

Food 
● ● Culture 
 Collective

Cultivating the Roots of Transformation

July 2022 – June 2023



An artistic illustration of a tree trunk and its roots. The trunk is dark brown and textured, extending from the top left towards the right. The roots are thick and gnarled, spreading out across the bottom half of the image. The background is a mix of light green and yellowish-orange washes. There are several small green tufts of grass scattered around the trunk and roots. In the upper left quadrant, there are several bright orange oranges, some whole and some sliced into halves.

At a Glance

As Food Culture Collective celebrates our first year as a creative collective committed to transforming food culture at its roots, we are reflecting on the stories, relationships, and insights of the last year. Since the summer of 2022, Food Culture Collective:

- **Piloted 3 core strategies** for reimagining and reclaiming food culture, including: (i) Nourishing narrative transformation (ii) Growing cultural power among Black, Indigenous & people of color food culture workers and (iii) Cultivating a food community rooted in solidarity & celebration.
- **Commissioned 25 original art illustrations** by creatives working to transform culture through visual art; resourced a narrative **series on Black Food, Love, and Liberation**; supported **4 emerging audio storytellers** to produce **8** stories illuminating experiences of food sovereignty; and released the illustrated video [*Message from an Irresistible Future*](#).
- Joined the People's Food and Farm Project, a **systems-change effort to grow food sovereignty** in the SF Bay Area, bringing personal storytelling into the campaign development.

- Hosted **4 live roundtable conversations, 5 communities of practice, and 4 narrative strategy trainings** for **250+** participants.
- Our essays in the *Nonprofit Quarterly* and *GIA Reader*, on the power of food culture to shape our world, **went out to 44,000 print readers and over 20,000 digital subscribers.**
- Grew into a community with a presence across the U.S. and around the world, with over **750** people engaging in our live programs from **26** states and **8** countries; **our media reached an engaged audience of 20,241.**

There is so much to celebrate as we transition into a new season of co-creation with our community, and we are deeply thankful for all your support!

8 things we learned Around the Table this year

Food Culture Collective's seasonal *Around the Table* conversations call us to the table--and into community--with the people asking the big questions at the intersection of food, culture, place, and power. Our team at FCCItv is still percolating on the wisdom generated through the last year of deep dives into the juicy questions buzzing in food culture, like

There are so many rich insights shared by our *Around the Table* guests and community members this year. **Here are eight that stand out to us:**



Even in the absence of direct connections to our ancestral homelands, food and culture connect diasporic communities to the lands our ancestors come from, and continue to exercise a deep and nourishing power in our lives. ~ shane bernardo, Food as Healing



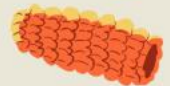
Embodied consent is an essential ingredient in collective governance. Reconnecting with somatic wisdom and cultivating a practice of feeling for your inner 'yes's' and 'no's' is revolutionary work and helps to create a culture of care. ~ Alexis Flanagan, Resonance Network



Humans are part of the ecologies we live in. 'Kincentric ecology' is a way to describe how we are not separate from the earth, but part of a widening circle of human and more-than-human kin. ~ Enrique Salmón, author, Iwigara



When we lead with creativity and play in movements for social change, we center the joy and wellbeing of our communities. Play is a powerful tool to catalyze wider shifts in how we relate to the work of transforming our shared food culture. ~ KJ Kearney, Black Food Fridays



Seek knowledge and community with people who are excluded from food and land spaces. Centering disability justice in food spaces teaches us vital new ways of belonging to and co-existing with the land. ~ Kristie Cabrera, Disability Justice advocate



Play is a source of radical imagination; a way to root in a shared collective purpose. Play can help us to deepen trust, imagine new worlds and embrace change faster. ~ Cindy Suarez, author, The Power Manual; Kai Tzeng, Cattails Comix

Align your daily practices with your deepest values. In this moment of environmental disharmony, bringing collective action into coherence with the things we say we care about enables profound transformation. ~ Norma Wong, Zen Priest & Movement Strategist



Allow your "we" to become as big as possible. The apocalypse is now, and around the world, we experience unearthing everyday. Practice thinking collectively; consider who you include in your wider community and how you might serve them, including the rocks, the trees, the birds.... ~ Lucecita Cruz, Cuir Kitchen Brigade

How do we seed deeper, more secure connections to the lands, waters and people who nourish us through a culture of collective care?
Seeding Collective Care, Fall 2022

Who gets to belong to the land, and why?
Reweaving Belonging, Winter 2022

What transformative pathways emerge when we unearth the wisdom revealed by the apocalypse?
Unearthing Apocalypse, Summer, 2023

What would the world look like if we fed our collective capacity to embrace play?
Play as Portal, Spring 2023



By the numbers

486
attendees

8 food culture
workers featured

4 hosts

Folks tuned in from
82
cities around the world

These rich conversations have been so full of insights and powerful stories, we've decided to expand the table. In the coming year, we'll open our generative questions to a broader community of contributors to dig into, in both live creative spaces and by submission to a multimedia publication: *Dispatches from Around the Table*.

For more insights from the *Around the Table* Series, tune into the multimedia recaps [on our Journal](#).



Seeding Abundant Futures through Communities of Practice

Ever wonder why it's so much easier to learn new things in a group? Scientists estimate that a flock of birds can fly 70% farther with the same amount of energy than if each bird flew alone. The truth is, we all benefit from taking on challenges in collective settings.

This year Food Culture Collective engaged 86 participants through our communities of practice; spaces where we offer deep dives into cultural strategy, creative storytelling, facilitation training, and food media production.

Through **Ears in the Field**, **Story Power Place**, and **Liberatory Culture Kitchens**, our community gained new knowledge and tried out vital practices to reconnect with ancestral foodways, immerse in their local foodshed communities, and practice the art of ethical, community-engaged storytelling.

Story, Power, Place

Story Power Place is Food Culture Collective's flagship story facilitation training. Over the course of 7 weeks, this year's cohort of 44 participants dove into the art of storytelling as an ancient tool for weaving a cultural fabric of collective care, creative resistance and ecological harmony. Story Power Place builds on the earlier Facilitating Stories for Impact training, and was joyfully co-created and facilitated with Tannia Esparza of Girasol Descendants.



It's a journey, trying to recognize what I've been taught, what is worth carrying forward, what I need to unlearn or release. False stories I was told growing up, patterns that are hidden in how we interact with food and with local communities. In the training, I so appreciated all the creative ways to engage the connection between stories, narratives and culture.

Angel, 2023 Story Power Place participant



Ears in the Field

Our first cycle of the Ears in the Field, a paid audio-production fellowship, ran over the Spring and Summer of 2023. Four fellows went on powerful journeys of self- and community-discovery.

Rooted in 4 distinct foodshed communities around the country, the inaugural cohort of Ears in the Field fellows spent months training in the art of sound production, podcasting, and ethical community-based storytelling. Guided by food and land communities finding strength in troubled times, the cohort brought to light narratives that witness food as teacher. You'll be able to give these stories a listen, as they make up the first season of Food Culture Collective's **Radical Nourishment podcast**.

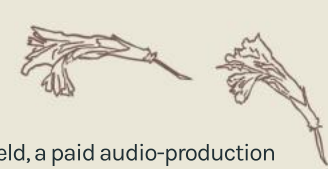


Liberatory Culture Kitchens

Following each seasonal Around the Table event, Liberatory Culture Kitchens (spaces to Immerse in the cultures we seek to grow) provide a way to sink our teeth into the nourishing practices and philosophies surfaced through these rich conversations. Facilitated by Food Culture Collective staff, Liberatory Culture Kitchens met online for the 6 weeks following Seeding Collective Care, Reweaving Belonging and Play as Portal dialogues.

Culture Kitchens allow participants to try on practices to engage their foodshed communities in ways that:

- Embody the principles of liberatory power;
- Revitalize ancestral traditions and foodways towards an irresistible future;
- Coalesce culturally-rooted ideas and visions for ecological harmony.



What participants are saying

[My] special thanks to Food Culture Collective for running a brilliant immersion series this spring which helped recenter my relationship with food as a source of joy and connection. Imagining the power of food as a platform for collective liberation has never been more fun. ~ **Corey**

I feel incredibly grateful to have shared this experience with a community of brave, thoughtful souls who inspire me to be in deep relationships with food and our shared world. ~ **Maxx**

The Play as Portal and Reweaving Belonging immersion programs feel like nutrition for my brain and body in the realm of my engagement in the food system. It feels like these sessions infuse growth, rest, reflection and health into how I show up to my work. ~ **Bonnie**

I kept going to the immersions because I really felt this visceral sense of care and belonging. Like, we want to imagine, we want to play together, we want to nourish one another, and that was really necessary for me... ~ **Yajaira**

Liberatory Narratives in Action

Shifting how we talk about food, how we think about food, and how we relate to food is directly tied to the fight to ensure future life on this planet. As food leaders who are Black, Indigenous, and diasporic people of color have long argued, dominant food narratives perpetuate extractive and exploitative norms rooted in white supremacy culture—prioritizing profit over collective wellbeing. Without intentionally addressing deep narratives to change the way we think about food, we will continue to struggle to shift actions and behaviors that are desperately needed to meet this moment of climate crisis, corporate consolidation, and political polarization.

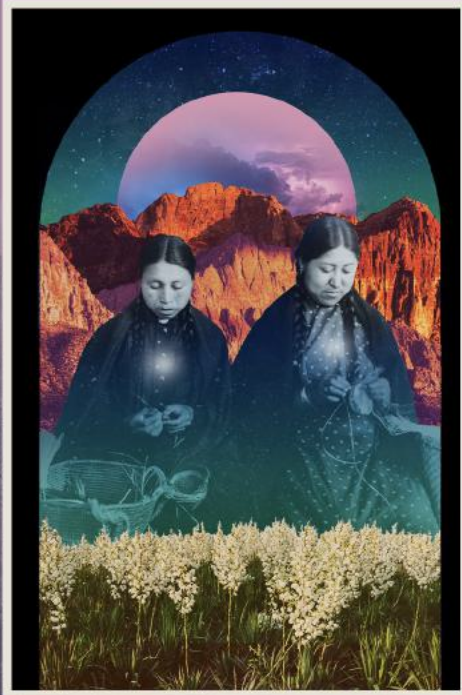
When we embrace a cultural approach to food, and invest in transformative cultural strategies, a world that nourishes our mutual flourishing and collective liberation becomes possible.

~ Jovida Ross, Shizue Roche Adachi, & Julie Quiroz in "[Rethinking Food Culture Might Save Us](#)"



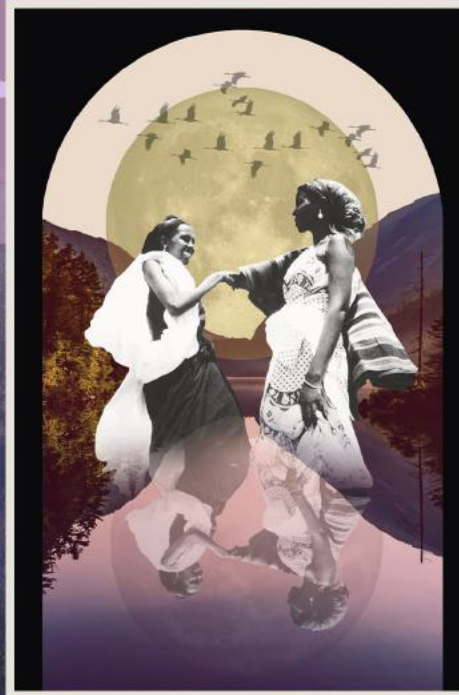
Postcards from 2050: Enter the Dream Space

In 2022, we reached out to 3 community members to commission postcards written from the year 2050. Inspired by the work of Black feminists who have practiced radical imagination as a way to call in the future we yearn for, narrative strategist Natasha Mmonatau guided Zsuzsi, Coyo and Breeze in a process of visionary free writing. **Featuring commissioned illustrations by Indigenous multidisciplinary artist Mer Young, their postcards vividly evoke a future of care for the lands, waters and people to whom we belong.** Excerpts are below. The full text of each can be found at foodculture.org/postcards-from-2050



We are now reclaiming what our ancestors couldn't practice; living on this land in ways that honor all of creation as kin. These days, we visit the old growth trees, salmon runs, fern-covered forest floors, and berry patches; gifts possible only because we put everything we had into protecting them.

Zsuzsi, 2050



The soil smells joyful, fertile, happy. The living microbiome has been regenerated through collective human practices that have finally transcended cultures of dominance and extraction. My generation is witness to the revival of communal land stewardship. It was a struggle earlier on... The soil's microbiome is now a beloved community again.

Breeze, 2050



[T]here's more to food than just eating. Today, in 2050, we care about every step that's brought our food onto our plates. We care about how the workers who made the food are treated. We care about the employees that sell this food and above all, we care about the food itself. We ask ourselves; "is this food being grown so generations after us can enjoy the same nourishment?"

Coyo, 2050

Black Food, Love & Liberation

For the last 6 months, Digital Culture Fellow Ugoada Ikoro has delved into the archives and unearthed Black land narratives through her Food Culture Collective newsletter series **Black Food, Love & Liberation**. Her original research has led to unexpected places, and through a collaboration with the Oakland Museum, Ugo has shed light on the historical stories of the land stewards, cultural workers and food organizers sustaining Oakland's Black foodways. Each essay is accompanied by archival photographs that illuminate the power, beauty and joy of these visionaries. You can take in Ugo's [beautiful series](#) on the FCCLtv online Journal.



Narrative Strategy Workshops

Food Culture Collective offered 4 narrative strategy trainings in the last year to a total of 180 participants, including the SLOW Food USA network and members of the Food Systems Leadership Network. Our approach to narrative strategy focuses on ethical practices for community storytelling and surfacing food narratives in ways that activate liberatory power, as defined by Cyndi Suarez in *the Power Manual*.

Learning about how power shows up in personal interactions was the biggest highlight for me.

Workshop participant

Story Dish: A Game of Story, Food & Gathering

Part dinner-party table game, part world-building deck, Story Dish was created as a gift for our community members to be able to gather over food during the holiday season and engage in the ancient practice of story-sharing. Guided by a series of evocative prompts from Food Culture Collective, participants gathered to share and listen to stories of food, land and home. Sign up as a member to access a digital version of Story Dish. Print copies of Story Dish will be available to purchase at foodculture.org/shop.

What participants are saying:

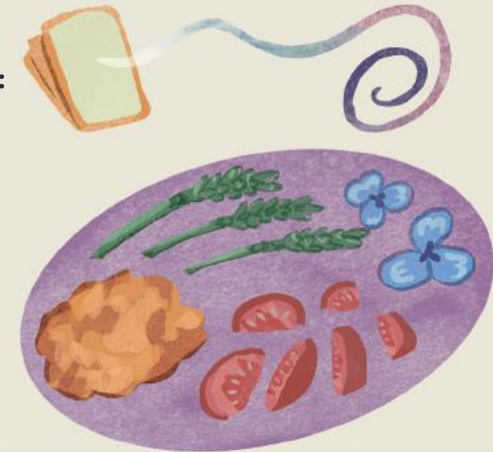
My most recent story circle was held at the homestead of Soirée-Leone in South TN. What manifested was a beautiful, almost dance-like time of flow and wonder and embodied sensuality inspired by flavors. Thank you for affording me the opportunity to pilot these story circles here in TN. They have been fruitful!

~ Elke, Story Dish host

I finally did the story circle with the deck y'all sent me. It was during LA más' campfire early Feb and it went amazing! The deck clearly outlines how to set the table and I ran with it. [I] felt the resonance of the way the cards invited us to weave and invite a sense of belonging. The story circle was made up of majority families and during our closing I noticed the openness of the space in the way parents expressed their gratitude for the event. I feel... immensely grateful for the generous gift that Food Culture Collective gifted us with. ~Yajaíra

Oxford Real Farming Conference

This year, Food Culture Collective Co-Director of Purpose and Practice, Pui-ling Lew, teamed up with Shane Bernardo of Food as Healing and Abi Huff of EarthSEED farm to share stories at the Oxford Real Farming Conference. The session explored how cultures impact our views and realities, the importance of orienting to a cultural framework for food systems transformation, and shared stories of culturally-rooted approaches to food and farming.



A Glimpse of What's Ahead

In alignment with the season of change and rebirth, Food Culture Collective will be transitioning into a co-leadership structure stewarded by a smaller team. Ada, Jo and Pui-ling will now be co-directors with specific areas of focus:



Pui-ling

Co-director of Purpose & Practice

Jovida

Co-director of
Collective Governance

Ada

Co-director of Creative Play

We're so grateful to do this work with an extended community of food workers, culture-bearers, and creatives.

Radical Nourishment

We're thrilled to share the labor of love that is Food Culture Collective's new podcast! Co-created with HEAL Food Alliance, the first season of Radical Nourishment is a deep dive into the stories of communities around the U.S. growing in strength and power as they reclaim sovereignty and self-determination in ways big and small.

We'll be sharing Radical Nourishment episodes with our communities via radical imagination listening parties, where we treat the stories as instructional texts that prompt us to imagine the potential for more reciprocal ways of being with the earth, our food systems and each other.

To listen and learn more, visit foodculture.org/radical-nourishment

