



a chat with
CARLO PETRINI

SLOW FOOD MOVEMENT FOUNDER CARLO PETRINI TELLS ALECIA WOOD HOW YOUNG PEOPLE HOLD THE KEY TO A BETTER FOOD SYSTEM.

PHOTOS: ALBERTO PEROLI

Q: SLOW FOOD HAS EVOLVED A LOT SINCE YOU FOUNDED THE MOVEMENT IN THE 1980S. HOW DO YOU THINK IT HAS CHANGED OVER TIME?

A: When we started, our main objective was to defend everyone's personal right to the convivial pleasure of food. Food was losing all of its ties with the territory, and the first thing that made us aware of this was the increasing difficulty in finding food that was, in fact, "good". We began to research the causes of this, and by doing so we gradually realised the complex geopolitics that lay behind our daily food choices. We have learned to better comprehend the logistics, environmental implications and the social, economic, anthropological and cultural consequences [of food]. The journey continues today, conscious that food should not just be "good" but "good, clean and fair".

Q: WHAT PROJECTS IS SLOW FOOD FOCUSING ON AT THE MOMENT?

A: The beauty of this association is that there are always more projects to keep us engaged on many fronts. Right now, however, there are definitely two that are close to the heart of the entire international association. First, the 10,000 Gardens in Africa project. This project seeks to develop community gardens throughout the African continent that can feed the community, schools and villages with quality food, and become places of encounter and exchange. In addition to physically setting up the garden, the project covers staff training costs and travel expenses for the directors of various gardens so they can meet and create a network of resilient relationships within Africa. We are convinced it is important to focus on and sustain this very continent, in which almost one million people are still suffering from hunger and malnutrition. Secondly, I would like to indicate the strengthening of the youth network. Young people are our future. If we want a better food system we must focus on young people so they do not feel alone when fighting their daily battles, and to help them see agriculture as a viable life project. We have just concluded the first edition of *Terra Madre Giovani* - We Feed the Planet, the meeting of more than 2500 young people in Milan to discuss food issues many of them face every day. The event was a great success, and I am sure that this peaceful

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multitude still has the power to make a contribution, proposing innovative solutions, launching new ideas and projects.

Q: WHAT DO YOU FEEL HAS BEEN SLOW FOOD'S GREATEST ACHIEVEMENT?

A: Surely, one of the things we are most proud of is the incredible *Terra Madre* network, which meets every two years in Turin at the *Salone del Gusto* [an event that celebrates small-scale producers from around the world] and is made up of thousands of farmers, breeders, shepherds, cooks and food artisans who in every corner of the world feed their communities. Their approach to sustainable cultivation of the land is a value in itself, and our job is to support them and not leave them on their own.

Q: HOW IS SLOW FOOD CREATING POSITIVE CHANGE IN THE FOOD SYSTEM?

A: The road to change is certainly long, but along with our daily work, we continually try to increase people's awareness because by choosing our food we make a political choice, a true and real vote, even if it is often unconsciously. In parallel, we must find ways to strengthen local production through sustainable initiatives and international projects, for example with the Slow Food Presidia (to preserve biodiversity and protect at-risk traditional food products), or at a local level, like with the *Mercati Della Terra* ('Earth Markets' selling all local, seasonal produce). We try to ensure these producers feel part of a network that has the communication capacity to discuss the issues closest to their hearts.

Q: ENSURING GOOD, CLEAN AND FAIR FOOD FOR EVERYONE IS AN AMBITIOUS GOAL. HOW DO YOU FIND THE INSPIRATION TO STAY TRUE TO YOUR OBJECTIVE?

A: If the right to good food, a clean environment and social justice will not be achieved, our work will not be finished. It is certainly not easy, but this is the only direction in which we can continue working to be faithful to what we believe in. The road is still long, but we have no intention to stop.

Q: YOUR WORK INVOLVES TRAVELLING IN ORDER TO PROMOTE AND SPREAD THE SLOW FOOD PHILOSOPHY. WHERE ARE YOU GOING NEXT?

A: The next trip will take me to Shillong, India, in the region of Meghalaya for the Indigenous *Terra Madre* event, a gathering of food producers from indigenous communities around the world. Though different, they often share problems and points of view regarding their choice to remain faithful to their territories and traditions, resisting homogenisation of their knowledge. I can't wait to be there with them. **OG**