

KELLY CLARK
Carrboro Farmers' Market Customer & Volunteer – Chapel Hill, NC

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Date: May 8, 2011
Location: Kelly Clark's residence – Chapel Hill, NC
Interviewer: Kate Medley
Length: 1 hour, 9 minutes
Transcription: Shelley Chance, ProDocs
Project: Carrboro Farmers' Market

[Begin Carrboro-Kelly Clark Interview]

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Kate Medley: Okay, you ready?

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Kelly Clark: I'm ready.

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KM: I'll start by saying this is Kate Medley interviewing Kelly Clark at her house in Chapel Hill on May 8, 2011. I'll get you to start by telling us who you are and what you do?

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KC: My name is Kelly Clark and I have been a long-time supporter of the Carrboro Farmers' Market via being a customer, via being a groupie. I have volunteered for the market and I have worked for the market in various capacities since the early 1990s.

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My husband and I have a printing business here in North Carolina out near the Research Triangle Park, and we came to North Carolina in 1981 to open our business, a copy business in Chapel Hill and have continued in that field since then.

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KM: I was going to ask what brought you to this area. Do you want to elaborate a little bit on that?

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KC: Sure. We were in the printing business in Nebraska with Kinko's Copies and we wanted to open businesses elsewhere. And Kinko's had already mapped out the country and we weren't part of their grand scheme of things. And so with some individuals that had helped Richard start his business in Lincoln in 1978, we had opened some stores in Iowa and we had another couple that was interested in starting some businesses with us. And so they came to North Carolina in 1981 looking for some opportunities and we got to North Carolina because Richard's advisor at the University of Santa Barbara when he was studying there had taught at the University here in North Carolina in the early '60s.

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So when he heard we were looking for another location and somewhere where Kinko's wasn't, North Carolina came up because he said you should go to Chapel Hill and look. It was a really nice campus. They were building something called the Research Triangle Park. So the couple that we went into business with came to North Carolina. There was no Kinko's copies; indeed it was a great environment and so we got a location just north of Columbia and Franklin Street on Columbia Street, so one of the hottest intersections in the Chapel Hill area. And we hit North Carolina at the perfect time.

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We kind of rode the wave in the early '80s and built up our business that we started here was called Copy-Tron. We sold our interest to our business partners in 1986 and then opened our current business Laser Image Corporate Printing in 1987.

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KM: Okay.

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KC: So that's the quick history [*Laughs*].

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KM: Do you want to tell us a bit about your interests in foodstuff?

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KC: Well I remember as a child, my parents were very big on entertaining, and I remember sitting on top of the stairs and I would have parties and I would listen to the conversations and I would enjoy watching my parents prepare for their parties and they did very beautiful dinner parties. And I remember it just being very jovial and friendly social occasions. And then I remember my mother as being a good cook and enjoying to cook and my grandmother being a baker and enjoying that, although my grandmother was an invalid and unable to cook really when I was a child. But I knew that she had a history of especially Christmas cookie baking.

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Richard, when I met him, he was also a great cook. And so I think actually Richard did more to teach me about cooking and encouraged my interest in cooking than anybody. I think that how I ended up at the Farmers' Market though and why it became such an important part of my life and my interest in food was primarily because as a transplant—I had grown up in Lincoln all my life and I had a wonderful circle of friends there. And I missed that sense of community. And when I first started going to the Farmers' Market, which would have been in the late '80s, there was something communal about it.

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And at first I just would—I'd go and I'd circle and I would look and the food fascinated me, the people fascinated me, but then I realized that what I was starting to feel as I got to know people this was the one place where I could go that felt like there was a sense of community. And it gave me something that I didn't find in the business community here, because we had our own business. I think it was maybe we were working so hard and we weren't involved in a lot of things that didn't have to do with the business.

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So the market became sort of the alternative to business. And I think it was that it gave me that sense of comfort that one gets from food and from people and—. I think that might be the answer to that question [*Laughs*].

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KM: Good. Well, let's introduce this thing. Tell us what is the Carrboro Farmers' Market?

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KC: Well the Carrboro Farmers' Market is one of the oldest farmers markets in the country, going on its thirty-second year I believe. Formally started in 1978, '79. I think that what everybody needs to know is that the Carrboro Market is not just one of the oldest in the country, but it's one of the oldest farmer-run markets, which makes it very unique.

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A lot of markets are started around the country by an individual who has the money and the time and the inclination and pulls together contacts and brings a farmers' market together. Or maybe a town, you know, starts a farmers' market. But here our market is run by the farmers, and

so they have a membership that meets annually, and at that annual meeting a Board of Directors is chosen, and so that all comes from within the membership, and then on the Board—they choose the President, Vice President, Secretary and Treasurer.

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Because it's a farmers-run market that has some very specific rules that includes no one can sell at the market who doesn't grow within a 50-mile radius of the market itself, and that rule has existed from the very beginning. Along with the fact that the vendors must produce all that they are selling, so there's no wholesaling, there's no middleman, and that when they sell, they have to be the representatives. You can't send an employee; you can't send a stand-in. You have to have somebody of the farm and a primary owner of the farm to be selling at the market.

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So to me it makes it very immediate. When I think of how long I've been shopping at the market, so this is since the late '80s and I think of—I've been eating local food for a long time, long before people thought about how important it was to eat locally. So when I think of, you know, my lists of what I've bought at the market and watched how that market, the diversity of product that's been able to grow up within the market over the course of these years and all within a 50-mile radius, it's pretty amazing that that factor hasn't limited the market's success.

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There are certainly larger markets around the country. There's probably markets with more diverse products. But they're coming from outside of the community. And so I think what makes the Carrboro Market unique is the essential localness of it and making that—. Another thing that I think is important about the Carrboro Market is it's always been a leader in helping other markets to evolve or to start. They've been very generous with their rules, with the bylaws. There's a lot of sharing that's gone on that's helped other markets grow, so it's really—it's like

the grandfather, the grandmother market, you know, always teaching, always open, always encouraging, not afraid to share its message. You know, I think it's a confident market in that regard.

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KM: To someone who has never visited North Carolina, describe Carrboro and what role the market plays within that town.

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KC: Well I think I first want to say that, you know, the market started—it's a Chapel Hill-Carrboro Market, and so the earlier markets were truck markets in Chapel Hill, where literally I think some of the earliest markets, they appeared in parking lots or on certain streets where a few farmers would drive up and they would pull their truck in and then literally sell out of the back-end. And then early on when the market was formulating in Chapel Hill, it resided in the parking lot of a restaurant. It was at the Church of Reconciliation. It ended up in the parking lot at East Gate Shopping Center and around that time is when it started to make its move towards Carrboro.

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Because Carrboro decided that they wanted to invest and to see a market grow up in that town. And so there were funds that were sought through the Legislature in order to make a shelter on Robison Street in Carrboro, which is on the—it was on some property that was owned by the Carmel Mall and so I got the sense maybe in just over the years reading articles and stuff that it was the town's decision that they wanted to provide this for their community. And I think

it just so happened that the Chapel Hill-Carrboro Farmers' Market needed a residence, needed something more formal than the parking lots that they had been depending on.

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And so now both Carrboro and Chapel Hill, I think, are sort of little liberal hotbeds in the—surrounded by the conservative South and so maybe there was more of a willingness to try new things—there was an openness to—I guess we've classified the early participants in the market, you know, in several ways. We've got our hippie types, the back to the land(ers), we have folks who had been in other careers and just were willing to start over as farmers later in life—all of these types residing not only within Chapel Hill and Carrboro but there was a strong small farm community in the environments of Chapel Hill and Carrboro.

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I think that maybe perhaps, too, Carrboro looking for a way to distinguish itself from Chapel Hill and the University and, you know, just like when we talk about the Research Triangle Park area and everybody always talks about Raleigh and Durham and they never say Chapel Hill, probably talking about Chapel Hill, and you never say Carrboro even though they're right next door to each other, so this—friendly, walkable community that decided to invest in itself. I think that's my description of Carrboro.

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KM: We have sitting before us several boxes and binders of documentation and history about the market. Can you tell us a bit about what your role has been in the market since the '80s?

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KC: I started shopping in the late '80s and my habit would be to go and I would probably walk around once or twice and look and see what was what before I started buying. And then I would make my selections and I can remember as the more I started shopping, well first I was running into products that I had never seen before. So having come from Nebraska, I didn't know what cress green was; I didn't know what collards were. There were a lot of things that I—even sausage biscuits were kind of new. And at that time you could get a sausage biscuit at the market and fried pies and—so there were just things that I wasn't accustomed to seeing.

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I wasn't a big shopper at a market, you know, when I left Nebraska in the early '80s. I was in my mid-20s and so I suppose my cooking career didn't really start until I was married and had moved to North Carolina. But this shopping started to become more than just shopping. I started to stop and talk to the farmers and get to know them. And I can remember talking to Mary Ann Pagano who I think at the time, when I first got to know her at the market, she was pregnant with Liliana and she still is a vendor at our market.

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I remember Alex and Betsy Hitt and next to them were Nat and Anne Burwell, a wonderful couple who sold flowers and they were just lovely and warm and friendly and because I was taking an interest in them, they took an interest in me. I can remember starting to get to know Bill Dow and next to him was Henry Sparrow, and Henry was just such a character and a warm, wonderful person. I'm so sad that he's no longer with us, but one of the early participants in the Carrboro Market and had been a long-time resident of the area south of Chapel Hill. And just told wild stories of his life early on and taking the horse somewhere down some road and always some tale that he would tell and Bill would tell stories.

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And so anyway, I just started to shop and started to get to know the farmers and I started journaling my trips to the market in the early '90s. And I don't know why, at one point I decided that I would write down everything that I bought at the market each and every time I went. So I have notes from nearly every visit to the market since 1992 and I record the date, the time I was there, what the weather was, and what I bought.

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And I save it. Sometimes I'll write down what I made with what I bought. Now it's just like I come home and put my food away and I have to write down what I bought. I can't not do it. And if I'm out of town and I'm at another market you know I do the same thing. I write down what I bought.

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So I was hanging out you know and I would shop and I would take my stuff to the car and I would go back and I would chit-chat and visit. And pretty soon, I was not just on the customer side of the booths. I was actually comfortable enough to kind of sneak around and hang out on the farmer's side of the booth and talk and learn more and I can still remember the day that Ken Dawson asked if I would please help him sell. He was busy and I got to help him sell behind, you know, his stand and I thought that was so cool. And so anyway I think that both of us—both the market and myself—recognized that I was somebody that could potentially help the market in ways none of us had really thought of in a designed way.

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So this is out of that shopping sort of era; In the late '90s I progressed toward a more interactive role with the farmers and out of that came our Market Guide in 1999. And I worked with Deborah Hilgenberg, who interviewed the farmers, did short vignettes on who our current farmers were and what they grew and sort of what brought them to the market in the first place.

And we put that into a guide that my printing business donated the printing on, and we published that book.

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And around that time the farmers, I think it was Alex and Betsy Hitt primarily, they would run little special events. The farmers would run small special events themselves. This was especially true after the market moved from the Robison Street location to the current Town Hall location. And the market was getting more well-known and the traffic was increasing and the farmers were becoming more creative and I think their farmers were taking off. And they were spending, by requirement, more time on the farm than they could on the market. And so we were both looking for something.

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I think the market needed me and I needed it.

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So I was available to be a volunteer and, you know, if a farmer needed help I could step in and help them sell. When the market hired the first non-farmer manager in 1995, Karl Schaefer—when the market moved in 1996 to its current location at the Town Hall, I asked Karl around that time—between that '96 and '99 era, you know—did he ever need any help. Is there anything I could do for him? He said yeah, I need a day off. I would like to teach somebody to do my job. And so I learned how to substitute manage. And so I would occasionally help Karl in that regard. I would come in on Saturday morning and set up the signs and go around and collect the money and, you know, park the farmers and do a little crowd control and do what managers do on Saturdays, and out of that I also started helping with special events and volunteering to help put on our tomato-tasting or our strawberry day or our melon-tasting.

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As the market evolved in the new location we also started a Wednesday market in the afternoon and, like the original Saturday market which was run by a farmer, the Wednesday market was also run by a farmer, up until—boy I'm really not sure of the year right off the top of my head. I think it was probably in the early 2000s. I actually managed the Wednesday market for a year for the farmers as a paid staff member, and around that same time I also had become a paid staff member as a part-time special events coordinator.

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And so at that point in time the market was—there weren't all these markets around the Triangle Area and we were really trying to grow the business, grow the market business, and so we were using special events to try to attract people to the market. And we did a lot of special events. In the early years of our special events promotions where we weren't just doing the tomato-tasting or strawberry day or melon-tasting, we started to do cooking demonstrations.

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I thought people needed to learn how to cook with what they were buying. And so I remember Sheri Castle was one of the early local chefs, just a local good cooking instructor that would help us with our cooking events at the market. We did flower arranging. We had an event where we were featuring our craft vendors. We sort of changed up the tomato event became not just one of our tasting tomatoes, but then we were voting on which was our favorite tomato. And so I was trying to make the events larger somewhat, something so that the community could become a little more involved and more interactive, utilize that gazebo structure. And I think it did help the market grow in that it provided really good feed for the newspapers. So there were good pictures. There were good articles. I think it helped to create some of the public relations, the publicity that we were looking for.

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Now, on the other hand, some of the farmers weren't very happy about the increase of special events because there's a perception that parking is really bad at the current location. And that it's too limited and that the customer is unwilling to park in outlying areas and walk in, and that some farmers really feel that the events on Saturdays in particular bring people into the market. But people are parking in spaces and staying too long and they're spending too much time in the gazebo and not enough time shopping, and so I'd say that the events that we did at the Saturday market sort of peaked in the mid-2000s, around 2005, 2006, 2007 was probably when we were doing the most of them.

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And then they've tapered back somewhat for those reasons, some concern on the part of the farmer that they're an interference more than a help in part because it takes a lot of effort to do the special events, and so the manager, as the market has grown and become more—just the job of managing has become more complex because the market does more outreach, you know—has EBT programs to help with food stamps and those kinds of things—more traffic, more customers. There's more for the manager to watch out for on a Saturday. So early on, where a manager might be able to juggle more of the special events and along with managing—now it really takes somebody who is doing that, being able to pay attention to that all the time. It's not a full-time job by any stretch of the imagination but it takes time.

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So more of our events now are on Wednesdays. It's a little less trafficked and so there's less traffic, so maybe there's less of a concern that parking is an issue or that the event itself is detracting from the market. And our Saturday events are sort of back to being our highlight events of strawberry-tasting, tomato-tasting, maybe there will be a melon day, the seedling event,

the larger events that maybe are showcased on the side of the seasons that aren't the ones that draw the biggest crowds in between May and August.

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So at one point in time, sort of in between starting to move towards that staff member and after I was just a shopper and starting to be more than just a shopper and a volunteer, I asked the market if I could start coming to the Board Meetings because I was really fascinated about, well, how does this market work, you know, and what happens at the Board Meetings? Can I just come and listen. Yeah, they couldn't see any reason why I couldn't just come and listen.

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So for a number of years I went to every Board meeting and I sat and listened and kind of got in on what that small group of people have to—you know the kind of issues that they're dealing with to enforce the rules, which were very thought out and have always been adhered to. But then as the diversity of product changed, then the rules have to morph to accommodate to that and just as we deal with bringing new people into the market, you know, how does that work where you're bringing in new vendors. And I really enjoyed that. I loved going to the Board meetings and eventually I ended up feeling like I didn't just have to sit and observe—that they would tolerate me having an opinion and telling them—I think I became sort of like a defacto voice of the community, the voice of the shopper.

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And so sometimes because it is a farmer-centric market and because of the fact that the farmers are running it, I think that it's been helpful for them to occasionally hear me say, "but if you thought about this from the point of view of your customer, maybe you would have a different opinion."

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So and I thought it was really of them that they knew I loved them and I cared about them and my interest was genuine. I had no ulterior motive. I had a good business that would support the market. You know, my business has been generous in terms of helping the market with printing over the years. And so I think I was—I don't know of anybody who ever begrudged the fact that I had wormed my way into the Board so to speak. **[Laughs]** And they've always been generous in that regard. And I've tried to return the favor by trying to understand them, trying to help tell their story, try to help them capture what they can of their history. I think that there's a lot of things in people's attics that we need to try to get out of the attic, perhaps the Southern Culture Library at UNC. I'm not thinking of the right name right now but the repository for items like that. You know, I think eventually we'll work to try to pull the pieces and the physical history of the market that we have on paper into a collection like that, so it's preserved and—.

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I think that the special events that I helped with over the years also helped to bring the chef community into the market and to educate the customers as to how the local food community was supporting the market and vice-versa. So we'll be in our ninth year this year of having the Chefs Event, which is an event that brings approximately six to seven chefs into the market on a Saturday focusing food that they've prepared in their restaurant on a theme and allowing customers to taste some of the fancy food that's in the area that they might not otherwise, but all of it based on chefs who've shopped regularly at the market.

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So I can also think over the years of **[Laughs]**—of not just being sort of a groupie to the vendors and to the farmers, but also, as the chefs started appearing at the market I would—I remember following Ben Barker from Magnolia Grill around the market enough so that I think at first he really thought I had a problem perhaps in this regard. But eventually, you know how

important it was to just see how the chefs shopped, and what did they shop for, and who did they stop and buy from, and what did they buy, you know, and then to be lucky enough to go to their restaurant and to eat the food and know where it was from and which farm. And so I thought that was pretty cool. And Ben should feel good because I also followed Julia Child around the Santa Barbara Farmers Market, so you know—I know no limits. *[Laughs]* I'll follow anybody. So, that's my story. *[Laughs]*

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KM: I want to go back to your list.

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KC: Okay.

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KM: And I want to ask that you pick out maybe an early list and a more recent list and read them to us in full.

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KC: Well, I think I'll pick the very first one I wrote because that would have been the model it would have been nice to have followed.

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On the opening day of market March 21, 1992 I was there from 9:00 to 10 o'clock. It was about 45-degrees. It was cool, sunny, with a slight breeze. I purchased goat cheese with black

pepper, spinach and cress, tomato plants and pansies, a fried apple pie, and a Scottish sausage roll. And the fried apple pie cost 75-cents then and the Scottish sausage roll—\$1.25.

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I think those are Scott's eggs that maybe—I wonder if the Fleming was there with Celebrity Dairy then or not; I don't know for sure. I'm saying that as an aside, now to keep reading.

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What was new to me was cress—not watercress. Cress comes up in corn and soybean fields in between crops. There is a native cress but a question as to whether it can be sown. You use it in salads or you blanch briefly and then steam lightly or cook with pork fat, use with other greens.

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And I have no idea who gave me that information. I had a little drawing where I mapped out where the vendors were, and this would have been in the market on Robison Street. And I said there were 25 to 30 vendors that day, and some other things that were new to me were collards. Oh and I see that I've also listed some things that I didn't buy. I didn't buy collards or green onions. There were potatoes: there were sweet potatoes, white potatoes and red potatoes. There was spinach and some lettuce. And the tomato man was there. He had a few tomatoes there, but they were gone by 9:00.

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And I wrote down that I made a spinach recipe, a sole Florentine with lemony rice, and an artichoke heart and tomato salad. And I got these recipes from *The Way to Cook*, *The Master Recipe Book* and *New Recipes from Moosewood*. Oh and I happened to have some Edna Valley Chardonnay and a Fumet-Blanc from Sonoma County. That is so funny.

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So that was where—my notes from the first day of market, the opening day of the market in 1992.

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My last notes from yesterday was from May 7, 2011, and I went to the market with my neighbor Stephanie because I can't drive right now due to my knee surgery. We were there from 7:00 to 8:15. It was rainy during the night, and the clouds were leaving, and the sun was coming and it was cool, but it was turning warm. And yesterday I bought yogurt and Asiago cheese from Flo. I bought three stems of delphiniums from Ken Dawson: one of the stems was purple and one was white and the other was purple(y) blue. I bought some stalk flowers from Kathy at Periwinkle that were white. I got strawberries from Elise, and kohlrabi (one purple and one green from Chris Murray), some red and golden beets from Elise, some yellow and orange carrots from the Brinkley(s), some potatoes from the Brinkley(s) that I left there at the market. I do that on occasion. I buy and then I contribute to some unknown shopper.

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KM: The note beside it says, "Where are they?" [*Laughs*]

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KC: [*Laughs*] Two bags of spinach from the Zacharys, and I want to say Dalton and Hazeline Zachary will celebrate their sixty-fifth wedding anniversary this May 12th, so this week and Hazeline just turned 83. They're at the market every Saturday in the height of the season.

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I bought fennel, three small bulbs from the Brinkley(s), and red and green lettuce from Bill Dow, sugar snap peas and eggs from Mike Perry, and Japanese turnip and mustard green kimchi from April McGreger, and asparagus from the Graham(s). And then I also bought some New Orleans coffee, iced-coffee from April that she makes with chicory, which is really good. And we had a [inaudible] from Chicken Bridge Bakery and [*Laughs*] the new hotdog vendor that's there; we tried one of his farmer's doggers which is a pork and chicken hotdog that had some of April's horseradish relish on the top of it. And that was yesterday's purchases.

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KM: Would you venture to guess or share with us how much you might spend at the market on any given Saturday?

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KC: I probably spend \$100.

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KM: And one year you wrote down everything that you spent but you stopped, why?

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KC: Well I did it for one year and I tried to be very religious about it. I was curious as to what dollar level was I spending at. And then I did add it up and I think it was over a couple thousand dollars, but we have to remember that I mean I buy virtually all my vegetables at the market. When the market started having cheese, most of my cheese comes from the market. Meat, once the market started having meat, I buy most of my meat from the market, eggs from the market,

bread from the market. So I try not to have the world's most expensive compost pile. I mean I really do try to utilize all of my food so that it doesn't go to waste. I love to cook. I make big pots of stuff. I freeze things so I have a freezer underneath my fridge and then a little teeny freezer out in the garage. And so it's strawberry season. I'll be buying strawberries here shortly and freezing them for the winter. And so the money—I feel like it's a good investment and that I suppose that I could spend less money on food if I was shopping at a place where there were coupons to use and food that was purchased because it was meant to be cheap you know.

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But the pleasure of the table and the way it parlays into the friendships that I've made and the fact that I'm supporting something as important as a way of life, I feel like it's an investment and one well spent. **[Laughs]** But I wouldn't necessarily want to add up my purchases every year. **[Laughs]** But I guess, you know, maybe some year I should just keep track of all the things that I buy at the grocery store and make that comparison.

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KM: I want to ask you to tell us what it looks like for someone who will never get to visit the market.

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KC: Okay.

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KM: Take us on a tour.

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KC: Well imagine a ball field and you're standing at home plate. And so as you look down from home plate to first base, and home plate to third base, you are seeing two shelters. And they have a roof but open sides with enough eaves so that the farmers that are under the shelter are generally protected from the weather, meaning rain.

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As you look straight towards the pitcher's mound there's a gazebo, a fairly large gazebo, where our vendor, Bill Daigle, who makes cedar furniture, is often residing but where our special events would take place.

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In between home plate and right before you get to the shelter are two open spaces where our market information booth is located on that—home base to first—home plate to first base side along with our craft vendors—are sort of organized from home plate to the start of the shelters, where primarily our craft vendors reside.

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The market has a limited number of craft vendors that can participate in the market. It's actually mandated that x-number of spaces go to crafts, but there's a limit because we have always wanted it to be a farmers market, not a general market nor a flea market.

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So as you walk from home base to first base, you would walk down a shelter that has approximately eight people per side. The vendors get a 10-by-10 space, so it's 10-feet on frontage and 10-feet behind them, so most vendors are able to have at least one table or they can configure their stalls in any way that they decide that space works best for them. So some vendors, you know, have a table right at the front and you are just working, looking at an item

that's on one table. Other vendors have built up their tables so that there's some height, so maybe you're shopping from some shelves or maybe they've even made a U-shape and so you sort of go into their space.

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The spaces under the shelter, I suppose, would be considered the prime spaces and those—all of the spaces have been assigned to the vendors based on seniority. And this is a system that's been in place since the beginning and it's a very involved process that goes on each year with determining if any new space is becoming available. So you see the same people generally as the market heats up and a regular market month in May you're going to see the same vendors in the same spot because they have assigned places.

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So as you walk through that first shelter from home base to first base you would turn the corner and start your run through the outfield towards second base and around towards third base and there's farmers on either side. The ones in the outfield, they put up tents so that it protects them from the sun, and most vendors do that or they have a big umbrella that they might be under. And those vendors in the outfield, they're all just as wonderful as the ones under the shelter. There's no you know—you can find a treasure anywhere. So I want to make sure when I'm encouraging people to walk around the market that they really take a whole tour because what you find in the shelter that's closest to Town Hall, in between home base and first base—there's going to be something different on the outfield and there's going to be something different at the other shelter.

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So as you come around and you're heading down from first base towards second base, we have the—oh the tomato man, the—David Denson, who brings tomatoes early in the season

because he grows in a greenhouse. Those tomatoes are great and he's there on the outfield. And Eliza with her pork, and Elise with her pork and beautiful vegetables, and Patrick Mulkey who makes great cinnamon rolls is out there, and Don Lunsford with his lettuce, and the McAdams Farm and boy—I could go on and on and on.

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But all of the vendors in the outfield have the opportunity, as the market shrinks in the winter season—they start to come into the shelter, so our winter markets tend to not have a population out in the outfield, but at the height of the season we have every space full. And so there's—gosh, there can be nearly 65 or 70 vendors in every space. The market is sectioned out in 10-by-10 segments. And so you come around to third base and you head back down the shelter towards the second shelter, which runs parallel to Laurel Street, and again you may have vendors who have vegetables, vendors who have beautiful flowers. A lot of our farmers are growing both vegetables and flowers, so we have a lot of flowers—beautiful flowers in our market.

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And as you come out of the shelter, again heading towards home base, then you have John Soehner and Cindy Soehner with Eco Farm as you close back in on home base. And across from them our orchid man is there sometimes, and the Farmers Food Share is right outside the gazebo as we head back to home base and there you have it. That's what you'll see is a big ball field full of farmers.

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KM: Who is the customer base?

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KC: Well I think it's very broad across all age groups. I think a lot of our early morning shoppers tend to be somewhat of our older population. They're coming to get there before the traffic heats up and the weather heats up, and we have long-time shoppers who have been shopping the market since the '70s, you know. They've been around forever. We have young families. I see a lot of families. Later in the morning we see more college students come. You see the chefs come to the market and shop. I think that there's just a wonderful mix of all types—all types of people and people who will drive a long way. I mean now maybe not so much, but I can remember Sherry Castle telling me, you know, she would drive from her house in Raleigh to the Farmers Market in Carrboro every Saturday morning. That's no small drive. I mean when you have people driving 25, 30, 40 minutes from Raleigh, from the other side of Raleigh to go to Carrboro to what was, you know, then the only market other than the State Farmers' Market, and people were driving there because they knew they were getting local.

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Now I'm not degrading the State Farmers Market, I shop there too. But I know I'm getting something different. And there are local farmers there, but there's a lot of wholesaling and there's a lot of produce that comes from—with outside the local area. And so I think that people were making a pilgrimage to the Carrboro Market.

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Now you know I admit [*Laughs*], I go to the Carrboro Market, I'll stop by the South Estes Farmer Market. I'll actually go to the Carrboro Farmers Market and then go over to the Durham Market because I want to see, you know, the other markets in the area. I want to see what they're doing, and there's some products at the Durham Market that I don't get at the Carrboro Market, so that will take me across town, too. But the people who are coming to Carrboro, well I think a lot of just the local community because it's a walkable community

that—you're choosing to live in Carrboro because you have that ability to walk to Weaver Street and hang out, or Neil's Deli and hang out, or Open Eye, or the Carrboro Market.

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So yeah, I think you see everybody.

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KM: What would you say is the biggest challenge facing the Carrboro Market in 2011? What are they really mulling over in those Board meetings right now trying to figure out?

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KC: Well, I haven't been going regularly to the Board meetings for the last three years approximately, maybe a little bit longer than that.

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KM: So in your mind?

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KC: In my mind, yeah. This year the notes with me and I do work closely with—I think I provide some coaching and mentoring to Sarah Blackland, the Market Manager, and I do know of some of the issue that they're dealing with. You know it's been hard for local small markets to adopt and adapt to the new—for example, the way food stamps are dealt with now—because they're dealt with through the credit card machine system and that's very different than the paper stamps, you know, that people were doing originally. It requires an investment on the part of the market way more than may have been envisioned originally.

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And so dealing with that, you know, how to be a market that can provide important support to populations that might not otherwise shop at the market, how to do that and not suck all of the air out of Sarah and have her focusing on that versus helping the farmers grow their market? I think that might be in my mind one of the things that the market has to continually evaluate and reevaluate. And I see this as the way the Board membership changes. Periods where the market is very much looking outward and then there's a turn and we have to focus more inward, and we want to make sure that we're making decisions that have to do with what's good for the farmers—period. And then it changes, and then it's like we have to remember that we have to reach out to our community. We have to give back to our community. How to balance giving to the community and still meeting the needs of the farmers?

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The location, wonderful location—limited parking. I try to get the farmers to think about the fact that I've seen a lot of markets around the country and a lot of them don't have parking and their customer base accommodates to that. But there's a real strong perception that, especially with the growing number of markets in the area—that people are able to pick their market based on ease of shopping; I can whip in, I can park, I can run and get my stuff, I can leave.

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The balance between the farmers wanting people to come and shop and leave and leave the parking spaces open for the next person, to the person who wants to go to the market because it's their community, because it's their social scene on Saturday morning; they want to stroll the market, they want to have a cup of coffee, they want to enjoy just looking, they want to talk to their friends—that puts them in there—out of their car and occupying a space, you know, longer

than maybe some of them want. So how does the market grow, you know? How do we reach out and continue to be a leader, because we've always felt like our market is a leader? And we did that by being a leader and showing how you can be a farmer-run market. We did that by showing how you can be a leader in the diversity of product. We've done that by showing how you can be a leader and the kind of special events that you can offer. Well how do you do that now with more competition, perception of limited access close by, like, will one day the market have to think about moving if it wants to grow? There's an absolute limit to the number of farmers that can sell there on any Saturday.

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Like now, new farmers that come into the market, they're more likely to get the opportunity to sell first on Wednesday before they'll ever be able to sell on Saturday because there's no room on Saturday. So is this market going to be satisfied being this big or is it going to want to be bigger? If it wants to be bigger where will it go? How will it do that? Can it be the Carrboro Market if it's not at Town Hall, you know? Is our identity tied to our location or is our identity in our farmers? So now these are some of the things that I think about in terms of listening to what the market deals with and whether or not they've actually talked about those things specifically this year, I don't know.

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But I think those are always things that I know Sarah, as a market manager, she's charged with the responsibility of bringing more people in, you know. How do you encourage people to come? What is it that brings them? Well maybe it's not a special event; it's what's at the market. You know, it's the type of vendors. It's the reputation. That's why it's so important that our market continue to remind not just our local community, not just North Carolina, but nationally

to keep reminding—we've been here a long time. After 32—33 years you get some respect. You get to say this is how we think things should be done.

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I think the market is always challenged to make sure that the vendors themselves are honoring the rules, they're playing the game the way it needs to be played, that they are growing and selling on their land what they say they are, you know. And so some policing always has to go on and the rub—that any notion that there's any—somebody who is not playing by the rules and what challenges that brings to, not just the manager, but the Board of Directors in wanting to be fair to all concerned, you know: fair to the vendors, fair to the public, true to our nature, doing what we say we do the way we say we're going to do it.

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So I think the Board also wrestles with having a manager, how to have a manager, how to support the manager, how to pay a manager fairly and enough to entice them to say not just one year but, you know, for years in a job that a lot of people might not like to have, you know, getting up at the crack of dawn on Saturday, Saturday after Saturday. Having a million bosses, so the manager, you know, is—that's a real challenge. I suppose that anybody who works for a Board of any type, you know, a nonprofit or any organization has that same sort of challenge. But I think our market managers have always had to balance the different segments of our farm community: the more traditional ones; the ones who are more game to try new things; the one who understand the value of marketing, the value of outreach, how you have to change to grow versus those who want to stay the same because change is scary, or the perception that if we change then we won't be who we said we were. We won't be true to our original ideals. But I think that's the challenge for this market—is to continue to find ways to grow within that original intent.

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They're always going to be a farmer-run market; they will never not be that. How do you bring new farmers in? How do you encourage young people to go into farming, providing them an opportunity to sell direct to the public and having enough opportunity within our own community? The more that other markets grow up in our area, the more opportunity for young farmers to go and start there. And that I think is a big challenge for the Carrboro Market because it is mature, because it has a limitation of space. How will we continue to be able to bring new people in? So I think that just the changing way that people eat—even the challenge of the perception that oh, the Carrboro Market, because I think it has this reputation, everything is organic. Well no, it's not. **[Laughs]** You know and so even the satisfying our customers and helping them understand that they have to be actively engaged with finding out for themselves. Are you buying from somebody who is growing organically? Are you buying from somebody who grows sustainably? Are you buying from a transitional farmer who has been growing tobacco all their life and is changing to a vegetable farm and how that process is long and one that doesn't guarantee that they're doing things organically and—?

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So, being able to be a market that accommodates to all sorts of vendors and all sorts of customers, that I think is some of our challenges.

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KM: Are there things that you want to tell us about the Carrboro Farmers Market or about the food and what role that plays in your life here in the Chapel Hill/Carrboro area?

01:03:00

KC: Okay, what I think is one of the most important things to me and why I was excited that SFA was going to do this oral history project, I think we got to work hard and fast and Sarah Blacklin and I have talked about this: this market needs to get its history recorded. We need to get it on paper. We need to talk to—we've already lost too many opportunities with farmers who are no longer with us to capture those early thoughts and early days of the market. But to me, this market has been so long lasting and over the years, so innovative. You've seen, you know, very interesting young farmers come out, you know, or come into the market and push the boundaries of traditional thinking about what would be on your table. Like I bet you if we looked at a table from 1978 you'd see some very typical southern products, your sweet potatoes and zucchinis and corn and greens of some sort. But over the years the diversification of the product that's followed the natural way that people have begun to eat over the last 10 years, so more ethnic food, more exploratory palates you know.

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But what's important to me and why I think it's so important that we—I like the fact that you've picked 10 different farmers to talk to, but I wish you could talk to all of them because everyone's story is so unique and they're so different. I mean people who've come to farming that have never been in farming; people who have—their families have been in farming all their life but they're having to change the way they're farming because of the changing ways that people are eating, or the fact that tobacco isn't supported the way it used to be, and they want to stay in farming but they can't farm like they traditionally did. Or somebody like John Soehner, who not from a farming background, but by god, he's thrown himself into farming with his whole body and soul. He'll try anything, you know, so everything that's come around. He'll watch another farmer and he'll try it and he's like, I have no idea what I'm doing, but you know the spirit of trying and to capture all of that in their own voice. That's one thing I would like to

help do, is to quickly some—within the next couple of years capture the voices that are at the market now, find the ones who aren't selling but were in the recent past in order to make sure that we don't lose the unique tale that this market has to tell.

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That's why this project that y'all are doing is really great because I think it'll help kick-start that work, and I also think that we need to capture—there's a lot of people who have shopped at this market for a long, long time and to be able to capture some of the stories of the people who also have come to feel that the market is more than just a place that they buy food. I think that there are a lot of people like me who—if they are lying in bed on a Saturday morning not getting their butt out of the bed [*Laughs*] and getting to market you feel guilty. You know and why is that? Because you're just not there. You're not going to have the good food you want. You're not going to see the people you wanted to see. You might miss some activity that you know was really important and it'll be a good start to your week—all of that. So that to me—there's bits and pieces and they're all over the place. They're in people's attics, they're in people's garages, there's something stuffed in somebody's barn. We've got to get that material out and get it saved and help this market pull together its history so that might be the next way that we make a big contribution is because we have that depth, because we have those years, that's something that most markets don't have and that's something that will keep us really unique if we get that story recorded and told in some way. So I think that's an important thing to do.

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KM: Well it seems to me that you kick-started this documentary project back in the 1990s, so thank you for sharing all that you have with us.

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KC: My pleasure, my pleasure.

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[End Carrboro-Kelly Clark Interview]