

the food cycle

Santropol
roulant

harvest edition

community food security
a kitchen of magical recipes
reflections on the first season of the rooftop garden
harvesting histories: an intergenerational palate

fall 2004

www.santropolroulant.org
charitable registration # 140717414RR0001

A lettuce leaf pokes out of a hydroponic tube at our rooftop garden (p. 3).



FOCUS ON FOOD: the Food Cycle at Santropol Roulant

community food security: empowering people to eat well, be well, and change the world!

Food is an essential part of our daily lives. It is central to our health and well-being, but we rarely know where it comes from, under what conditions it was produced or how far it had to travel to get to our kitchens and into our stomachs. In fact, most people are so far removed from food systems and cycles that their only contact with food is buying, preparing, or eating it ~ they have little contact with the people, places, and natural miracles from which that food originates.

This Food Cycle explores Santropol Roulant's relationship to the food we grow, buy, prepare, deliver, compost and serve. The fruits, vegetables, labour and love that go into the 90 meals we make in our kitchen 6 days a week, all year have a story — a rich and fertile story!

urban solutions & revolutions

Many people in our cities eat poorly, and often alone. It is difficult to find, afford and purchase nutritious and tasty food, or to grow it in a way that is good for the environment and for human consumption. These conditions mean that many of the individuals and communities with whom we work do not have "food security".

An important contributor to food *in*security is isolation, loss of autonomy and the lack of a social network. Organizations like Santropol Roulant create fertile, much needed spaces for people of all walks of life to gather and commune, with food as the central vehicle to breaking isolation and nourishing community, in its largest sense.

Santropol Roulant's "specialty" has always been the variety and quality of delicious and nutritious meals made fresh everyday by volunteers and our staff (yummy chicken cacciatore, orange chocolate cake, diabetic options, fresh fruit salad) for Montrealers living with a loss of independence. Our culture also fosters the unique interaction that takes place daily across the city of Montreal between volunteers deliverers and clients of different generations and cultures.

We realize that in order to address the root causes of food insecurity in our community, we need to look at the larger urban context; to build and deepen our spectrum of relationships around food. The food cycle at Santropol Roulant has evolved from food preparation in our kitchen and

Community food security

Food Security as defined by the World Food Summit, 1996 means that "all people, at all times, have access to nutritious, safe, personally acceptable and culturally appropriate foods, produced in ways that are environmentally sound and socially just."

delivery by bike to planting, sprouting, growing, composting and harvesting our own food from our rooftop community garden. It also involves working with local farmers and buying organic produce. In so doing, we are strengthening local food resources to meet local needs and making a strong statement on how citizens and community organizations can make a difference in urban sustainability.

Our community-based food and urban agriculture projects also include **Harvesting Histories**, recording the oral histories and recipes of our clients and volunteers, while making and sharing food. These projects enhance the holistic health of people of *all* generations and backgrounds, create new kinds of relationships between individuals and with the city and land. They provide healthy, organic, homegrown food to people in all stages of life and they give people a space to voice their stories.

Eat well, be well!

Vanessa Reid
Executive Director



Santropol Roulant is a Montreal-based not-for-profit organization founded and run by young people in the community. We bring people together across cultures and generations through our innovative meals-on-wheels service, our intergenerational activities and volunteer programs.

Santropol Roulant uses food as a vehicle to break social and economic isolation between generations and to strengthen and nourish our local community. We engage a diversity of people to take an active role in their community through initiatives that address the health and food security needs of seniors and Montrealers living with a loss of autonomy.

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This newsletter was put together thanks to our staff and volunteers.

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Financial sponsor: À la Carte Express www.alce.ca
Printer: Eva's Phoenix www.evasinitiatives.com/e-phoenix.htm

Reflections on our first season at the rooftop garden

The Rooftop Garden project represents a series of firsts for Santropol Roulant: our first major project in partnership with another organization (*Alternatives*) and our first off-site project away from 4050 Saint-Urbain. It is also the first volunteer-run collective garden on a roof producing food for a Meals-on-Wheels, and the first time our clients have received edible flowers as garnish on their salads, fruit salads, and desserts as well as fresh pesto prepared by volunteers from basil grown by volunteers at the rooftop garden!

One of the most exciting aspects of the Rooftop Garden is the marriage of environmental and social mandates with mutually beneficial results. Rooftop gardens improve air quality, mitigate storm water runoff, decrease pollution from food transport and moderate urban temperatures. Our rooftop garden is a space for volunteers to experiment, learn and grow together while spending time in a peaceful setting. Our clients receive the fruits of our labour in the fresh veggies and special treats that we harvest, prepare and deliver all in the same day.

Next year, our production will be higher so that we can subsidize a larger portion of produce going to the kitchen with varieties tailored to the tastes and health requirements of Santropol Roulant clients.

With the vermicompost system that absorbs waste from our kitchen, this project is a big step in the direction of a healthier and more integrated urban food cycle. We are now growing, harvesting, preparing, delivering, composting waste, and using the compost to help fertilize plants in the rooftop garden. Through working with multiple plant varieties (see sidebar) and learning hydroponic growing techniques, volunteers are empowered to set up similar systems at home. Our aim is to help people to “get growing” while promoting a better model of urban food security and greening the city.

In this first experimental year, the overwhelming interest expressed by individuals and media indicate that we have hit upon something interesting. With our partners, including the City of Montreal, University of Quebec and *Alternatives*, we aim to keep this momentum and enrich the way in which we deliver our mission, through growing food and cultivating community in the city.

For more on the rooftop and our partners, click on the link to the Rooftop Garden website at www.santropolroulant.org.

Jane Rabinowicz, Rooftop Garden Co-ordinator

from the ground up!

The Blanc de Blanc Café Garden was planted and is maintained with love and diligence by a team of Santropol Roulant volunteers. It is a beautiful neighbourhood space in which we are growing organic herbs and edible flowers to add a fresh zest to our meals-on-wheels, in particular, our summer salads. We'll be collecting family recipes and making preserves, like tomato and herb salsa and ground cherry jam, with volunteers through a series of workshops we are holding in our kitchen.



On July 22nd, volunteers and clients of all ages met in and ate at the garden; we discussed the question what is a good meal? and heard of world travels, how culture and history shape the things we eat and how we celebrate food.

The garden is located at 248, rue Villeneuve West.



What are we growing this summer?

Five varieties of tomato, including heritage varieties; ground cherries; Sweet basil and thai basil; three varieties of sage; parsley, oregano, rosemary, curry, coriander; three varieties of beans; five varieties of lettuce; nasturtium, pansies, sunflowers, and other edible flowers; chamomile and lavender; medicinal plants; hot peppers; sweet peppers; cucumbers, mango and baobab trees (donations from the Montreal Botanical Gardens) ...

and one eggplant!

our autumn kitchen



a kitchen of magical recipes

Food is the heartbeat of the Roulant, it is what makes it truly alive.

Much of our food comes from our very own gardens, lovingly transformed by volunteers into nutritious, delicious meals for our clients.

Our kitchen is a meeting place for different people from different horizons who bring their own unique taste to our daily task of providing good food; it is a place where it is possible to explore and discover different ways of being, individually, within a community and in a friendly and open atmosphere.

In a way, it is a school of and for life, a place where young and old get a chance to be together, where students and travelers pass by. In short, where human beings pool their energies to help those in need. Very central to our mission is working to understand the reason behind the social isolation so present amongst Montreal's elderly population.

The goodwill demonstrated by all these young volunteers who come daily in the kitchen is the wealth that enables us to build a solid bridge between cultures and generations.

Food is essential to life and the meals-on-wheel is a unique opportunity for us to distribute care and tenderness, by means of food, to the people we care for. The fall cycle reminds us that life has plenty to offer, in and around our kitchen. And there is plenty to share.

Bon appétit!

Catherine Simard, kitchen manager

For research, projects, issues, solutions, check out these food security resources online:

Action Communiterre: www.cam.org/~ecoini/english/home.html

Foodshare, good food box: www.foodshare.net/

Lifecycles, community gardening: www.lifecyclesproject.ca/

The Stop Community Food Center: www.thestop.org/welcome.htm

The Food Project (BLAST): www.thefoodproject.org/blast/index.asp

Equiterre : www.equiterre.qc.ca

Environmental Youth Alliance: www.eya.ca/mainhome/home.htm

Going organic

Our aim is to serve the most nutritious, safe and equitable food. We intend to grow, buy and eat organic produce wherever possible to support local farmers and a sustainable food system, and use the most nutrient-rich foods for our meals-on-wheels. Organic food is still very expensive, (especially for a non-profit with no core, recurrent funding source) but as we aim high and you can help! See page 6 for more info.

wheels-and-meals!



Bikes are an eco and logical way of distributing our meals to 7 of the nine neighbourhoods to which we deliver. This summer we opened the Santropol Roulant bike shop to all members of the cycling community, as a place to fix your bicycle, learn or teach to repair a bicycle, and share your passion for the most efficient (and fun!) means of transportation.

Volunteers and members participate in the running of the shop, making decisions and accepting responsibilities based on consensus. The shop is run by volunteers and is open Thursday through Saturday, 11am to 3pm. Contact us for more info: 284-9335.

harvesting histories : an intergenerational palate

Our Harvesting Histories project is just that: collecting our diverse stories and experiences around the rituals of dinner and creating community. The project takes advantage of the expertise within the Santropol Roulant community, especially among our clients, to help us shape our programs, all the while deepening our knowledge of Food.

Throughout this next year of Harvesting Histories, our gatherings will vary in scale from one-on-one visits with our clients to the large and festive. This summer, we held a recipe-testing night in our kitchen bringing clients, staff, volunteers and neighbours together to try out their favourite recipes to contribute new ideas to our 2005 menu.

The evening started with our clients and volunteers guiding our cooks Catherine and Anourag through the recipes they brought: Salmon Tikka, Thai Beef curry, fresh herb Frittata, and Clafouti for dessert. We then had a sit-down candlelight dinner, with conversation on the origins of the recipes and the cultures that influenced their flavors: Pakistan, Barbados and France. We then served these dishes at our August brunch in the park (with 60 people!) and they will be incorporated into our Meals-on-Wheels menu for 2005 to be enjoyed by all!

It is always a rewarding experience when we get together. It is through the stories and comments that we share that we get to know who our clients are and how to provide the best meals we can.

Harvesting Histories continues into the Spring of 2005. Next is an evening of organic cooking and carving pumpkins "Les Citrouilles Roulant" in late October. See our website at www.santropolroulant.org or call us at 514-284-9335 to join us or bring your ideas!

Marc Nisbet, Harvesting Histories Co-ordinator

Mrs. Birkett's Thai Beef Salad

- 10 ounces lean boneless beef loin, cut into ¼ inch strips
- ½ cup finely diced onion
- 3 tablespoons reduced-sodium soy sauce
- 2 tablespoons minced deveined seeded jalapeno pepper (or half a red pepper diced if you don't want the spice)
- 2 garlic cloves, minced
- 1 teaspoon minced peeled fresh ginger root
- 1 cup bean sprouts
- ¼ cup minced fresh cilantro
- 2 teaspoons oriental sesame oil
- 8 cups packed trimmed washed spinach leaves, dried and torn into bite-size pieces

"I don't do well in large groups, I spend most of my day alone, it's too much of change. Tonight was nice; it was like a dinner party."

—Mrs. Birkett, client, brought her Thai Beef curry recipe.



"I didn't realize how much I needed to talk, since my wife's sickness I haven't been out much. When you're retired it is easy to just sit there in your apartment and do nothing. You folks have started something here, when's the next outing?"

—Mr. Birkett

1. Spray large non-stick skillet with non-stick cooking spray; let heat up. Add beef; cook over medium-high heat, stirring constantly until no longer pink. Add onion, soy sauce, jalapeno pepper, garlic and ginger; cook, stirring frequently, for around 5 minutes, until onion is softened. Remove from heat. Add bean sprouts, cilantro and oil; toss to combine.

2. Divide spinach evenly among 4 bowls; top each portion of spinach with one-fourth of the beef mixture.

This fabulous salad is great for lunch or dinner and can be served on any combination of greens.

Recipe makes 4 servings.

Thank You Mrs. Birkett!

the funding and partners page

Eating In and Taking Out: an À la Carte Express Initiative to Support Santropol Roulant

For most people it is a luxury to get food delivered to their homes. We can order a Friday night pizza or sushi dinner when we're too tired to cook after a long day.... For Santropol Roulant's clients, however, meal delivery is not a luxury but often a lifeline.

À la Carte Express (ALCE), a Montreal-run meal delivery business with a big heart, has once again initiated a funding drive to raise money for Santropol Roulant's meals-on-wheels. From October 25th to 31st, you can support us by dining at one of the 4 participating restaurants (see insert). The restaurant will match the total donations customers put into "The Box" at each resto. Also, during November, all ALCE customers who order by phone can add an extra .50 to their bill to support our meal service. Finally, ALCE



staff have organized a bowl-a-thon for Saturday October 16th at Rose Bowl. So eat out, order in and join us at the bowl-a-thon. With your support we can raise our goal of \$12 000 which will go directly to buying fresh produce throughout the year for our delicious meals.

To take part in the À la Carte funding drive during the month of November, or for more information, visit www.alce.ca or call 933-7000.

We're all going to supper at one of the participating restaurants on October 25th so call Fiona at 284-2771 to join us!

**Fiona Keats,
Director of Fundraising & Communications**

À la Carte Express is the main sponsor for this newsletter.

It's not easy being green ... But you can help! Sponsor an "Organic Day".

As part of our **GREEN DIRECTIONS**, we will be adding 12 "**Organic Days**" to our calendar of meals for 2005. Our goal is to serve only the best, most nutritious foods to our clients and in so doing, support agriculture that is respectful of the environment, to farmers and to our health. Our staff, volunteers and our Board of directors have taken the lead and sponsored 3 Organic Days. We're looking for 9 more!

If environmental sustainability and making informed food choices gets you going, then you are the perfect person to sponsor an Organic Day. For a fully tax-deductible donation of **\$350**, your name, your family's name, or your company will be printed on the calendar day that you sponsor as well as in our newsletter & annual report. Moreover, you will be part of a larger initiative working toward an equitable food system and a nourished community.

Choosing community-minded businesses helps the Roulant roll ...

Zenith Cleaners, founded by one of our volunteers, Tolu, is generously offering house-cleaning services to our clients at very reduced rates. Thanks for your generosity Tolu!! For more information on his services call 917-9001.

Do you use a Web hosting service? If so then consider **Eco-Hosting** to host, design or develop your website. Their "**community support circle**" model redirects the flow of funds in the economy to encourage and support the important work being done in the non-profit sector at no extra cost to anyone. They will give you a 20% discount on condition that you use it to support your favorite charity (Santropol Roulant!) Check out **www.ecohosting.net** to find out how to sign up for the service and to learn more about this amazing business model.

You are Invited to our Annual Cabaret Fun(d)raiser!

Reserve Wednesday December 8th, 2004 @ 7pm to come out and support Santropol Roulant! Our always-very-original-Rand-tasty Cabaret brings together local talent, volunteers, supporters, staff and friends. This year's Cabaret will give you a taste of the quirky and absurd side of the Roulant.... (that's all we can reveal for now!! Stay tuned!)

Call Fiona @ 284- 2771 to reserve your tickets.