

Savoury dinners ... or agro-marketing?

How Slow Food movement relates to traditional food products

- paper presentation -

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INTRODUCTION

The global economical competition presses companies to save production costs and launch more and more attractive products, suggesting good shopping for consumers by strong advertising at all media. There is a strong competition, more and more concentrating food business at big multinational producing companies and global market chains.

For main competitors, investigations for efficiency and technological research – related the cost management – has an important role. For minimalization of production costs, there are two basic tools:

- product development - mostly formula manipulation: decreasing ratio of expensive components (substituting them with others, exploiting latest results of improved food technology and food chemistry - imitating, or sensually even "exceeding" usual values of traditional products)
- increasing efficiency of manufacturing by high capacity and mass industrial production; and utilisation advantages of very sophisticated and quickly improving logistic systems.

The global tendency provides worldwide to disappearance of thousands of traditional agricultural and food products, local breeds and recipes - and loosing biodiversity, local nutrition and social traditions, work places, regional market and so on. Furthermore, the question of food safety - at a so quick nutritional change and more and more complicated traceability - is still not convincingly answered.

Slow Food movement, founded in 1989 in Paris on the basis of initiatives of Carlo Petrini from Italy, now is a significant international civil network, for respects to and protection of "taste" and food traditions, for promotion / provision of "**good, clean and fair**" food.

Members of the movement are individuals, forming regional, local groups, "convivia". Actual numbers: about 100000 members, 1000 convivia, 100 countries. But the number of cooperating people and sympathizers is worldwide much more.

OBJECTIVES

The main aims of this organization are: saving diversity of primary products and variety of food preparation, to keep equilibrium between local agri-food production, food market and local consumption (including relations to gastronomy, culture, social life and tourism), to keep equilibrium with existing and developing global food-business processes.

Summing up, the general idea is to ensure "sustainable local prosperity" and protect future of regional communities, relating food-producing and consuming traditions.

PROCEDURES

To achieve the above outlined complex target, the movement deals with all interested parties.

The basic three involved parties, as main target groups, are:

- food producers (raw materials, basic ingredients, processed food, meals);
- "intermediary" participants, as restaurants, cooks, trades-people, expositors, editors, media,
- consumers (shoppers, gourmets, individuals, children, families etc.).

Even institutions and services (scientists, food engineers, hygienists, laboratories, inspectors, schools, etc.) have significant participation.

There are many programs and initiatives in Slow Food movement, including exhibitions, workshops, festivals, gastro-tours, taste/sensory trainings, school gardens, awards and challenges as "Slow cities" network, publication, education (involving specialists, scientists, academics ...), and there is a strong cooperation between convivia, participants and sympathizers.

RESULTS

The developing society of Slow Food, during last 20 years, formed a usefull variety of programs and actions, launched different activities.

By the international office (Bra, Italy), national organizations and local convivia a wide choice of regular – both national and international – programs, expositions and meetings has been developed, helping in integration of related parties and interested people. These relate all main grups:

- There are several initiatives and programs for **producers**: "Arc of taste" for disappearing products, "Presidium" program for product protection organized by International Foundation for Biodiversity, regular meetings like multifunctional Salone del Gusto. Actually a new strong networking is in progress, "Terra Madre", connecting and networking small food producing communities worldwide. Last meeting in 2008 in Turin hosted 7000 representatives from 153 countries.
- Special meetings and several events - such as food degustations, taste education workshops, special dinners, symposia - are ensured for **intermediary** people, like members of food market, restaurants, catering, education, publishing (cooks, gastronomy specialists, academics, teachers, journalists). International office and member countries have web-sites and a wide web network is available (www.slowfood.com).
- In activities and programs the main "target objective" is the **consumer**. To achieve complexity, to form a wide reception of traditional food products - depends on them. For this reason is very important to have exhibitions like Salone del Gusto and other regular international events, and - among others - events of regional and local convivia: dinners, farm visits, taste workshops, food degustations, school programs, school gardens, local markets, village festivals. There is a rich publication activity (Slow Food Editore issues basic editions in 8 actual "official languages" and a lot of books, publications in different languages).

CONCLUSIONS

Summig up, the Slow Food movement - with its holistic approach of "food" and detailed structure of programs, events, organizational tools and enthusiastic membership background - offers a choice to continue the traditional, approved, accepted, respected way of nutrition.

The movement connects people, integrates related parties to a professional and committed global network, completing the "world of food".

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