Welcome
Welcome to the December issue of “Food for Thought.” We’re so glad you’ve chosen to receive our newsletter and share exciting news of our events.

While you will find the most current information about our chapter in this newsletter, be sure to visit our website. Learn more about excellent local restaurants and markets, and find out how to share your talents and play a larger role in the Slow Food family. We would love to hear from you. Send us an email. Our fundraising efforts support the Monkey Business Cafe in Fullerton.

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New to Slow Food?

Slow Food is an idea, a way of living and a way of eating. It is a global, grassroots movement with thousands of members around the world that links the pleasure of food with a commitment to community and the environment. For more information, visit their website.

Join Our Mailing List!

Turkey Day has come and gone and Hanukah, Christmas and New Years will soon arrive.

Some of us will give gifts from our kitchens and some will give presents that reflect their interest in artisanal foods grown close to home.

Slow Food Orange County is growing rapidly and we have many exciting events planned for this winter and spring. See Upcoming Events below, especially our Chocolate Dessert demonstration by noted pastry chef, Frederic Moreau. Those who are new to Slow Food will enjoy reading about the Terra Madre conference and Salone del Gusto, which took place in Turin, Italy this past October.

We wish the happiest of holidays to our members, friends and their families, and look forward to seeing you soon.

Our last event
Slow Food Orange County held a special holiday tamale-making workshop at the Spurgeon United Methodist Church in Santa Ana on December 2. Lilly Garo of Santa Ana demonstrated techniques for making turkey, vegetarian, and dessert tamales. The kitchen was packed with both members and non-members of Slow Food as Mrs. Garo demonstrated the preparation of masa, the cornmeal mixture which is the base of the tamale, as well as how to make a homemade chile sauce. Then it was time for the hands-on portion of the evening, in which over 20 participants slathered masa onto corn husks, added their favorite fixings (such as chiles, cheese, olives, and turkey in chile sauce), and wrapped them up to take home. The two-hour workshop was a wonderful way for the community to learn about and experience hands-on a delicious ethnic holiday food tradition right in the heart of Orange County.
Upcoming Events

JANUARY

January 25, 4:00 to 6:00 p.m.

Chocolate Creations for Valentine's Day

Treat your guests to exquisite desserts from your kitchen. Frederic Moreau, formerly of the St. Regis Hotel Monarch Beach, will teach us how to make two a la carte style desserts featuring chocolate.

Using brands such as Felchlin and Vairhoma, Chef Moreau will demonstrate the basic skills to create and assemble a chocolate showpiece. Experience the showmanship of a competition-level pastry chef and indulge in the desserts Frederic prepares for us. Join us on January 25, from 4:00 to 6:00 p.m. at the Ritz Restaurant in Fashion Island, Newport Beach. Cost is $20 per person, which includes wine and hors d'oeuvres. Mark your calendars and make your reservations today. The restaurant has requested payment for all guests at least 2 days before the event. Guests without reservations cannot be accommodated. Please send checks to Roger McErlane, 483 Linden Street, Laguna Beach CA  92651.

January date to be announced:
Possible field trip to Napa Valley Mustard Festival Magic Gala at Culinary Institute of America, St. Helena

FEBRUARY

February 7 & 8

Tet Festival in Westminster
The Vietnamese New Year's Celebration is a great opportunity to experience a culture and cuisine that is unique to Orange County. More information to follow.

MARCH

March 14
Members Meeting and Potluck
Irish cuisine and brew-making workshop.

APRIL

April 14
Members Workshop
Cheese-making workshop with Heather Stoltzfus, cheese-making award winner at Orange County Fair. Location to be announced.

MAY

May, 30
Slow Food Orange County Barbecue and Potluck in Bommer Canyon, Irvine
Historic Bommer Canyon was the original site for the annual cattle round up and branding for the Irvine Ranch. It is now preserved as open space and provides a trail head location as well as beautiful picnic area under the shade of majestic sycamore trees. The event will be co-sponsored by the City of Irvine with a focus on food and nutrition. Barbecue will feature organic chicken. There will be a gate fee but it will be open to all who are interested and will be an opportunity for old and new members to enjoy a fun time and learn something more about SFOC. We will need the help of all members to put this on.

May date to be announced
Possible field trip to Cooking For Solutions at the Monterey Bay Aquarium.

PLEASE NOTE:
Workshops that may be substituted throughout the year include a tortellini and sauce making workshop and chef demonstrations. Please contact us if you would like to conduct a workshop.
A few months ago, two of our convivium members participated in Terra Madre and Salone del Gusto - a mammoth international Slow Food gathering of people, from struggling farmers to Heads of State. Their reports follow:

Roger McErlane, Slow Food OC President

It is huge, reported to be the largest Artisan Food event in the world. Miles of food displays and samples. My most moving experience was attending the Terra Madre lectures and seminars which are next door. Slow Food International selects food producers, (farmers and chefs and educators), from submitted applications and pays their way as delegates to attend this event.

One lecture in particular that I liked was bee keepers from around the world, in many different languages and costumes basically saying the same urgent message. The bee health and population is at the lowest level ever worldwide, almost a third of the hives have disappeared in countries that practice growing monoculture crops and practice industrial agriculture using pesticides and fertilizer to pump up yield from depleted soil. This was repeated by bee keepers from many countries, all of which follow the monoculture agricultural practices promoted by Monsanto and DuPont and their governments. Bees are considered to be an indicator species, which means they show the impact of something going wrong. Sort of the canary in the coal mine example. So we are facing the potential of not enough bees to pollinate our crops. One bee keeper from France said his hives in Paris were producing high quality honey and were the most healthy ever. The reason, No monoculture and no pesticides and fertilizers. Turin was a beautiful city, great food everywhere, most memorable meal, white truffles on pasta in the village of Alba.

Stephanie Georgieff, Slow Food OC Events Chair

Part of the Olympic Village from the 2006 Winter Games was transformed into Terra Madre, attracting 7,000 delegates from 153 countries. From the brilliant multicolored head scarves of the African women, to the hand-bead work of the Andeans, the national costumes from Northern and Eastern Europe, all of humanity was represented, equipped with musical instruments and culinary treasures from their part of the world.

The opening ceremonies were akin to the Olympics, with a procession of the flags. People dressed in regional costumes paraded onto the stage waving their banners. I was most touched by Afghanistan and Iraq, who had a presence at Terra Madre. The Governor of Piedmont welcomed us, as did the Italian Minister of Agriculture and numerous Slow Food International and United Nation leaders. We had a Video greeting from Prince Charles of Wales. One of the speakers was a young man from Massachusetts who was also featured at Slow Food USA in San Francisco. He started a garden program at his High School, to grow vegetables for the cafeteria, and has sparked a program “Sprouts,” that is spreading to other schools across the US. His parting comment was to invite Adults to look at kids differently, and that he was part of the generation who would help reunite the earth with humanity. This set the tone for the conference, whose new focus was fostering our youth in sustainable agriculture and local food production. The star of the show was Carlo Petrini, the founder of Slow Food, who is a delightful orator with a talent for endless musings on how magnificent we Slow Food People are when working together.

The most moving aspect of the gathering was the World Market Place, which happened in tandem with the meetings. The World Market Place was a showcase for the international project of Slow Food Foundation: The Presidia. The Italian meaning for “Presidia” is “to protect.” The Presidia involve more than 10 thousand small scale producers including farmers, fisherman, butchers, herders, cheese makers, bakers and pastry chefs in 47 countries around the world. The bulk of the Presidia are in Italy. We have seven in North America ranging from Wild Rice in Minnesota to May Oysters in Delaware Bay to Gravenstein Apple in Sonoma County California. There is some activity here in Southern California to get a Valencia Orange Presidia going. As project of Slow Food Foundation for Biodiversity, the Presidia must meet several criteria in order to achieve their designation. They must be of high quality and rooted in the culture of the area, they must be obtained through sustainable methods, and produced in working conditions which respect the rights and culture of the workers involved. In other words, they must be Good, Clean and Fair food projects. It is thought that through these practices, local economies are strengthened, harmony between earth and humans is practiced and delicious, ethical food is the result.
The World Market Place was buzzing with activity. I tasted cheeses from Bulgaria, Poland, Italy and Spain. There was a booth from North American Raw Mild Cheese Makers from the Ohio Valley. The Macedonians had chestnuts and honey, the Japanese had a seaweed vegetable product, White Beans from Liguria region of Italy, Abosh Raisins from Herat Afghanistan, Cacao from Olmec Mexico, Pear Cider from Herefordshire England, Capers from Aragon Spain, Goat Prosciutto from Catalonia Spain, Purple potatoes from Peru, the delicious list goes on and on and on. All organic and hand made, The World Market Place was amazing to say the least.

The tandem commercial market, Salone De Gusto, was occurring next to our pavilion. This public event featured artisan producers from around the world, along with food classes in wine, chocolate, cheese, beer and more. People from all over Europe come to attend this food show. It was the public face of Slow Food, and was overwhelming in its scope. They did a good job presenting the ideals of Slow Food; Good, Clean and Fair food in a delicious presentation. It was certainly not an event for the gluten intolerant vegan, but if you are in the market for the most amazing wine, cheeses, pastries, breads and preserved meats from around the world, this is the place for you. I ran into Roger and Sharon McErlane, which was fun to see our fellow OC Slow Food members, and Hai Vo, a senior at UCI studying sustainable agriculture. There were only four Southern Californians present, and I am very proud to say they are all from our Convivium! I was also privileged to take a Comte Cheese tasting class, and introduced to the finer aspects of discerning qualities of cheeses from different ages and locations. I must say, I have never sniffed sticks of cheese before, but the French cheese masters made it an artful lesson!

My perception of the event, was that this project of Slow Food was doing what the UN, international trade treaties and governments have repeatedly failed to do: bring a just, diverse and delicious environment to solve the challenges the global community faces today. Most international agricultural and environmental treaties get bogged down with nationalism and business interests, and the problems persist. All of what Slow Food is doing, is commenced as free, autonomous acts, and within the cultural sensitivity and appropriateness for each region. Climate crisis, economic instability, environmental degradation, oil dependence, food access, all of these things that seem to confound our international bodies. All these challenges are interrelated, and Slow Food has managed to make the connection and allow for a structure to solve the problems in lasting and relevant ways. The people of the world are tired of begging for justice. They took their problems into their own hands peacefully and in full of cooperation through Slow Food, the Presidia and Slow Food Foundation. Terra Madre showed us all what is not only possible, but what is happening now. I think that is why this movement has in a very short time, spread like wildfire. As Vandana Shiva said during her talk of Climate Crisis and Agriculture, the only way to adapt to changing climate is through sustainable agriculture. Commercial petroleum based agriculture can not survive the current and coming changes. I saw and felt deep in my heart, why we should join Slow Food. Our membership dollars and local efforts are part of a global family of delicious justice for earth, human, plant and animal.

More Food News

"As Barack Obama ponders whom to pick as agriculture secretary, he should reframe the question. What he needs is actually a bold reformer in a position renamed "secretary of food." Read complete article here.

And more food News, from Slow Food USA

A wonderful, deeply felt reminder of the role cooking can play in our lives and reflects one of the core principles of Slow Food.

"After all, what experience of food can compare with eating something good made by someone you can hug? Like other forms of human affection, cooking delivers its truest and most enduring gifts when it is savored in intimacy--prepared not by a chef but by a cook and with love." Read the complete article here.

Recommended Reading

Bottom Feeder: How Eat Ethically in a World of Vanishing Seafood
by Taras Grescoe

A seafood lover's round-the-world quest for a truly decent meal.
"Just when opting for omega-3-rich seafood is being recognized as one of the healthiest dietary choices a person can make, the news seems to be full of stories about mercury-laden tuna, shrimp contaminated with antibiotics, and collapsing fish stocks. In a world of endangered cod, pirate-caught Chilean sea bass, and sea-lice-infested salmon, can we really continue to order the catch of the day in good conscience?

Bottomfeeder is the story of a seafood lover's round-the-world quest for a truly decent meal. From strip mall Red Lobsters to the rotary sushi bars of Tokyo, Taras Grescoe, acclaimed author of The Devil's Picnic, travels to the end of the seafood supply chain and back. It is a journey that will see him pulling up lobster traps in Nova Scotia, grilling three-star Michelin chefs in Manhattan, and visiting British Columbia's salmon farms with a guerrilla ecologist. While Grescoe samples poisonous pufferfish in Japan, barbecued sardines in Portugal, and confronts a plate of live drunken shrimp in China, he discovers how out-of-control pollution, unregulated fishing practices, and global warming are affecting the fish that end up on our plates.

More than a screed about the world's fisheries, Bottomfeeder is a balanced and practical guide to eating -the first book, in fact, to provide readers with a clear explanation of how to choose the best fish for our environment and our bodies.

Bottomfeeding is all about eating down the oceanic food chain: avoiding the big fish, such as tuna, swordfish, and salmon, which tend to be full of contaminants, and learning to relish the still abundant, small species that tend to be full of omega-3s and other brain-healthy nutrients."

Read more about the author

Produce of the Month

How fortunate we are to live in a place where so much fresh produce is available year round. While much produce that fills the local supermarket has been shipped from all over the world, a few local farms and farmers markets allow us to eat well close to home.

Visit our website for a listing of local farmers markets, and the website of South Coast Farms in San Juan Capistrano.
All kinds of delicious information is available at NRDC - The Earth's Best Defense, and Local Harvest - real food, real farmers, real community.

Become a Member

We invite you to join the Slow Food movement! Slow Food OC is working hard to preserve and protect local foods and food traditions. Our convivium plans events and programs in places across OrangeCounty-anywhere from community gardens, taste education dinners, and farm tours-join the network and become active in planning and participating in these diverse initiatives.

Click here for Benefits of Membership. Send us an email if you have any questions.