

Hi people,

This is Sun Chang. Thanks Nemo for inviting me to the “Food: behind barcodes” panel and thank you all for coming. Unfortunately, I am physically away but the text and the bitter orange dishes are on behalf of my presence. Please grab one piece on each jar to taste, my presentation will follow afterwards.

It will start with a project I did last autumn, which is also the beginning of my food project and my life in Amsterdam.

I was looking for free food in urban green zones. Since autumn is a season for harvest and the urban green zones function more as city decoration than as edible substance, the food will rot if no one picks up. Luckily I found an apple tree next to my cycling path from sandberg to rietveld. I picked one to taste and realized it is very different from the “ordinary apple” coming from the supermarket according to its shape, size, taste etc. I picked all the 9 apples on the branches and shared this discovery with my friends.

After that, the difference between the free city apples and the supermarket apples became my interest and intended to compare them more. The commercial apples confused me - there are so many different types of apples for sale in the supermarket, from different colors, figures, countries and brands. In response, I forged a label for the free apple with the location of the free apple tree and placed it back into the nearest Albert Heijn at Delflandplein (fig.01, fig.02).



fig.01



fig.02

Afterwards, I realized it would be difficult for the people who will get the information to recognize this apple tree, since there is no apple on the apple tree anymore. I then bought 9 different types of apples and tightened them back to the apple tree (fig.03), transforming the free local on-season apple tree into a commercial stock import apple tree (fig.04).



fig.03



fig.04



Later on, my free food investigation kept on going and my time in Greece from March till now has brought me more experiences and content.

In the spring while I was walking with the dirty art department for 10 days from Delphi to Athens, from villages, towns, cities and finally the megacity Athens: the climates changed, the landscape changed, the people changed and the boundary between food and products also changed. On my path I encountered the aroma of wild and free orange and lemon blossoms, perfuming the landscapes.

By getting closer to Athens, the aroma of orange and lemon blossoms that was following me started to fade away; the wild and free food next to the roads were gradually disappearing and turned up to be in markets; more and more labor paid to bring those free greens into the city; those free green were re-evaluated and located within the economical system. The city, with its large population, functions as a giant machine consuming the provisions of the geographically remote areas.

Now the place I am living is next to the center of Athens. Although it is end of the season, still many bitter oranges can be found in the alleys. Bitter orange is one of the most common free fruits present around central Athens. However, this type of orange is not tasty, but extremely bitter and astringent. They are left hanging on the trees to fulfill their man made nature - bringing more color to the city, and then dropping on the cement ground, smashed by the matureness of itself or by something passing by to become splashes or jammy marks.

My Greek friend suggested a recipe specifically for these oranges to me: glyko tou koutaliou nerantzi (γλυκο του κουταλιου νεραντζι), which is made by boiling the bitter orange skins for a long time and then pan frying them with lemon juice and sugar (fig.05). The bitterness is covered by the sweetness and works as aftertaste - which is the sample from one of the jar you tasted at the beginning.



fig.05

But without the sugar coat, it will lack much pleasure, just like chewing a soft old sponge with a slight remaining bitterness - placed in the other jar, please help yourself if you did not try.

As this is an ongoing research hope you enjoy its current state through the taste.  
Thank you for reading and thank you for listening. :)