

# THE PROGRESSIVE FORUM

Great Minds, Great Answers

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For Immediate Release

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Alice Waters at The Progressive Forum February 27, 2012

A pioneer of the sustainable-local food movement, Alice Waters will appear at The Progressive Forum, Monday, February 27, 2012, at the Wortham Center, Cullen Theater, at 7:30 PM. Waters will greet fans and sign books at the end of the evening.

Tickets range from \$14 to \$54. A limited number of \$94 tickets are available which include green room reception with Alice Waters at 6:15 PM and center-front seating. Tickets are available at [www.ProgressiveForumHouston.org](http://www.ProgressiveForumHouston.org) or by calling 832- 251-0706. There is no physical box office except at the theater on event night.

The event is produced in association with Urban Harvest. Other sponsors include Georgia's Farm to Market, OHBA – Organic Horticulture Benefits Alliance, MicroLife Organic Biological Fertilizer, Garland Kerr and Jim Blackburn, Wendy Kelsey, and Catherine Walsh MD.

Randall Morton, Progressive Forum president, said, "Alice Waters' appearance is the third event in our exciting annual food series. She follows Michael Pollan in 2011 and Eric Schlosser in 2010."

Alice Waters, restaurateur, author, activist, and proprietor of Chez Panisse Restaurant and Café in Berkeley, California, is a pioneer of a culinary philosophy based on using the freshest organic products, served only in season. Over the course of 40 years, Chez Panisse

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has inspired chefs and leaders of the food movement around the world. The restaurant developed a network of local farmers and purveyors whose dedication to sustainable agriculture assures the restaurant a steady supply of pure, fresh ingredients.

According to *The New York Times*, “Alice Waters...is credited with revolutionizing American cooking.... More than any other single figure, she was instrumental in developing New American Cuisine, an adventurous, frequently improvisational use of the finest American ingredients, and a simple and straightforward approach to their preparation.... Ms. Waters helped change the American palate, inspiring a devotion to seasonal cooking and local organic ingredients. As chefs around the country followed her lead, Chez Panisse...became a shrine to the new style of cooking and a culinary mecca.”

In 1996, the 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Chez Panisse, Alice Waters created the Edible Schoolyard, which became a national model for teaching students all aspects of the food cycle. From a vacant lot, she created a one-acre garden and kitchen classroom at Berkeley’s Martin Luther King, Jr. Middle School dedicated to instilling “the knowledge and values students need to build a humane and sustainable future.” The program integrates gardening, cooking, and sharing school lunch into the core academic curriculum.

In the same year, Waters established the Chez Panisse Foundation to support the Edible Schoolyard and encouraged similar programs that “use food traditions to teach, nurture, and empower young people.”

The success of the Edible Schoolyard led Waters to establish the School Lunch Initiative whose national agenda integrates a nutritious daily lunch and gardening experience into the academic curriculum of all public schools in the United States.

In August 2011, the Chez Panisse Foundation was renamed and became the Edible

Schoolyard Project. The organization says its focus will be an online resource, [edibleschoolyard.org](http://edibleschoolyard.org), that will “identify and map like-minded edible education programs around the world, and gather and distribute best practices.”

Today, the network of Edible Schoolyards includes locations in Berkeley, San Francisco, Los Angeles, New Orleans, Brooklyn, and Greensboro. The organization says that 3,000 students have graduated from the Edible Schoolyard at Berkeley’s King Middle School alone. The King School has hosted over 1,000 national and international visitors each year, including educators, health professionals, community advocates, and legislators, as well as inspired several hundred kitchen and garden programs across the country.

Alice Waters is also vice president of Slow Food International, a nonprofit organization promoting and celebrating local artisanal food traditions with more than 100,000 members in over 130 countries.

Waters began lobbying for farmers markets and school lunch reform in the early 1990s. In 1992, she started urging President Clinton to install a vegetable garden at the White House. Almost two years later, the Clintons put vegetable planters on the White House roof. In 2009, first lady Michelle Obama broke ground on a full organic garden.

Waters has authored 11 books including *The Art of Simple Food* (2007), and *40 Years of Chez Panisse: The Power of Gathering* (2011).

Waters has received many awards. In 1992, the James Beard Foundation named Waters Best Chef in America. *Gourmet* magazine recognized Chez Panisse as Best Restaurant in America in 2001. In 2007, the organization called The S. Pellegrino World’s 50 Best Restaurants gave her the Lifetime Achievement Award and described her as “the most important figure in the culinary history of North America.” In 2008, she was inducted into the California

Hall of Fame. In 2010, Waters was elected into the French Legion of Honor. The only other American chefs so honored include Julia Child and Thomas Keller.

Waters graduated from the University of California, Berkeley, receiving a degree in French Cultural Studies in 1967. She says in *40 Years at Chez Panisse*, “France changed my life forever. When I returned to Berkeley in 1966 to finish college, I knew I wanted to live the way my French friends did. These were people who thought of good food as an indispensable part of life, for whom each day was punctuated by food related decisions.... I began to appreciate how food anchored life to the land and to the seasons, and I began to dream of sharing all this with my friends back in Berkeley.”

In 1968, she attended the Maria Montessori Training Organization in London and returned to Berkeley where she became a Montessori teacher, a factor in her creation of the Edible Schoolyard. In *40 Years at Chez Panisse*, she says, “I was at the Berkeley Montessori School for two years. I loved teaching Maria Montessori’s ideas about nourishing the whole child to learn by doing things themselves, by touching and tasting and smelling in an ongoing education of the senses.

At the same time, she became enamored of the “books of Elizabeth David, one of the very greatest writers about food.... She understood exactly what it takes to eat well: an unrelenting emphasis on quality; an attentive, inquisitive palate, an insistence on eating locally....”

Waters said, “Before Chez Panisse opened, it often seemed like I already had a restaurant in my house. Friends were always coming over for dinner.”

In 1971, Waters opened Chez Panisse, which still serves a single fixed price menu, relying on the freshest local ingredients at the height of their season. The idea was revolutionary

at the time, now emulated by chefs and restaurants and farmers markets around America, a philosophy where agriculture is at the center of American culinary quality, where farm-to-table dining is sometimes called California Cuisine.

In *40 Years at Chez Panisse*, she says, "...Chez Panisse has been serving its guests not just food but ideas.... Most important is the universal idea that we have an obligation to support the farmers, fishermen, and ranchers who are taking care of our planet at the same time they are nourishing us, and an equally solemn obligation to nourish our children, who are depending on us for a livable future. Another idea is that our full humanity is contingent on our hospitality...."

The restaurant was named for Waters' favorite character in a trilogy of Marcel Pagnol films which depict the lives of working class citizens in the 1930s in Marseilles. Honore Panisse is an older, kind, and generous man, a widower who agrees to marry Fanny, a younger woman who is pregnant with another man's child. Waters also named her daughter after Fanny.

In 1980, Waters opened the upstairs Chez Panisse Café, which features a wood-burning oven and serves an a la carte menu for lunch and dinner. And, in 1984, she opened Café Fanny a few blocks from Chez Panisse, named after her daughter born that year. Café Fanny serves breakfast and lunch in a casual, European café setting.

The Progressive Forum is a nonprofit 501(C)(3) civic speaker organization presenting its events at The Wortham Center. It's the only civic speaker organization in America dedicated expressly to progressive values. Its purpose is to enrich our democracy and culture by striving to present the greatest minds from all the fields of human endeavor, the sciences and the humanities as well as politics and public affairs, great minds it believes are advancing the success of individuals, our species, and life on the earth.

The Progressive Forum premiered on June 13, 2005, with Robert F. Kennedy, Jr. and

Houston Mayor Bill White in a program called “Our Environmental Challenges.” Since then, The Progressive Forum has produced a number of highly acclaimed events. Al Gore launched *An Inconvenient Truth* at The Progressive Forum June 7, 2006, his first U.S. book event for that title. On September 17, 2008, Gloria Steinem celebrated the 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the historic National Women’s Conference held in Houston. On March 27, 2008, Robert Redford introduced a film he produced and narrated, *Fighting Goliath: Texas Coal Wars*, a documentary about 32 Texas cities banding together opposing coal plant permits. In June 12, 2009, Nancy Pelosi became the first sitting U.S. House Speaker to make a public appearance in Houston in modern times. On December 7, 2009, The Progressive Forum produced the national launch event for the first book by premier climatologist James Hansen of NASA, *Storms of My Grandchildren: The Truth about the Coming Climate Catastrophe and Our last Chance to Save Humanity*. And in 2010, The Progressive Forum presented John Paul Stevens, the first U.S. Supreme Court Justice to appear in a public event in Houston.

Other speakers have included Karen Armstrong, Lester Brown, Ken Burns, Richard Dawkins, Jared Diamond, Sylvia Earle, Elizabeth Edwards, Tim Flannery, Jane Goodall, Brian Greene, Arianna Huffington, Seymour Hersh, Molly Ivins, Robert F. Kennedy, Jr., Bill Moyers, Michael Pollan, George Soros, Edward O. Wilson, Frank Rich, Garrison Keillor, Joe Klein, Anna Deavere Smith, George Lakoff, Richard Leakey, Bill McKibben, Eric Schlosser, T. Boone Pickens, Michael Pollan, Larry Wilmore, and Edward O. Wilson.

The Progressive Forum originated a new model in civic speaker organizations in Houston to deliver a larger audience and a higher quality experience in a theater rather than a hotel luncheon as with traditional speaker organizations. The Progressive Forum model is similar to that of a performing arts company by using the finest theaters, paying speaker fees to present the

top intellectual stars, and marketing to the public throughout the region rather than through an organization's members. It offers convenient box office services through its website allowing ticket buyers to print tickets at their computer in addition to traditional phone sales.

Founder and president, Randall R. Morton has owned Randall Morton International, Inc. for 36 years, an independent advertising and public relations agency whose clients have included the leading oil equipment companies in the U.S., Japan, Mexico, and Europe. Morton co-created, co-produced, and co-hosted the Oilfield Breakfast Forum from 1994 to 2003, another speaker platform that is still the largest in the oil industry. While earning a degree in government from Georgetown University in Washington, D.C., he served as an issue writer for the Democratic National Committee. At Georgetown he was ranked third nationally as a pass receiver in nonscholarship football, on a team ranked sixth nationally. He earned a second B.A. degree from the University of Tulsa in communications where he served a year later as an adjunct professor teaching advertising design and copy writing. He is married to former prima ballerina with Houston Ballet Suzanne Longley, and they have two children.