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Interview with John Witte, Tenino Farms, 2010 (audio)

John Witte

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Steve Rosin interviewing John Wittiy of Taniano Farms March 1st 2010 at Woodstock wine and Deli, Portland OR

00:30 Steve: How long have you lived in Portland?

John: "30 plus years"

00:35 Steve: What brought you to Portland?

John: Received PhD at UofO, spent 1 ½ years as post doc in Sweden. When Finished came back looking for work and found a job in Portland, OR.

00:53 Steve: Where were you educated after High school?

John: BA in Ohio, then UofO for a PhD.

01:07 Steve: How did you get involved in your work farming?

John: Always interested in growing things as a kid, so it seemed like a natural thing to do.

01:29 Steve: What effects has your chemistry experience had on your farm?

John: You have to know what's going on. When you read about pesticides and fertilizers and the chemicals involved, its all apart of agriculture.

02:20 Steve: Do you feel like it's allowed you to be more self sufficient?

John: My back ground allows you to know what's going on. Not self sufficient.

02:34 Steve: How would you define sustainability?

John: Real sustainability is sunlight + water + carbon dioxide + atmospheric nitrogen and a trace amount or two of phosphorus = sustainability. Anything else you are taking it out of the environment and it can be a hasell to put it back.

03:32 Steve: Do you see the waste being produced from the city being a source of that?

John: Some of the waste has heavy metals in it which is toxic... etc.

03:57 Steve: How should that be dealt with?

John: We need to roll with the punches. We are running out of elements and the soil is being depleted.

06:00 Steve: It's interesting that you have these two carriers, does one take precedence over the other?

John: The college work takes precedence over the farm, but during the summer it's the other way around.

06:30 Steve: What changes have you seen the industry go through over the 15 years you've been a part of it?

John: There's more interest in naturally grown food these days

06:51 Steve: You are pretty involved with the Lents Farmers Market

*John goes into the history of the Lents Farmers market and where it currently is.

08:00 Steve: What creates the success of the farmers markets?

John mentions the grants and individuals involved.

09:08 Steve: Do you think it helps to have a diverse market?

09:40 Steve: You supply produce to restaurants around town, how did those relationships develop?

John talks about how his quality sold his product and the environment around selling to restaurants.

12:10 Steve: What are some of your proudest achievements?

John: The Lents farmers market is one of his proudest achievements.

13:18 Steve: I read that you aren't certified organic, is that something you are looking at?

John: I've heard it's useful and that it's not, but it is expensive and I believe my word is enough.

14:28 Steve: What sort of things would you like to see change in the Portland area?

John goes into Oregon's WIC program see private organizations step up for people in need of food.

15:43 Steve: How are you able to manage a farm on only one acre?

16:34 Steve: Do you see your work having a political aspect to it?

Talks about meetings he's attended at OSU and work with the state legislature.

17:40 Steve: What are some of the challenges you face?

John goes into watering his farm and the heat involved.

18:20 Steve: Do you have any advice for anyone looking to get into being a local food producer?

John: There's plenty of competition in Oregon so you need to find your niche. Every farmer is out for themselves.

John gives closing thoughts

- End of interview.