



Slow Food®

Daily Food According to Slow Food

To say that Slow Food cares only about gastronomic excellence and culinary art at its highest level would be a limiting and misleading statement.

In fact, one of the fundamental missions of the association is the promotion of quality everyday food that has positive repercussions on the lifestyle and health of individuals, without forgetting the principles of food education, the local economy and environmental sustainability. Slow Food is committed to a wide range of initiatives and projects in this area.

Earth Markets is one of the most recent and ambitious Slow Food projects. The aim is to build a global network of farmers' markets to create a viable economy in both developing and developed parts of the world, whilst respecting the earth, local culture and diversity and acknowledging the importance of food.

The pledge to create a system of national farmers' markets was undertaken in 2006 at the Slow Food Italy Congress in Sanremo, and since then it has become international in scope. The project was based on a survey of farmers' markets in Canada, Great Britain and the United States and of organic markets in Italy. The first markets were launched in 2007 in El Mina, near Tripoli, in Lebanon, and Bamako, in Mali. Slow Food has set itself a goal to open 20 markets over the next 12 months in Italy, as well as others around the world.

Short supply chains, support for local economies, and seasonality are the guiding themes of these markets, along with biodiversity, education, sustainability, quality and community. Local producers who sell only products grown in the area using sustainable methods will run the Earth Markets. Consumers are not only shoppers at these markets, but also an integral part of the mechanism behind their success. Here people will have the chance to talk with producers directly, getting to know them personally, which, in turn, creates more educated and conscious consumers. In Italy markets were opened in Montevarchi, near Arezzo; Bologna; Cairo Montenotte, near Savona; San Daniele del Friuli, near Udine; and San Miniato, near Pisa.

In March 2008 a three-day conference was held in Montevarchi (Arezzo), attended by 80 participants from Italy and countries around the world, including Mali, Brazil, Bulgaria, France, Lebanon, Mexico, Peru, Romania, Spain, the United Kingdom and the United States. It featured training sessions and discussions to set guidelines for the markets. The meeting was coordinated by Slow Food Italy, the Slow Food Foundation for Biodiversity and Slow Food Tuscany, with the support of the Tuscany Regional Authority, ARSIA (Tuscan Regional Agency for the Development and Innovation of Agriculture and Forestries) the Arezzo Provincial Authority and the Municipality of Montevarchi.

School Canteens. During 2008 Slow Food did a survey of 50 schools around Italy in order to learn about the quality of food served in school canteens. This work led to the writing of a manifesto aimed at both children and adults, illustrated with cartoons showing a canteen run following Slow Food principles.

At the university level, 2008 saw the completion of a project carried out at the request of the Piedmont Regional Authority, in collaboration with the *Ente Regionale per il Diritto allo Studio Universitario* (Regional Board for the Right to Higher Education). The project involved upgrading university restaurants managed by the board. Made possible by the participation of the University of Gastronomic Sciences in Pollenzo and the University of Turin, it was divided into three areas.

The first was an investigation into the local production of poultry meat and fruit, together with research exploring the economic and logistic opportunities for supplying regional products and the drawing up of a plan for the regular delivery of products.

The second area concerned an education project for University of Turin students. The course of ten lessons, worth four credits, is entitled "Food Education and Canteens."

The final area was a study of the menu at the canteen in Via Principe Amedeo, Turin. New recipes were created and four new menus proposed based on seasonal food. This work was carried out in collaboration with Marta Grassi, award-winning chef at the restaurant Tantris in Novara.

Hospital Catering. One of the issues in which Slow Food is currently active is food in hospitals, which often differs greatly from what patients and visitors like and are used to eating. In a place where people already having a hard time physically and emotionally and where time is marked by medical tests and therapies, it is important to restore food to its proper place. In fact, while there is significant scientific evidence showing how important good meals are to proper healing and health maintenance, often they are served in uninviting places and outside normal mealtimes.

The essential principles for the diet of hospital patients were outlined in the *Carta dei diritti del piacere, della convivialità e della qualità dell'alimentazione del malato* (Charter of the Right to Pleasure, Conviviality and Food Quality for the Ill), drawn up by the Piedmont Regional Authority's Agriculture Council, the Health Department, the Dietetics and Oncology wards of the San Giovanni Antica Sede Hospital in Turin and Slow Food. A program was developed at the hospital to raise awareness about the importance of food, to refurbish cafeterias and to turn mealtimes into times for rehabilitation, recreation and cultural enrichment. The project is also being carried out in Germany at Alice Hospital in Darmstadt. It includes Taste Workshops designed for patients and hospital employees to teach them about local products selected according to the good, clean and fair principles. The hospital is working to ensure that products like these are used every day in the canteens.

Under the "Improving Health" program, the Italian Ministry of Labor, Health and Social Policies and CCM, the Italian disease control center, have financed a three-year program entitled "Canteens in Hospitals and Care Facilities for the Elderly: The Development of Good Practices." The project, which aims to prevent and reduce malnutrition in hospitals and care homes, was entrusted to the Piedmontese Department of Health and Sanitation in collaboration with Slow Food Italy. The principal objectives include a survey to examine the organization of food services in each region, and the subsequent development of recommendations and models applicable to different services to improve their quality. These models will be tested in random areas of Italy. Recommendations will then be made in order to compile a document designed to accompany and facilitate the implementation of good practices in various Italian health facilities.

Dream Canteen!

A special space was set up at Salone del Gusto 2008 for talking about experiences in canteens and Slow Food's ideas. *Dream Canteen!* was a real canteen serving lunch and dinner, and also hosted events and meetings for a select audience of institutional food service professionals. Representatives from companies, associations, public authorities, parents, teachers, educators and trainers were invited to discuss various aspects affecting canteens.

Dream Canteen! will return at Slow Fish 2008, with two scheduled events dedicated to the issues and problems surrounding eating fish in the canteen, looking at the balance between canteen needs and the problems of overfishing.