

Genevieve Vahl

Interview Story

Jonny Hunter and Slow Food UW share similar values to create a better food industry

The local expert

From serving rice and beans in the basement of a church to becoming one of Madison's most iconic culinary figures, Jonny Hunter's social values parallel Slow Food UW's (SFUW) action on campus.

Hunter and SFUW enact similar ethics within their practices. Both seek to educate people on our individual role and impact within the food system. Together Hunter and SFUW work to provide insight and access to good, clean and fair food for all.

While an undergraduate at UW-Madison, Hunter took over a coffee shop in the basement of a church serving food to customers for just \$3 every weekday during the academic year. Simple, vegetarian ingredients comprised the menu. He coined his operation The Catacombs.

"When you're on campus, you're always trying to find who you are and what communities you want to be a part of. And so we built this really strong, pretty large community....Much of the way Slow Food runs," Hunter says.

Hunter humbly recognizes his influence on Slow Food. His start-up inspired the introduction of the organization on campus.

After losing access to the church space, Hunter and partners refused to settle, thus The Underground Food Collective (UFC) was born. The UFC is comprised of a restaurant, catering business, meat processing operation and a butcher shop. Hunter's strong value in ethical and sustainable sourcing practices and labor rights are exhibited throughout the UFC.

Hunter wanted to make change from the inside out by directly entering the food system himself. He knew the power they had in choosing to process meat through an ethical and sustainable lens. By processing meat correctly, prices rise, people will buy less therefore less consumption.

"We felt like we had to be in the meat processing business; not because we wanted to celebrate meat, but rather we wanted to be a part of the food system. We wanted to be a part of a better food system."

SFUW articulates these similar values in their manifesto of providing good, clean and fair food for all. Both organizations create platforms for consumers to become aware and adopt similar practices in their everyday lives, developing a better industry for the future.

Hunter has been a feature chef at least once every year running at SFUW's Family Dinner Nights. Hunter is passionate about the organization and what it provides for students.

"I think resources like Slow Food and how they are building a community and teach people how to cook and also promote ideals, I think those are all really important. The amount of students that have been touched by Slow Food and see that organizational impact is just incredible."

Hunter and SFUW collaborate to exemplify the power within individuals' decisions. They help people make conscious decisions as consumers.