

Food Insecurity - Reconnecting with Natural Resources

Presented By

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SF Bay Area – The most expensive place to live in the United States.

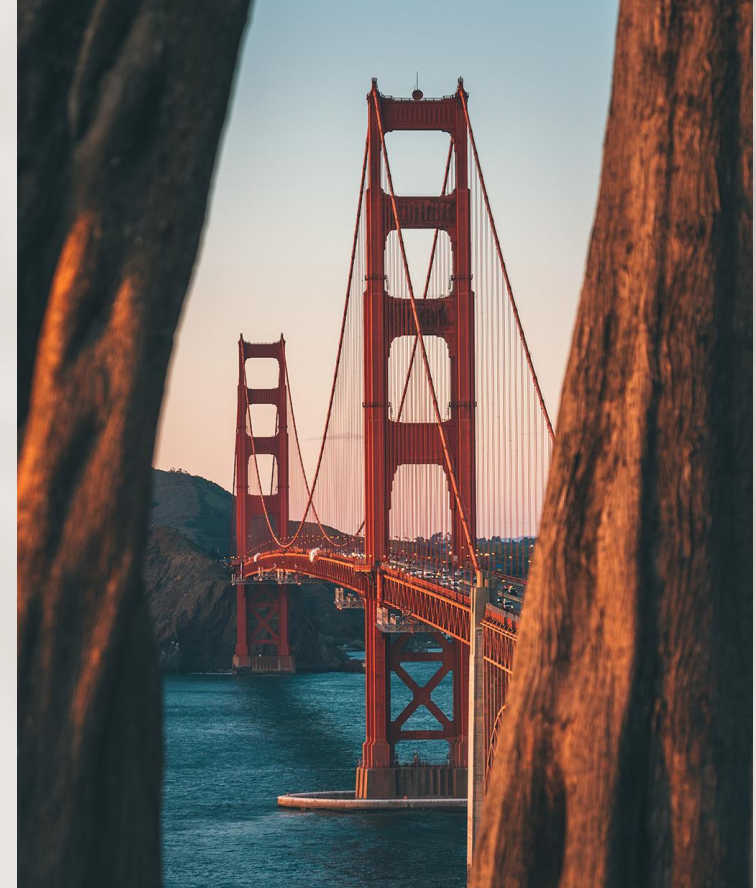
The California Bay area is one of the most beautiful and diverse places to live within the United States. We have beautiful redwoods, mountains, beaches, parks and more. We also have access to technology, ethnic diversity, education, and some of the most breathtaking views anywhere. But it doesn't come cheap.

The cost of living in Northern California has long been the most expensive of anywhere else in the country. With the demand for housing, high rent, and crushing utility costs, it is not easy to live here comfortably.

Defining poverty in the Bay Area is complex due to the high cost of living. Traditional federal poverty guidelines, based on national averages, paint an inaccurate picture. For example, in 2023, the federal poverty line for a family of four is **\$27,750**. However, in San Francisco, a family of four needs an income of **\$117,400** or less to be considered low-income, according to the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD).

The median rent for all bedrooms and property types in the Bay Area, CA is **\$3,000** per month. Houses in the Bay Area typically rent between **\$1,250** and **\$7,999**, with a median rent of **\$3,000**.

According to CalFresh, a family of four cannot earn more than **\$39,000** per year to qualify for food assistance.



Let's put this into perspective

	Rent \$4k per month x 12	Utilities \$388.67 per month x 12	Commuter Costs Average Annually
\$117,400 Income For a family of 4	\$48,000	\$4664	\$12,650
Total Average Costs	Average Childcare Cost for 1 Child Annually	Average Cost of Transportation for 1 Child Annually	Groceries \$1289.50 to \$1468.00 per month for 4
\$99,211 - \$101,363	\$16,317	\$2116	\$15,474-\$17,616

This means the average family of 4, which usually consists of 2 working parents and 2 children, would find it challenging to live sustainably. If one parent cannot work or cannot find a job that pays more than the current minimum wage, they will not be able to meet all their most basic needs. Including the most basic of needs; **FOOD**.

What is food insecurity?

Food insecurity is a lack of consistent and equitable access to healthy, safe, and affordable foods that promote optimal health and well-being. **Inadequate access to healthy food results in long and short-term health and nutritional hardship and negatively affects one's overall quality of life.**

- More than **1 in 10 people** in the Bay Area currently experience hunger
- Approximately **870,000 people** in the Bay Area are food-insecure
- The overall food insecurity rate in the Bay Area is **11.5%**

The effects of food insecurity run far deeper than hunger alone. Food insecurity has been linked to several severe physical and mental impacts such as increased risk of hypertension, hyperlipidemia, cardiovascular disease, and depression. Not only are these health impacts preventable with measures to bolster food security in communities, they're disproportionately impacting certain communities. Food insecurity is most prevalent in low-income households with children, immigrants, houseless individuals, residents of single room occupancy hotels, transitional aged youth and college students, seniors, and people with disabilities.

What can be done about Food Insecurity?

Why are people experiencing this issue in one of the wealthiest regions in the U.S.? Through commercial farming and food processing, people have become super-market dependent. But what if we were able to educate people how to reconnect with natural food resources? Their health would likely improve, as well as decrease the demand for super-market foods which would also ultimately lower the cost of food if there is less commercial demand. Knowledge sharing would facilitate more trust in the recommendation to shift to more sustainable diets e.g. vegetarian or plant-based diets. Education campaigns could help influence policy and legislation whilst providing citizens with the skills to advocate for sustainable food systems. We need to continue to promote knowledge sharing, storytelling and education initiatives so we can have a future generation that is aware of what a sustainable food system is. I feel strongly that this could happen through way of a food festival where people could sample foods created with local natural resources, and be educated through demonstrations and storytelling. I think people would generally be more receptive to this idea if they could sample foods and learn thru visual demonstrations.



Reconnecting with Natural Foods

Did you know the Acorn is one of the most versatile super foods there is? By and far, the acorn provided the most significant source of food for the majority of Californian indigenous groups. Of the 50 species of oak that exist, about 15 come from the state of California. Mostly, the acorn was boiled in baskets by hot stones and made into a thick jelly-like mush or porridge. This process is known as leeching. The closest thing to this in markets is the acorn jelly in Korean supermarkets. Acorn can be made into nut butter, or grounded into flour. It can be used to substitute coffee, grits, and made into acorn milk, and acorn flour which can be used to make breads, pancakes, muffins, cookies, soup, flatbreads such as tortillas, and even ice cream!



What are the benefits of Acorns as food?

Eating acorns may have several benefits:

- For digestion: Acorns are full of fiber, which can help improve gut health and prevent constipation
- For heart health: Acorns are low in fat and high in antioxidants, which can help lower cholesterol and blood pressure
- For healthy bones: Acorns contain calcium, phosphorus, and magnesium, which are essential minerals for bone health
- For blood sugar control: Acorns have a low glycemic index, which means they do not cause spikes in blood sugar levels
- For energy: Acorns are rich in complex carbohydrates, which provide a steady source of energy

Bay Area Acorn Festival!

The Bay Area is a hot location for food festivals. Bay Area residents are also open to healthy food options. A food festival would bring diverse Bay Area communities together to sample foods, learn through demonstrations, and give individuals and families valuable knowledge about local natural food options. It would also be an opportunity to learn about local indigenous tribes and traditions, which also helps the tribes with land recognition and reclamation. It is also beneficial to the local economy. Research shows that the more involved local people and suppliers are in terms of provision of services, food, beverages, and attractions, the greater the economic benefits to the region. **Local vendors, artisans, craftspeople, restaurateurs, hoteliers and innkeepers may make a large portion of their annual income during the course of an event such as a food festival.**



How would I do this?

There are a number of steps that would need to be taken to ensure a successful food festival. The first step in hosting a food festival is to assemble an event planning team. The team should consist of individuals with experience in event planning, marketing, and food service. The team should be responsible for managing the event's operations, coordinating with vendors, and marketing the event. My second step would be to find an accessible venue that is easy to reach for everyone. This could be an outdoor or indoor location, but nevertheless, one that is large, spacious, and close to freeways. A county fairground location would do nicely, and their exhibition halls are cost-friendly.

A food theme would need to be established, similar to other food festivals in the Bay Area such as the Gilroy Garlic Festival, and the Morgan Hill Mushroom Mardi Gras. In this case, the theme is Acorns! I would need to have a diverse and inclusive food selection that includes finger food and more substantial dishes. Dishes such as Acorn soups, breads, coffee drinks, ice cream, desserts could be offered, as well as other dishes which use Acorns in their recipes. Additionally, I would need to secure entertainment acts to keep the attendees engaged. This could be local bands, or even have a community stage. This also helps with support from the community if their children or friends/family are performing. I would need to get support from sponsorships to help with the overall costs, as well as charging vendors a space rental fee.

About the Artist - Julie Acosta

Artist Statement

I have spent much of my adult years reconnecting to my Indigenous roots, which I express in my art. My art focuses around indigenous knowledge, empowerment, and awareness. For so long, *indigineity* has been covered up and nearly wiped out through the American continent. My goal is to help people reconnect with **Indigenous America** through artistic depictions and knowledge-sharing. My art-making process consists of developing an idea or message that I want people to see. My art seeks to help myself and others explore indigenous history, as well as past and current issues plaguing indigenous communities. Through my various art-works, I hope to inspire others to see their own reflection and gain knowledge within aspects of my art.

Biography

Julie Acosta (b. 1978, Santa Clara, California, United States), I am a member of the Jumano Tribe of West Texas. A recent graduate with 3 Associates degrees in the Studio Arts and Design fields, I am an experienced professional Artist with strong concept developmental skills. Highly detail oriented, I thrive on collaboration, change, and innovation. I am a painter, photographer, illustrator, graphic artist, and sculptor. My husband is a member of the Calaveras Band of Miwok Indians and it is through him that I have gained much knowledge of California Indigenous culture. I also create Indigenous beadwork.

Thank you



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