people have gotten involved in local food systems like the Beacon Food Forest.
• Many participants want to continue the changes they made in fig. 3 after the pandemic ends.

Needed Education:
• People feel anger and shock at the food system and a desire to learn how to support change, fig. 4.
• Participants want to learn how to eat locally and healthfully, fig 4.

Local Expertise:
• Emily Katz with City Fruit: “The Answers are within the community.”
• Carla Penderock with the Beacon Food Forest: “The experience of relating directly to your food source...is a paradigm shift.”

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Significance:
• We have a better idea of weak spots in the local and industrial food system as well as an understanding of the sustainable changes people want to support.
• While the food system is currently disrupted, this may be the time to begin an educational campaign and promote change so the food system can emerge from COVID-19 more sustainable and resilient than before.