Scientific American's new Food Matters blog is all about the science of food, including GMOs

Tabitha M. Powledge | September 3, 2013 | Genetic Literacy Project

There are, according to *Saveur* magazine, which puts together annual "best" lists of them, tens of thousands of food blogs. One of the categories is Best Culinary Science Blog. These turn out to be more about technology than science and are of course temples of *sous-vide* cookery (that include $75 plans for putting together your own *sous-vide* machine.) But they also feature other devices, for example using your pasta machine to concoct giant (black!) rigatoni using cocoa, cayenne, and baking soda. Not to mention making cotton candy with a milk frother.

What you will find at the Scientific American Blog Network, beginning September 3, is not that kind of thing. SciAm has added to its impressive stable of existing science blogs a new group blog devoted entirely to food. Find the Food Matters blog here.

Food Matters bloggers are a mix of scientists and journalists. There will also be the occasional guest blogger.

The range of topics is expected to be broad, although I'm hoping it doesn't encompass making cotton candy with a milk frother. In his email announcing Food Matters, SciAm's blog czar Bora Zivkovic said the subjects would include "food chemistry, evolution and ecology of food crops and animals, the GMO controversy, biochemistry/physiology of digestion, nutrition, obesity, medicine, food poisoning, policy, politics, global food issues, anthropology of food, environmental and public health aspects of agriculture, food marketing and communication, science of cooking, and even recipes."

To get a sense of what the bloggers are planning I talked to one of them, plant geneticist Pamela Ronald, perhaps the most familiar name among the new SciAm food bloggers. Ronald and her colleagues at the University of California-Davis study genes that govern a plant's response to its environment, and their main focus is rice.

But Ronald is a crop genetics scientist who has also become well known to the general public for a stance on GM food crops that is unusual, if not unique. That's because she has managed to bring together two aspects of food crop agriculture that usually seem to be in conflict. She wants the world to combine genetically modified food crops with organic farming methods. With her organic-farmer husband Raoul Adamchek, she is co-author of *Tomorrow's Table: Organic Farming, Genetics, and the Future of Food. Tomorrow's Table* came out in 2008, and already she is at work on a new edition.

Because in the US only 1% of the population is involved in farming, she noted, the public does not have much understanding of seeds or plant breeding. "I'm hoping the group blog will become a source for people who are interested in food and also nutrition," she said. It's her belief that scientists want to make themselves available to the public, and she said she is pleased that there are now many places to find science-based information that can translate technical jargon.

Browse by

Authors
Sources

or try our Advanced Search

More from this Author

Tabitha M. Powledge

- Booze: Yet another thing we share with our primate ancestors
- Epigenetics and disease: No easy answers
- Left-handedness: Genes and matter of chance
- Do the MAOA and CDH13 "human warrior genes" make violent criminals--And what should society do?
- Science lessons in wake of New Yorker Mukherjee epigenetics article
- Humans share 99% of genes with chimps? Can DNA explain differences?
- Steven Pinker's 'Get out of the way' approach ignores need for bioethics in science
- What should be done with unsettling 'incidental findings' in gene screens?
- Ethical 'decision day': How should we regulate 'gene editing' of humans?
- The Death of death? Review of "Evolving Ourselves" and unnatural selection
- Mystery of obesity: Failed 'rectal transplant' raises questions about role of gut microbes
- DNA testing under fire in wake of fake herbal supplements investigation
- That 'Precision Medicine' initiative? A Reality Check
- Where are the missing females? Do skewed sex ratios in China, elsewhere lead to social problems?
- Buzz on how the housefly genome will help cure human disease

More from this Source

Genetic Literacy Project

- Should University Agricultural Research Scientists Partner With Industry?
- Autism ethics: Is search for cure the right goal?
- Epigenetics Around the Web: Oprah Magazine fumbles 'inherited trauma' story, and more
- Led by Nigeria, Africa opening door to genetically modified crop cultivation
- Genetic Literacy Project's Top 6 Stories for the Week, March 6, 2017
- CFI Research: Does Celebrity Visibility On Issues Translate To Credibility?
- DNA forensics is not an infallible tool — but not because of science
- When Celebrity And Science Collide: Hollywood And The Anti-Biotechnology Food Movement
- Can you be both fat and fit? Your genes may have a say in the matter
- Bias at The New York Times? 'The Truth is Hard' when reporting on bees and neonicotinoid pesticides
- Weird world of DNA: What's the best way to help patients with genetic diseases that are not

Top Articles

10 studies proving GMOs are harmful? Not if science matters

One third of lymphoma patients cancer free after 6 months in CAR-T gene therapy study

Are there environmental and economic benefits to GMO crops? Study claims $150+ billion since '96

Do the MAOA and CDH13 "human warrior genes" make violent criminals--And what should society do?

Autism increase mystery solved? No, it's not vaccines, GMOs glyphosate--Or organic foods

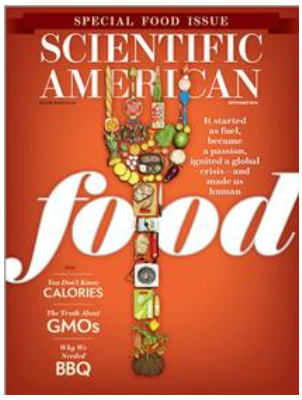
Led by Nigeria, Africa opening door to genetically modified crop cultivation

Autism ethics: Is search for cure the right goal?

Is attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) a legitimate diagnosis?

Return of the woolly mammoth and 3 other ways CRISPR could change the world

But she has another agenda too. That's spreading the news that there is a scientific consensus on the safety of foods currently on the market that contain GMO ingredients. "This is not the opinion of single scientists. It's global. I hope we can get that across," she said. (The Genetic Literacy Project recently released an infographic quoting the world's major science organizations' position statements on GMO safety.)



If you're a foodie—or even if you're just someone who eats—you might want to check out *Scientific American* magazine's current issue (September 2013) as well as Food Matters. The magazine is all about food, as the Table of Contents reveals: why food tastes good, obesity as an addiction (and why calorie counts are wrong and the shootout between calories and carbs as bad guys), BBQ as the driver of human evolution, our 2 million-year history with processed food and, for GLP readers, David Freedman's take on the truth about GM food.

Tabitha M. Powledge is a long-time science and medical journalist and author whose work has appeared in print and online in the mainstream and professional media. She began writing On Science Blogs in 2009. The blog moved recently to the PLOS Blog Network.

inherited?

- Perplexing Case Of Consumer Confusion About GE Foods In a 'Fake News' World
- Epigenetics Around the Web: Dolly the sheep and aging. Epigenetics is not genetics. Obstacles to gene editing.
- How agriculture can lead the way to a lower carbon economy
- Genetic Literacy Project's Top 6 Stories for the Week, February 27, 2017

Related Stories

Science Denial Is A Global Issue Hampering Food Technology Advancements
February 22, 2017

Plant geneticist Pamela Ronald on why organic farming can benefit from advanced genetics
June 22, 2015

CFI Research: Does Celebrity Visibility On Issues Translate To Credibility?
March 3, 2017