

FOOD FONT

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Artist and Educator is Raising Funds to Develop Food Font, a Tool that You Can Play and Write with Your Food

Kristen Baumlier, artist and educator, turns to alternative funding sources for her latest project, Food Font, an interactive project where people can create food alphabets and use them in an interactive design tool.

Cleveland, OH (August 13, 2012) - Want to play and write with your food? Ever wish you could express your thoughts and ideas in kale, vending machine food, or your mother's meatloaf? Well, if Kristen Baumlier's plans go as planned, you soon will be able to do so.

Food Font is an interactive art project where people can make alphabets out of food, take pictures of each letter, and later use these and other food alphabets in a fun, free, interactive online design tool. Baumlier hopes that the Food Font activity and tool will be used by a variety of groups. "This is something that farmer's markets, community gardens, teachers and students in the classroom, chefs and restaurants, people who have a passion for food, or by a group of friends or family can do," Baumlier noted. The project supports dialogue and builds community around food, health, and sustainability. This summer at some of the Food Font events that Baumlier has setup at some farmers markets, people will be making letters with their market purchases, or help make an alphabet out of a local in-season ingredient.

The artist behind the project is Kristen Baumlier, an interdisciplinary artist and Associate Professor at the Cleveland Institute of Art. For several years Baumlier has been doing projects that explore food and sustainability. When asked how the project started, Baumlier said that, "I was doing work in my studio where I was photographing words and letters out of food. I realized that this process had potential to be fun and an interactive way to promote discussion and build community around food."

Baumlier is using the popular crowd-funding internet tool Kickstarter to raise funds to support the development of the Food Font interactive design tool. "I have been able to build the website, create support materials for the project, and design the front end of the Food Font design tool. What I need financial support for is to pay a programmer and developer to build the Food Font Design tool." Baumlier plans to build and get the Food Font Design tool up and running in Fall 2012.

In line with Kickstarter.com guidelines, projects must raise all the funds by a set date, or the project receives nothing. Food Font has a 30-day fundraising window, from start to finish. If the allotted budget (\$10,000 US) isn't raised before August 23, all pledges are cancelled and the project will not be funded. When asked about why Kickstarter was appealing, Baumlier noted, "The ability to spread the word quickly online to a lot of people, and keep them updated on the status of the project is really great." An added advantage for artists is Kickstarter's merchant partner Amazon.com, which enables each project the ability to receive funds from anywhere in the world.

Funders of Kickstarter projects are called backers, and for each pledge level there are rewards that a backer can get. For Food Font, rewards include an oval bumper sticker with the word YES written in food at the \$5 level, a Food alphabet magnet set at the \$15 level, a Customizable Food Font Recyclable Grocery bag with a set of food alphabet decals at the

\$25 level, customized archival digital prints, and other rewards.

On the Food Font website there are resource materials for organizing a Food Font event; materials for teachers; and resources to help you make a food alphabet or organize your own Food Font event. With the tool, you can write with various food alphabets, choose backgrounds, and do basic layout techniques to make images that can be saved, shared electronically, and also printed. The tool can be used to make images, posters, signs, and other printed materials.

Some food alphabets created so far include a letterform set made of kale, food from Baumlier's family Christmas dinner, French fries, candy circus peanuts, and chopped vegetables. This past Spring a Food Font event was held at the Cleveland Institute of Art and students, faculty, and Staff created a vending machine food alphabet and a packed lunch food alphabet. When a food alphabet is submitted to the Food Font site, a font name and event information is inputted. This information will be visible to users who will be able to use their own food alphabets as well as those made from about other individuals, groups, and businesses. "I'm really excited to see what people will make. People can make letters in either capital letters or small, and use the alphabet checklist on the resource page of the food font website to help with the process," said Baumlier.

This summer Kristen Baumlier has scheduled some Food Font events in order to get the project out into the community, and inspire others to get involved with the project. From July to October the project will travel each week to various Farmer's markets and community events where visitors will make letters out of a seasonal food or their market purchases. So far events are scheduled in areas in Cleveland, OH, Buffalo, NY, Milwaukee, WI, Pittsburgh, PA, and Carrboro, NC.

To learn more about the project, readers can visit the project's pitch page here:
<http://www.kickstarter.com/projects/kbaumlier/food-font>

To read more about the Food Font project and find the resources to help make a Food Alphabet readers can go to <http://www.foodfont.com>

About Kristen Baumlier:

Kristen Baumlier is an artist and educator based in Cleveland, OH who does projects about food and sustainability. Her projects have traveled and been exhibited in New York, San Francisco, Chicago, Helsinki, Budapest, and Germany. In 2012 Her interactive website design Hand + Heart was a finalist in the Where Do We Give? Design contest. You can read more about her work and projects on her blog www.blog.tinysplashbigview.com, or her website www.kristenbaumlier.com.

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