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Ancient Organic Revival

By Boyd Martin

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We excitedly received a few packaged products from Essential Living Foods, anxious to try them out on our American palates. These were powdered forms of what is referred to as the "Lost Crops of the Incas"—a purple corn extract, Aji Amarillo Powder, and Camu Camu. We especially enjoyed the spicy hot Aji Amarillo powder. With its lightly sour, warming taste, it has been fabulous on brown rice, and eggs. The Camu Camu is also slightly sour, but also slightly sweet, and seems to give bring out an entirely new taste dimension to whatever we put it on, from leafy greens to cantaloupe.

Reflecting on this, I became acutely aware of how limited my taste experience has been, and how certain tastes I grew up with represent the smallest fraction of the outrageously vast diversity I've missed out on in my life. I saw my diet as a puny product of modern American monoculture, where vast fields of a select micro-world of hybridized foods are mass produced by huge mega-corporate growers for all the wrong reasons: shelf life, color, consistency, and packagability. This is truly a sad state of affairs in a modern global world—corporate giants carving out their niches and then exploiting them to the max for maximum profitability. It made me wince.

I gained an entirely new level of respect for Christopher Daugherty, founder and purveyor of Essential Living Foods. Far beyond the idea of commandeering new food crops for marketing to a modern palate aching for more diversity, Daugherty has incorporated the concepts of organic farming, permaculture and conscious consumerism into his mission, not only to provide great new tastes and nutritional options, but to enhance the lives of thousands of indigenous native farmers, elevating their farming practices, and re-establishing a profitable agro-culture that recruits new members away from urban areas and back to the land. After all, it was the huge agricultural conglomerates who squeezed out small farmers in the first place, who were then forced to seek new careers in the city. This not only happened in America, but across the globe. Agronomy theories and practices taught in universities funded by agricultural corporations were turning out a new breed of farmer now armed with unnatural technologies within a paradigm of Nature as the Enemy. Yes, it's not natural to plant 1,000 solid acres of corn. Nature tends to attack such a battle plan for profits.

Ancient Organic Revival

The lost crops...

Ironically, Daugherty's mentor was trained in those universities in the late 50's and early 60's along with several would be farmers from South America. As they headed back to their respective villages to apply their new found technological theories for profitable farming, Daugherty's mentor decided to become an airline pilot. Yet, he stayed in touch with his fellow agronomists and invested in their operations. He further developed a passion for the work of Hugh Popenoe and the National Research Council, who published a book in 1989, *Lost Crops of the Incas: Little-Known Plants of the Andes With Promise for Worldwide Cultivation*. This passion and vision was passed on to his alumni, and to a young Daugherty, who became a certified organic farmer in Florida. "I met him, and we just stayed very close friends," says Daugherty. "His family was into farming in South Florida and he used to teach me a lot about plant names and species, and plant culture—just the fundamentals about how important our ecosystems are; not getting too overwhelmed with saving the earth, but just doing what you can locally to provide a global response."

Far from adhering to 60's-style agronomy—which would tend to re-locate these Lost Crops to a California monoculture test farm for hybridization—Daugherty was offered the opportunity by his mentor to oversee the application of organic farming methods to these crops, and doing it in their indigenous setting. After all, that's where the crops came from, so why not simply grow them there? Plus, his mentor's Peruvian alumni had already provided a foothold for organic farming in Peru. "He offered me a deal a couple of years ago to sell the product for these individuals. It was the first year that they became certified organic. So I, luckily, sold everything there, and have created a very tightly-bound organization—responsibility and response—and trying to do a lot of problem solving."

Social impact...

Inspired by the great potential for positive social impact on a near-third world area, Daugherty and his team plowed into the multitude of logistical problems. It became clear it was truly possible to not only bring these organic crops to market, but provide the indigenous people with a profitable new career opportunity. These people's ancestors thrived on these crops hundreds and thousands of years ago without chemical technology—there was a connection with the land in these people that could only potentize the results. It was an opportunity to literally get back to their roots. "We deal with the impact we are having both on the economy and the social aspects, and the impact we're having on society as we are growing these products, and what we can divert and intervene into our processes, so that we can really have a solid project," Daugherty says.

"These foods are ones we are slowly working on to develop to see what ones have commercial value," says Daugherty. "A lot of them are new flavors. For those that can't be consumed directly, we look into the energetic qualities, also the nutritional value of them. We're just trying to create a story and folklore around the traditional uses, and the Incan staple value—where in the map of the Incas did they actually consume this crop, and how much of it they were growing, and why they grew it, and if there were any fasting or dieting regimes on it."

Daugherty stressed the importance of taking time to sustainably bring these crops to a worldwide market. "We're just being very careful how we open the door and let people know about them, because it just seems to create havoc every time we bring a new product out. Everybody's looking for it trying to get it. But what's happening is that they are also de-valuing the quality by over-producing, and people

Ancient Organic Revival

trying to compete with a lesser value product. All in all, we're just taking it one step at a time until we feel we've succeeded with each product, and then move on to the next."

Daugherty's mentor was enchanted with the Peruvian culture. "He had a true passion for all the Quechua products and Quechua crops, and Aymara. Those are the two main native languages where we're working. Most of the people on our farms speak those languages. He became clearly passionate about what it was that they had to offer and their work ethic—the true heart of these people."

Making it all work...

Although Daugherty has run up against a mañana–mañana initial response with the locals, once they commit to working, they throw themselves into it. "We have a little more structured system where our head people in the business are all German–based and have agronomy backgrounds. So we have a very intent pushing system. It's very clear we're focused on the heart with a very clear business strategy," says Daugherty.

To keep things moving at a viable pace, Daugherty has implemented a type of work ethic code, making very clear the criteria to be met. "We allow a three–strikes–you're–out rule in everything we do and everyone we work with," says Daugherty. "We're very helpful, even if you're out. At the same time, the

people are very different in the fact that every single thing they do, their heart is so poured into it. I mean, the energetic quality of these crops and food are off the Richter Scale with most people who are testing them and eating them."

Permaculturing...

Part of the criteria for a growing operation includes strict permaculture procedures to ensure that once an operation has been brought into the production line, it stays there permanently. "We're setting up a four–stage system where every single associate that we're working with in our projects are only allowed to sell to us if they are permaculturally–based," says Daugherty. "So they're not just mono–cropping. Where we're working at our projects, people are having perennial and annual crops that are being harvested at various times of the year, allowing for all of their land to be covered in something green and growing, to be watered and nurtured, and to provide a healthy ecosystem for the preservation of the land and for the future of any growth there."

What does the permaculture look like? "There's a canopy, and then there's something growing under that canopy—usually a smaller tree—which is sometimes taken out after the larger canopy trees are in full bloom and growing to their full capacity. Then we have crops growing down at the bottom—various medicinal herbs and fruit and vine crops. We are intervening slowly chicken tractors and goose tractors; cows and goats, and that type of animal through all of these crops, so they're doing all our cleaning, and naturally fertilizing as they go along."

Challenges and joys...

Daugherty gets a lot of interest from neighboring farmers who see how productive these methods are, and want to join up, which presents its own set of challenges. "The main challenge is just the lack of education," says Daugherty. "Luckily, the follow through on the buying end hasn't been so hard. Another challenge is the testing to prove that our product is better on an alchemical structure in the

Ancient Organic Revival

States, which we have been overcoming by biting the bullet and just paying for the testing. But the main challenge is that the economy is very stressed in Peru, and the health is very stressed. Most of the people, although they are full of heart energy—a very amazing people—they live in an environment where there are no catalytic converters, purified water, air quality monitoring, those types of things."

Within the challenges lie the joys, and the true reward, not only personally, but socially. "One of our joys is to empower these people to work through a system, and they come out on the other side feeling empowered—that's whether we're here or not. They now have a better quality product that has been brought to market that has fair market value placed on it. It has all the spec sheets, analysis, and clear projections. So they feel they have a future involved in what they're doing," says Daugherty.

Local promotion...

To spread the gospel of sustainable agriculture to the cities, Daugherty's team presents periodic conferences, through three certifying agencies and through two educational organizations where Daugherty's partners are on the board. "We have an 'All-Organic Day,'" enthuses Daugherty. "We get organic catered food and organic drinks to a church or whatever facility. We usually collect 50–100 people at a time—and about 20% out of that stay online and start creating the info loop. We definitely let the people realize we're not from the States to be some big overbearing company, we're being a conduit. Once we know that your criteria is fulfilled, and we know that you are really in synch, then we are your financier. We cash crop your product, and help you in all your phases, not just relying on your end sales. We buy your boxes, your bags, we finance the harvesting, we finance the processing. We finance it pre-shipment, so it's a different type of buying than most American companies who just buy based on what they receive."

Daugherty has run into zero resistance from other commercial farmers in Peru. "They think we're crazy," he says matter-of-factly. "We really follow through and the money is there when we say, and the boxes are there. We keep following through and pushing them for more information, which they like, and they're very receptive. The skepticism tends to fade as we intervene more and follow through." The word gets around the various farms and villages: "How much did you get for your corn?" "Oh, I cut mine down—I couldn't get anything." "Well, we just got 38 cents a kilo."

Future expansion...

"There are easily over a thousand new items we will have over the next three years—new things that have never been heard of before," claims Daugherty.

Currently Essential Living Foods is co-packing for five Whole Foods Stores regions, through a New Jersey co-packer warehouse. "He's been doing that since we started—one of my first accounts," says Daugherty. ELF products can be found in such brands as Soy-Delicious Ice Cream With Pecans, Campbell's soup is buying ELF's hot peppers for their Spicy V8 Juice, and Whole Foods Blue Corn Chips participates. Daugherty keeps on networking, "There are a couple of larger companies we are working with, so slowly, little by little."

What can interested conscious consumers do to support ELF's efforts beyond buying organic products? "We're setting up a tiered system of buy-packages for groups that you can invest in. We're also going to be accepting donations for what we are working on. Plus, people trying out these new

products, sharing with us their true heart—found responses—not just 'yes, that's interesting, that's energetic'—but more what it can be used for, helping us to figure out ways to get it into the mass market's eye."

To augment ELF's regional outreach, Daugherty is supplying the Casa De Milagros Orphanage in Peru with organic foods. The orphanage is partly supported by actor Woody Harrelson, and rock band, The Black Crowes. Subtle Energy Solutions and Transformation Enzymes are also providing therapeutic products for these children.

"ELF is one aspect of our company," says Daugherty. "We're also creating a line of medicinals called Indigenous Medicinals. You could call it 'Phyto—therapy from the rainforest.' All grown sustainably."

GRAPHICS/LINKS: <http://www.subtleenergysolutions.com/newsletter-lostcrops.html>

Boyd is the webmaster of www.subtleenergysolutions.com and the newsletter writer for that site. He enjoys a wide range of experience both in the ways of the internet, alternative medicine, environmental issues, and in freelance writing. An active, professional drummer, Boyd performs in the Portland area with several area blues and R&B bands.

The Facts About Organic Baby Food

By A. Pruder

Quite simply, organic baby food is that which is processed without the use of artificial pesticides and/or synthetic fertilizers. While many note organic food as being either store-bought, garden grown or gathered in the wild, the correct association is certified organic foods, which are produced and labeled according to strict regulatory standards. In a number of countries, including the United States, the use of the word 'organic' in the commercial market, without the proper certification, is prohibited by law.

Organic baby food is most commonly found in a supermarket and will be labeled accordingly. Because of its nature, organic baby food is more expensive than other types. Processed organic baby food typically includes only those ingredients that are organic and has no artificial food additives. While there seem to be a number of benefits to using organic baby food, the most common reason for purchasing this type of product is the overall quality. Increased nutritional value, the absence of residues from artificial pesticides and better taste are all positive benefits of organic baby food.

Organic baby food, because it is believed to be fresher, often carries an improved taste over other baby foods. Because organic farms are small, their products are most commonly sold close to home. Therefore, organic baby food and other products feature a fresher taste simply because they are fresh.

By 2003, organic food products were available in 20,000 natural food stores and 73% of commercial grocery stores. While many believe that organic baby food is helpful, others are not as certain. Some believe that farming and organic fertilization may carry its own risks that may be passed along in organic baby food.

Ancient Organic Revival

The main debate lies with the better approach to manufacturing organic food. Is it more healthy to use artificial and synthetic products in food processing or natural fertilizer and organic farming methods? There are both sides to any debate and the questions surrounding organic baby food is no different. There is legitimate concern over contamination and safety of organic food and products, but an exact determination as to which side of the table is right has yet to be decided.

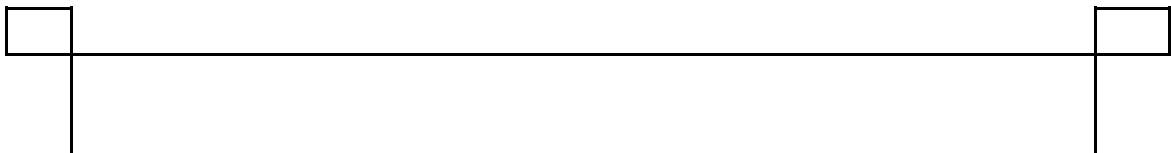
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Want to learn more about organic baby food? Make sure you visit our site at:

for access to additional organic baby food tips and information.



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