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Fighting for the future of food



ERIC LEVY / The Chronicle

By Carol Ness
CHRONICLE STAFF WRITER

“Just about everybody is pretty serious about their chow,” says Deborah Koons Garcia, enjoying the understatement. “Even if they don’t eat good food, they’re serious about their junk food.”

No matter how serious they are, though, Garcia knows most people don’t realize that genetically engineered foods have quietly slipped into much of the American food supply,

known as the widow of Jerry Garcia, the legendary Grateful Dead lead singer and guitarist who died in 1995.

“Someone needed to make this film, because if this technology isn’t challenged and if this corporatization of our whole food system isn’t stopped, at some point it will be too late,” says Garcia, her back to the sweeping ridgetop view from the Mill Valley home she and Jerry bought not long before he died. She went ahead with their plans to add on, and made her film with a staff of six in the vast downstairs room that would have been her husband’s art studio.

from Terra Madre, Slow Food’s annual gathering in Turin, Italy, a center of organizing against GMO foods.

Appearing on the panel along with Garcia will be two of the anti-GMO authorities who appear in her film: Andrew Kimbrell, head of the Center for Food Safety in Washington, D.C., and Ignacio Chapela, an assistant professor at Berkeley, whose work

Deborah Koons Garcia says “if this corporatization of our whole food system isn’t stopped, at some point it will be too late.”

tracking the invasion of American GMO corn into Mexico stirred a furor.

Deborah Koons Garcia’s film documents how genetically engineered foods slipped into our supply

mostly from corn and canola. They’re in an estimated 60 percent of all processed foods.

She wants people to understand the risks, in her view, while there’s still time.

“We are at a crossroads,” says Garcia, fending off the wet affections of her three Dalmatians as she explains why she’s spent the last three years and a chunk of what she calls her “Jerry money” making “The Future of Food,” a documentary about GMO (genetically modified organism) foods. Though Garcia has made films all her life and runs her own production company, Lily Films, she is better

“The Future of Food,” finished in July, will get a special two-day screening at the Castro Theatre on Thursday and Friday.

The first night’s showing is a benefit for Slow Food, the international society dedicated to wresting our breakfast, lunch and dinner back from industrialization. Introducing the film will be Alice Waters, local/seasonal food guru and a Slow Food International officer, and afterward, “Botany of Desire” author and UC Berkeley journalism professor Michael Pollan will lead a panel discussion on the issues it raises. Both Pollan and Waters are just back

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It will be the film’s highest-profile showing in the Bay Area. It’s been hot on the film festival circuit. And activists have been showing it all over the country, especially as part of campaigns to ban GMO crops in Marin, Butte and San Luis Obispo counties on Tuesday’s ballot. Marin voters passed the ban, following Mendocino County’s lead in March, but it went down in the other counties.

“The Future of Food” is Garcia’s first major film

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“The Future of Food,” at the Castro Theatre, Thursday and Friday, Nov. 11-12. Thursday’s 7 p.m. screening is a benefit for Slow Food; tickets are \$10, available

est climates and soils, to show how GMO crops threaten such biodiversity. It was here that Chapela found controversial evidence that genes of GMO corn had already jumped the border to contaminate

links to Monsanto, including Agriculture Secretary Ann Veneman and Attorney General John Ashcroft. It also briefly debunks claims that GMO foods are the answer to world star-

Long gone are the days when Garcia believed “we could have our healthy foods over here, and they could have their food over there. You do your thing and I do mine.”

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sa,” says Garcia.