



It is a huge honor to be here tonight to accept the Organic Trade Association's 2008 Organic Leadership award. My husband Drew and I have been committed to, and passionate about, producing organic food for two dozen years, and we are very happy to be a part of this wonderful community.

I speak for both Drew and myself when I say we are extremely grateful to the Organic Trade Association for this tremendous recognition. I'm proud to say that we've been members of the OTA for a decade, and being honored as a leader in this industry means so much to us because we truly believe that the shift to organic production is an important part of the solution to a largely unsustainable food production system.

When Drew and I started farming raspberries in our two and a half acre backyard garden in 1984 (which I see is the same year Cal-O started; thanks to Cal-Organic for sponsoring this dinner), the choice to go organic was purely instinctive. We are both from Manhattan, which wasn't the best place to learn to be a farmer or to gain an understanding of how food was produced. It wasn't until we were faced with the reality of using our own hands to apply toxic chemicals that we realized that chemicals just like these were routinely used to produce the food we had been eating all of our lives. We knew there had to be a better way. And so began our long, gratifying, and often tumultuous journey growing our tiny farm stand into a company that is the largest grower of organic produce in the world.

In the beginning when we were just growing raspberries and selling them from a little folding table in our driveway, it was always tough convincing people that our berries were worth the 50 cents more a basket than the ones for sale at the supermarket next door, since most people had no idea what the word "organic" meant.

Today, people sometimes say we were ahead of our time. But back then, most people just thought we were pretty misguided...for trying make a living farming...for thinking that baby greens would be more than a passing fad...for believing that pre-washed, packaged salads were a viable product...and especially for thinking that we could do all of this organically. There were so many obstacles to our success. And I can say for sure that Earthbound Farm wouldn't be here today if Drew and I didn't have each other as business partners, strong allies, and best friends.



So much has changed since those early days, but the only change in our commitment to organic food production is that it just keeps getting stronger and stronger. The more we learn about the effects of synthetic pesticides on people, animals and the environment, the happier we are that we have helped prove that it is possible to grow a bounty of gorgeous produce without using them. The more we learn about the detrimental environmental effects of farming with synthetic agricultural chemicals, the prouder we are that the 150 farmers that grow Earthbound Farm organic produce on 40,000 acres avoid the use of about 13,000,000 pounds of these chemicals each year. And the more evidence that emerges that shows organic produce is significantly more nutritious than its conventional counterparts, the more gratified we are that we have made so much headway in achieving our mission to bring the benefits of organic food to as many people as possible and serve as a catalyst for positive change.

When I think back about the food available to me as a teenager growing up in New York City, I can only recall one place to get "health food" - a teeny, dark store two bus rides away that only had a small section of pock-marked, wilted organic produce, big bins of wheat germ and brewers yeast, rows of vitamins and many strange smells. Interesting, but not much to entice me, just the impression that eating healthy was not only pretty strange, but probably a huge sacrifice, too. But I do think I discovered rice cakes and tahini there, which I still love.

Today our kids are both teenagers, and when I compare that lone little store to what they see now - beautiful and delicious organic produce in so many markets we go into, a huge selection of organic products: dairy, cereals, grains, beverages, and snacks just to name a few - I feel like what we have all accomplished is truly tremendous. When I fast forward to imagine the world when my future grandchildren are teenagers, I can envision organic foods on equal footing with conventional food in terms of shelf space, selection and farm land. With a new awareness about food production flourishing in this country right now, I can imagine a time when optimal health is the priority for people across America. I can imagine our country shifting away from the short-sighted and flawed focus on high volume and low cost, and instead, embracing organic food in a really big way.

It is harder for me to imagine our country quickly rising to the challenges we are facing as we must try to slow global warming and protect our diminishing natural resources. Drew and I, and all of us at Earthbound Farm, are taking this challenge to heart



and working hard to make our business as sustainable as possible. While producing organic food has so many environmental benefits, we believe we have to be innovative and maintain a single-minded focus to force sustainable improvements in all aspects of our business. We are using more and more biofuels in our farm equipment and company vehicles. We are switching to post consumer recycled packaging. We have reduced the amount of electricity and water we use. And we help offset our carbon impact by planting trees; but we know we have a long road still ahead.

Drew and I hope that in the future, Earthbound Farm will be seen as a leader not just in the organic industry, but also as a company that produces products in the most sustainable ways possible. But for tonight, I want to thank you for your recognition. I am grateful to take this award home to California where I will share it with all the committed and talented people who have made our journey possible. Drew and I may have started Earthbound Farm, and we continue to help guide it, but our strength lies in the combined efforts of a whole community of people – and I want to acknowledge our partners, employees and growers, as well as the many wonderful customers that have supported us all these years

Thank you to the OTA for this honor and to those who supported our nomination. Thank you to our employees, growers, partners, customers, and friends. And thank you all for being here tonight.