



Center for Responsible Travel

Transforming the Way the World Travels

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Panel 2: Inclusive and sustainable economic growth

Presentation Overview – Michael Doneff, Chief Marketing Officer, ThinkFoodGroup & Brian MacNair, Executive Director, World Central Kitchen

José Andrés is sorry he couldn't be here today, but, as you now know, he and his crew from [World Central Kitchen](#) are on the ground in Puerto Rico, coming up with ways to feed residents who don't have power, food or drinking water, due to Hurricane Maria. He's teamed up with Puerto Rican chef José Enrique, and they've put together two bases for meal preparations. They've been joined by volunteers from Puerto Rico and the U.S. mainland and are working under the hashtag #chefsforPuertoRico.

They've prepared all kinds of meals, including stews, sandwiches, and paella, for people in all kinds of situations—hospitals, neighborhoods, senior homes—and they're using food trucks to distribute the meals. They're feeding 5,000 people per day, and since they started, a couple days ago, they've served more than 15,000 meals.

Those of you who know about José probably aren't surprised by these efforts. While he may be known as a topnotch chef, restaurant owner, and TV personality, for years now, he's been focusing his culinary efforts on big-picture issues, like poverty, hunger, and underemployment. And it started here in D.C.

He's said this before—his life changed the moment he reached out to Robert Egger, of [D.C. Central Kitchen](#), as a volunteer. Robert founded DCCK in 1989 by doing something simple with a refrigerated truck and a small kitchen. He collected the untouched food leftover from President Reagan's Inauguration festivities and brought it to the kitchen, where he repackaged it and sent it to homeless shelters and anywhere else people needed a good meal.

D.C. Central Kitchen has since grown into something bigger. It offers a culinary training program that takes people off the streets, helps them with their drug and alcohol abuse, or their sense of not belonging, and teaches them the skills to become cooks.

José was inspired to do something similar on a larger scale, so he created World Central Kitchen, of which Brian MacNair is executive director. In fact, after we're done here, Brian will head down to Puerto Rico to join José.

José's first foray in this area took place a few years ago, in Haiti. Back in 2010, that country had a devastating earthquake, and the recovery, for a variety of reasons, was slow. So in 2014, he sent down two pastry chefs to train five orphanage staffers to bake bread. World Central Kitchen donated the mixers and ovens, and the bakery now produces 400 fresh loaves a night for the orphans and for sale to shops.

Aside from that bakery, World Central Kitchen has overseen other projects in Haiti: a \$400,000 culinary school in the historic Elie Dubois girls' academy to train hospitality workers; a model community kitchen in the remote village of Foret des Pins; and a role in converting almost 100 urban schools from charcoal cooking to clean LPG. WCK has also worked, in similar ways, with communities in Brazil, Cambodia, Cuba, the Dominican Republic, Haiti, Nicaragua, Zambia, and, of course, the United States

José feels very strongly that, in the world we've created, food seems to be the cause of many problems, here in the States and abroad. Obesity, hunger, climate change—food is always behind it. Here, we're overeating what are mostly low-nutrition foods. In developing countries, the challenges are malnutrition, poverty, deforestation, failing farms. Food policy demands are all around us.

Used in the right way, food can end hunger. It can be used to fight obesity and malnutrition. Food and the right farming practices will create employment in the developing world, where it's needed most. They can also help improve the environment.

José and people like Brian, members of the food community—they have the answers to many problems the world faces. Farmers, fishermen, beekeepers, cattle ranchers, day laborers, truck drivers, chefs, restaurant owners, winemakers, teachers, school superintendents, real estate developers—they're all part of a food chain dedicated to feeding our communities, our nations, and our world. And feeding our world is a big responsibility. When government leaders, doctors, scientists, lawyers, NGOs, all gather at a table to talk about issues of food security, chefs should have a seat there as well.

José believes strongly that chefs have a unique perspective and an ability to sway how the public eats, and unless we start making really good food decisions, ones that can stand the test of time and not just help people but let them help themselves, then our world won't be healthy and we won't be supplied with the food that's needed. We are making the choices on how we feed our families part of the conversation. Part of the solution. Food has the power to do that, which is why José cares so much.