

ART AND COMMUNITY

Slow Food Movement Gains Speed, Delights Foodies

By Madra McDonald
Contributing Writer

If you subscribe to culinary periodicals or peruse the food section of *The New York Times* on any given Wednesday, you'd be hard pressed not to come across an article nowadays that mentions slow food. This appreciation for all things "good, clean and fair" has recently spawned a larger following in the cooking community for those who have a deep appreciation for food and where it comes from.

By definition the slow movement means "a cultural shift toward slowing down life's pace." Not a bad idea. In a world of instant everything and short cuts galore, couldn't we all stand to slow things down a bit? There is clearly a connection to what our country eats and how it affects our health and everyday life.

If you ask the average passionate foodie, the term slow food can mean different things to different people. It is called "The anti-fast food." "A return to food as it was yesterday." "The pur-

est form of revisiting the dining room table."

Perhaps its most important virtue is that it's not a trend. The modern day roots of the movement trace back to Rome, Italy. In the early 80's, slow food pioneer Carlo Petrini was more than a little disturbed when the corporate fast food giant McDonald's™ reared its golden arches by opening near the renowned Spanish Steps of Rome. For a country that is celebrated around the world for its deep rooted, made-from-scratch cuisine, the unwelcomed merchant inspired a global movement that would transcend countries and reignite our everyday appreciation for all things pure and enriching in life. In 1986, the Slow Food organization was born and has since sprouted to include 83,000 members with chapters in over 122 countries.

According to its website, Slow Food

USA envisions a future food system that is based on the principles of high quality and taste, environmental sustainability, and social justice – in essence, a food system that is good, clean and fair. Slow Food USA seeks to catalyze a broad cultural shift away from the destructive effects of an industrial food system and fast life; toward the regenerative cultural, social and economic benefits of a sustainable food system, regional food traditions, the pleasures of the table, and a slower and more harmonious rhythm of life.

In simpler terms,

the slow food movement pays tribute to the age-old testament "you are what you eat." Relating to organic meats, conscience-minded individuals don't mind the marginal expense of paying a little extra for organic beef, poultry and pork if it means the animals are humanely raised on a vegetarian diet, free of antibiotics, hormones, artificial additives

and preservatives.

The most recent valiant effort that attests to the slow food movement was expressed by British chef and Food Network star Jamie Oliver. In January, he slaughtered a chicken in front of 4 million television viewers to demonstrate what goes on behind-the-scenes in our country's slaughterhouses and to awaken British consumers to the high cost of cheap chicken.

Oliver did this not to promote vegetarianism. He did this to make people both aware and concerned about the way animals are being treated. His argument profoundly points out that most people today are more concerned with how much food costs rather than if the animal had a natural life and a humane death.

"A chicken is a living thing, an animal with a life cycle, and we shouldn't expect it will cost less than a pint of beer," he said. "It only costs a bit more to give a chicken a natural life and a reasonably pleasant death."

To learn more visit www.slowfoodusa.org.

"A chicken is a living thing, an animal with a life cycle, and we shouldn't expect it will cost less than a pint of beer."

Jamie Oliver

Simple Tomato Salad with Prosciutto

Serves 4-6

Ingredients:

6 local, ripe tomatoes (2 of them peeled & seeded)

1 clove of garlic

1 teaspoon ground cumin

Pinch of crushed red pepper

1/3 cup of good quality extra virgin olive oil

4 ounces prosciutto (thinly sliced)

Crumbled ricotta salata (dry ricotta)

Kosher salt

Fresh-ground black pepper

Fresh torn leaves of basil

Method:

For the vinaigrette: In a mortar, add a pinch of salt and the garlic and crush into a paste. Add crushed red pepper and the 2 peeled and seeded tomatoes. Crush the tomatoes until a smooth liquid is achieved. Add cumin and transfer the mixture to a bowl. Whisk the olive oil in a steady stream and season (you can alternately do this in a food processor but a mortar really traps in flavor). Thin-slice the remaining 4 tomatoes and arrange them across 4-6 plates and drizzle a couple of spoonfuls of vinaigrette on and around the tomatoes.

Lay thinly sliced prosciutto on top along with some crumbled ricotta. Finish with torn leaves of basil.

Phillip McDonald

Fresh and Seasonal are Key to Flavor



Phillip McDonald

Simple, Local & Seasonal by Chef Phillip

Chef & Owner of Table Five

Spring is fresh and there is no better way to celebrate this time of year than through food. I was very lucky to have been born and raised in Destin B.C. (before condos), where fresh fish was only a fishing pole and a dock away. And it was this passion for all things fresh that ultimately led me into a career of cooking professionally.

My enthusiasm for food has taken me on a decade-long journey that I feel has only just begun. I've had the great fortune of working under some of the best chefs in the south and my culinary travels have led me to many wonderful parts of the country and abroad. From discovering Meyer lemons in Northern California to savoring house-made salami and fresh-cut pasta in Tuscany, I have to admit that my vacations are almost always planned around food.

Over the past few years, I have come to realize that we have an abundance of local bounty right here in our own back yard. There has been an increase in local food vendors and farmers sprouting up in our area including Grayton Beach-based "Perennials and Natives by a girl named Toni," Dragonfly Fields and Old Mill Farm, to name a few.

So you can imagine my excitement when the founders of Seaside approached me with the idea of writing a food column that would contribute more than a mere recipe. Although my hope for this column is that it will evolve organically over time, my mission is to share with you my knowledge on the importance of simple cooking technique and – most importantly – flavor. I hope my words inspire in you the pure joy of foraging and cookery as well as being conscious of where your food comes from.

In each issue, I will highlight seasonal vegetables and fruits, sustainable seafood and free-range meats that our local farms and purveyors are offering along with a simple recipe. I will also report on my adventures to search area farmers while lacing through the back roads of this great region. The recipes I will provide are technique-driven. Don't get too caught up in rigidly following them.

Unless you're making pastries, recipes can be altered by ingredients and their conditions and are, for the most part, loose approximations.

At the end of the day, cooking should be relaxing and therapeutic. Food is best when shared with others and I encourage you to send your thoughts, comments and any food-related questions my way. You never know, you may inspire the subject for a future column. Here's to conscious eating.

Seasonal foods to look out for now:

Artichokes
Asparagus
Tomatoes
Baby squashes
Fennel
Strawberries
Blackberries
Cobia
Pompano

Phillip McDonald is the chef/owner of Table Five, a personal chef service that specializes in dinner parties and private home events along the Emerald Coast. He can be reached at info@tablefivechef.com or (850) 496-5066.

Catching Up with Poets, Photographers Who Escaped to Create

By Marsha Dowler
Seaside Times Writer

Escape to Create 1995 introduced two gifted Florida artists with far-reaching creative consequences. Poet Silvia Curbelo and photographer Anna Tomczak discovered they shared a mutual appreciation and understanding of one another's work.

Since that time they have worked in collaboration, pairing painterly poem to poetic photograph in an extended exploration of memory as fragments, and the ephemeral nature of beauty.

Each has since published a major work inspired in part by the artistry of the other. Curbelo's poetry continues

to be published in major literary journals and has twice been anthologized by the acclaimed W.W. Norton publishing house. Her latest collection of poems, "Ambush," features a Tomczak figurative photograph on the cover.

Tomczak's first published monograph, "Sanctuary: Anna Tomczak, Photography," was recently published by the Museum of Florida Art (DeLand, Fla.) where the largest exhibition of Tomczak's career is currently on display before traveling to museums across the country.

Curbelo, a native of Cuba who came to the U.S. with her parents at the age of 11, lives in Tampa where she is managing editor of Organica Magazine. Tomczak's home and studio are in Lake

Helen, Fla., where she conducts several photographic workshops throughout the year. They include digital and image transfer workshops in Tuscany, offered through Il Chiostro Tours, Inc.

Whether considered individually or as a collaborative duo, Curbelo and Tomczak have made significant contributions to the arts in Florida.

Both "Ambush" and "Sanctuary: Anna Tomczak, Photography" are available for purchase from Sundog Books.

For information on Escape to Create, The Seaside Institute's artist-in-residence program, visit the Escape to Create link at www.theseasideinstitute.org.

Application deadline for the January 2009 program is June 15.