Handcrafting The Change They Want To Eat In The World?
An Inquiry Into The Who, What, and Why
of Artisanal Food Production
in Central Ohio

Thesis

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by

Erin Caricofe, B.A.

Rural Sociology Graduate Student in the
School of Environment and Natural Resources

The Ohio State University

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Thesis Committee:
Dr. Jeff Sharp, Advisor
Dr. Tomas Koontz
Abstract

The U.S. food system has seen substantial growth of small scale businesses crafting “artisanal” foodstuffs. Entrepreneurs showcase their wares at events such as the Pike Place Market Artisan Food Festival (est. 2010), Oakland’s Eat Real Festival (est. 2009), and Slow Food Nation (est. 2008); they are being recognized in *The New York Times* and the *Edible Communities* magazines; and garnering designations such as the Slow Food “Snail of Approval” (for foodstuff contributions to quality, authenticity, and sustainability).

From beer and spirits to breads, cheeses, and ice cream, these producers promote high quality ingredients (some local or sustainable) and tout production methods that are often labor-intensive, time-consuming, and subject to season or particular supply chains. These purveyors – selling through farmers markets, food carts and trucks, specialty groceries, and occasionally their own brick and mortar shop – charge premium prices for their small-batch creations, much like Organic and heirloom specialty crop producers that have come before them. Mass-produced, less expensive, and arguably more “convenient” versions of their foods are often readily available in traditional grocery stores, yet these entrepreneurs still step forward to offer their products – why?

This research offers a qualitative portrait of artisanal food producers and the various factors motivating them. While artisanal food production is occurring nationally, this
research focuses on the motivations and factors influencing a set of Central Ohio food artisans, to explore some of the following questions:

- What does it mean to be artisanal? What are the artisans’ core values and motivations?
- How are food artisans participants in what academics refer to as the “quality turn?” Where do food artisans stand in opposition to mass-produced, industrial food?
- Are food artisans a new part of the alternative food movement, or a movement unto themselves? In what ways does their work impact the dominant food system?

Data revealed food artisans to be values-based individuals emphasizing product quality through their careful sourcing of ingredients (mostly local) and the use of traditional, time-consuming production methods. The food artisans studied expressed a strong desire to operate as locally embedded businesses, consistent with the ideas of Civic Agriculture. Their production practices and product quality goals reveal an alignment with the quality turn occurring in the food system, and a broadening of what the quality turn can encompass. While these artisans were not actively involved in an alternative food system movement as identified by other food system scholars, there were many similarities in terms of personal motivations and business practices among these artisans. Future studies in other regions and of larger samples of artisans might investigate the extent to which these artisans represent their own food system movement.
Acknowledgements

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I dedicate my research and thesis to my late father, Ronald Bruce Caricofe, always my biggest fan and most vocal cheerleader. His support of my ideas and questions-asking is unmatched.

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Vita

November 27, 1978……born, Woodbridge, Virginia

2001…………………..B.A. Art History, College of William and Mary

2004…………………..Research Assistant/Interviewer, Grub: Ideas for an Urban, Organic Kitchen by Anna Lappe

2005…………………..Certificate in Culinary Arts, Northwest Culinary Academy of Vancouver, British Columbia

2005…………………..Organic Farm Intern, Tenuta di Spannocchia, Siena, Italy

2006…………………..Foods Department Publishing/Test Kitchen Intern, Southern Living, Birmingham, AL

2007…………………..Development Associate, Organic Farming Research Foundation, Santa Cruz, CA

2007-08………………..Cook, Seelbach Hilton, Louisville, KY

2008-09………………..Program Associate, Wallace Center at Winrock International, Arlington, VA

2009…………………..Certificate in Agricultural Horticulture, Center for Agro-ecology and Sustainable Food Systems, University of California – Santa Cruz

2009-present…………..USDA Interdisciplinary Graduate Program in Rural Sociology Fellow, The Ohio State University
FIELD OF STUDY

Major Field: Rural Sociology
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CHAPTER ONE
INTRODUCTION

1.1 Study Background and Goals

“Columbus is a foodie’s paradise. What started out as a comfort food capital has turned into one of the country’s most innovative food scenes.”

So boasts the Columbus Convention and Visitor’s Bureau in describing its culinary scene (http://www.experiencecolumbus.com/dine-here.cfm). Local publication outlook continues the theme, getting more specific to its nature: “It seems that the pendulum is heading back to a ‘homemade-homegrown’ method of business here in Columbus, because there’s definitely been a swing towards local products being sourced and handcrafted by local residents. The idea of artisan-style, gourmet quality foods are providing a popular environment for locavores and those wanting to feed them” (Dunn, 2011, P18).

Not unique to the Midwest, or any specific region of the U.S., “good,” fresh, and culinarily innovative food are increasingly being used to define the character of a locale. The existence of such artisanal foods is increasingly being viewed as a quality of life indicator. These foods are often the handiwork of a growing cadre of small scale food artisans, each crafting their particular vision of a quality food item, such as seasonally-inspired deep dish pizzas made with local cornmeal, a slow-simmered tomato sauce from a family recipe, or vodka made from regionally-raised winter wheat.
Artisanal food is everywhere these days. In the media, particularly in new media such as blogger posts, tweets, and Facebook pages, it is touted for its creative novelty. And its points of sale are emerging in interesting and unconventional outlets, from farmers markets, to e-commerce websites, and pop up restaurants (Morago, 2011). Gourmet (and not so gourmet) food trucks are near-stampeding into cities across the U.S., serving glammed-up street food to winding lines of customers (Sims, 2011). Last decade’s micro-breweries are giving way to micro-distilleries and micro-meaderies, often as a facet of urban re-development. Pickles and jams are enjoying a popularity across generations that they’ve not before experienced. Career-changers are leaving high-paid positions in law in order to open gluten-free bakeries (Stout, 2011). Breads, cheeses, and chocolates – long-time darlings of artisanal production – are being joined by ice creams, unending cupcakes and confectionary spin-offs, as well as small-batch versions of other value-added items: kimchi, homemade soups, doughy pretzels. While the foods are many, their relatively small-batch production appears bound by a collective commitment to quality, primarily in flavor development and shortcut-free production.

Underscoring its focus on skillful culinary quality, England’s recently founded School of Artisan Food defines “artisinal” as

“...a term used to describe food produced by non-industrialised methods, often handed down through generations but now in danger of being lost. Tastes and processes, such as fermentation, are allowed to develop slowly and naturally, rather than curtailed for mass-production. Artisan producers know where their raw materials come from and are aware of the different local conditions which have given rise to particular regional specialities. Industrialised mass food production aims for uniformity and volume efficiency. Artisan production methods involve more simple yet practised skills. Producers seek to communicate a
sense of the origins, both cultural and in terms of locality, of their product”
(http://www.schoolofartisanfood.org/about-us/artisan-food)

As suggested in this definition, the novelty of artisanal food results from traditional production methods being introduced to a modern audience accustomed to mass-produced, highly standardized goods. In harkening back to traditional methods of production, procurement, and even (direct) sales, artisanal foods represent an innovation, as both a consumer product and a cultural concept. In the U.S., following a long period of industrial enthusiasm and consumer clamor for “modern” foods at cheap prices (frozen dinners, microwaveable heat-n-serve meals, and so-called “convenience foods”), artisanal foods are attracting interest by both consumers and producers.

But, why? What values and goals motivate artisanal food producers, and what do their collective efforts mean for the food system at-large? Are these food artisans aligned with the goals and values of longstanding alternative food movement actors, in support of sustainable agriculture, food security, and social justice, or are they part of “the ‘Go Local’ craze?” (Fitzsimons, 2011). Are they a culinary response to the bland standardization of mass-produced foods and a corporatized food system – a la Slow Food versus fast food? Or are they just business-minded entrepreneurs finding opportunity in small niches inaccessible to the global food system?

Before addressing these questions, I should further detail what I reference as artisanal food: for this manuscript, I combine dictionary definitions with lay understandings to delineate “artisanal” food as that which

• is made through small scale and handcrafted methods,
• is non-mass produced,
• is made with ingredients (or produces final products) possessing distinct provenance, and,
• as a synergistic result, perceived to possess superior flavor, taste, and qualities desired by and specific to an item.

This is not food snobbery per se, but grandma’s cooking at it’s most modern. How that notion is iterated, received, and accessed by consumers is another matter, and not one addressed within the focus of this paper.

Systematic examinations of modern U.S. food artisans have received little attention in the academic literature, although their presence is implied in the conceptual and background discussions of the surging local foods movement and small business/local economic development efforts. While research has examined consumer food preferences and motivations, the perspective of the value-added producer of artisanal foods is less known (Feenstra, 1997; Goodman, 2002; Goodman and Dupuis, 2002; Kerton, 2010). European research on artisanal food production is more common, and while often oriented around rural or regional economic development, a 2000 study focused on artisanal producer constructions of quality in England and found “a strong emphasis on the hand-made nature of the specialty food product, the quality of the raw materials (which were often locally sourced), the ‘natural’ character of the ingredients (e.g. without additives, colourings or artificial flavourings), the small scale of production, special packaging and presentation, and the high quality of the finished product itself”
(Ilbery and Kneafsey, 2000, P224). Are the artisanal producers in our context similar to those in England? If so, from where are these goals born? The purpose of this research is to begin to address this knowledge gap, and map the growing and diverse participants in our food system.

1.2 **Significance of Study**

As academic literature on contemporary food artisans in the U.S. is limited, this research aims to provide a “snapshot” of artisanal food production in Central Ohio that contributes to our understanding of the “quality turn” occurring in the food system. This research also aims to flesh out the boundaries of what the quality turn encompasses in research to-date, and how it might be broadened as the food system and its participants change.

The quality turn as denoted in the literature today includes the popularization of sustainable agriculture and Organics, food security efforts, labeling schemes such as Fair Trade, and the growth of local food systems around a variety of production and consumption factors. While artisanal food appears to fall within the quality turn’s “place-based and socially embedded alternative food practices”, its seemingly primary emphasis on culinary quality is separate from these practices and only marginally referenced in the literature (Goodman, 2003, P1). Therefore, this research seeks to incorporate the wider definition of *systems-based*, more objective “quality” of the quality turn, with *product-based*, more subjective “quality” as promoted by artisanal food producers. Both are very
interconnected, yet distinct. For an example, the use of Fair Trade or organically grown coffee is one step towards food quality, but doesn’t necessarily guarantee a “quality” cup of coffee at the end of the process – for each producer’s step, “the method of production matters”¹. This quality distinction is slight yet substantial, as it may account for a increasing population of artisanal producers, whose exact influences and motivations aren’t yet known, and whose impact on the qualitatively changing food system has not yet been examined. Traditional studies in the sociology of agriculture have paid due attention to agricultural production-centric issues as the changing food system has called for it. In addition, research has also focused on consumer motivations and roles. Broadening the scope of quality turn literature to include these new value-added producers is necessary to reveal a richer and more accurate image of the food system as it is now evolving.

This research adds to the broader literature on food systems, and aims to make specific contributions on contemporary food artisans and the expanding qualitative side of food system change. As such however, it is not comprehensive or exhaustive on the subjects. Rather, it situates itself at the crossroads of many interconnected food system facets, capturing first-hand views and experiences from active practitioners in a specific Midwestern city.

¹ Comment shared in a research interview with a local goat cheese maker.
CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

As the next generation of cooks comes of age, it seems that many might bypass restaurant kitchens altogether. Instead, they see themselves driving trucks full of artisanal cheese around the country, founding organic breweries, bartering vegan pâtés for grass-fed local beef, or...making it big in baking as the next Magnolia Bakery. Joann Kim, 26... cited the intersection of the economic downturn and the rise of the local artisanal food movement as reasons for the recent flowering of small culinary start-ups.


"Artisinal" is the big word in food these days. The essence of the ethic—more than an idea, it's an ideal—is independent ownership, handcrafted food, small scale (often urban) production, fealty to real or imagined culinary heritage and, often, savvy packaging, canny marketing, social-media outreach and, sometimes, wacky experimentation with flavors (hot-chile-pepper ice cream from Ohio, for example, or jerk-flavored cheese from Seattle). Genuine handmade artisanal food production is a tiny part of the 60 billion dollar "specialty" food industry, but the artisanal movement thrills those who dream of beating back the industrialization of food.


To understand today’s food artisans and dissect their role in the food system, this chapter begins by discussing the food system’s “turn to quality” in recent decades. Including references to the alternative food movements’ advances in sustainable agriculture and food security, I note recent efforts associated with Local, Organic, Fair Trade, and Civic Agriculture that may be of particular relevance to artisanal food businesses. Attention is given to the potential influence of Slow Food, Edible Communities publications, and evangelization by movement leaders such as Alice Waters, as cues for food quality and as artisanal food proponents. The literature review then turns to potential parallels between small business owner motivations and the persistence of family farms as they might relate to food artisans. Finally, I conclude by looking at artisanal food production as it exists in relation to the dominant food system.
consider in what ways, if at all, it represents a social movement unto itself, or whether artisanal production is part of an increasingly comprehensive quality turn in the food system.

2.1 The Quality Turn: Expanding on the Alternative Food Movement(s)

In her 2004 book, *Together at the Table*, Patricia Allen explores the alternative food movement, focusing on the twin goals of generating a more sustainable agriculture and achieving greater community food security, and led by the vision “to reconstruct the agrifood system to become more environmentally sound, economically viable, and socially just” (Allen, 2004, P2). Specifically, she notes sustainable agriculture as aligned with “production-centered issues, such as environmental degradation and the viability of the family farm,” and community food security with “issues of distribution and consumption, such as food access and nutrition problems” (Allen, 2004, P2).

As the food system continues its process of industrialization and globalization – accompanied by food safety concerns, food insecurity, and environmental degradation – the alternative food efforts expand in scope and sophistication to include broader and deeper qualitative changes to the food system that mitigate some of these concerns and maximize other desired outcomes. Some have referred to this change as “the quality turn” (Goodman, 2003, P1). A rich body of food system research has emerged describing these qualitative changes, including examination of the environmental and social protection efforts of sustainable agriculture and food security (Allen, 2004; Feenstra, 2002), the
evolution and potential cooptation of Organics (Goodman, 2000), the benefits and associations of local food (Hinrichs, 2003; Born and Purcell, 2006; DeLind, 2010), and the recognition of community-based food systems of Civic Agriculture (Lyson, 2004).

The primary foci of the quality turn in academic analysis to-date has been the environmental, social, and safety/public health measures as “linked to the different systems and institutional relationships which underpin the production, distribution and retailing of quality food products,” and in general practices that favor direct relationships, trust, and embeddedness (Morris and Young, 2000; Goodman, 2003 and 2009). In practice, this emphasis on systems-based quality is reflected in increased third-party certifications (Organic, Fair Trade, Rainforest Alliance, Food Alliance, etc) and aggressive federal safety regulations. They have also come to include smaller, more grassroots, and localized alternatives (community supported agriculture, community supported restaurants, increased numbers of farmers markets, “living wage” efforts). Much of this is studied from the consumer perspective, and not the value-added producer or supply side.

This research supports a new direction: that qualitative changes to the food system are moving towards a more common inclusion of “the attractions of culinary diversity, quality foods, and gastronomic distinction” and “the renewed legitimization of artisanal food production and regional cuisines,” reflecting a new focus on product-based, intrinsic aspects of quality, perhaps part of the U.S. approach “to wrest control from corporate agribusiness and create a domestic, sustainable, and egalitarian food system”
(Goodman, 2009 and 2003). Such a qualitative change can be seen in the work of Slow Food International and its U.S. counterpart (discussed in later sections), and in the growing ranks of artisanal food businesses across the country. These alternatives are reflecting and creating new sensibilities in both the production and consumption of food, whether fresh off the farm or value-added in some way. Subsequently, the meaning of quality within the U.S. food system is growing ever more nuanced.

In the EU, there has been greater attention given – both academically and in the marketplace – to the intrinsic qualities of specialty food products. As a measure of regional and craft-based pride, as well as a means of (often rural) socio-economic development, the “EU ‘protect’ food and drink products which have either a special character, such as being produced with traditional raw materials and/or a traditional mode of production, or a recognizable geographic origin” (Ilbery and Kneafson, 2000, P218). In places like England, France, and Italy, artisanal producers are aided by labeling schemes that denote (and, in effect, preserve) place-based production and traditional methods therein. In the EU, the Protected Designations of Origin (PDOs), Protected Geographical Indications (PGIs), and Traditional Specialty Guaranteed (TSG) are three methods of geographical distinction that confer a product’s authenticity and superior quality (Tregear, 2007). France’s *Appellation d'origine contrôlée* (AOC) and Italy’s *Denominazione di origine controllata* (DOC) are similar quality and geography indicators, appellation systems that pre-date and often supercede the broader EU schemes.
Quality considerations along the “farm-to-fork” chain are outlined in the table below, expressing the complete realm of factors that the quality turn literature can account for (table from Morris and Young, 2000):

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Aspect of food quality</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Method of production</td>
<td>‘traditional’ methods, welfare or environmentally friendly, socially just</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Place of production</td>
<td>regionally or locally distinct product</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Traceability</td>
<td>food has a clearly defined provenance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Raw materials/content</td>
<td>may relate to perception of the authenticity and naturalness of food</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Safety</td>
<td>consumer confidence in the safety of production, processing, packaging, labelling, distribution, storage of food</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nutrition</td>
<td>food provides a good source of nutrients and meets dietary concerns</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sensual attributes</td>
<td>the way in which food appeals to the senses, i.e. appearance, freshness, texture and flavour, taste, feel and smell</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Functional</td>
<td>the food fulfils the purpose for which it was intended</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Biological</td>
<td>the food supports natural life e.g. in live yoghurt</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2.1: Aspects of Food Quality

2.1.1 Slow Food

Established in 1986 in the world’s epicenter for valuing food quality, Italian-born Slow Food is a response to the rise of fast food, and the feared erosion in food-based traditions and culinary knowledge – our food culture. Their worldwide membership claims approximately 100,000 who support and “practice small scale and sustainable production of quality foods,” and their programming is structured around preserving
“flavors…endangered” by industrial production (www.slowfood.com). Such ideals live through approximately 25,000 members in the U.S.; Ohio claims six *convivia*, or chapters, including those in the major metro areas of Toledo, Cincinnati, Cleveland, and Columbus.

Without specific reference to Organics or shorter supply chains, Slow Food’s vision is for all people to enjoy the pleasures of food that is good (fresh, flavorful, sensuous), clean (healthy, eco-friendly), and fair (accessible cost, fair pay). This enjoyment comes from bridging pleasures of food with a certain awareness of and responsibility for its production – Slow Food President Josh Viertel sees the food-centric organization as a consumer’s “gateway drug for civic engagement” (Koenig, 2011). The organization’s membership base enacts its ideals in formal, national-level Slow Food Committees, and in city chapter events focused on the local. In 2003, the Slow Food Foundation for Biodiversity was created “to protect small producers and to preserve the quality of artisan products…” (http://slowfood.com/international/11/biodiversity). While obviously relevant to the work of artisanal food producers the world over, Slow Food as a notable influence or source of support for the country’s emerging food artisans remains to be determined.

### 2.1.2 Edible Communities

In addition to Slow Food’s efforts to preserve foods, promote culinary quality, and publicize traditional methods of production, U.S.-based Edible Communities has
joined the effort to highlight and celebrate local and artisanal food, foodshed by foodshed. Since 2002, Edible Communities has grown from one to sixty-five regionally produced, independently operated occasional magazines (and now also a blog, events, podcasts, and an annual event for local food movement leaders). Their stated mission is to “transform the way consumers shop for, cook, eat and relate to local food,” and “to connect consumers with local growers, retailers, chefs and food artisans, enabling those relationships to grow and thrive in a mutually beneficial, healthful and economically viable way” (www.ediblecommunities.com).

Edible Communities, as part of the local foods movement, adds to the quality turn’s expansion. The publications reflect a changing zeitgeist that values not just sustainable agriculture and the right for all to have equal access to healthy foods, but also the stories behind our food, technical details about its production, an awareness of the supply chain, and the enjoyment of delicious food. Their multi-pronged mission reflects sensibilities popularized by the alternative food movement in recent decades, revealing a shift of triple bottom line considerations into more mainstream consciousness. 2010 saw the release of *edible Columbus* as well as *Edible: A Celebration of Local Foods*. This cookbook is also “a collection of touching stories that spotlight real American heroes: our farmers, fishermen, food artisans, chefs and others” (www.ediblecommunities.com). Further connecting the local with those farmers and food makers in our communities who comprise it, the Edible Communities Annual Meeting issues Local Heroes Awards in categories such as Food and Beverage Artisan.
Edible Communities is not alone in the publicity of local and artisanal foods. Columbus, as in many other cities, features food artisans in many local publications including *The Columbus Dispatch*, its weekly alternative paper *Columbus Alive!, Crave* magazine, *(614)* magazine, *outlook* magazine, not to mention numerous place-based websites and blogs. The community of Edible magazines, however, in its national spread, represents a larger collective consciousness around championing local, artisanal foods and their producers.

2.1.3 Alice Waters and The Delicious Revolution

Several prominent individuals promote the pleasures, politics, and culture of eating seasonally and close to home. By way of her California restaurants, multiple Edible Schoolyard programs, school lunch reform efforts, numerous speaking engagements, essays and cookbooks, author/chef/celebrity Alice Waters spreads the word of social values around eating well, accomplished through consuming local and seasonal ingredients, savoring high-flavor foods, and favoring sustainable and Organic agriculture over industrial food. Well known to food activists, her so-called “Delicious Revolution” and wide-reaching agenda are playing a role in the diffusion of artisanally-minded cuisine in the U.S., the mobilization of which was notable in 2008, when Waters instigated the inaugural Slow Food Nation (SFN) event in San Francisco.

“We want to lift a loud voice to change our food system,” Waters responded when asked about SFN, where over 50,000 people are expected. “We need to change the ways we grow, distribute,
and eat food, which needs to be good, clean, and fair. Things are at a crisis point with respect to health and the environment” (Bliss, 2008).

“Hyped as the ‘Woodstock of the food movement’ and the ‘first continental culinary congress,’” over 85,000 people from across the country attended Slow Food Nation to sample selected artisanal foods at the Taste Pavilions and Slow on the Go Marketplace, participate in Food for Thought panels and discussions, and interact in the Victory Gardens outside City Hall (Powell 2008).

2.1.4 Local Foods, Civic Agriculture, and economic development

Regionalism and a sense of place are increasingly desirable modes of value-laden product differentiation in the marketplace. “Local” consumption continues its rapid growth, riding out the wave of “locavore” as the 2007 Oxford American Dictionary word of the year. Its full meaning continues to evade definition, however, as it can be used to reference geography, opposition to global, sustainability, quality, and even authenticity without qualifier. While “local” may operate as “a banner under which people attempt to counteract trends of economic concentration, social disempowerment, and environmental degradation in the food and agricultural landscape,” it’s actual meaning and viability as a quality indicator is based entirely on how users choose to imbue and act on it (Hinrichs, 2003).

As part of the larger quality turn, the local food movement has grown as consumer confidence in industrial foods has decreased. Food recalls and bacterial outbreaks in the industrial food system have done much to encourage alternatives to the
potential dangers in “placeless and faceless” foods, and promote foods with a known provenance (Goodman, 2009). Farmers markets largely carried the traffic of early Buy Local campaigns, a purpose-driven practice and market share since co-opted to some degree by larger grocery chains such as Whole Foods, A&P, and Wal-Mart.

In the trenches of weekly farmers markets, local food system proponents prioritize direct connections between producers and consumers. This practicing in the art of community-building and small business economic development is a primary component of Civic Agriculture. In broad opposition to globalization-run-amok, as characterized by “standardized, low-cost, mass-production enterprises,” civic agriculture “advocates smaller, well-integrated firms cooperating with one another to meet the needs of consumers in local (and occasionally specialty global) markets” (Lyson, 2004, P75). Further, it promotes that “what is ‘good’ for the socioeconomic health and well-being of the local community is integrally tied to the welfare of the small-business community” (Lyson, 2004, P76).

With its focus on business-community interconnectedness, Civic Agriculture ties local food system development to community-based small business philosophies seen in organizations like the Business Alliance for Local Living Economies and the American Independent Business Association, and texts such as Michael Shuman’s The Small Mart Revolution. The heart of these philosophies are socially-responsible businesses that are locally- and independently-owned, embedded into their communities at a scale and in an interconnected manner that is relevant and beneficial to their shared socio-economic
health. For some community-oriented businesses, creating local wealth is less about “stopping their larger counterparts, per se, [than] starting something new,” enabling the “virtues of an economy that takes full advantage of local talent, local capital, and local markets” whether food-based or not (Shuman, 2006). Overall then, whether an economy burgeoning with small businesses is destined to replace or co-exist alongside larger industrial operations isn’t entirely clarified; to each their own?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>GLOBAL</th>
<th>LOCAL</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
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<td>Independent artisan producers prevail</td>
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<td>Resource protection and regeneration</td>
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<td>Democratic participation</td>
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<td>Homogenization of foods</td>
<td>Regional palates</td>
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Table 2.2: Characteristics of the Global and Local Food Systems

2.2 Utility, Motivations, and Scale: How Artisanal Food Persists from the Pre-
Industrial to the Post-Industrial

Marketing terminology we see today – local, organic, artisanal, natural – was the unstated norm of pre-industrial food production. Select purveyors of smaller-scale
agriculture and artisanal production have maintained their operations over time, despite gross industrialization of the agricultural landscape and consolidation of food production. Numerous academic studies have considered this persistence of the family farm unit, keying in to factors such as lifestyle preferences and utility goals beyond profit maximization as motivations and means of market competitiveness. Do today’s new value-added food artisans “persist” for similar reasons? What are their motivations, and how do these motivations place them within the current food system?

2.2.1 Utility and Operational Flexibilities of Small Businesses

Research has explored the persistence of the family farm in the shadow of industrial agriculture. Resisting co-optation and consolidation that others fall to, these smaller production units hold out for lifestyles and livelihoods with desired characteristics. Such small operations tend to yield an inherent economic competitiveness based on their behavioral and organizational features of production, rather than an economics of scale. We see this in specialty production of items such as Organic peaches, where time-consuming production techniques using human labor rather than chemical sprays enable a high product quality, rare and desirable flavor profile, and therefore a price premium unavailable to standardized and larger scale mass-production (Reinhardt, 1989). Such operations also often feature producer needs and utility beyond profit, such as having certain lifestyles or non-monetary goals met. This form of competitiveness can also include the “willingness of the family farm unit to forego profit, and even to accept a
return on labour lower than the market wage in crisis periods, [enabling] the family farm to compete with large-scale capitalist units” (Reinhardt, 1989, P204). And so, we continue to see a layered coexistence of big business and small business, operating on different bottom lines, means of production, and methods of survival, in the spaces left by or inaccessible to the other.

There are similarities between the persistence of the family farm and the “persistence” of the food artisan, both in motivations and models. A small farm’s limits to technologies of scale are akin to artisanal food production using labor-intensive techniques, sans shortcuts and (oftentimes) mechanization. Likewise, the “temporally uneven character” of agricultural production is similar to the artisan’s use of ingredients particular to season (Reinhardt, 1989). In their specialized production of handcrafted value-added items, food artisans can equally resist industrialization and vertical integration, using alternative markets to promote their handcrafted, non-standardized products. Finally, as family farms structure around kinship and prioritize personal connections and direct participation in operations, so too do small food businesses denote the centrality of connections and community, and direct oversight of/participation in daily business operations.

Whether a primary, income-producing business or a hobby one, these smaller operations run on perseverance and personal utility, and as such use creative solutions to start and to stay afloat. Some lucky few begin from a beneficial position – financially or knowledge-wise – and most will determine an optimal niche that keeps them financially
viable enough, whether it be some sort of product specialization (filling a void) or the development of multiple product/income streams. Many rely on a spouse’s income to provide health insurance, secondary income, or primary income during leaner production months (Reinhardt, 1989; Mooney, 2008).

2.2.2 For Love, Money, or More: Small Business Motivations

While a business may have long-term goals of profit-maximization, they’re not necessarily the impetus for its establishment. Seen in the aforementioned persistence of the family farm, earned income can be a secondary or flexible goal alongside other sources of utility; these can include desired lifestyle, the creation of high quality products, and the furthering of desired social causes (Morton, 2002; Bugg, 2007; Tregear, 2003). As such, when traditional neoclassical mores aren’t the primary motivation, market supply doesn’t necessarily reflect demand: “Suppliers themselves may have preferences about what to supply; that is, producers may get utility from certain characteristics of the product or production process” (Morton, 2002, P431).

Potentially transferrable to any artisanal producer, a study regarding small scale wine producers in California showed that “lifestyle motivations were important for producers as well as more commercial aims and objectives, and it is the method of production that is crucial in separating different types of producers” (Bugg, 2007, P3). This same vein of research has revealed utility maximizing owners to often set higher prices and produce a higher quality product. As well, they often assume lower returns and
essentially subsidize their business when needed to survive in the market, much like small scale farmers (Bugg, 2007). Most interestingly, it has been found that “owners who primarily care about financial returns from their winery are less likely to produce high quality wine” (Morton, 2002, P432).

2.2.3 Artisanal Foods and Industrial Foods: How Size Matters

The dominant food system’s sheer volume and mass-production methods (sourcing, automation, standardization, etc) necessarily leave market voids in which small producers can provide the opposite: local, handcrafted products featuring creative small-batch variety. Similarly complementary, different economic goals and scales work in favor for each. The industrial food system exists within a traditional neo-classical framework, using economies of scale, corporate consolidation, and high growth goals to earn profits as the primary bottom line. Artisanal food businesses, on the other hand, appear to be primarily independently owned, centered around intrinsic product quality, culinary diversity, and creativity within a values-based framework, and have diverse measures of success and utility (denoted in Chapter Four, below). Artisanal food businesses do need to be profitable (achieved in part by premium pricing), but can potentially maintain low-profit operations by exploiting their own labor or subsidizing their operations in some way, as non-monetary goals guide them.

The ability of food artisans to fit a specialty niche provides both an economic and cultural opportunity out of reach to large business. But is this niche and scale where they
plan to remain? Are their utility or lifestyle motivations fixed? As in the case of formerly-independent companies such as Ben & Jerry’s Ice Cream and Stonyfield Farms, time will tell whether food artisans across the U.S. are expanding their reach qualitatively as well as quantitatively, and to what degree their goals are cultural or economic. Will they allow (do they hope for?) their business to grow beyond the local, to be picked up by national chains, to be franchised? Will variations on artisanal quality be co-opted by large corporations and drained of value through standardization and industrialization, in the way the term “Organic” has become a marketing tool, as much an indicator of low bar of standardization of production? Or will food artisans hold their handcrafted ground and relish small scale ownership, allowing “alternative cultural economies to emerge, survive, and remain controlled by insiders, even if they remain in the margins of the mainstream economy?” (Fraser Ettlinger, 2008, P1652).

### 2.3 The Artisanal Food…Movement?

Every major social movement throughout history has started with a handful of adventurous folks who have dared to reimagine their world and had the energy and courage to create new models. This time they come to us with soil and flour and garlic and seeds on their highly skilled hands. They are our postmodern pioneers, our “quiet” revolutionaries, and this revolution begins in the soil and ends up on our plates.


The prevalence of artisanal foods suggestively places them as a particular trend in qualitative food system change. However, even if national in scope and seemingly increasing, do food artisans comprise a social movement unto themselves? Defining a
social movement can be difficult, especially when overlaying it on a more newly emergent phenomenon. If “social movements are unconventional collectivities with varying degrees of organization that attempt to promote or prevent change,” then it can be argued that food artisans do represent a movement of sorts, albeit nascent, unstructured, and largely undefined, both geographically across space, and in relation to other movements (Harper and Leicht, 2007, P133). But, ironically enough, is this potential movement built around volume, in terms of their growing population, or is it built on their effectively shaping attitudes, defining public opinion, and affecting social policy – traditional routes of change for social movements (Harper and Leicht, 2007, P133)? Looking to the literature around “new social movements” as a “reaction to the modernizing process in advanced industrial capitalist societies” and their shaping “by values about self-actualization, community, and personal satisfactions,” we might consider artisanal food producers as laboring around community-based food system change in movement form (Harper and Leicht, 2007, P154). However, if this loose group doesn’t organize, noticeably affect policy in their favor, and recruit consumer sympathizers for the long-term, their strength as a movement will wane, likely be short-lived, and not wield a deep impact on the existing food system. Perhaps the more important question to ask is: do these food artisans perceive themselves as part of a movement? And if so, which one?

An increase in socially responsible and mission-based businesses is making space for new types of for-profits. Movement or not, their presence may mark an incremental
succession of the food system, where an artisanal good is offered in place of an industrial commodity, a local business resists displacement by a global chain, profits are maintained within a community, and a local economy is strengthened. In our highly industrialized agrifood system, the provision of more qualitative transactions around basic human needs in a socially embedded setting can be seen as an expression of agency towards change. Through vehicles such as farmers markets, Buy Local campaigns, and new media, individuals have begun “to understand the social world as mutable and [have developed] a sense of their responsibility” – and I would add, ability – “to pursue social change” (Harper and Leicht, 2007, P154).

Nationally released documentary exposes such as Supersize Me, Food, Inc, and ingredients, as well as books such as Fast Food Nation and Omnivore’s Dilemma, have done much to bring worker abuses, socio-economic inequalities, and public health issues of the industrial food system to light. Aware of what qualitative factors and manageable oversight is lost at such a scale of production, and increasingly aware of the alternatives, individuals are changing behaviors around consumption and production in a manner aligned with the various food movements of the quality turn and socially responsible businesses both, towards the triple bottom line of economic viability, environmental health, and social regard. Perhaps then the Quality Turn is the larger social movement, broadening in its considerations of quality, and characterized by increased food awareness and participation, from farm to fork.
2.4 On What Ground? Determining the Place of Food Artisans

To better understand today’s food artisans and where they fit and effect change in the food system, research will need to pursue greater knowledge of their personal motivations, business practices, and common goals (if any). Relevant research regarding the alternative food movements suggests that artisanal food businesses might orient towards a similar reconstruction of the agrifood system around goals of greater environmental, economic, and social sustainability, using operational privileges available to them through their specialized production: namely, flexible economic competitiveness, varied utility, and premium pricing.

I argue in support of Goodman’s claim that these food artisans work within a broad quality turn framework of “culinary diversity, quality foods, and gastronomic distinction,” and suggest that they do so for their personal benefit as well as improvement to the food system. Whether or not ascribing or aspiring to national-scale efforts of the alternative food movements, I imagine research pertaining to those willing to leave behind steady pay and benefits will reveal people driven by passionate values and the desire to define quality production and personal utility on their own terms.

This manuscript seeks to begin addressing where and how exactly food artisans fit into the food system and its related movements. To get at the heart of their motivations and business practices, my research seeks to answer:

1. What does it mean to be artisanal?
Is it production methods, ingredient qualities, or the utility goals of the artisans themselves as independent business owners that define artisanal? An inquiry into common meta-themes may define artisanal businesses and reveal values or goals around which their practices congregate.

2. **How are food artisans participants in the quality turn?**

Are sourcing considerations around sustainable agriculture a primary tenet of their businesses, or are they champions of the Local? Are they particularly operating in opposition to the mass-produced industrial food system? As potentially place-based or community-embedded businesses, I want to explore how themes within Civic Agriculture are or are not present in artisanal food businesses. Examining practices that account for extrinsic measures of quality (sourcing and production methods) as well as intrinsic measures (flavor, freshness) will help in this assessment.

3. **Do food artisans represent a new part of the alternative food movement, or a movement unto themselves? In what ways does their work effect change on the dominant food system?**

Interview questions inquire as to what degree food artisans work towards mediating “environmental degradation and the viability of the family farm” or “issues of distribution and consumption, such as food access and nutrition problems,” efforts that would align them with the alternative food movement as delineated by Allen (2004). The level at which food artisans organize – even
locally – around shared goals would further delineate where they stand as a movement, or as an effort effecting change on the food system.
CHAPTER THREE

METHODS

3.1 Description

Semi-structured interviews were attempted with twenty small scale food businesses in Central Ohio who produce limited-run batches of handcrafted foodstuffs. Businesses were selected to represent breadth in types of products, points of sale, and years established. This attentiveness to interviewing a greater diversity of enterprises does under-represent baked goods artisans who are common to Ohio’s artisanal food landscape due to the state’s Cottage Food Industry regulations permitting the licensing of home kitchens for commercial sales. The intent with this qualitative approach though, is to provide an in-depth understanding of a set of artisanal producers, rather than provide generalizations about the local artisanal community, although where there is substantial conformity in views and ideas among even this subpopulation of artisans it might be inferred that such views may be widely held in the particular community in which this study is being conducted.

Participants were selected based upon meeting the aforementioned definition of “artisanal” (seen in Chapter One), and researcher familiarity with small scale food businesses as introduced through a single local independent grocer. Queries were made with community and university peers regarding suitable candidates for research, with the resulting interviewees reflecting the feedback from these local knowledgeables. Potential interviewees were approached using personal connections or acquaintances when possible, and were approached “cold” when there was no known connection.
Food artisans’ actual practices, in addition to their personal perceptions as shared in their interviews, define their work. Therefore, in addition to interviews, I reviewed various marketing materials, from packaging to media coverage to web presence of the artisanal business. The language used and conceptual connections articulated in their marketing efforts can help to map their position in the food system.

Internal Validity

Face-to-face interviews allowed a direct question and answer regarding personal inspiration and day-to-day business operations; three interviews were held over the phone, by request of the artisan due to geography or scheduling. Interviewees were carefully selected as fulfilling the previously defined roles of “food artisans”, and interview questions were reviewed and edited by the research advisor and graduate researcher so that they distinctly, though inductively, explored the realm of entrepreneurial motivations.

Self-reported interview data offered the advantage of coding that allows research to explore each of several variables—values, experience, business models, marketing practices—as distinct influences upon entrepreneurial behavior. In order to measure these variables consistently, an interview protocol was developed utilizing the same set of initial interview questions. While interviews in general were open-ended and allowed to range, a standardized subset of questions were answered in each interview, allowing for comparable data. Subsequent coding followed a standardized procedure of thematic
categorization, to encourage consistency and validity of findings across different interviewees.

Despite all attempts made to reflect honest and straightforward findings in a small population of business owners, biases against this are inherent. One potential bias concerns interviewees, as small business owners, being marketers by nature and interested in positive representation of their work; they undoubtedly seek a positive view of their work. However, this possibility was reduced by the nature of the confidential interviews and anonymity of participants. Secondly, even when using the same set of questions, interpretation of what is being asked can differ from interviewee to interviewee. Thirdly, methods used in seeking an intentional breadth of producers/products can lead to a bias that other methods wouldn’t have produced. For example, had all artisans been solicited solely from the local farmers market, the resulting data and demographics could have been different. As a city populated with numerous ethnic populations, their food businesses and food trucks, further Columbus-based research could yield something other than an entirely Caucasian population and native Midwestern perspectives.

3.2 Procedures and Equipment

Interviewees were approached and acquainted to the researcher and the general research program via a recruitment letter outlining their informed consent, approximated time
commitment, and value of their time and expertise for research. Interviews were subsequently scheduled via phone and email follow-up within one week.

Interviews often took place in or just adjacent to the place of business, providing for a degree of participant observation in how the businesses are operated, customer flow and interaction, etc. In the case of home-based businesses, one interview was conducted on-site, the others in coffeeshops. Three interviews were held over the phone.

It was the researcher’s original intent to conduct all interviews on-site at business locations, outside of business hours. Due to the complex and overstretched schedules of most small business owners, however, this ideal scenario proved too difficult to attain. Rather, many interviews took place during business hours, and were subject to work-related interruptions. While these distractions certainly extended interview length, care was taken to maintain the full attention of interviewees when asking questions – i.e., often questions were asked two times, in different ways, in order to guarantee that a given question was heard, understood, and answered. Therefore, despite technical differences in interviews, a certain consistency was maintained for the benefit of the research.

Interviews ranged from 28 minutes to 90 minutes in length and were captured using a Sony ICD-AX412 digital recorder. Interviews were recorded in MP3 format, and transcribed manually into Microsoft Word. Thematic categories were sorted from the full data set using Microsoft Excel. No further qualitative software was used.

3.3 Data Analysis
Subsequently, results were processed manually from Microsoft Word into Microsoft Excel as emergent themes were identified by type and frequency of response, and categorized; they were further refined within this same program. All steps of the data collection process were carried out by the graduate researcher, who gained comprehensive familiarity with the data through constant contact.

Findings were summarized into an initial qualitative portrait of this emerging field, and compared to the alternative food movements (local, sustainable, Slow Food) and the established dominant food scheme (corporate, global). These steps serve as the basis for the conceptual map of food artisans – their driving motivations as individuals, as well as their perceived placement within the dominant and alternative food schemes and their respective established principles of operation (profits, efficiency, sustainability, etc).

3.4 Resulting Sample Group

In total, I held interviews with sixteen local artisanal food businesses. Some of these interviews were with two people simultaneously, representing jointly owned operations. In total, twenty persons were interviewed. Ten females and ten males comprised the interviewee group; all were Caucasian. Ages of those interviewed ranged from 28 – 63 years, with the average age being 38; ages of businesses ranged from less than one year to seventeen years.
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<th>Sex</th>
<th>Education</th>
<th>Culinary Training</th>
<th>Marital Status</th>
<th>Kids</th>
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<td>Chef/restaurateur</td>
<td>Married</td>
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<td>FT, primary</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Table 3.1: Demographics of Selected Central Ohio Food Artisans

Marital status of those interviewed skewed overwhelmingly to married or partnered (and cohabitating); half of those have children. Parents mentioned their children’s role in relation to the business, mostly as it enables spending more time with their children, or creates a particular environment for their upbringing – in their words, the farm as a place of learning and responsibility, for example, or regular visits to the farmers market providing life lessons on where food comes from.

The majority of artisans interviewed – 73% -- described their work as full-time and representing their primary source of income for supporting themselves and their
families. For four individuals, their business is full-time but income is secondary to that of their spouse or partner. Due to the young age of many of these businesses (63% have been in operation for under 5 years, and all but one for under ten), several interviewees pointed out that while the business is technically a primary source of income to them, it is not yet a profitable venture.

As a group, many had college degrees: fifteen of the twenty interviewed completed college, to include nine Bachelor degrees and six Master degrees. Specific food, beverage, and business education was less represented in the group, through just one culinary degree, one MBA, and one undergraduate degree in food science. Overwhelmingly, most individuals simply noted a love for food and self-training through trial and error, cooking for friends and family, and customer feedback.

Perhaps in line with suggested national trends, this group of food artisans represents career changers and hobbyists turned professional. Several mentioned holding previous jobs in the food industry, whether waitressing, cooking, or some form of preparation and sales. Two mentioned their business start as stemming from the hobby of home brewing beer; one is a fourth generation distiller of spirits, the first in his family to go commercial.
CHAPTER FOUR
RESULTS & DISCUSSION

This chapter highlights findings from my interviews, denoting emergent themes and patterns, and discussing them in relation to my initial research query: What does it mean to be artisanal? How are food artisans part of the quality turn? Are food artisans part of the alternative food movement, operating towards goals of sustainable agriculture and food security, or are they part of a movement at all?

4.1 What does it mean to be “artisanal?”

<table>
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<th>In their words: Artisans on “Artisanal” and “Quality”</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Artisanal</td>
<td>flavor rules, homemade taste, natural, local, best, creativity, craftsmanship, love for their product, few but quality ingredients, quality before local, art and skill, not mass-produced</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quality</td>
<td>the new competitive edge, bigger not better, source locally, freshness, flavor, best ingredients available, raising the bar, beauty, biodiversity</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4.1: Interviewee Definitions of Artisanal, Quality

Interviewees revealed their definitions of artisanal to be largely similar to the one given in Chapter One: made through small scale and handcrafted methods, non-mass produced, made with ingredients possessing distinct provenance, and referring to a final product having superior flavor, taste, and desired qualities. Constant emphases were made around very selective ingredient sourcing and skilled production methods.
Ingredient sourcing was overwhelmingly skewed to the Local, and the seasonal, and all rationality in sourcing was primarily explained around product quality in flavor and effect (baked goods having the right “crumb,” for example). For these small business owners, their love for food and provision of a quality food product was a primary source of utility.

Artisans prioritize hands-on, time-consuming production methods, in line with previous research suggesting that “process is viewed as the most essential part of ensuring quality” (Ilbery and Kneafson, 2000, P224). As such, the artisanal food businesses studied in this work were smaller scale, non-automated operations overseen by owners and small numbers of staff; only two of the businesses interviewed had over 20 employees, for example, and the rest had less than five full-time staff (though some were reliant on additional part-time staff, interns, volunteers, and friends). These relatively young businesses were all poised for growth beyond their current scale, save one; for the larger group, increasing the size and reach of their businesses is viewed as a necessary and healthy part of their business plan, and one they are cautiously pursuing with a sensitivity for maintaining their artisanal quality standards.

While all the artisans interviewed were opposed to mass-production and the industrial food system, interviewees were not entirely against using some modern technologies that further their work and enable its sustainability as a business; in addition, about half of the interviewees spoke to the market/sales outlet complexities of being an independent, specialty producer in a predominantly industrial food system.
We have it on our label: artisanal veggie burger. Handcrafted. The joining of art and skill, the use of a manual kind of project in order to bring it to life. It definitely falls into that category for us. We hand prep all the vegetables, we hand scoop all the burgers, hand patty them, there’s a lot of effort that goes into each one – a lot of love! ...We have been looking at a machine that will patty them. I think the involvement, the art, and the development of them, does still qualify [them as artisanal]...it makes scaling up possible. We can’t just work longer hours. – veggie burger producers

From their website: Made from local, soft red winter wheat, [our vodka] demonstrates a perfect balance of cutting-edge technology, old-world traditions, and the finest farm-fresh ingredients. – micro-distiller

It’s really a matter of freshness. Nothing that goes into my product is frozen or dried – it’s all fresh. And that’s what I think is the real difference. I truly think that because I don’t compromise on that, that’s how I end up with a superior product. It would be easy to by IQF onions – they’re half the price. But they’re also half the flavor. So, I don’t do it. – pasta sauce maker

This isn’t Auntie Anne’s – this is an artisanal product. We’re going to be baking the freshest products available to make sure you have the best product possible. There is a lot of explaining to customers, this is how we run our business the way we do, why we don’t have what we had yesterday, just educate them on our company and what we’re about. – soft pretzel business owners

4.1.1 Values and Goals

Values were consistently identified as a driver for both the establishment and long-term goals of these artisanal food businesses. They were expressed as more personal than movement-oriented in nature. This was seen in self-described qualitative faults in the current food system around culinary quality (“void of homemade taste”, “we can make something better”), and the independent provision of a product through means that are equally more sustainable and more satisfying.

We really feel that it represents our values...we don’t use any artificial preservatives in anything we do, we don’t use any pesticides on our land, we do everything in a holistic, natural way... Every day, I am balancing integrity, efficiency, and profitability. And I have to say, integrity is often the winner, much to the dismay of my accountant and my investors right now. Integrity, Efficiency, Profitability – which tie in with Food, Farm, and Flavor – this web is the frame in which we operate our business. – goat cheese maker
Explicit references to sustainable agriculture and social justice were very few compared to general expressions of values associated with the larger quality turn. Most comments applicable to the alternative food movement centered on sourcing from local farms, or green practices in packaging and waste, though two artisans did speak directly to food access and price point issues for the low-income. The favoring of community-based economic development was seen in preferred practices of utilizing local supply chains for ingredients and sundries, and the use of locally-owned banks for financing, primarily local (and locally-owned) points of sale, as well as in the making of local policy appeals to better support small local businesses.

Personal values weren’t limited to environmental, social, and economic considerations; these businesses are built around the belief that food should taste good. The five artisans who reported using organic ingredients do so for perceived flavor benefit in addition to environmental benefit, and the more widespread sourcing of local ingredients by twelve of the sixteen businesses was associated with ingredient/flavor quality as well. Practices around notions of quality extended to an appreciation for seasonality, as well as the use of face-to-face, direct marketing as a means to educate and sell “quality.”

There were many “Local” practices valued by these food artisans, from a strong valuation of place- and face-based supply chains and quality ingredients, to the ways in which they view their businesses as an important part of community-embedded economic development. Therein, tenets of Civic Agriculture were readily seen in food artisans’
business operations – as values-based, locally oriented economic enterprises that fill spaces left by industrial food and enhance the socio-economic health and cultural fabric of their communities (Lyson, 2004).

That said, none of the artisans interviewed run his or her business entirely locally. They still utilize the global food system for sourcing ingredients, organic ingredients, Fair Trade ingredients, and general products related to the business operations (packaging, for example). In addition, seven of the sixteen businesses (representing frozen or bottled goods) sell regionally and/or seek to sell nationally through a range of supermarkets and distributors. Values and practices don’t always align, but interviewees suggested that alignment as a current pursuit, perhaps as a reaction to the non-local bias of the dominant food system, and the striving towards a different “quality” balance.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Business Age (yrs)</th>
<th>Products</th>
<th>Primary Sourcing</th>
<th>Use of Organics</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2.5</td>
<td>Soft pretzels, pretzel bites, buns</td>
<td>Global</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Mead (honey wine)</td>
<td>Local, Direct with farmer</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Pizza</td>
<td>Local, Global (Sysco’s “Local Crop”)</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17</td>
<td>Salad dressing/marinade</td>
<td>Global</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Ice cream, sorbet, frozen yogurt</td>
<td>Local, Direct with farmer, Fair-Trade</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Assorted breads, baked goods</td>
<td>Local, National</td>
<td>some</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Soups, savory turnovers, noodles</td>
<td>Local, Direct with farmer</td>
<td>some</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.5</td>
<td>Chevre, cajeta, goat’s milk fudge</td>
<td>Local, Direct with farmer</td>
<td>hormone- &amp; pesticide-free</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Veggie burgers &amp; breakfast patties</td>
<td>Local, Direct with farmer, National</td>
<td>some</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Distilled spirits – 2 vodkas, 1 whiskey</td>
<td>Local, Direct with farmer</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Vegan baked goods/sweets</td>
<td>Local, Direct with farmer, Global (UNFI)</td>
<td>mostly</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Vegetarian hot dogs</td>
<td>Local, National</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&lt;1</td>
<td>Belgian-style beers</td>
<td>Global</td>
<td>Certified</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Assortment of bakery/café items</td>
<td>Local, Direct with Farmer, National</td>
<td>some</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Coffee – by the cup, beans</td>
<td>Global</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.5</td>
<td>Pasta sauces</td>
<td>Local, National</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4.2: Products and Sourcing Practices of Selected Central Ohio Artisanal Food Businesses

Valuing Environmental Sustainability

Thirteen interviewees incorporate “green” principles into their business with great intention. These include sourcing organic and chemical-free ingredients, sensitivity to the type and amount of packaging they use, and recycling and composting practices, and were framed variously as a competitive aspect of the business, a personal/business value, and just a default mode for a better way of being:

What we’re doing now – politically, economically, ecologically – nothing is sustainable that we’re doing. It will implode, at some point. So we’re going to have to do it now, or
circumstances are going to force us to do it later. And at that point we’ll be in emergency mode, and [not making great decisions]. — vegan hot dog cart owner

We wanted it to be sustainable, not just in working with the farmers, but in recycling and composting. Veggie scraps and getting those back to the farmer to compost. Limited packaging and what does that look like. — veggie burger producers

From their website: [our bakery] loves the earth. just like we want to take care of you, we also want to take care of our planet. and so we strive to run our bakery with the smallest ecological footprint possible. our packaging is the greenest we've seen, 100% biodegradeable down to the vegan glue. we re-use cardboard beer boxes from our local food co-op to pack our wholesale orders. we recycle and compost everything possible, to the point where we throw away less than one household container of trash per week. we use green cleaning products, compact fluorescent lighting, and make our central city wholesale deliveries by bike. — vegan baker

Valuing Social Justice

Only two artisans noted growth goals oriented towards greater social justice and food access ends. A third spoke to economic (un)fairness in current supply chain policies for small producers, and described the changes they were hoping to make in their next year of sourcing.

... we’d like our product to be accessible, and because it’s a convenience food and a healthy one...[we’d like to serve] the population that corner stores serve and those kinds of avenues. We’re not there yet, but that’s part of our community vision and figuring out a way to make healthy food accessible to those who don’t often have access to it. — veggie burger producers

Long term vision? I’d like to manufacture the product so that all folks that would like to enjoy a locally made goat cheese could do so at a reasonable price. It’s all about just providing nutrition and access to families. It shouldn’t be an affluent thing. It’s framed that way, but it shouldn’t be that way. — goat cheese maker

From their website: Our goal is to share what we have and help those less fortunate when possible, so that all people have access to fresh, nutrient dense foods from the farm regardless of economic condition. We believe in people and the fair and equitable treatment of all.

We source primarily from Ohio mills, because of their ability to process and store. What we’re doing this year...is create direct relationships with local farmers. Literally pay them twice what they are making in the existing supply chain. And we’ll reduce our costs as well, by about 60%. Incentives are currently structured to buy pre-made [liquor] from out of state – not utilizing local farmers or infrastructure – and then ship the final product out of state as well. We’ve asked the state to recognize the inequalities in the system, recognize that businesses like ours want to do the right thing and source from Ohio agriculture. — micro-distiller
Valuing Organic

Organic wasn’t a highly utilized benchmark for most artisans. Only seven of the sixteen businesses interviewed noted use of some Organic ingredients, though some of those expressed a desire to use more. Only a single interviewee was Certified Organic, a choice explicitly explained in terms of product quality above that of removal of pesticides from the land, etc. It might be important to note that this producer also seeks a national-level distribution for his product, and so would benefit from such differentiation in the larger market.

It wasn’t really even a decision. There was no question that I was going to be working with organic ingredients, from the get-go. The more I got into it, the more it wasn’t just a choice to work with people [creating organic ingredients], because it’s great, it’s great for the world, but I felt that the ingredients were superior. – beer brewer

For others, the use of organics was a selling point for their customers, an important part of their business niche, and an underlying principle of agricultural considerations.

I was one of the first gourmet carts, one that wasn’t doing hot dogs or gyros, meat street food. I had a niche market, I was doing all organic, as local as possible, all vegan/vegetarian. – vegan hot dog cart owner

I’m trying to use as much as I can local products, and organics, grass-fed beef, free-range...I think that’s important to people who come to me. – soup cart owner

Our goat milk is free of free of antibiotics, pesticides, preservatives and bovine growth hormones (BGH). However, our farm and creamery are not certified as organic. For us to purchase or produce our own certified feed – our business would not be sustainable, and then we wouldn’t be serving anybody. – goat cheese maker

4.1.2 The Local Emphasis: Sourcing, Selling, and Strengthening the Local Economy
Twelve of the sixteen businesses interviewed prioritize a local supply chain for their ingredients, noting preferences for relationship-building and making community connections, the ease of transactions provided through direct connections with known people, and ingredient quality. Of the remaining four, one expressed a desire to work with local farmers and seasonal products in the near future, as her business established; two others utilize non-local products (coffee) or operate at a scale more suited to global sourcing. Even so, for the largest, oldest, and farthest distributed business, local was still a defining component: “We started as a local product. The bottles [still] come from a local glass company. Our labels are made locally. We try to do as much domestically or locally as possible.” As much as local sourcing could beneficially be used by these small businesses, it was pursued.

“We make veggie burgers out of primarily Ohio-grown ingredients; we like to support local farmers and source our ingredients as much as possible from Central Ohio and surrounding counties. Generally, the farmer relationships are direct... we prefer that so that we can create relationships and build lasting bonds and community, essentially. – veggie burger producers

...it really started with being at the Worthington Farmers Market...I can just shout over, Hey, can you bring me a gallon of honey next week? I’ve developed a relationship with all of the vendors, I think. That matters to me, too. I can just call them up, I don’t have to explain who I am...it’s nice to have relationships with the people you work with. And I’m really discerning about taste, too. So, it’s not just because it’s easy and convenient and local, it has to taste really good too. If Vermont maple syrup really tasted better than Ohio maple syrup that’s what I would do, but I don’t think that that’s the case. – home-based baker

“Local” appeared to represent something of a proxy for “good” as far as sourcing and general operations go; it was largely discussed as better or primary in those regards, but not exclusive to alternatives, such as the national specialty market distribution desired by five of the interviewees, or the sourcing of Organic specialty ingredients from...
Germany by one. This dual approach is seen in a local micro-distillery that uses the tagline “Local ingredients are the only ingredients,” but distributes strategically to national markets in order to mediate tax burdens that reduce profit returns on in-state sales.

As reputable, values-based local businesses, artisans themselves seek associations between local and quality. This finding furthers the largely consumer-based research around quality being “intrinsically linked to the supposed ‘localness’ of production” (Murdoch et al, 2000, P115). Interviewees spoke to the quality that local food can possess, but they didn’t take associations between the two as a given. Rather, they spoke to their role as local businesses upholding quality standards, and as community-based participants in localized economic development. They also touched on the economic efficiencies possible through local sourcing:

Where I come from local is important, but local’s not just about convenience, you expect it to be quality. Here, we promote the idea that you need to demand good quality from your local companies, always raising the bar. There are only 3 [local spirits producers] of the 9 with state permits that are actually sourcing from local farms. The rest of them write checks to Delaware, or Nevada, or Texas...and they call it locally sourced. I find that offensive. And I find it disrespectful to the actual farms that have to sell their product pennies on the dollar to these large plants because that’s the way the supply chain requires them to. – micro-distiller

“Buy as close as you can to your meadery, and sell as close as you can to your meadery.” We sold at $14 a bottle, previously, and I said, No. You buy higher quality local honey, and you sell at a higher price to the local community. And we did that and it worked. Keeping the money, keeping the resources inside your community. When you move resources away, they become wasted. In America, it’s mass production and mass consumption – it doesn’t even make sense. It makes sense to the very few people who make a lot of money, but it doesn’t make sense to the majority. So that drove a lot of principles of this business. – meadery co-owner
A common sub-theme within discussions of “local” was economic development, and keeping wealth close to home through direct, shortened supply chains and the compounding nature of favoring the local and the “double local”:

There are local businesses, and there are local businesses who use local products, and I think that they are different. I think that’s where some of the education comes in. You know, Smuckers is in Ohio, but would we consider them a local business? That’s where we like to take the conversation and education to, that local piece. It’s good to support any local business because that’s where money stays. But, depending on how much they buy, money might also go - if they’re buying a lot of their supplies from elsewhere. So, supporting local businesses who buy local is supporting “double local.” -- veggie burger producers

Every day you have the option of going to a big box or buying from a local business that sells the same product. Talk about a stimulus, instant stimulus. And those companies that source locally, it’s even more. Every day we try to make an impact with the limited resources we have. So we focus our efforts on the supply chain – wheat, honey. The latter is from a single apiast, shared with [two other local businesses], a demand that’s allowed him to grow his operations from 80 to over 1000 hives. And it’s just all Ohio wildflower honey. Those are the kinds of decisions you make when you’re building your supply chain that can really make an exponential economic impact. -- micro-distiller

I consider myself an artisanal food maker. So that separates me from Wal-Mart and mass-produced sort of things. Not only because I’m hand-making everything, but because I’m buying things locally – I buy Krema peanut butter, not Jif. I feel like the local engine keeps grinding because I buy local, I produce, then sell local, I hire local. -- home-based baker

I like that our suppliers are local, our hay is local, we are actually helping citizens in our community. Our money stays local. We’re refinancing our property right now, using a local community bank. I want to keep every dime as close to me as I possibly can. In my head, the question is Beyond Local, I’m trying to figure out what’s Beyond Local. For myself as a food producer, I think right now it’s very trendy to be Local, someone that eats local foods. I want it to become so prevalent that everyone will just do it. -- goat cheese maker

4.2 The Artisanal Turn to Quality

Over half of those interviewed reference product “quality” in their primary marketing materials (website, labeling); more brought up the term within the interview. Quality was described in relation to flavor and characteristics of their foods as derived from good ingredients and shortcut-free production methods. Their focus on where qualitative food systems change needs happen next was clear, pressing on the expansion
of the quality turn to include “culinary diversity, quality foods, and gastronomic
distinction” (Goodman, 2009, P4). When discussing potential growth or automation, food
artisans emphasized retaining the original qualities (both idealistic and practical) around
which their businesses were started. Quality is therefore both a product and business goal,
and a means to those ends.

_It’s about quality, as opposed to quantity. Bigger’s not always better. I’m driving to better._
– ice cream maker

_As I grow national, I still want to retain my localness here, but I think that it will be a little
different then. Core of quality, no matter the size. I’m not going to produce a $2 can of sauce.
It’s not what I’m about._ – pasta sauce maker

_(Is quality the new competitive edge?) Yeah, yeah, I would say so. Some people might say that
since the economic downturn that pricing is becoming more important. In our case, product
quality would trump pricing._ – salad dressing business owner

_There’s a lot of marketing rhetoric…that makes customers infer quality in things that isn’t
always true. When it comes to the smaller distilleries, there are two types: small-batch, which
are largely pre-made spirits from an industrial plant, shipped in, and softened and flavored on
site, and artisan – the traditional craftsmen, that are in the art of mashing and distilling from
scratch, every product has a sense of place in it. The only way to deliver on that promise is to
source locally. Ours is about grain-to-bottle, literally knowing the farmers and the mills in
sourcing locally, and then the other is much more market driven._ – micro-distiller

_Our milk comes from a variety of different Ohio farms that meet our quality specifications – and
sometimes people don’t meet our quality, and we can’t continue to work with them._ – goat
cheese maker

_I just try to use the best ingredients that are available to me. I use [a local dairy] for milk, a
local friend raises eggs….anything local that I can use, I’m happy to try as long as it…My first
thing is quality. The butter I use is from Vermont Creamery, they definitely have the best butter
in the U.S. I would rather use their butter than something local that’s of a lesser quality. I
understand the local food movement. But for my goals and what I want to produce, quality
comes before local._ – bread baker

With their focus on flavor and values around sustainability, these food artisans
align with Slow Food’s goals in smaller scale, sustainable production of quality foods,
and food that is good (fresh, flavorful, sensuous), clean (healthy, eco-friendly), and fair
(accessible cost, fair pay). Slow Food, however, does not figure as a major source of
influence for those interviewed. Only three interviewees claimed membership with the organization, and none invoked the organization’s name, despite their shared goals “of a more delicious, sustainable food system.” Only one interviewee—an active member in her local chapter, and a past attendee of Slow Food’s international Terra Madre event—mentioned Slow Food before being asked about the organization specifically:

*We focus on three things: Food – good food, like Slow Food: good, clean, and fair – Flavor, we want to produce a beautiful product with the best quality ingredients going in – and then Farm, in that we are a small family farm, and we care about supporting other small family farms. It’s the family farms that are going to be producing the specialty foods, the heirlooms, thereby increasing the genetic pool. And if I have to fly it halfway across the country, well most of this food on the table in front of us flew across the country to get here. The fact that it’s 1800 miles from field to plate for the average carrot…I can’t police that. All I can do is provide a solid product to someone who will enjoy it and appreciate it.*  
  
  – goat cheese maker

Despite not waving the Slow Food flag, these food artisans are intentional about not letting us go the way of homogeneity. Some vehemently promote craft knowledge and culinary quality in the marketplace through their products and outreach. Additionally, they stand behind something of a “defensive culinarism,” where their use of few and high quality ingredients means no hiding behind questionable additives or production practices. Indeed, this defines the products they put into the market, and much of their decision-making around sourcing.

*This isn’t meant to be a Kettle One or a Grey Goose. The promise of a micro-distillery is about spirits with a distinctive sense of place; we really focus on harvesting the character and the flavor that is authentic for Ohio, which is why we don’t filter it out.*  
  
  – micro-distiller

*I don’t want a homogenous world. That’s one of the reasons why we create specialty products – I believe that the method of production matters. That’s why we do things without automation.*

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that is often inefficient, we use old-school recipes, we do things in an old-fashioned way, and I believe that you can taste it in the product. – goat cheese maker

Toppings-wise, everything is hand-made. We don’t use a lot of stuff that’s prepared already. What sets our stuff apart is that we don’t generally put anything on that’s uncooked or unroasted or straight from a can. Everything’s been coddled, I guess. – pizza maker

...most all of the breads I make would fall into the artisan category, containing only flour, water, yeast, salt. My real belief with food is that you get out what you put in. – bread baker

...our cheese is made with no preservatives, and there are no artificial ingredients. It’s just 4 ingredients: milk, salt, culture, and rennet. And we try not to produce anything with anything in it that my son can’t pronounce. And people feel good about that. – goat cheese maker

People try it, and they really end up liking it, because it’s thoughtful, it’s prepared well, it’s got a lot of good ingredients in it. – vegan hot dog cart owner

Reflecting their choices to go the extra mile in attaining product quality, interviewees unanimously shared an anti-mass production/anti-industrial sentiment. Every artisan interviewed either spoke against the negative effects of industrial food, or in favor of more involved, artisanal production that opposes the mass approach. Artisans consistently demarcated their products against the mass-produced, using terms such as handcrafted, quality, creativity, integrity, love, labor-intensive, and thoughtful. As such, interviewees consistently align with the quality turn’s shifting away from mass consumption towards increased qualitative differentiation of products to include “the renewed legitimization of artisanal food production and regional cuisines” (Goodman, 2003, P2).

We, as opposed to a lot of companies, handle every single aspect of our business – it’s very labor-intensive, we employ a lot of people for the work that needs to get done, there are shortcuts but we choose not to take them. There are a lot of companies that exist just as marketing companies, they have a brand but have all of their stuff done by co-packers and just market. We do all of our stuff ourselves. That’s becoming a more rare bird. ~ We’ve chosen the more difficult method. – salad dressing business owner
From their website: Unlike most mass produced commercial salad dressings and marinades, [we take] special pride in its unique quality obtained from a number of necessary hands-on steps during its production.

I think one of the values that underlies our business – and our own eating choices – is anti-large scale agriculture food business, and all the environmental, economic, and social damage that those kind of systems perpetuate. We want consumers to have confidence in what they’re eating, that they know who’s making it, and they know where ingredients are coming from, and I think that will always keep us separate from the larger, mass-produced stuff. – veggie burger producers

I understand that whole other food system and why it’s there. I don’t like them or buy them, but it did fill a need for a long time in the US. When it switched over in the U.S. in the 30s and 40s it made sense; it doesn’t make sense any more. But it’s going to be hard to go back. – bread baker

4.3 Shades of Community Embeddedness

Artisans pointed to inspirations close to home – family, other local business, community – as primary influences on their businesses, eschewing national issue activism for community-based economic development and the creation of the kind of communities in which they want to live and work. While they certainly see their work as community-building, their values-based practices of embeddedness and long-term goals see that the community also builds them – a cyclical civic partnership of consumption-promotion-production-economic development.

4.3.1 Crafting Independence and Inter-dependence: Relationship Building with other Small Businesses

A few interviewee comments stood out as emphasizing these small business owners as independent ones. Pragmatic, idealistic, and driven by a can-do, take charge approach towards manifesting their ideal food future, artisans spoke to creating their dream businesses, with or without broader support from policy or national organizations.
In general, I don’t think Ohio is friendly to small business. We’re all just doing it. We’re not waiting for the public sector to catch up. We’ve decided on the kind of city we want to live in, and if we can’t make it, we’ll move. I think there’s a big disconnect between what people want and what policy-makers are doing, and I think there’s a lot of disincentives to doing business in the city. But we won’t wait, so we just do it. – micro-distiller

I can’t even imagine taking jobs for corporate or state. I’ve learned so much from all of [the small businesses I’ve worked for], they all have this independent streak...and they’re all strong-willed passionate people. It’s radical, in a way, that you choose this other path, and don’t take the easy way out. It’s almost political in a way, that you’re doing your own thing. – coffee roaster

Comments also tied their independent ways to the inter-dependency required in community-building around local food systems, especially as fledgling small specialty businesses. Many food artisans are currently in partnership with other local food artisans – three nearby businesses share an apiast for their honey sourcing, for example; one hot dog cart uses local veggie burgers from one producer and pretzel buns from another to make a local-local creation; an ice cream maker has used spirits from two of the three alcohol artisans interviewed in making various seasonal creations; etc.

...originally our goal for the company was to kind of have a community-based relationship, be able to offer programming and contribute to society in a way that businesses don’t often get to. – veggie burger producer

Small business communities represent another facet of relationship-building for food artisans, as the environments in which they operate (farmers markets, vendor foodhall) act as de facto incubators. The role of community for these small businesses cannot be under-valued, as it can provide both “know a guy” entry points for a business to start quickly and bureaucracy-free, as in the case of a local pizza company, avenues for businesses to achieve their greater goals, such as a local ice cream company’s direct
sourcing of dairy from a single purveyor of grass-fed cattle, as well as means for some businesses to even stay afloat:

... over my career, we’ve followed every single lead I could get to get closer to the source for dairy. And there have been 3 organic and grass-fed dairies that we’ve worked with, but all of them have come and gone except for [our current single dairy source] – which is actually one of the reasons we’ve been growing [our business]. If we were just in [a specialty retailer], or 1 or 2 or 3 shops, it would not be worth four dairy’s] time to work with us. We’re by far the biggest part of their business. If it wasn’t for us, I really don’t think they would exist right now, I think they would have gone under. – ice cream maker

That feeling of community has really been facilitated by our participation in the farmers market, really. We have shared goals, and shared experiences, and can ask questions of one another. The farmers market is the perfect place, we’re all there early, we have our coffee, it’s time to share, how’s it going and checking in. It’s not just about the customers, but about feeling the support. – veggie burger producers

4.3.2 Tell Me A Tale: Relationship Building between Producers, Consumers, and Media

Unless they establish an immediate partnership with Whole Foods or a national distributor (a noted strategic aim of one interviewee, and a desire of another), a large part of artisanal food business operations revolves around the relationship-building involved in direct marketing. This process centers on storytelling, sharing an informational and values-rich tale of ingredients, sourcing, production techniques, and flavor. It should be done in a way that creates a transferable buzz, moving consumers into paying action, and into sharing word of their purchase. The story they each tell operates as education, entertainment, as well as their competitive edge as they relationship-build one customer at a time.

It’s storytelling. You’re telling the story, sharing it with people. I never really feel like I’m selling it, I’m just sharing it. I’m really passionate about it, and excited. So people have an
experience with it, that might be culturally unique, their first time. If people have an experience
that’s pretty powerful, they tend to share it with a lot of people. – beer brewer

The outreach food artisans accomplish is key to their small business success, in
the creation of a delicious reputation that transfers exponentially through their potential
consumer community via “word of mouth” marketing. Twelve of the sixteen businesses
interviewed specifically noted “word of mouth” marketing as the primary mode of
marketing; three others implied it in their use of editorial-based marketing and through
donations to charitable events.

I donate $150 in goat cheese to some charity event and have 600 people sample it… it’s a great
way for me to stand there and sample and put the cheese in people’s mouths. You can take a
picture of cheese, but until you taste and feel it’s creamy goodness… It’s a good way, sampling’s
a very good way. – goat cheese maker

We do tons of editorial. All of my time is done doing interviews… -- micro-distiller

Editorial is the new advertising; content is king. – goat cheese maker

This word of mouth marketing can stem from first-hand product sampling, other
people’s experiences, and the ways those first impressions are shared through local
media. Beyond what food artisans themselves pitch, local press, bloggers, and online user
review sites share in the buzz-making process in a major way. These alternative
marketing routes are a distinct component available to small food businesses, quite
outside the operations of mass-produced industrial foods. Since the start of edible
columbus in 2010, four of the six issues have featured stories on this research’s
interviewees, usually under a section aptly titled “Artisan Foods.” Bloggers – as web-
based mini-celebrities reaching categorically interested audiences – were suggested to
have a goodly amount of reach in promoting the next thing in local food; this concept was
introduced through interviews, but not thoroughly explored in this research.

_Haven’t had to think about marketing, cause the bread has really sold itself. I don’t really need
to do marketing, trying to stay below the radar._ – bread baker

…it’s really been word of mouth. But if you do something remarkable, I think that’s how you get
media attention. I’ve never sent out a press release. We’re just trying to be really good at what
we do. – ice cream maker

_Word of mouth has been really good for us. I’ve always sort of felt like, if you’re product is
good, you don’t have to sell it; word of mouth is enough._ – vegan baker

_It’s strictly word of mouth. I haven’t paid for advertising at all._ – beer brewer

Finally, participatory consumers utilize user review sites such as Yelp! or
columbusunderground.com, where reviews carry slews of comments providing
(unmediated) feedback/feedforward on a given food or business. One can’t imagine such
efforts being taken for standard super-market fare peddled by voluminous corporations –
Do we consider or remember the transcendent qualities of the latest variety of Oreo, for
example? Can such an effect even be had with such a product? For a local pizza business
interviewee however, research revealed happy customers promoting further word-of-
mouth press:

_4/25/11_  wow I was really blown away. Best pizza I have ever had

_4/10/11_  Leave your preconceived notions of what a pizza should be at home and take a bite.
Everything tastes so incredibly delicious. Worth every penny.

_2/26/11_  its so unique, its pizza so carefully prepared, its portions so shockingly
filling, its crust so perfectly placed between the deep dish of Chicago and the thin
slice of New York with a hint of corn taste. The toppings are so beautifully prepared
and heavenly fresh.

_1/26/11_  this is a whole other level of pizza. I’m going to call it the "pizzagasm".

_11/16/10_ Who knew pizza could be this delicious? This isn't "regular" pizza. It's more
eternal. The sourdough cornmeal crust is light, crunchy, and flavorful. The
flavors are out of this world._
4.4 The Making of a Movement?

Interviewees revealed shared sensibilities around general artisanal practices and the importance of Local, however, no one self-identified with any existing movement, nor suggested a new artisanal one. In largely not speaking explicitly to national food issues or using movement terminology, artisans’ regard for these issues appears more a home-grown, osmotic practice than one driven by national-level activism. Indeed, even within their self-described community of businesses, it was unclear how collectively they act, on what terms, or to what collective ends. Their aim and reach into the local or larger food system isn’t, as such, completely clear at this point.

There were no strong data patterns suggesting that these artisans subscribe to alternative food movement goals of environmental preservation or social justice, even though there was occasional alignment with these realms. These simply weren’t the core principles around which these businesses were built. Instead, motivations around product quality and work as a source of personal utility, and influences such as family matriarchs, home cooking, and other local businesses spurred their independent paths. The overarching emphasis on operating locally and spurring economic development across

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3 Pulled from comments posted under “Clever Crow pizza is awesome” [online], available at http://www.columbusunderground.com/forums/topic/clever-crow-pizza-is-awesome.
their communities through small businesses is a natural extension of these motivations and influences.

Only seven of twenty people noted participation or membership in professional organizations, with participation skewing towards local business associations and statewide agricultural non-profits. With the exception of the one reference to Slow Food, no one spoke to national level interest groups or any body referencing alternative food movement goals. The majority of interviewees commonly referenced the guiding role of “community” in their operations – from volunteer friends who help bottle product, to fellow vendors at farmers markets, to the larger body of small business owners in Columbus who connect to and support one another. This community was described as inspirational, a de facto incubator for more and better local businesses, as contributing to the “cultural fabric of the community,” and as an asset for economic development.

The solidarity seen amongst these artisans around elevating the artisanal against the mass-produced could potentially serve as the critical value contributing to the development of an artisanal food movement, however, at this point, it’s merely a commonality. They have strength in their values-based numbers. The anti-mass production sentiment these particular artisans expressed, along with their focus on product quality and intrinsic culinary attributes, places artisans in the fold of qualitative changes taking place in the food system. As these changes continue to increase in scope as a response to industrial food system ills, perhaps the more appropriate tack isn’t to determine their independent movement status, but to see them as a dispersed yet
collective thematic entity that should be counted amongst the diverse web of participants in the Turn to Quality Movement.

4.4.1 Influences and Motivations

Influences and motivations are a revealing part of the inner and outer workings of artisanal food businesses. Self-described motivations reflect previous research on small craft food businesses and the persistence of the family farm, including a prioritizing of personal utility, a de-emphasis on profit maximization, and the willingness to persist during times when these two factors weren’t beneficially balanced. Explaining their business genesis and suggesting its potential trajectory, interviewees noted motivations centered on product quality and work as a vehicle for personal utility. Both are inherently expressions of values, primarily personal but also market-based. For food artisans these twains continually meet, akin to the bifurcated operations revealed in the persistence of the family farms literature.

*I started because of the lack of available, good options in the suburbs, where it’s every meat eater for themselves. It was just an expansion of my values, and my daughter asking....* – soup cart owner

*We didn’t really like the veggie burgers that were in the grocery store and felt that we could make something better, and had better quality ingredients, and that consumers could trust – they knew who made it, they knew who grew the vegetables, and they could trust the product.* – veggie burger producers

*I think there’s a void in canned sauces. I don’t eat canned sauce, cause I don’t like any of them. Most of them have that “we make a thousand gallons of sauce at a time” flavor. There’s a void of homemade taste.* – pasta sauce maker

*While I [worked] at Limited, I competed in triathalons for [charity]...and to do the fund-raising, I would just bake every week. I’d take a cookie jar in every week, and folks would just toss their money in the jar, take a cookie. That’s when it kind of clicked for me: I can make money at this.* – home-based baker
I had been vegan for about a year, following my second child’s allergies to dairy and eggs. I’d been bringing things to potlucks and preschool events and getting rave reviews – “This is so good, you should open your own bakery!” And I just heard that so many times, that when I graduated from school and was looking for something to do, I thought maybe I should try it. – vegan baker

I was having a party at my house...I think it was my dressing, and someone told me I should bottle it. Before I knew it I was online with the Department of Ag trying to figure out what I needed to do to get something like that up and running. – pasta sauce maker

I just hated the company environment; I’m just not a corporate person. With my wife at the time we started joking about starting a vegetarian hot dog cart, ha ha ha. Then we found out there’s people doing it in other parts of the country. I basically woke up one morning and said I’m going to do this. – vegan hot dog cart owner

[My friend] and I dream of having a shared [work] space...we didn’t start our businesses in order to financially support our children...we want to be around our children. – soup cart owner

We’re trying to raise our children with a healthy understanding of science and nature. Our goal is to raise children that can think; moving to the farm we felt was a great way to give them the opportunity to be kids...and to learn how to think creatively. – goat cheese maker

Two meta-themes emerged around sources of inspiration for their businesses: family matriarchs and the experience of regular home cooking (when growing up and now with their families), and the presence/influence of other local businesses. There was only a single mention of national food figures (Michael Pollan and Barbara Kingsolver) as points of inspiration, but family, local food “heroes,” and small business collaborations were noted as influential in ten of the sixteen interviews. Grandmothers were an especially common source of inspiration and culinary know-how.

Definitely my heritage. I think about both of my grandmas, and my great-grandma, who I knew. And the local food community is just so inspiring and amazing. I grew up on a farm, in northwest Ohio, and my mother stayed home with my brother and me and made everything from scratch. She has this huge garden, and preserved foods...we really lived off the land. Her dad, my grandfather, was a butcher, so we always had really great meat. And my dad grew up on a dairy farm two miles from where I grew up, so we always had fresh milk. So that’s just really the way I was raised, local. – home-based baker

As a child, going to my grandmother’s house, she would make a giant pot of beans, maybe with a bone, ramps from the yard...she would end up with this substantial dish. – soup cart owner
I grew up cooking and entertaining. My grandmother was an old Italian woman who loved to cook. ... we went to grandmother’s – we would go there for the weekend, weeks at time in the summer, also every Sunday dinner. She was always cooking, always making something. I took an interest in it. – pasta sauce maker

Other local businesses were sources of inspiration and points of reference for those pursuing innovative food businesses. The more established food businesses were appreciated for being beneficial trailblazers and business resources for new entrepreneurs.

I think Jeni’s has been inspirational in terms of their local sourcing, and often when we think about something, we think “What would Jeni’s do?” There was some struggle for her in the beginning – this is her second time around, and I think even that’s an inspiration; you get down a bit, and you jump back up. I think it’s a great company. – veggie burger producers

I think that Jeni’s really started something in Columbus and she was the groundbreaker for people trying new things. And I think that’s really helped other small businesses...try new things. – soft pretzel business owners

Pattycake Bakery has been a huge influence. I remember walking up to Cup O Joe and seeing her stuff, and reading the label: Made at home. Wow. It’s so good. She started from her home, and that’s been really inspiring to me. Yeah, so just seeing what other people were doing and seeing how I could do it differently, make it my own. And, you know, Jeni’s Ice Creams, of course, is a huge influence. – home-based baker

4.5 Future Directions for Artisanal Food

Food artisans don’t exist in a production vacuum, and even with values and tenacity steering their businesses, their larger reach and effect may depend on not just their more formal organization, but also a subsequent effect on policy and the wider market. Technically poised for persistence over time through such factors as flexible economic competitiveness, this position is far from certain. Without larger “space-making” supports of policy or assisting infrastructure (commercial kitchens, etc), the economic competitiveness of small businesses can be diminished substantially:
55% of our retail price is state and federal tax. It’s exceptionally difficult to run a business at that tax level. Incentives are currently structured to buy pre-made [liquor] from out of state, not utilizing local farmers or infrastructure, and then ship the final product out of state as well. We make about 30% more by shipping it outside of Ohio. We’ve asked the state of Ohio to recognize the inequalities in the system, recognize that businesses like ours want to do the right thing and source from Ohio agriculture. Our hope is, from a volume standpoint, and from a margin standpoint, we’ll make more money out of the state of Ohio [this next year]. It sucks, but until the regulatory environment changes....as a small business, I want to be here next year. – micro distiller

Much like career-changers or city-raised youth entering the field of farming, today’s food artisans are perhaps starting from a generational gap of knowledge, missing know-how formerly passed down from family practitioner to family practitioner. and instead intentionally collecting it from a wide environment around them, based on their interests and values. A local ice cream maker specifically commented on entry into artisanal food businesses, centered around a self-selected focus and persistence in gaining experiential knowledge:

*With artisan foods, you can take a couple of classes, and just get started. You can tweak one product until it’s great, and then put it out there, and that’s all you do. If you want to do something, you can pick up a few books, and get pretty good at it. It doesn’t take a lot of expertise, it just takes a lot of time.*

Interviewees contrasted their work using traditional production techniques with that of mass production, spoke to their preferences against flavor-depriving short-cuts, and noted limits to their future growth around the preservation of original product quality and handmade aspects. Their qualitative improvements to food production carry quantitative increases in price – a fact that both enables their work, financially, but also restricts it economically. The majority of the artisans interviewed however, noted their
modest financial requirements in life and in business, revealing their own economic flexibility in exchange for the richness of non-monetary gains.

In addition, in investigating where food artisans sell and hope to sell their products is as telling as the how of it described in previous chapters. Most, but not all, are poised for growth, but that growth is not necessarily along traditional lines of national distribution or supermarket sales. While that is the path for some, due to the nature of their product (certified organic alcohol, pasta sauce), thirteen of the sixteen businesses interviewed are planning their business growth within more local boundaries. For a few, the primary value in national markets is to carry their local sales during lean times, and to share artisanal foods with interested audiences.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Marketing Language</th>
<th>Marketing Means</th>
<th>Points of Sale</th>
<th>Geographic Reach</th>
<th>Growth Plans</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>“hand-rolled Bavarian-style pretzels with a kick”</td>
<td>FM, Website</td>
<td>FM R – 1 W</td>
<td>Local</td>
<td>Increasing production to meet demand</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Buy, Make, and Sell Local”</td>
<td>Facebook, Twitter, Word of Mouth</td>
<td>R – 1 W</td>
<td>Local</td>
<td>Replicate locally-based mead production in 10 cities nationally</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“they make delectable artisanal pizzas worthy of national acclaim”</td>
<td>Facebook, The North Market website, Website, Word of Mouth, Local Press</td>
<td>R – 2</td>
<td>Local</td>
<td>Retail placement – take &amp; bake of frozen pies from local stores</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“100% natural, fresh, no preservatives or additives…unlike mass-produced commercial…”</td>
<td>Industry Referrals, Self-Promotion</td>
<td>W</td>
<td>National</td>
<td>More market share</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Continued
Table 4.3 continued

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>“Handmade American ice cream = Bliss...we build every recipe from the ground up with luscious, Snowville milk and cream from cows that eat grass”</th>
<th>Word of Mouth, Website, Blog, Events/Donations</th>
<th>R – 10 W</th>
<th>National</th>
<th>Expansion of direct, quality-based retail and wholesale. Promotion of new style business model.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>“the breads I make fall into the artisan category...My first thing is quality.”</td>
<td>FM, Events/Donations</td>
<td>FM – 6 W</td>
<td>Local</td>
<td>Restaurant wholesale</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“soup from scratch – delivered!”</td>
<td>FM, Website, Local Press</td>
<td>FM Festivals R – email</td>
<td>Local</td>
<td>Package homemade noodles with ingredients kit; a small lunch counter.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“…the highest quality artisan dairy products in small batches using the collective knowledge of traditional methods…”</td>
<td>Word of Mouth, Events/Donations</td>
<td>FM – 7 R W</td>
<td>Regional, National</td>
<td>Increasing variety of products, as well as amount of wholesale</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Artisanal Veggie Burgers, Crafted in Columbus, With Ohio Ingredients</td>
<td>FM, Facebook, Local press</td>
<td>FM - 3 W</td>
<td>Regional, National</td>
<td>Replicate locally-based veggie burger production nationally; more community relationships/contributions.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Made from local, soft red winter wheat...a perfect balance of cutting-edge technology, old-world traditions, and the finest farm-fresh ingredients”</td>
<td>Local press, Facebook</td>
<td>R – 1 W</td>
<td>Regional, National</td>
<td>Selective national market expansion.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“We don’t exist to pull in the dough, but to make it, from scratch.” ~ “Our concept is very much home cooking, all natural. And as sustainable as we can possibly be”</td>
<td>Facebook, Website, Blog</td>
<td>R – 1 W</td>
<td>Local</td>
<td>Diversify with healthy foods café next door.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Columbus’ first and only all vegetarian (vegan) mobile hot dog cart””</td>
<td>Word of Mouth, Website, Facebook, Twitter</td>
<td>R – 1</td>
<td>Local</td>
<td>Sold business to Pattycake Bakery.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“a small production, organic brewery...source the best ingredients we can”</td>
<td>Facebook, Tasting Demos</td>
<td>W</td>
<td>Columbus</td>
<td>Selective national market expansion.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Continued
Table 4.3 continued

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>“handcrafted using only the finest ingredients, sourced locally where possible”</th>
<th>Word of Mouth, Facebook, Twitter</th>
<th>FM – 1 W</th>
<th>Columbus</th>
<th>Retail shop/café, perhaps 2-3, all local.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>Word of Mouth</td>
<td>R – 1</td>
<td>Columbus</td>
<td>“This is the ultimate vision.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Zapico Foods is about quality! We make small artisan batches of our products by hand, following recipes that have been passed down through generations.”</td>
<td>Word of Mouth, Facebook, Twitter, Tasting Demos, Local press</td>
<td>W</td>
<td>Columbus</td>
<td>Smart, debt-free growth into more specialty shops in a broadening region.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4.3: Marketing Means, Sales Points, and Growth Plans of Central Ohio Artisanal Food Businesses

*Legend: FM=farmers market, R=retail sites - # of, W=wholesale*

4.5.1 Beyond Economics: Limits to and Desires for Growth

As seen in literature regarding the persistence of the family farm, many food artisans spoke to utility “beyond economics” (Reinhardt and Barlett, 1989). In one form or another, 13 of the 16 business interviewed expressed their work as a labor of love that has (or suggests it will have, at a more mature state) monetary rewards enough, and provides for equally important non-monetary rewards.

*We wanted to work together, and do something that was purposeful and meaningful; money isn’t our primary focus.* – veggie burger producers

*My life is my work; I need something like that. It is kind of like a hobby – baking – but I just enjoy making things for people on a larger scale. I never see it as work. I never saw the restaurant as work. It was just how I wanted to spend my day. ...People loved it, and that’s what I love about it – seeing people enjoy food. That makes me feel good; it propels me to keep wanting to do it. I don’t know….I don’t really care about the money.* – bread baker

*When I began, my goals were just to make a living, a moderate income, in a way that I could sleep at night with. That was one of the things that was attractive about the hot dog cart, I could work 4-5 hours a day and make survivable income.* – vegan hot dog cart owner
If I wanted to make more money, I would work more. I have very few needs, financial needs. I’d rather not work myself to death, and still enjoy what I do. And most people who work there identify with that – they work 4 day weeks, and don’t want more. – vegan baker

I feel like it’s where it is, this is the ultimate vision. I don’t have any plans to make it bigger. I’m definitely not a business person. I don’t need to make a lot of money. I can make a really small amount of money and still keep the lights on and show up every day. If a real business person knew how little money actually comes through that door, they would probably freak out. – coffee roaster

Fifteen of the sixteen artisanal food businesses interviewed represent rather young operations (fourteen are 5 years old or younger), with a desire to grow into the black as they mature. Some spoke sensibly about this happening in a debt-free, incremental way, allowing the business to grow organically yet manageably. Sensitive also to their original intents around product quality, a few artisans have already resisted requests for product partnerships by outside brokers and investors, choosing instead to remain the sole and direct managers of their business. A local soft pretzel business owner, when offered a large-scale, QVC-type deal, declined, on the premise that “That’s not my product.”

While desiring healthy growth, ten of the sixteen businesses interviewed noted growth limits around keeping their businesses intentionally smaller-scaled (regional in retail, for example) and their products hand-made, reflecting a greater focus on the quality of their products and maintenance of their personalized operations above their interest in making it big financially:

I’m looking at getting a 20-barrel brewhouse set up on the farm. A 20-barrel brewhouse is a big step up for us, from one barrel at a time, but it’s still a small, boutique-sized operation and I want it to always be that. I’m not interested in being a big regional brewer. – beer brewer

(franchises?) No, no, because I want everything to always be handmade, and have a personal touch to it, and I think that’s harder to do with multiple locations. I can see maybe having two? – home-based baker
I’d like to do retail placement, ‘take and bake’ frozen pies. You know, with the same level of quality, level of flavor, expectations, so you won’t compromise anything by buying a pizza from Hills or the Co-op, same thing as buying it here. – pizza maker

I would want to sell at the kind of place that I shop, places that are responsible, sustainable. I wouldn’t want it to just be anywhere – [location] reflects the product. – soup cart owner

That said, two of the interviewed businesses (longer established, and larger in earnings and staff size) are already in national distribution, and both hope to grow their businesses further in terms of market share, the one with greater product placement, and the other with more retail stores and national web-based sales. Two of the three artisanal businesses that produce alcohol see their future – both as a result of the current tax code, and in reaching discrete, specialized customer bases – in national distribution. However, each of these four businesses spoke specifically to maintaining product quality to set them apart, all seemed committed to maintaining a very locally-oriented headquarters and, to a lesser degree, supply chain. One spoke to the socio-economic privileges that operating at such a scale can enable:

We’re not opposed to any growth, as long as we can still do what we do. I think everyone says that, but I think growth is really cool. It gives us more opportunities. You know, we can work with our vanilla bean supplier, we can continue to build partnerships around the world and support people. Building money is an awesome thing to do; I’m learning a lot about that. It’s amazing, when you can choose where to spend it. I think it’s really wonderful that we can choose to work with a direct trade, Fair-Trade, vanilla bean supplier in Uganda and help her and her farmers... – ice cream maker

Despite the ability to fetch premium prices, artisanal food businesses are often challenged to find financing. The ideals behind “Slow Money” were brought up in eleven conversations (explicitly by one), referring to slower, smaller, more sustainable economic investment and business development (foremost into a decentralized, people- and place-
based food system), driven by mission and goals as much as profits. Such means of financing were discussed by food artisans as both necessary in today’s depressed economy, as well as desirable personally and for long-term business and community well-being.

There’s no bank financing. Everything has to be funded through cash flow or private investors. We would be growing if we had more capital. We have 25 investors. We’re a classic Slow Money company. – goat cheese maker

I’m really clear that I’m here to make wealth, and not just for myself, but for my community, and that includes my employees and the vendors that I work with, including the storefront architects and builders that do that building out. And I’d prefer to not have a bank finance me, cause that’s Suits Who Knows Where. I have some people in my life who are in a position to make an investment, and if I can make a difference to them, that matters to me. – home-based baker

We have a very short supply chain – it makes a lot of economic sense. That economical sense, especially in the alcohol business, there’s good profits there. But it’s not all about the bottom line, it’s about how we get there. And we could get there in less sustainable ways, less socially-responsible, ethical ways. – micro-distiller

I believe we’re an asset to the community, and to rural economic development. We are trying to invest in an old, dumpy building, and keep our money local. – goat cheese maker

4.5.2 Scaling Up and Staying Small: Quality-Based Business Models

Merging values and business acumen is a constant balancing act for local food artisans, as they make decisions affecting their bottom lines as well as how they sleep at night. Tending to this balance takes a certain level of creativity and resilience – factors you can see at work in their daily operations. As interviews increased in number, I came to see a suggestion from these artisans – sometimes overt and explicit, other times in vague terms of thinking out loud – of new ways of business, ways to pursue quality, maintain the integrity of “local”, and grow at the same time.

I’m an Anti-Capitalist, and interested in cooperative-style businesses, creating a cooperative environment where everyone wins. My overarching meta-narrative isn’t actually the specific
items that I’m selling, or the specific business that I’m starting, but the idea of trying to reinvent the business field, like alternative-style businesses. That’s more of what I’m interested in experimenting with, a new economic, (beyond supply chains, even, to) the way that people relate to one another as human beings within the rubric of business. So, in business….if you’re going to be in business, “This” is how you’re supposed to be in business. But, why? I’m just interested in exploding those ideas. – vegan hot dog cart owner

I truly believe that we’ve developed a business model, that isn’t about the CEO and five people up top taking home all the money and driving Ferraris, but having this great collaborative thing with people all around you. I work with an amazing team that I hand-picked, and of course all those suppliers, and when you think about….we’re going to spend $2 million in Ohio ag this year. That’s awesome. And it doesn’t matter how big we get; that’s a model that can scale up. – ice cream maker

Two of the mature business visions for interviewees represent a sort of pod-based production unit, based and sourcing locally, but connected thematically at a larger level. These new models are built around the balance of values and business. You can see them in the mission-driven and socially-responsible businesses cropping up and made more known by national organizations such as the Business Alliance for Local Living Economies. None of these terms or organizations were mentioned by name by a single interviewee, but their visions of where their businesses could go fit squarely within, and suggest directions the food system may take in the future, locally or otherwise:

I feel like in a few years, maybe we’ll write a book about this, all about this company, and help people start a system of business. I definitely feel that this is a different American business model. I don’t like to call it Slow Business, because it’s not about staying small on purpose, it’s about being intentional, kind of how we do it….for a while, we would have been considered a low-profit business, but it still works, even if you’re a low-profit business. You’re still paying yourself, you’re paying everybody. And you can grow as big as you want to grow, you’re making a decent living. – ice cream maker

Long-term, big picture for the business, our hope, is to create this model, whether it’s a franchise or whatever, where we could replicate [this] in other parts of the country, using local products to make the same thing. Right now, we do ship within UPS’ 2-day ground. We’re doing that because we have a customer base that demands it, which is great, but ideally we’d like to have other [small businesses] with local ingredients [to those locations]. – veggie burger producers
Ideally, would like to be making local mead in 10 places across the country. That would be about all I could handle. I could have the influence on the market that I want – I really want to influence how honey is made, in a positive way. If we can build this model, we can achieve that.

– meadery co-owner

4.6 Study Limitations and Implications for Future Research

This particular research project is clear in its humble goals: to take an early snapshot of a relatively new trend within one particular geographic region, and relate it to much larger and long-standing food system work. That said, this project sought to gather as rich and accurate a picture as possible, in order to contribute a valid and substantial start to further research.

As with any piece of research, this one was not without limitations. First, the inductive approach and rather open-ended questions used may have served to elude certain valuable perspectives that could have been obtained through more pointed questions. Though much ground was attempted to be covered by those questions used, a more direct inquiry around movement self-identification, for example, could have led to more explicit findings. This study’s research was originally oriented around determining the food artisan’s fit within the predominant alternative food movement as they self-described it; the question of whether each artisan saw themselves as part of (any) movement was not directly asked. The overall research, if time had permitted, may have benefitted from a second round of interviews, using enhanced questions and broader populations; as interviews occurred, themes began to emerge and subsequent interview questions could be altered to better address the three main research questions.
Additionally, as with any interview process, even with the same questions being asked by the same researcher, interpretation can happen quite differently, affecting the validity of answers.

A second limitation pertains to the particular sample used. As mentioned in Chapter 3, this research features a selection bias towards breadth rather than pure representation, and used an off-hand, peer network for creating the sample pool. These choices have both strength and limitations. These findings avoided a glut of baked good producers, but may have excluded a diversity of other artisans, including Columbus’ ethnic populations.

Thirdly, the fact that this research pertains solely to Central Ohio is a limitation, geographically and otherwise. The findings shared here aren’t applicable to any larger claims or assumptions; they will need to be supplemented with a great deal more research taking place in other parts of the country. Within this particular geography is also a potential cultural limitation, as we cannot assume the same influences and motivations are at play in Columbus, San Francisco, and Washington, D.C. Depending on the larger regional culture, there may be more activism-minded businesses, more political strategizing with those mission-based businesses, greater national-level focus. Also, the role of rural, suburban, or urban context as a factor on the continuation or the re-discovery of food culture and craft knowledge could be further explored for its influence on artisanal food businesses. Central Ohio artisans by and large came from more rural locales where food knowledge was passed down or cultivated; what of those who grew
up entirely with industrial food supermarkets, convenience foods, and box recipes – what is artisanal for those folks, what is the trajectory?
CHAPTER FIVE

CONCLUSION

What does it mean to be artisanal?

Particular to this subset of artisanal producers, the question of what it means to be artisanal was answered by them as being a craftsman practice centered on product quality (few and good ingredients, flavor) and specialized, shortcut-free production methods. Often manifested in small-batch production runs that counter mass-production and standardization, artisanal practices also run Local: seen in commonalities around sourcing, selling, developing community economic health, and finding inspiration close to home. As it harkens back to a vague past – imagined, real, or just desired – the popularization of artisanal production suggests a sort of 21st century version of the Back To The Land Movement, a modern hankering for more meaningful connections between people, food, and our deeper values as a response to industrialization processes that can remove these aspects. As one interviewee noted, “This artisan food culture is alluring. And its definitely a reaction to that feeling of isolation we all get, with the food system being so big you can’t figure it out. Even with social networking, you’re feeling more and more removed, and folks want to connect again, and go back to some sort of, I dunno, past – even though I think it’s very modern, and is not that connected to the past.”

It’s old-fashioned idealism at work within the framework of capitalism, dreams fitted within reality, with constant pushing of the one into the other in an ongoing effort to change the food system toward the qualitatively better.
How are food artisans participants in the quality turn?

Columbus artisans revealed themselves to be broadly incorporated into the quality turn, with systems-based quality practices around sustainability, local, Organic, food access, and using their businesses as leverages to build relationships with other small producers. Their exercise of social and economic values to concurrently build their businesses and their communities will reshape the local and larger food system if the artisanal population continues on its current trajectory of growth into the future. As seen in the strategic local and global sourcing choices made by a local ice cream maker, as well as the determining of scale in mead production that would have positive influence on how honey is made, “building money” and choosing where to spend it is a powerful position that one can work their way into and make change. The reach of these artisans seems limited only by their free hours in the day.

In addition to the systems-based quality practices, artisans participate in the quality turn through product-based quality practices. These center on flavor, ingredient integrity (no additives, no preservatives), time-consuming production methods, as well as skill and know-how. However they receive their skillset – from grandma or through a short course – they are instigating a micro level (compared to the macro level of Fair Trade, for example) of intentional consumption and production based on regard for food quality. If eating is an agricultural act, producing artisanal foods might just be a virtuous one. As values-based, if not singularly mission-based, businesses, they represent
qualitatively different means of food provision, selective in numerous facets of their business, all with an eye to the integrity of their systems-based and product-based dimensions of quality.

As such, artisanal food producers don’t just contribute to their foodsheds, they create them, building community and business capacity, and celebrating various cultural and social dimensions of place. Columbus food artisans are much more engaged in local efforts than national ones, and contribute – intentionally or not – to the decentralization of the food system. With an eye to the longer-term integrity of their businesses within the larger community of local businesses, food artisans align with civic agriculture’s notion of “socioeconomic health and well-being of the local community [being] integrally tied to the welfare of the small business community” (Lyson, 2004).

If we view these artisanal businesses as efforts towards re-scaling and decentralizing an industrial food system gone awry, then food artisans act solidly within the realm of the alternative food movement, albeit in a way that expands on what the alternative food movement has encapsulated to-date. I feel that this expansion, and the larger expansion of the quality turn to encompass broader manifestations of qualitative food system change reflects the evolution of a more comprehensive quality turn at work on the food system today.

The quality turn to-date has focused on extrinsic quality, consumer aspects; food artisans share commonalities with the quality turn, but push into a new realm of intrinsic product qualities, sensual food attributes related to pleasure and enjoyment of delicious
food, and are marked by lifestyle-as-livelihood. The quality turn is manifested in artisanal foods through a commitment to (various forms of) quality – the intrinsic as well as the extrinsic – but needs to take into account personal motivations and lifestyle choices of value-added producers. This is anticipated a bit in the literature but not made explicit in research. A broader redefinition can account for increasing numbers of value added producers, and the innovative, values-based businesses they establish around qualitative, not quantitative metrics.

Community embeddedness emerged as a common facet of artisanal food businesses, from operations to marketing to charitable partnerships noted by seven interviewees. The development and dissemination of the story behind the food’s production is a major vehicle for this embeddedness to occur, whether in the course of direct marketing between consumer and producer, or by proxy on a product’s label. The community also plays a role in nourishing this embeddedness, seen in local new media such as blogging. These “culture creators” weren’t around ten to fifteen years ago, but their presence now is helping to create layer upon layer of local food system development through information, education, and criticism.

Do food artisans represent a new part of the alternative food movement, or a movement unto themselves? In what ways does their work effect change on the dominant food system?
While interviewees often partner with other local and artisanal businesses, they lack a formal organization, an explicit solidarity around common goals, and the recruiting of sympathizers (at least in traditional terms) that would suggest the making of a more official social movement (Harper and Leicht, 2007, P134). They do operate in community inasmuch as they utilize each other for business advice, collective sourcing, and sharing in some aspects of production, but they aren’t codified around their similarities in any official way. Lacking a macro-network, they don’t appear to yet convene around national memberships or professional exchanges, around policy advocacy, or around widespread changes to local sourcing or local food system development. Rather, they seem to be independent businesses each doing what they prefer to do, with plenty of overlap.

Food artisans’ comprehensively qualitative approach encapsulates the broadening quality turn to include culinary regard and food business oriented towards solving social problems; if an umbrella movement need naming, perhaps they should be considered part of the Quality Turn Movement, taking the various splinters of Local, Organic, sustainable, and social justice, and folding their qualitative aims into the same path. Their growth plans towards maintaining the integrity of product quality, their proposed models that allow for simultaneous scaling up and remaining local – both suggest a certain succession of food system change, built around quality and innovation. Seen in the chart below, various characteristics and traits associated with what I’ve denoted as sub-movements of the Quality Turn are shown next to the frequency with which these traits were mentioned.
or enacted by those food artisans interviewed. The data shows connections between the various sub-movements and their degree of strength: Local and Civic Agriculture are stronger than Sustainable Agriculture and Social Justice. The realm of Artisanal Food has specific traits and characteristics unto itself, to which most all of those interviewed subscribe.

But it’s early – time will tell where such businesses – rather, business owners – will take things. Organics have seen co-optation by large corporations, and certainly such large businesses will continue to want a piece of the artisanal pie in their march towards growth. Certainly, if artisanal food production ever reaches a scale that begins to tip a felt economic favor in their direction, the industrial food system will be quick to respond in not letting that market share escape. However, if and how that economic scale is reached by food artisans remains to be seen. Those who sell at (and are scale-limited by) the farmers market desire to keep that sale channel active, for both economic and social support reasons. Other small artisanal businesses, though, will find a certain benefit in scaling up beyond what’s local – as the most established business in the group has already done through national distribution (albeit from a very locally- and quality-oriented business operation).

By and large, however, the food artisans interviewed don’t emphasize the exportation of their foods outside a more local realm – to receive higher prices (or less per unit, through discounted wholesale volume) or reach the largest possible population – but speak to developing larger levels of local consumption. I would imagine, if queried,
most interviewees would rather diversify their offerings and remain more locally embedded than scale up and industrialize their businesses, forgoing the direct participation in and traditional production techniques shown to be important attributes of their work. Therefore, I would suggest food artisans are seeking a sweet spot of idealism and profit in their work, businesses that provide a livelihood as well as relevance to the community in which they’re located.

In addition to the values and passions that drive a person to put their livelihood on the line as a small business owner, I believe the “taste bud epiphany”\(^4\) has a large part to do with the rise of artisanal foods and the ways in which they might change the food system. It itself is a value, a qualitative improvement to how we approach food – how we shop for it, pay for it, share in it, enjoy it. New awareness and new enjoyment of food is a mainline to changing food culture. Artisanal food may represent an attempt to change consumption metrics, from the purely monetary and temporal (how fast? how cheap?) towards the culinary and the cultural (how does this taste? how was it made?), changing the way we value food, both monetarily and otherwise. Therefore, in merging their passion for good food and desired work utility with community-based economic development around this, food artisans might just be on the path to creating a new and improved food system, movement or no movement.

\(^4\) “What inspires them? A taste-bud epiphany, usually, plus, in the newer generation, the addition of a thick dollop of youthful idealism.” Taylor, 2011.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Quality Turn Sub-Movements</th>
<th>Characteristics &amp; Motivations</th>
<th>Frequency of Mention/Practice</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sustainable Agriculture</td>
<td>• holistic ecosystem health</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• environmental sustainability</td>
<td>12</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Organic, chemical-free</td>
<td>9</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• small farms</td>
<td>2</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• animal welfare</td>
<td>1</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• public/worker health &amp; safety provision</td>
<td>1</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• biodiversity</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• land/soil preservation</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• seed saving</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• localized knowledge transfer</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community Food Security</td>
<td>• social justice</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• public health/nutrition, esp in urban, low-income areas</td>
<td>4</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• secure food access</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• equitable treatment/compensation for food workers</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• food sovereignty</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• urban farming</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Local Foods</td>
<td>• make/sell in proximity, reduce food miles</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• place-based, terroir</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• shorten supply chain, increase profit at each step</td>
<td>6</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• direct marketing</td>
<td>15</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• build community</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Civic Agriculture</td>
<td>• relevant, interconnected systems of food production and distribution</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• smaller-scales</td>
<td>10</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• community-based orientation</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• local economic development</td>
<td>6</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• integrated farms, businesses, and organizations</td>
<td>6</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• socio-economic and environmental health</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• long-term vision</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Slow Food</td>
<td>• connect food to politics, environment, agriculture</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• invoke pleasure, awareness, responsibility</td>
<td>11</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• defend biodiversity</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• practice taste (palate development)</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• preserve foodways</td>
<td>7</td>
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<tr>
<td>Artisanal Food</td>
<td>• quality in flavor, production</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• traditional production methods, non-industrial</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• anti-mass production, non-homogenation</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• hands-on, hand-made, skilled labor</td>
<td>16</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• made from scratch</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• few and high quality ingredients</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• specialty items, incl vegan, vegetarian, gluten-free</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 5.1: The Many Sub-Movements of the Quality Turn, and Frequency of Interviewee Mention/Practice of Characteristics & Motivations in the course of research
*the salad dressing company interviewed produces large volumes and utilizes some automation techniques, however some ingredients are hand-processed to preserve ingredient integrity and the company relies on seasonal employment to match certain agricultural harvest times.
Bibliography


Appendix: Food Artisan Interview Questions

Artisan name(s):
Business name:

Please describe your business.

What sort of products do you make? (How do they compare to “equivalents” in the grocery store/are there equivalents?)

Who or what inspires your work? What values define your work?

How did you get into this work? What experiences or influences got you here?

Is this your first/only business? Have you worked in food before? Relevant family occupations/history?

How are your products promoted – where and using what language?

Who is your target audience? Does this comprise your customer base? Are they repeat or one-time customers?

How is education – of suppliers, customers, etc – part of your work?

Who or what makes your work possible?

What professional organizations do you belong to, or publications do you read, to keep abreast of your field? Do you feel like you labor alone, or within a community of similar artisans (whether local or national, etc)?

Where do you see you/your work in relation to the dominant food scheme? To the alternative food movement?

What sort of expansion plans do you anticipate? Is there a limit to your growth, and if so, why?

What were your goals when you began? How have they changed?

Location of sales:
Gender(s):
Age(s):
Level of Education:
Ethnicity:
Marital status:

Is this work full-time or part-time? Primary source of income, or secondary?