



Slow Food® Bedford

Annual Report – Sue Miller Convivium Leader – Slow Food Bedford

Slow Food International

The fundamental right for pleasure and the responsibility to protect the heritage of food, traditions and cultures to make this pleasure possible, has been the strong message in our movement throughout 2006/7. Good, Clean & Fair and the belief that the food we eat should taste good; that it should be produced in a clean way that does not harm the environment, animal welfare or our health; that producers should receive a fair compensation for their work has remained our philosophy. The concept of eco-gastronomy and the recognition of the connections between plate and planet has been a message that has formed the backbone of our organisation.

We are co-producers, not consumers, because by being informed about how our food is produced and actively supporting those who produce it we become part of and a partner in, the production process. Never was this more apparent than at Slow Food's Terra Madre in Turin in October 2006 when 4,803 farmers, breeders, fishermen and artisan food producers from 1583 food communities and 150 nations joined forces with 953 cooks, 411 professors, 225 representatives from universities, 2320 observers (including myself and Paul) and 776 volunteers to join in debates, workshops, tastings and to celebrate a network of food communities from all over the world sharing in their aspirations, disappointments and remarkable achievements. This was truly a step forward in building a global Terra Madre network. A network of people inspired by face-to-face meetings, exchanges and debates. In the UK we now have 30 Terra Madre cooks and 34 food communities (producers) who are actively involved in Terra Madre.

Simultaneously, Salon del Gusto was being held at the old Fiat assembly line in Turin and was a one of the largest multinational food festivals of it's kind. It brought together not only 298 listed presidia products to taste from all over the world, but had a over 200 workshops & lectures, plus streets of oil, chocolate, vegetables and pasta, a whole Turin Market and a wine tasting area that was second to none. The achievement in Slow Food International alone in staging these two events was remarkable.

In May 2007 Carlo Petrini sent a letter of invitation to all National Associations to join a congress in Mexico in November 2007, his document "Visions and Projects" – "Take back life" is setting the guidelines for the future of the Slow Food Movement. A draft statue will also be agreed at the congress, which will allow more freedom within the movement.

Slow Food International now has a membership of in excess of 83,000 with 850 conviviums, Supporting 289 Presidia projects in 43 countries, the Ark of Taste now catalogues 160 products in 32 countries.

Slow Food UK

Slow Food UK office opened in Ludlow in January 2007. This is a major step forward and Fiona Richmond The UK Coordinator has done a wonderful job in pulling it altogether. Slow Food AGM was held in Ludlow in February with the election of the board they are as follows:

Silvija Davidson – Leader of Slow Food London
Angie Dodd – Slow Food Member Cornwall
Lyndon Gee – Slow Food London
Iain Liddell – Leader Slow Food East Lothian
Pam Rodway – Leader of Highlands & Moray
Alan Roe – Development Director and member of Slow Food Ludlow
Chris Walton – Finance Director and Member of Slow Food Edinburgh
Suzanne Wynn – Leader of Slow Food Somerset

A convivium leaders meeting was held in London on 9th June. Carlo Petrini addressed the meeting and took time to speak to every convivium leader personally about how their convivium was doing. Carlo was in the UK for the launch of his book "Slow Food Nation" The idea of this book is to develop ideas, raise awareness and arouse passion in how we can take back control of our food. The meeting discussed the congress in Mexico and we voted on the International statute.

Slow Food UK is a young movement that is starting out on the difficult journey of trying to make a difference, in this country, to the way we look at, think about and taste food and to redefine it as a pleasurable act. To date Slow Food UK has 2189 members and 46 conviviums, this is increasing and I hope it will be the start of a strong movement in the UK.

The UK has 9 listed Ark of Taste products

Artisan Somerset Cheddar
Cheshire Cheese
Colchester Native Oysters
Dorset Blue Vinny
Double Curd Lancashire Cheese
Dunlop Cheese
Herdwick Sheep
Lyth Valley Damsons
Three Counties Perry (alc. drink)

6 Presidia products

Artisan Somerset Cheddar
Cornish Sardines & Pilchards
Fal Oyster
Gloucester Cheese
Old Gloucester Beef
Three Counties Perry (alc. drink)

Slow Food Bedford

Launched in July 2007 has gone from strength to strength we now have 70 members.

Over the past year under the headings of Taste, Embrace, Support & Focus we have organised the following events:

Embrace – Napoli V's Sardo 2nd Sept

Comparing the different tastes and cooking methods of Naples and Sardinia. Bedford became home to many people from both of these areas after the Second World War. They brought with them a culture that has survived in our community for over 60 years. Intense rivalry over cooking methods and use of ingredients shows us a passion that we need to regain in our own food heritage.

Support – The British Cheese Festival 30th Sept

Held at Cheltenham October 2006. Gave everyone a unique opportunity to sign up for master classes on the art of cheese making or just to celebrate our English beers, cider and Perry brewers.

Taste – The Wild The Nut & The Berry 11th Nov

This was a chance to taste local produce from our woodlands and countryside. Gianna and Paul, members of our convivium helped to pick the produce from the hedgerows in September and were able to sample the fruits of their labour at a truly local event.

Embrace – Caribbean V's African 13th January

We have a strong link to the Caribbean and African nations as many came to Bedford in the 50's and 60's to find work. These cultures have an amazing food culture and through our local markets, particularly our charter market, ingredients can be sourced to make any traditional dish. Safeguarding a way of life that must not be lost from their culture.

Focus – 25th Jan, presentation of Slow Food to Tastes of Bedfordshire meeting to form an action group to save our local gourmet market which is presently being swallowed up by supermarket trade, which is directly affecting the attendance of our local traders. Tastes of Bedfordshire is a County Council project that compile a directory of Bedfordshire foods and crafts. It also runs a Bedfordshire Food Mark which is a stamp that informs people of which companies are producing, buying and serving Bedfordshire food. We have teamed up

with traders and the local borough to put forward suggestions to improve our gourmet market and make the market sustainable for the future.

Taste – "Munch & Glug" 24th Feb - In line with Camra Community Pubs awareness week – This was a Beer tasting and traditional pub food. Our local pubs are sadly disappearing from our communities and so to is the traditional food that was served alongside the excellent ales that have become part of the British Pub. We use a local community pub the Devonshire Arms for this and our other our events.

Support – Oyster trip 17th March - Richard Hawards Colchester native oysters. Richards's family have been cultivating in the shallow Salcott Creek off West Mersea Island, Essex since 1792. The day was a fantastic incite into the life of an Oyster gatherer as we not only got to open and taste the native Colchester Oyster but were actually involved in landing the catch. Richards Oysters are listed in the Ark of Taste.

Taste – "This is England"

This was the last event in our calendar year and was a celebration of English and local produce. A damson tree originally from Laxton Orchards supplied the fruit for the year old Damson Gin. The Sheringham crab was of superb quality and the English rosewood smoked chicken was smoked in our back garden from wood from a rose tree planted in the 1930's. The Sharnbrook Hogget championed up the main course, of which all ingredients had been purchased from producers within a 7-mile radius from of the Devonshire Arms. The Honey for the Icecream came from the local Beekeepers association. The Dorest Vinny Blue (ark of taste) was a great finish coupled with locally made Sandy Oaties.

We have had some truly memorable events over the past year, which we have as Slow Food Bedford Supported Good, Clean & Fair and awakened so many people to the passion of pleasurable food from the planet to the plate without destroying the future for the next Generation.

I hope you all can celebrate with us on 21st July, our 1st anniversary and AGM and hope this will be the first of many!

Sue Miller
Convivium Leader
Slow Food Bedford

I would like to thank all our members and committee for the support they have shown over the last 12 months

In particular the following people:

Paul Wright – Treasurer
Paul Miller – Research, cooking and constant support
Val Walter – Devonshire Arms
John Franklin – Franklins of Thorncote
David Blunt – Davidjon Butchers
David Gunn – Gunns bakery
Allan -Traditional Fishmonger
Cath Gipson (mum) – Prep. For events and flowers
Filippo Volpe – (Slow Food Leader, Hertfordshire) Support & Good Cheeses
Caron Kendall – Tastes of Bedfordshire
Richard Howard – Richard Haward's Colchester Oysters
Matt & Nick Hill – Behind the scenes support
Pepe Perkins – Minutes
Anne Marie – helping at events

The next generation for giving up their Saturday night to voluntary help out
Non members - Nique, Terri, Jamie, Nick, Members - Mark, Karen & Michael