

# Slow Food UK News

November 2009

**Dear Members and Friends,**

Here we are again. Another month has passed, leading us all towards a chilly winter season. The leaves are falling, orange and yellow, and here at Slow Food UK we continue on our journey to reconnect the British public with the stories behind their plates. To this end, we have spruced up our newsletter design and hope that you enjoy the result.

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## Slow Food in Scotland

Our visit to Scotland in September left us impressed by the commitment and enthusiasm for Slow Food in Scotland. We also found our colleagues there operating in a more progressive political arena around food policy. This has much to do with the Scottish government's interest in dealing seriously with food issues such as dietary health, sustaining rural economies and developing tourism.

One of the key requests from our leaders in Scotland was to allow them a more powerful way of identifying themselves. Unfortunately, the frequently unhappy history of relations between Scotland and England has left Scots identifying less with the descriptor "UK". As a solution, we have been delighted to enable Scottish groups to work under a banner of "Slow Food in Scotland" (their relationship with and administration by Slow Food UK remains as before). A logo has been created for this initiative using the official saltire blue - see below.



As always, we met some extraordinary members and leaders on our visits. Keith Jackson's innovative approach to livestock farming on Skye and Howard Wilkinson's tireless work for producers in Ayrshire were particularly inspiring. We are now working to bring members a system that allows them to communicate more easily and widely in the Slow Food network, thereby expanding and sharing knowledge and creating a unique resource.

## Terra Madre Day 10/12/09

Terra Madre Day, the international event to mark Slow Food's 20th Anniversary, will be held on December 10 this year. It aims to help to make people aware of the importance of eating locally.

You can celebrate TM Day in a variety of ways, for example hosting a celebratory meal, an excursion to a producer, or a farm visit. If you register your event on the Terra Madre Day website, it will be shown on the global map of events so everyone can find out about who's celebrating and where. The website also contains a tool kit to help you organise and promote your event.

SF Ludlow was the first to register their event online. Member Clive Davis will be hosting 'The Green Cafe Terra Madre Social'.



## BBC Food & farming awards

We have exciting news with regard to the finalist list for this year's BBC Food and Farming Awards.

Slow Food members George Steriopoulos and Andrew Dennis have both been nominated in the Farmer of the Year category and also have Ark, or Ark nomination entries in the case of the Lincoln Longwool. Furthermore, The Somerset Cider Brandy Company from Martock, another UK Ark product, has been nominated for Best Food Producer, as well as Trealy Farm Charcuterie in Monmouth, who are former BBC GFS Bursary Winners and SF Members.

It is great to see how much recognition these fantastic producers are receiving, and we are even more proud to say that they are all part of the Slow Food UK network. Congratulations!

## Social Media

## Breeder profile

Nichola and John Fletcher own Reediehill Deer Farm in Auchtermuchty, Fife, and have been running their small family business for over thirty years. Dr John Fletcher is Britain's only vet specialising in deer and is also one of the country's foremost experts in deer management. Whilst John supervises the herd of red deer which graze free-range on the farm, Nichola manages the venison side of the business. She also works with specialist organisations to pass on her knowledge about venison.



Early last month, the Slow Food UK team visited the Fletcher's farm to learn more about venison meat and deer farming. Here is how we got on.

### *1. So, why venison?*

We need to kill deer to protect trees and crops and it is obviously good to eat those, but over and above that, deer meat - whether wild or farmed - is recognised as much healthier nutritionally than conventional livestock. So much so that the American Institute for Cancer Research and the World Cancer Research Fund state that 'consumption of meat from non-domesticated animals is preferable'. It is now accepted by many scientists that we have evolved to eat game meat and that the fatty subsidised grain-fed meats of recent history are killing us. Anyway, venison tastes better!

### *2. In terms of carbon footprint how does venison fare?*

Deer are not normally fed cereals, so are much better than cattle and sheep and infinitely better than pigs and poultry. Also legislation allows us to kill farmed deer on the farm - unlike conventional livestock - without recourse to distant abattoirs so we can dramatically reduce food miles and retain rural employment. From the global warming perspective, of course, deer are not significantly different to other ruminants in the quantities of methane they produce.

### *3. What do you think of the growing trend in cutting down meat consumption?*

Of course everyone in the first world eats too much meat - white or red - and no-one doubts that. However, in temperate regions, there are many places where the only crop that can grow is grass and we can't digest grass. If we are to use these areas to feed people, then we have to graze animals or abandon the land. This is why vegetarianism is more sustainable nearer the equator and less sustainable nearer the poles.

### *4. How can slow food increase their support of breeders and producers around the UK?*

By drawing the urban public's attention to the realities of life so as not to keep alive urban myths about the countryside, farming and animal husbandry, some of which are woefully inaccurate and get repeated

twitter

Do you Tweet? So we can communicate with new audiences and promote our message of good, clean and fair food to the masses, Slow Food UK has a Twitter page. Twitter serves as a great way of linking with other like minded organisations and groups so that we can share ideas about our work. Follow us at: [@slowfooduk](https://twitter.com/slowfooduk).

facebook

Find us on Facebook - Slow Food UK - and follow the orange snail.

## Slow Diary

Nov 10 - SF Liverpool Preserving Masterclass with Lucinda Antal - National Wildflower Centre

Nov 9 - SF Edinburgh host a Slow Supper at David Bann's

Nov 13-15 - MasterChef Live, a BBC Good Food Production - London Olympia

Nov 21 - SF Worcestershire & Jackie Miller host 'UK Ark of Taste Dinner' - Colliers Hill

Nov 22 - SF Hastings holds Bakery Classes - Judges Bakery

Nov 23 - SF Berkshire-Wiltshire Game Preparation & Supper - The Kindersley Centre

Nov 25-29 - BBC Good Food Show - NEC Birmingham

Dec 1 - SF North Yorkshire- Annual Festive Dinner - The White Swan

down the generations. In particular, many journalists would benefit from learning about the realities, not all of which perhaps fit into their preconceived 'ideals'.

#### *5. The best way to cook venison?*

First, buy good venison (which could be farmed or wild; neither is 'best' as it depends on its age and how it has been handled). To roast, grill or fry, brown it, part-cook it and then rest it for perfect results. To slow cook, make sure it is kept moist by either introducing some fat (eg a pot roast), or immerse in a liquid (eg a stew), and serve with succulent vegetables and a creamy sauce. Ideally get hold of a copy of Nichola Fletcher's (my wife) Ultimate Venison Cookery.

#### *6. A message to the youth of today, currently disconnected with the origins of food?*

Face up to reality and loosen up a bit. There is no perfect solution. Meat eating, vegetarianism and veganism all have their problems, both social and environmental, when feeding a mass population. We are humans; we need to eat, and we need to conserve our planet. This means a variety of solutions that will make best use of differing environments. The best thing we can do is to eat less, but be more discerning about what we eat. There must be food for everyone, not just rich western nations.

If you would like to find out how to buy Nichola and John's venison, or learn more about their farming techniques, please visit [www.seriouslygoodvenison.co.uk](http://www.seriouslygoodvenison.co.uk)

## Slow Economy

Local currencies are slowly being introduced in communities around the country, the latest being the Brixton Pound (BP). Following the Totnes Pound in Devon, the Lewes Pound in Sussex and the Stroud Pound in Gloucestershire, Brixton became the fourth UK town to adopt its own currency in September.

These alternative currencies are an initiative pushed by the growing network of UK Transition Towns ([www.transitiontown.net](http://www.transitiontown.net)), 'a community in a process of imagining and creating a future that addresses the twin challenges of diminishing oil and gas supplies and climate change, and creates the kind of community that we would all want to be part of,' (Transition Town Totnes, April 2008). Tim Nichols, the project manager of the Brixton Pound, aims to encourage shoppers to visit local independent outlets, and build diversity and resilience in the local economy. "The idea is for people to pay local suppliers for goods and services - this includes people like plumbers. At any point they can take it back to an issuing point and replace it for sterling", said Mr Nichols.

In order to 'accelerate the transition from an economy based on extraction and consumption to an economy based on preservation and restoration' (Slow Money, Woody Tasch), reasons for adopting a local currency include:

- a boost in local production and creation of more jobs
- reducing the supply chain
- increased consumer knowledge of which businesses benefit the local economy
- help to insulate the effects of the recession and increase local trade

To find out more about about these local currencies, see Transition Network.

## Group spotlight

Slow Food Fife is led by Viv Collie. Viv has 20 years experience

working in economic development projects in the UK and Northern Europe, and has also been involved in the development and delivery of a number of high profile food and tourism related projects. On our Scottish tour, we caught up with Viv and other local members to hear more about their group.

*Viv, why did you decide to set up a Slow Food group?*

Fife offers a wealth of produce and boasts a number of excellent restaurants and food retailers and we established our group so we could communicate more widely the benefits of shopping and eating locally. We aim to help showcase Fife food and drink producers, so that more members of the public can access good, clean and fair products. Oh, and we were also inspired by the dynamism of SF Edinburgh and SF Perth – and thought we could do it in Fife!

*Who makes up the Slow Food Fife Committee?*

Well, we are a varied group all with a passion for promoting our local region. Roger Brown has over 30 years working in the Scottish rural economy and tourism sectors, and has long been an enthusiastic amateur about the role of natural, locally sourced food and its importance in sustaining local economies and rural tourism. Our Secretary, Dr Carrie Fox is a freelance registered dietician and health writer with a strong interest in local food. Next we have Christopher Trotter, a food writer, chef and consultant passionate about local seasonal food, and last but not least, our Treasurer Gillian Whiteford, a local Fife food producer with an Honours degree in Rural Business Management keen to educate the benefits of eating locally and illustrating what food is actually available.

*What would you like SF Fife to focus on in terms of projects, i.e. education, biodiversity and knowledge sharing?*

We aim to inform and educate people about local, seasonal produce – and help them make better decisions when buying their food. We also hope to provide a focal point and vehicle for promoting local food producers, processors, retailers and eating establishments to the local population and visitors to Fife. We have established links with other local food initiatives, including Fife Farmers' Market, the Fife Diet Project, Royal Highland Education Trust, local Transition Towns, the Fife Coast and Countryside Trust, and we hope to work more closely in the future with these organisations in order to spread the message of good, clean and fair food.

## Slow Food Ark Corner

*The Ark of Taste is a catalogue of exceptional gastronomic products in danger of disappearing due to current food production and distribution systems. Thanks to the contribution of experts and collaborators around the world the Ark currently includes more than 700 products from 30 countries. Presidia are an extension of the Slow Food Ark. A presidium is a local project which focuses on a group of producers of a single product. They work together to develop production and marketing techniques to allow their work to be economically viable.*

*All Slow Food groups are encouraged to seek out local products which would be suitable for inclusion in the UK Ark of Taste. More information about the Ark and further contact information if you wish to nominate a product are available on the website [www.slowfoodark.com](http://www.slowfoodark.com)*

### **Scottish Beremeal**

Beremeal is flour made from bere, the distinct Northern Scottish, six-row local barley (*Hordeum vulgare* L.). At present bere is easily

identified from other barleys as the only 6-rowed spring barley on the UK market. A scientific nutritional analysis of bere meal shows a wide variety of macro and micro nutrients, including significant quantities of folate, thiamine, pantothenic acid, iron, iodine and magnesium. Beremeal has been described as having an earthy, slightly stringent, nutty flavour. It does not store well and is traditionally used to make a dark-greyish bannock, a soft roll that is a speciality of Orkney, Shetland and the Western Isles.

Bere was grown historically in Wales (as Haidd Garw or Coarse barley) and Scotland on higher land of poor fertility i.e. Highlands and Islands. Environmentally, the short growing season of bere suits the lands of low fertility and long summer daylight hours, partly offsetting the poorer soils and lower temperatures due to higher latitude. The long history of bere cultivation in Scotland has led to a wide genetic diversity within and between bere populations. Historically the flour was used throughout Scotland and barley bannocks were eaten widely as the main bread. From the nineteenth century onwards its use declined except for in the Highlands and Islands and on Orkney and Shetland it remained used as bread. Handmills or querns produced meal for household purposes while watermills produced meal on a larger scale.



If you would like to get your hands on some Beremeal, you can locate it at the Golspie Mill and Barony Mills in Scotland.

## National Meeting

Halloween weekend saw Slow Food UK group leaders and representatives converge on the UK Capital to attend the National Meeting. The meeting was held at the Royal Festival Hall at the Southbank Centre - the largest single-run arts institution in the world - with whom Slow Food UK has a unique partnership. The meeting took the format of an Open Space session, which was developed from ancient African tribal meeting practices. The participants were able to raise any subject they wanted to discuss, and over 20 topics - from social media to 'what is slow food & how should it be communicated?' - were addressed in the break-out sessions of between 5-25 people.

The attendance of Carlo Petrini, Paolo di Croce and Silvia Monasterolo of Slow Food International raised spirits and have inspired confidence in our members to move forward on new ideas and projects, with support from the National Office. Leon Ballin of SF Sheffield said, *'The democratic way the National Meeting was run and the use of the unusual but highly effective 'open space' system of discussion allowed the members from around the country to set the agenda for Slow Food UK over the next few years. This will make the organisation stronger and more sustainable as it combines grassroots democracy with strong and positive leadership.'*

