

00:00:00	Music	Music	Gentle, trilling music with a steady drumbeat plays under the dialogue.
00:00:01	Promo	Promo	Speaker: <i>Bullseye with Jesse Thorn</i> is a production of MaximumFun.org and is distributed by NPR.
00:00:13	Music	Music	<i>[Music fades out.]</i> “Huddle Formation” from the album <i>Thunder, Lightning, Strike</i> by The Go! Team. A fast, upbeat, peppy song. Music plays as Jesse speaks, then fades out.
00:00:20	Jesse	Host	It’s Bullseye. I’m Jesse Thorn. 50 years ago, in Berkeley, a restaurant called Chez Panisse opened its doors. It wasn’t super buzzy at the time. The chef, Alice Waters, hadn’t opened a restaurant before. The night they opened, they had a lot of friends helping out, but they were short on silverware. They served a four-course menu that cost a little less than \$4. What made the place important, the reason we’re talking about it 50 years later, is that Chez Panisse was one of the first restaurants to champion local, seasonal, sustainable food. It’s something you see on menus all the time today, but back in 1971, you just didn’t. It’s not how people thought about food.
			Again and again, if you read up on the history of today’s sustainable food movement, Alice Waters’s name comes up. Alice is also a devoted and uncompromising advocate for changing the way we eat. She cares deeply about how we grow food, what our kids eat at school, and—perhaps most importantly—teaching kids how food is made.
			To celebrate the 50 th anniversary of Chez Panisse’s opening, we’re replaying my interview with Alice Waters from 2019. Let’s get into it.
00:01:33	Music	Music	Relaxed, thumpy music.
00:01:40	Jesse	Host	Alice Waters, I’m so happy to have you on <i>Bullseye!</i> Welcome to the show!
00:01:43	Alice Waters	Guest	Well, thank you.
00:01:45	Jesse	Host	So, I’ve read that you were a picky eater when you were a kid. What are the things that you remember liking to eat?
00:01:53	Alice	Guest	Liking to eat. That’s a good question. I guess I really liked the tomatoes and the corn, in the summer, in New Jersey. Because they—I, well—I didn’t know that the taste really was about growing them in our backyard, but I always wanted sliced tomatoes, corn on the cob, and then my father would cook a steak on the grill.
00:02:29	Jesse	Host	<i>[Chuckles.]</i> And, um... I was very, very happy.
00:02:32	Alice	Guest	What do you remember <u>not</u> liking? Pretty much everything I had for dinner.

[They laugh.]

My mother wasn’t very—sadly, wasn’t a very good cook. And she’d never learned. And then all of the sudden, she had this family and it was a lot of pressure to know what to do. And she relied on frozen food and... you know, fish sticks and *[laughs]* the like. But she was determined to have us eat something that was healthy. And so, we didn’t have desserts, we had fruit cup out of a can for dessert, at night.

But the amazing thing was, back in the 50's, it was always good to eat as much butter and bacon. Those were healthy things for us. And so, to cover up the taste of the, sort of, dry, whole-wheat bread, I could slather it with butter and put on a couple pieces of bacon *[laughs]* and I made myself a bacon sandwich, which I loved. I mean, that's not half bad. I'd eat that.

00:03:48 Jesse Host

[Alice laughs.]

Do you remember eating anything as a kid—or maybe, let's say as a teenager, given that you had picky tastes—I mean, like, I like to eat all kinds of things and I was the same way, until I was—until I was a teenager, probably. Um. *[Dejectedly.]* I feel bad for my mother and stepmother and father who had to cook for me. But, do you remember anything—when you were really young—that you ate that was a special thing?

00:04:23 Alice Guest

Well, I talked about it in my memoir and I would always want to go to New York City and eat at The Automat, in New York, because I could choose what I wanted to have. And, at that time, there were people that were behind these little windows that you could see that were making, you know, a grilled cheese sandwich or an egg salad sandwich or just cutting into the lemon meringue pie. And I was fascinated by that. And just... felt like I'd had—you know, this special privilege, to make that choice. Which seemed more important than really what it actually tasted like.

00:05:18 Jesse Host

I think that having a sense—a feeling of control—is a really important part of children's eating. I mean, I see it in my own kids.

00:05:27 Alice Host

Well, I can say from 25 years, now, of The Edible Schoolyard Project, in Berkeley—where we've been dealing with 1000 middle school kids—6th, 7th, and 8th graders—that when they are empowered to cook for themselves, they always wanna eat it. And I mean anything. If they grow it and they cook it, they wanna eat it. It's kind of amazing. You're seeing the whole process and so it is that that I think is really transformational.

00:06:13 Jesse Host

Do you remember when it first occurred to you that you would like to learn to cook in a way that you had not had happen, at home?

00:06:22 Alice Host

I remember exactly *[laughing]* that moment. Um, well—it was after a year of living in France, when I was 19. You know, I was supposed to be going to school, but never attended classes. I was always about, finding a restaurant, reading the menu, you know—tasting and tasting, you know, oysters right on the coast of Brittany and having them right out of the water. And it was a revelation.

00:06:57 Jesse Host

Do you remember what the first thing you tried to cook was that was a stretch for you?

00:07:03 Alice Host

Well, I came back home, and I was luckily given an Elizabeth David cookbook. And so, her recipes were very straightforward. But I think the most challenging thing that I ever tried to cook was a Pâté en Croûte—that's pâté that was wrapped in a kind of puff pastry. And it was seasoned—at that time, I mean, I'd never seen black truffles and they came in a little can and I chopped them all up and put them in that pâté. But when I accomplished that, I felt sooo, sooo proud. I guess that's what I would say. And I chose just the right wine to drink with it. *[Chuckles.]*

00:07:55 Jesse Host

Did you make your own pastry and pâté?

00:07:58 Alice Host

I did! I can't believe I did that.

[Jesse chuckles.]

00:08:03 Jesse Host *[Chuckling.]* I really do believe I did that, though. One time, when I was like 20, I had picked a bunch of apples from the tree in my mom's backyard and decided to make an apple pie out of them, 'cause there was just too many to eat. And, um, I made the crust for the pie just by, like, opening—you know—I don't remember. *The Joy of Cooking*, or something.

[Alice laughs.]

00:08:37 Alice Guest You know? Like, just some cookbook that was sitting around. And it came out really well and, uh... that was, now, probably 15 years ago. I have not attempted to make *[laughing through his words]* pastry since! Just because I was so proud that I got it right, that one time! And I didn't wanna break my streak. Yeah, I know how that is! Well, I've never made the Pâté en Croûte again.

[They laugh.]

00:08:48 Jesse Host Ever. But it's something that you have to learn by doing.
00:08:51 Alice Guest Why did you want to open a restaurant? I wanted to open a restaurant for my friends. I wanted to eat like the French. And, truly, I was incredibly naïve. I just thought, you know, somehow I could do this, because I had eaten in these restaurants in France and I wanted it small enough and I only wanted one menu a night, just like some of these little places in Paris. And I was frustrated that there wasn't a place where I could have those tastes and I—instead of cooking for my friends and kind of going broke doing it, I thought, "Well... I'll make a little restaurant and then my friends will come, and they'll pay for it and et voila!"

00:09:47 Jesse Host *[Laughs.]* I mean, it's—uh, it's a lovely thought to think that in order to avoid going broke cooking, you should open a restaurant.

[He laughs again.]

00:10:01 Alice Guest Which is the top—the top way to go broke cooking! I know. *[Laughs.]* It—we went, of course... I think \$40,000 in debt for six months. I didn't think about money, at all. I still don't think about money. And I think I probably hired way too many people.

[Chuckles.] We had never had any experience except cooking at home. I mean, Lindsey, who was the pastry chef—I mean, she did the pastries sort of one by one, or two by two in the kitchen—little cottage behind Chez Panisse—to begin. I mean, she didn't know how to cook... you know, differently. And, in a way, that could have been seen as the wrong way, but it turned out to be really the right way. Because we didn't wanna have anything left over, after the evening. We didn't wanna have to use leftovers, the next day. So, we would know how many people came and we would just start anew, every day.

00:11:14 Jesse Host That must have been intense.

00:11:16 Alice Guest It was. *[Laughs.]* It was. Really intense, when... when I burnt the corn soup, one time.

[They chuckle.]

And we had to tell people it was roasted corn soup.

[Jesse laughs.]

When James Beard came to the restaurant... you know, he said, "This isn't a real restaurant. This is like going into somebody's home. This is not a kind of, you know, production place. This is—this feels like you're going into somebody's house for dinner."

And I thought that was the most wonderful compliment. Because that's exactly what I wanted people to feel.

00:12:04 Jesse Host

Did he... say it in the way that you took it?

00:12:07 Alice Guest

Just about. I think he did. He wrote a column about it.

00:12:12 Jesse Host

More *Bullseye* still to come after the break. From MaximumFun.org and NPR.

00:12:16 Music Transition

Relaxed music.

00:12:19 Jesse Promo

Support for *Bullseye* and the following message come from Culturelle. Culturelle wants you to know that an estimated 45 million Americans may have IBS, according to the International Foundation for Gastrointestinal Disorders. Culturelle IBS Complete Support is a medical food for the dietary management of IBS. It's designed to relieve symptoms like abdominal pain, bloating, diarrhea, and constipation in a safe, well-tolerated, once daily dose. Save 20% with promo code "radio" on Culturelle.com.

[Music fades out.]

00:12:58 Promo Clip

Music: Cheerful string music.

Speaker 1: There are arrowheads in the walls.

Ramtin Arablouei: I'm Ramtin Arablouei.

Rund Abdelfatah: I'm Rund Abdelfatah. And we're the hosts of *Throughline*, NPR's history podcast.

Ramtin: And for our special series this month, the best of *Throughline*.

Speaker 2: You know, if we carry on as we have been, this is what we might wind up with.

Rund: Listen now to the *Throughline* podcast from NPR.

[Music ends.]

00:13:18 Music Transition

Thumpy music with light vocalizations.

00:13:22 Jesse Host

It's *Bullseye*. I'm Jesse Thorn. My guest is Alice Waters. She and I talked in 2019. Let's get back into it.

When I was a kid, my family shopped at a grocery store that's still in San Francisco called Rainbow Grocery—a natural food store. And the reason was not out of some particular strong preference for, you know, natural foods over processed foods or whatever, but mostly just because it was the only [laughing] one within walking distance of our house. And we didn't have a car.

And I remember a lot of great things about that food, but I also remember, like—you know, there's like a kind of fig newton that you get at the natural food store that—where the outside is very intensely dense and difficult to chew.

[They laugh.]

00:14:16	Alice	Guest	The fig part's alright.
00:14:20	Jesse	Host	Yes, I know about that, sort of the health food. <i>[Laughs.]</i>
			Yeah, exactly! And I wondered—I wonder what your relationship was, having opened this restaurant in the Bay Area, in the early 1970's, as the idea of Health Food—with a capital H and F—was blossoming in, you know, the Bay Area and LA particularly.
00:14:41	Alice	Guest	Well... you have to remember that I was a Francophile. And so, even though I had—you know—digested many... of the values of the, kind of, the hippy, back-to-the-land movement. And certainly, <i>Diet for a Small Planet</i> had a big influence on me. I didn't want that—what I thought was unsophisticated, you know, just throwing all the vegetables together and making some brown rice and serving them like that. I wanted... to go back into the history of gastronomy. I wanted to learn from <i>Larousse Gastronomique</i> . I poured over that book and wanted to know what Escoffier was thinking and I really believed in the art of cooking and presentation.
00:15:55	Jesse	Host	Over time, as you ran the restaurant, did you get any further from the idea of... French food? Of Francophilia? And figure out what was good about either other foods of the world or, simply, American food?
00:16:15	Alice	Guest	Absolutely. I feel like I had the good luck to learn from extraordinary people, like Edna Lewis. And she opened up a whole world of southern food, to me. She was talking the same language as I was. But with a whole new vocabulary. And it was so... uh, inspiring to me. I think of her, one time, wanting to go to a Southern Foodways Conference. And she wanted to have milk and cream there that was fresh. And she asked if she could bring a cow.

[They laugh.]

00:17:20	Jesse	Host	I loved that. She wanted to milk the cow! And that is what I'm looking for, is that—the immediacy of—the aliveness of food. My mom had a garden in the shared garden plot, in the back of our church. The thing that I remember her growing there was Easter Egg radishes, because—you know—radishes aren't the most flavorful food on earth, in the best of circumstances. And the flavor that they have is one that's not necessarily, uh... the easiest to appreciate, if you're seven years old. They're—you know, there's a pretty sharp flavor?
00:17:59	Alice	Guest	But, like... hey. If it's seven different colors, I'll eat it! <i>[Laughs.]</i> <i>[A beat, then she laughs.]</i> But that's the way it was at the beginning of the restaurant. We put the word out that we wanted anything that was grown in people's backyards. We would make a trade for lunch at the restaurant.

And I'm hoping that that's the kind of response that could happen and that we could really, you know, restart those victory gardens

that we had back during World War II. And thereby, you know, learning the values that... of nourishment and beauty and meaningful work and *[laughs]* all of those things we've lost in our fast food indoctrination.

00:18:49 Jesse Host If you had, like, a half hour broadcast to all Americans—fewer, you know—if you got the slot after the State of the Union, or whatever.

[Alice chuckles.]

And you could teach people, with no presumption of their cooking skill, to cook something at home, what do you think would be a good thing to teach those people to cook?

00:19:16 Alice Guest Ooh. That's very serious question. I think it's very hard to communicate through technology... about food. Because it's about smelling... and tasting. We need to be really in tuned, so that we can get all the information into our minds through our sense. And—I mean, the first thing that came to mind was pasta pesto. Because people, in general in this country, like that dish and most all children do, and I would ask them to pound it with a mortar and a pestle. You know? With an inexpensive one, like a suribatchi. And pound the garlic and pound the basil in. And it's really just simply boiling the water for that. Maybe it's having a little good olive oil and a little parmesan cheese. But it creates an aroma and a taste that can be unforgettable.

00:20:48 Jesse Host I really love mangos.

00:20:50 Alice Guest *[Delighted.] Ooh!*

[Laughs.] Now, you must live in India?

[Jesse laughs.]

00:21:01 Jesse Host Or do you live in Mexico? Or maybe you live in Hawaii?

I live in southern California, where there are—there are mangos grown in southern California.

00:21:05 Alice Guest Are there?

00:21:07 Jesse Host Yeah. I think they're there at the Pasadena High School Farmer's Market and I'll buy them when they're there—the few different varieties they make. But, you know, there's a lot of Mexicans and Mexican Americans in my neighborhood who love mangos and, you know, they'll sell those, uh—what are they called? Ataulfo mangos? The little yellow ones?—by the crate, on the side of the road. And those are Mexican mangos, generally. Sometimes Philippine, but generally Mexican.

00:21:39 Alice Guest But I always wanna know how they were produced. I wanna know whether they have herbicides and pesticides. I wanna know how they were shipped. I wanna know a lot of detail before I buy them, on the side of the road.

00:21:58 Jesse Host Is there anything that—like, it's February. You wanna eat it. And you're like, "Sorry, Ferry Building's Farmer's Market. Sorry, Berkeley Bowl. I'm headed to Safeway."

[Alice laughs.]

"And I'm gonna buy it in a can or off an airplane or whatever's necessary."

00:22:15	Alice	Guest	<p>No. I'm happy to report that I don't crave that. I mean, there was one very amusing story that my daughter Fanny... tells in her new memoir that's coming out, in the Spring, where she went to—she said she wanted blueberry pancakes, and I said, "Fanny, there's no blueberries!" And I said, "I'm sure you can't find them."</p> <p>And she went to the grocery store and she came back and there they were: a little label on them, "blueberries". It said, "organic". And then she just had to tell me the truth. And she had taken the label off of another package and put it on.</p>
00:23:02	Jesse	Host	<p><i>[They laugh.]</i> She sounds cool. <i>[Laughs.]</i></p> <p>We'll wrap up with Alice Waters in just a minute. Did you know she is afraid of sea urchins? I bet you did not know she is afraid of sea urchins. Plenty more gems like that still to come. It's <i>Bullseye</i>, from MaximumFun.org and NPR.</p>
00:23:20 00:23:23	Music Jesse	Transition Promo	<p>Peaceful music.</p> <p>This message comes from NPR sponsor Discover. Discover matches all the cashback you earn on your credit card at the end of your first year, automatically. With no limit on how much you can earn. It's amazing because of all the places where Discover is accepted. 99% of places in the US that take credit cards. So, when it comes to Discover, get used to hearing "yes" more often. Learn more at Discover.com/match. 2021 Neilson Report. Limitations apply.</p>
00:23:57	Promo	Clip	<p><i>[Music fades out.]</i> Music: Sophisticated electronic/string music.</p> <p>Teresa McElroy: <i>Shmanners</i>. Noun. Definition: rules of etiquette designed not to judge others, but rather to guide ourselves through everyday social situations.</p> <p><i>[Music stops.]</i></p> <p>Travis McElroy: Hello, internet! I'm your husband host, Travis McElroy.</p> <p>Teresa: And I'm your wife host, Teresa McElroy.</p> <p>Travis: Every week on <i>Shmanners</i>, we take a look at a topic that has to do with society or manners. We talk about the history of it. We take a look at how it applies to everyday life. And we take some of your questions. And sometimes, we do a biography about a really cool person that had an impact on how we view etiquette.</p> <p><i>[Music fades back in.]</i></p> <p>Travis: So, join us every Friday and listen to <i>Shmanners</i> on MaximumFun.org, or wherever podcasts are found.</p> <p>Teresa: Manners shmanners. Get it?</p> <p><i>[Music ends on a bright chord.]</i></p>

00:24:40 Jesse Host Welcome back to *Bullseye*. I'm Jesse Thorn. I'm talking with Alice Waters. She's a lifelong activist who's dedicated her life to advocating for food sustainability and education. She's also the founder of the legendary restaurant, Chez Panisse, in Berkeley, which just turned 50 years old. She and I talked in 2019. Let's get back into it.

I once had the late Jonathan Gold on the show. And he was a really lovely guy and real hero of southern California, of food. He was a writer—for folks who don't know who he was—who was well known for, kind of, expanding the palate of restaurant criticism, here in southern California. And he won every award there is. Wonderful writer and a guy who would, you know, putz around in his pickup truck and go to Reseda and eat, you know, some kind of highly herbal, southeast Asian blood sausage and he would get exactly what was good about it.

And I—one of the things I asked him was, like, "Is there anything that you just don't like eating? 'Cause you ate everything." You know, that was his whole deal.

He says, "Oh yeah, I don't like eggs."

[Alice laughs.]

I was like, *[disbelieving]* "You don't like eggs?!"

[Laughing.] Like, "You're down for these—you're down to eat, you know, the blood sausages and you're like: well, I'll knock a few balut back, you know?"

But he's like, "Uuh, yeah. I just think eggs are gross. And I, like, make them for my kids, in the morning, and the whole time I think about how gross I think they are." *[Laughs.]* It was—

00:26:12 Alice Guest I guess he—I guess he hasn't had my egg cooked on a spoon. But he's somebody I admire greatly. And he educated all of us.

00:26:25 Jesse Host So, I guess my question to you, Alice, is: you know, in your cooking, you strive to be seasonal and that means having a relatively expansive palate, because—you know—there's—you can't just pick the six things you like and make those things, when those things may or may not pass out of season, or might not be good today.

00:26:55 Alice Guest So, is there anything that you're just like, "Ugh, that's gross"? Not really. Not really. I... I'm very... hesitant about seafood. About shellfish. And I guess I know too much and sea *[chuckles and stammers]*—sea urchins scare me.

[Jesse chuckles softly.]

00:27:29 Jesse Host But I think that there's not very much that I wouldn't try. *[Beat.]* Climate change has... been a huge issue, in the food world, in a thousand different ways. Has it directly affected the food that you make and serve, at Chez Panisse?

00:27:43 Alice Guest It has. We are incredibly conscious of what's going on in the state of California, as it's burning. And as it's getting wrong—warm at the wrong time of the year. Because when that happens, fruits ripen a

little bit too quickly. And I think sometimes they need, you know, enough time on the vine, or on the branch, so that they develop their full potential of taste. And we've known—noticed it in the stone fruits, in the last couple of years. We noticed that we get, you know, even strawberries sooner that aren't as flavorful.

But it also turns out that our farmers are the ones that are very diverse in what they're growing. And they're—they have cover crops and they're prepared in ways that, certainly, the industrial farmers are not prepared.

00:29:02 Jesse Host I grew up lower middle class, sometimes borderline poor, and I grew up taking the subway to the farmers market in the Civic Center, in San Francisco, with my mom to buy food. And my experience of farmer's market shopping was defined by, you know, being elbowed out of the way by elderly Vietnamese women.

[Alice chuckles.]

And *[laughs]*—and I think that food was also cheaper than the food at the supermarket by my house. I haven't found a farmer's market like that, here in southern California, where I live. And thinking about it made me wonder if you ever worry that the push to make food more local and seasonal—to bring, you know, better tasting produce to people—has been co-opted into being a luxury product? And that it's difficult for—that it will be difficult for it to transition from being a luxury product into being a practical part of a broad swath of people's lives.

00:30:21 Alice Guest I think you're right! It has been given that wrong impression... by the fast food industry. They'd like us not to buy our food, there at the farmer's market. It's too expensive. Takes too much time. So, it really depends on our understanding of cooking, learning about what you need to spend money on and what you don't.

But if we have a pantry that is well-stocked, I can cook a meal in ten minutes. And if we've gone to the farmer's market one time a week and we think about the sequence of meals, if we invite our family and friends to cook with us, we can make food that is... that is deeply delicious and nutritious.

00:31:22 Jesse Host Well, Alice Waters, I'm so grateful that you took all this time to be on *Bullseye*. It was—it was really fun.

00:31:29 Alice Guest Well, *[laughs]* I'm so—I'm so hopeful.

[Music begins to fade in.]

And I... so believe that this could be a—as I call it—a delicious revolution. Thank you.

00:31:45 Music Music Jazzy interstitial music plays.

00:31:52 Jesse Host Alice Waters from 2018. Every day, she is working to change the way we think about food. You can find out more about her Edible Schoolyard Project at [EdibleSchoolyard.org](https://edibleschoolyard.org). If you happen to be in the Berkeley area and you wanna give Chez Panisse a try, it is still a really special experience, 50 years in. And if you're in Los Angeles, she is opening a brand-new restaurant inside the Hammer Museum in Westwood. Look for it this fall.

[Music fades out.]

00:32:23 Music Music Upbeat, brassy music plays.
00:32:27 Jesse Host That's the end of another episode of *Bullseye*. *Bullseye* is created out of the homes of me and the staff of Maximum Fun, in and around greater Los Angeles, California—where, just the other night around 9:30PM, my recording was interrupted [*chuckles*] by the signature tinkle of an ice cream truck. And I'm not gonna lie, I was not mad at it. I like to hear an ice cream truck any time, even at 9:30 at night.

Our show is produced by speaking into microphones. Senior producer, Kevin Ferguson. Producer, Jesus Ambrosio. Production fellows at Maximum Fun are Richard Robey and Valerie Moffatt. We get help from Casey O'Brien. Our interstitial music is by Dan Wally, also known as DJW. Our theme song is by The Go! Team. Thanks very much to them and to their label, Memphis Industries, for sharing it.

00:33:29 Promo Promo You can keep up with the show on Twitter, Facebook, and YouTube. We post all our interviews there. And I think that's about it. Just remember: all great radio hosts have a signature signoff.
Speaker: *Bullseye with Jesse Thorn* is a production of MaximumFun.org and is distributed by NPR.

[Music fades out.]