



## Taking Back Life: The Earth, the Moon and Abundance

### 1. Introduction: The Earth, the Moon and Abundance

The **Earth**: After Terra Madre we found ourselves face to face with a new, very different reality, and a very complex one at that – a reality with which we had to compare ourselves and one which we had to learn to relate to in order to be practical as is our tradition. So both Slow Food itself and the mission it bears must undergo further adaptation to this new reality or else risk missing out on important opportunities or occasions and, most of all, developing ever more specific activities that may not ultimately make any real impact. “Take back the Earth” should be the slogan that impels us to follow the route traced by both editions of Terra Madre, the pivotal meeting of food communities. This must bring us to the International Congress in Mexico in November 2007 with concrete proposals, ideas to formalize and ratify to give us a structure that allows us to confront our new challenges.

The Earth imposes these reflections upon us: Because we are an eco-gastronomic movement, we cannot stay impassive while the world around us deteriorates, especially now that we understand fully the importance of interdisciplinary gastronomy, of “eating as an agricultural act”, of the work of farmers and of the stewardship of rural society.

It is we that “enrich that Earth”.

The **Moon**. The moon represents our attitudes towards the idea of utopia, of thinking big and thinking positive. The moon represents our culture, forged through 20 years of history and in continual evolution, open to the influences of the agricultural world, the academic world, our urban realities and the culinary history that thousands of cooks around the world write daily. A culture both innovative and complex, open to all diversity as a source of growth, creation and pleasure. We have united pleasure to responsibility, creating a small cultural revolution that has taken hold in more parts of the world, that has shown itself to be adaptable to various locales and cultures and to be captivating for everyone. Let us not underestimate the reach of our ideas, which must push us to believe in ourselves even more, to thrust our hearts beyond every obstacle. The Moon is this: no fear of dreaming, of inventing, of finding connections between things that seem disparate from each other. This is what we have been taught by gastronomy, an interdisciplinary science upon which we can construct a new way of thinking. The seed to sow and cultivate is that which we already are: a living organism made of many souls, many skills, different kinds of knowledge and lifestyles. We are not a simple organization; we are the product of our lives and our experiences, looking to ally ourselves with the nature that surrounds us. Our utopia is the seed that will make us harvest reality, and that which will make us journey there.

It is we that “make the Moon beautiful”.

**Abundance**. The System, or those that govern us, has made abundance something to watch with suspicion: wealth, excess (leading to waste), taking and taking without questioning what remains for the Earth and for others or what will no longer renew itself. Abundance in this sense, as designated by our society, creates iniquities, a developed world and developing world, an Earth that will no longer be able to give as much as it has. “Take back Abundance”



# Slow Food

means reestablishing first and foremost the meaning of this word, which connotes generosity. And specifically, the generosity of the Earth through a relationship with it that is both sustainable and actually fruitful; generosity we all know has limits; generosity that means also renouncing, sharing, supporting and helping. Abundance must have its agricultural meaning, that which describes a bounteous harvest, one which makes us truly rich. Abundance is that which we must give back to the Earth, and doing so in a way that can satisfy us with harvests that are rich, Good, Clean and Fair.

It's a concept that must be considered in terms of sustainability; let's not make a mistake by asking for more. We don't want more food when there is already enough for everyone in the world, at least according to the figures. We don't want to become wealthier in goods or in money; we want everyone to have enough to live properly. Abundance is, therefore, a concept that is also dependent on solidarity. The objective of "Abundance" is widespread well-being. There you have it: abundance is well-being for everyone, raising our quality of life on the Earth, together with the Earth.

"Take back Abundance."

## 2. Why a "New Gastronomy"?

In my book *Good, Clean and Fair: Principles of a New Gastronomy* (Published as *Slow Food Nation* in the USA), I cite a UN report published in March 2005, called "Millenium Ecosystem Assesment". The report is the result of four years of research by more than 1,400 scientists and experts from around the world. Its objective was to monitor the state of the Earth's health and to sketch out some of the possible future scenarios according to our lifestyles and production practices. The most suprising data that emerged is that most of the damage that the Earth suffers comes from food production. Before I read this report, I had believed industry and everything we associate with pollution to be the culprits, but instead no, much of the fault lies in making food. And it continues to be so, because in hypothesizing these future scenarios these experts maintain that if we continue to exploit our resources to this extent and to produce these levels of pollution, we can say goodbye to the human race in the span of just 300 years. We would be like the dinosaurs! In the history of the planet Earth, 300 years is the equivalent of a couple of minutes. It's as if they had told me that Carlo Petrini would die tomorrow.

The report was published in 2005 when the ecological issue was rather circumscribed to groups that came under the label "environmentalists" (and this applies also to Slow Food), who were often also charged with alarmism (and consequently whose appeals were often ignored). In two years, however, things have changed a great deal: the effects of climate change reveal themselves daily now and there isn't a newspaper out there that goes two days without reporting some natural catastrophe or the melting of the polar ice cap and glaciers or temperature increases or sad new appeals to alter our current lifestyles. While I write this, an important international meeting on climate change is being held in Paris, and governments are finally beginning to put these issues on their agendas. But it doesn't take much to realize what's going on: it's January and I saw butterflies outside! I saw daisies flowering in the fields!



# Slow Food

We have always called ourselves gastronomes and eco-gastronomes because the environmental issue had been a top priority well before recent developments came to light. But we also learned that our responsibility is not just to make accusations. We've already realized small but significant things: the Presidia, which safeguard food products at risk of extinction, a Foundation to defend biodiversity, Terra Madre. We must continue on this road and begin giving concrete answers. Out of our pragmatism, we have called for a redefinition of gastronomy to make it a new science that, by examining food in all its kaleidoscopic aspects, becomes a key to guaranteeing a future. A key to reversing the damage we've done to our "spaceship", the Earth.

Food and the technical, technological, economic, social and cultural systems that it involves are the primary causes of the decline of our planet. We gastronomes must reflect, study, invent and create a network to find viable solutions.

Few have known to anticipate and interpret the connections between food, agriculture, sustainability and consumption as we have. We can say that by training our senses to understand and appreciate pleasure, we have also opened our eyes to the world. To protect our good food, we began studying and putting into action concrete initiatives. We realized that gastronomy is not mere folklore and gourmandism, but a science to be redefined and reaffirmed. It wasn't by chance that we founded a university based foremost on these principles, and it wasn't by chance that we were the first to claim the centrality of food in our society as the key for a future that is both prosperous and happy.

### **3. The New Gastronomy**

If we search amongst all the most important definitions of gastronomy that were given when the term came into common use, it's worth noting that from the early 1800s, the common denominator we find is the aspect regarding food choice. It's obvious that choosing food for a banquet or for a poor person's table in the early 1800s was very different with respect to today. Priorities, economic means, possibilities of transport and conservation were very different and much more restrictive. The need to feed ourselves sufficiently and in a pleasurable way comes alongside a whole range of options that we've been afforded by the new possibilities and capabilities we have and by the global food system that has taken shape over centuries. But with these possibilities come new responsibilities: eating has become even more of an agricultural act. The moment in which we choose what to eat, we avail ourselves of entire systems of production, transport, transformation and distribution.

In considering the definition of gastronomy that Jean-Anthelme Brillat-Savarin gave us in his celebrated 1825 treatise *The Physiology of Taste*, we immediately see how food choice involves an extremely high number of kinds of knowledge and skill, and moreover, the more that choice is precisely and responsibly made, the greater and more diverse our own knowledge and culture of food will be.



# Slow Food

*Gastronomy is the intelligent knowledge of whatever concerns man's nourishment.*

*Its purpose is to watch over his conservation by suggesting the best possible sustenance for him.*

*It arrives at this goal by directing, according to certain principles, all men who hunt, supply, or prepare whatever can be made into food.*

*Thus it is Gastronomy, to tell the truth, which motivates the farmers, vineyardists, fishermen, hunters, and the great family of cooks, no matter under what names or qualifications they may disguise their part in the preparation of foods.*

*Gastronomy is a part of:*

*Natural history, by its classification of alimentary substances;*

*Physics, because of the examination of composition and quality of these substances;*

*Chemistry, by the various analyses and catalyses to which it subjects them;*

*Cookery, because of the art of adapting dishes and making them pleasant to the taste;*

*Business, by the seeking out of methods of buying as cheaply as possible what is needed, and of selling most advantageously what can be produced for sale;*

*Finally, political economy, because of the sources of revenue which gastronomy creates and the means of exchange which it establishes between nations.*

I find this definition surprisingly modern for the period in which it was written, and I believe it is suitable even today. Try to reread it as a member of Slow Food that takes into account sustainability and fairness, pleasure and accessibility to all incomes, discovery and sensory analysis, defense of biodiversity and the pride of farmers all over the world. It fits perfectly and seems to be written specifically for and about us. For this I allowed myself to update the definition in *Good, Clean and Fair*. Permit me to revisit the definition again, even if it is a little long, as I believe it also constitutes a sort of appeal:

*Gastronomy is the intelligent knowledge of whatever concerns man's nourishment; it facilitates choice because it helps us to understand what quality is.*

*It enables us to experience educated pleasure and to learn pleasure-loving knowledge. Man as he eats is culture; gastronomy is culture, both material and immaterial.*

*Choice is a human right: gastronomy is freedom of choice. Pleasure is everybody's right and as such must be as responsible as possible: gastronomy is a creative matter, not a destructive one. Knowledge is everybody's right, but also a duty; gastronomy is education.*

*Gastronomy is part of the following fields:*

*- botany, genetics, and the other natural sciences, in its classification of the various kinds of food, thus making possible their conservation;*



# Slow Food

- ***physics and chemistry**, in its selection of the best products and its study of how they are processed;*
- ***agriculture, zootechnics, and agronomy**, in its concern with the production of good and varied raw materials;*
- ***ecology**, because man, in producing, distributing, and consuming food, interferes with nature and transforms it to his advantage;*
- ***anthropology**, because it contributes to the study of the history of man and his cultural identities;*
- ***sociology**, from which it takes its methods of analyzing human social behavior;*
- ***geopolitics**, because peoples form alliances and come into conflict partly, indeed chiefly, over the right to exploit the earth's resources;*
- ***political economics**, because of the resources it provides, and because of the methods of exchange which it establishes between nations;*
- ***trade**, because of its search for the means of buying at the best possible price that which it consumes and of selling at the highest possible profit that which it puts on sale;*
- ***technology, industry, and the know-how** of people, in its search for new methods of processing and preserving food inexpensively;*
- ***cooking**, in its concern with the art of preparing food and making it pleasing to the taste;*
- ***physiology**, in its ability to develop the sensorial capacities that enable us to recognize what is good;*
- ***medicine**, in its study of the healthiest way of eating;*
- ***epistemology**, because, through a necessary reconsideration of the scientific method and of the criteria of knowledge that enable us to analyze the path food travels from the field to the table, and vice versa, it helps us to interpret the reality of our complex, globalized world; it helps us to **choose**.*

*Gastronomy enables us to live the best life possible using the resources available to us and stimulates us to improve our existence.*

*Gastronomy is a science that analyzes happiness. Through food, which is a universal and immediate language, a component of identity, and an object of exchange, it reveals itself as one of the most powerful forms of peace diplomacy.*

This is the new gastronomy, which sanctions our third metamorphosis: from classic eno-gastronomes to eco-gastronomes and today neo-gastronomes.

The work we must undertake to do at every level of our movement is critical for bringing back dignity and significance to gastronomy. Gastronomic sciences will perhaps help us once again put food into the center of our lives. Maybe it will convince someone to change his or her lifestyle. Maybe it will succeed indirectly in re-equilibrating the world a little. All without renouncing pleasure or enjoyment, which are decisive components for both our well-being and happiness. “The new gastronomy is the science of happiness.”



# Slow Food

## 4. The Quality We Want

Take back life: the earth, moon and abundance. New gastronomy: innovative concepts with deep roots in our past and in the past and traditions of all the communities in which we live. I've discussed words and projects, ideals to which we aspire – a desire to do something, in a simple and daily way, to correct the damage that the Earth has suffered and that threatens the age-old culture of food. But this necessarily has to translate to daily action, to something simple and immediate, something that coincides with our choices. More than a year ago, we chose to define quality according to Slow Food in order to find a concise formula that is not reductive but that leaves us room for interpretation according to global diversity. This is quality that should be part and parcel of production, transformation, distribution and consumption. It has nothing to do with laws nor dogma that we must cling stubbornly to, but an ideal to which we must tend towards progressively, involving as many people as possible in improving the world's food. It seemed to be that Good, Clean and Fair were the three requisites of quality food. Intimately linked as they were to each other, they could easily encompass all that we want our food to be. I'll just recall these aspects briefly, for as an epigram, it can be easily shared and spread everywhere through our members, who are both bearers and interpreters of this message.

Quality food, according to Slow Food, should be:

### **Good**

*Good* is inherent to Slow Food's historical inclinations, to the little revolution we began by declaring our "right to pleasure". Good refers to the superior sensory characteristics of a food or drink. It is recognized by training our senses, then through taste education to awaken our sensory natures, atrophied as they have been by an inundation of additives, by increasing standardization of food production on a global scale and by the growing confusing and clamorous stimuli we are subjected to every day in this information-driven society. To recognize, taste, sense and know. To understand how our food is made can already help us know if one food is better than another, but the final test is when it meets our expert, attentive and finely tuned senses. The sensory goodness is requisite because no one ever eats anything that does him or her harm. Food has been a joy and pleasure for as long as man has existed. Eating cannot be reduced to mere sustenance, stripped of culture, identity and the socialness that it has historically carried with it.

Laying claim to the Good means not just claiming our right to pleasure, but also to our way of living, our traditions and identity. What is good for me is not necessarily good for someone from another part of the world, a product as he is of another culture. This demonstrates how Good is an identifying element and how necessary it is for us at Slow Food to avoid the pitfalls of defining a "Western" notion of Good.

Good must be as democratic as possible, accessible to everyone, and sought out daily. The subjectiveness must be clear in our actions – for example, when we choose products to make



# Slow Food

Presidia or when we approach other cultures. In this sense, however, we at Slow Food should be at an advantage because we have convivia and food communities all over the world who are able to guide us in understanding what is Good in their respective areas. They take ideas we promote (the right to pleasure and defense of this right, taste education) and put them into practice (through tastings, Taste Workshops, getting to know food producers), adapting them to their many different local realities.

For this we have the task of researching, recognizing, producing and fostering the production of good food so that we can choose and herald a new model to follow.

## **Clean**

The link between Good and Clean is the naturalness of foods. The more a product comes from natural cultivation that respects the characteristics of raw ingredients (transforming them, of course, but without compromising them) and the less it uses unnatural ingredients in being transformed and is also fresh, seasonal and local, the more the product is certain to be good. This aspect of naturalness almost always ensures that production processes are more sustainable, respectful of the environment and less polluting as well.

And it is the second characteristic of quality food that deals specifically with the ecological sphere. To be Clean, a product must respect the ecosystems and biodiversity through all the phases of its production and distribution chain, no less protecting the health of producers and consumers. And this is why we say no to industrial agriculture, monocultures (the organic kind too!) and genetically modified organisms. We say no to products that travel too much and for no reason, to excessive centralization of distribution and transformation.

Clean speaks of sustainability, an ephemeral concept and a relative one: to consider a food fully sustainable is difficult. A product grown conventionally near your home and purchased directly from the farmer at your local market is more “sustainable” than the same product grown organically on another continent, imported by plane and purchased via a car trip to the supermarket miles away from home.

Let's be careful about attaching certain lifestyles, labels or only a few “nobler” aspects of production to our foods; it's far better to be curious about the whole chain (whose shortness is, in any case, usually a good indication of sustainability) that brought a food to your table and to use common sense to understand what are, within a rather complex context, the limits of producers, regions and the Earth. To say that we must only eat local food would put the Sami of northern Europe and Alaskans in difficulty, for example. To say that we must only eat organic food could mean the birth of industrial organic agriculture that is harmful for biodiversity (because of its monocultures), greatly centralized (with extensive use of intercontinental means of transport) and unfair for farmers that aren't able to satisfy bureaucratic practices to obtain certification.

Let us place a “local” limit on our convivia, on the activities we do and on our daily food choices and look for ways to follow this with common sense: let's not make Clean a hard and



# Slow Food

fast rule, but a guide to making intelligent choices that are compatible with our eco-gastronomic ends.

It goes without saying that the Earth's health obliges us to look for Clean products whenever possible and without hesitation. This is a priority in every case. But let us underscore the fact that we're not looking for Good and Clean products in absolute terms, but rather that, between two products, I'll always choose the one that is better than the other in terms of those two aspects of quality.

We work in order to get information that will allow us to judge what is better in order to favor – always and wherever possible – those products that are Cleaner.

## **Fair**

The third requisite for quality food is that it be Fair. In terms of food production, Fair speaks of social justice, of respect for workers and their know-how, of rurality, of decent living conditions, of suitable compensation for work done, of accessible prices, of gratification in producing well and in consuming quality products, of the definitive liberation of farmers, of the right to seeds. These are things we learned first and foremost from Terra Madre. And also: the search of Fair products must be a priority because it makes no sense that those who produce our food (which is still the majority of the world population) must continue to get by in spite of untold difficulty and stay relegated to the bottom rungs of society.

Around our idea of Fair revolve the two fundamental concepts of social sustainability and economic sustainability.

In social terms, we speak of the liberation of farmers all over the world and therefore a task of finding equilibrium despite the extreme iniquities that exist on the planet. It's a task that must be taken up at the political and strategic level to bring an end to things like dumping or landless farmers or farmers crushed by production methods that reduce them to be mere tools in a system no longer under their control. We must work to reconstruct a new rural sector, to conceive of and redesign the countryside as a joyous place, a place in which to prosper, in which there is a living culture and not a sad factory in a polluted environment that churns out products in mass quantities nor a bucolic – but sterile – dormitory for those who work in the city.

Social sustainability should be found within our actions at both global and local levels. We can undertake this as an international association and as individual convivia.

Economic sustainability, on the other hand, raises new challenges – to think of a new economy more allied with nature and the needs of man; to spread a new idea of commerce, nobler and less utilitarian; to redefine what is fair trade; to reconsider the concept of helping and supporting farmers in difficulty. I believe we could start putting this into practice through our network, setting a good example and, most importantly, demonstrating to the world that the agricultural micro-economy, the short production chain and food produced artisanally for local markets are not idealistic in a world where the pursuit of profit and mass production



# Slow Food

reign. We must demonstrate – because we have already realized what must be done with the Presidia and food communities – that these kinds of economy are not just sustainable, but also a source of wealth and actual well-being, both practicable and preferable.

## **5. Aiming for Good, Clean and Fair: The local economy**

I've questioned myself repeatedly as to why Slow Food, together with all the people and groups we influence and with whom we come into contact, can really do something to direct the food system towards being Good, Clean and Fair. Here, I have to make another "ideological" preface, as I realize that if we don't extract ourselves from the prevailing economic model, which conditions both our thoughts and our actions, we won't be able to do anything. I thought about this at the Terra Madre plenary assembly and I realized that it would be difficult if we, citizens of the so-called "developed" world, became the standard bearers that would change the system. We, much to our regret, are complicit; we are part of an economic system in which we are now submerged up to our necks, while many farmers, largely those from the so-called "developing" world, are the ones that can show us the way. And the primary way is the relocalization of consumption and agricultural production.

One of the most commonly used words these days that we could also employ to define the Slow world is "network". We have always described Terra Madre as a network and have worked to make it such in practice, searching to create and offer the right tools and services to be able to multiply the vast potential the food communities offer through their interactions. This context, it goes without saying, also extends to all other aspects of Slow Food. We function in this way as "facilitators", but through the Presidia, convivia, restaurants, academics and so many others, we play an active role in moving towards quality food.

After the memorable experience we had in Turin last October, however, the meaning, profundity and complexity of our ideas and plans were greatly enriched. The meaning of the word "network" for Terra Madre's participants became an important conviction. And this time we speak of economy, of a change probably already underway in the world that Terra Madre knew to intercept (or of which it was a defacto supporter?) since the primary roles were those of the food communities. I'm talking about a new idea of economy, built upon agriculture, that puts local communities, their food, their culture, their traditions and practices and the land in which they live.

The market economy as we know it and as it has been determined by the dynamics of globalization, is revealing gross limits – both from the standpoint of the sustainability of its activities and from its way of producing wealth.

It is no longer solely the usual detractors of capitalist systems that insist that the world economy is a giant resting on feet of clay. Its major exponents are conscious of the fact that "anti-ecology" is increasingly growing to mean "anti-economy". In a situation of this kind – whose causes are to be traced to the changes that world agriculture has undergone because of industrialization, not to mention the centralization of production systems – the food



# Slow Food

communities are a shining example of what it means to say “local economy” or “nature-based economy”.

It’s not an idea that we just invented out of thin air – economists in the past have pointed out how every economic process, from a physical point of view, tends to consume in wasteful ways and discards more energy than it produces. This met with great opposition at the time, in part because the veracity of this hypothesis can only be observed in the long term. The state of the world has begun, however, to validate these experts that were once considered visionaries. They theorized about the decrease or the staticness of the economy as a means of guaranteeing a future of well-being. An ecological, organic or humane economy: whatever they call it, it’s clear what should be the *true* output of economic processes – not a flow of goods and waste, but a more immaterial flow, the enjoyment of life.

The food communities generally put the short production chain into effect, or otherwise they operate a long but highly sustainable chain, based, in any case, on the reciprocal knowledge of those involved. Let’s take, for example, producers’ markets (like the Mercatale in Montevarchi, Italy, or the one in Bamako, Mali, or American farmers’ markets), the US’s community-supported agriculture and AMAP in France, to mention just a few experiences we have been involved in.

The communities then, region-specific by definition, can’t escape from conserving, promoting and making yields in a way that’s compatible with their own ecosystems, their own countrysides, their own biodiversity. And this is put into place in safeguarding musical, oral and written traditions, their own histories, their own ways of building, their own social constructs and humanity.

Beyond that we can say, in light of our experience with the Presidia and by virtue of knowing many of the Terra Madre participants, that these kinds of micro-economies work or have all their papers in order to flourish and work in a remunerative way.

We’re not talking about close economies, autarchical economies or excessively conservative ones. The meaning of these models taken within the context of a network that might still need more modern technology gives undeniable value and, it must be said, a power which is not yet fully understood.

Ultimately, it demonstrates that, in spite of what critics say, these experiences aren’t just mere throwbacks or sterile means of disavowing the current system, but are examples of how respecting the Earth, themselves, their own culture, diversity and the centrality of food can create a new kind of economy that is sustainable and more practicable in many different contexts, in areas both “developed” and “developing”, in rural contexts and urban contexts.

A strong point of this economic model is that is founded on community, on the idea of community that must be nurtured and not just the nucleus in which to develop the processes that we want or as a node in the network. The community is a way to strengthen a real



# Slow Food

relationship with not just a region, but with all those that inhabit it as well. It takes care of itself and of its members as much as of its home. Values at risk of disappearing in our frenetic society can return to become the benchmarks of our existence: fairness, generosity, openness to others and to diversity. In this sense, the pride of being a farmer, of producing well, takes on new contours and new meanings. The same thing could be said for those who live in urban environments, where consumption by true co-producers brings about the same feelings and a strong involvement with respect to those who work the Earth. I'll add also that the communities take part in exchange, taking advantage of means of communication and that are more modern, creating culture and richness.

After Terra Madre we are still convinced that, within the work that the food communities undertake, we glimpse the seeds of a new modernity, a new economic era. Nature's economy, for the record, in which "the invisible hand of the market" is substituted by the benevolent yet strict hand of Mother Earth. The dignity of local economy is the only one that will allow us to realize what today is becoming an oxymoron: sustainable development. If we really want to make this possible, we must foster all the creativity that comes out of systems of local economy – a creativity capable of bringing us towards Good, Clean and Fair food that consumers, whom I would like to call co-producers, must contribute to.

We must force ourselves to conceive local economy in planning terms, integrated in a holistic manner, with the necessity of opening our sphere of interests not just to things related to gastronomy or the Presidia, but also to other expressive forms like poetry, music and local history. The term "local" must not be taken to be a synonym of localism, but as an economic form that is well integrated with the area.

Since 2004, after the first edition of Terra Madre and up until today, what is it that we have accomplished? We have prepared the land and spread good compost on it, we've ploughed and harrowed and now the land is ready to be seeded. It is by seeding that the network will become credible and doable.

And what is the seed that we should sow? The practice of local economy: that which the food communities make real in their villages and towns. This is the strength of local communities; this is the strength that produces our food each day.

## **6. Where Good, Clean and Fair begin: the community**

The place where local economy is rooted is also the place where it can be realized and can flourish: the local community.

When we coined the term *food community* in 2004 we were conscious that this term contained an innovative concept. The community is necessary as we prepare for the future; it puts into practice the uncertainty that is contrary to society as a structured, hierarchical and institutional system. Uncertainty is our strength, and community is a free agent for nature with which to exercise our imagination, to be inventive, to have courage, to undertake new roads, to think about reciprocal help and care, to translate rights into obligation, to think of



# Slow Food

the well-being of everyone. There aren't competitors, either in terms of usage or consumption, in the community if one leads a participatory and happy life. If this uncertainty makes Terra Madre or Slow Food escape our grasp, we mustn't worry. I am convinced that the almost "anarchic" quality of the Slow Food network allows us to trust in the future. Up to today, it has worked well by virtue of an extremely strong bond that no politics can touch: the bond of affective intelligence. This world of rational intelligence finally has a group with members from all over who behave in an affective, brotherly way. This allows us to not structure ourselves too much, to be free, to enjoy ourselves and at the same time to create our future *without power, with a little knowledge, wisdom, and much, much taste*. And who more than us is able to give flavor to the Earth?

The community is the place, the context in which to realize this concept of "local adaptation" that Wendell Berry theorized about. We must push as much as possible for the relocalization of production and consumption, social life and traditions without renouncing the commerce or exchange that makes the network possible and by strengthening local communities and the ways in which they work. According to the classic definitions, a community is a social group that lives in a well-defined geographical area and is a part of society itself. The community takes on the characteristics of society, but on a limited scale, leveraging on personal values and sympathies (affective intelligence) given the homogeneity of the social characteristics that comprise them. It just so happened that society and community came into being on two different levels of sociological theory and are identified as polar types of social relations. On the one hand, there is society characterized by individualism placed in a relation of exchange, while on the other, there is community, diametrically opposed and characterized by a relation founded upon solidarity and ends of a diffuse nature, not often conscious and based more on the attitudes of its participants. Society is defined as a social relation of a mechanistic nature counter to the organic nature of community. In reality, the two things are not opposed because they are compatible. Communities, with their affective values, their solidarity, offer the perfect fit because a fruitful local economy can be realized and all our association objectives can be put into effect: from safeguarding biodiversity to keeping traditions alive, from conviviality to the transmission of knowledge, from supporting farmers to guiding co-producers in their actions. The sense of community within our network must be maintained, and we must reflect upon the sense of the food communities, nuclei that are able to put into practice a sustainable, Good, Clean and Fair food system, to make this "natural" model become our own, as an international association.

We must figure out how to integrate the communities' values into our association, from the local economy that they practice to the organic and non-mechanistic spirit that characterizes them. Perhaps we will have to adapt Slow Food's structure itself to this network of communities. If we think about how we want to make local food production systems important, the community figures largely as the ideal model – both to put into practice and to whom we should credit. And this is a very important question when we look to the 2007 International Congress in Mexico, where we must establish new rules with which to welcome the food communities into our association. Perhaps it will be necessary to start by putting the question simply in semantic terms: is the convivium still enough as a form of regional



# Slow Food

organization? Or should it be the case that we view it as the engine driving local community, the link between production and consumption, between institutions and culture, between a region and those who live there? I'll offer some more concrete proposals before the end of this, but the invitation is to reflect on these themes: if we stay as we are, we will not be adaptable, given that we find ourselves fully within an increasingly globalized, uncontrollable market-economy system – a system that would impose upon us what we should eat and what we should be without giving us the possibility of making real choices about our shared destiny. Take back life!

## **7. The network: what will Slow Food become in the future?**

Renewed goals, new goals

Local economy and Community are two key phrases, two concepts that appear useful in overturning the colossal deformities of the market economy that have centralized, globalized and standardized our food system at great cost to the Earth in terms of pollution and iniquities amongst peoples. The food communities have taught us that this way is not only possible, but maybe the only way of really making a mark.

To these two fundamental concepts, however, there's a third to add, and it's the key that will make the project operative and effective at a global level: the network.

Our network – call it Slow Food, call it Terra Madre, call it whatever you want – this network exists, it grows and changes according to who and what we are, who we involve, who we ask for help or give help to. Convivia, Presidia, food communities, restaurateurs, small-scale producers, shopkeepers, merchants and contractors: whoever becomes part of Slow Food or allies him or herself in some way to our objectives becomes a part of the network.

We have always maintained that the network is “anarchic”, in the sense that we don't want to label ourselves or subscribe to any particular ideology. We simply want to be the vehicle of a new food system that has our themes in a new “nature-based” economy at its core. The network does require, however, a minimum of structure to keep its members united, to allow them to communicate and exchange information, culture, solutions – a basic structure that is another point we must start thinking about in order to bring about change at the Congress in Mexico in November.

The Congress will be the official launch of this network, a virtuous multinational that is powerful and able to counter the negative tendencies that, I am sure, will always include more people, institutions and associations who are willing to collaborate. This network will be the catalyst for realizing our goals. The network will allow us to spread – according to local culture – our message of peace, well-being, innovation, tradition, pleasure, happiness and our desire that Good, Clean and Fair food be available for everyone. And we can do it without being invasive and using a logic that operates on colonization of minds and places and motivated by a single-mindedness that has already done enough damage.



# Slow Food

I believe that in constructing the network the convivium will have the most important and delicate role, and we urge all convivia to construct and strengthen their own local communities.

But how? Beginning with widespread involvement, with producers' communities, knocking on the door of local institutions to raise awareness, organizing markets, initiating small projects in the area, contributing to the international association's communication with news and issues to bring to the world's attention. And even then, bringing forward the battles that we launch at an international level in their own regions, establishing relationships with cooks and nearby universities. The convivium must become our means of promoting and strengthening the local communities. Our convivia all over the world confront very different realities and the focus they take tends to take shape around specific activities. There are still many convivia that stick exclusively to classic gastronomy, that limit themselves only to dinners and convivial meetings. This is good, as they are activities that strengthen the affective intelligence within the community but often at the risk of reducing themselves to an exclusive club. I believe that in the future more openness will be necessary, as will work to involve other local realities, whatever they may be, to help organize events, markets, debates, campaigns for public awareness – to realize, in other words, that it is our idea of local community that will make the new kind of economy we want possible.

## **Education**

Education for all ages remains one of the benchmarks of our mission. It's what has always made us more than just a gastronomic association.

Our initiatives, from Taste Workshops to Master of Food courses that we organize through convivia in Italy and collaborations with schools and hospitals put us at the forefront in this sector. Our virtuous network can't be realized without people capable of recognizing the importance of our message, the quality we want and that is necessary for a better food system. And this knowledge, let us remember, comes first and foremost from the ability to recognize the pleasure that food can give us.

Food education, education on taste, the senses, technical aspects of production and various products themselves: after a few initial years in which we were essentially self-taught, we have been able to accumulate experience in this field that we could then make available to all the convivia that want to pursue educational initiatives for their communities.

It is thus necessary to continue on this road we have undertaken and continue to establish school gardens in the schools of our communities, to organize courses for adults, to go to hospitals and schools to realize initiatives that improve the quality of the cafeterias and make it a formative experience as well and to create in all of our events, big or small, occasions for Taste Workshops with producers and experts – all without forgetting the fundamental and strategic importance of this activity at every level.



# Slow Food

Educational programs risk, on one hand, clashing with the lack of information about our food, and on the other, stopping just at evaluating a few products – particularly those considered superior – and not touching upon more quotidian fare. We must arouse curiosity and interest for all the gastronomic aspects of quality. From the most basic level of sensorial analysis and tasting, we must begin studying formative methods to guide people in choosing their daily food, to educate them about their behavior and the lifestyle they make manifest through their choice of what and how to eat. This is the step that we are gradually making a reality and must be taken together with university education, both because we ourselves are blessed with a university of gastronomic sciences and because we cannot leave the universities involved in the last Terra Madre out of the network.

## **Co-producers**

To guarantee ourselves Good, Clean and Fair food, we must begin thinking of ourselves as co-producers and not mere consumers. The era of the consumer is over: he literally consumes the world and is the key figure in a market economy-based society; he is the primary accomplice in the destruction being done to the Earth.

Educating himself, knowing products, the producers themselves, methods for better feeding himself and polluting less, the co-producer, from within his community, becomes concretely and individually the engine of true change. The power we are vested with simply because we make daily choices about our food is incredible: exercising it with awareness and responsibility is our duty to ourselves, our families, our communities and our peoples.

Again, the convivium is central in this small but revolutionary transformation by shaping educational activities accordingly as well as encouraging dialogue and direct contact with producers. The kinds of activities a convivium can do are numerous, from involving Presidia where they are present, to protection and promotion and to giving back to the locals an awareness of what can come from their own area. Often members of a community aren't even aware of what kind of agriculture is all around them. This is one of the motives behind the Presidia – these foods have been forgotten and it is the very community they come from that exhibits indifference to them.

Another activity which convivia should engage in is to organize producers' markets or alternative forms of food distribution that privilege the local as a guarantee of quality. Some convivia are already involved in farmers' markets, community-supported agriculture, AMAP or co-ops, while others are not. I believe that we must give ourselves over to studying these and inventing new kinds. And ultimately, it's the convivium that should research and establish these new distribution systems in their own areas within their actual communities.

The co-producer is the companion the producer lacks in order to make a true local economy that is community based and Good, Clean and Fair.



# Slow Food

## **Knowledge dialogue**

Another critical aspect of our local responsibility that must be considered among the activities a convivium should pursue is what we call “knowledge dialogue”.

Over just a few generations, the knowledge of farmers and popular knowledge have disappeared or have been shunted aside. The phenomenon is particularly pronounced in developed countries, but it is also beginning to involve the rural societies of poorer countries. In the name of scientific “progress”, this precious knowledge has been thrown away, has been relegated to the archaic and has lost importance, replaced by a kind of “modernity” that knows more about markets than about culture.

I believe it to be our duty to do something to save these kinds of knowledge – which I like calling “Slow knowledge” – from oblivion and to bring them back into our daily lives without repudiating scientific progress. I also believe that “official” science and Slow knowledge should establish some kind of fruitful dialogue. The participation of universities in Terra Madre was very much for this end, and individual convivia must begin to take part in this as well.

I believe it to be in a community’s interest to save Slow knowledge because it is an integral part of the community’s own identity and history, and also because it is often popular wisdom that teaches us good sense. We would do well then to involve local institutions, academia, schools, teachers and older generations of farmers in an ambitious but totally necessary project.

This would mean an action strategy that begins unavoidably with cataloguing and archiving knowledge. Before everything disappears, it must be recorded for future generations. And so we’ll conduct interviews, we’ll create audio and video documentation in which everything manual and oral and also know-how can be engraved in the collective memory forever. It is one of our responsibilities as members of Slow Food and as members of our communities. All this can be done in different ways, perhaps by creating historical institutions that document and study at a local level, as several Bra natives that work for Slow Food have done for their hometown, or, like Slow Food Italy, by trying to involve local institutions in a national network, together with a film company and the Italian TV network RAI, to make documentaries on the knowledge that is being lost.

The initiatives can be many and different and as creative as each convivium can make them, but this responsibility to the local – I repeat: first in terms of archiving and then in keeping it alive through knowledge dialogue of Slow knowledge – is not only a civic duty to our own communities, but is now a priority, before it is too late.

## **Seeds**

Another issue that Slow Food has tackled at an institutional level but that must be put into practice at the local level by our convivia and our communities is farmers’ right to seeds. This includes not just rejecting GMOs to get the message across to local authorities, but ensuring



# Slow Food

the right to not have to suffer the invasion of products of industrial agriculture that eat away at biodiversity.

The problem here is common everywhere, and if, in developed countries, we can already identify the damage done by this perverse system, in communities of developing countries it's reached dramatic proportions. I think of Vandana Shiva's charges about the tens of thousands of suicides of Indian farmers who were unable to deal with the enormous debts they accumulated from having to buy seeds and fertilizers from multinationals. It's not by chance that Vandana was among the promoters of the "Manifest on the Future of Seeds", underwritten also by Slow Food and created by the International Commission on the Future of Food, of which we are part. This manifesto must be our manifesto, and we must never lower our guard in dealings with such harm to biodiversity, humanity and the heart of a farmer's work – harm that is inflicted every day under our noses.

The local community must make itself responsible for its own biodiversity and of its own right to take advantage of it, maintaining its right to access seeds and to forms of agriculture that better adapt themselves to the community. This is the central question for maintaining food sovereignty in the world.

## **Microfinance**

In supporting the activities of poor countries, the Presidia, food communities, the liberation of Good, Clean and Fair agriculture-based micro-economies, I believe Slow Food must pursue another commitment. It's an open question and very delicate, but the association should go in the direction of identifying types of credit, microfinance and ethical banking systems that allow real community development. We must point to community self-sufficiency and look for means to provide financial help that do not take the shape of neo-colonialism.

Activating alternative financial systems within our network could be a revolutionary solution and we are examining how it can be done. The appeal is therefore to contribute ideas and projects, because we don't want to become an organization like all the others, financing projects externally and then when obliged to leave those areas, allowing the projects to fall apart, leaving the communities in the same indigence and difficulty as they were in in the first place.

In terms of a network made up of local communities, we must understand that there are some points we should insist upon, principles of solidarity, but also another way to think about finance: a principle of restitution that squares with solidarity and that has us give back and donate ill-gotten gains to those now in difficulty because they have folded under the market-economy system and, if you will, colonialism. This is the good neighbor principle that should distinguish local communities and must be extended to the rest of the network ("When a family was the first to finish harvesting, they went immediately to help out their neighbors... This is community, this is being a good neighbor," wrote Wendell Berry). The fertility of saving must be considered because it is right that he who wishes to put something aside and perhaps invest it in sustainable activities, has his own little, but guaranteed, personal profit.



# Slow Food

Here we are speaking of what *Investors Circle* has defined as “Slow Money”: a sustainable way of investing in ecological but productive activities. “We must return money to the Earth,” in both figurative and literal senses.

Communities must be able to walk on their own two feet and our involvement must be predicated on this ultimate goal. We don’t do charity nor pursue nice projects to make ourselves appear benevolent and committed in the eyes of the rich West. True solidarity respects other people’s cultures and provides a solid foundation to ensure a future.

## **Communication**

A network cannot exist if there is not communication that goes on within it. Communication is fundamental to making a network function and to demonstrate its strength to those outside of it. We must work for a democracy of means of transmitting knowledge, for technological literacy, for the creation of multimedia archives.

This will help us in creating “knowledge dialogue”, but, above all, will allow communities to stay open, to establish more sustainable exchange and commerce relationships. Let’s make ourselves responsible for guaranteeing access to electronic communication means for communities that are not already equipped with them and join in knocking down the “digital divide”.

The Terra Madre Blog has given us a small demonstration of the potential here if we succeed in fully utilizing these new media in a democratic way and explore all of them, making sure no one is excluded.

At the same time, however, let us not renounce other kinds of communication; let us not forget the value of oral communication, of meeting face-to-face. The network must foster internal circulation of not just information, but also products and people, promoting exchange, meetings, handshakes.

Let’s think of a system in which communication is top-down – Slow Food’s international association, whose primary goal is to coordinate common activities and to spread important news to everyone. Then there’s ground-up communication, from communities themselves, that points up problems, recounts stories, launches appeals, proposes products, records old knowledge and provides an informative global report on the agricultural world.

This is made possible with computers and with multimedia – both of which should become increasingly accessible – but also with telephones, faxes and letters sent to the middle of jungles, along with a smile for those coming to meet us.

## **The University of Gastronomic Sciences**

Before going on to more technical proposals concerning the International Congress, I wish to touch upon the University of Gastronomic Sciences of Pollenzo and Colorno, which was



# Slow Food

strongly desired by and conceived by Slow Food and then realized with the support of institutions and private sponsors.

We are now in the university's third year and students continue to come here from all over the world. They study new gastronomy, as multidisciplinary as we have defined it, slanted towards the Good, Clean and Fair that we wish for. The 250-odd students that go there are taking part in truly wonderful experiences. In addition to their classroom studies, they are experimenting with innovative stages, or field seminars, that allow them to get to know productions, areas and communities directly. The association has provided invaluable support to make these stages possible at the local level, and it will be the task of our entire community to collaborate in these.

This is a new approach to education that we intend to further develop and also a formative experience that will become a fundamental resource for our movement. And the movement will have to watch these students with great interest, as it is not difficult to imagine that from among them will emerge new active members of our international association. Many students from places where Slow Food is little known are planning to return home once they've completed their studies to bring Slow Food to their countries.

## **Slow Food 2007 International Congress in Mexico**

In light of all of this, I believe the future task of the movement will develop on two levels, both an international level and a local level, with individual regional groups supported and galvanized by the national superstructure. New gastronomy, the search for Good, Clean and Fair, a nature-based local economy, communities and the network itself are all the nerve centers that must be put into action. The responsibility of the international movement will then be to galvanize the national associations and consequently the convivia, providing the right tools and the right conditions beginning at the 2007 International Congress in Mexico. There, all the issues discussed here will be addressed as well.

I'll begin to raise a few technical questions of vital importance to give us a light and flexible non-authoritative structure, as well as a few concrete proposals to discuss to identify a few means of operation.

## **Convivium or community?**

This is, first and foremost, a semantic question and a formality – that, however, in light of what's been discussed so far, contains substantial value. The question essentially is: Can the convivium as we know it take on, on its own, our objectives for a Good, Clean and Fair economy?

A convivium is often a group restricted by membership that excludes non-members. This often leads to limiting its activities to the usual dinners without going too far beyond this. There's nothing wrong with this, but I believe that Slow Food's local chapters must be called forth to undertake activities that are a little more complex, to look for partners and starting points outside of the movement and outside their own realm of experience. This means



# Slow Food

creating a network and stimulating the local economy. Then: How do we make the many Terra Madre food communities a part of the movement? They have asked to join even without actually being able to obtain membership – which is often not available to them.

I believe that the answer is to search within the idea of community and I put forth the proposal that the Congress ratify the passage of changing the names of our local chapters from “convivium” to “community”. It is a momentous change, I know, and I want to put the idea before the entire movement for consideration.

I believe the term “community” better describes what we can be and in many cases already are at the local level: there are the convivium leaders, volunteers that organize activities, look for contacts, administer finances; members, important in their numbers in terms of political weight, but also people that seek out education, pleasure, conviviality, quality products and meetings with producers; there are the producers themselves, the farmers in rural areas and merchants in cities; restaurateurs that collaborate on convivium initiatives and promote the kind of eating and gastronomy that’s in line with tradition and made with local products; there are academics and schools that are involved in safeguarding popular knowledge, local history and taste education; institutions and private supporters that often can lend an important hand in getting projects off the ground; communication experts, journalists, environmental organizations and all those who identify with the concepts behind the new gastronomy. Very often some of these people are not Slow Food members, but they are sympathizers or even have our very same objectives because of their own work. It would be ideal to involve them all as members, but I believe that a community, an expanded entity relative to a convivium, can welcome everyone, operate on a shared sense of identity, local pride and desire to create a prosperous, sustainable system within its own region.

I believe that the future task of the convivium is to create contacts and to find partners in their regions and then to become a true community. I don’t know if it’s a case of changing the official name, but I believe that that might be a strong indication of our intentions, a clear push towards our objectives and a small internal revolution that could make what we’re working for clearer, and to those outside as well. What would help convivium leaders in their work at a local level and many food communities too would also be a more complete step towards realizing the virtuous network that we want. “Community” seems to me a term much richer in meaning than “convivium” and could allow us to get past perceptions of Slow Food as elitist in certain countries and of the dinner ritual that can become the only occasion to come together and the only real activity the convivium organizes – it’s somewhat less than what we’re seeking.

## *Membership*

The scope of expanding convivia to communities is also to be able to involve a greater number of people to take part of the association, an objective that can also be reached by creating a new kind of membership for those in poorer countries or rural areas.



# Slow Food

Unfortunately, change in membership, which I anticipate to constitute three price levels, requires restructuring of our internal system of communication, which is currently based on magazines and makes up a cost that is disproportionate to our ends and excessively binding.

A new membership structure coincides with a new editorial format. Dividing economic participation amongst the various national associations according to what they are capable of paying would be an indirect form of redistribution that would allow us to really become a “glocal” entity.

## *Magazines and newsletters*

The key to inventing a new, more flexible membership structure is to modify the international magazine *Slow*, produced in six languages, which, from a financial and perhaps also political point of view, constitutes a not insubstantial constraint. Notwithstanding its vastly important role in the development of the association all over the world and performing exceptionally in spreading ideas within the movement through its elegant graphics and the care taken in bringing each issue to life, the cost of producing it is enormous and obliges us to keep membership rates at their current level. Perhaps in this way it constitutes a constraint upon the democratic development of the movement because it excludes internal debate and all those who cannot join on these terms.

The national associations will have to come up with a sustainable financial plan, means of sponsorship or financing and those individuals who will take on production of the newsletters/magazines. These publications would therefore be under the guidance of the association itself and could be used as a vehicle for local themes while also incorporating those that have more international reach.

Imagine a basic newsletter, with reports, local event announcements and a section that is the same for all parts of the world, all of it produced by the international association. This newsletter could be then be augmented according to the desires and capabilities of each national association. It would, however, constitute the basic medium shared by all countries to be able to better utilize as many languages as possible and create a more democratic system. This would ease up considerably on the financial weight of the magazine, allowing membership rates to be more flexible and providing for better internal communication within the network.

That doesn't mean that Slow Food Editore will no longer produce anything for the international association. Another proposal that we would like you to consider is that the three issues of *Slow* be substituted by a single annual work that is comprehensive and exhibits all the quality we are used to. It could be the annual Slow Food Almanac, a kind of book or album to collect and produced in as many languages as possible for countries where there are at least 100 members.

The annual Slow Food almanac should reach members at year's end and should include a survey of all the work that was undertaken that year and the objectives and grand design for



# Slow Food

the future. It will offer a wealth of news about the communities and how they are developing. It will contain perhaps a small inventory of projects carried out, coverage of major events like Salone del Gusto and Terra Madre. It will also offer an opportunity to again take up something we established in Naples in 2003 but that we have not yet realized: a project to recognize historic locales and well-deserving figures of gastronomy. We must think about how to bring this to fruition – even if in small but significant numbers. We could establish a micro-office in Bra that coordinates the almanac. This initiative, in light of our discussion of local communities and safeguarding Slow knowledge, takes on great significance and must be put into practice.

The annual Slow Food Almanac would describe the identity of the movement each year, giving an account of what was done and what will be done. It will tell the stories of the communities, of recognized individuals and places to save, our battle to defend biodiversity and for a different economy. It must be produced in as many languages as possible to accord full value to the diversity and cultural richness that are present in our movement.

The almanac will allow for further development of local newsletters and of the new forms of membership.

## **9. Take back life!**

The proposals and affirmations of principles in this document – which may sound high flown but shouldn't scare those who are used to dreaming and thinking big – are what I believe we must concentrate on for the future. This document, more than anything, is intended to urge us not just to find means and the time to put these ideas into practice, but also to redesign the association to fit what we are becoming and wish to become.

These suggestions should not be seen as an obligation or a cross to bear, but an opportunity to reflect upon how many horizons are opening before us. They could be taken up by individual convivia (or communities?), even if not all in one fell swoop, but with deserved calm and our Slow wisdom.

I wish to also reaffirm the strength of the internationality and friendship between the different people within Slow Food, to find means because this unique characteristic emerges to become an important engine behind the development of the movement.

Take back the Earth, the Moon and Abundance: take back life! This could be the slogan, the message that we take to Mexico in November, the phrase that encompasses in some way all the ideas and projects that I wanted to present to you here

Let us never forget the ultimate ends of our actions, the ultimate ends of gastronomic science: the search for happiness.



Slow Food