

Lobster Or Pomegranate? Food Choices On The Poverty Line

The Picture Show, National Public Radio (NPR), 11.07.2012

How much food could you buy per day if you were living at the poverty line? In the U.S., that might equal one live lobster, two whole pomegranates or 39 Oreos. In Thailand, three fried fish. And in Brazil, you could have just part of watermelon.

By Coburn Dukehart

Photographer Stefen Chow and economist Lin Hui-Yi ask us to confront these food choices in their ongoing project The Poverty Line. They visually represent hypothetical food options for someone in poverty with the concept of “One Frame. One Day. One Person.”

Chow recently answered some questions about the project over email:

The Picture Show: What do you hope to achieve through this project?

Chow: We wanted to explore the question that we initially had: “What does it mean to be poor?” We hope that this body of work can create conversation, understanding, and even spark constructive action among people who have seen it and feel moved by it.

How do you choose what food to photograph?

I try to find what the particular country’s normal diet is. I get my information from asking locals, searching on the Internet, and visiting markets to get a feel of the food. There is a little science and gut feel involved.

What do you do with the food after you photograph it?

We give it away most of the times, and yes, I snack on many of the foods as the photo session goes on. It is food after all.

Has working on this project changed your relationship with food in any way?

Definitely. I have now traveled to local markets on six continents, and I have come to appreciate food availability in a much broader way. To be honest, I have come to appreciate vegetables a lot more; while meat, though I still love it, is over-consumed in almost all the developed countries.

Learn more about “The Poverty Line” on their [website](http://www.npr.org/sections/pictureshow/2012/07/11/156512351/lobster-or-pomegranate-food-choices-on-the-poverty-line). Chow also recently spoke about the project in this TED talk.

Link to original article: <http://www.npr.org/sections/pictureshow/2012/07/11/156512351/lobster-or-pomegranate-food-choices-on-the-poverty-line>



Hong Kong: 44.96 Hong Kong dollars, or \$5.79 U.S., of fish.



Thailand: 52.87 baht, or \$1.74 U.S., of fried fish.



France: 5.60 euros, or \$7.45 U.S., of French grapes.



Australia: 7.52 Australian dollars, or \$8.02 U.S., of turkey wings.



China: 6.30 yuan, or \$1 U.S., of bok choy.



Madagascar: 1,284 ariary, or 58 cents U.S., of garlic.



Nepal: 32.88 Nepali rupees, or 41 cents U.S., of lentils.



Germany: 4.82 euros, or \$6.41 U.S., of German bread.