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For Immediate Release

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Statement from the Chez Panisse Foundation

On March 29, 2010, at the request of activist John Stauber and the Organic Consumers Association (OCA), Alice Waters issued a statement calling for safe composting methods in San Francisco. Representatives from the OCA responded by shamelessly misrepresenting her position, repeating false accusations against Francesca Vietor, the Executive Director of the Chez Panisse Foundation and a Commissioner on the San Francisco Public Utilities Commission, and announcing a plan to picket Chez Panisse Restaurant. The Chez Panisse Foundation welcomes a full public airing of the facts of the situation, which follow. In particular, the Chez Panisse Foundation has learned that the Center for Food Safety, which filed the original petition on this matter to the Public Utilities Commission last year, is not a party to OCA's planned demonstration at the Chez Panisse Restaurant.

The Organic Consumers Association claims to be "leading a campaign to stop the SFPUC from giving away sewage sludge." But the truth is, the SFPUC has already stopped, directly because of the intervention of Ms. Vietor. Mr. Stauber and the OCA have also repeatedly charged that Ms. Vietor has been "actively promoting sewage sludge." This is entirely false, as Mr. Stauber has been informed more than once. Ms. Vietor has never promoted the SFPUC program. In fact, as soon as Mr. Stauber brought the program to her attention, Ms. Vietor asked the staff of the SFPUC to do three things:

1. Put the program on indefinite hold until sound scientific data can be gathered and evaluated;
2. Conduct additional, rigorous testing of the material the PUC had been giving away; and
3. Issue a public call for solutions to the larger question of how San Francisco and municipalities everywhere should be dealing with their waste.

As part of the SFPUC's re-evaluation efforts, SFPUC staff requested that the OCA share the scientific data that, according to the OCA, proves unsafe practices. In a letter dated March 26, 2010, the OCA refused to share its data.

Alice Waters believes deeply in organic farming and gardening. Her forty years of advocacy on this issue speak for themselves. She and the Chez Panisse Foundation believe that rigorous science, transparently evaluated, should be the basis of government policy.

The Foundation looks forward to ensuring public review of the science on this matter and working with the SFPUC and other relevant stakeholders to insure that safe practices are followed, here in the Bay Area and beyond. But we have no confidence, in view of their actions, that Mr. Stauber or the OCA share these goals. By refusing to acknowledge and correct their false accusations, Mr. Stauber and the OCA have attempted to taint the reputations of Alice Waters and Francesca Vietor, both of whom have long and outstanding records as environmental advocates. The Chez Panisse Foundation calls on Mr. Stauber and the OCA to retract their false statements and issue Alice Waters and Francesca Vietor a public apology.