

FoodHub in the News



Sustainable Business Oregon
March 11, 2010

Kane honored by Fast Company as a sustainable food leader

Portland, OR – *Portland's Deborah Kane, vice president of the food and farms program with Ecotrust, was named by Fast Company magazine as one of the 10 most inspiring people in sustainable food, alongside such names as Michael Pollan, author of the Omnivore's Dilemma, Jamie Oliver, of the television program The Naked Chef, and Robert Kenner, the director of the documentary Food Inc.*

Kane was honored in part because of her work on FoodHub, the online match-making service that connects chefs with food producers, that was launched by Ecotrust earlier this year.

Sustainable Business Oregon checked in with Kane to talk about the Fast Company list and to catch up on FoodHub:

Q: How has this honor changed your work week?

A: It has made me spend a lot of time thinking about my equally deserving colleagues and peers; in some cases it's provided the perfect excuse for some fun trips down memory lane. I've been fortunate to work with hundreds of colleagues who just as easily could have been on this "top 10" list.

Q: Which of your co-honorees would you most like to share a meal with?

A: Jamie Oliver, no question. A lot of what we do at Ecotrust involves trying to change the school food landscape. Jamie once did a video in which he made, from scratch, chicken nuggets with school kids. I think he was following the ingredient list from one of the major food processing companies that supply chicken nuggets to schools. In the process, he made it painfully clear that chicken nuggets are oftentimes more bone, and skin and disgusting additives than chicken. Having seen what goes into some school chicken nuggets, every kid in the room opted for the baked chicken breast. I thought it was brilliant and I'd love to get to tell him that in person.

Q: How are things going with FoodHub since the launch?

A: It's been extremely gratifying to take FoodHub from concept to reality. We were pretty sure we were on to something while we were in the planning and development phase; but there is just no better feeling than having those suspicions confirmed now that we've launched. Our goal was to build a tool that would make it easy and efficient for regional food buyers and sellers — of all types and scales — to find each other, connect and do business. In just the five weeks since launch, restaurants are locking in contracts with local growers, fishermen are sending in product from the coast, wheat producers are finding new markets, and schools have a direct line of sight to farmers

who want to come in and teach kids where their food comes from. Pinch me; it seems to be working. And as we get into harvest season it is only going to get more dynamic.

Q: Why was Oregon a good place to nurture FoodHub?

A: FoodHub is for everybody that's buying or selling regional food; it is in no way limited to those already benefiting from and participating in our famously robust regional food economy. But frankly, to engage the traditional rancher in Eastern Oregon, or grass seed farmer in the Willamette Valley or the hospital food buyer who hasn't yet thought about localizing their supply chain, you need the early adopters to get things going. In Oregon, we've got those early adopters.

Q: What was it like building a for-profit business from within Ecotrust's nonprofit walls?

A: Fantastic. Before I came to Ecotrust I had actually told myself I'd never work for a nonprofit organization again. But I bent my own rule and joined Ecotrust four years ago because it's a unique organization where entrepreneurialism is both encouraged and expected. Ecotrust has a long and successful history of nurturing concepts in a non-profit context and then spinning the best ideas off as for-profit entities such as ShoreBank Pacific and Ecotrust Forests LLC.

Q: What else are you working on that you're excited about?

A: I'm always excited about *Edible Portland*, the quarterly magazine we publish. It is such a tremendous honor for us to get to tell the unique stories of the men and women in our region who put food on our tables every day. We publish with the change of the seasons and I'm always surprised by how excited I always get to be involved in each and every issue.

URL:

http://www.sustainablebusinessoregon.com/articles/2010/03/kane_honored_by_fast_company_as_a_sustainable_food_leader.html