Food and Faith: Theology and Burlington’s Local Food Movement

Within recent years, anthropological scholarship around local food movements has grown significantly. Many anthropologists have looked into the ways in which local food consumers make meaning of their alternative food systems. In this study, I look into one such meaningful contextualization, asking the question: does faith have a place in discussions around local food movements? I argue that faith has a significant role to play in local food projects. To this end, this study seeks to examine the present and potential roles of religion in sustaining the local food movement in Burlington, Vermont. Through an in-depth literature review and ethnographic research, I examine the ideological intersections between religious groups and local food initiatives, uncovering a new language of local food community support. Looking outside of Burlington, I use examples of faith sponsored food initiatives to provide historical evidence of faithful engagement in food aid. This historical precedent for faith sponsored food initiatives highlights the benefits and challenges of incorporating faith groups into food initiatives. Finally, through ethnographic research with faith-based groups and local food organizations, the study builds a set of recommendations for how to best integrate local food initiatives with faith-based groups in Burlington, Vermont. Providing logistical information on how to integrate faith-based groups with local food initiatives, I hope to open up a new avenue of community support for local food in Burlington, developing stronger community ties to our growing local food system.