



THE EXPERT WHO ADDED A KEY INGREDIENT TO THE ASPEN IDEAS FESTIVAL.

STORY BY **AMANDA FAISON**

You may not know it, but you were likely influenced by Corby Kummer’s thinking about nutrition long before he became a regular featured speaker at the Aspen Ideas Festival (June 25–July 1, aspenideas.org).

In addition to being a senior lecturer at the Tufts Friedman School of Nutrition Science and Policy, a senior editor at *The Atlantic*, a restaurant critic at *Boston Magazine*, and a six-time winner of the James Beard Journalism Award, Kummer has penned two books (*The Joy of Coffee* and *The Pleasures of Slow Food*), and his byline often appears in *The New Republic*, *New York Magazine*, *The New York Times*, *The Smithsonian*, and *Vanity Fair*.

Since jump-starting his career at *The Atlantic* in 1981 as a journalist covering food, politics, and science, Kummer increasingly has become interested in the intersection of all three topics. More than a decade ago, he penned a series of articles in scholarly journals and popular magazines (e.g., “Can Technology Save Breakfast?” in *The Smith-*

sonian) after visiting Nestle Research Center outside Lausanne, Switzerland, to investigate how the world’s largest food conglomerate was positively impacting public health by tweaking recipes across product lines to reduce sodium, sugar, and saturated fat content. “I would do article after article talking about new ways food companies were helping people eat better,” recalls Kummer, a frequent judge on Food Network’s *Beat Bobby Flay* who will host a conversation with the celebrity chef at the Aspen Institute on June 18. “But I thought...why not bring them together to have a bigger impact?”

That was the genesis for Food & Society, an Aspen Institute think tank he founded in 2014 “to help people of all income levels eat better...and identify and nourish the leaders from all realms who will help them do that.”

As a regular attendee and guest speaker at the Institute’s Aspen Ideas Festival, Kummer observed how other tracks—science and technology, law and justice—attracted large audiences and stimulated public discourse. So he asked organizers if he might leverage

ASPEN IDYLLS

A nutrition guru’s take on the local dining scene.

“What I see happening is that everything is very expensive,” says Corby Kummer, when asked to describe local restaurant trends, and where he prefers to nosh during the Aspen Ideas Festival, and why.

His picks:

ACQUOLINA

(acquolinaaspen.com)

“I eat here because of the value to price.”

CACHE CACHE

(cachecache.com)

“This is an example of an expensive restaurant people love to criticize for high prices, but they pay their labor very well and have a hands-on owner who cares about the community and customers.”

MEAT & CHEESE

(meatandcheeseaspen.com)

“I hate the no reservations, but I love the food and the emphasis on local.”

his think tank’s network to stoke similar conversations (and action) around food.

Every summer since then, Kummer has led panel discussions and conducted interviews with the likes of world-famous Le Bernardin chef Eric Ripert and Mario Hernández Alonso, owner of the first Michelin-starred taquería in Mexico. This summer, as one of the festival’s 180 featured speakers (from documentarian Ken Burns to CNN’s Fareed Zakaria), Kummer will convene a provocatively titled roundtable session (“For Amber Waves of Grain—and Those Who Farm Them”) exploring how industrialized agriculture has contributed to the dismantling of rural economies and the communities that depend on them. The key question: “How can we rebuild local food systems and dismantle the barriers farmers face by expanding access to land, capital, and market opportunities?”

That’s a big ask, but he’s betting that Aspen can help articulate an answer.

Says Kummer: “I’ve never found a place more suited to making change and doing good than in Aspen.” ●