

Local Stories by Local People

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(excerpted)

Foodies Unite

Orfalea Funds s'COOL FOOD Initiative Launches With Screening Of Documentary "Two Angry Moms"

In the first of several events, the Orfalea Fund launched the s'COOL FOOD initiative with a totally free evening and a veritable buffet on Wednesday night, (11/7/07) at the Marjorie Luke Theater with food, film and facts on children's cafeteria food served at the schools.

Tables full of information on the s'COOL FOOD initiative, the doc "Two Angry Moms" and organic food were decorated with organic produce in big baskets or wooden fruit crates.

Lois Mitchell, President of the Orfalea Fund, confidently presided over the screening, opening by welcoming the crowd of 300 or so and thanking them for "coming out on a school night." She briefly explained the s'COOL FOOD initiative and how the Orfalea Fund is putting its' resources behind this proposal for a year. Santa Barbara is the first county ever to be studied so s'COOL FOOD will work as a road map or blueprint for school systems to adopt and adapt to their own areas.

"Two Angry Moms" began and for the hour and change it rolled the message that good, real food yields a multitude of benefits beyond personal health. Attention is better focused and tests scores improved when kids get a good breakfast. This is a grass roots doc and has a built in audience with the wave of parental activism now brewing on nutritional values of food in the schools. Headlines flash between interviews with more statistics thrusting our youth into a future of

health problems - most notably diabetes, obesity, learning disorders and asthma. The food in focus here is in the school cafeterias but Dr. Susan Rubin, one of the angry moms in the film's title and director of the non-profit, "A Better Holistic Health," stated, "We need to increase our food IQ." Pointing to all of us being better educated on what is in the processed food and snacks we eat at home and at schools. Film follows Dr. Rubin, a mother of three girls, who was a dentist but went back to school for a degree in nutrition after seeing the rampant decay in her youthful patients. She took her kids' school to task first, she went in and had lunch at the cafeteria to see it firsthand. It wasn't initially good but as the film wraps there is a turn in the school administration and things are looking up. It's a team effort - parents, administrators, teachers, food service providers and students are equally important parts.

Amy Kalafa has a nice list of film work to her credit, and in "Two Angry Moms" we find her introducing the set up for the doc and how she came to march to the tune of going up against big business. She's always up front with her camera, no covert filming. Made me flash on Michael Moore's style or maybe it's the big guy vs. little guy struggle so integral to the tension in getting this message out there passionately. Kalafa has all right stuff here and gives a very practical approach in the film showing how you can become active in your local kids' schools with each section of the film broken into "how to" portions.

High point of the doc for me was the Chez Panisse Foundation segment. Based up in Berkeley, run by infamous chef Alice Waters, it was news to me that Waters had designed several schools lunches in her neighborhood. But it was that foundation's Chef Susan Cooper who hit it home. Her no bones, or in kitchen terms boneless, approach was refreshing. Filmmaker Kalafa chose wisely to stay on Cooper for a powerful truth about being a DES baby and how because of it she was always sick as a kid and now. She's also

got a full set of braces and smiles like the sun. All the while she's captured stirring hundred gallon pots of soup, chopping veggies, and being the maestra in the kitchen. In another interview of a school cafeteria worker who never baked, but learned how with real food ingredients, now loves her job and is vested in delivering fresh baked goods to her school's students, was the perfect demonstration of how this should all work. Her transformation is one of many in the film.

Chef Kate Adamick is also a key player in this doc and has several sections in the film, giving the audience the "a-ha" moment when she blithely reads the ingredients on a pack of snack chips and clearly announces - "none of this is food, you know. It's all chemicals. Food isn't this color," she said, holding up a bright pink tub of something. She goes on to show the yogurt the school chose to serve has high fructose corn syrup in it, and reiterated "you have to really read the ingredients to be in the know." "Two Angry Moms" delivered the goods on all levels and the following Q&A was equally intriguing. Filmmakers Kalafa, & Rubin were joined by Chef Kate on stage to field questions from the house and ended the evening with people knowing a lot more than they did when they arrived.

Natalie Orfalea closed the evening, and hailed the "stellar, passionate people here tonight," she asked all in the house to "please tell your friends and ignite a spark in the community to get changes here." She also announced this is just one of a few events to be held this year to bring more attention to the s'COOL FOOD initiative.

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