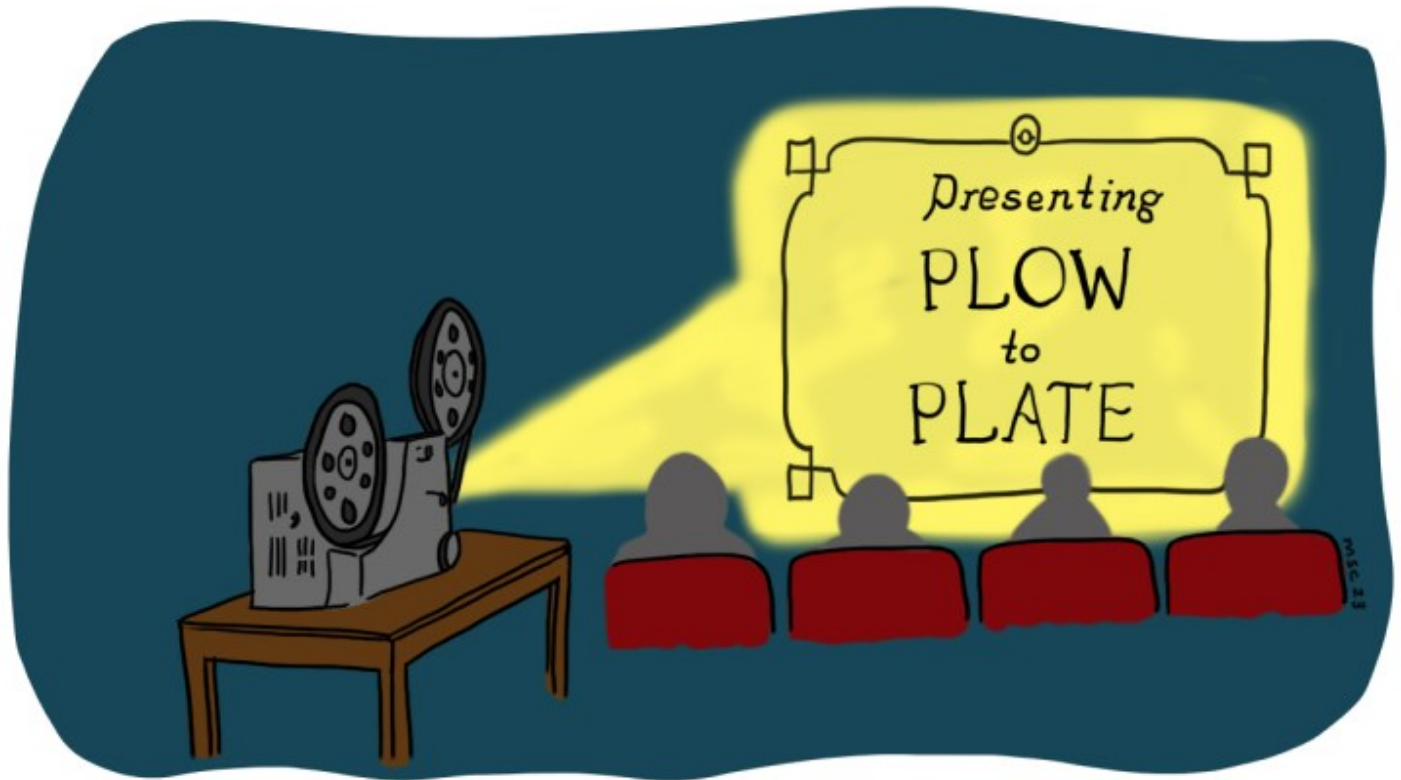


PLOW TO PLATE FILM SERIES

April 12, 2023



Sweet Dreams

By Adam Rabiner

The 2012 documentary *Sweet Dreams* is about the people of Rwanda who in 1994 experienced a genocide in which over 500,000 Tutsi were killed and the country severely traumatized, including members of the first and only female drumming troupe, Ingoma Nshya, which means “new drum” or “new kingdom.” Ingoma Nshya’s founder, theater director Odile “Kike” Katese, intended the troupe to usher in a new chapter of support, healing, and reconciliation. Traditionally, women were not allowed to touch drums, an instrument performed by men for kings, not for any sacred reason but because they were deemed to be “too heavy.”

Ingoma Nshya’s members are both Hutus and Tutsis. Some are widows whose husbands have been murdered; others are wives of husbands who have been imprisoned. There are rape victims, children of imprisoned parents and orphans who are the

sole surviving members of their family. But these differences are secondary to each musician's insistence on commitment, such as showing up on time for rehearsals. All find drumming healing and cathartic.

More broadly, Kike feels her countrymen and women are broken, empty bodies moving in space, but dead inside. They need to re-learn life, re-experience joy, smile, cry and feel again, create new memories and traditions. When, in 2009 Kike meets the two proprietors of Brooklyn's Blue Marble Ice Cream, Jennie Dundas and Alexis Gallivan, it occurs to her that this delicious, fun and joyous dessert could help Rwandans discover how to live happily again. She asks if they can help her open Rwanda's first local ice cream shop, to be named *Inzoni Nziza*—Sweet Dreams—a cooperative to be founded by the drummers.

THE WOMEN HAVE A LOT RIDING ON THIS VENTURE, A MEANS OF FINANCIAL SECURITY HARD TO COME BY IN RURAL RWANDA.

You share the troupe's enthusiasm as they excitedly set out to visit a neighboring bee-keeping collective in the Nyungwe Forest, inspect a dairy cooperative, locate a retail space (where they post a handmade cotton sign proclaiming, "coming soon, ice cream, coffee, and dreams"), form committees and start taking English lessons and basic business classes.

Yet inevitably various dramas and obstacles ensue, such as which ten lucky women will be selected for the coveted positions of store employees. Can the women afford the monthly dues required of them, and will the essential ice-cream maker, donated by South Africa, be fixed in time for the grand opening? The suspense, tension, pain and hope in that final one week countdown to opening day is palpable. The women have a lot riding on this venture, a means of financial security hard to come by in rural Rwanda.

The women show they learn a lot from their marketing lessons. At the grand opening they rent a truck and drive it through town shouting slogans worthy of a professional PR firm:

“Ice cream is here! It’s the New Thing.”

“It’s hot, it’s very cold, it’s good.”

“If you’re old, it’ll make you young again.”

At the ribbon cutting ceremony they give out free samples, pound on their drums all day and are deliriously happy. Their sweet dreams are coming true.

The story of Ingoma Nshya shows how friendships can thrive even among those who have every reason to fear or hate one another. It demonstrates that we have more in common with one another, in this case artistic freedom and expression, passion for music, dance and song, and liberation from sexist taboos, than artificially constructed reasons that divide us.

The engaging business tale chronicling the creation of Inzoni Nziza is also one of persistence in the face of adversity, of cooperation and compromise, of taking classroom learning and applying it with concrete planning and action and ultimately, the reason Plow to Plate has chosen to present this film, the power of ice cream to transform a nation.

THEIR SWEET DREAMS ARE COMING TRUE.

Together these organizations give the women so much confidence and empowerment that they later partner with male drummers from Rwanda and their brother country, Burundi, to put on a joint collaborative celebration of festive drumming, dancing, sing-

ing and joy making.

When they board a plane for an international tour in Holland—many for the first time—they are not intimidated at all but rather excited for what the future holds. They have come a long way in putting their past traumas behind them as they move towards a more optimistic and peaceful future.

SWEET DREAMS

A FILM BY ROB AND LISA FRUCHTMAN



Sweet Dreams, April 18, 2023 @ 7:00 p.m.

Screening link: <http://www.plowtoplatefilms.com/events/>

Adam Rabiner lives in Ditmas Park with his wife, Dina, and two children, Elan and Ana.

SAFE FOOD COMMITTEE REPORT: PLOW TO PLATE'S UPCOMING DOUBLE FEATURE

April 12, 2023



by Adam Rabiner

Bisonhead was shot on location in 2015 in Yellowstone National Park with the Native American Tanner family. It is a short and quiet film, mostly visual—wintry plains and hills, a bison shot dead with a rifle and dragged away by its slayer leaving a trail of blood in the snow, the same bison lying in the back of a pickup truck having its teeth

examined by a young woman wearing a pink blazer. The prairie wind howls, an instrument like a didgeridoo sadly wails, flowing water crests over a waterfall and roars, a snowplow rumbles steadily down a deserted highway, footsteps make a crackling crunch on a snowy path, but not that many words are uttered. Yet the movie packs an emotional punch above its weight. It's like a highly concentrated fruit juice. A little goes a long way.

After a few of these images, the following words, contextualizing the film, are posted on the screen in white print on a black background:

"The extermination of bison from their hunting grounds will force the Plains Indians to give up their nomadic ways and surrender to the reservation system. Every buffalo dead is an Indian gone."

1867, U.S. Military Colonel.

"Nearly 150 years later, a family of Ponderai Native Americans travel to Yellowstone to take part in the culling of wild bison in order to preserve their treaty hunting rights."

"Yellowstone was once part of the Ponderai's ancestral harvesting grounds. Today they are restricted to a small hunting zone outside the park."

One of the longest stretches of conversation is when some of the Tanners discuss hunting strategies over a map of the area and realize their opportunities are limited by the fact that the bison are gathered on private land which is off limits to the Tanners.

A similar restriction is brought to bear in the subsequent scene. One of the Tanner elders is driving his car and about to enter an area when the driver of another vehicle leaving the area stops him to ask if she can help him with anything. When he says no, she doesn't hesitate to tell him that the area is closed and off limits. When asked if

she is a game warden, she replies, “Nope, I just live here,” to which Mr. Tanner replies under his breath after pulling away, “Well, don’t worry about it then.” The younger woman in the car laughs at his retort to a microaggression piled on top of generations of historical injustices.

After this annoying encounter, the older Tanner and his younger female relative pull up on some bison grazing on grass ringed by a fence with buildings in the background—a Yellowstone education center and a gift shop—and she films them with her phone. This scene is followed by one of a vanload of non-Native American tourists whose tour guide stops the vehicle for a photo opportunity. The guide explains that it will have all the elements of a classic Yellowstone winter picture because it has the three necessary components of snow, buffalo, and rising steam behind them. In the next scene, two buffalo with bells draped on their necks walk below the balcony of a residential condominium. The sense one takes away from these juxtapositions is that the Tanners, indeed the buffalo themselves to some degree, have also been relegated to tourist status.

As powerful as these images are, *Bisonhead* ends with a handful of words. “We can’t harass them, we can’t chase them. What do you think our ancestors did back in the day? (gentle laughter). Run them into a draw or run them over a cliff.” (more soft laughter). *Bisonhead* ends with the Tanners defiantly driving past a herd of buffalo grazing by the side of the road, honking the car horn to chase the buffalo as someone prepares a rifle. Then the film circles back to the opening shot of the felled buffalo and the hunter breathing heavily from the exertion to move it onto the truck. “What do the bison mean to us?” asks a voiceover as you watch a bison slowly walk away from the camera behind a snowy and wind-swept hill rise. “In one word, freedom.”

Our National Mammal tells the story of buffalo culling by the Montana Department of Livestock due to ranchers’ fear of brucellosis disease.

Bisonhead and *Our National Mammal* screening: Tuesday, February 14th, 2023 @ 7:00 p.m.

SAFE FOOD COMMITTEE REPORT

April 12, 2023



PLOW TO PLATE PRESENTS: *THIS ORGANIC LIFE*—HAWTHORNE VALLEY FARM

By Adam Rabiner

This Organic Life is a television series found on HUDSY, a community-inspired app and media platform with a mission to bring the Hudson Valley “closer together online and in-person, fostering connection in innovative, collaborative and unique ways.” Episode one, hosted by Wen-Jay Ying, owner and founder of Local Roots NYC, focuses on Hawthorne Valley Farm in Ghent, New York. In the course of Wen-Jay’s visit to the farm, she talks to Executive Director Martin Ping, Field Vegetable and CSA Manager Todd Newlin, Dairy Herd Manager Jess Brobst and Creamery Manager Jeremy Shapiro. These conversations show that Hawthorne Valley Farm similarly fosters connection, community and innovation through its biodynamic and regenerative farming,

farm store, Waldorf school and educational programs.

Ping, who oversees the whole operation, provides the big picture: a farm striving to create a balance between the land, animals, plants and people—all the more challenging due to climate change and COVID. He explains the need for imagination to attempt this balance. The farm seeks to foster connections among co-workers, consumers, producers and members of the community, near and far. Like our own Food Coop, Ping sees the exchange of goods and services as being about relationships, not simply transactions. When you personally know the farmers who produce your food, the nourishment you receive from a meal exceeds its nutritional value. Ping rejects the market-based paradigms of industrial agriculture focused exclusively on balance sheets and profitability, and looks beyond them to determine the farm's return on investment. Admiring the beautiful Berkshire mountains in the distance, he points to his favorite peak, spreads his arms and pronounces that he is among the one-tenth of one percent—one of the wealthiest men on the planet.

THE CYCLE OF LIFE ON A FARM

Todd Newlin explains how the farm makes compost, laying piles of food waste and other organic matter in covered windrows. The compost is not for direct use on any vegetable crop but for cover crops which will eventually be plowed into the earth in preparation for the subsequent vegetables. The cover crop's purpose is not simply to strengthen the soil and hold the land in place, but also to enrich the soil by adding organic matter like nitrogen. Newlin is harking back to the farming practices of the original Native American stewards of the land, who respected and replicated the natural systems, which resemble a self-feeding circle. He concedes that it is tough but worth it: when achieved, the land is more resilient and the vegetables, with roots deep in the rich soil, taste better.

Wen-Jay was fortunate to visit Jess Brobst on the very morning that Bertha gave birth to a baby bull. Jess explains that the act of giving birth turned Bertha into a cow. Before that, she was actually a heifer. Bertha, who still has her placenta attached, is

part of the B line. Her baby's name will start with B to better track its lineage. The placenta, which is nutritionally rich, will be left for Bertha to eat if she desires. Jess hypothesizes that some cows do this instinctually, to clean up the birth site and keep predators away. If not eaten, it will be added to the compost heap. Jess points out a lame bull lying nearby who may be put down if he cannot recover. She then points at the newborn (perhaps to be named Billie) and says these two animals are a great example of the cycle of life on a farm.

THE HUDSON VALLEY IS A MAJOR SUPPLIER OF OUR COOP

Jeremy Shapiro demonstrates how Hawthorne Valley milks its cows, with a mechanical suction device attached to the teats on the udder. Each cow can give anywhere from five to ten gallons a day, more or less, depending on the soil and grass or particular cow. He explains that smaller dairy farmers have a hard time competing with larger operations due to the cost structures and lack of economies of scale. He observes that the dairy industry as a whole is suffering from less demand due to changing dietary habits and the belief that cows contribute disproportionately to methane production and global warming.

One can only look forward to future episodes featuring Gopal, Kinderhook and Deep Roots farms. We are fortunate that the Hudson Valley is a major supplier of our Coop.

This Organic Life—Hawthorne Valley Farm, coming up on Tuesday, January 10, 2023, at 7 p.m.

Screening link: <https://plowtoplatefilms.weebly.com/upcoming-events.html>

PLOW TO PLATE PRESENTS: WHEN TOMATOES MET WAGNER

April 12, 2023



Safe Food Committee Report

By Adam Rabiner

When Tomatoes Met Wagner takes its peculiar title from a quirky experiment to see if the organic tomatoes grown by Alexandros Gousiaris in the tiny farming village of Ilia, in central Greece, will do better when exposed to classical music rather than the traditional Greek music that usually plays for them over several speakers arrayed in the fields. Alexandros, the central character and heart of this film documentary, is a tinkerer, entrepreneur and risk taker, which can be seen in his decision to return to his home village, a place most young people seeking economic opportunities had fled, after studying mathematics at the university in Heraklio in Crete. In 1996, he founded Odysea, Ltd. to produce and export honey, and added tomato production in 1998.

Alexandros works with a cadre of elderly women, two of whom, Agathi and Katina, are his aunts. The small team of employees democratically creates and tests a new sauce and other recipes, spending up to two years adjusting herb and spice ratios. Based on feedback received from a business trip to Brussels visiting local retailers, Alexandros decides to substitute more fashionable quinoa and barley for traditional rice in a stuffed tomato “meal in a jar.” He even considers exporting his tomato sauce to England in beer bottles to appeal to its pub-loving citizens.

Though his willingness to be dexterous as a businessman shows he is not held back by the way things have always been done in the past, in the main, Alexandros is hewing to tradition. His great-grandmother and grandmother both bred bees in their backyards and his family’s roots in beekeeping go back to the 19th century. As an organic and small-scale artisanal producer Alexandros’s production costs are higher than conventional larger-scale operations, and he struggles for profitability. In a town of only 33 residents, half of them working for the company, there is a lot staked to Odysea’s success.

The tensions between Alexandros’s desire to live, farm, and create community in his moribund ancestral town and the economic challenges he faces are the central theme of the film. He discusses these existential questions with a colleague and answers someone who asks why he returned to the village after college: “What does education have to do with a job?” Alexandros, who likes to regale his co-workers with stories

and myths, particularly one about Christopher Columbus's journey to America and return to Spain with tomato seeds, is himself a kind of mission-driven Odysseus, beset by travails, answering to a higher calling, and trying to reassert his place at home.

The village of Ilia has seen better days. It once had two coffee shops, but they have both been long shuttered. When Alexandros arranges a French student exchange and fills the local school with visitors (while giving the village a temporary dose of energy, youth, and life) we learn that the building had been closed thirty years earlier for lack of children. His aunt Agathi, the town's former top student, now always wears a widow's black attire. One of her friends comments that she has acquired a black soul by constantly dwelling on her memories and old times. When Agathi harvests with a sickle, she looks like the Grim Reaper. One of the ladies predicts that when the remaining older generation finally dies off, their children will also flee the town, as their grandchildren had done.

This remains to be seen. On that business trip to Europe, accompanied by several of his co-workers, Alexandros was informed by one manager that there was virtually no information on the labels. Discerning consumers want to know: what town is this from, what kind of tomato is it, who are the people that made it? A born storyteller and educator, Alexandros can easily and compellingly answer those questions. And once he does, Odysea may not simply continue to win awards for taste and quality in international and domestic competitions. With any luck, this food backstory could generate the same excitement in a new generation of Greek youth as it did for the curious and enthusiastic French visitors, or the back-to-the-land younger generation of farmers coming up in the United States, and spur much needed renewal, growth and economic development. Just like those tomato seeds Columbus brought back from the New World did.

When Tomatoes Met Wagner: Tuesday, December 13th, 2022 @ 7:00 p.m.

Screening link: <http://www.plowtoplatefilms.com>

INTERNATIONAL TRADE EDUCATION SQUAD (ITES) REPORT

April 12, 2023

By Willy Naess

The squad's mission is to keep members informed about international trade issues and how trade agreements can impact our ability to maintain our values and realize the goals of the Park Slope Food Coop, as put forward in our mission statement. Members of the ITES take responsibility to study and share with Coop members information that can lead to individual and/or collective action.

The squad meets every four to six weeks and regularly writes articles for the *Gazette*, offers committee reports at the General Meeting, maintains an online blog and organizes four public education forums per year that are open to the public.

SECOND LOCATION STUDY COMMITTEE REPORT

April 12, 2023



ILLUSTRATION BY MAGGIE CARSON

UPDATE AND CALL FOR NEW MEMBERS

By Jonathan Farber

The Park Slope Food Coop is unique in all our lives. It is also a very different type of business in the wider economy. For nearly fifty years we have been bucking the system and showing the world how we provide good food at low prices for working members. Our model challenges the status quo. To bring about positive change in our food and farming systems you would be hard pressed to find a more effective vehicle than the Park Slope Food Coop.

The Coop is also very successful. We are emerging from the pandemic battered but not diminished. Thanks to committed members and staff and to an infusion of millions of dollars by the federal government, we are still here. In fact, once the IRS pays us for the tax credits to which we are entitled, we will have more cash than when the

pandemic started. And, with folks returning to work their shifts and the Coop once again admitting new households at a rapid clip, there is every reason to believe we will rebuild our membership and sales.

Which leads us to the Park Slope Food Coop Second Location Study Committee (SLSC) and the upcoming release of our Draft Report and Recommendations. Approved by the General Meeting in 2016, we have been busy exploring whether we should open a new store in addition to the location on Union Street. The Coop members on the committee and the general manager of the Coop think it is now time to have a robust discussion about this important topic.

The SLSC is recruiting new members. Committee members receive PSFC shift credits for their work. This is an exciting venture and an opportunity to join a diverse team studying the next expansion of the Coop. We are especially looking for members with professional experience in community organizing, public relations, real estate, planning, business management, finance and marketing. PSFC members interested in joining the committee may contact us at secondlocation@psfc.coop.