



Feed Me a Story: Collecting America's Culinary Heritage

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At Ellis Island, Theresa Loong, far left, and Laura Nova speak with Kathy Tufaro, far right, about her family's traditional recipe. On July 27, Loong and Nova spoke to many visitors to the Ellis Island Immigration Museum as part of their project, Feed Me a Story. (Photo: Justin Mitchell/Fi2W)

time on Ellis Island, the iconic gateway to America for millions of immigrants in the early 20th Century, Loong and Nova knew it was perfect.

On July 27, the two women and a small cadre of photographers, camera operators, and audio engineers took to the grounds of the Ellis Island Immigration Museum. Nova and Loong pushed around a small airline serving cart decorated with pictures from Ellis Island's past, including one photo of a Salvation Army worker offering immigrants a plate of donuts.

For their project that day, Loong and Nova offered donuts of their own, "reenacting" the image.

"It's very important to pick something that has some sort of historical context or framework to it," said Nova.

Kathy Tufaro, who works at Ellis Island, decided to drop by and tell a story of her British family's recipe for macaroni salad. She liked the idea of the project, and enjoyed taking part, even if speaking on camera is not ordinarily something she enjoys.

"I hope that they publish a book and put all kind of recipes in it, because things aren't like they used to be," she told Fi2W. "People don't make things like they used to."

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Laura Nova and Theresa Loong met at a restaurant at the Essex Market in Lower Manhattan. The women found that besides a love of food, they shared an immigrant heritage. Nova's ancestors were Jews from Eastern Europe, while Loong's came from China. Before they left the restaurant, Nova and Loong, an artist and documentary filmmaker, respectively, decided to collaborate on a project.

Now, the two women are almost a year into Feed Me a Story, a unique oral history project that encourages people to share recipes from their family's ethnic heritage.

"We're hoping to do a documentary-style video cookbook, and an accompanying app, so the user can upload their own stories connected to recipes and have those mapped and connected to other people who are doing the same thing," Nova told Fi2W.

When an artist's residency was offered for the first



Laura Nova with the Feed Me a Story cart, decorated with a photo of a Salvation Army worker serving donuts to recent immigrants. Loong and Nova gave out their own donuts on July 27. (Photo: Justin Mitchell/Fi2W)