

# Nutrition News

Department of Human Nutrition



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## The Slow Food Movement – Is it Gaining Momentum?

“Fast food” is a term most Americans use periodically. But what is Slow Food? Slow food aims to be everything fast food is not. It’s slow in the making and the eating, and it’s fresh, not processed. It is from neighborhood farms and stores and not from retail giants. Slow food is about taking the time to slow down and enjoy life with family, friends and co-workers.

Slow Food USA is a non-profit educational organization dedicated to supporting and celebrating the food traditions of North America. Their mission envisions a future food system that is based on the principles of high quality and taste, environmental sustainability, regional food traditions and the pleasures of the table.

The Slow Food movement was founded in 1986 by Italian author Carlo Petrini. He wanted to reach out to consumers and demonstrate to them that they have choices over fast food and large supermarkets. He wanted to keep alternative food choices alive with a movement that is ecologically minded and concerned with sustainability – a connection between the plate and the planet. With the preservation of taste at the forefront, he sought to support and protect small growers and artisanal producers, support and protect the physical environment, and promote biodiversity. Today, the organization that Petrini and his colleagues founded is active in over 100 countries and has a worldwide membership of over 80,000.

Slow Food is inching its way across the country, with more than 70 chapters in 40 states. Identified by their snail logo, Slow Food local groups called ‘convivia’ invite members to taste, celebrate and share food traditions important to their communities. Its biggest bases are in New York and northern California, but Nebraska, Colorado, Missouri and Oklahoma support growing chapters. The Kansas City convivia has an asparagus harvest and seminar scheduled in Lawrence, Kansas, and a tour of the Louisburg Cider Mill planned in May 2008. Slow Food Kansas City focuses on food, local growers and the food preparation practices within different cultures. Slow Food teaches about choice and season.

Patrick Martins, Slow Food USA executive director, says that Slow Food picks up where the organic food movement left off. “Once dismissed as a fringe market, organic foods now are a staple in most grocery stores,” he said. Slow Food’s influence could accelerate trends already affecting big business, marketing experts say. Restaurants are adding low fat soups, salads and other healthy items to their menus to meet customer demands for made-to-order meals with fresh ingredients locally grown. Success is proving that consumers are willing to slow down and pay more.

Slow foods don’t have to be expensive or complicated. They can be as simple as brewing tea from a local store, tasting cheese produced in a nearby county or shopping at a farmers’ market. Slow foods include the message that dietitians have been preaching for years – a focus on whole foods, such as fruits, vegetables, whole grains, nuts and legumes. The slow food philosophy digs deeper into the food system, tracing foods all the way back to the soil in which they were grown. According to Melinda Hemmelgarn, MS, RD, columnist and a Kellogg Foundation Food and Society

Policy fellow, the message of slow food is about “thinking beyond your plate.”

Will the Slow Food Movement continue to gain momentum? Will we return to life as it was? Will you buy a Slow Food cookbook and connect with food in a way that is direct, celebratory and delicious? Try doing something “slow” – make the pasta for a casserole, squeeze oranges for fresh juice or knead bread and enjoy the fresh aroma as it bakes. Even taking time to sit down for a lunch away from your computer is a leap toward the concept of slow foods.

For more information about healthy eating, contact your local extension office.

The Food Assistance Program can help people of all ages with low income buy nutritious foods for a better diet.

To find out more, call toll-free 1-888-369-4777.

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