



AMERICAN MUSEUM OF NATURAL HISTORY

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**OUR GLOBAL KITCHEN: FOOD, NATURE, CULTURE
ON VIEW AT AMERICAN MUSEUM OF NATURAL HISTORY
FROM NOVEMBER 17, 2012, THROUGH AUGUST 11, 2013**

NEW EXHIBITION FOLLOWS FOOD FROM FARM TO FORK

VERTICAL HYDROPONIC FARM, DAILY TASTINGS IN WORKING KITCHEN TO ENGAGE VISITORS

In the new exhibition *Our Global Kitchen: Food, Nature, Culture*, the American Museum of Natural History explores the **complex and intricate food system** that brings what we eat from farm to fork. In sections devoted to **growing, transporting, cooking, eating, tasting, and celebrating**, the exhibition illuminates the myriad ways that food is produced and moved throughout the world. With opportunities **to taste seasonal treats** in the **working kitchen, cook a virtual meal, view rare artifacts** from the Museum's collections, and **peek into the dining rooms of famous figures** throughout history, visitors will experience the **intersection of food, nature, culture, health, and history** – and consider some of the most challenging issues of our time.

“As the Museum prepares to open this comprehensive exhibition on the subject of food, we find ourselves disquietingly poised between the extremes of Hurricane Sandy – with its extensive devastation, including disruption to the food supply – and one of the nation's most celebratory family- and food-based holidays, Thanksgiving,” said Ellen V. Futter, President of the American Museum of Natural History. “In such a timely and vivid context, the Museum presents *Our Global Kitchen*, which addresses the vital and complex topic of food from the perspectives of the environment, food supply, and human culture. Food is intimately familiar to all of us – and experienced daily as a social ritual – but the complex global system that produces it has critical implications for the health of humans

and of Earth's ecological systems."

"When many people around the world sit down at their tables, their plates are filled with a pastiche of smells, tastes, and sights that come from near and far – the product of an enormous, complex, dynamic global food system that is, on one hand, an amazing, miraculous product of a global community and, on the other hand, a system in delicate – though imperfect – balance, and vulnerable to disruption," said Michael Novacek, Senior Vice President and Provost for Science at the Museum. "Our appreciation for this reality leads to an enriched life, health, and cultural experience, and a greater capacity to sustain – and improve – the food system into the future."

"My experience in developing this exhibition has given me a renewed appreciation for how lessons that we have learned from ecological systems can help us as we grow and gather our food," said Eleanor Sterling, Director of the Center for Biodiversity and Conservation at the Museum and Co-Curator of *Our Global Kitchen*. "We hope visitors will look at something they all do every day – eat – and think about the legacy of centuries of farmers that have shaped our foods, the wisdom of cooks to create cuisines, the celebrations and traditions woven across generations and geographies, and how the natural environment supports the foods that we rely on now and in the future."

"Food both sustains our bodies and perpetuates our culture. Eating and meals is the place where families meet, business is conducted, and our senses are stimulated," said Mark Norell, Chair of the Division of Paleontology at the Museum and Co-Curator of *Our Global Kitchen*. "Anyone who appreciates food knows that cooking is an art form. The challenge today is to make this art form both healthy and sustainable, as well as delicious and beautiful."

"At JPMorgan Chase, we are committed to doing our part to help our communities in the U.S. and around the world. We strengthen food security by donating to food banks, financing grocery stores in food deserts, and protecting against the volatility of food prices," said Peter L. Scher, head of Corporate Responsibility and Executive Vice President, JPMorgan Chase. "Access to food is not only essential to combating poverty, it is also an integral part of every culture. It brings people together and helps build communities. We are proud to be the corporate sponsor for *Our Global Kitchen* at the American Museum of

Natural History.”

“Our food system is moving towards a crisis. We supported the exhibit and educational materials in order to shine a light on the social and environmental costs of the industrialization and concentration of our current production model,” stated Helaine Lerner, Chair of The GRACE Communications Foundation Board.

Grow: How Humans Modify Crops, Livestock

Most of the plants and animals we raise for food today barely resemble their wild ancestors. Thousands of years ago, for instance, there was no corn—modern cobs were bred from a wild grass. Today’s **global food economy** binds us all to the 1 billion people working in agriculture, from a rice farmer in Vietnam to an oyster farmer in France.

Our Global Kitchen highlights numerous methods growers like these currently use and also discusses potential **new growing techniques**, ranging from test-tube meat grown from animal stem cells—meant to reduce animal suffering, waste, and pollution—to farms planted in skyscrapers. In the future, many types of **overlooked plant and animal species** could provide solutions to known problems relating to food sustainability and ever-growing demand. Examples include:

- **Algae**, highly nutritious and already popular in countries like Japan, which can be grown in both fresh water and salt water
- **Insects**, which are high in protein and require much less land, water, and food than animals raised for meat
- **Quinoa**, a grain from the Andes that **contains all of the essential amino acids** the human body needs for protein and has no gluten

In conjunction with the exhibition, the entrance to the Museum’s Judy and Josh Weston Pavilion will feature an **18-foot-tall hydroponic vertical growing system** designed and maintained by **Windowfarms**. The 280-plant installation and a smaller unit in the exhibition gallery will grow a variety of fruits, vegetables, and herbs to showcase sustainable food-growing techniques and agricultural biodiversity in increasingly urban habitats. (*For more information, please see the accompanying release on Windowfarms.*)

Trade and Transport: How Food is Distributed Around the World

Local cuisine is often the final step of a **sweeping global process** hundreds of years in the making: Thai curry, French pastries, or Italian pasta may be considered quintessentially Asian or European, but until 500 years ago, no one outside of the Americas had tasted chile peppers, chocolate, or tomatoes. Highlights of the exhibition include:

- A life-size re-creation of a **16th-century Aztec marketplace**
- **Food Ships**, an interactive game that demonstrates the challenges associated with **transporting items like bananas, apples, tuna, and lamb** around the world (*For more information, please see the accompanying release on Digital Programs.*)
- A “**waste sculpture**” containing the amount of food a **U.S. family of four wastes** per year: 1,656 pounds

Cook: How Humans Have Transformed Food Across Cultures and History

Cooking is one of humankind’s **most distinctive activities**; only members of the human family regularly heat their food before eating it. Cooking has become a dynamic **expression of human creativity**, refined through thousands of years across many cultures along with methods such as fermenting, pickling, drying, and smoking. In *Our Global Kitchen*, visitors will:

- **Discover signature dishes from around the world** and how these have evolved through generations, from Korean kimchi to Moroccan tagine
- Be transported through **smelling stations** that disperse puffs of air scented with lemon, lavender, thyme, and fennel, vital ingredients used in everything from candies to fish dishes to potent absinthe
- Explore an **interactive cooking table**, where visitors “make” famous dishes eaten around the world (*For more information, please see the accompanying release on Digital Programs.*)
- View **artifacts from the Museum’s vast anthropological collection**, including a miniature pottery stove from the Han Dynasties era and a decorative metate with a jaguar motif from Costa Rica, as well as utensils and cookware from around the globe, in addition to a selection of **historic, classic, and even humorous cookbooks**

Every technique and every dish, from steaming tamales to frying paratha, represent the work of **generations of cooks and long-standing traditions**. What dishes might we add in the future? Perhaps breathable chocolate – a mist of chocolate particles that provides the

flavor without the calories – or **experimental cuisine, sometimes called molecular gastronomy**, a style of preparing food that combines methodical inquiry into the physics and chemistry of cooking with methods and tools such as liquid nitrogen, circulation baths, and blowtorches to create dishes like melon caviar and pheasant meal.

Taste: How We Experience Flavor

In a first for an American Museum of Natural History exhibition, a **working kitchen** will help visitors explore the **complexities of flavor** and present exhibits that explain the **biology of taste**. Live programming in the kitchen will animate the experience of food and flavor through daily samplings and activities ranging from taste tests to **demonstrations of dynamic cooking methods** and **visits from local farmers, chefs, and nutrition experts**. Presented with **Whole Foods Market**, the theme of the kitchen will change every two weeks, starting with apples and touching on everything from bread making to chocolate to grilling. (*For more information, please see the accompanying release on Public Programs.*)

Eat: Contrasts in Too Little, Too Much

There is **great variety** in what humans can eat – and have eaten – over thousands of years. But while enough food is produced to feed the world’s population today, **distribution is unequal**, with millions of people around the world hungry. On the other hand, more than a billion adults are overweight or obese. In some countries, the problems of **hunger and obesity exist side-by-side**, each with serious implications for public health.

Chemically, food is mainly made up of fat, protein, and carbohydrates, with water, vitamins, and minerals as well. Proper nutrition requires all of these; it’s possible to become **overweight and malnourished** by consuming too many foods that, while high in calories, are low in vitamins and minerals.

Visitors to *Our Global Kitchen* will see **intersections of food, health, and culture** and can look forward to:

- Discovering what a **week’s worth of groceries** includes for families from 16 countries around the world
- Exploring **common breakfast foods** from around the world, from Greek pancakes to Colombian *changua* soup

- Sitting down at the **tables of some illustrious individuals** throughout history, including Empress Livia of Rome, Mongolian ruler Kublai Khan, and author Jane Austen
- Looking at **historic dishes**, from Mohandas Ghandhi’s childhood meal to Michael Phelps’s Olympian-sized breakfast

Celebrate: How Food Reflects Culture and Identity

Food does more than keep us alive. It **connects us to the land, to cultural heritage, and to each other**; in religious life and in family and national tradition, many foods become symbols, with meanings that shift as communities change and people move around the world. *Our Global Kitchen* takes visitors on a wide-ranging tour of foods that commemorate special occasions, including colorful **Ukrainian Easter eggs, sugar skulls from Mexico’s Day of the Dead, and masks made for giant yams by the Abelam people of New Guinea** who, at harvest time, display their largest yams in ceremonial dress and then exchange them with one another. A video finale will **invite visitors to join celebrations** at a Thanksgiving dinner, a Chinese New Year, the Eid feast marking the end of Ramadan, Oktoberfest, and the Hindu festival Ganesh Chaturthi.

In a display kiosk entitled “What does food mean to you?” visitors are invited to **share photos**, whether of a traditional holiday dish for a family gathering or a simple meal with friends, for a chance to be featured on the Museum’s website – **amnh.org** – or on the exhibition kiosk itself. Photos can be posted on **Instagram** with hashtag **#CelebrateFood** and should include a brief, explanatory caption.

Exhibition Organization

Our Global Kitchen is curated by Eleanor Sterling, Director of the Museum’s Center for Biodiversity and Conservation (CBC), and Mark Norell, Chair of the Division of Paleontology at the Museum, with support from Erin Betley, content research specialist and biodiversity specialist with the CBC.

The exhibition is designed and produced by the American Museum of Natural History’s award-winning Exhibition Department under the direction of David Harvey, Senior Vice President for Exhibition.

Exclusive corporate sponsor for *Our Global Kitchen* is **J. P. Morgan**.

The Kitchen Experience is presented by **Whole Foods**.

Additional support for the *Our Global Kitchen* exhibition, as well as the Educator's Guide and exhibition website, was provided by The GRACE Communications Foundation, in furtherance of its mission to promote public awareness of the problems associated with our food systems and provide information, resources, and tools for consumers to make change.

American Museum of Natural History (amnh.org)

The American Museum of Natural History, founded in 1869, is one of the world's preeminent scientific, educational, and cultural institutions. The Museum encompasses 46 permanent exhibition halls, including the Rose Center for Earth and Space and the Hayden Planetarium, as well as galleries for temporary exhibitions. It is home to the Theodore Roosevelt Memorial, New York State's official memorial to its 33rd governor and the nation's 26th president, and a tribute to Roosevelt's enduring legacy of conservation. The Museum's five active research divisions and three cross-disciplinary centers support 200 scientists, whose work draws on a world-class permanent collection of more than 32 million specimens and artifacts, including specialized collections for frozen tissue and genomic and astrophysical data, as well as one of the largest natural history libraries in the Western Hemisphere. Through its Richard Gilder Graduate School, it is the only American museum authorized to grant the Ph.D. degree. In 2012, the Museum began offering a pilot Master of Arts in Teaching with a specialization in earth science. Approximately 5 million visitors from around the world came to the Museum last year, and its exhibitions and Space Shows can be seen in venues on five continents. The Museum's website and collection of apps for mobile devices extend its collections, exhibitions, and educational programs to millions more beyond its walls. Visit amnh.org for more information.

Hours

The Museum is open daily, 10 am–5:45 pm. The Museum is closed on Thanksgiving and Christmas.

Admission

Museum admission is free to all New York City school and camp groups.

Suggested general admission, which supports the Museum's scientific and educational endeavors and offers access to the Museum's 46 halls including the Rose Center for Earth and Space, is \$19 (adults) suggested, \$14.50 (students/seniors) suggested, \$10.50 (children) suggested. All prices are subject to change.

The Museum offers discounted combination ticket prices that include suggested general admission plus special exhibitions, IMAX films, and Space Shows.

- Museum Plus One includes one special exhibition, IMAX film, or Space Show: \$25 (adults), \$19 (students/seniors), \$14.50 (children)
- Museum Supersaver includes all special exhibitions, IMAX film, and Space Show: \$33 (adults), \$25.50 (students/seniors), \$20.50 (children)

Visitors who wish to pay less than the suggested Museum admission and also purchase a ticket to attend a special exhibition, IMAX film, or Space Show may do so on-site at the Museum. To the amount they wish to pay for general admission, they should add \$22 (adults), \$18 (students/seniors), or \$12 (children) for a Space Show, special exhibition, or IMAX film.

Public Information

For additional information, the public may call 212-769-5100 or visit the Museum's website at amnh.org.

Prepare for your Museum visit by downloading the new **American Museum of Natural History Explorer App**, a groundbreaking enhanced navigation tool available for free from the App Store on iPhone and iPod touch or at www.iTunes.com/appstore/. The Explorer pinpoints your location within the Museum and offers turn-by-turn directions and customized tours, a fossil treasure hunt, and social media links for posting to Facebook and Twitter.

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