

**LAUREN COX**  
**Le Tre Lune Farm – Douglasville, Georgia**

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Location: Le Tre Lune Farm, Douglasville, Georgia

Interviewer: Sara Wood

Transcription: Shelley Chance, ProDocs

Length: One hour, nine minutes

Project: Women at Work in Georgia

**[Begin Lauren Cox Interview]**

**00:00:01**

**Sara Wood:** So it's August 5, 2013. I'm Sara Wood with the Southern Foodways Alliance. I'm sitting here with Lauren Cox of Le Tre Lune Farm. We're out here in Douglasville, Georgia. And I'm wondering if you could go ahead and say hello and introduce yourself.

**00:00:26**

**Lauren Cox:** Okay, hi, my name is Lauren Cox and I am a farmer out on the Glover Family Farm and my farm business name is Le Tre Lune which stands for the three moons.

**00:00:38**

**SW:** And how did you come up with that name?

**00:00:41**

**LC:** Well my husband [Luca Caffettani] is Italian, so obviously we wanted to kind of play on his heritage. And at first we were thinking—we were playing around with kind of non-hippie names and more kind of marketable names that people don't have. There—there are a lot of names in farms that are repeated and so—but then we got stuck because we couldn't think of a name in Italian that Americans could pronounce. And they still can't pronounce our name, so—.

**[Laughs]** I don't know how effective that was. But we just—we just came up with it kind of willy-nilly, so—.

**00:01:25**

**SW:** And before I forget will you tell me your birth date for the record?

**00:01:28**

**LC:** Oh yeah, my birthday is May 23, 1984.

**00:01:34**

**SW:** Lauren can you talk about where you grew up and what it was like there and if you—I mean if you had any connection to farming at the time?

**00:01:43**

**LC:** Okay, yeah, I grew up in Little Rock, Arkansas and I didn't really have a connection with farming. My aunt on my father's side was kind of the first person who introduced me to I guess gardening, small-scale gardening and she—she would baby-sit us, my brother and—and I on the weekends. And I remember sitting in like an arm chair in her bedroom and she loved watching hummingbirds so she would always have the garden kind of filled with flowers and things that she knew could attract hummingbirds. And she kind of had her small kitchen garden. And that was really the only exposure I had to farming.

**00:02:27**

I was more of a food person and so my family was really you know—we always ate dinner at the table. We always—we always went out to eat, I mean we were just a very food-oriented family. And that's kind of where my relationship with food started.

**00:02:47**

**SW:** And what was your aunt's name?

**00:02:50**

**LC:** Oh my aunt's name was Aunt Mary Keats and she was the funniest woman ever. Unfortunately she was also an alcoholic so she passed away while I was a teenager and I was really connected to her and anyway, so she was—she—she was really funny. She would come to Christmas parties at my parents' house and have this pin on her shirt that said, *Oh shit I forgot to be good.* **[Laughs]** And so she was kind of this crass woman, but this softer side of her was always like the little garden that she would keep with all her cats and the hummingbirds and stuff like that.

**00:03:33**

**SW:** Do you remember what her—what some of the things that she had in her garden were?

**00:03:37**

**LC:** She did mostly herbs and flowers and then she would do—I think she did squash and zucchini and maybe some beans, but nothing big. You know it was in the city, so—.

**00:03:54**

**SW:** It was right in Little Rock?

**00:03:55**

**LC:** Yeah, it was actually right in kind of the older part of town where they have the 1950s homes that have the eight-foot ceilings and you know really tiny compartmentalized houses with little backyards. They all look the same, it was kind of one of those things, so—.

**00:04:10**

**SW:** Did a lot of people have gardens in Little Rock that you remember? Was that common?

**00:04:16**

**LC:** No, I mean that was really the only garden I had—that was the only time I had ever really been exposed to farming. Most of the time my experience with the outdoors was kind of the father/daughter, “Let’s go camping, let’s go fishing,” thing. And so we’d go to campgrounds and the Ozarks like the Northwest part of Arkansas has a really beautiful national park, but you know after living in Arkansas and kind of driving from one town to the next and seeing the flat fields of commercial farming you kind of don’t really see it anymore.

**00:04:54**

So it wasn’t anything interesting to me and I didn’t really remember it. It’s not something that stays vivid in my memory.

**00:05:03**

**SW:** And what are your parents’ names?

**00:05:05**

**LC:** My—my dad’s name is Frank Cox and my mother’s name is Fay Cox and my dad is American and he’s from Little Rock, and my mother is Filipino and she moved to the United States when she was eighteen.

**00:05:21**

**SW:** And then she met—did she move to—right to Little Rock and—?

**00:05:25**

**LC:** She did, she um, she moved to Little Rock. She got placed in Little Rock actually. In the early ’80s [1980s] America was kind of trying to get a lot of doctors from Asia and India over to the states and nurses as well and so there was this weird push for, you know, this medical staff—staffing from overseas and so she was part of the program. She had just graduated from nursing school. And they also graduate you a lot younger there than in the states. And so she got placed in Little Rock.

**00:06:03**

**SW:** And do you—do you know her maiden name?

**00:06:06**

**LC:** Yes, it’s De Guzman.

**00:06:09**

**SW:** And do you know where in the Philippines is she from?

**00:06:11**

**LC:** She is from Manila. So she’s actually Quezon City, which is a part of Manila.

**00:06:18**

**SW:** So she worked as a nurse?

**00:06:20**

**LC:** Yeah, she was—she was originally going to—and I’ve asked her all about this, it’s so funny—I asked her how she got to the states and you know why did she want to become a nurse? And she said originally she was going to—she got offered to be a flight attendant in San Francisco. And she would have done the one trip a week kind of thing back and forth to Japan for like Japan Airlines or something because she had a nursing degree and she was bilingual. She could speak Spanish and English and Tagalog. So that was great for like a stewardess at that time to have that kind of medical background. But she said she didn’t want to do it because she wanted to be more stable. And so she took the opportunity to go to Arkansas which in hindsight I’m like, “Mom, why did—out of every—you could have lived in San Francisco,” **[Laughs]** you know, “but you chose Arkansas,” which turned out okay—so.

**00:07:21**

**SW:** I’m wondering did she do a lot of cooking when you were growing up.

**00:07:24**

**LC:** She did actually. I you know—my farming in some way is very influenced by my aunt and my memories of her as well as memories of my family in the kitchen growing up and a lot of the times I only had the chance to go back to the Philippines once before my grandfather died when I was twelve. And we stayed for three months. But other than that, you know, I think nowadays modern couples that are from different backgrounds and different countries, they kind of try to teach their children both languages and instill both of the cultures within the child’s life. And I feel like in—at that time when I was born and maybe particularly amongst Filipinos there is really this mentality of integration. And so we never learned Tagalog, you know we never really communicated with the family in the Philippines and so the only real connection I had with my heritage from the Philippines was through the food my mother cooked.

**00:08:32**

And so that was kind of, you know, Thanksgiving we would have half turkey and then we’d also have like lumpia and adobo, which are like traditional Filipino dishes and so that was always a part of my food memories of my mother. And then she would also do crazy stuff. I think now about it, she used to let me get into her spice cabinet and I would cook—basically I’d just get a pan and put water in it and throw all of these spices in it **[Laughs]** and—and pretend that I was cooking something amazing. And it probably smelled horrible. And now I think, “Oh my gosh, spices are so expensive, was she insane?” She just let me dump all these spices in water, but she used to let me cook with her and that was also a big part of the—of the reason why I farm now.

**00:09:25**

**SW:** And so how—so did you leave Arkansas when you were eighteen or how did you—? Can you kind of talk about how you got out here and farming and that trajectory?

**00:09:34**

**LC:** Yeah, yeah, so I originally wanted to be a ballet dancer. I had danced ever since I was a kid and when I could choose where I wanted to go for college I kind of took the more practical side and said, “Okay, if I become a dancer I might not even get into a company. I’ll go to New York and have to be poor and so why don’t I just go to—stay in Arkansas and do the practical thing and kind of just get a liberal arts degree?” So I got a degree in history and in—and the focus was African history for me, and sculpture. And then when I got out of school I kind of was just applying to jobs in Arkansas and it was hard to use my history degree because there is actually something that exists that’s like a history degree in Arkansas history. So I was competing with people who never planned to leave the states, like—or to leave Arkansas. And they were like specifically studying Arkansas history.

**00:10:47**

So I ended up working in a kitchen. And I thought that was just the most practical thing to do. You could learn something technical and I also kind of rationalized it because it was a way to you know merge history—the history of food, you know and the way you’re eating history to merge that with art, you know an art that’s edible. And so that’s kind of what I did until I met this French musician from Bordeaux who told me about the University of Gastronomic Sciences through Slow Food. And he said, “Oh, this is great. You should go to this if you’re really in the history and the culture of food and production. You should go to this university.” And so I

applied to it and I got in. And then when I went there part of the—the master’s program was you have to do an internship—whatever kind of internship you want and so I knew from my—my—my interest in Africa that I wanted to go do an internship in Africa. Well, you’re not going to be a wine critic in Africa unless you go to South Africa.

**00:12:06**

And so I chose to go to East Africa and my focus was to work with a rural radio station that did you know interviews with farmer, coffee farmers and tree farmers, and people that were growing kind of traditional vegetables. And that really kind of—it was really frustrating to see how they had to deal with the government and how they had to deal with the—the markets being so frustrating and just the climate and not having clean water and even if they grew this amazing produce, they didn’t have any way to sell it. I mean one of the—one of the coolest things is I went and saw these nuns from St. Francis of Assisi and it was in Tanzania and they were hermits. And so behind these walls of their kind of—I guess what is it—the—like an abbey or something they—behind their abbey they were growing these herbs that could cure malaria which was a lot better than getting pills from, you know, the United States and developing countries that they don’t have money for, they don’t really have access to, and so they were working on ways to dry herbs that could cure malaria. But they also had this beautiful vanilla that they were growing. And I bought probably ten pounds of vanilla for \$5 US from them.

**00:13:41**

**SW:** Whoa.

**00:13:41**

**LC:** And I wanted to give them more but they were saying, “No, no, that’s too much.” And I literally sold—or I literally bought it and then went to the post office and mailed my mother this vanilla and she said that two months later she got it. I don’t know how it went through customs because it wasn’t vacuum sealed or anything. But yeah, she got it and she opened the—the mailbox and it just—she got this whiff of vanilla [**Laughs**]. So we’re still kind of chipping away at the vanilla. Anyway but that was—that was really kind of formative in me deciding that I needed to have a say in what happens to the food system, whether it’s in the states or in Europe or Africa or wherever I choose to live. I really wanted to be participatory in that kind of decision-making.

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And so when we moved back to the states after I met my husband in Italy, we moved back to the states and we applied for an internship on a farm in Georgia. And we did that for eight months and we kind of learned how to farm and then we were offered an opportunity at the farm where we are now which is kind of an incubator farm for other farmers. The infrastructure is already pre-existing and we’ve been here for two years, so—. It’s kind of a random way to get to this point but [**Laughs**] I could have done a million other things too and they would have been—I could have found interesting things in all of those things, but it would definitely have had to do with food and with growing food, so—.

**00:15:24**

**SW:** I just want to go back and make sure I get this stuff. What—where did you go to school in Arkansas and what year did you go to Italy?

**00:15:35**

**LC:** Okay, I went to Hendricks College in Arkansas. It's a small liberal arts college, and then I left to go to Italy in 2007 and stayed in Italy until 2010.

**00:15:52**

**SW:** And I'm wondering while you were at—while you were in the program in Italy I mean what kinds of things—I'm sure, I mean it sounds like you were exposed to so many things but I'm wondering if there are particular things that kind of blew your mind more than others, something that you keep with you in your work today if that makes sense.

**00:16:12**

**LC:** I think the producers, meeting with the producers kind of stuck in my mind. They were so excited about their product and what they had made and they would always want you to taste it. And you know seeing the—the men in their eighties that make this parmesan cheese and they wake up every morning at four AM and the only day they have off is Christmas Day every year, but they make this amazing product. And they respect it. And that's definitely stuck with me. And also the—the cultural ties of the specific food that we were eating the whole time during this master's that was kind of the main point was this product comes from this region because of the history behind it, because of the way these people had to evolve. I mean one of the things in Crete, we went to Crete for a—for a staj, which is a field trip in English, we went to Crete and we were with this guy who was a wild grain gatherer and so he does a lot of foraging for wild asparagus and wild fennel and they told us that because Crete was colonized so much by Arabic

countries, by Italy, like the Romans and all these different countries that the law there is you can harvest and forage on other people's lands. And it's not illegal.

**00:17:47**

So there's really no such thing as private land if you're going to forage because they had to link together to kind of survive all of this invasion. And that was pretty neat to me. That's something you wouldn't see in the states you know. **[Laughs]** No trespassing, shotguns kind of thing—so that was really cool to me.

**00:18:09**

**SW:** And when you were in East Africa were you in Tanzania or were you kind of all over the place?

**00:18:14**

**LC:** I was in Tanzania at first and then I got—the first half of my internship was in Tanzania at this radio station near Lake Victoria and then the other half of my internship was in Kampala, Uganda. So it was really different, it was going from a very rural environment where I didn't see a foreigner for, you know, a month and a half to being in a very urban environment with lots of nonprofits, lots of foreigners, lots of missionary work—in Kampala. And so it was a very stark contrast, both the urban setting and how people in—dealing with food in the markets are—are in that situation versus a very like rural situation where there's one big market in the city or in the town and everybody goes to that.

00:19:14

**SW:** Can you talk a little bit more, I mean you talked about a couple specific things you know not having access to clean water and just the way that they're treated, the way that farmers are treated there, but can you talk about what the system is like in—in the parts of Africa where you were in Uganda and Tanzania?

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**LC:** Yeah, first of all I think that a lot of what I noticed at the beginning was the lack of infrastructure and so really the concept of time there and getting from one place to another is so dependent on multiple factors, such as did it rain today? Normally when it rains there it kind of floods and so the—the roads will get washed out or you know did you pop a tire? Maybe you popped a tire, fixed it, and go ten more miles and pop another tire. It's kind of—so I noticed that—that was a really big problem as far as just in general the overall problems with East Africa and as trying to become a developed nation or group of nations. The infrastructure was just not there. The internet comes from South Africa and so there is this—at the time there was this whole debate over damming up the Nile and South Africa wants to dam up the Nile so they can get more electricity and what happened—what ended up happening was Google and the internet was cut off in the entire country of Uganda for two weeks while I was there.

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So imagine in America if you couldn't get on your phone and do a Facebook post I mean for one day, it was—it's crazy. So that's a really big problem. Mobilizing the farmers, also talking to farmers about not producing the same things, so as to not have the markets saturated because obviously with the law of economics if everybody has tomatoes the price goes down. And just little things like that—that specifically has to do with infrastructure getting more people

to market that grow different things but also connecting them through internet, through instant messaging, through this technology that can help kind of mobilize these people.

**00:21:42**

And then another thing that was really interesting to me was where farmers source their seeds. And I went to a seed bank that you couldn't even really call a seed bank. It was basically just a shack and the neighbors of the people I was living with at the time were going to get their seeds for the fall. And they showed up and it was just—it was literally a Wal-Mart bag, filled with random seeds. But there was no way of knowing where they came from. They could have come from America. They could have come from Monsanto. They could have been saved. There was no way whatsoever to know where they came from. And furthermore the people really didn't care because that wasn't a priority for them. The priority was you have seeds. You can grow things. So there's also an education problem as well—or an education, I wouldn't call it a problem. I'd say a deficiency, there needs to be more education about it and also methods such as you know canning and preservation and water-saving, things like that—that need to be kind of given to the—presented to these farmers and also these rural subsistence, you know they're just kind of living on what they have to help them kind of get through this unstable system that they're living in, you know.

**00:23:14**

**SW:** And so I guess you know you—you talked about you guys came back to the states and ended up getting an internship in Georgia, but I mean did you want to come back to the states when—you know after you spent your time in East Africa? Did you—you were in Italy, you were kind of all over the place actually. **[Laughs]**

00:23:29

**LC:** I know. **[Laughs]**

00:23:30

**SW:** I'm like wait, you were everywhere. I mean did you want to stay outside of the states and get more involved in food issues outside or was there something that was pulling you back to the states after seeing all of the—experiencing all of the things that you did?

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**LC:** Yeah, it's strange. I—after I got back from Africa and then I graduated, Luca and I kind of decided that we were going to move to Rome on a tip from a friend—a family friend who had worked with the embassy and the UN and so what we did is basically we moved to Rome and rented an apartment on Craig's List for two weeks and I went to a bunch of interviews. I wanted to stay there but I wasn't locked into the idea. It was more about what I could do where I was and so whatever place allowed me to do that and have the job that I wanted and kind of become involved is really—and I still have that mentality. You know I—I feel ties to the South and there are things that I really love about it. The food culture I think is one of the few that you can find in America that actually has a history. And but I wouldn't be opposed to moving anywhere else in the world. There's so many things to do in the food system in general that I could find a place for myself anywhere, you know if there was a purpose, so—. Is that what you asked, yeah?

**[Laughs]** My family kind of pulled me back, too.

00:25:09

But you know it's you always feel fragmented you know. Once we moved back here now I miss Italy and Europe and—and that but when I was over there I really missed the states and I

feel like if you travel and you—you have the tendency to make connections with wherever you go you'll always be fragmented in that way after you kind of open the floodgates to the different cultures you have, you know.

**00:25:34**

**SW:** Uh-hm, and just before I forget to ask you, what is Luca's last name and where is he from?

**00:25:38**

**LC:** Yeah, his last name is Caffettani, and he is from Parma, Italy, yeah.

**00:25:45**

**SW:** Do you speak—are you fluent in Italian?

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**LC:** Yes.

**00:25:49**

**SW:** So how many languages do you speak?

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**LC:** Oh I only speak two [**Laughs**]. I—I—and I'm losing my Italian every day, so—. We speak—we don't like to be rude to, you know, Americans and so we always speak in English here, but we—if we were over there we would speak in Italian.

00:26:09

**SW:** That’s pretty cool.

00:26:10

**LC:** Yeah.

00:26:12

**SW:** So how did you—so you—when you guys decided to come to the states you came back in the states and Luca came with you and you guys got married?

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**LC:** Uh-hm.

00:26:21

**SW:** How so were—did you—were you just looking for an internship on a farm and Georgia just happened to be the place or were you specifically looking to go to Georgia?

00:26:27

**LC:** We—we to find an internship we kind of sent out applications all over the country. I mean we applied for an urban farm in Austin [Texas], called Johnson’s Backyard Garden. We applied to a farm off of—in an island off of Washington state. We applied to the farm in Georgia and of all the places that called us or didn’t call us, you know, Burge [Organic Farm in Mansfield, Georgia] would let us have our two dogs. And that was kind of a big thing because we had taken our dog back from Europe with us, so we flew her—we got her in Europe and we brought her back here. We couldn’t abandon her. And so that was kind of, you know, no compromise. “We

want a farm but we have a dog. Can we bring her?” **[Laughs]** And they were really the—the farm where we interned is called Burge Organic Farm and it’s about an hour outside of Atlanta. And they’re a hunting club as well. And so—kind of a private hunting club and they also do weddings and then they have the organic farm and so the farm manager said, “Oh that’s not a problem. We have like thirty dogs running around all the time. So come on.” So we ended up coming to Georgia.

**00:27:48**

**SW:** And what year was that?

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**LC:** That was 2011 at the very beginning—of 2011.

**00:27:56**

**SW:** And what was—what was that internship like? I mean what was the—what kinds of things did you learn about yourself on the farm when you went to Burge?

**00:28:06**

**LC:** Oh, I probably learned that I’m more neurotic than I think of myself as being—. Yeah, I’m more—way more neurotic than I thought I was and a perfectionist. I learned that I have to be more patient, I guess, with people. It’s really—the farming is a very—you know group-oriented thing and a lot of things you can’t do by yourself. You have to kind of work with four or five people to knock something out in a day, otherwise it’ll take you two weeks to get it done by

yourself. And so that was one of the things that I—I had to work on was being more patient with people.

**00:28:55**

I also learned that I was a leader but I could also be a team player. Being an intern I kind of—at first I thought, “Oh, I don’t know if I can kind of work under somebody doing this hard physical labor,” but I really wanted to learn and so that wasn’t even a question to me once we got into it. I kind of asked a lot of questions and took all the direction that I could and did everything that I was supposed to. And that really helped because I think later on when I came back and had questions for Cory [Mosser] who was the manager he respected me in that way to give me really in-depth answers about it because he knew I was committed to it.

**00:29:35**

**SW:** What is Cory’s last name?

**00:29:36**

**LC:** Cory Mosser is his last name.

**00:29:39**

**SW:** What kinds of things, I mean was this the first time that you were actually getting in the dirt and planting and harvesting and doing all of this stuff or were you doing stuff like that when you were abroad?

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**LC:** I would say that this is definitely the first time we had ever done anything like this. I was a—how do you say it—an armchair farmer up until that point. And so I had read a bunch of books on like bio-dynamics or—and organic—*Organic Farming for Dummies*. I still have that book. But yeah, it was the first time—because you don't really—it's so intimidating you know and I've—I talked to Cory about it and he said, "Oh yeah. I have—I can't grow things in pots. I kill everything in pots." He said, "But if you get me in soil I can grow like a maniac." You know I think that's what it was in college. I had basil plants that were in pots and kind of herb—herbs in pots and I'd always kill them. So while I kept reading about it I was so scared to even just do anything, so yeah this was definitely the first time. It was definitely the first time Luca had ever touched dirt. I mean he was a city boy and his shoes are so nice. I can't even **[Laughs]**—

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**SW:** He had really nice shoes while he was farming?

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**LC:** Well he had really nice shoes while he was not farming and then slowly he's become—I kind of look at it—I know it's totally making a—a—how do you say—how do you say it? The—it's totally making a—like a blanket statement but I look at his refined side as his Italian side and his—when he's dirty and hasn't taken a shower and, you know, is on the tractor I totally look at that as his American side now because every time—because our life in Italy was so different. It was living in the city, you know we'd bike everywhere. He had little tiny slacks on that were ironed, you know. He would iron his underwear **[Laughs]**. And now we're totally the opposite. You know, we wash our clothes like once a week because there's no point, we're just going to

get dirty again, so it's kind of funny. I see that as the Italian side of our life. And then now this is the very American side of our life.

**00:32:06**

**SW:** So why did you guys decide to keep doing it? I mean what kept you—what kept you on and what—what brought you out here?

**00:32:14**

**LC:** Well see, when we were interning and we love Cory, you know he taught us a lot and he taught us how to be the farmers that we are today and how—the—the standards that we have for ourselves and for others and just the farm operation in general, but working eight months under somebody is really doing that kind of physical labor makes you, number one question if you even like the physical labor in itself—the job, and number two question if you ever want to do it for somebody or if you want to do it for yourself.

**00:32:50**

And so we found that we liked the physicality of it and we liked the job but if we were going to do it again we would definitely do it for ourselves. And so this—the timing of this offer and this land kind of falling into our laps coincided with that realization that we love this—this job and this life and that we definitely want to do it for ourselves. So that's why we stayed—stayed and continued to farm.

**00:33:19**

**SW:** What do you love so much about it?

00:33:22

**LC:** I really like the creativity of—well first of all I like nursing the plants. I like the relationship that my hands have with the soil. I like the physicality of it obviously. You know and—and in a way it was very practical for me. I said I wasn't going to be a dancer but what is something that I can do that's physical every single day of my life as a job? You know, and it's definitely not sitting in front of a desk all day. I think that with that kind of training as a dancer I have to have training in the rest of my life, like throughout the day. And so this was a very much kind of train yourself, get up in the morning, you're going to bend down and you're going to do this over and over until you find the most efficient least painful way to do it, you know to where you're fast.

00:34:16

And that kind of mentality overlapped. And then I really like participating with chefs in creating these dishes and in growing things for—for them that they love. I like the story of the food. I think that that's really what keeps me interested on a more emotional level is the—the story behind the food that I grow and kind of educating people about that even educating chefs but also at markets, you know growing these strange things and we do try to grow a lot of Italian varieties of things as well Asian varieties. And that's what really keeps it interesting.

00:35:00

**SW:** Can you think of a—a crop or two or a plant or two that has a particular story that you like to talk about or something that you think is interesting for people to know about it?

**00:35:10**

**LC:** Yeah, I think that dandelion greens are really cool. The—you know and—and also chicory is I think—in Italy in the winter you eat a lot of chicory which is kind of a bitter salad green and it grows—it's very hardy so it grows through the winter. I think that in the states we have this concept that you can't farm year-round or you don't get food year-round. In the South that's totally not true. You can—you can very easily farm year-round and you can even start planting in the winter. In the North you can eat year-round as well, it's just a matter of planting early enough to where you're just harvesting through the winter to eat.

**00:35:55**

But so in—in Europe they are very much a more localized food system and so in the winter you don't really get lettuce or arugula. You'll get something, if you want to eat local you'll get chicory or dandelion greens which are kind of—they have this bitter component to them and a lot of American palates aren't used to that bitter component. And a lot of chefs love it, so—so yeah. I—I like talking to chefs because they kind of have that world view of it and they know how to take something that is very particular to a certain culture and make it appeal to people on the mass market. So yeah, chicory is definitely one of those things and dandelion greens as well. In Greece you know you harvest dandelion greens, it's one of those—I've had people at the market in the states, in Georgia, come up to me and say that back in the Depression their grandparents would eat dandelion greens because they couldn't get any other greens. And so they evoked these memories of the history of the United States and the Great Depression and as well as things for me that back on the other side of the ocean, so—.

**00:37:13**

**SW:** How—okay, can you talk about how—you said that this opportunity fell in your laps. Can you talk about how that happened, I mean what happened for you guys to come out to this farm here?

**00:37:24**

**LC:** Yeah, so as we were finishing the internship with Cory we were kind of mulling over what to do next and we didn't really have any specific ideas. And so Cory put us in touch with this girl named Katherine Kennedy who is from Atlanta, she's—she's twenty-nine as well. And so I contacted her and she was out here at the time doing a farm and the name of her farm was called Ivabell Acres. So it's very Southern, you know Ivabell I think was her grandmother's name or her great aunt's name—something like that. But—but that's also the cool thing about this place is you can always make it what you—you can evoke what you want to evoke out of the business name.

**00:38:10**

Anyway she had a very Southern name going on and she was actually trying to get out of this farm to do more urban stuff in Atlanta. And so we talked about it and she wanted a partner for half of the year as she transitioned out and we were—you know we were there and we said we would do it and we had the money from our marriage saved up. And so that's kind of how—it fell into our lap timing-wise—definitely because it was right when we finished our internship with Cory that we moved in maybe a month later and started this farm.

**00:38:47**

**SW:** And what year was that again?

**00:38:50**

**LC:** That was 2000—and let me think, 2012—or no, it was 2011, I guess. It was November 2011 and then that's when we moved in. And so our first year was 2012, our first full season was 2012.

**00:39:08**

**SW:** And can you talk a little bit about the Glover Family Farm and how long they've been here and—and sort of like you know the—you know Joe and Judith farmed before you guys did and just sort of the story around that?

**00:39:23**

**LC:** Yeah, so—so the Glover Family this has—this has been in their land for over 100 years. And I think Sherman's troops camped here, actually there are a lot of old—there's lots of old pieces of metal and bullets around back in the pastures. But anyway, so they—Skip and Cookie started—so it's been in their family's land for a really long—a long time. And then I think Skip's father—Skip is the guy who is living here now and he's in his late seventies and his wife Cookie is also here and she's in her late seventies. Skip's father I think was doing conventional farming for a little bit on this land and then he got to the point where he really couldn't do it anymore. And at that time Skip was doing his own independent research into organic farming and I think that was in the late '70s [1970s], early '80s [1980s]. And so Skip as he took—started taking over the farming operation they converted from a commercial scale farm into an organic small sustainable farm.

00:40:40

And so that—that continued on this organic farm concept on this land until, I think, the late ‘90s [1990s] when Skip and Cookie got to the age where they couldn’t really do it anymore. And so what happened was through Georgia Organics which is a great organization, in Georgia that kind of connects farmers and landholders and food people and chefs and—and all kinds of people in the food world—connects them together, Skip was actually on the Board of Georgia Organics. And he got in touch with Joe [Reynolds] and Judith [Winfrey]. Joe was at the time interning—or no, he was working for Nicolas Donck, who is also one of the few farmers back in the ‘90s [1990s] and early 2000s who was doing this organic farming and so he had—Joe had worked for Nicolas for five years more or less. I don’t know exactly—don’t quote me on that, but Skip approached Joe and said, “I have this land. We don’t want to farm it anymore. We’re interested in having young people out here to do it. Would you be interested?” And Joe took that opportunity and was out here for three years. And then Katherine took over the land from Joe. She was here for one year and this is—then we took over the land from Katherine. And we’ve been here—this is our second year.

00:42:11

**SW:** And what was it like to come out here and take this over?

00:42:15

**LC:** It was kind of crazy. You know there’s always the transition period because every farmer does it differently. So you know we came from a different—Katherine actually interned before she started farming. She did an eight-month internship with another farm called Jenny Jack Sun Farm up in—Pine Mountain, yeah Pine Mountain. And so she had a different philosophy of

farming than what we had learned from Cory. So when we came in, you know, it was all about compromising and trying to figure out what methods were the best and yeah, for a second there was a little awkward transitioning but you know you—you pick and choose your battles and you learn new things that are better than what you already knew on both sides.

**00:43:06**

So I do think that yeah, it was—it was a little strange at first.

**00:43:13**

**SW:** How have you found your stride out here?

**00:43:16**

**LC:** [*Sighs*] Like, what do you mean exactly?

**00:43:19**

**SW:** Well I mean—I mean you know when you're doing an internship you—you talked about working for Cory and you're learning, but I mean—I mean what have you—I guess what—how—how have you—what kinds of things have you learned? I mean they could be specific or general I guess, but just—in how you operate, how you guys operate on your own when you're out in the field or how it's changed since you—if anything has changed you know just finding your own niche since working for Cory and you're on your own here you know?

00:43:52

**LC:** Yeah, well I think they're—so after we first moved onto the land we had only eight months' worth of experience and there are things every season that a farmer fails at and a farmer succeeds at. And so having interned for only one season there were things that we didn't know how to grow at all, for example corn, broccoli—those are things that had—had troubled Cory the year that we were interning there. And so we didn't even get around to harvesting it or really understanding all the aspects of that product.

00:44:32

So after—you know there was really a—the transition was a little difficult for the different personalities involved and the partnership in general and also trying to form a relationship with Skip and Cookie and seeing what their expectations of us were. But after that was over we—we started growing things—I really feel like this year we've hit our stride. You know last year was the first year that we had ever farmed on our own, so we were doing a lot of experiments. We were really successful in some things but we also failed at other things that ironically we had learned about with Cory. **[Laughs]** And then there were things that we had not learned at Cory's that we were very successful in last year.

00:45:19

So it really is totally independent of—of your past and it's—it's almost like a card game. You know half of the game is what you're dealt in the beginning. And then the other half is how you decide to play it. So working with the weather and all of these things, I think that we've become a lot more efficient in what we grow and we've kind of—Luca and I last year were kind of trying to figure out what we were good at individually and there was—you know we're husband and wife, so there's—there's our personal relationship and our business relationship and sometimes we would step on each other's toes but—but this year we've kind of found out that

you know Luca is going to be more of the tractor/soil guy and I'm going to be more of the marketing and the seed choosing and you know the more tedious things I'll do and he'll do more of the grand sweeping changes to the—to the fields.

**00:46:21**

So now we've kind of I guess compartmentalized these things and we don't—and that's really helped us to stay working together. **[Laughs]**

**00:46:32**

**SW:** Which isn't easy.

**00:46:33**

**LC:** No, it's not. **[Laughs]**

**00:46:35**

**SW:** I'm going to take this out of the sun.

**00:46:37**

**LC:** Oh yeah.

**00:46:40**

**SW:** Digital whatever it is—. So can you talk just a little bit about how many acres you guys farm here, how big it is, how many acres you farm, and maybe some of the things you grow that you really love or you want people to know about maybe a story about—?

**00:46:54**

**LC:** Okay, yeah, so the farm—the property, the entire property itself is twenty-five acres. A lot of it is pasture and woodlands but we, ourselves farm five acres total. At any given time with cover crops we'll do three and a half to four acres, so that's basically what we're tilling and that's where our cash crops are. And then some of the things that I like to grow—well this year I'm really excited, we're growing ginger, which is kind of a new thing. A lot of the ginger that you get in the country comes from Hawaii or California, which most of our food comes from California. But there are a group of farmers in Georgia that are working with UGA [University of Georgia] to kind of study whether or not we can grow ginger in the South. And so I'm growing—we're growing one bed of ginger. We'll see how it goes. And then another thing that I'm really excited about is we're growing cotton. And we're growing colored cotton which I got from—I got the seeds from what is it—Southern Exposure Seed Exchange and I wasn't allowed to ship it to Georgia. So I shipped it to Arkansas and over Christmas I went back for—for the holidays and took the seeds over the border. **[Laughs]**

**00:48:26**

**SW:** Why—why—okay for people—okay what is colored cotton and why—? I guess the first question really is why can't you ship it to Georgia?

**00:48:34**

**LC:** I don't know exactly. In the—you know we get these—farmers get seed catalogs sent to them all the time and you know you have your—your seed companies that you generally source from that you tend to like because they have germination or something or other. I like Southern Exposure because it is focused on the South and so they know the climate and then there's also

that history with the seeds, right? There's the heirloom varieties from the South which you got to love.

**00:49:03**

So the cotton—and they're the only seed company that has—that I know that sells cotton, organic cotton. It just said at the bottom of the—the page, it said you know, “This is a cotton—unfortunately cotton cannot be shipped to California, Georgia, and some other state and if you live in Virginia you have to have a permit, proof of growing permit in order to get these seeds. And not only that but we limit you to one packet per time.” So there's clearly something where they don't want this to become a commercial enterprise, it's either that like the government is imposing this—I'm sure the government is imposing this—“you can't ship it to Georgia thing,” but as far as the packet sizes, it could be two things. It could be either the company itself is just now getting the seeds and wanting to kind of you know propagate the seeds or that's also a government thing that is limiting the possible commercialization of organic cotton. And I know there's only one organic cotton stand in the United States.

**00:50:19**

**SW:** Where is it?

**00:50:20**

**LC:** So I don't know where it is but someone told me that.

**00:50:23**

**SW:** That's crazy. What is colored cotton? How is it different from regular cotton?

00:50:27

**LC:** Okay, well colored cotton is just what it says. There's green cotton that's kind of a pale green color. Then there's brown cotton, which is almost like a bark, a tree bark color. And they have pink cotton. They have kind of yellow cotton. The story behind that and I read in Southern Exposure Seed Exchange was that in slave—like during the times of slavery, slaves were allowed to grow only colored cotton for themselves and the white cotton which had a longer fiber which was easier to process, therefore more economic, they could only grow for their white slave owners. So white cotton was grown for the white people and colored cotton was grown for colored people. And because of that a lot of these colored cotton varieties, which have been deemed kind of not processable because of their fiber being so short have gone extinct.

00:51:39

And so I guess Southern Exposure got a hold of these seeds and is trying to propagate them as well as you know sell them to the general public which is really cool. So I—I want to grow that just for the historical perspective and also sometimes we have kids come out here and I think that is cool to show them that and to tell them the story as well, so—.

00:52:03

**SW:** I just have a couple more questions for you. Are you good?

00:52:06

**LC:** Yeah, yeah.

**00:52:07**

**SW:** Can you talk about—I mean there’s all this you know people—a lot of people have mentioned how hard it is to earn a living being a farmer and you’re farming out here at the Glover Family Farm. Can you talk about how that works for you guys, I mean do you have to pay them for the land and then you can keep all the profits from the sales of like the market or—?

**00:52:31**

**LC:** Yeah, so yeah this situation is really rare. We don’t pay for the land. We don’t pay rent. The only thing we pay for is the electricity and infrastructural improvements and when things get broken we fix them. So that keeps our overhead pretty low. Our operating costs are really low. We get to decide how big we want to grow. If we want to spend \$2,000 on seeds and have 150-member CSA then we put all the money into that and then we get all the returns. But if we only want to spend \$200 on the CSA then we—we get the returns on that as well.

**00:53:15**

That’s really the only reason why this is—from a starting point has made it possible for us to get this far and be this successful and to be able to pay ourselves a salary every month, you know which is not a lot but it is a consistent salary.

**00:53:34**

**SW:** Can you talk about like in the long-term like is—is this something that’s sustainable for you guys like do you think that you, you know in the future you would stay with this kind of opportunity of farming on land that’s owned by someone else or would you guys eventually want to like find your own land and farm?

**00:54:01**

**LC:** Okay, yeah I think that this—this type of farming is essential to young farmers and I think that at the same time it is a stepping stone. So I feel like Skip and Cookie understand that and that's really their intention is they want to be an incubator farm. They don't want it to be a lifelong commitment and they want farmers to go on and to do bigger things and things for themselves.

**00:54:34**

And so I do think that—that there—there are going to be other opportunities and that we'll look for things that are more of our own that we can take more ownership over as we go through the process of continuing to farm and continuing to become better farmers, yeah, so—.

**00:54:59**

**SW:** And could you talk about—about who—who do you grow for her, like how does it work? You mentioned the CSA, but could you talk about like who you grow for and how it works?

**00:55:09**

**LC:** Yeah, so the way that we kind of structure our planting is our first priority is our CSA because they give us the seed money in the beginning in April and March and April they give us the money to be able to pay ourselves and kind of the startup costs every year to buy the seeds and to pay the vendor fees for the farmers' markets and things like that. So our first priority is definitely the CSA.

00:55:42

Our second priority is the farmers' market because you get the best—just from a business perspective you get the best profit margin for your—your product at retail values. So we definitely love the farmers' markets, plus you get to like have that interaction. I really have more interaction with the farmers' market people than I do the CSA because half of our CSA picks up in Atlanta and we don't—we just drop it off. So the—the people in Atlanta that do the CSA I actually never see them. It's the ones that come to the farm where we kind of have a relationship with them.

00:56:25

And then our third priority is generally the restaurants. But it's different, you know you—part of the way we do things is we like to grow—the fact that we're very small allows us to be a little more free to choose what we want to grow. If you have 150-member CSA your priority is going to be growing things that you know will grow, that you know you'll get a lot of, and that you know you can give 150 people. Because we only have a fifty-member CSA we can grow things that maybe aren't as efficient, they're not as—you actually lose money on it, but they're things that add interest to the farm and that get people coming to the farmers' market stand, like ginger. You know nobody is probably going to buy—no restaurants are going to buy ginger from us, no—nobody is going to buy cotton from us. You know we're growing such a small amount but you know in the fall if I make, you know, Christmas wreaths or fall wreaths using cotton that's kind of a novelty that people appreciate and people will buy. So and it adds diversity to ourselves, so yes, kind of—.

00:57:39

**SW:** And what markets are you guys at?

**00:57:40**

**LC:** We do the Decatur Farmers' Market on Saturdays and it's behind the main square and that one goes year-round and then we do the Grant Park Farmers' Market which is near the Atlanta Zoo and that's on Sundays from 9:30 to 1:30 and then our CSA drop-off for Atlanta are on Wednesday. So we go into the city three times a week.

**00:58:07**

**SW:** And can you talk about some of the restaurants you work with?

**00:58:10**

**LC:** Yeah, so some of our favorite restaurants that have—well they've evolved into some of our favorite restaurants were first out of the—you know we first kind of made connections with them because it was practical for us because our—of our Decatur kind of home base, our Decatur CSA drop off. But we really love Drew Belline from 246 [No. 246]. He is a great guy. He's really supported us the past two years and, you know, we came out of nowhere. We didn't—we didn't know him and he didn't know us. And he asked us to partner with him for the Killer Tomato Festival, both years in a row, and for another event called Les Dames d'Escoffier which promotes women in the food world. And he was cooking for that and he asked us to partner with him for that. So he's kind of you know allowed us to go to these functions and to get our name out there.

**00:59:07**

And then we really love Billy Allin, who is the chef for Cakes and Ale in Decatur as well and he's great because he goes to the farmers' market, so he's up bright and early. I mean he's one of the first people at the market, so it's nice to see chefs that will walk to the market, see what all the producers have and say, "Hey, I really want this, if you guys have any left-over—because I know this is your best opportunity to sell it—sell all you can but if you have any left-over come of the restaurant and we'll buy the rest." And it's really nice to know that going into a market that even if you don't sell all of it you—you have a place to move it, you know. I love Billy.

**00:59:50**

**SW:** And I just have one more like question for you. It's—well it's actually two, but can you talk about the community of farmers here in terms of like I guess the first question since this is all about women and farming, like is there something particular up to this area, like the Atlanta area or Georgia about seeing all these women farming or do you think—do you think it's something that's particular to Georgia?

**01:00:17**

**LC:** I feel like—ugh that's a difficult question. I feel like it's not particular to Georgia. I think that it's—first of all I think it shouldn't be a phenomenon. Okay, secondly, I do think that it's becoming more widespread all over the United States to see females farming. Skip has said to me that he thinks women are the best farmers because we have that natural tendency to be mothers and to nurture things. And that's really what farming is—is you're nurturing plants. I

mean all of these seeds want to grow. It's just whether or not you give them the conditions that are right to do it.

**01:01:05**

I feel like you know it's really—we're at that point that the connections that—you know I feel a lot closer to more—many more of the male farmers than I do the female farmers actually in Georgia. And I don't know why that it is. I am—I have a lot of girlfriends. I don't have a lot of guy friends in my civilian life. So it's strange to me that I wouldn't be that close with other female farmers. It could—you know you could do a study on the same thing in the workforce or when women are joined with men—or women are kind of competing for a man, they compete with each other when you really don't need to. You're kind of all doing it for the same common goal. I don't think that happens here, I don't think that we compete with each other. I think it's just, in a way, guys have been doing it longer here, so that we as newcomers kind of on the scene can get more from them than we can get from our other female farmers. But I don't feel like it's going to be like that for long. And I feel like in general in the United States you're seeing more female farmers.

**01:02:32**

I do think that females kind of have it for the long-run, they have that stamina to kind of do the internship or decide they want to do it and commit to it, whereas I think sometimes men tend to like power through and then once that—once that physicality kind of wears down it's harder for them to stay committed to it because women have a deeper connection with food, I feel, on a—not necessarily with chefs, because we also know that there are more male chefs in the kitchen than females, but that could really be a product of the intensity of the work environment as opposed to the passion for the food, you know. But I do feel like women have a—overall there are more women that have—that cook every day in their homes and that are

home-cooks and that pickle and can and cook for their children and do these things like that—that if there were women to go into this field that would be what would keep them in it was that passion for food, you know.

**01:03:42**

**SW:** And can you just talk briefly—and this is my last question for you and then if you want to add anything—I’ve taken a good hour of your time—just about the community of farming here in the region if there’s something particular about it? It seems like everybody is pretty connected to each other and there’s good relationships and one person started learning here and then that person ended up teaching someone else, can you talk about the region and farming and the youth?

**01:04:07**

**LC:** Yeah, so yeah, the—the farming community here is awesome. We—I don’t know if it’s like that anywhere else. I figure it could be like that somewhere in California, but California is pretty big. And there are all those different micro-climates but yeah in Georgia that was really one of the things that made Luca and I kind of sit up and take notice of the possibility of becoming farmers in Georgia was the fact that all of these people are connected and none of this information is only for one person. It’s a very open community, we talk about new—new techniques, we talk about problems, ways to fix them. We came here through Cory, who connected us with Katherine. Cory and Katherine and a handful of other farmers were in this movie called *Grow* and they all know each other and, you know, we kind of—with the internship that we had we lucked into it. We stepped into this community that was so supportive and, you know, we barely get to see each other anymore because the season is underway but in the

winters—and when we do see each other it—it is a family. So that’s been really, really important for us, you know. We—we learned everything we know about farming in Georgia. We didn’t have to go out of state to learn anything and bring it in. We learned everything here, so—.

**01:05:41**

**SW:** And you’ve been in other places abroad you know experiencing and learning about the way other people do things. I mean, can you talk about maybe something that’s special that you’ve noticed in your timeframe here in Georgia that really sticks out to you?

**01:05:57**

**LC:** As far as the farming goes?

**01:06:02**

**SW:** Like the land or just—? I don’t know just something regionally impactful?

**01:06:10**

**LC:** Yeah, I think that it’s kind of a warrior spirit here in Georgia. You know Cory said to me when we first started interning with him, he said, “You can farm in Georgia. You could pretty much farm anywhere.” He said Georgia is one of—probably one of the hardest places to farm because of the—the humidity, the heat, the pest pressure, and the disease pressure. And he said, “If you can do that,” you know and we have such a long growing season, “that you can pretty much farm anywhere.”

**01:06:44**

And so you look at other farmers and you—that—that come here to Georgia to farm and it is a very serious decision for your life. You have to be kind of a hard core farmer to make it here. And you also have to be a really astute businessperson too to become one of the forerunners in the farming—farming scene in Georgia. There's a lot of people that want to do it, but it does take you also being a businessperson and kind of understanding exactly what you need to do to keep your business viable and successful.

**01:07:23**

So that's been really, really interesting, you know, there are pros and cons to everything and we've—we've thought about going back to Arkansas and farming there but it's a question of do we want to go back to Arkansas and have to wait for—for them to catch up to the—the infrastructure and the community—the food community that's already existing here in Georgia? We would be—if we did we'd be one of the most successful farmers because we'd be the first to do it. And in a way it would be easier but in another way it would be a lot more difficult, so—yeah.

**01:08:01**

**SW:** Well Lauren is there anything else you want to add that you think is important?

**01:08:06**

**LC:** I talk too much. **[Laughs]** Um, no, I don't know. I can't think of really anything, yeah.

**01:08:20**

**SW:** Well thank you for doing this, I appreciate it.

**01:08:21**

**LC:** Oh you're welcome, yeah. No worries.

**01:08:26**

**SW:** All right.

**01:08:26**

**[End Lauren Cox Interview]**