

Artist is Making an Alphabet out of Food from Local Food Trucks

Kristen Baumlier, artist and educator, is making a food alphabet out of food from Cleveland Food Trucks for her Food Font project, where people can create food alphabets and use them in an interactive design tool.

Cleveland, OH (August 24, 2012) - Want to write something out not in letters but in cupcakes, dumplings, or barbecue ribs? Kristen Baumlier, an artist from Cleveland, is currently making a food alphabet out of food from the food trucks in Cleveland.

In the last couple of years, the number of food trucks in Cleveland has grown to 18 food trucks that are licensed by city of Cleveland. There also are about 7 or 8 that are licensed from other jurisdictions. Food trucks are known as being mini-restaurants, and often have foods that experiment with flavor, develop a local following, and have food that is easy to eat while standing up or on the street.

Baumlier is developing her project Food Font, which 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. Her plan is to launch the interactive tool on Thanksgiving this year.

To make the food alphabet, Baumlier plans to make a letter or two from each local food truck's food. She gets some food, arranges it on a plate into the form of a letter, and photographs it. "This week I made the letter "T" out of the sesame noodles from Umami Moto, a "L" out of Donut Lab's cinnamon and sugar donuts, a "Q" out of Fired up Taco veggie tacos, and made three more from other trucks," explained Baumlier.

To get the Cleveland Food Truck Alphabet started, Baumlier stopped by the Walnut Wednesday event in downtown Cleveland, where a number of food trucks park on Walnut Street, and made 6 letters out of food. "The project is meant to support discussion about food. I am a big fan of food trucks which are a great example of local culture, experimenting with food, and community."

Baumlier is making the food alphabet to inspire others to make their own food alphabets for the Food Font tool. She hopes that the project will be used by a variety of groups and intends for the project to be done at by people who have a passion for food, farmer's markets, community gardens, by teachers and students in the classroom, or by chefs and restaurants.

"Anyone can make a food alphabet out of any food and submit it to the Food Font website," said Baumlier. When asked about why she is making a food alphabet out of food from food trucks Baumlier said, "I think that food trucks are a great representation of community and local food. The food also is diverse and interesting – like Cleveland."

The project supports dialogue and builds community around food, health, and sustainability. For several years Baumlier has been doing projects that explore food and sustainability. When asked how the Food Font 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.

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. Want to make an alphabet, or contribute to the Food truck alphabet? Check out the Food Font site where you can get information and learn how you can play and write with your food.

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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