

THE VISIONARIES

They're growing kale in abandoned lots, feeding hungry schoolkids, looking out for our laborers, and teaching us why cooking matters. In short, they're changing our food world for the better. We toast them all.

PHOTOGRAPHY BY ROBERT MAXWELL

THE ANTI-HUNGER BOYS

JEFF BRIDGES & BILL SHORE

They might look like the odd couple—one with a long goatee and even longer hair; the other in a boxy blazer and sensible shoes—but get the Oscar-winning actor and former political adviser talking about childhood hunger in America, and you quickly realize they're kindred spirits. Some 30 years ago, each established an organization to fight global famine, and 20 years later, Jeff Bridges's End Hunger Network and Bill Shore's Share Our Strength both began looking at hunger in this country. In 2010, the pair joined forces on Share Our Strength's No Kid Hungry campaign, which works to get meals to needy children. "We don't have kids dying as a result of not enough food," says Shore. "We have kids—16 million of them—facing serious malnutrition and cogni-

tive deficiencies because they aren't getting enough of the *right* food." One in five, Bridges adds, "won't be healthy enough to get educated enough to function, let alone lead." Their solution? Get states to tap into the millions in federal funds earmarked for school meals. And the governors are listening: No Kid Hungry now has programs in every state. —ALANNA STANG

THE GOOD-BEEF GUY

WILL HARRIS

Until the mid-1990s, the third-generation owner of Georgia's White Oak Pastures was a model industrial-beef producer. His 800 cows were confined, fed corn and soy, and treated with antibiotics. Artificial growth hormones fattened the calves, and at six months they were crammed into trucks and driven to Midwestern feedlots. "Here I was fighting nature every step of the way," Will

Harris says of the revelation he had in 1995, "and then I read about consumers who wanted grass-fed beef, and I thought, Hell, I can serve that market." With the profit-be-damned zeal of a convert, he tossed the drugs, hormones, and corn, switching to pasture. He abandoned pesticides and chemical fertilizers; brought in chickens to rotate through the land; and built an abattoir and poultry-processing plant. And nearly went broke. "Every day I wondered, What have I done to my family?" Then, about six years ago, things began to improve. Whole Foods and other stores and restaurants became customers. White Oak was once again viable. "I got binders two inches thick with guidelines from organizations about humane livestock husbandry," Harris says. "But I only have one metric: Can you pour yourself a glass of red wine, sit back, and enjoy watching your animals?" —BARRY ESTABROOK, *blogger at Politics of the Plate and author of Tomatoland*

NO CHICKEN
Ethiopian by birth, Marcus Samuelsson cooked high-end Swedish food before drawing crowds to the uptown phenomenon that is Red Rooster Harlem.



THE INTEGRATOR

MARCUS SAMUELSSON

He took New York City by storm cooking the food of his Swedish youth at Aquavit in the 1990s. And though he named his memoir *Yes, Chef*, Ethiopian-born Marcus Samuelsson is far more than just a master behind the stove. In addition to having recently launched two websites devoted to getting the word out about how easy—and how important—it is to cook at home, he opened Red Rooster Harlem, the restaurant that's lived up to his dream of serving as both crossroads of the city and pillar of the community. Local kids drop by for cooking classes; much of the produce comes from the nearby farmers' market; and many of the staff call the neighborhood home. "I'm proud to be part of the solution," says Samuelsson, "to have a place where regardless of your gender, regardless of your race, regardless of your sexuality, if you're working hard, you have a job."

—JOCELYN C. ZUCKERMAN

THE ORGANIC GROCER

NELL NEWMAN

The eldest daughter of Paul Newman and Joanne Woodward grew up in the woods, "running around with a pack of dogs, fishing." Though she tried the first family business, a stint in acting school revealed it wasn't for her. With a degree in ecology, Nell Newman couldn't help chiming in on Paul's products, but he resisted organics; to him, it meant "that horrible weird stuff Mom made in the '70s." It took Nell secretly serving an all-organic Thanksgiving dinner in 1992 to get the go-ahead to explore a line of organic pretzels (Pop's favorite snack). Since then, she and business partner Peter Meehan have grown Newman's Own Organics into one of the largest organic brands in the country, producing everything from cookies to pet food. The company has even teamed with McDonald's to offer its coffee in the chain's New England locations. "Think

about who's trying this," Meehan told Nell, "people who've never tried organic coffee before." "That's remarkable," she says, flashing a movie-star grin. "It really is a step in the right direction."

—PAIGE S. ORLOFF, *writer at OnEarth.org*

THE GRAIN GURU

WES JACKSON

Most critics of modern agriculture fixate on the problems of how we farm now; Wes Jackson focuses on the problem of humanity's decision to begin farming at all. For Jackson, the Fall came when we got a taste for seeds from annual grasses and began plowing up the earth to plant them. Early on, the MacArthur "genius" says, our ancestors learned that to "make those annual grains germinate, nature had to be subdued or ignored." Thus came the plow, which disturbs soil microorganisms, vaporizes carbon, and makes topsoil vulnerable to erosion; chemicals, which exterminate unwanted bugs and weeds but harm workers and foul the water; and the idea of planting vast swaths of land with a single species. All of that, plus the addition of fertilizers derived from fossil fuels, has pushed us to the edge of agricultural collapse, Jackson insists. The answer? Look at nature as a teacher, not as a force in need of subduing. And when he looks out from his perch at the Land Institute, which he founded in Kansas in 1976, he sees remnants of prairie ecosystems, anchored by perennial grasses that hold together a vast store of topsoil with their deep roots—all without plow or poisons. The prairie has emerged as the model for Jackson's celebrated experiments in perennializing grain agriculture—developing varieties of wheat and other grains that come back every year, no plowing or fertilization necessary. His grains are still a decade or two from being farmer-ready, but judging from the beer that a local brewer recently made from a variety developed at the institute (and from the biscuits Martha Stewart made), this iconoclast is on the right track. —TOM PHILPOT, *writer for Mother Jones and cofounder of Maverick Farms*

THE MOTIVATED MAYOR

MICHAEL BLOOMBERG

Interviewing New York City's mayor is like interviewing a living, very verbal encyclopedia. Facts, figures, and statistics roll off his tongue easily and accurately, backed up by research from the Department of Health as well as the Bloomberg School of Public Health at Johns Hopkins University. The successful (three-term), energetic, thoughtful, progressive leader is 100 percent devoted to improving the lives of his constituency. His initiatives in healthy living are already legendary—the ban on smoking in public places and restaurants, the establishment of salad bars and healthier menus in school cafeterias, the elimination of trans fats from prepared foods in restaurants, and now the limited size of calorie-packed sodas and juices. He cares, and his city is all the better for it. —MARTHA STEWART

THE LEGISLATOR

JIM MCGOVERN

It's the rare politician who takes an unpopular stand unlikely to win him big donations and won't let it go. But that is exactly what our hero of hunger, Jim McGovern, does. Since being elected to the U.S. House of Representatives in 1996, McGovern (D-MA) has been the strongest voice in Congress fighting for the rights of children and their families to have something to eat. "If you ever meet a child who is hungry, it breaks your heart," he says to anyone who will listen. The trouble in the current political climate, of course, is how few people will listen. McGovern plans to urge the next president to convene a conference on food and nutrition, bringing together the many agencies and government departments that currently don't compare notes but need to. "Let's have this discussion," he says. "We need a policy to help feed senior citizens, young mothers, kids, everyone who's hungry. We need to lock everyone in a room till we have a plan to end food insecurity." —CORBY KUMMER, *senior editor at The Atlantic*

“The better the farming—the more the health of the land is improved—the better the flavor.”



GOOD BREEDING

Chef Dan Barber is delving deep into plant genetics, in pursuit of better flavor—and the ecological gains that tend to go along with it.

THE BIG-BUSINESS WOMAN

MAISIE GREENAWALT

As vice president of strategy, responsible for the sustainability programs for Bon Appétit Management Company, Maisie Greenawalt could just do her job and go home at night, but she cares too deeply—about everything from troll-caught tuna to migrant tomato workers—to rest easy. Not only has Greenawalt ensured that all 500 of the company's cafés (from the one at Amazon headquarters, in Seattle, to the one at Oberlin College, in Ohio) serve only rBGH-free dairy products and beef raised without antibiotics, source at least 20 percent of ingredients from within 150 miles, and adhere to the Monterey Bay Aquarium's strict Seafood Watch guidelines, but she's helped establish a code of conduct for produce suppliers and contributed to a report that will serve as a road map for creating farmworker labor standards. We're in awe, and slightly exhausted, just thinking about it. —HANNAH WALLACE, freelance writer based in Portland, Oregon

THE BADASS

MARION NESTLE

In an era of trivial reality food shows—when “food expert” credentials are a mere URL away—Marion Nestle is one of our aces: a bit of Gloria Steinem, Marie Curie, and Julia Child all wrapped up in one. The New York University professor and best-selling author (who, not incidentally, has a Ph.D. in molecular biology) is a true triple threat. Having published six books in the past 10 years, exposing the questionable nature of the foods we put in our mouths, the marketing that seduces us, and the motives of those we put in office, Nestle is a food hero's hero: Michael Pollan has ranked her the second-most-powerful foodie in America. (His first? Michelle Obama.) If you are what you eat, and if the personal is political, then what you eat is all tied up with politics—and Nestle was visionary enough to realize this and agitate for NYU to create, in

the mid-1990s, a graduate and doctoral program in Food Studies, a hybrid of nutrition, biology, anthropology, and public health. “Marion not only realizes the centrality of food to our everyday lives,” says her NYU colleague Marvin Taylor, “she created a whole field to study it.” —LUCINDA SCALA QUINN, executive editorial director at Martha Stewart Living

THE MAN OF THE PEOPLE

MICHEL NISCHAN

As the father of two sons diagnosed with type 1 diabetes, Michel Nischan knew well the importance of a diet abundant in vegetables and fruits. But when the chef/owner of Dressing Room restaurant in Westport, Connecticut, learned that the majority of Americans who suffer from the more prevalent form of diabetes, type 2, live in high-poverty areas, it sparked some soul-searching. Five years ago, Nischan cofounded Wholesome Wave to expand access to affordable produce. Now buyers with federal food-assistance benefits can double the value of their dollars at farmers' markets, and patients at risk of obesity-related diseases can redeem “prescriptions” for produce. Healthy eating is “important to all Americans,” Nischan says, “not just, you know, yuppie farmers'-market goers.”

—MIRANDA VAN GELDER

THE FLAVOR SEEKER

DAN BARBER

We'd be happy just being able to tell our friends that our restaurant had been the venue of choice for President and Mrs. Obama on their first official New York City date night. But that particular bragging right is only one of many for the soft-spoken chef behind Manhattan's Blue Hill. Among the others? Overseeing the award-winning restaurant at sister property Blue Hill at Stone Barns, in the Hudson Valley; serving on the board of the farm and educational center there; and leading the national conversation on organics, locavorism, and, most recently, the importance

of breeding when it comes to the quality (and flavor) of our food. Also, the guy can write. Which is why we're so looking forward to the publication of his first book next year. —J.C.Z.

THE SEA KEEPER

ELLEN PIKITCH

From the time she schlepped a tank of sea snails on the subway to compete in a science fair (she won), New York City native Ellen Pikitch has had her sights set on the marine world. When the beluga sturgeon population plummeted in the '90s, the executive director of the Institute for Ocean Conservation Science launched an all-out campaign—slyly named Caviar Emptor—to bring it back from the brink, and in 2006 she published a study on the millions of fish killed each year for the Chinese delicacy shark fin soup. More recently, Pikitch documented the perils of netting too much tiny marine life to make fish meal and fish oil. Such is her clout that the omega-3 fatty acids industry invited her to its annual conference. “It was a good discussion,” she says. “No one threw fish oil capsules at me or anything like that.” —M.V.G.

THE WORKERS' ADVOCATE

TRACIE McMILLAN

Growing up outside of Flint, Michigan, Tracie McMillan may not have had a whole lot of money, but what she did have was brains. And the guts to spend months at a time working undercover in such unsavory and physically punishing gigs as migrant garlic picker, night stocker at Walmart, and cook at Applebee's. “I wanted to start a discussion that could bridge the gap between people who are really struggling to get food on the table,” McMillan says, “and the folks who are comfortable enough that they can decide to just pay more money to get better food.” Published earlier this year, her brilliant book, *The American Way of Eating*, did just that, and people haven't stopped talking about her since. —J.C.Z.