

Tales from the White Dog Cafe

A Quarterly Newsletter 3420 Sansom St. Philadelphia Fall, 1997

A Way of Life

When I was about ten, I received a mailing from the anti-vivisection league asking for donations. I'll never know how they accidentally got the name of a child, but it had a profound and lasting effect on me. In the brochure was a picture of a beagle dog strapped to an operating table in a research laboratory. The dog looked just like my pet, who was my best friend. The suffering of animals is a subject I've always had the hardest time facing.

It touches me in such an unbearable way that other than my continuous support of animal welfare organizations beginning with my childhood allowance, I have always avoided it.

Over the last few years I've become increasingly aware of the plight of farm animals. The vast majority of the animals we eat in America are raised in intensive-confinement systems known as factory farms where animals are simply commodities rather than creatures capable of feelings and intelligent behavior. Pigs are almost as smart as dogs; they can recognize their names and come when called. There are reports of pigs saving humans from drowning and other acts of bravery and loyalty. The conditions under which pigs, cattle and chickens are raised and slaughtered are so horrifying that I won't describe them in this newsletter.

At the cafe we go through large quantities of bacon, ham, sausage, and other pork products and for a long time I didn't stop to think about where that bacon came from, or maybe I just couldn't face it. Breaking out of traditional food distribution systems is not easy, but thanks to the perseverance of chef/partner Kevin von Klause, purchaser Ron Yeager and farmer/forager Glen Brendel we have developed a supply route for humanely raised pork from the Amish farms of Lancaster County. We'd already found suppliers of free range chicken and eggs and naturally raised veal and now we're introducing humanely raised organic beef to our menu, which Kevin describes in his new column. Fresh fish still remain most popular and as always our dishes include hearty portions of grains and vegetables, largely from organic family farms, with plenty of choices for vegetarians. The importance of our business is not just the quality of the food we serve, but the way of life it supports.

Animals are not the only ones to suffer. Our cruel and inhumane food producing system is destroying rural America. Family farmers who nurture the earth and respect the lives of farm animals are being rapidly replaced by factory farms, with three million family farms lost since WWII. By raising animals in unhealthy and unsanitary conditions, concentrating animal waste and using drugs and feed pesticides, agribusiness is destroying

our topsoil, polluting our water supply and contaminating the very food we eat for the sake of short term profit.

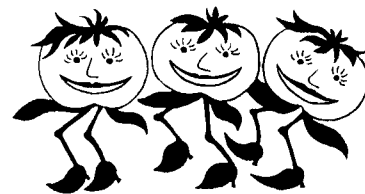
Few of us, as consumers or business people, want to sell or buy within an economic system that causes the suffering of others, whether it be animals, farmers, sweatshop workers or our own children whose health and future are damaged by environmental destruction. Frequently we become resigned and tend to avoid confronting the suffering that too often lies behind our everyday transactions. Sometimes there are no clear alternatives to business as usual, but we can create them. By joining together as concerned producers, retailers, investors, and consumers we can develop economic relationships which respect life and build a just and healthy world.

Because it's white, most people guess that our logo depicts a yellow labrador, but if you look more closely, you'll see that it's the silhouette of a beagle, my childhood pal.

Judy Wicks

Dance of the Ripe Tomatoes

A celebration of organic and humane farming



Friday, September 19, 6:30pm

Buffet Dinner

featuring the harvest of local organic family farms
served outdoors under tent-top on Moravian Court
(behind the White Dog Cafe)

Followed by Dancing

8pm - midnight with Silver Sound DJ

Join the Ripe Tomatoes for the last dance of summer

\$25, including tax & gratuity Dancing only \$5.

Reservations 386-9224

*The third week of summer is the Humane Society's
Farm Animal Awareness Week.*