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National Portrait Gallery

Portrait Presentation: A Conversation with Alice Waters

Extracted on Mar-29-2024 04:30:46

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WEBVTT

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<i>José Andrés</i>: I imagine that France had a big influence on you.

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<i>Alice Waters</i>: It did.

<i>José Andrés</i>: I imagine that the life in the streets, those amazing markets— you travelled to Turkey, you were influenced by Turkey.

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But you are back in Berkeley and you open that place.

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What you dream back in 1971, of what that place could be? And how it differs from what it has become?

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<i>Alice Waters</i>: Well, I really just wanted a place to eat for myself and my friends. And that's the truth— I still want a place to eat for myself and my friends.

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I didn't have any great expectations about it.

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I was a disillusioned, very political person coming from Berkeley in the sixties,

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and I was teaching school, but I wasn't very successful with the kids, I was very impatient, and,

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but I had this idea of a simple place that served real food.

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And I didn't know what that was except I had a taste in my mind.

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And I still have a taste in my mind of the wild strawberries I ate in France,

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The creme fraiche, the oysters on the half-shell, I felt like I had never eaten anything in my whole life.

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Not anything. I was just kind of afraid of food

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and I just kept it an arm's length.

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But when you go into a culture, and I'm sure it's the culture of Spain back then, when people, you know,

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were engaged in the cooking of food for dinner and lunch for their families and friends

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they had — went to simple restaurants to eat

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and there were farmers markets everywhere, around every corner, and it seemed

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to be just part of a rich, and meaningful life.

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and I didn't know what — I just knew that food was part of that food was part of that sort of big cultural experience

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and that's what i wanted to do.

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<i>José Andrés</i>: Around probably twelve years ago I had the opportunity with my wife to go to Chez Panisse in a train to Napa Valley

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I called to make reservation to the restaurant, and obviously they are always full,

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but luckily for us, many years later, it was 1980, you opened

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Chez Panisse,

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<i>Alice Waters</i>: Upstairs.

<i>José Andrés</i>: After 71 you open upstairs, the Chez Panisse cafe. I ate there with my wife.

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How many of you, you've been to Chez Panisse?

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How many of you in your life?

<i>Alice Waters</i>:

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<i>Alice Waters</i>: Oh! [[laughter]]

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<i>Alice Waters</i>: A lot of them!

<i>José Andrés</i>:

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Great. I went there, we order this Monterrey Baby Squid

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<i>Alice Waters</i>: Um-hmm.

<i>José Andrés</i>:

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they were roasted briefly in the wood-burning oven.

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I remember we ordered three order — we, we got three orders of those.

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And the waiter told us "Sir, we need to leave some for the other people." [[laughter]]

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But

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One of the things, as a person, probably as a chef

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that taught me, "Come on, that cannot be true!"

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And believe me, I didn't say that in a good way,

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is when I ordered the serve, and I get, two clementines in a plate.

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and two dates.



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