

# Local Food Project at Airlie

Summer Skit Series 2008

Originally performed at the Annual Harvest Dinner on September 7, 2008

*You Can't Eat an Acronym*

## Characters

Ned, author and director of NFOFFNF

Patty Pan, a summer squash

Squash Bug, a garden pest

Local Food Lover 1

Local Food Lover 2

## Props

Books

Table and chair for Ned

Pens for signing

Antennae for Squash Bug

Orange squash bug eggs

Yellow cap for Patty Pan

## Scene

A book signing

*[Ned sits at a table signing copies of his book, Patty Panifesto: The Urban Edge Micro-Farming Odyssey Revolution Magnifique. Local food lovers stand in line, followed by Patty Pan, then Squash Bug.]*

**Local Food Lover 1:** I can't wait to read your new book. How did you come up with the title—*Patty Panifesto: The Urban Edge Micro-Farming Odyssey Revolution Magnifique?*

**Ned:** I have a strong affection for the squash family. The Patty Pan in particular is such an impeccable vegetable and it has come to symbolize for me the very essence of the local food movement.

**Local Food Lover 1:** Wow. Thanks a lot. *[Local Food Lover 1 moves off with signed book.]*

**Local Food Lover 2:** *[As Ned signs another copy of the book.]* It's great to meet you in person. I heard you on public radio speaking about your local food activist organization.

**Ned:** Yes, NFOFFNF. We've been fighting for years to bring the benefits of buying and eating local food to the public's attention. We also interface with the media, provide resources to emerging farmers, offer produce buying guides, hold an annual film festival, and sponsor an art contest for school children.

**Local Food Lover 2:** That's amazing. You cover so much ground. What does the acronym NFOFFNF stand for?

**Ned:** It's the National Farmers Organization for... *[Mumbles rest.]*

**Local Food Lover 2:** Oh, right. Thank you. *[Moves off.]*

**Ned:** Next. Hello, there.

**Patty Pan:** Hi! I'm so inspired by your work. [*Squash Bug begins setting orange squash bug eggs on Patty Pan's shoulders and back. Patty Pan holds up her copy of the book.*] I've been waiting on pins and needles for this to come out. *Patty Panifesto: The Urban Edge Micro-Farming Odyssey Revolution Magnifique*—what a title!

**Ned:** Well, years of research and thousands of hours with my hands in the earth have gone into it. All of my local food expertise is included, along with groundbreaking reports from NFOFFNF.

**Patty Pan:** Yes, I've heard about your organization. What is it? The Northern Food—

**Ned:** It's the Northeastern Foundation of Farms, Food and... [*Mumbles rest.*].

**Patty Pan:** Oh, okay.

**Ned:** Since you're such a big fan of mine, why don't I personalize the book for you?

**Patty Pan:** Really? Oh, that would be amazing. My name's Patty.

**Ned:** [*Head down, getting ready to sign.*] Patty what?

**Patty Pan:** Patty Pan.

**Ned:** That's funny. [*Laughs, then stops himself.*] Oh...it's your real name?

**Patty Pan:** Uh-huh. All of my family are huge fans of yours. The advances you've made in getting people to appreciate squashes are truly revolutionary. And I'm so flattered that you single me out here in the book. [*A little coy.*]

**Ned:** So...you're an actual squash?

**Patty Pan:** Yep! But I'd love to meet the Patty Pans you're growing. Your garden must be a model of perfected technique, a local food Shangri-La! Can I schedule a tour?

**Ned:** I'll...um...have to check the schedule. We're often so busy we can't handle visitors. [*Notices Squash Bug putting eggs on Patty Pan.*] What are you doing?

**Squash Bug:** Me? Nothing. Just waiting to get my book signed. [*Pushing past Patty Pan to hand book to Ned.*]

**Ned:** This...uh, squash...was in front of you.

**Patty Pan:** [*Brushing absently at eggs.*] I don't mind. Go right ahead. I'm waiting to sign up for a tour anyway.

**Ned:** [*To Squash Bug.*] You look familiar. Have we met?

**Squash Bug:** We've never been properly introduced, but my family and I are quite intimate with your vegetables—your zucchini, watermelons, cucumbers, even your Patty Pans.

**Patty Pan:** Are you involved in local food production too?

**Squash Bug:** Not the production, but I do love to eat it. *[To Ned.]* This succulent little squash here would like to schedule a visit to your garden. Wouldn't you like to show it off?

**Patty Pan:** Oh yes! I'd love to see the bounty of your beds—the softball-sized tomatoes, the giant eggplants you cradle like babies, and of course the supermodel squashes!

**Ned:** I...it's just...the garden's not quite...I've been so busy with my work at NFOFFNF...

**Squash Bug:** Yes, such a prestigious acronym, but tell us, what exactly does it stand for?

**Ned:** The Nationwide Farm...I mean the National Field Organic...the Northern Food...oh I don't know, all right! I'm sure it's on our website somewhere, NFOFFNF.org.

**Patty Pan:** But I thought you said it was the Northeastern—

**Ned:** *[Cutting her off to address Squash Bug.]* Who are you?

**Squash Bug:** I should be more familiar to a seasoned grower like yourself. My name is Squash Bug. *[Ned looks from Squash Bug to Patty Pan.]* Do you remember me now?

**Ned:** Oh...my...god.

**Patty Pan:** *[Peering at an egg.]* What are these things?

**Ned:** *[To Squash Bug.]* Why are you here?

**Squash Bug:** I told you, I came to get my book signed. My brothers and sisters will get a kick out of reading the brilliant “Panifesto” of the “master gardener” whose yields we cut in half without breaking a sweat.

**Ned:** Don't say anymore. You'll ruin me!

**Patty Pan:** What's she talking about?

**Squash Bug:** Tell her, Mr. Expert, how you neglected your garden, left your Patty Pans to fend for themselves, helpless against us squash bugs, one of the garden's most common pests.

**Patty Pan:** You did? But what about your research? Your years of experience and one-ness with the soil? Why didn't you protect your innocent squashes?

**Ned:** I didn't know what to do! The squash bugs attacked all at once. I've been traveling so much with my speeches and book readings and rallies for NFOFFNF.

**Squash Bug:** But you can't eat an acronym, can you? [*To Patty Pan.*] Being so wrapped up in his own success, he forgot the most basic principles of good gardening. He stopped paying attention and he neglected to cover the plants when they were at their most vulnerable. Lucky for me though—I still have flashbacks to that decadent feast. God, those Patty Pans were delicious! [*Leering at Patty Pan and licking her lips.*]

**Patty Pan:** No! No! [*To Ned.*] I can't believe *you*—of all people—let your Patty Pans get eaten! You were my hero.

**Ned:** I'm sorry! I've gotten carried away. I wanted to fight for local food, but I also wanted to be a star, see the NFOFFNF logo on the blimps over every football stadium in America. Now I'm just a sham. Please don't tell anyone!

**Squash Bug:** Don't worry. She won't have the chance to reveal your secret once those eggs hatch.

**Ned:** Oh no, not you, too!

**Patty Pan:** [*Looking a little sickly.*] You've got to help me.

**Ned:** But I haven't actually tended plants in years. What if I can't remember what to do?

**Patty Pan:** You've got to remember. You're my only hope.

**Ned:** Okay. Let's go. I think I've got some old row cover under my gazebo.

**Squash Bug:** Don't forget this. [*Ned snatches the book from her.*]

**Ned:** Hang on, Patty Pan. You're going to live! [*Ned supports Patty Pan under the arm; they shuffle off together.*]

**Squash Bug:** Call me if she doesn't make it. I love local food leftovers.

*The End*