

Isia Cooper
Crack in the Sidewalk Farmllet
Atlanta, Georgia

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Date: October 14, 2016
Location: Isia Cooper's Farm – Atlanta, FL
Interviewers: Jenna Mobley and Bang Tran
Transcription: Deborah Mitchum
Length: One Hour and Thirteen Minutes
Project: Women Who Farm: Georgia

START OF INTERVIEW

(Sounds from Ms. Cooper's farm in the background)

00:00:01

Bang Tran: So this is Bang Tran and Jenna Mobley with the Southern Foodways Alliance. It is October 14th on a beautiful autumn day and we're here with Isia Cooper at her little farm in south Atlanta. And I'm going to have you introduce yourself real quick into the tape, just your name and what you do.

00:00:26

Isia Cooper: Okay; hi, I'm Isia John Cooper and I am a farmer here in Atlanta. And I guess I mean I do so much more than that but I would basically say that I'm a farmer. I toil in the dirt. *[Laughs]*

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BT: Cool. And just for the record can you tell us your birth date?

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IC: Yeah; November 25, 1980.

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Jenna Mobley: Almost time to celebrate. I'm glad we asked. We'll plan a birthday party. *[Laughs]*

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BT: Yeah. Okay; so let's start from the very beginning. What—was there ever a relationship to farming when you were growing up?

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IC: Hmm; so I would say my relationship was sideways to farming. So I'm an adopted child but my family—I come from a family of—you know from Bowdon, Georgia of—of growers, of farmers, the old-school chicken farm, from that—I think from that lineage.

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But I would say really my love for nature that's where we'll begin started with my adopted family Jack and Jill Cooper. They adopted me when I was eight. And so that was constantly nourished. I was in Girl Scouts for like 12 years [*Laughs*] and I went camping like probably five times a year. And my dad and I went camping all the time. And I just always loved nature. And I was one of those little girls that was obsessed with fairies and tree spirits and always thought I was like hearing things and connecting.

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And I think as I got older, the evolution of that really led me into wanting to be outside, like not—I don't really play well in like offices and buildings. I get rally antsy and I also don't really do well with having bosses. So this—this seems like a really good fit. As far as the health piece to farming, I worked in Hospice for a handful of years in my youth, and on my early 20s, and I would say that—that—that opened the door to food as—as a gateway—as a gateway to—to health and as a gateway to so many different socially conscious you know avenues.

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So now I farm.

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BT: And so where did you grow up at?

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IC: So I grew up primarily in Riverdale, Georgia, really close to here.

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BT: Stayed here around in Georgia all your life?

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IC: Pretty much; I lived in North Carolina for like a very short while which really moved me deeply. It was a really powerful experience and actually kind of propelled me back to Atlanta to—to move deeper into like the food pathways.

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JM: Can you tell us more about that?

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IC: Yeah; so I had just ended a relationship. This is—isn't this the way it goes; I had ended a relationship and needed something different, so I hit the road and ended up on this wonderful piece of land with these amazing women in North Carolina. And it was from October until the early spring and the—the deal was is that I would just kind of work their land and help and keep things clean and—and you know like help—help harvest raspberries and other things like that just to live there. And it was—it was really, really beautiful, like the people I made connections with, the folk school that's up there near—near their place in North Carolina, all the different little growers and the contra dancing and it just kind of like opened my mind to what I wanted to be surrounded with in my life.

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But I knew I had to come back to Atlanta, like I knew that I wasn't done here yet, so back I came to Atlanta and the doors just literally started opening for me and I met—I met my husband, my life partner here and partner in crime in farming, and so much more happened.

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BT: What was the—do you remember what was it called? Was it like a farm; did it have a name or anything?

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IC: Yeah; so it has a name and it's called Pepperland. It's actually—it's amazing; it's an amazing story in itself.

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Khalisa and Corey, they are the people, the two women that run it, and it—it's a—during the summer it's a—an autistic musical camp. So it's really amazing and it helps to nourish those children and introduce them to music and allows them to like put on a show at the end of their camp. It's really cool.

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BT: So when you came back to Georgia and you met your partner, like your partner—your husband, what's his name?

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IC: His name is Chris Clinton.

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BT: How did you guys meet?

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IC: [*Sighs*] So while I was in North Carolina I had made a list [*Laughs*]*—I'm looking to the side at him. I had made a list. I was just over it. I was over like messing around. So I made this list of what I wanted in my next partner, because I just wanted to be really, really clear, you know. So I had like this beautiful list that he was going to be really into nature, like really tender with growing things and listening to things, have a great sense of humor, be a little snarky like all these things, but be the—be really like loyal and loving and humble, but also really intelligent; so this whole big list, very, very particular I will say.*

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Then I came back to Atlanta and I was here for a couple months living near Little 5, working at Sevananda, having my routine, going to the Java Lords every morning and getting my cup of coffee. And then one morning this—this girl who worked there asked me if I wanted to go to like a house show later that night? I was like okay; I'll go.

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And I was sitting in my little apartment and I was like uh I'm so cozy here. I don't know if I really want to go. And at the last moment I decided to go. So I run down the street and I meet her in front of Java Lords—or I thought I was meeting her in front of Java Lords but she wasn't there. And I'm like where are they? So I'm looking around and all the sudden I hear her calling my name. And she calls my name and I hop in the car and I go to this house show at this little place that used to be called the Banana Hammock, you know little houses have names, you know.

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And I walk into the door and I see this guy sitting on the couch and he had like this really beautiful like leather Australian hat and he's like looking at a book and immediately I was like who is this—who is this guy? I can't even see his face, but I'm just immediately drawn to him. He had like this magic hat on.

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And he looks up at me and there's I think like this exchange and then somehow like the music stops and somehow we end up sitting outside. And he's doing like these string like hand-string games and we just end up in front of each other talking for hours just about who we are and what we want to do and how we're basically going to build our lives together. I feel like that's what was happening.

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I got in the car with my friend and said I think I just met the person I could spend the rest of my life with. And he got in the car with his friend and said he just met his one. But I could have missed that opportunity like by this close, like this much [*Gestures*] but that's the story. Oh and he moved in with me three days later and we've never looked back.

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JM: How did it build from there and how did farming become part of that relationship or how did that fit in?

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IC: So part of that conversation that night and subsequent nights was that—or days was just our love, (a) our love for the land, our need for—for greater freedom, and—and our desire to want to be in a place, like place for a long time, a place where you could just rest your bones literally, a place—and a place that we could nurture for a long time.

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And that desire to create all of that together I think is what has really propelled us, like this mission and you know we knew it was going to take a lot of work. And I think as we've gotten older we've realized that it's going to take a lot more work. You know all these things take a lot of time.

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So we decided that we were just going to have to work really, really hard to get there and this little property came available and a rental in the back of the Creative Loafing and we said okay this is the perfect size. Let's just you know plant a seed where we are basically. You know we're not going to—just be able to get to that homestead tomorrow. It's going to take a lot of time and a lot of work.

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So here we are and just piece-by-piece over the last nine years we've gotten different properties to grow on either through like agreements of like mowing lawns and looking out for the places or through buying small properties just to make like this—this kind of like piecemeal, piecemeal farm. [*Laughs*] But that's kind of been our trajectory.

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BT: And just to kind of put it in context, what—so you said you moved to North Carolina?

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IC: Uh-hm.

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BT: What year was that?

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IC: That was in 2006.

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BT: Two thousand and six and—and you were working Hospice before that or after that?

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IC: I was working Hospice before that. I worked Hospice 2002, no, 2001 to 2003, the end of 2003.

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BT: And when was it that you came back here?

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IC: I came back here in 2007.

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BT: Uh-hm and you met Chris—?

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IC: June 2, 2007.

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BT: June 2, 2007, right to the date.

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IC: Uh-hm.

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BT: And three days later you guys moved in together?

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IC: Uh-hm.

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BT: And so when was this property—when did you first acquire it?

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IC: January 2008.

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BT: January 2008 so it's been about eight years since you guys have started farming?

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IC: Just about yeah; yep.

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BT: And what's the name of your farm?

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IC: Crack in the Sidewalk Farmlet.

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BT: Can you tell me about how that came about?

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IC: Yeah; so we're an urban farm. I mean we're surrounded by you know kind of like—well initially when we moved here we were surrounded by a lot of empty houses. The neighborhood has been struggling and blighted and especially since the housing crash of 2008. It kind of went downhill.

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But it also has a lot of tenacity, a lot of—a lot of amazing people, a lot of beautiful things happening, and we kind of viewed our farm as kind of—as—as tenacious in itself. And if you look down at the sidewalk you'll see amazing things coming out of the cracks, like dandelion greens and yellow dock and chickweeds and all kinds of little grasses. And it takes a lot of tenacity, a lot of strength for them to come out and like this willingness to grow out of that, out of those cracks and out of that asphalt.

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And I think that we view our farm in that—in that sense that—that we're pushing forward. We're trying to bust out of like the city landscape and nourish—and nourish it.

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And the cherry on top of that is that we also do a lot of foraging as well. So we have like a relationship to—to those kinds of like tenacious weeds and you know we try to tie them into like the fabric of like our farm story.

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BT: Can you explain that a little further, like what does foraging really—why is it so important to you to do it—part of this land because not all farmers you know will take the time to do foraging to supplement?

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IC: Right; so I think the really big you know thing that I haven't said yet is one of the things that was kind of the driving force for Chris and I is with the housing crash and with everything else that was happening in '08, not like a—not like a—a survivalist kind of thing or like a prepper—prepper sense, but just wanting to be able to really be able to provide for ourselves and have like that—that knowledge and wanting to be able to like connect back through history for—for what was always ours as a human being, like this—this like this bank of knowledge and wanting to be able to be prepared later just in life for—for anything that could happen, because we just don't know what can happen.

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So foraging is definitely a huge piece to that and it's—it's a beautiful—it's a beautiful like set of—of knowledge and skills to have and it really connects you to the earth and it—and it helps you to realize how—how nurtured you are from your—just—just on its own, without like—without you planting a seed how much the earth gives to you.

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So I think that—that—that skill and us acquiring that skill and—and having that as a part of our farm kind of creates or facilitates this other piece of our farm that is about finding true sustainability. So our farm hopes to attain more—more things that are very tied into permaculture. We already have a lot of that here, but I think that—that is our like—our big picture goal. And foraging kind of fits in with permaculture, you know especially when you already see things in nature that already kind of have that system in place, so kind of being able to you know forage and pull from like the nuts from your chestnut tree or your little you know

nettle patches that you have and all these other little beautiful things that you implemented that are perennial to keep the system that's really sustaining. And I think that that's the big piece is looking at what sustainability really is and how our farm can like keep moving towards like that greater definition.

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And so foraging is part of that for us.

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BT: What was—so what was the farm; what was this property before you guys bought it?

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IC: Okay; so it's always just been a house but I think you know I think it was built in the '30s and I know an old lady lived here for a long time. And she passed away and I think that for you know maybe a handful of years before we moved in, it was just getting cleaned up and maybe somebody else lived in it. Then pretty much you know it became a rental and we moved into it.

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Actually a lot of the houses in this neighborhood are like that—owned by families that have been here for a very long time. When we first moved in there was a lady two houses down named Jewell who was like this 89 year old like firecracker. It just was amazing and really just kind of taught us all about the neighborhood. And she had been here since she was probably about 17. So that's a long time to be in a place.

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It's—I think it's been a very interesting evolution for this neighborhood.

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BT: What do you mean by evolution for this neighborhood?

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IC: I think just like the story; you know a story—every neighborhood has its story of where it's been and where it's going and you know from—I think that white blight has definitely been a big piece of that puzzle and then other people—folks just getting pushed out from their homes and pushed to the parameters because I very much feel like this is a parameter. This neighborhood is definitely a parameter. And then, building, like their communities here and then from there the projects being built and that adding like elements of violence and unrest. And then from there those things being torn down and—and other things like the Charter School being built and like the Carver Community Market and Coffee Shops and Outreach and all the churches, you know to help like build the community back up and now you see the blight happened with the housing collapsed and a lot of those things started struggling again. And now more investors are coming and younger people are—and artists and more bohemian like people I guess I'll say are looking at the neighborhood.

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So it's just like this really interesting evolution and hopefully—hopefully one that will be to the benefit of the neighborhood without—without pushing people, African Americans or Hispanics or any other people that are in great need without pushing them out in greater parameters, without—without the gentrification that—that can—that comes usually with that influx of investors and your artist types.

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BT: How do you think Crack in the Sidewalk fits within all that evolution?

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IC: You know it's been interesting. Sometimes we—we—we're concerned. We hope that we're not part of the problem. You know we don't want to be part of that problem. But at the same time we feel like we—we've made good neighbors. We've provided food, you know like when we—when we—when it's been needed and when people have asked we give a little bit extra. We try to help our community members feel included in things to the best that we can.

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But we are concerned. We know that there's been people, like investors who will pop by and look at us and be like oh you're here? You know kind of—and it's—it's a little unsettling.

But we hope in the long run that we're doing something that's really amazing for the neighborhood. We'd like to maybe you know figure out how to make like a little land trust because ultimately you know we rent this property where we're at and we know that—that the ultimate goal for the owner of this land is to wipe all of this out and build condos here.

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So I mean that's—that's a big picture. Ultimately we—we're trying ourselves to buy some of these properties to help counterbalance that I think so that we can turn some of it into a trust because there's such amazing land and so much like a country feel to this space. So I think that land trusts and those kinds of things happening in communities can offer a lot to the communities. You know they can offer like fund classes and—and you know community events and all those things that—that really nurture community and like having like garden spaces and even like wood-fired like you know cob house kitchen, those kinds of things. There's always—I feel like that can only bring good to the community—hopefully.

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BT: So the—

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JM: I was going to ask; what is the name of this community and out of—in the bigger picture of Atlanta how would you describe what's special about this area or what's different about this area? You talked a lot about the evolution, so just to give us a sense of what this place is that we're talking about within the picture of Atlanta?

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IC: Yeah; so I—I always tell people that we're five miles south of Atlanta. We're still in Atlanta. But we're right down Moreland, past the Starlight Drive-In, past the Starlight Drive-in so we're really, really close—even though sometimes it feels like we're not that close. We're just right on the edge, right there.

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But I think that you would call it the Lakewood Heights or the Southeast Historic District of Atlanta. We're kind of like right in this little zone. I think on paper and to the City we're kind

of in like an area called the Browns Mill District, kind of like this clump of names and all these little intersecting areas.

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I think what really makes this place special is just how it has like this country feel. If you drive from here to across Moreland to Key Road, there's like this feeling of almost like something like a throwback through time where you still get the sense of just like people sitting in like their—on their porches just enjoying themselves and talking to their neighbors and I mean you still feel that closer into the City but there's something about it that just feels a little bit slower.

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I think people have bigger back yards. There's a little bit more wildness. It's not as kept which in a way like I like that wildness to it. There's you know more like scruffy trees and I feel like you see like more interesting things happening, like people in like a shopping cart attached to like a motorcycle. You know just like funky stuff; there's just funky things happening you know that gives it sometimes like this other world feeling—what I like.

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BT: And so why is it important for you to—you said that you're—you guys are buying land around here.

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IC: Uh-hm.

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BT: To preserve all that? That's important to you?

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IC: That's absolutely important to us. I mean [*Sighs*] you know when we—when we moved here and we started this we—gosh, I think that we had hoped that we could buy it but I think our landlord, you know he really—he wants—of course he wants to get as much as he can for it.

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And it just doesn't seem like it's been in the—in the cards. But that doesn't mean that we decided not to give any love. We have put so much love into this land. You know one of our ultimate—ultimate things, like the bottom line for us has not really been about money. It's been more about just the love of the earth and wanting to like nourish a space completely. You know we do a lot of stuff with like charcoal and bio-char and hoping that—that we could like make this place so fertile that within like 50 to 100 years it could just—it could just like be like bursting with life even more life than it is now and that it could really feed people.

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And so we had to like kind of put all that stuff in a package in a box and just kind of like not look at it, so that we could just like be here now and live in this moment to the fullest. But when we're—when we're really like realistic with ourselves, you know how much more could we keep investing in something that—that we know is going to be potentially like just scraped clean and built upon—so buying, trying to buy like we have a little property across the street and trying to buy the place next door feels like a really—like an important piece to keeping a lot of that still intact and still alive and trying to keep some of that dream true, some of that you know so it wasn't all for naught. Not that it would have been for naught anyways; I mean because what is the saying better to have loved than to not love at all, you know and that's something I—I stand by in my life.

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BT: What was it like in the beginning for you when you guys first started?

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IC: Hmm.

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BT: Did you have a background in farming before like—? I know you said you worked at that farm before but did Chris?

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IC: So not really. I think that you know I mean the place I worked before I wouldn't say was really like a proper farm. It was more of like you know like a small homestead with like little things that they were growing. But when I lived in the big house in Atlanta off Ponce City and when just living around Atlanta I've always been around people who wanted to have like home gardens.

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So we were always kind of doing that together. And that really kind of planted that seed for me for growing food and then especially in North Carolina, seeing the other little farms that were happening like a little place called Land's End that's in—that's in North Carolina, like this little, small little farm that they were doing, I mean really—smaller than this and they still had like a little CSA and everything and that really like kind of like lit a fire underneath me.

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Did I answer your question Bang?

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BT: Yeah; I mean like what was a—what was it like for you? Was it like a struggle or—?

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IC: Yeah; there we go, there—yeah. No; it was. It was a struggle at first. I was working at this Healing Foods Institute, you know teaching classes. I have also a background in—in healthy cooking and raw food preparation although I'm not a raw foodist anymore. It's been a whole other evolution.

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But so I was—I was teaching classes at this Healing Institute and at the same time you know we were trying to like start this very small farm. So Farmlet, Crack in the Sidewalk Farmlet, so at that point it was really small. I mean it's still really small. It's like what almost three acres, but then it was like really small, very tiny.

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And I think you know we were let into the East Atlanta Market like on the graces of like Jonathan Tescher and the Scharkos and all these other amazing growers and producers who were there, you know in the middle of summer with our little—our little tiny tomatoes and you know

everybody was just so gracious. And I think that for the first while we made maybe like \$65 a week. You know and then the next year it was a little bit better. And then I quit the place that I was working and invested myself full-time into our project and each little year together we made it better and better. And I really feel like maybe it took you know if we've been—it's probably been in the past six years, five years that we have felt really, really solid.

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But it's always a struggle. I mean farming—farming is a struggle. It's—it's completely humbling and it just teaches you so much about trying to let go and go with the flow. *[Laughs]* But it was definitely a struggle in the beginning that's for sure. I mean we were even on Food Stamps in the wintertime because we hadn't planned properly, you know. So it's always been a learning curve. We definitely have had growing pains and sometimes we still go through them, you know with different transitions, different things that we have tried on the farm that have failed or just didn't work, you know. But we're definitely on the upswing now.

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BT: Like what were those things that didn't work?

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IC: Gosh; I mean there's just you know so many little—like there's so many things that didn't work, but there's also so many things that did work. but for the things that didn't work, okay like the time that we tried to do like hay bales in the side yard and like growing food in the hay bales, but they just were like swarmed with ants and the ants just like attacked like the produce and there was a lot of investment into like all of these like straw bales and—and trying to make sure that they you know were like good quality straw bales. And then like building this thing and tending to it and just hoping that this process would happen, but that's not happening.

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Instead it got you know—instead Mother Nature had other plans and the ants moved in. So like things like that; I mean that's just a part of it, or—or even things like oh you grew like this beautiful crop of beets. And everything came up perfectly. But then you have a really like hot year and the pests just love—love stressed plants so then all these little caterpillars move in

and then your crop is destroyed. You know it's—no matter what you do you know and so we have organic standards, so the things that we do are going to be different and—and more loving.
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So no matter how many little caterpillars you squish you know—that problem is still there. But that's just a part of it, like you know when you become a farmer that—that you're going to fail. You know that—that things are going to happen, but you try to keep doing it anyway and just you know try to control the variables that you can and then you have to kind of like let go of the rest.

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BT: So what do you—what was like—so we talked a little bit about you know what didn't work but what did work? What was like that one thing that it worked out and you were like this is really—this is happening, you know like this is kind of—?

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JM: All right; we're back in business?

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BT: Are you rolling?

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JM: Yeah; I'm ready. It's rolling.

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BT: All right; coming back to it, what was that—

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IC: The a-ha moment?

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BT: —the a-ha moment?

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IC: Of things that did work? So again just coming back to that concept of evolution, the evolution of our farm and knowing who you are as a farm, like what your farm stands for and what you have to offer to the greater community and also to I think the greater community of farmers and—and organic and sustainable farmers, finding that voice.

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So part of our farm and the risk that we take is of not having irrigation on our farm, not laying down drip or anything like that and not having wells, none of that. We do water collection and then you know—in rain tanks and then the big part is the methods that—that we've come up with to help with that.

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So we would—we are what you would call a dry farm. Dry farming is a huge thing out in California. You know it's their answer and their adaptation to the drought. And so we also implement those things onto our farm which is part of like our bigger goal for what sustainability should mean or could mean for our farm, having a greater output than your input and trying to you know rear back on the water use is a big part of that equation.

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So I think our big a-ha moment was when we started planting things and developing these ways that we plant things that really help our farm be really, really productive without as much water. And I think it's something that we take a lot of pride in and how our—how our farm can look without a lot of water. And it—it takes more time to plant things, like—like for example, we'll plant kale in little trays like a 50-cell, right and then instead of just planting those plugs straight into the ground like really close to each other we'll prop them up and we'll let them get a longer root system. And then we'll make big seams in the sub-soil and along—in our long rows, big seam in the sub-soil—the sub-soiler and we'll come back and we'll plant those plants out with a lot of space in between them but we'll make a big slit into the soil and then we'll take that plant and gently undo those roots in a big cup of water.

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We'll plant the plant in and then we'll take a huge scoop of water that's been—that's been livened up with bio-char, so like the charcoal that's been activated, and then we pour a big cup of

that and you can hear this great sound of [*Slurps*] as the root sucks down into the sub-soil. So they're already getting into like that deep clay sub-soil. And then we plant them and then we never water them again unless it rains. And they just grow and grow and grow and they're so beautiful. And again, like I love the word tenacious, so tenacious and evolution are our words for the day.

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So like the—it's like that tenacity of them getting their roots in the ground, the flavor that's there, and like all those salts and minerals without getting overly watered, I think that those practices and the practices that we keep on developing are like our a-has, our we did it and this is working, something that we take a lot of pride in here on our farm.

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You guys are going to have to do a lot of editing. [*Laughs*]

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JM: This is great Isia.

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BT: How—how did you learn all that?

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IC: I mean so you know a lot of it, so I will say that Chris has been the more researching one of the two of us. He's—he's really, really good at that or he really, really—I'm like oh look over here, look over here. I just want to—I just want to try things and see what happens you know.

00:32:44

So I can't remember the author's name but we have this great book called *Gardening When It Counts* and it definitely talks about that—about like the, you know—like being able to know how to have a very productive garden without all these things, without like all your hoop houses and your heated greenhouses and all of this stuff. I mean—I mean it's amazing it can extend your season and protect your investment, but at the same time it costs a lot of money for the farmer. It uses up a lot of energy on the farm. And it's really maybe not in the long run the

most sustainable thing for possibly for your land and also possibly for you as a farmer and your checkbook and your bank—your bank account.

00:33:24

So I feel like—I feel like for us developing these things has been just the research and the trying and see if we—if we fail or if we succeed and it's been a lot of—a lot of succeeding in the long run. I mean we can tell through test beds and things like that—that we've done like what happens when you try things this way as to what happens when we don't. And so we just run with it; if it works then—then we keep trying that. But it's definitely—we do definitely have like—you know kind of like controls in a sense, maybe not like purposable controls but they're there.

00:34:06

BT: And so you—going back to this, you said you were a raw foodist and you taught classes on that?

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IC: Yeah; very shortly. You know I mean you know I'm almost 36 but you know my 20s were a time—so I've always been kind of like an against-the-grain kind of a lady. And like a lot of people I know you know I—the gateway to—to kind of bucking the system was being a vegetarian, you know and—and also just being really, really sensitive to things, too like being really sensitive to human beings and their pain and suffering and really sensitive to animals and any pain and suffering that they go through. And I think that was like my first thing that like turned, like you know turning your brain on, turning your heart on was what was going on in factory farms.

00:34:57

And—and knowing that I didn't want to take part in that and then that going deeper, I think—I think in some way, I mean if I'm really honest with myself and with you guys, working in Hospice at that young of an age I think I didn't really process it well and you know I started to not really like eat well and not really take care of myself. I got really, really thin. And so I moved to an extreme, like I became a raw foodist, you know as a way to I think control what I was eating.

00:35:30

And that really was—it was nourishing in a lot of ways and it taught me so much about organic food and eating well and—and other people who are into that, brought me to like Sevananda and like a great co-op that we have in the City and other things like that. But in the long run it was not sustainable for me or my body and it wasn't really what I was ultimately looking for because it wasn't grounding. And I'm very much like of the earth, you know. And I think that the most grounding way that—that I have nourished my body has been through working on this farm and—and farming community with other farmers who humanely raise their animals and slaughter their animals and kind of taking a part in that process. And it's been the most balancing and grounding way of—of eating for me.

00:36:25

BT: And so like that's how you really became familiar with organic practices and—?

00:36:31

IC: Oh yeah; yeah. I mean that was like—that was like—like I said, like the—the door, the gateway. I mean food itself is such like—is like a gateway. People who become vegetarians or who—who get turned on about organic food, it—it opens so many other doors to so many other social issues. You know it's—and I feel like it's that—kind of like that first one that we make when we're in our youth that says no, I'm an independent person in like my household. [*Sirens in Background*] I mean usually it causes like a tussle or strife in your home. Luckily it didn't in mine. But it can, you know because it's like you're taking your stance as like this independent thinker you know. And it—and it definitely did that for me. So you know it taught me all about the importance of—of not eating food that's been sprayed with pesticides and chemicals and what that does to our body and also a greater picture, too of what it does to the earth in the long run.

00:37:28

JM: I'd be interested to connect some of these dots. You mentioned the community that really welcomed you in when you first started farming and then you just mentioned again this community where you learned about these new ways of farming. I'd love to hear more about

what that community is and—or if there are different communities or how they have served you and your farm over the years.

00:37:54

IC: Yeah; so I would say Atlanta has just a really amazing amount of movers and shakers and people in the food world. And not all those food worlds converge; they might converge through small threads but they're very much like their own little pods and I feel like I've had the opportunity to move throughout most of them.

00:38:13

And, each of those communities have—have given me some little gift of knowledge in a way that—one way or another.

00:38:18

The community that I think I talk about on the whole though is like the good food community of Atlanta and of Georgia and how like all those threads have come together to kind of weave like my own experience, and I would say like on the smaller level the Community Farmers Markets have—you know they've—they've kind of held Chris and I and our farm, and you know helped us to like do what we've been doing and all the people who take part in that, so all the different farmers. And then all the other farmers who aren't even a part of that have also helped, you know from the stories and the experiences and the knowledge and—and then also the customers, too. I can't forget about them.

00:38:59

You know they come with their stories of like their autistic—autistic child or like their illness or—or just like wanting to just nourish their families and we—we're constantly educating each other, you know. So I have been inspired by many. [*Laughs*]

00:39:22

BT: And so when you and Chris started farming you know what's—has there been any change since then in terms of the big food, good food movement to you?

00:39:38

IC: Oh man. When we first started it was so small. I mean it was happening like you know Jonathan Tescher and everybody in East Atlanta had—holding it down like this beautiful little farmers’ market and then Morningside had a farmers’ market and you know there were things happening and—and people who have been farming for a long time and coming to these farmers’ markets.

00:40:02

But ask me the question again; I’m sorry.

00:40:07

BT: Well what’s—you know what’s changed? Have you saw any big changes?

00:40:11

IC: Yeah; yeah what’s changed? So since all those small farmers’ markets started and I think that—I’m sorry. [*Laughs*]

00:40:24

BT: It’s okay.

00:40:25

IC: So I would definitely say that the food movement in Atlanta has grown exponentially in like the eight years—eight and a half years that we’ve been doing this from the small markets in East Atlanta and Morningside to where we’re at now with markets all over the city. And not just the markets themselves but also like the relationships with the chefs and the things that are happening in schools and in communities, it is huge. There’s like this amazing like dialogue, this conversation that’s happening everywhere. And I see so many—and so many people again coming back to that community question, who—who are taking part of this like spreading out like little fingers, little channels everywhere into like this greater food community. I think it’s just going to keep getting bigger.

00:41:09

I mean there’s so many young people who are coming and asking like, how do you do this? Or, how do I start this? Or, can I work on your farm and—and learn about this? And it’s—

you know it's—it's really, really amazing because for so long I felt like people were like oh, Atlanta, you know it—it doesn't have like these great things or it's just really not like punk rock or—. But now I'm like oh no; you're so wrong. We have like this amazing—like this amazing like culture happening in our City of people who are passionate about so many things, about food, justice, and—and fermentation and bio—you know all these little corners of awesomeness are happening now in the City.

00:41:56

JM: What do you see as the future of the whole movement or what would you like to see for the movement in Atlanta?

00:42:03

IC: Man what would be amazing, you know so having just returned from Italy, from Terra Madre and the Slow Food experience, what would be amazing is to see us kind of like implementing more of those Old World kind of ideals into our lives.

00:42:22

And I think that that's what we yearn for; we yearn for something that is—that is more you know entrenched in our like community and our community values and our—our like knowing your neighbor like these kinds of things. And part of that is what—what helps sustain those things are like these small markets, this coming out, this talking to your farmer, all these little daily rituals that create like that—that kind of you know smaller sense of community.

00:42:50

And I think that hopefully—hopefully more farmers' markets in the sense that they happen more often, so maybe while not so many farmers' markets all over the City but ones that happen maybe every day where it just becomes part of people's like, their culture where they go and they buy food and it's not this big thing and it's not something that—that's alienating, it's not a leap, but it's—but it's affordable. It helps to really like keep the farmers really thriving and healthy and also keeps the communities really thriving and healthy. But it's just something that's just done; it's not—you know it's not like this uber-special thing. While it is a really special thing I want it to become like something that's normal where—where it feels like everybody can do it, where it's not something that's strange or—or mistrusted or have like mystery around it, where

it's just—it's just what you do. So that's my hope for it. That's my hope for the future of the food movement.

00:43:50

BT: Yeah; I mean that would be beautiful.

00:43:53

IC: It would be beautiful. Throw in like aperitivo with cheese and wine and—oh it would be great. [*Laughs*]

00:44:02

BT: You mentioned that a lot of young people come up and you know talk to you about how to do things and also mentioned like Old World values and ways of doing things. What—do you see the movement getting younger and younger and trying—and how does that like interact with all these sort of like Old World mentalities that younger people—

00:44:25

IC: Right.

00:44:26

BT: —might not have been—?

00:44:28

IC: Yeah; it's an interesting place that we're because while on one hand you have a lot of young people who can't like stop looking at their phones, you know and who are really plugged into technology and where it's taking us, you also have at the same time they're also kind of looking back through time, you know wanting to know how do we fix, you know where we're at now and wanting to deal with those issues? And I think that—that finding those deeper connections and—and rooting back into the earth is part of like—part of how you fix where we're at now.

00:45:02

And their phones are welcome. You know all that technology is welcome because—because I think that it could possibly be if we have the right vision and the right sight it could help us towards that bigger picture. So I feel like when—when these younger people come to me and they want this knowledge, I feel like it's—I feel like it's a wonderful thing. I mean I'm only like 35 and when we started this I was like 26 and I see like the elder people in the community is also like welcoming them in and I mean and supporting them. What is it like three-percent of farmers now in the US, which is so incredibly sad when you think about that and how many people don't know where their food comes from. I mean you don't see it all around you.

00:45:46

Again, going back to Italy, you know riding the train through Italy like you would see just fields and vines and you know it was like get in where you fit in, like you could see all this food being grown everywhere and people know where that food is coming from. And I feel like people just don't know now.

00:46:03

So and I feel like that—that bothers us on that basic human level that a lot of people just feel like something is not right. We've gone astray and with this—you know the millennials a lot of them are just really awake, not to make a blanket—blanket statement but it feels like I know a lot of young people who are very like—like wanting to like root back in and who want and crave for like this older way, you know of being and doing. So it's—I don't know; I'm happy so I facilitate that and be a part of that and teach the little things that I've learned so far along the way.

00:46:54

BT: Yeah; so when you started both you and Chris were pretty young, right? You're still pretty young. [*Laughs*]

00:47:02

IC: Yeah; yeah I'm still pretty young. But I'm a young whippersnapper. I would say gosh maybe like 26 and that's considered a young farmer. I mean I feel like the age of the young farmers could you know—is like I don't know farmers in their teens and possibly to 35. I'm like on the edge now. [*Laughs*] You know and then from there and I also think it's maybe like the

amount of time that you've been farming. I mean I think even farming 10 years is still considered like a young farmer. You know your older farmers are ones who have been like at it for 20, 30 and above and—and also people where it's been generational, like generational farms, where it's just something that you grew up doing.

00:47:45

BT: How has that been you know being seen as like a young farmer because you know when—I think when a lot of people think of farmers they don't picture you or Chris you know like these really sort of like very young people and just like—

00:48:03

IC: Yeah.

00:48:04

BT: —you know?

00:48:04

IC: It's interesting. You know on so many different levels how people see Chris and I as young farmers is probably different than how they see me as a young farmer, as a woman which I'll touch base on in a moment.

00:48:16

How they see Chris and I as young farmers, it's you know I think it's—I think people romanticize it. I think they're also really excited. I think they think it's really, really cool. I think people who are in the City have a different approach to it than people who are outside of the City. I think sometimes they're like huh? What do you mean? I don't understand. You know like what their idea of farming is—I think—I think overall people think oh that's so awesome and you know thank you for carrying this on and doing this thing.

00:48:46

I think for me as a—as a woman farmer, it's been a little more of a struggle. I think a lot of times people don't—you know in their mind when they think of the term farmer, they think of like the old white man. I mean that's—that's the farmer that we're given, I mean and like you

know the Super Bowl games that—their commercials of like the—the big truck and all the farmers, it was always like the white man. That's all you see.

00:49:11

So we'll sometimes have people come up to market who aren't really market shoppers or frequent market shoppers and they'll be like well, where is the farmer? I'm like you're looking at the farmer. And I've even had a man say to me well, you're too pretty to be a farmer. I'm like well, buddy you're in shock because I know like 30 gorgeous women farmers and some of them even wear lipstick on their tractor—I'm sure. I do sometimes behind the tiller, whatever. You know like what does that mean? What does that look like?

00:49:38

So trying to really like make our—make ourselves like heard and known has actually been kind of a journey and also a little bit easy because there's so many women in this food system here in Atlanta, so many women. And it's—I think we're trying to tell that story you know say hey; look. You know with the beginning of agrarian culture and even in the hunting and gathering societies you know before the agrarian culture, women were—were your growers. They were the ones who were—who were doing that while the men went out and hunt.

00:50:15

Somehow we have forgotten like what the story is and that—that women get their hands dirty and that we plant the seed and that we can nurture it and that we can do that hard work and we do it and we do it really, really well.

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And I think that—that when people like start to learn that it just opens up their minds of what a farmer can be. And it can be—it can be an older black woman to a punk rock young man; you know it could be this awesome quirky Asian guy to you know this—this younger African American guy with dreadlocks. It can be whatever. It can also be the old white man. It can be anything you know and it draws us all together and it's really special like that.

00:51:08

I'm nervous.

00:51:09

BT: No; it's totally cool. It's great; no. So navigating you know in this sort of like not only like male dominated profession but also just like culturally you know the perception is male dominated. You know personally for you has it been like a constant thing that's been on your mind?

00:51:35

IC: It is and I try to not let it. I think—so it's different; being in a-partnership farming is a little bit different than being like a woman who is farming on her own. You know people know that you're the farmer. Sometimes with Chris and I—I mean he—he is an amazing and beautiful human being. You know he doesn't wear shoes and he kind of—he kind of did like this cult of personality in a way. And you know he is; you know he is—he is like this total cult of personality. And I feel like I sometimes have to like step up to the plate and be like and hello. And here I am too, you know; I can sometimes just be in the background like nurturing and lots of times they say women are in the background like nurturing the system from behind.

00:52:17

But you know I—we just had like this farmer fund benefit and—and calendar celebration party that was really, really amazing and there were some people who hadn't met Chris and I before. And they came up to us and they were like oh you're the farmer—I mean you're—you're the mushroom farmer guy? And the woman turned to me and goes oh, are you the mushroom guy's girlfriend? And I was just like—and Chris' face just went like oh, eff-bomb.

00:52:45

You just stirred the shit pot now lady because he could just see like my face. I was just like no; I am not the mushroom guy's girlfriend. You know I am the farmer and the mushroom girl in this married relationship. You know just like all this ridiculous you know stuff came to my mind and being overly defensive about it in my mind, but I mean it comes up for me you know constantly just having to say you know this is who I am and—and I am working just as hard. This is my everyday life is out here—his equal farming. You know I'm not just like a pretty thing floating around in a dress out here, you know, so—. *[Laughs]* Ah; it's a struggle, but in the end I feel like where it counts—where it counts I know and the people that I love and care about know, you know and—and that's all that really matters in the end is that I know who I am.

00:53:54

JM: Katie told me a story from Italy about maybe you were going to get a manicure or there was still dirt under your nails but I'm interested in how like you see your identity of both of those sides of being this tough farm girl but how that feminine side comes in or how you would describe yourself as a juxtaposition of both?

00:54:19

IC: Gosh; it's really, really interesting. I've actually like played around with having a blog, like a farmer girl blog that also like suggests like skin care lines, you know like that I like, like really silly because I am. I'm—I'm—I am definitely kind of the contradiction in ways. I love really—you know so thinking about Katie, like I think three weeks before I went on my trip I like dumped my little like pouch out in her lap. And she discovered my weird lip gloss addiction. Like there were like 30 different lip glosses. She was like I can't believe this. And she's like you don't even get to wear these. I'm like I know; I just have—you know I'm dirty all the time. I wear like the same things all the time. My nails are destroyed. But I love like these little pretty things. I just love to have them and even when I get up in the morning, even if it's just here on the farm I'll still put like a really pretty lip gloss on, you know. *[Laughs]*

00:55:14

And I love to get really dressed up and like go to the ballet or go to the opera or go to the museum. I love to like go to like these amazing restaurants, to support the farmer community. You know that's very much a part of who I am. I grew up in ballet and you know going to like the Fox Theater and going to museums and so that's still very much a part of who I am. And you know I've also loved fashion, you know. All those things are very much a part of who I am and maybe they feel like a contradiction but at the same time, I try to just you know—they're just part of who I am and I try to make them work together you know *[Laughs]* in their own little funky way but—. We'll see; maybe one day I'll do that blog. I don't know; we'll see what happens.

00:56:03

JM: I'd love to hear more about what—when you're not farming and when you're not at a farmers' market you mentioned a couple things you love doing. But what else is there to Isia?

What are these things you love doing and what are these favorite restaurants you love to go to?
What else is there?

00:56:16

IC: Yeah; so what else is there? So number one, the other little thing that I do is I'm a yoga instructor. So I teach a noon yoga class at the beautiful studio of Nirvana Yoga and that's a really, really part of like—of like what I do and who I am. And it's—it's something that's like outside of—of what Chris and I do. It's like this little gift that I find so much joy in that's a very important part of my life. So there's that.

00:56:43

And then the restaurants that I love going to like Staplehouse, Staplehouse with Ryan Smith and you know the—the Giving Kitchen and just that whole beautiful thing that's happening, Empire State South, like to go and get a good cocktail made by Kelly Thorne and her team of people. Gosh, the Kimball House, if you want to go for like Happy Hour or oysters and just like some really good like prosecco, you know like just little joys, like to me in my life I have come to like—like treasure all the little joys. I love making bath bombs or buying like lush bath bombs and taking hot baths in the wintertime or after a hard day's work or—or like enjoying a bottle of wine out here in our side yard with like some really good cheese made from like Rebecca and Ross, you know like Many Fold Farm. Like these are like the small treasures, so they're really—these are like my pleasures. And reading, I love to read and like everybody else, I also like to get into a good show—show and binge-watch [*Laughs*] every once in a blue moon and just giving back to my community. I find like the greatest pleasure in life comes from like working with other people and when you can give something and share something and light up somebody else's day.

00:58:09

BT: And that's like—that's kind of like the coolest thing right is that none of these things are mutually exclusive, like you can be—

00:58:16

IC: Right.

00:58:17

BT: —a woman who is really into lip gloss and fashion and still be like a hard core farmer?

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IC: Of course.

00:58:25

BT: You know you can still be farming and like out here but still doing like all this like city/urban stuff you know.

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IC: Oh yeah; oh yeah and you know our big goal is still to like—to like move to the mountains potentially but those things are going to still be like a part of me. I'll still want to come into the city for—for things and fun things like that. But then I'm still going to like you know maybe want to wear some beautiful crazy skirt around or you know I'll still like want to wear this lip gloss or I'll still be thinking about like you know as a farmer you know you're out in the sun all the time, I'll still be thinking about like concoctions for like the skin, like fun things to make or—or even like really nice like brands that you can buy and you know good sunscreens and stuff like this.

00:59:11

So it's—they're not—they're not mutually exclusive and I think that when—when we try to make them mutually—mutually [*Laughs*] exclusive and put ourselves in—we put ourselves into boxes when we try to put these things into boxes. You know and I definitely do not like being boxed in. So lipstick in the field it is. [*Laughs*]

00:59:34

JM: How did that—you have such a strong sense of self and identity, but I'm interested in how that developed over the years from growing up if a lot of those aspects were part of your

identity as a child or if they kind of developed through your experiences or your sense of place or how did that develop over the years?

00:59:55

IC: Okay; so as an adopted child I was actually adopted by Jack and Jill Cooper when I was eight. So I went through the foster care system for—for a good many of years and that was probably about maybe seven foster homes.

01:00:05

So you know we get from like that—that nurture versus—nature versus nurture, we get a lot—a lot from our families and I think that—that through like those first formative years I developed a lot of like—I had to develop who I was because I didn't have those constants, those constant reflections from parents or grandparents and—and from siblings.

01:00:28

So that kind of—that—that base of who I am I think was created there, developing who I am and it ended up being really important to me to find my own sense of self—was kind of an offshoot of that experience and you know and a necessity of that experience.

01:00:45

What nurtured that even further are—are Jack and Jill Cooper, I mean they literally saved me at that time. And she always—Jill, my mom, was very much and still is very much an incredibly strong woman, very strong-willed, like she knows who she is, she knows what she wants, she knows what she'll put up with and what she won't put up with.

01:01:09

And she definitely instilled that in me. And then I mean she was our Troop Leader in Girl Scouts for like twelve years and even that itself, I mean girls might think it's corny but it actually taught me a lot about leadership skills and how to lead and teach and—and even do speeches with like Toastmasters and all these things that—that—that I've been surrounded with. And not even to mention all the amazing women I've always been surrounded by who always spoke their truth or who like pushed through like their hard times, just all these different reflections and examples I've had have instilled that in me to—to really kind of stay true to who I am, which is like really like the integrity, like having integrity and having—having like your sense of purpose and who you are is really important to me.

01:02:07

BT: Do you find you know with like that—you're talking about mentorship and women that you look up to and stuff, do you find that as a woman farmer in Atlanta, do you find a lot of younger women wanting to come and work here on the farm and kind of learn from you?

01:02:28

IC: You know I think that it's kind of mixed. I mean I think that there are—there are definitely women in our community, I mean younger women who—who definitely I don't know if they look up to me but I definitely know that—that they—that they have mad respect for what I do. You know and that I have had women who have come out here and who I have had really amazing quality time with, you know teaching and sharing stories. And that's—that's been just really beautiful.

01:02:58

Now as a young woman farmer myself, I have had amazing mentors and still do that are older than me, like Linda Scharko and Mary Rigdon—Decimal Place and even like Mary Yetter who like quit working at CARE for so many years and her amazing stories to start her small farm, like all these amazing women act as mentors to me for like their—their strength and their longevity and their willingness to keep like doing the stuff. And I want to say Miss Mary Rigdon would be embarrassed but one day we went over to her house to get compost and she was out in—she was out on her tractor with hair dye in her hair, like as it was like—you know she was waiting for like that time. So it was like perfect. I was like oh my gosh; I wish I could take a picture of this because this is like—this is the story, like you're like this math whiz goat farmer lady on your tractor with like your hair dye stuff in your hair. And it's just like—it's perfect. It's just perfect you know going back to like that woman who is a farmer and contradictions and all that stuff.

01:04:08

BT: So here you know circling back to your farm here, what are the other spaces? You said it was a piecemeal farm.

01:04:18

IC: Yeah.

01:04:18

BT: What—what are like the other places like—the spaces like, where are they?

01:04:23

IC: So if you start with—with our house right here as a base, you work down, so this is called—we call this the middle terrace and then we call this the lower field, down here, and then the next yard over is Jewell's yard, because that's where Miss Jewell lived and she grew in her yard for years and years and years and she grew okra and we still grow her okra.

01:04:46

Then across the street we have a little property that we own. We own a house and then we own an empty lot and the lot is actually grown on for years. And the soil is really nice and we grow there. And then our biggest property is a property behind a church that's off Constitution, a few minutes away from here. And that's like where we do like our 100-foot rows of like just really big crops. So it has been piecemeal just through like little agreements and conversations. I think for the houses here it's been more of a benefit to the people who—who own the houses but haven't constantly had somebody in them.

01:05:23

You know again, this is a transitory neighborhood, so people will own the house or their family will have owned the house but they're not living in it, but yet they don't want to rent it. So we'll kind of—our presence helps protect them from getting like you know stripped of like their wires or just—just having something happening there is a benefit.

01:05:42

JM: And then you'll—

01:05:43

IC: Take you to the big field and do that—.

01:05:49

BT: You said you still plant Miss Jewell's okra.

01:05:52

IC: We do.

01:05:53

BT: What does that mean?

01:05:53

IC: So she gave us her seeds to her okra and it's—it's a beautiful okra. It's like a—like a Texas Cowhorn variety I think. And what that means is that it can get really, really long and still stay incredibly tender which is a big thing because in the South you know you have your sticklers who will come to market and they'll be like your okra is too big. And like—and Chris will just take a piece and go like so—? [*Gestures*] It's still good and they'll be like ah, and it's—you know it's still tender.

01:06:21

And you know growing her okra is kind of like a way to keep her legacy alive and she was so funny and just such—such like a sassy lady and her okra is just really amazing. And just thinking about how long she tended that and kept that seed it's become really important to us to like keep that going as well, and it's a beautiful okra. I mean it gets like as big as like a young tree and—and grows like an amazing delicious okra.

01:06:53

JM: What are some of the other of your favorite things that you plant?

01:06:59

IC: So the cliché would be tomatoes, but I really love growing tomatoes. I mean it's been—it's been a hard relationship with tomatoes because they definitely here in the South they're like—they're like the needy—it's like a needy relationship. They're like your needy significant—if you had one, like a—you know if you get in one of those they're—they're very high

maintenance and very needy. They—they constantly demand upkeep and attention but I really love to like—to—to try to like to please them and to see what happens when you do and when you really take care of them what can happen.

01:07:36

And of course sometimes those things fail completely but still it's like—it's really pleasurable when you do get like that really big beautiful delicious tomato and the thing about our tomatoes is that they're dry farmed. So that means that the flavor is going to be much more intense because we're not ever like pumping water into them. They only get rain when it rains and then they also get like that big like cup of water with like the charcoal, the—the, you know the bio-char.

01:08:02

And that's it. You know unless it was horribly doughy but that's it, and so I feel like again they just—they bring us so much pleasure and their strength and their beauty and their ability to grow through—through all the different things that we put them through and all the different things that we do give them. And they bring me a lot of pleasure.

01:08:23

The other things that I really love to grow I would say are like beets and roots. I love the magic of like pulling this—like you can't—you know sometimes you can see it and sometimes you can't or you don't really realize how big it is. And it makes like a little like sound [*Gestures*] and it's just like this—this big beautiful thing.

01:08:40

And I love presenting them at the markets, too, like these glowing orbs of like beauty and you know color.

01:08:52

That's where the whole beauty and art thing can kind of fit in at the market booth. It's where I can kind of like marry them thinking about like the—kind of like how it looks, like the aesthetics of like the vegetables and the booth and all that.

01:09:05

BT: Uh-huh; do you enjoy doing that?

01:09:08

IC: Oh yeah. I really do. It's a lot of fun for me; yeah. [*Laughs*] Even when I'm bunching things I'm like this color, this color, this color. It's—it's fun.

01:09:21

BT: Uh-huh; [*Laughs*] so what—what is like—what do you see in the future for yourself and do you see just continually you know staying here and trying to get more and more—you talked about maybe having a land trust or something?

01:09:46

IC: I think Chris and I want to a binary farm system, so we're—we want ultimately like we're not going to be buried here. You know we're not. I think that ultimately we want a village somewhere that's a binary system, and a village of people not so much like a commune or anything like that but a place where a lot of like people can live and build—build homes and where there can be like a farm but there can also be like you know a village system that—that provides different jobs. Maybe there's somebody that does tree service but then those logs come in and they're you know integrated into like the compost or somebody does mushroom logs and somebody does shiitakes and you know like all these little different things are in our minds.

01:10:29

I think ultimately that's what we want is like a little village economy somewhere maybe like an hour and a half to two hours away from here. But still have like the land trust, binary system happening here. We don't want to give up what we've had and we think it's a great like thing for like other people to come into and—and learn and like commit themselves to something and—and then the farmers' market community, we've been in it now but it's so much like a family that I couldn't imagine not being a part of that; so still wanting that in some way to still be a part of our lives.

01:11:02

I think ultimately though that's the bigger picture is—is we want all the cake. [*Laughs*] We want all the cake, so I think yeah the binary farm system is what we're hoping for.

01:11:12

BT: Uh-hm. Can you explain exactly what a binary farm system is?

01:11:17

IC: Yeah; so that means that we would keep something—you know somewhat of this going and having growing spaces and it could act as like you know we have—hopefully we're going to buy the house next door. We're—we're also growing on that property. We can buy that house and then we'll have our other little house across the street. And that will be a place—excuse me—for if we come into town or anybody else does you could stay there. And there will be awesome things happening between both places, even more like education—educational things happening. Chris and I look towards not farming as intensively as we are ourselves but being able to teach more, you know like more permaculture and wild foods and even like yoga, you know on the farm and those kinds of things, and then letting other people kind of have at it but keeping like that Crack in the Sidewalk alive here is really important to us. But integrating like a—a mountain village/farm into that feels even more important.

01:12:24

BT: Utopia(ish)?

01:12:26

IC: Yeah; we know it would be real though. You know it—it'll have its challenges just like anything else. So far just trying to make that happen is—is the biggest challenge. We'll see what happens but for now here we are and we're just going to keep putting our love into it.

01:12:47

BT: Do you have any questions?

01:12:48

JM: No; is there anything else you'd like to share with us?

01:12:53

IC: I think we really covered everything. *[Laughs]*

01:12:57

BT: Cool.

01:12:58

JM: Thanks so much.

01:12:59

BT: Well I think we'll stop there and we're just going to sit here for like 30 seconds so that we have some sound for editing.

01:13:10

IC: Okay.

01:13:33

[End Isia Cooper Interview]