

INTRODUCTION

How It All Started: The World Works in Mysterious Ways

We are in the midst of one of the most profound transformations in human history. Amidst global economic crisis, rising violence among nations, and a deepening awareness of the breakdown of the planet's ecosystems, a tidal wave of change is sweeping through communities everywhere.

The change is coming not from governments or political leaders, not from the United Nations, World Bank or International Monetary Fund. It's coming from people like you and me who are looking around our towns, neighborhoods and villages and seeing not just problems but opportunities. Often there is nothing more than the spark of an idea and the willingness of one or two or ten people to dive in and begin.

The Ceres Community Project's story is just one example. It all started quite innocently. At the time, I was dividing my time between two of my passions – working part-time as a chef at a retreat center in the western hills of Sonoma County and teaching horseback riding and training dressage horses at a farm in Santa Rosa. After spending ten years running a home-delivered meal service, I was enjoying the simplicity of getting paid for my work and not having to take it home with me.

On a lovely June day in 2006, I was driving to the barn when my cell phone rang. Sue Curry, my riding instructor, wondered if I could give her daughter a job over the summer and perhaps teach her to cook at the same time. There was no easy solution. I wasn't in a position to hire anyone – and who takes someone who can't cook on a catering job? But Sue was persistent and I have always been more inclined to say yes than no when the universe comes calling.

One conversation led to another and a couple weeks later I suddenly thought about a friend whom I knew was involved in the local cancer support community. One call confirmed that, yes, there were definitely families who could use help with meals. Sue offered to pay for the food, I donated my time, and Megan and I began meeting one afternoon a week to prepare meals for two single people and a family of four – all of them dealing with cancer or other serious health issues.

As Megan and I cooked together, I talked about my love of working with food. She gained confidence chopping and dicing and moved on to blanching and sautéing. Every afternoon, we packaged the food

we'd made, creating grocery bags of meals for our three families. One of the first times that we cooked, the husband of a woman with breast cancer stopped to pick up their food on his way home from work. I had never met him before and introduced myself and Megan. We told him about the food we had prepared. I witnessed Megan's pride in the contribution she was making in their life and his deep gratitude for the simple gift of the meals. Something about that moment took hold in me.

Several weeks later, I woke early in the morning with a vision of a non-profit that would bring young people into the kitchen to learn to cook and eat healthy foods and then provide meals to individuals and families who were touched by serious illness. I wanted more people to benefit from what Megan and our three families were experiencing.

What prompted Sue to call me that day? When the idea entered my mind to call the friend who was involved in the cancer support community – where did that come from? And the vision of this as a non-profit, whose idea was that?

The Ceres Community Project's story is filled with seemingly inexplicable moments, connections, ideas and conversations. An expert in Quickbooks shows up to volunteer just as we've filed our incorporation papers and need to create our own accounting system. Someone passes a brochure to a local reporter in a moment when we are expanding. She writes a full-page story and we benefit from a needed influx of volunteers. A professional chef just happens to wander into an event we are catering as a fundraiser, picks up our brochure and calls me – a month before we are adding our second cooking day and I'm scrambling for help.

Over the past three years I've deepened my understanding of the energy or spirit at work in the universe. When we are able to open ourselves to its magic, when we learn to be attentive to where it is leading us – not just to our own plans and ideas – amazing things can happen. Today, The Ceres Community Project is truly the co-creation of hundreds of people, each of whom said “yes” in a moment of awareness that they had something to contribute, that there was a role to play in something larger.

That first morning when I “saw” what would become The Ceres Community Project, I remember being filled with excitement. The vision was very clear and I sensed an elegance to it – the way that it addressed so many needs in the community and so many things that I cared deeply about. Young people would learn to cook. People who needed healing food would have it. We would help teach people about the link between what we eat and our health. And we'd help to

“If we forget to play, we lose our love for life, and loving life is what will save our world, not fearing destruction. We're desperate to be invited into our joy, into our energy source, the belly laugh, the burst of giggles, wild abundance, bright color and zest for life of play. The laughing Buddha is fat to show that even the most massive bulk can lift off the ground – with a big enough laugh. Laughter is the sound of play and a doorway into play. Right now, wherever you are, put this article down and laugh. Not because there's anything funny going on, but because you're free to laugh. It may seem awkward at first, but stretch into it. Get off your spot. You will discover that you can find ecstasy just by moving toward it. Play is the movement of love, and love is what moves the Universe. Never underestimate, especially during a time of crisis, the power of play to move the world. Indeed it's the only thing that ever did.”

—Gwen Gordon,
“Play is the Movement of Love”

restore the idea of caring for our neighbors, something that had been lost between my parents' generation and my own.

Despite what I thought I understood, I can look back now and tell you that I barely had a clue about what the universe had in mind when it planted the idea for Ceres. Today, the project continues to unfold in ways that surprise me – and I imagine that a year or two from now, we will still be discovering more about how the heart of The Ceres Community Project wants to express itself.

Let me share a bit of the story of how we got from the idea to the reality.

Getting Off the Ground: Angels and Perseverance

During the fall after Megan and I had cooked together, I began talking in earnest with a few friends that were interested in the idea. If we were going to move forward, I wanted there to be a base of support beyond just myself. I also made lists of people who I believed would be supportive and who brought skills and/or knowledge that would help. While surprisingly few of them stepped up to the plate, unexpected help came from other directions.

A dear friend, Cherie Lippard – the person who I called that first morning when the idea appeared – heard about a group called Bread for the Journey which provided small grants to local non-profits. She gave me a copy of their brochure and I promptly sent them an email outlining the idea. The group was interested and a meeting was arranged for Cherie and me to talk with three members of the group's board at a local coffee shop. It was one of many small turning points in our journey. Based on the idea that local communities house the resources to solve local problems, Bread for the Journey looks for individuals with good ideas who have the skill, passion and support to make them a reality.

After talking for a half hour or so, the three women asked Cherie and I to move to another table. They conferred for a few minutes and then invited us back. With little fanfare, the group offered us the \$1,000 we had asked for. The money was given without paperwork, with no strings attached. Their faith in what we were doing – and their willingness to put this small sum of money behind it – is one of the things that kept us going during those first sometimes challenging months.

I believed strongly that The Ceres Community Project needed to be owned by the community and that we would accomplish that by having as many people and businesses participating as possible – beginning with the local food markets. I started with Andy's Produce,

a small locally owned grocery where I had shopped for many years. I had met one of the women who worked there several years earlier when we both boarded horses at the same barn.

I knew that Julie was part of the family who owned the store and stopped in one day to talk with her. We stood in the sun surrounded by huge bins of vegetables while I told her about my idea to bring young people into the kitchen and provide meals for people who were sick. I needed money for food, could Andy's help? She asked how much I wanted and the number \$5,000 came out of my mouth. Julie offered to speak with her parents, the store owners, but warned me that they gave a lot of money to many different community causes and that the decision would be theirs.

A few weeks later, she told me that they had agreed to give me the full amount – even though we hadn't yet cooked a meal. When it went so smoothly at Andy's, I mistakenly thought it would be just as easy to raise this kind of money from every grocery store in town. When others didn't return my calls, or pledged much smaller amounts, I began to discover what an unprecedented gift Andy's had given us. When they reduced their support to \$1,000 the following year, I realized that Andy's owners had played a vital role in launching The Ceres Community Project by providing enough money to allow us to demonstrate the idea.

Today, we maintain an account at Andy's and shop there weekly. We also order all of our bulk supplies through the store at significant savings, a way that the market continues to support our work.

We had our start-up capital and money for food. We had teens who wanted to cook with us, and there was no shortage of families needing the support of prepared meals. The two missing pieces were a commercial kitchen and a non-profit to house the project.

Cherie and I had put the word out that we were looking for a kitchen, but nothing had materialized. The ones we had looked at were much too small for an active group of teens, or were situated in places where noise was a concern. I knew we couldn't work freely and creatively with young people and worry about noise!

We had been thinking about church kitchens when someone mentioned The Community Church of Sebastopol, a sprawling network of buildings at the north end of town. Finding a location where we could cook was clearly critical and we seemed to be hitting dead ends wherever we turned. It was with this feeling of frustration that I walked into the church office and meet Karin Seder, the church's facilities manager. Karin and I had spoken briefly on the phone, but it was in our first in-person meeting that I really felt Karin's – and the church community's – support. She told me that

“I cannot tell you how much the meals you made for me meant. Not only were they beautiful and tasty, but eating them made me feel like all the love and support the universe has was coming directly to me from you through the food you sent. That positive response you participated in makes healing seem certain.”

– Rita

“This service is amazing and I can actually feel the difference. It encourages me to eat healthier. I’m generally too tired to eat healthy. Thanks to all of you!”

– Barbara

“I find The Ceres Community Project touches me beyond words. The many young people who prepare the meals give so much of themselves. I look forward to unveiling each week’s creations, always so fresh, tasty and inviting. It helps so much to know that people, beyond family and friends, actually care and wish to ease my path to recovery. A heartfelt thank you to each and every one.”

– Linda

“Wow! My first delivery of food came today, and I was blown away at how good the food is! My appetite has been so minimal that I have been forcing myself to eat, but your menu was so fresh, healthy and good that I know I will love this program, and look forward to the deliveries.”

– Patty

the church had two kitchens that might work for us and promptly took me around to see them.

When we walked into the main kitchen, which shared a building with a basketball court (no worries about noise here!), I knew we had found our home. The kitchen was square with a large island in the middle where at least six people could work. There was a commercial refrigerator, six burner stove, gas and convection ovens, a commercial dishwasher and a good assortment of pots and pans. Karin told me that the kitchen was available and she agreed to let us use it one afternoon a week for a small donation of \$100 a month to help cover utilities and wear and tear.

By the middle of October, we had funds from Bread for the Journey to cover the insurance that the church required along with some cooking equipment and containers, we had a line of credit at Andy’s Produce to pay for food, and we had a kitchen. The one stumbling block was a non-profit partner so that we could solicit donations and apply for grants. After being strung along for three months without a decision, we walked away from our first potential partner. It was a hard lesson and enormously frustrating. Thinking that we had found a perfect match, we had stopped looking for other possibilities, ending up losing time and wasting energy.

In early January of 2007, we cut our losses and began seeking a new partner. One of our Bread for the Journey angels, Dr. Nan Fuchs, introduced us to Dr. Terri Turner, a local osteopath who also ran a small non-profit with the goal of improving the quality of patient care by increasing communication and respect among practitioners. Terri and I spoke for about an hour on the phone and then met for lunch. From her own experience with patients, Terri saw the enormous benefit of what we were hoping to do. She agreed to present the idea to her board. Unfortunately, there wasn’t another board meeting until mid-February. I was going to have to be patient.

Right about the same time, we learned about a group in Marin that was funding projects that supported men and women with breast cancer. My first thought was that we shouldn’t apply. While two of the people Megan and I had cooked for had breast cancer, I wanted The Ceres Community Project to be available to a broader range of people. After a number of conversations with To Celebrate Life Breast Cancer Foundation and a few of the people working with me on The Ceres Community Project, we decided to apply for a grant, agreeing to use the funds specifically for breast cancer survivors. The only problem was that we couldn’t apply for a grant without a non-profit partner.

On Thursday, February 8th, I met with the board of Relationship Centered Community Care and explained the idea for Ceres and the

resources we had put in place. The next morning, Terri told me that the board had agreed to sponsor us. The grant for To Celebrate Life was due by noon the following day in Marin County, about an hour and a half away! I wrote the grant on Friday, drove to a copy shop in Marin on Saturday morning to make the required number of copies, and delivered it to the head of the grants committee an hour before the noon deadline.

In mid-March, To Celebrate Life called to let us know they had awarded us a \$7,500 grant to provide meals to breast cancer clients. Finally, on March 29, 2007, The Ceres Community Project got off the ground. Three high school students from Summerfield Waldorf School and one student from El Molino High School in Forestville gathered with me at The Community Church's kitchen to prepare meals for four local families.

The details of those early months run together for me now. Here's what I remember. Laughter and something just below total chaos in the kitchen. Days with too few teen helpers and days with too many. Heartfelt notes of thanks from our clients. Demonstrating how to chop an onion, sauté shiitakes and blanch broccoli. Prepping yet another case of kale. Driving food to a client when a delivery volunteer didn't show up at the kitchen. The enormity of packing every single thing we needed and taking it all to the kitchen – then having to return it all home again at the end of the day.

Not Quite It: Untapped Potential and More Angels

Those first six months I wavered between absolute commitment to what we were doing and frustration at its limitation. We were clearly making a difference, yet almost everything we were doing fell short of what I saw the potential to be. I was still working at another job and putting all of my free time into Ceres but it felt harried and disorganized.

I wanted the experience to be richer and more meaningful for the teens. I wanted to make the program available to more people. I imagined what it would be like to have all of our food grown by local farmers and a kitchen where we could store all of our ingredients, allowing us more freedom to create on the spot. There was so much possibility yet it was taking all of my free time just to get the weekly cooking done and out to the clients.

That October I found myself at the Bioneers Conference in Marin County. If you haven't heard of it, the Bioneers annual conference is one of the more inspiring experiences on the planet. Some 3,000 people from across the globe gather to share practical solutions to

“It is especially important in this discussion to recognize the unity of the total process, from that first unimaginable moment of cosmic emergence through all its subsequent forms of expression until the present. This unbreakable bond of relatedness that makes of the whole a universe becomes increasingly apparent to scientific observation, although this bond ultimately escapes scientific formulation or understanding. In virtue of this relatedness, everything is intimately present to everything else in the universe. Nothing is completely itself without everything else. This relatedness is both spatial and temporal. However distant in space or time, the bond of unity is functionally there. The universe is a communion and a community. We ourselves are that communion become conscious of itself.”

– Thomas Berry

“The truth is that all aspects of the current crisis reflect the same mistake, setting ourselves apart and using others for our gain. So to heal one aspect helps the others to heal as well. Just find what you love to work on and take joy in that.”

– Joanna Macy

the world’s most pressing problems. During the afternoon, I sat in the main plenary hall listening to Joanna Macy, Jean Shinoda Bolen, Alice Walker and several other women leaders. They were talking honestly and directly about the state of the planet. As I sat listening, I wrote on my pad, “what would it look like if I took The Ceres Community Project on wholeheartedly?”

I knew I was holding myself back and I also knew that if I was going to dive in, I needed to free up more time. That meant finding a way to pay myself at least a small amount so that I could let go of other work.

Three days later, I happened to be visiting with a friend of a friend whose partner had died of breast cancer eight months before. After a bit, I began to tell her about the work we were doing with Ceres. By the time we parted, she had offered me \$5,000 to help me pay myself. The next day, I had a meeting with a man who had heard about what we were doing through someone at Bread for the Journey. Sitting across the table from one another at a small café in downtown Windsor, I told him how the project had come to be, what we had accomplished so far, and what I thought the potential might be. After about twenty minutes he asked, “How can I help?”

I admitted to him that I didn’t really have any idea what he had in mind. I had simply heard that he was interested and had come to talk with him. He told me that he was a philanthropist and asked how much money I thought would make a difference? By the end of that half hour meeting, I had secured another \$10,000 – funds that would allow me to make this work my priority.

That twenty-four hour period was one of the most profound experiences during The Ceres Community Project’s early life. In that short period of time, everything had shifted.

Those two donors sensed the possibility of The Ceres Community Project at this very early stage. By putting their faith and financial support behind our work, they were instrumental in unleashing the enormous potential that we were sitting with.

Over the next four months, the entire structure and operation of the organization changed. Volunteers showed up who were willing and able to take on major areas of responsibility. I brought together a small group as an advisory board and we began meeting monthly. We added a second cooking day, doubling the number of teens who could participate and creating the potential for doubling our client load as well. By March, just a year after the project began, we incorporated as our own non-profit and filed for 501(c)(3) status from the IRS. The Ceres Community Project was no longer a little project that I was doing on the side one day a week.

Two Years and 32,000 Meals Later

During our first eight months in 2007, we provided about 4,500 meals to 28 different households cooking just one afternoon a week in our church kitchen. A year and a half after that first day, we moved to a new kitchen leased by long time volunteer Patti Stack. Patti launched her catering business Capers & Company and provided space for The Ceres Community Project three afternoons a week. We now had a home where we could store our growing amount of food, containers and equipment. Even more importantly, we had a space where we could bring our clients and their stories more present for our teen volunteers.

During 2008, we tripled the number of meals we provided to more than 17,300. By December of that year, at least 125 teens had participated in the program and we had nearly 100 active volunteers. Our client load had grown from 12 at the end of the previous year to 34 and we had begun to develop a nutrition education and cooking class program for clients who were ready to cook for themselves.

As we entered 2009, we were busy creating organizational charts, budgeting, writing goals, and hiring a small group of part-time staff. Another significant shift was in the works. Once again, The Ceres Community Project didn't look at all like it had a few months previously.

By the end of 2009, the Ceres Community Project will have provided 45,000 beautiful, delicious, nourishing and *free* meals to hundreds of local families. At least 250 young people will have worked in our kitchens with about 25 participating each week. Our 16 hour educational program, the Healing Foods Cooking Course, is being offered every other month, providing knowledge, skills and inspiration for those recovering from illness and their caregivers. A free Healing Foods lecture series extends our reach into the larger community.

2009 brought expanded connections with local farmers and food producers. Virtually all of our produce is now donated, coming from our local Whole Foods store, farms, school and community gardens, and the kitchen gardens of several local wineries. Our client offerings include specialty foods like our Immune Broth, Vitality Truffles and Arame Ginger Sauerkraut, some of which we also sell at our local farmer's market. And we are in conversation with people in neighboring Marin and Napa counties, Seattle and New Jersey about launching similar projects.



Thursday

1. Kamut Pasta w/ Roasted Butternut, Greens, Onions & White Beans *1 w/ P&E
2. Curried Winter Vegies
3. Fish w/ Citrus Marinade Cabbage & Carrots w/ Sesame
4. Package Pumpkin Mousse *4 Flan
5. Package Radish Salad

JERSEY BOY

The Importance of Remembering

During those early months of launching The Ceres Community Project we felt our way. What kind of food was helpful? How many meals could we cook in an afternoon with teen volunteers? How many teens could we have working before things tipped over into chaos? Could the teens help with delivery or was it too much to ask after a long day at school and time in the kitchen? What we knew was that there were local families that needed the support of lovingly prepared healing food, and that young people had much to give and much to gain by joining us in the kitchen.

The many questions that arose answered themselves as we moved forward. Today, despite the fact that our size and organizational structure have changed, the process continues to be the same. As we enter 2010, we have a sense of how we might deepen and expand our contribution here in Sonoma County and across the country. We have plans and goals and budgets for the year ahead. And yet we remain aware and attentive to what has not yet revealed itself. We know without a doubt that The Ceres Community Project will look different a year from now – and in ways that we cannot yet anticipate.

At its heart The Ceres Community Project is a force for creating connection and healing and for rediscovering the vast web of relationship in which we live. I can't take credit for the idea, nor can I take responsibility for what has been accomplished. I was simply open to what presented itself and willing to step in and begin. As I shared the vision with others, they brought new insights and helped to create more possibility.

Today, The Ceres Community Project is a co-creation of hundreds, perhaps thousands of people. So many strands have woven together – the experiences, needs and ideas of our many clients, teen and adult volunteers, business sponsors and referral agencies; the bounty and diversity of food which has come our way and the generosity of the farmers; the creativity of all the cooks throughout history; and on and on.

What Difference Does It Make: The Big Picture

Obviously, The Ceres Community Project is making a big difference in the lives of many people:

- Our clients receive beautiful and nourishing meals at a time of enormous stress and challenge. Many of them are economically disadvantaged, live alone, and could not afford the quality of food we provide without our service. Here in Sonoma County, and in many other places, there is no meal support unless you are elderly.

"I have two daughters, Tina, recently married and living in Rohnert Park, and Anaar, a medical student at Northwestern in Chicago. After I was treated by an emergency room doctor and my primary care physician for a blood pressure spike last December, Tina complained to Anaar that something didn't look right. Anaar brought her stethoscope and rubber hammer home for the holidays and found an eleven pound tumor both doctors had missed. Then she found an excellent surgeon at UCSF, Dr. Eric Nakakura, very experienced in excising retroperitoneal liposarcoma. Tina helped me find the Ceres Community Project, a great blessing in my long recovery. Not only is the food delicious, but I find special comfort in the role of young people in providing this vital service.

Thanks to my daughters, my mother, UCSF, Ceres, and many generous friends, I am returning to my work as a painter--with the renewed purpose that follows the heavy questions that are cancer's gift. I'm a member of Sebastopol Gallery, and my responsibilities there helped pull me back to health. The work I showed as featured artist this fall included many Native American elements. Now I'm collaborating with a Pomo dancer who liked these paintings on a project to represent Pomo life ways to the larger community.

Thank you Ceres Community Project for feeding me. Your nourishment will show in the paintings produced in this collaboration!"

– Sandy Eastoak

- Clients tell us that the meals they receive help them feel connected to and supported by the whole community – an enormous contribution to their healing.
- Our teen chefs develop culinary skills, gain an understanding of the link between what they eat and their health, and learn about leadership and team work. Even more fundamentally, they discover their own competence and the enormous satisfaction of contributing to their world.
- Those participating in our educational programs – the Healing Foods Cooking Course and lecture series – gain the knowledge, skills and inspiration to make whole foods a part of their lives.
- And all of us involved in Ceres, as clients, staff, board, teen chefs, volunteers, food donors and business sponsors, benefit from feeling connected and engaged in the larger world.

The Ceres Community Project is part of a growing movement to recover a healthy and nourishing relationship with our bodies, the food we eat, community, and the larger web of life which provides that food.

The western industrialized diet is at the root of an epidemic of obesity, diabetes, cancer, heart disease and auto-immune conditions that is ravaging our parents, friends, family members and children. Scientists now agree that fully 35 percent of all cancers could be prevented by eating a healthier diet. The statistics are similar for heart disease, and the relationship between poor quality diets and diabetes is much higher.

Beyond that, we have become increasingly disconnected from one another. More of us move away from our families than ever before and few of us stay at the same job for longer than a year or two. Church attendance is down as is participation in service clubs, bowling leagues and other forms of social networking. A 2006 study by the National Science Foundation found that 25 percent of Americans say that in times of personal crisis they have no one they can confide in, double the number in 1985.

Yet researchers are confirming that feeling connected and cared for contributes significantly to long-term health and to our capacity for healing. A 1997 Carnegie Mellon University study found that people with rich social networks were four times less likely to become ill than those with fewer friends.

The Ceres Community Project grew out of an understanding of these forces. Our mission is to restore whole, local and organically grown food to its place as the foundation of health for our bodies, communities and planet.

About this Cookbook

In the following pages we've tried to capture our current understanding about the kind of food that is most supportive of good health. We've paid special attention to the needs of those touched by serious illness, and have tried to provide information, recipes and resources to enable you to feed yourself well despite the challenges that illness presents.

The recipes that made it into the cookbook had to meet several rigorous criteria – 1) They had to include a high proportion of foods that are especially beneficial for health, 2) they had to be simple to make, 3) the end result needed to be delicious, and 4) at least in most cases, they needed to allow for variation and improvisation.

Our goal is simple – to encourage you – whether young or old, ill or well – to rediscover the joy and satisfaction of cooking. Food, as all indigenous people have known throughout history, is our “primary medicine”. What we eat literally becomes us.

As research mounts, it's increasingly clear that we either support or burden our bodies based on the foods we choose to eat. While that may sound stark, think of it this way. Whole, organically grown foods are recognized by our bodies. We have the capacity to process, digest and put them to good use with a minimum of effort. These foods are building, restoring and nourishing.

Most processed foods are made up of chemically created ingredients which our bodies don't recognize as food and don't know how to process. They include a high proportion of toxic byproducts. Digesting these foods and eliminating the toxins puts enormous stress on our systems and takes energy away from healthy processes.

Cooking brings with it an enormous range of benefits. First and foremost, it allows you to take control over what you and those you love eat. If you don't cook, you are dependent on purchased food prepared by others. Often this food isn't as fresh or as whole as what you might make. In addition, it carries the energetic imprint of those who made it and whatever emotional state they were in. When you cook, you have the opportunity to imbue the food with love, gratitude and healing energy.

Cooking is empowering. When you prepare your own food, you send a message of love – that you care enough to take the time to prepare a healthy meal. When you cook, you have the pleasure of handling food directly. You get a chance to notice how beautiful and colorful it is. Through the food, you reconnect to the earth and tap into a deep well of gratitude for its sustenance.

Our Mission

To restore whole, local and organically grown food to its place as the foundation of health and healing for people, communities and the earth.

What We Do

- Provide delicious and nourishing whole foods meals and a community of support to individuals and families touched by life-threatening illness.
- Inspire young people to become life-long stewards of their world, and give them the understanding and skills to become advocates for whole, local and organically grown foods in their own lives and the lives of others.
- Educate the larger community about the relationship between what we eat and the health of our bodies, our communities and the earth, and provide the skills and inspiration for each of us to become advocates for positive change in our own lives and the lives of others.

“Each of us is truly our primary doctor with nature as our guide. We have all the healing knowledge we need within our very beings. Learning to make contact with the healing ability within and using this knowledge in our daily life is the route to better and better health and well-being.”

– Elson Haas,
Staying Healthy with the Season

“Embedded in family life and in cultural and religious ritual, food has always been our most direct, intimate tie to a nurturing earth as well as a primary means of bonding with each other. Food has helped us to know where we are and who we are.”

– Frances Moore Lappe,
Hope’s Edge

Finally, cooking provides an opportunity to slow down and be present. In the midst of a busy day, fifteen minutes of washing and chopping vegetables can provide a deeply healing pause. Cooking calls you into *this* moment, requiring that you breathe, slow your pace, and pay attention to where you are and what you are doing.

If you don’t cook, it may seem like a mysterious and complicated process. In fact, cooking is quite simple. At its heart, cooking is the marriage of two things: 1) learning a few basic techniques, and 2) discovering the kinds of foods that make both your taste buds and your body sing. If you need some help with the first part, take a look at the chapter called Getting Started. There you’ll find definitions of basic cooking terms and a simple overview of the techniques you’ll need for the recipes in this book.

The second is the part that no one can do for you. It’s also the ultimate answer to developing a way of eating that is uniquely suited to and supportive of your physical, emotional and spiritual health. Begin with your own curiosity and be willing to let go of any preconceived ideas you have about what you like and don’t like.

Before you eat, ask yourself what your body really wants and take the time to listen for the answer. After you eat, notice how you feel. Is your energy good and does it last? Do you feel clear or foggy? Do you sleep well at night and wake up feeling refreshed? Over time, this simple process will yield a rich understanding of the kind of food that is most suited to you in any given moment. You might keep a special journal to record what you discover.

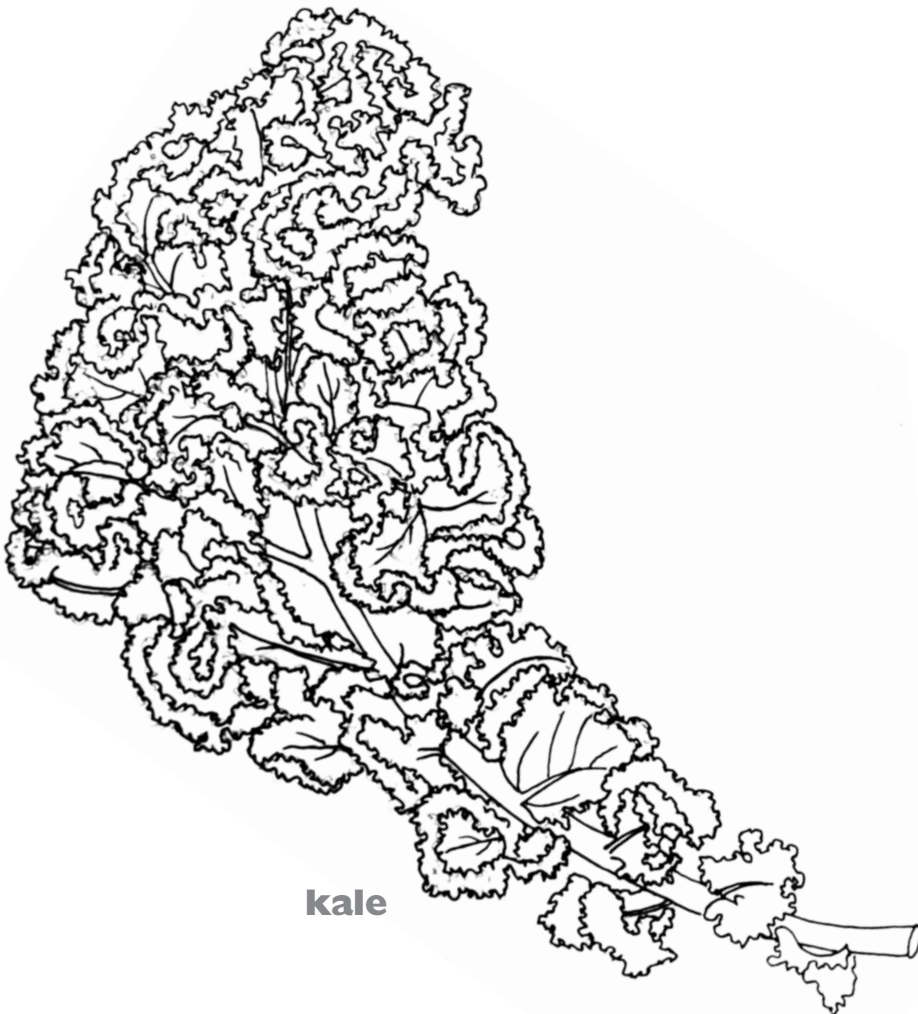
As we’ve researched healing foods and cooked for people who are ill, we’ve discovered that there are a number of important foods that are unfamiliar to many people – fermented foods like sauerkraut, sea vegetables, seeds with Omega 3 oils such as chia and flax, sprouted foods and alternative sweeteners to name a few. In the next chapter, Nutrition Basics, we provide a general introduction to our philosophy about eating to support health, whether you are ill or well. You’ll learn about foods you may not be familiar with, the importance of healthy fats and how to reduce or eliminate sugar from your diet. If you are currently dealing with illness, Nutrition Basics also provides tips for feeding yourself well when you have very little energy.

Finally, at the back of the book you’ll find a Resource Guide to support you in exploring many of these topics in more detail. There are books, organizations and websites which we have found to be useful in understanding the role between what we eat and our health. We’ve also provided sources for hard to find ingredients.

The Ceres Community Project is a work in process – an ongoing collaboration that is being shaped by our clients, teen and adult volunteers, staff, board, business sponsors, farmers and the larger community in which we live and work. We hope that what we have shared here – our current best understanding of how we can eat to support our health – nourishes your body, mind and spirit and encourages you to cook and eat in accordance with your own deepest nature.

Blessings and bon appetit!

Cathryn





In April, 2008, I had a radical cystectomy followed by chemotherapy. I live alone and often didn't feel like eating, much less cooking. Having healthy, delicious meals right in my refrigerator allowed me to eat even though I thought I didn't want to. Knowing the food was made with love and care nourished me as well, not to mention training teens to cook. What an incredible community resource!!!!

Patricia Waters, Cotati

