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FOOD INFORMANTS

'Good Food Jobs' Founders Taylor Cocalis and Dorothy Neagle: A Week In The Life (Food Informants)

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***Food Informants** is a week-in-the-life series profiling fascinating people in the food world. We hope it will give you a first-hand look at the many different corners of the food industry. Know someone who would make a great **Food Informant**? [Tell us why.](#)*

Dorothy Neagle and Taylor Cocalis met while attending Cornell University in 2004, and immediately bonded over food -- namely, ice cream cones. While Taylor's studies eventually took her to Italy for a [Master's degree in Food Culture](#), and Dorothy's work as an interior designer led her to New York City, they stayed in touch and eventually became neighbors in New York once again. Taylor was running the classroom at Murray's Cheese shop with unbridled enthusiasm when Dorothy discovered that her passion for environmentalism was stirring up an interest in food and agriculture. It didn't take long for the two of them to brainstorm an idea that would satisfy their interests in sustainability, food culture, and making a difference in other people's livelihoods. [Good Food Jobs](#) launched in October 2010. As of January 2012

the site has amassed over 16,000 registered followers and posted over 3,000 jobs.

Read Taylor and Dorothy's diary below to learn about how to run a small and growing food business, and hear details about what happened at TEDx Manhattan.

Monday, January 16

Dorothy (Brooklyn, NY), 7:00am: I wake to the cry of my 8 month old daughter -- a human alarm clock, much more reliable than any electronic one. It's two hours until her first nap of the day, and I don't have a moment to look at the computer. My priority is to brush my teeth.

Taylor (Greensboro, VT), 7:00am: I wake at sunrise. Make tea (hot water with honey and lemon), French press coffee for the household, stoke fire, feed bread starter and put stock pot on stove chock full of chicken, goose and pork bones. Was away last week, so today will be heavy admin/catch-up day. How many emails can one amass when they're away? Hundreds.



Taylor, 8:30am: Check email. This is a continuous process all day long, as they keep coming in. Most immediate are approving new jobs, of which we have 3 this morning. Once done, plow through the other correspondence and prioritize projects for the day, which include:

- Check in with Heidi Krantz from VT Small Business Development Center/The Center for an Agricultural Economy. She's hosting a social networking seminar for food producers on Thursday night at the newly opened Vermont Food Venture Center, and I am teaching it.
- Kirsty from Sickles Market (in NJ) wants to set up a phone date on Thursday to talk about me helping/hosting a VT cheesemaker tour in September 2012.
- Jonathan asks us to submit a RFP for a workshop at the Brooklyn Food Conference in May 2012. Right. Forgot to do that last week.

Thankfully they extended the deadline from January 15 to one month later.

Dorothy, 9:00am: Mae is down for her nap, and I'm throwing on clothes and checking my email for anything urgent, checking my calendar for any appointments I may have forgotten about, checking my to-do list for the day's priorities.

Taylor, 9:15am: I plow through some web testing. Tomorrow we're announcing the web pages for the upcoming [Good Food Jobs Fair](#), which will be a part of the [Just Food Conference 2012: Eat - Work - Grow the Movement](#). Every time we test new features on the site, which saves our web producers a lot of legwork and us a lot of cash, we have to run the same procedures on a Mac and a PC using various web browsers: Firefox, Safari, Internet Explorer and Google Chrome -- as many as we have patience for.

Dorothy, 10:00am: The babysitter arrives, and I'm lucky if I get out the door before Mae wakes up. On my way to the "office" (one of any three cafes in a five block radius) I realize it's Martin Luther King Day. Settled in with my laptop, I call Taylor for a real voice-to-voice check-in. We catch up on life first, then work. I submit Taylor's web testing notes to the web producers for revisions. I do some weekly housekeeping, reviewing stats on the site. We had a record week of job posts, and web traffic continues to increase. I write up an introductory email to the group of five panelists that I'll be moderating as part of another event at the Just Food Conference.



Taylor, 11:00am: Just got the contact list for [TEDxManhattan](#). Scanning to tag folks I want to meet/see at the conference. Also heard from the Kitchen Manager at [Del Posto](#), who agreed to be profiled on our [gastrognomes blog](#). I'm sending her a follow-up with all of the details.

11:30am: Drafting up this week's Tuesday newsletter, complete with our weekly blog feature, new jobs and up-to-date info.

Dorothy, 1:05pm: Mae's nap schedule is a mess today, for Reasons I Can't Explain, and I resign myself to the fact that my work day is over. And then...A Miracle Happens: she falls asleep for a Third Nap. I trade emails with Taylor and submit a few more changes to the web producers so that the Fair pages will be ready for public view when the newsletter announces their arrival to fifteen thousand people tomorrow.

Taylor, 2:50pm: Approve two new jobs that just came in: one in San Francisco, another in [Rwanda](#).

Dorothy, 7:00pm: Bedtime for Mae. Dinner for my husband and I. As usual, I'm checking my email sporadically throughout the night, but I manage to have some down time in between. We fall asleep on the couch at 9pm. Another sexy night as new parents.

Tuesday, January 17

Dorothy, 6:30am: The alarm clocks goes off a little early. My mother-in-law had to cancel her visit today, so that means that work is taking a backseat to Mae time. When I'm home with her, I try to limit my work to her nap times, for fear that she will grow up with the memory of only the top half of my face, visible above my laptop screen.

Taylor, 8:04am: Plow through emails. In particular, getting back to someone who quit her corporate banking job and enrolled in culinary school, paving her way in this new field. Also writing some folks at [Sterling College](#) regarding our second [Vermont's Table food systems summer program](#) (I taught the first Food Entrepreneurism class last summer). Preparations under way for this summer's version.

Taylor, 8:38am: New job post for an [Apprentice Artisan Ice Cream Maker](#). Is it wrong that I always want to apply to them myself? Would that be a conflict of interest?

Dorothy, 9:50am: Check my email and find Taylor online, weighing the option to send out the newsletter even though the web producers haven't finished all of our changes yet. Send it? Or pester the web producers? We decide to send it AND pester the web producers.

Taylor, 1:09pm: Onslaught of emails in response to the newsletter/[Good Food Jobs Fair](#) announcement. Can't keep up. Also just got an awesome email from a former job seeker that read: "In December, a job was posted for an apprenticeship at the Center for Community Empowerment in Jasper, IN. I applied, with no expectation whatsoever of getting it, and last night I gleefully accepted the position. This would not have been possible without your website. You have brought my goals of food and community fully together at last and I am eternally grateful for your services." That feels good.

1:10pm: The first application to participate in our Good Food Jobs Fair from comes in: from [Stone Barns Center for Food & Agriculture](#). It's a good omen.

Wednesday, January 18

Taylor, 7:00am: Out the door! Beauty of your own business? You make the schedule. I make mine to allow for a weekly coffee date with a dear friend and unofficial GFJ advisor in Stowe.

Dorothy, 10:15am: Settled in at the cafe, which has been overtaken by a group of photography students. My agenda: distilling pages of notes that I took after interviewing employees of the [New Amsterdam Market](#), which Taylor and I have a history of consulting with for HR-related matters since Taylor formed a relationship with the Market President, [Robert LaValva](#), oh-so-many years ago. This time around, we're offering advice on how to ensure that the Market flourishes in its next season, and beyond, based on feedback that we gathered

from current employees. Taylor and I will soon put our heads together before we sit down with Robert to deliver some recommendations on Sunday. This is the kind of work I love: working with other people, for a company I believe in, to come up with solutions that will help those people and that company have a happier, longer lifespan.

Taylor, 11:54am: Twitter check. Holy crap. Yesterday was active. Lots of buzz around the Good Food Jobs Fair. People requesting from all across the country that we make it a local event. Shall we take it on the road? Must get creative. Also had a GFJ success story submitted in under 140 characters. People are clever. Love it.

12:04pm: Email onslaught. Web testing for new LIVE CHAT feature. Dorothy approved 6 new jobs this morning, and there's a new one waiting.

2:22pm: Okay, spending the rest of the day working on the social media seminar for tomorrow. Must finishing putting together 10 page handout.

Dorothy, 7:37pm: I managed to assemble [this](#) for dinner. Love it when the day's biggest achievements are in the kitchen.

Thursday, January 19

Dorothy, 7:16am: A day without a sitter is a day to release into the wild. I have to shrug off the weight of professional productivity, get down to eye level with Mae (which is approximately 2" above the floor -- very humbling) and try not to wonder what time it is.

9:15am: My husband, who is dallying on his way to the office, steals my power cord to download music onto this iPod for the subway ride. Meanwhile, Mae wakes up early from her nap, and I am officially not checking my email again for at least another 3 hours.

Taylor, 9:22am: Confirm details for presentation tonight. Shoot! Don't have a Mac projector adapter. Good luck trying to find it in northeast VT.

10:04am: Quick jaunt to visit local artist [Jennifer Ranz](#) to buy some of her beautiful pottery for a thank you gift. By the end of our conversation, we also decide to barter social media lessons for gardening lessons. A productive visit, for sure. Welcome to the Northeast Kingdom.

Taylor, 12:24pm: Score! [Joel Salatin](#) and [Dan Barber](#) speaking at the 92nd Street Y in NYC on Monday. Perfect timing, as I'll be in the city. Snatched up two tickets for Dor and I.

Dorothy, 2:49 pm: I review the notes that Taylor and I put together after our web producer posted the first round of work on our new Live Chat feature, which will allow people to conduct an online interview with their favorite food professionals (in their pajamas!) After I write up all the notes, I take screen shots to illustrate to the tech what we are seeing, from a variety of browsers that we test on. Then I log into their client interface and submit all the info for revisions, which should come back next week.

Taylor, 5:14pm: Arrive to the [Vermont Food Venture Center](#). Participants trickle in, including owners of baked kale chip company, Vermont Peanut Brittle, Jo and Ben from Snug Valley Farm, and Sumptuous Syrups. Ed brings in some peanut brittle. Best peanut brittle of my life. So happy. Class flies by far too quickly. Clearly there's a need for at least 3 more sessions on the subject.

Friday, January 20

Taylor, 7:15am: Friday is babysitting day. Watch the daughter of the cheesemakers down the road (from [Jasper Hill Farm](#)) and get some much needed time away from staring at my computer. Check in to approve 3 new jobs and look for any urgent emails.

Dorothy, 11:05am: It's one of those great, frigid, glaringly sunny winter days. Mae and I take a walk to a neighbor's house to hang out with some other moms and babies. Topics of discussion include getting into pre-kindergarten (impossible), working from home (entirely possible with the right balance of babysitting) and how to satisfy our breastfeeding appetites (near impossible). I eat my third breakfast while we chat. When is lunch?

Taylor, 7:50pm: Plane takes off. A quick 45 minute flight to JFK. Got to love JetBlue.

10:00pm: Isn't it ironic that it costs \$39 to fly from Burlington to New York City, but \$58 to take the cab from JFK Airport to Brooklyn? Arrive to a fresh bottle of Lambrusco and homemade pot-stickers. Note to self: don't drink too much 'brusco. Early morning and loooooong day tomorrow.

Saturday, January 21

Taylor, 7:14am: Heading to the Hell's Kitchen location of [Sullivan Street Bakery](#) to meet a friend who's planning a new web-based venture. You may know him from his [fudehouse.com](#) fame. We talk web development, budgets, concept, accounting, taxes, audience, and . . . and . . . and . . . and. We could easily fill up a few hours. *Special note: Kudos to the counter guy who steered me toward the fresh from the oven brioche / gruyere / prosciutto pieces of heaven. That's enough to warm a girl for a few hours.*

9:14am: Walking over to the Times Center on 41st for TEDxManhattan. Check-in, coat check, can't walk 10 steps without seeing someone I know. [Sweet Loren's](#) business is legit after winning The [Next Big Small Brand Contest](#). Brent Wasser moved from [CIA](#) to [Williams College](#); let's plan a talk for the students about sustainable food summer employment. [Brooklyn Bouillon](#) has come so far since we met here last year. Not enough time to chat. Let's meet Food & Agriculture Lawyer [Jason Foscolo](#) in the flesh this Wednesday. Lights flicker on and off. Get to your seats. They mean business.

10:28am: Introduce myself to my neighbor, Peter Kaminsky, author and food advocate. That's why I love TEDx. It's all about the people. First presentation is TED video from [Birke Baehr, an 11-year old from Tennessee](#). This is my fourth time, but it gets better and better. Man that kid's got charisma. Check out his [website](#). Maybe he'll let us profile him for our blog. Love TED / TEDx format. If you haven't been, go. Now. This one -- coordinated by Diane Hatz and [Glynwood](#) -- is my favorite food conference of the year.

1:20pm: Session 2. Did I mention I love that [Laurie David](#) hosts? What's food without a little fun? Her humor is greatly appreciated. Mitchell Davis, Vice President of James Beard Foundation, presents on "taste." What a novel idea -- seriously. Mitchell delves into flavor, memory, and sensory evaluation and its impact on successfully passing on food culture. I shed some tears. Thank goodness someone is saying this. It gets better. [Howard Hinterthuer](#), winner of the TEDxManhattan Challenge, present on the [Veteran's Food Production Project](#). Stellar performance.

2:57pm: Stephen Ritz -- South Bronx 6th grade Teacher and Founder of Green Bronx Machine -- speaks. He manages to pack [64 minutes of content into the 18 minute time limit](#), without it being rushed. Unbridled energy, enthusiasm, humor, inspiration, ACTION. By the end, tears are streaming down my face. My neighbor turns to say, "Wow, that was powerful." and I'm crying so hard I can barely breathe in response. You've got to [meet this guy](#).

5:42pm: Literally bump into [Barry Estabrook](#)! So amazing. I clue him in that we must start a TEDx on Food Jobs, and he must commit to speak on food justice. Who's in?

Sunday, January 22

Dorothy, 1:15 pm: Back home in the nick of time to put the baby down for a nap, return the Zipcar, make sure we didn't leave the car seat in said Zipcar, and link up with Taylor for our New Amsterdam Market meeting. On the way to the cafe, where the Market's President, Robert, is meeting us, we chat about the agenda. It's the first chance Taylor and I have had to talk, in person, in weeks.

Thankfully, and as usual, we are on the same page.

4:30pm: Taylor has headed out to make dinner for her boyfriend's family (a big pot of chili, perfect for the cold weather and big football game. Note chipotle chili powder is REALLY hot. Don't use too much.) My husband is at the office preparing for a big meeting on Monday. That means it's just me and the wee one for dinner and dancing (in our undies).

7:00pm: Bedtime goes off without a hitch and the apartment is shockingly clean. This is the first time in 48 hours that I've had a chance to sit down and embrace the weekend. I give it a bear hug.

See more Food Informants below: