

Veggies or Burgers?

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The food we consume has a tremendous impact on our health. And the fact that approximately two-thirds of Americans are overweight or obese indicates that people are struggling every day with choices about what to eat. A recent seminar at the Tulane School of Medicine focused on the issues surrounding "Food: A Matter of Choice?"



Shoppers at the Crescent City Farmers Market can choose from a bounty of fresh vegetables and fruits for healthy eating. (Photo by Paula Burch-Celentano)

Ashley Wennerstrom, community health policy and research specialist in the medical school's [Office of Community Affairs and Health Policy](#), and her colleagues presented film clips from the documentary *Food, Inc.* on Friday (March 12) in the Bowers Auditorium to spark the discussion.

The film clips dispel the myth "that what we consume is simply a matter of personal choice," says Wennerstrom. It illustrates "how federal farm subsidies, food marketing and accessibility and affordability of food shape how we, as a nation, eat."

In the film, a family of four enters a fast-food drive-through and orders food for the

entire family for less than \$10. "I can get two cheeseburgers for a dollar," says the woman in the film. "One stalk of broccoli is more than that."

During a lively debate after the viewing of the film clips, members of the audience, including community leaders, students and faculty and staff members, agreed that "issues associated with our industrial food system are incredibly complex and must be addressed on numerous fronts," says Wennerstrom.

The presentation clips from *Food, Inc.* is the first in the film seminar series, "Social Determinants of Health."

Wennerstrom says that she and her colleagues decided to organize the film seminar series to explore how the medical community can get involved in collaborative, community-based projects that promote policies addressing determinants of health.

Alice Waters, food activist and chef, will host a [screening](#) of the film *Food, Inc.* today (March 17) at 6 p.m. in the Freeman Auditorium, Woldenberg Art Center, uptown campus. A required minimum donation of \$10 at the door benefits the Edible Schoolyard of New Orleans.