



The Athena Wellness Podcast
Episode 070 – A Slow Food Experience
September 8, 2021

00:05

Welcome to the Athena Wellness podcast, the show that invites you to take a seat around the community fire and listen to stories that inspire. I'm your host, Kathy Robinson, author, coach and founder of Athena Wellness, a company that's dedicated to supporting you on your journey to live more wholeheartedly.

00:30

Hello and welcome to Episode 70. Thanks so much for joining me for this shortened Wellness Wednesday episode, a little midweek boost to help keep your Warrior Vibe high.

In Episode 69, we talked about the joy of slow living, which started with the Slow Food Movement. And today, I'd like to share a memorable example of what can happen when elements like a meal, conversation, and the outdoors come together like poetry.

A number of years back I had a unique dining experience that was beyond "farm to table." In fact, it was "table to farm," made possible by a traveling roadshow of sorts that creates dining experiences in unusual places.

The company behind this extravaganza is called Outstanding In The Field, or OITF for short. It was founded in 1999 by a man named Jim Denevan. OITF began with a dinner on Jim's brother's farm. And that company has since hosted more than 1000 dinners in all 50 states and around the globe.

Jim describes what he does as "a traveling celebration of what connects us all and a radical alternative to the conventional dining experience." OITF's mission is "to reconnect diners to the land and the origins of their food, and to honor the local farmers and food artisans who cultivate it."



Outstanding In The Field is a roving culinary adventure, literally a restaurant without walls. Each event is a celebration of all who made the meal possible, from those who are responsible for the ingredients to those who prepare them, and to connect those who enjoy the food to where it was harvested.

While the unexpected alchemy of food, place, and people are part of the charm, what I most appreciated was the aesthetic that Denevan brings to each event. This California native, before he started Outstanding In The Field, worked on his brother's farm, as a chef, and as an environmental artist, using natural elements to create sand drawings on the beach with the intent of them being transformed and erased by nature.

And that's exactly what dinner at an OITF event feels like - a nature inspired sculptural creation. The table is the focal point placed on the landscape using an artist's eye to create a temporal piece of art that will transform the participants and then be erased.

Every meal is different as it unfolds, taking advantage of the seasons, sites, ingredients, chefs' creativity and the weather. Those long table arrangements become living art set on farms, meadows, vineyards, gardens, docks, sea shores, rooftops and mountain tops. A one of a kind composition with an element of surprise, like a reveal. And then add to that some magical light through a beautifully placed sunset or a moon rise.

04:25

The event I attended was held on a farm in southern New Jersey, a beautiful setting that reminded everyone that New Jersey is, in fact, the Garden State. We were met by a woman with a clipboard for a simple check-in process and we wandered the farm grounds as people gathered. We were offered delicious appetizers and handcrafted cocktails. It was a beautiful way to settle into our surroundings and relax into place.

After a while, we were welcomed by Jim, who stood by his iconic vintage red and white bus, which is home base for him and his crew while they're on the road. He said a few words about Outstanding In The Field, introduced the farmer, who spoke about his journey to the land we were standing on and what was harvested for the evening's meal. And then we met the chef who spoke a bit about how the evening would unfold.



We had more time to explore and amble until it was time to take our seats at the end of a table that was set for more than 100 people. The five course meal unfolded as if we were in a Michelin star establishment, and it was accompanied by copious amounts of wine.

We enjoyed the freshest, hyper-local ingredients, expertly prepared and served alfresco with strangers who were quickly becoming friends. And, as if on cue, as the sun set, we witnessed a spectacular moon rise.

My Italian and Irish heritage was on fire. Such a beautiful way to enjoy an evening with a loved one, breaking bread with new friends, and finding connection in a pop-up community. And there's something special about enjoying an experience knowing that it's impermanent, that as the diners head home, the very setting that was co-created between nature and humans, is being packed up and a brand new experience is in the making for the next gathering in the next town.

But the spirit of the event has lingered. Since that time, I've enjoyed trying different ways to recreate the Outstanding In The Field experience when I have gatherings, both large and small. Celebrations with friends, enjoying food, and being outdoors. And some nights, even the moon joins in.

07:13

Thank you so much for joining me today. I know there are many ways you can spend your time. Thank you for choosing to spend it with me. Until our paths cross again, be kind to yourself and show your Warrior Spirit some love.

If you know anyone who could benefit from today's episode, please pass it on. And many thanks for supporting the show by subscribing and leaving a review. It means a lot and it helps others find their way to our circle.

If you'd like to access the show notes, have a question you'd like addressed on a future episode or would like a transcript of this episode, visit www.AthenaWellness.com/podcast.

Until next time, be well!