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Letter from the Filmmaker

The Grocery List Show has been a profound labor of love, spanning six years during which I played multiple roles—from producer and director to holding the boom mic up. The journey began with my personal connection to the everyday stories and adventures hidden within grocery store aisles, starting with my own.

When I was a baby, I was adopted from Busan, South Korea, and raised in a small, predominantly white town in Michigan, where I grew up feeling an awkward disconnect from my “Korean-ness.” It wasn’t until I went to college in a more diverse city that I met and befriended Korean and other Asian people for the first time. A formative experience occurred when I was a server at a Korean-owned sushi restaurant. At that time, Korean food wasn’t as mainstream as it is now, especially not in the Midwest, and the owners had a successful restaurant selling this more popular cuisine. I did my best to blend in with the staff at this restaurant, hoping that my lack of Korean language skills would be attributed to parents who only wanted their kids to speak English.

When the truth inevitably emerged, I was taken by surprise that, instead of shunning me after discovering how un-Korean I was, my boss immediately encouraged me to connect with my heritage. The most efficient access point for her to do this was through all things food. She



and others who worked at the restaurant immediately began exposing me to Korean ingredients and dishes. As someone who already enjoyed cooking, that was all it took to send me down the rabbit hole. I continued to connect with Korean culture, and I grew into an understanding of my complex identity through the vehicle of food. Challenging myself to go to Asian grocery stores with no familiarity with the ingredients and inability to read the labels became a fun adventure and confidence booster, and I learned more with every trip to the store and every dish I tried to make.

Ultimately, these experiences, along with my passion for cooking, helped transform my fears and insecurities into a lifelong adventure filled with curiosity and joy. Exploring grocery stores and experimenting with new ingredients became a path to self-discovery. Each food I tried, each dish I cooked, and every person I shared a meal with contributed to my personal evolution.

The Grocery List Show is a love letter to the special stores and people I’ve encountered through my infatuation with cooking. It’s my way of expressing my gratitude to those who run the stores and sharing my appreciation for how they serve as beacons for communities—helping people stay connected to the places they come from or the places where they’ve found themselves.

—Emily Strong, Director/Executive Producer,
The Grocery List Show



About the Series

SERIES SYNOPSIS AND OVERVIEW

Hosted by Top Chef contender Chrissy Camba, *The Grocery List Show* is a trip to five bustling international grocery stores in America and the multicultural communities they serve. Special guests and food enthusiasts join Chrissy to shop for ingredients and cook a favorite family recipe, as they celebrate global food traditions over a shared meal. Each episode dives into a unique grocery store's origin story while also fleshing out the deeper cultural and personal histories that can shape the foods we love.

SCREENING OBJECTIVES

- **Celebrate** the many communal memories and traditions associated with food
- **Spotlight** local grocery stores, restaurants, and family-owned businesses in their community
- **Foster** interpersonal bonding around food and diverse cultural and ethnic communities
- **Encourage** local opportunities to cook and share food with others
- **Spark** curiosity about various forms of cuisine and gastronomic heritage



How to Plan Your Event

SCREENING TIPS

Screening options: *The Grocery List Show* is a web series that contains five separate episodes. Each episode is roughly 10 minutes long and features a different cultural grocery store and type of cuisine. You might show all the episodes of *The Grocery List Show* in succession at your screening event, or you might opt to feature a few episodes, depending on your overall event goals (e.g., if you plan to include other hands-on activities or local partnerships that may take up more time).

Format: After you screen *The Grocery List Show*, either in its entirety or featuring a smaller selection of episodes, decide whether you plan to have a moderated discussion and/or include other activities to engage your attendees. Be creative and trust your instincts about how to include your local community in your event! Several suggestions in this guide may spark ideas. Mix and match based on what works for you.

Further suggestions: If you'd like more suggestions for planning, promoting, and producing your event, check out the [Indie Lens Pop-Up Program Toolkit](#).

FACILITATOR TIPS

- Food is central to community-building! Invite participants to share their memories and experiences, no matter what region or cultural background they may come from.
- If looking to spotlight a certain cuisine or community in your screening event, include people from that community directly in your planning efforts and as speakers or event partners. The Potential Partners/Speakers sections in this guide may be helpful as you brainstorm ideas.
- Remember online engagement: Several activities in this guide provide opportunities for attendees to share their stories online, including through tagging @TheGroceryListShow and @IndependentLens. *The Grocery List Show* team would love to hear from your attendees, and their online input may help inspire future episodes! Feel free to share [the link to the YouTube series](#) at your event (or create a QR code) so more people know how to find it online. See the [Indie Lens Pop-Up social media guide](#) for more tips.

OTHER EVENT-PLANNING TIPS

Hosting events with food: *The Grocery List Show* provides an excellent opportunity to include various cultural cuisines during your screening event, as well as hands-on community-building activities that focus on food and cooking. If you include food in your event, keep these general tips in mind.

- **Venue capabilities:** Be mindful of how your event venue might be able to accommodate various food-centric activities. Space constraints, available equipment, and other venue-specific features may influence which activities you choose.
- **Layout and spacing:** Also check out your venue beforehand to plan where you will place different stations during your event, especially for any activities involving cooking and food. Think about how to plan seating and spatial flow between your screening event and follow-up activities.

- **Food allergies and sensitivities:** Be aware that your event attendees may have different dietary restrictions, food allergies, and food sensitivities. Clearly label all food items and ask about individual dietary needs whenever possible.
- **Health and safety guidelines:** Look up local guidelines for hosting public events that involve sharing or making food. Your screening venue and community partners may be able to help, particularly if they've led food-centric events before.

Accessibility planning: All episodes of *The Grocery List Show* include captions. Remember to address other forms of accessibility in your overall event planning and marketing efforts. Evaluate your screening venue beforehand for its accessibility features, and check out these Indie Lens Pop-Up resources for more guidance.

- [Indie Lens Pop-Up Event Accessibility Checklist](#)
- [Indie Lens Pop-Up Event Accessibility Guide](#)



Topics and Themes

FOOD, FAMILY, AND COMMUNITY

Background Information

For many people, food is intimately tied to human relationships. The kitchen is one place where important personal memories are made: cooking and eating together can introduce us to new and interesting recipes, and it can also immerse us in familiar flavors and comfort foods. Such experiences can bring us closer to other people. Through featuring several different cuisines, as well as the human stories behind specific dishes, *The Grocery List Show* celebrates how food can be an essential part of community and belonging.

Discussion Questions

- Share a story about one food item you enjoyed while growing up. Who introduced you to this dish? What specific memories do you associate with this dish? How would you describe this food to others (appearance, taste, smell, etc.)?
- Which person has most influenced the kinds of food you eat today? A family member? A friend or coworker? A chef you follow or someone whose books you've read?
- Who do you enjoy eating or cooking with? Family, friends, neighbors, faith community members, other social groups? Tell a story about a fond memory you've experienced while sharing a meal with others in this social circle.

- Have you ever gotten to know a friend better through trying the foods they most enjoy? What happened? How did it feel to share this meal, and what did you learn about this person?
- Do you have a favorite cultural grocery store? Or is there one you have been meaning to check out? What are the ingredients you have discovered there? What is your favorite ingredient from that store?
- How did going into a new cultural grocery store or trying a new cultural dish change you? How did it expand your way of thinking (or cooking)?
- Reflect on one of the episodes from *The Grocery List Show*. How did personal stories enrich your understanding of the dish or cuisine that appeared in this episode? Did these stories make you want to learn more about this culture or type of cuisine? Why?
- How did a food item or onscreen moment in *The Grocery List Show* remind you of something positive you've experienced in your life? Share with a neighbor.

Engagement Activity Ideas

- **Local snack swap or potluck:** When advertising your screening event for *The Grocery List Show*, include a note inviting attendees to bring a favorite snack to share. This snack can be from any cuisine or cultural tradition. After the film screening, enjoy your assorted snacks together. While you all eat, invite each person to share a specific memory about the food item they brought and why it's meaningful for them.

Alternative option: Invite a local restaurant or grocery store to bring various dishes for a larger potluck. Remember to ensure that you have the right tableware and utensils available for this activity, and provide placards and pens so participants can write what's in each dish (including sensitive ingredients like nuts, gluten, dairy, shellfish, etc.).

- **Recipe swap:** Like the snack swap, this engagement activity involves giving audience members some advance notice. While advertising your screening event, include a note inviting attendees to bring a favorite family recipe to share. Again, this can be from any cuisine or cultural tradition. At your event, place all the recipes in a shared location (perhaps on a table or a bulletin board) for everyone to peruse. Encourage attendees to take photos of recipes to take home and try for themselves, perhaps create a community cookbook inspired by this event, or offer a shared drive online to upload recipes for future use. You might also encourage event attendees to share personal stories about the recipes they brought, in pairs or in smaller groups

Further suggestion: Combine the potluck and recipe swap. Event attendees can bring a small snack or dish to share, plus the written recipe to give to others to take home!

- **Start a cooking club:** Provide sign-up sheets for attendees to organize a cooking club in your area. This activity can be more informal, including if participants want to cook together using a specific cookbook, or it can serve as a way to highlight local cooking classes and other related opportunities in your area. Invite these cooking classes or culinary arts schools to bring information about their offerings to your event (see the Potential Partners/Speakers section below).
- **Continue the conversation online:** Encourage attendees to take a photo or a short video of a dish they've enjoyed cooking at home and post it online with the hashtags #TheGroceryListShow, #TGLS, and #IndieLensPBS. They can also tag @thegrocerylistshow and @IndependentLens.

Alternative idea: Encourage attendees to visit a favorite local grocery store, take a photo, and share the photo online with those hashtags.



PHOTO COURTESY OF SAM PANKONEN

Potential Partners/Speakers

- Local cooking schools and culinary arts institutions that might lead a cooking activity or provide sign-up materials for a cooking club. Do an online search for your area or check out [this list of culinary schools by state](#).
- [Foodie groups in your area](#) or local groups that lead food tours of your city.
- Reach out to local libraries! They often have many resources to share, including cookbooks, food-related literacy programs, local cooking classes, cooking supplies, and more.

Resources

- Watch this [interview with director Emily Strong and chef Chrissy Camba](#), from the 2025 Los Angeles Pacific Film Festival.
- Read more from [Asian Journal News about Chrissy Camba](#), the chef featured in *The Grocery List Show*.



SUPPORTING LOCAL BUSINESSES AND ORGANIZATIONS

Background Information

Small family-owned businesses and local grocery stores are at the heart of *The Grocery List Show*. The grocery stores featured in this web series are more than places to shop for food: They are also the heart of their neighborhoods. Such businesses, as well as other local nonprofits and educational organizations that provide food for their communities, can become meaningful places for people to find the ingredients that are central to many cultural traditions and forms of cuisine.

Discussion Questions

- Is there a specialty food item that you enjoy finding at local grocery stores or farmer's markets? What do you like making with this food? Why? Share your insider advice with a neighbor.
 - What do you experience when you get your food from small local grocery stores? Supermarkets? Farmer's markets? What do you experience when growing your own food? Swapping food with neighbors and friends? Getting food from other local organizations? How do these places feel similar or different? Which factors influence where you get certain food items? Compare notes within a small group.
 - Share a story about a local grocery store (or restaurant or farmer's market) that you frequent or that you feel generally familiar with. Why do you enjoy going there? Is it the atmosphere?
- The people? The food? All of that? Compare notes within a small group. Also feel free to exchange recommendations about favorite local places to gather and eat and about where to find specific types of food.
- Is there a dish or ingredient you love, but cannot find nearby? How do you get this dish or ingredient? What would make it easier for you to get it?
 - Discussion panel: Invite the owners of a few local grocery stores and/or local restaurants to participate in a short discussion panel after your screening. You might also ask these businesses to be a sponsor of your event to help with local community reach and/or you might include local chefs and people from nonprofits who are working to address food insecurity in your community. Possible questions for a discussion panel include the following:
 - What's the origin story of this small business or organization?
 - Are there any favorite dishes that have arisen over the years? Why?
 - Is this organization involved in any traditions?
 - How do these dishes or traditions highlight the importance of community and culture?

Engagement Activity Ideas

- **Grocery stores and multicultural food traditions:** Invite someone from a local cultural grocery store or restaurant to come and lead a cooking activity at your screening event. As everyone makes food together, encourage the chef to share insights about the dish and its role in a certain community or type of cuisine. You might also partner with a local culinary school or cooking class for this activity.
- **Shared map of local grocery stores and restaurants in your neighborhood:** Create and print out a wall-sized map of the geographical area near/around your screening event. Then pin-point a few existing grocery stores, restaurants, and other food-related small businesses on this map. Throughout the evening, invite event attendees to write sticky notes about any personal memories they may have at these local businesses, such as favorite things to buy from any of these places, habits or routines related to these places, memorable interactions at any of these places, and so on. If attendees have personal memories of other local foodie spots *not* marked on your map, invite them to share those too! After the event, you might consider adapting this community-generated map into an online format (e.g., using Google Maps) so attendees can access it at a later date.
- **Grocery store/restaurant tour:** Invite the participants at your screening event to work together to design a grocery store or restaurant tour of your area. Which businesses are “local hits” or “can’t-miss destinations”? What are their unique features? Once you’ve brainstormed and curated your local foodie tour, offer a sign-up sheet for people to meet again and go visit these places together (at some later date). You might consider partnering with food-related meetup groups or organizations that offer food tours of your city for this activity. Also consider setting up online sign-up opportunities for people to join a food tour later. This could be a follow-up to the map activity above.
- **Your dream grocery store:** Pass out large pieces of poster paper to your event attendees. Then invite everyone to imagine: *What would your dream grocery store look like? What kinds of food would you sell or make there? What activities or community gatherings would happen each week, each month, or each year?* Invite participants to draw this dream grocery store on their poster paper, then share their stories with a small group. Place everyone’s posters around the room at the end of the evening. (This is intended to be a child- and family-friendly activity.)
- Invite local organizations focused on food insecurity (e.g., food banks, other nonprofits) to come and hand out information about their work. Offer your event attendees the opportunity to sign up to volunteer with these organizations. You might also consider hosting a food drive during your event, in partnership with one of these organizations.

Potential Partners/Speakers

- Local grocery stores, small businesses, and chambers of commerce in your area. Community connections or an online search may help you. As one example, check out this list of [specialty grocery stores in Albuquerque, New Mexico](#).
- Local farmers' markets. Check out the [USDA's Local Food Directories](#) to search for these types of food hubs in your area.
- Local chefs and restaurant owners. Check out the [Independent Restaurant Coalition](#).
- Local food banks and other nonprofits focused on alleviating hunger. [Feeding America](#) enables you to search for food pantries and meal programs by ZIP code. [The Food Research and Action Center](#) offers a list of anti-hunger associations by state.

Resources

- Read the [YES! Magazine article on how cultural grocery stores contribute to their neighborhoods](#).
- Check out this [WTTW article featuring readers' memories of Chicago-area grocery stores](#).
- Search [PBS Food](#) for more culinary stories or resources specific to your local area.



COMMUNITY-BUILDING, CULTURAL EXCHANGE, AND HERITAGE PRESERVATION

Background Information

The small businesses featured in *The Grocery List Show* are vibrant hubs for their communities. They empower different groups of people to feel connected to their personal origins, simply by providing these patrons with the ability to access food items that are central to various staple dishes. These small businesses also empower wider cultural exchange: No matter who you are, visiting a grocery store can be a vibrant (and delicious) way to learn about many kinds of cultural and gastronomic heritage.

Discussion Questions

- Do you feel connected to a specific part of your heritage when you eat certain foods? Share a story with the group about why this type of food feels important to you.
- What tastes and smells remind you the most of home (wherever home is for you)? Which memories arise when you eat or smell this dish?
- Why is food so important for connecting with one's sense of cultural heritage? Explain this in your own words.
- Share a story about trying a dish (or some general type of food) that was new or unfamiliar to you. What was this experience like? Did you discover anything surprising, either about this cuisine or about yourself?
- Are there other cuisines or types of food you've wanted to try to cook (or taste), but you haven't yet? What are they? Discuss with a small group. Then try to (1) discover one specific food that no one in your group has ever eaten before, and (2) give one other person in your group advice about where to go eat something new to them (but not to you).

Engagement Activity Ideas

- **Sampling different cuisines:** Host a dialogue between two or three different cultural organizations from your area. Ask each organization to bring one classic dish to share, perhaps a “comfort food” dish or a specific dish from their culture that uses a common ingredient (e.g., rice). Then compare notes: What is the story behind this dish? What flavors are most important in your cuisine? How do those flavors compare or contrast with the flavors in other cuisines?
- **Foods that capture you:** Place a large whiteboard or piece of paper on one wall during your event. Then invite attendees to write notes or draw pictures of the single food item that they feel captures them and their sense of heritage or identity. (Is it pizza, enchiladas, curry, ramen, something else?) If they want, they can add a short note explaining why they chose this food item to represent them and their experiences. At the end of the night, take a photo of everyone’s contributions. You can also invite participants to share their contributions online, tagging @thegrocerylistshow and @IndependentLens.
- **Farm to table activity:** Invite a local farm or food education organization to your event to spotlight the local food ecosystem, including local farmers and locally grown food. These organizations might lead a brief activity about local flavors or they can pass out information on their work to event attendees.

Potential Partners/Speakers

- Cultural centers and local cultural organizations
- Food education nonprofits and community organizations in your area.
- Farmers’ markets in your area.
- Local food festivals. Take a look at this [extensive list of local food festivals and events](#), organized by state and city.
- College groups and/or departments.

Resources

- Read this [UNESCO article about traditional culinary practices and global cultural heritage](#).
- Check out this [InsideHook piece on how immigrant communities have shaped many rich food cultures and culinary diasporas in the United States](#).
- Discover the [rich history and lasting resilience of Native American agriculture and foodways through this blog from the Indigenous Food and Agriculture Initiative](#).

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INDIE LENS POP-UP

For more than 20 years, the award-winning Indie Lens Pop-Up program has partnered with local organizations across the country to bring people together for film screenings and community-driven conversations. Inspired by the documentaries featured on PBS's *Independent Lens*, Indie Lens Pop-Up is a space for sharing ideas and making connections that shape our understanding of ourselves and the world around us. Since its inception in 2005, nearly half a million participants have come together at Indie Lens Pop-Up events to discuss issues that impact local communities. Learn more at pbs.org/indielenspopup.

INDEPENDENT LENS

Independent Lens is an award-winning documentary series that fosters understanding, seeks to build empathy, and encourages a more united society. Produced by ITVS, *Independent Lens* documentaries have premiered on PBS for 25 years and streamed on YouTube, helping Americans foster deeper connections between communities and themselves. From the Oscar-nominated *I Am Not Your Negro* to the Peabody-acclaimed docuseries *Philly D.A.* and the Emmy® award-winning *The Invisible War*, *Independent Lens* provides viewers with in-depth, nuanced storytelling reflecting the experiences of people from a variety of voices and communities. Funding is provided by the Action Circle for Independent Lens with major funding from the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation, Acton Family Giving, Ford Foundation, and Jonathan Logan Family Foundation, with additional support from Artemis Rising Foundation, Wyncote Foundation, Park Foundation, Brandt Jackson Foundation, the deNovo Initiative, and RandomGood Foundation. Additional support has been provided by the Corporation for Public Broadcasting.

Stream anytime on the PBS app or YouTube.
Learn more at pbs.org/independentlens.

ITVS

Independent Television Services (ITVS) is the largest co-producer of independent documentaries in the United States. For more than 30 years the San Francisco non-profit has funded and partnered with documentary filmmakers to produce and distribute untold stories. ITVS incubates and co-produces these award-winning titles and premieres them on our Emmy® Award-winning PBS series, *Independent Lens*. ITVS titles appear on PBS, WORLD, NETA, and can be streamed on various digital platforms including the PBS app. ITVS is funded by the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation, Acton Family Giving, Ford Foundation, Jonathan Logan Family Foundation, Artemis Rising Foundation, Wyncote Foundation, Park Foundation, Brandt Jackson Foundation, the deNovo Initiative, and RandomGood Foundation. Additional support has been provided by the Corporation for Public Broadcasting. Learn more at itvs.org.

