

How San Francisco's Restaurant Industry Would Change the World Through Food

by [Allie Pape](#) Sep 21 2014, 3:16p



How would you change the world through food? Local experts weigh in.

To mark the relaunch of **Eater** today, the Features team compiled a collection of seventy-two of the best ideas for how people around the world are or how they plan to or how they want to change the world through food. A lot of the ideas are incredibly earnest. Some are ambitious beyond reason. But what they all have in common is a belief that, with hard work and good food, the world is headed in the right direction.

As a local component to this feature, we asked the San Francisco community to chime in. So check out the **[national responses over here](#)** and scroll below to see what local thinkers and doers would like to do to change the world through food. Have a suggestion? Add it to the comments.

Michael Mina, chef and restaurateur: I would change the way people relate to one another through food. Today, we are so dialed into technology that we've forgotten to balance these advances with good, old-fashioned social pleasantries – shaking hands, holding eye contact, face-to-face conversation, even meeting someone new outside of the digital world. To me, food is a gateway to new experiences, while exposing your palate to new flavors. If you're dining solo, it can be a conversation starter and lead to meeting someone new, and if you're with a group you're essentially bonding over this shared experience where food is the core element that brought everyone together in the first place. Dining over crave-worthy food in a comforting atmosphere is a vehicle to bring friends and family

together, and make ever-lasting memories. By creating an inter-active dining experience, where one must truly be present, you're reintroducing people to this lost art of connection - telling stories, laughing, and sharing food.

Charles Bililies, Souvla: I hope to establish the "smart casual" movement— bringing responsibly-sourced product, fine dining-standard hospitality and beautiful aesthetic to everyone. It is possible to create the magic of a great dining experience through the counter service format, and I would love to see this style take off.

Sara Hauman, Huxley: Changing the world through food can be as simple as encouraging the ritual of sharing food to advocate a sense of family, community and togetherness. The best meals of my life haven't necessarily involved the best food I've ever eaten, but they stand out in my mind because of the way they made me feel. The act of passing a bowl around the table or reaching to grab one last crispy bite from the plate is comforting and essential, and has the power to unite a group of people, even complete strangers. Cooking allows me to create that experience for others.

Erika Lenkert, GFF Magazine: There are far loftier issues to tackle— the use of pesticides, excessive resources to produce our food, and toxic yet common ingredients are just a few. But I'm going with something I may actually have a shot at: I aspire to help people to improve their health, sense of pleasure, connection with others, and impact on the environment through positive, empowering, and inspiring stories and recipes.

Anthony Myint, Mission Chinese

Food/Commonwealth: Food is already changing the world, but not always in a good way: I recently learned that about 30% of greenhouse gas emissions come from the food system, and that really concerns me. My hope is that our relationship to food can be transformed, and that the food world can become part of the solution to our environmental challenges. I'm particularly excited about the potential of perennial agriculture to restore soil, conserve water, prevent erosion and maybe even sequester carbon from the atmosphere. Overall, we tend to think about food and the environment in terms of "local" or "organic," but I believe that we need to focus more on the issue of carbon footprint, so I've been working with Chris Ying (Lucky Peach) on a non-profit called **Zero Foodprint**, which helps the restaurant industry reduce and offset greenhouse gas emissions.

Dominique Crenn, Atelier Crenn: Our food system is broken; we have no other choice than to change. We, as human beings, need to be conscious and thoughtful in the way we produce and eat our food. But what is the better way, as no policy is in place? The sustainable way. Showing the power of the community through food, the grass roots. Civil society has a profound impact on the local economy, and each of us needs to be a part of it. As chefs, it is our duty to foster those beliefs and share them with our customers through food.

Chad Robertson, Tartine Bakery: I want to work to support regional, sustainable grain economies, with the goal to make more nutritious, delicious food available and

affordable for more people.

Jay Bordeleau, Maven: Mentorship. Domestically, we have a industry plagued by a lack of middle-management. There are chefs and line cooks. There are owners and servers. But I'm beginning to think sous chefs and assistant managers are like unicorns and leprechauns. These are the hard workers that truly hold down the fort and make the difference between good and great restaurants. I've never been able to hire one: there are none to be found! Sure, there are many programs and schools that offer 'proper' training, and 'prepare' students for the real world. But they lack something.

Our process is to find good green people, train with care and diligence, promote from within, and then reinvest in their development, starting the cycle all over again for their new position. Beyond working with food that is downright delicious, I love having [Maven chef] Isaac Miller as business partner for his amazing ability to train, and his mentorship. My team and I are learning the value of mentorship, and gearing our efforts towards good, deep, and focused training to create the staff we need. We can't scale the food industry. We can't code an app to cook all this food. But we can build a solid and passionate team, a team that fervently punches above their weight.

Sue Conley, Cowgirl Creamery: If we were the queen bees, we would tax farmers that use pesticides, exploit workers, deplete the topsoil, pollute our waterways, and endanger indigenous plants and animals. Instead, we'd reward farmers who work in harmony with nature, take good care

of their land and animals and pay fair wages to their workers. We can identify many of these farmers by taking a look at a list of farmers who are certified organic.

Ryan Cole, Stones Throw: I'd serve all food family style. When you share food, and open your eyes to finding enjoyment with others out of your comfort zone, you can open your mind to accepting different points of view, beyond food.

John Birdsall, Chow: In 1978, the English food writer Jane Grigson argued for a home vegetable gardening revolution, "an assertion," she wrote, "of delight and human scale." Honestly, I have no patience for thinning arugula seedlings, but that has always struck me as the proper goal of food in whatever form: to throw down for pleasure and the power of craft. I just got back from Thailand, a country where you find amazing food—fresh, well cooked, and delicious—at random street stalls and truck stops for the equivalent of a U.S. dollar or two. I'd change the world by making it mandatory for every inhabitant of the so-called developed nations to spend two weeks eating at the source—countries with rooted food cultures that still grow green—until the heat lamps go cold in America's QSRs, interest in corporate food chains diffuses like a clump of cinnamon on a Pumpkin Spice Latte, and we connect, over cheap meals dedicated to delight and human scale.