

SPEAKER BIOGRAPHIES

WHEAT! AN EXPLORATION OF CULTURAL EXPRESSION WITH SCHOLARS AND CHEFS IN 3 WEBINARS

AUGUST 20: IMPORTANCE OF WHEAT TO THE WORLD

FELIX G. BAQUEDANO

Excerpted from -- <https://www.ers.usda.gov/authors/ers-staff-directory/felix-baquedano/>

Felix Baquedano is an economist in the International Trade and Development Branch of the Market and Trade Economics Division at the USDA Economic Research Service (ERS). He coordinates publication of the International Food Security Assessment (IFSA), an annual report. The IFSA is the U.S. Department of Agriculture report that tracks global food security for 76 low- to middle-income countries. He is also involved in trade and food security research with a regional focus in Latin America, the Caribbean, and Sub-Saharan Africa.

Before rejoining USDA, ERS in February 2020, Felix was the officer for Latin America and the Caribbean (LAC) in the Global Information and Early Warning System (GIEWS) group of the Markets and Trade Division of the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO). At FAO he led numerous reports that monitored production, food availability, and market conditions (including prices) for main food commodities in LAC. He was also a member of GIEWS Food Price Monitoring and Analysis team, where he developed the indicator for food price anomalies, which is a tier one indicator for the United Nations Sustainable Development goals. He led numerous development projects in LAC and Sub-Saharan Africa and worked as an international consultant in a number of World Bank projects. Prior to his tenure at FAO, he focused on trade and food security research at USDA, ERS from 2009 to early 2013, with a primary focus on the Central American and Caribbean sub-regions of LAC.

EDUCATION

Ph.D., Agricultural Economics -- Purdue University (2009)

M.Sc., Agricultural Economics – Purdue University (2005)

B.Sc., Pan-American School of Agriculture Zamorano (1999)

ANDREW SOWELL

Excerpted from -- <https://www.ers.usda.gov/authors/ers-staff-directory/andrew-sowell/>

Andrew Sowell is an Agricultural Economist in the Crops Branch, Markets and Trade Economics Division at the Economic Research Service, USDA. Andrew is currently the Wheat Outlook Coordinator for the USDA, Economic Research Service. Prior to his current position he served as the Coordinator of the agency's Sugar and Sweeteners Market Outlook Program since September 2020 and is author of the monthly ERS report *Sugar and Sweeteners Outlook*.

Andrew worked for USDA's Foreign Agricultural Service (FAS) from December 2011 to August 2020. During this time, Andrew analyzed international markets for several different commodities, and most notably, served nearly four years as Senior Wheat Analyst. As the Senior Wheat Analyst Andrew analyzed trends in the Russian wheat market, finding both Russian and U.S. producers face similar challenges. He further predicted future yield gains are possible for Russia wheat production.

EDUCATION

M.S., Agricultural Economics – Purdue University (2011)

B.S., Agricultural and Applied Economics – Virginia Tech (2009)

DR. MATTHEW ROUSE

Excerpted from footnoted sources

Dr. Matthew Rouse is a Research Plant Pathologist with the Agricultural Research Service, Cereal Disease Lab in St. Paul, MN.

Matt's research mission is to reduce losses in wheat and barley to major diseases including stem rust and leaf rust. Matt contributed towards solutions to the threat of Ug99 and other emerging virulent races of the stem rust pathogen. In the fight against Ug99, Matt conducted research in Kenya, Ethiopia, and in a biocontainment facility at the University of Minnesota. Matt is part of an excellent team with members from the Agricultural Research Service, Cereal Disease Lab, University of Minnesota, and international collaborators. Together the team worked with Matt to make rapid progress in identifying new stem rust resistance genes, establishing new field disease screening nurseries in Ethiopia, and assisting breeders in the release of stem rust resistant wheat varieties across the globe. Matt is a member of the Stakman-Borlaug Center for Sustainable Plant Health at the University of Minnesota¹.

Matt's work on Ug99 was recognized in August 2018 with the Norman Borlaug Award for Field Research and Application at the Sustainable Goals conference in the Netherlands. The award is endowed by the Rockefeller Foundation. This award recognizes exceptional, science-based achievements of early career individuals who have advanced human development by improving the quality, quantity, or availability of food in the world².

Matt and his beautiful wife Alicia have two young children.

EDUCATION

Ph.D., Plant Pathology – University of Minnesota (2010)

M.S., Plant Pathology – Kansas State University (2007)

B.S., Zoology/Statistics – Oklahoma State University (2005)

¹ [Matthew Rouse | Borlaug Memorial Lecture \(umn.edu\)](#)

² [USDA Scientist Receives the Borlaug Field Award : USDA ARS](#)

AUGUST 27: WHEAT IN GLOBAL CUISINE

DR. RACHEL LAUDAN

Excerpted from Wikipedia -- https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Rachel_Laudan

Rachel grew up on a traditional family farm in South West England. A much-repeated memory during interviews with Laudan tell of her father experimenting with grinding wheat to make his own flour. He removed the husks and then attempted to grind the grains by pounding with a pestle and mortar, followed by feeding the wheat through a meat grinder and eventually striking it with a hammer on a flagstone floor.

Laudan started her academic career teaching history of science and technology, social and economic history and world history. Initially teaching at Carnegie-Mellon, she also taught at the University of Pittsburgh, Virginia Tech and then the University of Hawaii. While living on the Island, Laudan was struck by the interconnected cuisines that created the fusion of local food and subsequently went on to write her first non-academic book *The Food of Paradise* which was published by the University of Hawaii in 1996. Despite being rejected by several cautious publishers the book was awarded the 1997 Jane Grigson/ Julia Child prize of the [International Association of Culinary Professionals](#).^[6]

In 1996, Laudan and her husband the philosopher Larry Laudan, both retired from academia and moved to Mexico. However, they both continued to visit America, Argentina and Spain as visiting lecturers. During her time in Mexico, Laudan worked on the ambitious task of writing her next book *Cuisine and Empire: Cooking in World History* which was published in 2012. Like her previous book it became an award-winning publication, gaining the IACP Cookbook Award for Best Book in Culinary History.

Today, Dr. Laudan regularly contributes to her Blog, “A Historian’s Take on Food and Food Politics” -- [Rachel Laudan – A Historian's Take on Food and Food Politics](#). Through her blog Dr. Laudan grows a new generation of food historians providing advice on how to get started.

EDUCATION

Ph.D., History and Philosophy of Science – University College London (1974)

Undergraduate degree, Geology – Bristol University

CHEF SANAA ABOUREZK

Excerpted from [Meet Sanaa — Sanaa's Gourmet \(sanaacooks.com\)](#) and other footnoted sources.

Chef Sanaa Abourezk is a native of Damascus, Syria. She is a Gourmet Chef, Restaurateur, Author of four cookbooks, Nutritionist, Teacher, and a Blogger who is passionate about the art of cooking, teaching cool recipes and fighting child hunger in America and around the world.

In March 2016, Chef Abourezk challenged Bobby Flay on the Food Network’s hit show “Beat Bobby Flay”. She made it to the final round up against the master chef with her signature dish, vegetarian moussaka. Abourezk integrated tomato, onion, and her signature spicy walnut sauce in her eggplant

dish, telling the audience that she started her restaurant with six eggplants and now she routinely uses six cases. She went on the show to prove vegetarian dishes can be exciting.³

Chef Abourezk is a YouTube star with many videos teaching her food preparation techniques. In her November 17, 2017 TED^x Talk we learn about bulgur wheat. Sanaa's mother asked in disbelief, "people come to your restaurant for bulgur and they pay \$9? People in America are crazy." Sanaa explains how bulgur is traditionally made in Syria and why this grain is so important to the world. (TED^x talk, [Want a Healthy Life? Eat Bulgur.](#))

Chef Abourezk worked as a nutrition adviser for the South Dakota Department of Health, where she advised clients on nutrition, cooking, and healthy eating. Chef Abourezk is celebrating 15 years in Business with Jazz raising money for Hungry Heart of Sioux Falls to cover school lunches. Chef Abourezk offers cooking classes for small groups, designed to introduce people to healthy food preparation techniques and exposure to the joy of preparing and sharing a meal with friends.

RESTAURANTS OWNED AND OPERATED

Sanaa's 8th Street Gourmet a popular Middle Eastern Restaurant in Sioux Falls, South Dakota.

In 2017, Sanaa's was selected by *Food and Wine* online as one of the best vegan and vegan friendly restaurants in all 50 states⁴. Restaurant Sanaa's 8th Street Gourmet is a local favorite offering healthy, affordable gourmet cuisine, cooked daily from scratch using fresh seasonal ingredients. Sanaa's is a green restaurant utilizing only 100% recyclable containers, washable linens, and stainless cutlery.

EDUCATION

Masha Innocenti Cooking School in Florence, Italy

Cordon Bleu Baking School in Paris, France

M.S. Nutrition – California State Polytech University, Pomona

B.S. Agricultural Engineering – Damascus University

CHEF KEVIN MITCHELL

Excerpted from <https://discoversouthcarolina.com/articles/meet-kevin-mitchell-south-carolina-chef-ambassador-2020> and <https://slowfoodnations.org/participant/kevin-mitchell/> and [Kevin Mitchell — Menus of Change](#)

Chef Kevin Mitchell is the South Carolina Chef Ambassador 2020-2021 and in 2008 Chef Mitchell became the first African American faculty member of the Culinary Institute of Charleston. A Nathalie Dupree Graduate Fellow of the Southern Foodways Alliance, he became a strong proponent for the preservation of Southern ingredients and earned a reputation for expertise on the historical significance of African American cuisine. In 2013, he joined the board of Slow Food Charleston and remains active in the American Culinary Federation. Chef Mitchell is also the founder of

³ [Who won? Sanaa Abourezk takes on Bobby Flay \(argusleader.com\)](#)

⁴ [The Best Vegan \(and Vegan-friendly\) Restaurants in All 50 States | Food & Wine \(foodandwine.com\)](#)

Bridging Culinary Awareness, a mentoring program promoting culinary arts as a career option for challenged high school students. In October 2021 the University of South Carolina Press will release Chef Mitchell's new book an illustrated guide to South Carolina food, dishes, and ingredients. The new book features 75 recipes, including Palmetto asparagus, Lady Baltimore cakes, red rice and okra and okra soup.

"As a Chef Ambassador, I hope to share not only stories of the great ingredients of our state, but to also share the stories of those who created the great food we enjoy today. As a culinary historian and chef, I feel it is important to connect the food to the people. We have a great history here in the Lowcountry and it is important to honor the enslaved and formally enslaved chefs and cooks on whose shoulders we stand for creating the food we now know as Southern cuisine."

EDUCATION

M.A. Southern Studies – University of Mississippi

B.P.S. Professional Studies in Culinary Arts Management – Culinary Institute of America

A.O.S. Occupational Studies – Culinary Institute of America

Training as a young boy in his grandmother's kitchen – instilled his dedication to moving food from the fresh market to the white tablecloth

CHEF ANREA NGUYEN

Excerpted from -- <https://www.vietworldkitchen.com/about-andrea-nguyen>

Chef Andrea Nguyen is an author, freelance writer, cooking teacher, consultant, and the force behind the Viet World Kitchen Web site. Chef Nguyen's **The Pho Cookbook** won the prestigious 2018 James Beard Cookbook Award. Her book **Hooray for Pho!** is on its eighth printing. Beginning in 2011 Andrea's cookbooks were released in enhanced digital formats which include embedded video portions. Andrea's third cookbook, **Asian Tofu** expanded the concept to include travelogues and an eBooklet for do-it-yourself tofu making. *Asian Tofu* was selected by NPR and the New York Times in their picks for 2012 Summer Cookbook picks. Her fourth cookbook, **The Banh Mi Handbook** draws people into Vietnamese cooking by helping them learn how to make a "darn good sandwich". The sixth book, **Vietnamese Food Any Day** released in February 2019 is filled with modern takes and hacks to help people make good Viet food at home, again making the best cookbook lists with the New York Times, Washington Post, Bon Appetit, Library Journal, Eater, and many more. Chef Nguyen is a member of the International Association of Culinary Professionals, Association of Food Journalists, Southern Foodways Alliance, and Les Dames d'Escoffier International.

"I have no formal culinary training. I never went to cooking school. I read, research, practice and make many mistakes along the way. My life-long curiosity about food, cooking, and culture fuels my work. At the end of the day, my aim is to (1) capture the human connections to food and (2) demystify Asian food without dumbing it down. There's no reason why more people shouldn't include great homemade Asian food in their rotation."

EDUCATION

M.S., Business and Communication Management – University of Southern California

B.S., Business and Communication Management – University of Southern California

SEPTEMBER 3: FOOD CULTURE AND HISTORICAL LEGACIES

SARAH WASSBERG JOHNSON

Excerpted from <https://www.thefoodhistorian.com/about.html>.

Sarah Wassberg Johnson is the force behind the [Food Historian](#) blog. Sarah is an author, speaker, educator, podcaster, and blogger on all things related to food history. She is frequently interviewed by journalists seeking historical context, she was featured in all three episodes of the History Channel miniseries, “The Food That Built America”. She’s appeared on National Public Radio, the *Atlantic*, *Atlas Obscura*, and CNN.

Although she currently works as a museum professional in the museum education field, her lifelong love of food and history led her to focus increasingly on American food history. Her areas of specialty include: rural and agricultural history, women's history, the history of domestic science, World War I and World War II home front history, the Progressive Era, particularly the Country Life movement, and food history in general.

In her spare time, Sarah enjoys cooking vegetable-rich meals from scratch, collecting vintage, ethnic, and community cookbooks, throwing parties, hiking with her husband and her Shetland sheepdog, volunteering at other museums, and writing.

EDUCATION

M.A. in History/Public History – University of Albany, State University of New York

B.A. in History and Scandinavian Studies – Concordia College, Moorhead, Minnesota

DR. THOMAS TALHELM

Excerpted from [Thomas Talhelm | The University of Chicago Booth School of Business](#)

Thomas Talhelm studies how culture affects the way we behave. He studies how rice and wheat agriculture have given northern and southern China two very different cultures, even influencing whether people move chairs in Starbucks. His research also finds that liberal culture in the US is more individualistic and that getting people to think more analytically increases support for liberal social policies, whereas thinking holistically increases support for conservative policies. Thomas occasionally lectures and writes about research and culture in Chinese.

Thomas lived in China for five years teaching high school in Guangzhou as a Princeton in Asia fellow, a freelance journalist in Beijing, and a Fulbright scholar and an NSF Graduate Research Fellow. While living in Beijing, Thomas founded [Smart Air](#), a social enterprise that ships low-cost air purifiers to help people breathe clean air without shelling out thousands of dollars for expensive purifiers.

Dr. Talhelm is an Associate Professor of Behavioral Science, University of Chicago Booth School of Business.

EDUCATION

Ph.D. University of Virginia (2015)

B.A. with highest honors, Psychology and Spanish – University of Michigan (2007)

Beijing Language and Culture University, Chinese literature and ancient Chinese (2009)

SESSION MODERATORS

SCOTT HANSCOM

Deputy Director for the National Agricultural Library

Scott joined the National Agricultural Library (NAL) in 2006 where he managed the Monograph Acquisitions and Fiscal Receiving Unit responsible for acquiring materials for the collection through purchase, gifts, and other means. In this role, Scott managed submissions of USDA-authored published content into AgSpace an early digital repository hosted by NAL. Starting in 2013, Scott was engaged to support the Agriculture Networked Information Consortium – a consortium of agricultural libraries across the Land-Grant research community. In 2016, he was selected to serve as the Lead in the Customer Services Unit which provides reference services at NAL. In November 2018 Scott was named the Branch Chief for the Digitization and Access Branch in the Data Production Division. In this role, Scott was responsible for the management of NAL’s world class agriculture collection, designated as a Heritage Asset for the Department of Agriculture. Also, in his purview, the digitization program, currently with more than 8 million scanned pages available through the Internet Archives, and NAL’s Special Collections. In addition to his regular duties, Scott was called upon to run the Administrative Office at NAL for multiple rotations beginning in 2013.

Prior to joining NAL Scott’s career gave him a breadth of experience in libraries and archives, from cataloging and acquisition, reference, and managing special collections. Institutions he is affiliated with, include:

- Technical Services Department, Milton S. Eisenhower Library, Johns Hopkins University
- University Libraries, University of the Arts – Philadelphia, PA
- Bibliographic Services Department, Samuel Paley Library – Temple University, Philadelphia
- Ewell Sale Stewart Library, Academy of Natural Sciences, Philadelphia, PA
- Amherst College Library, Amherst College, Amherst, MA
- New York State Library, Cultural Education Center – Albany, NY

EDUCATION

M.L.S., School of Information Science and Policy – State University of New York at Albany (1992)

B.A. – Dickinson College, Carlisle, PA (1987)

PAUL M. WESTER, JR.

Excerpted from <https://docs.house.gov/meetings/SY/SY21/20150326/103252/HMTG-114-SY21-Bio-WesterP-20150326-U1.pdf>

Director of the National Agricultural Library (NAL)

Since joining NAL in October 2015 Paul focused on re-building the workforce and breaking down internal silos. He improved communications with staff instituting “Ask Me Anything” sessions which provides a format encouraging staff questions at regular all hands sessions – these became essential communication channels with the onset of the pandemic and mandatory telework. Paul serves on the Diversity Committee of the American Research Libraries (ARL) consortium. Under his guidance, NAL became the first Federal library to run an ARL ClimateQUAL assessment of the workforce.

Prior to joining the National Agricultural Library, Paul served as the first Chief Records Officer for the U.S. Government at the National Archives and Records Administration (NARA). As the Chief Records Officer, Paul led records management throughout the Federal Government. He helped transition NARA to incorporate electronic records into policy and workflow. Paul played a major role in developing the Presidential Memorandum on Managing Government Records, issued in 2011.

EDUCATION

M.A. and Master of Library Science – University of Maryland

B.A., History – University of Maryland