

Christmas wishes to Slow Food Perth members, friends and families



Procession for the Feast of Epiphany,
Moscow XVI century

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'See you in Puebla!'

This call by Slow Food international president Carlo Petrini at the end of the fourth international Slow Food Congress in the Italian city of Naples four years ago set in train the task of planning the 2007 congress in Mexico. Slow Food Perth congress delegate and convivium treasurer Trudy Parker reports from Puebla.

SLOW Food Perth co-leader Pauline Tresise and I were privileged to be the Western Australian representatives in the 17-strong Australian delegation to the fifth Slow Food International Congress in Puebla, Mexico, 8–11 November 2007.

The main purposes of the congress are for delegates to endorse the future directions of the organisation, to elect the international president (Carlo Petrini, unopposed), and for representatives of the many countries present to update other delegates on the status of Slow Food in their respective countries. Some smaller meetings of international councillors and other groups also took place outside the general sessions.

This business took place between lunches and dinners of outstanding Mexican food, with wonderful musical accompaniment, as well as concerts and spectacular dance performances.

The Australian delegation was housed in the Camino Real Hotel in the historic centre of Puebla. This building started life as a convent in the sixteenth century, but there was no austerity required of us in the twenty-first – the rooms were very comfortable and breakfasts delicious.



Slow carnations at the fifth Slow Food international congress in Puebla, Mexico. Photograph Trudy Parker

The congress

Carlo Petrini made inspired and inspiring speeches both opening and closing the congress. Slow Food has come a long way from its roots as a protest against Macdonalds appearing in Rome – Petrini's active mind and creative soul have taken the organisation from being one to celebrate good food and its convivial consumption to what it is today – the cluster of organisations which protect our Terra Madre, conserve food biodiversity, and above all promote, support and celebrate all those who produce and transform *good, clean and fair* food for us all to enjoy.

Among the updates, we heard the contrasting stories of Slow Food in different countries, from Pia, the chef from Swedish Lapland to Dessislava from Bulgaria

and the delegate from Brazil, the biggest exporter of food in the world. Then there were the Slow Food partners such as Phrang Roy from the [Christensen Fund](#) and their Global Biocultural Initiative, to Woody Tasch and his plans for “Slow Money” to change the way the whole world of money works.

Each country represented had very different stories to tell, from dealing with the practicalities of organising a national association (Australia and The Netherlands) to reviving and restoring agricultural and food transformation processes almost lost during the communist era (Bulgaria, Belarus) when quantity of production totally over-ruled quality.

Deeply moving group presentations were made by 15 students from the University of Gastronomic Sciences and nine from various United States universities. Their passion for the promotion of *good, clean and fair* food was awesome.

On the final day, the students presented a resolution for the congress's endorsement, the content of which was a commitment to be more active in the support of younger people – recruiting and including them in convivia, and in the leadership of the Slow Food organisation as a whole.

There is plenty of food for thought in this resolution, and the potential for Slow Food Perth to form active partnerships to bring some of its ideas to fruition. It will be available for all to read in due course, along with the minutes and reports from the congress, and Pauline has included its text in her report for the Australian delegation.

This resolution was carried unanimously, and was immediately acted upon in part by Carlo Petrini when he announced at the end of the congress that his three vice-presidents will be Alice Waters from California

(continuing, for historic reasons), Vandana Shiva from the Navdanya organisation in India and 20 year-old Kenyan John Kariuki Mwangi, one of the students from the University of Gastronomic Sciences.



Puebla state produces an impressive array of foods, which were arranged in a beautiful display at the convention centre, and which we also observed in the market in the days after the congress was over. Chillies in many forms are prominent, fortunately for my palate not all hot, plus wonderful tropical fruits, meats with skin and fur still visible, seafood and much more. I longed to stay in Puebla for a while with access to a kitchen in order to buy, prepare and eat this beautiful produce.

On the Saturday of the congress, as soon as the day's proceedings were over, we piled into buses and were driven to Cholula, an ancient town very close to Puebla. On the way, we had good views of the famous 'Smoking Mountain' – Popocatepetl – and when we arrived were witness to some Aztec ceremonies in the dark, on the side of the pyramid of Cholula. This is the largest pyramid in the world,

being almost two kilometres around its base, but over the years became buried in earth to the degree that it was thought to be simply a hill, on top of which the Conquistadors built a church. The church remains, and only sections of the pyramid structures underneath it have been excavated.

Following the pyramid ceremony, we were led into the town centre and treated to a special cocktail (contents unknown, but delicious), mescal, beer and food, while watching energetic Aztec dances, on the steps of the Cholula cathedral. After the dancing was a delightful concert inside the cathedral, then it was time for dinner. More entertainment, good food, wine and fun followed. This was typical of the social activities of the congress, and fundamental to the Petrini approach of mixing the very serious with plenty of conviviality, music, dancing and fun.



There was no announcement at the end of this congress about where the next one will be held in four years' time. There is more of a focus on next year's Terra Madre meeting – planned to have a major

emphasis on youth, and also to be, in Carlo's words 'the biggest folk music festival in the world'.

Thank you to the Perth convivium for nominating and supporting me as a delegate to the congress. It was a life-changing experience and clarified for me the true value, purpose and direction of the Slow Food organisation, which I am happy to share with all.

Pauline Tresise's Mexican collage

THIS collage *right* of the fifth Slow Food international congress in the Mexican city of Puebla in November 2007 helps to remind me of a wonderfully happy and vibrant experience. For me this is what makes Slow Food stand apart from all other social justice organisations – it is the pleasure of the shared table; the overwhelming memory of the sights, sounds, tastes of the shared table we experienced together.

Every lunch and dinner was enveloped in the senses – the music of the *marachi*, the company of the world communities, the tastes of the local *cocina Poblana*, the richness of the *mole Poblana*, exquisite *chiles en nogado* adding to the uniqueness of the cactus soup, and the delicate flavour of grasshoppers served with either *mescal* or local beer.



The cherries of Castagni

Slow Food Perth convivium secretary Philippa Baws visits La Piana dei Castagni, an agriturismo in the Italian countryside between Bologna and Florence.



WE picked up our hire car in Bologna – 'we' being five mature students from an Italian class in Perth. With some difficulty we stuffed our suitcases into the inadequate boot, much to the amusement of a couple of Italian male bystanders whom we could see, through a haze of cigarette smoke, were just waiting to be asked to help with the task.

Rosanna was our driver and she set off cautiously and rightly so as it was the first time she had driven on the 'wrong' side of the road. It took us longer than the hour it should have to get to Castel D'Aiano as we missed the exit from the autostrada. But soon we were back on track, driving through breathtaking densely wooded scenery, up into the hills and along windy roads with lots of heart-stopping hairpin bends.

We were all looking out for the water tower at the edge of the road that I remembered from my last visit. It was where we had to turn off and soon it came into view. We turned into the tree-lined unmade road and after nearly a kilometre we came upon the fifteenth century stone cottage which was to be our home for the next four days.

'Benvenuti nella nostra casa' said the sign on the door with a mobile telephone number to call if no one was home. While we waited for Valeria to arrive, we took in our surroundings – the sweet freshness of the air, the sound of bees buzzing in the lavender, the birdsong, chickens roaming freely around the garden, and the magnificent uninterrupted view beyond the vegetable garden to the Apennines, vast and majestic in the distance. How refreshing this was after the hustle and bustle of Venice.



Valeria showed us up the stone stairway to select our rooms. Since we were the only visitors, we could take our pick of the five available rooms, each one with its own en-suite and each enjoying stunning views. After we had claimed our rooms we returned downstairs

where Valeria had poured us each a glass of *prosecco* accompanied by home made biscotti and some little savoury delights from the old flour mill nearby.



Breakfast at La Piana dei Castagni is a Slow Foodies' heaven. Mini omelettes made with just-gathered free range eggs and zucchini freshly picked from the vegetable garden topped with a slice of locally cured prosciutto. A variety of cured meats, soft and delicate stracchino and fresh ricotta cheeses, a chunk of parmesan, all locally produced, to enjoy with bread from the wood-fired oven at the flour mill and Valeria's home made cherry jam. Another of Valeria's delightful specialities is *tigelle* – small round flat bread typical of the area.

As we enjoyed our breakfast, we could see through the window that Gianni, Valeria's father, was gathering another bucket of cherries for yet more home-made jam and cherry torte. There are cherry and chestnut trees everywhere on the property. The chestnuts were not yet in season, but we were invited to pick and enjoy the cherries and, of course, we needed little encouragement to do so.

Over the next few days we enjoyed long walks in and around the property and visits to Il Mulino, the old flour mill and wood-fired oven and to the parmesan cheese producer.

Valeria cooked dinner for us on two evenings during our stay, assisted in the kitchen by her handsome young son, Gabriele. Zucchini risotto was followed by succulent turkey cooked with pancetta, anchovies and thyme, and salad from the vegetable garden. For dessert, there was another of Valeria's specialities – chocolate salami. There were chestnuts, and of course abundant fresh cherries. Everything home made and locally produced. And for a *digestivo* there was grappa, limoncello with basil or a walnut liqueur. After this delicious meal it was as well there were only a few stairs to climb to bed!

All too soon it was time to stuff the suitcases back into the car and head off to Verona. But I'll be back, time and again, as I just can't resist the peace and tranquillity, the delicious food and above all Valeria's warm Italian hospitality.



More information

<http://www.pianadeicastagni.it>

'No trifling matter' – black perigord truffles and how to prepare them

Slow Food Perth member Trish Wood writes about 'Aaah', the expression prompted by the alluring aroma of truffle.



Truffle harvest in the Perigord, France.
Photograph Denis Cauchoix
www.trekearth.com

SMELL it once and you will never forget it. Truffles and how best to serve them, while retaining their elusive and prized qualities, is perhaps one of the most debated culinary topics of all time.

Once harvested, a truffle absorbs oxygen and expels carbon dioxide and other gases containing the aroma, therefore, once they are considered 'ripe' for harvest and unearthed, they should be eaten within a few days.

With local harvesting of perigord black truffles at Manjimup in the state's south west from June through to October, access to fresh truffles is easy enough. And at \$3000 per kilo, solvent gourmets want to make the most of their purchase.

Fatty foods such as butter, cream, oil and animal fats, especially in the skin, trap both the flavour and the aroma of truffles. The majority of recipes showcasing the highly revered truffle will contain some kind of fat.

It is not necessary to be elaborate when preparing food using truffles. The simplicity of an omelette or scrambled eggs with some shavings of raw truffle lavishly scattered on top just prior to serving is elegant and bound to impress.

Alternatively, stir some cream and butter through good pasta, add a little Gruyere and some finely sliced raw truffle, garnish with chopped parsley or chives and you will be well pleased with the result.

However, if you have a hankering for a grander cuisine perhaps you could satisfy your epicurean enthusiasm by roasting game birds.

Try, for example, pheasant, quail, guinea fowl, pigeon or duck, with slices of truffle tucked under the skin, but never in the cavity. Consider serving with potato slices roasted in goose fat and some truffle.

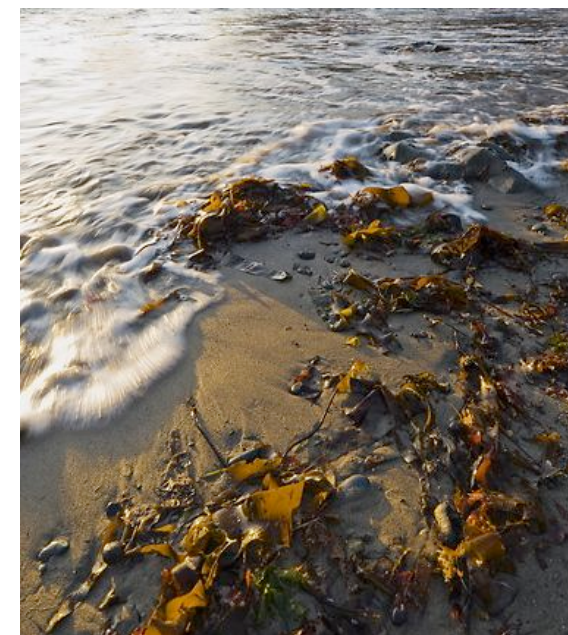
'Truffles make the women more tender and the men more passionate,' claimed Brillat-Savarin.

If that be the case, you might consider this. For that ultimate romantic supper, prepare truffles with champagne by placing two truffles – remembering that too much of a good thing spoils it – in a small casserole dish, cover with a dry champagne (knowing that champagne only comes from France) and let simmer for twenty minutes or until only a teaspoon of liquid per truffle remains.

Cover with puff pastry and bake in a hot oven for a further twenty minutes. Brillat-Savarin may well be right. Oh, and hang the expense!

Durvillaea potatorum – this vegetable ain't no weed

Australia's coastline supports the richest variety of kelp species on the planet and on King Island, off the Tasmanian coast, harvesting of the kelp is a source of economy for the locals. Pauline Tresiase investigated a mis-named vegetable that never should be considered a weed.



THE giant seaweed known as bull kelp grows well in the cold southern waters and contains compounds that are used in hundreds of products.

Bull kelp is harvested on King Island. It is dried, crushed into granules, and then shipped in containers to Scotland where alginates are extracted. It is probable that we use alginates every day, via products

such as ice cream, drinks, salad dressings, detergents, toothpaste, paints, paper, dental, pharmaceutical and cosmetic preparations.

For Dennis and Peta Klumpp of King Island Produce, kelp has also become a mainstay. They are licensed to collect half a ton of freshly cast kelp each year. While beachcombing on the rugged west coast of King Island they often discussed the idea of eating seaweed so they experimented with cooking and using the bull kelp that had been cast up from the storm. They were keen to use the resource and partly inspired by folk legend from his mother and wanting to utilise nature's own vegetables from the sea, King Island Produce was born.

Here Dennis's passion for creating culinary dishes with herbs and spices, and his background in industrial chemistry came to the fore. Many concoctions in the kitchen followed. There were numerous failures, but from the edible dishes sprang the idea of producing a unique product that would add to the existing range of gourmet King Island food.

An analysis by the Institute of Clinical Pathology and Medical Research Lidcombe NSW showed King Island bull kelp fronds to contain (mg/kg) calcium 2973, magnesium 2827, potassium 2826, sodium 13064, zinc 6, iron 5, plus significant traces of copper and manganese.

Bull kelp *Durvillaea potatorum* grows prolifically on the reefs surrounding King Island, where the brown leathery fronds grow to a spectacular eight metres. During storms, kelp plants are torn from the rocks and cast on the beaches. Such is the tenacious grip of the kelp "hold fast" or root that often a piece of granite is broken off and remains attached to the root. Kelp can

live 14 years or longer and can grow at the rate of 10-14cm a day.

The continuous leaching of nutrients from the land supplies the oceans with a rich source of trace minerals - the ideal medium for seaweeds to grow, trapping every known element.

Seaweed has long been used in Japan and China as a staple item of diet, recorded by Sze Teu in 600BC as 'a delicacy fit for the most honoured guests, even for the king himself'. In Hawaii about 75 different species have been eaten.

All seaweeds are edible but many are unpalatable. Some are very tasty after drying roasting or lightly steamed. Most are not very tasty fresh, wet, and alive. Powdered or flaked sea vegetables are often best. Some of the better known seaweeds are:

Nori is probably the most popular seaweed for eating, both historically and today. It is great in soups, reconstituted in salads, just as a dried snack, toasted lightly in a dry iron skillet, deep-fat-fried with cooked rolled oats as the Celtic *laver bread*, and as a food wrap in sushi. *Nori* sheets are a manufactured food product. *Nori* was eaten abundantly by indigenous peoples wherever both occurred. It tends to have a sweet, meaty flavour pleasant to most palates.

Dulse, another red alga, is another easy to eat snack but quite salty and often a little fermented in the marketplace; its relatively high fatty acid content results in rancidity after a year or more in storage.

Kombu the large brown kelps, *Sugar Kelp* and the *Wakame* can be eaten just dried but usually are easier to eat when cooked with grains, legumes or miso soup broth.

Bull kelp The bright green dried fronds of the giant kelp are a great snack, salty and high in vitamins and minerals (up to 50% dry weight), particularly potassium, protein and free amino acids.

Hijikia, Sargassum Sea-palm Other brown algae that are usually best cooked with wet food as in soups, miso broth, grains, legumes, vegetable pies and stews.

Sea Lettuce has a strong seafood taste and odour but is easy to eat as a snack or in salads since it is quite delicate after drying and crumbles easily into tiny tender pieces.

More information

<http://www.naturespiritherbs.com/SeaVegetablesArticle.pdf>

<http://www.kip.com.au/index.html>

Casting a worm – sustainable recycling in your backyard

'By recycling with worms...we can play a real part in returning our organic wastes to the natural order, thereby increasing soil fertility, minimising global warming and preserving the earth's environment,' says David Murphy in the preface to his inspiring book Organic Growing with Worms. Slow Food Perth member Lyn Tong has dug the dirt with her own research.

FOR a number of years I have been experimenting with several types of worm bin systems. The one described below, once set up, is the easiest to

manage, therefore suitable even for the most time poor.

In essence, the system consists of standing two bins (plastic garbage bins, compost bins, polystyrene boxes etc.) On bare ground, building up scraps in one, and once full, leaving it alone for some time to allow worms to convert it to castings while building up scraps in the other. When the scraps in the first have been converted into castings, the contents can be emptied and the bin can then be used for building up scraps again.

Choosing a site

To start you need a suitable area of ground on which to place the two bins. The ideal position is where there is constant summer shade and some winter sun otherwise an always shady position. It can be in a garden bed, under a shady tree or outside the back door.

Preparing the bins

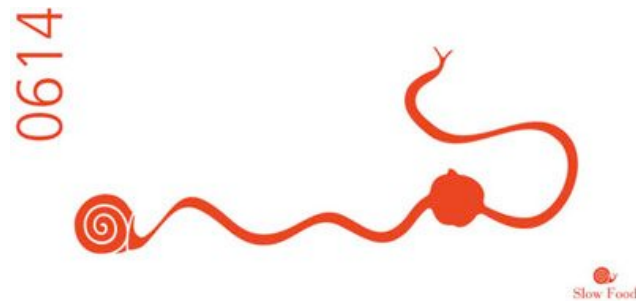
Choose your bins. These can be garbage bins, polystyrene boxes, compost bins etc. The smaller the bin the faster you will fill it and the sooner you will have some castings; however keep in mind that worms prefer a wider surface area to work in. The bins need to be opaque with a firm fitting lid.

Take one of the bins/boxes and unless it is a compost bin, cut out most of the bottom leaving a 2cm rim. This will help deter undesirable creatures from entering once the bin is on the ground.

To allow air in, drill some small holes in the bin making sure there are a few dotted all around. (A zigzag row of holes, about 1cm in diameter, 20cm apart, one third of the way up from the ground and again two thirds of

the way up should be adequate. Repeat the above with the second bin.

Place the bins side by side in your chosen position with some space, at least 10cm, between them. If you haven't managed to leave a rim in the bottom, press the bins into the ground so as to discourage undesirable creatures from entering at the base. If there are still gaps between bin and ground, mound a little earth in the gaps. Your bins are now ready.



Feeding your worms

Collect your food scraps. You can accumulate them in small recycling containers and/or in bags in the fridge. When you have sufficient, take some newspaper, (I find that two sheets of *The West Australian* or similar, overlapped by half to two-thirds works well), place some scraps on it and wrap it into a parcel. Take the lid off one bin and place your parcel/s on the bottom. Keep adding parcels to form a layer. Then build up the layers. The bottom parcels will begin to lose volume once the worms start eating and once moisture in the scraps is lost through evaporation. The parcels may begin to fall inwards, in which case with each new addition to the bin, press the parcels downwards and outwards.

A cover over the parcels is advisable as it has the advantage of keeping the worms in the dark, of keeping the bin cooler in summer, of helping to prevent the parcels from drying out and of providing additional food for the worms. It can be hessian bags, carpet underfelt or even a thick layer of moistened newspaper.

No matter where you have put your bins, the worms should be able to find them. I have *never* introduced worms into my bins, not even into the current ones which are located outside the kitchen door of a newly built house. However, to make sure, you can always transfer some from the garden.

The worms will work from the bottom upwards. Once the first bin is full, leave it and start layering parcels in the second one. Now you need PATIENCE. Depending on the size of your bin and the prevailing conditions, it will be a few months before all the contents of the first bin are converted to castings.

Once the bin contents are fully processed into castings, the worms will return and remain underground until you have emptied it and have begun to introduce parcels of food scraps into it again.

Depending on how many scraps you are able to generate and how much space you have, any number of bins can be set up.

Harvesting and storing castings

The castings can either be used immediately or stored. If you need to empty the bin so that you can use it again immediately, you can remove the castings all at once, in which case you can scoop out from the top or lift the bin off the contents. The castings can be used at once in the garden or stored in a plastic bag, a plastic container with a lid etc. If you have set up

more than two bins and therefore have other bins to fill with scraps, you can keep the unused castings stored in the original bin. Make sure that the castings don't dry out by checking and if necessary, sprinkling or spraying some water over and by keeping them covered.

There are differing opinions as to how long the castings retain living bacteria and are therefore effective. David Murphy suggests three months, others up to twelve months.

If you don't want to wait to fill your first bin you can transfer the unprocessed parcels on top into the second bin and scoop out the castings in the bottom of the bin.

Recycling with worms can be this simple as long as you are aware of the conditions worms need to survive.

They need *dark, moist* conditions with 60-80% moisture ideal. The moisture exuded from the scraps is absorbed by the newspaper which, depending on the prevailing conditions, either keeps the contents of the bin moist for longer or prevents the worms from drowning. If the paper around the top parcels is drying out, moisten it by sprinkling some water over, keeping in mind that, while worms like moist conditions, if covered by water they will drown.

They don't like it too warm nor too cold so some warmth in winter is advantageous.

If it's too hot in the bin they will retreat underground and surface again when conditions are more favourable.

They need *air*, hence the small holes drilled in the bins. You could also construct wormeries from timber

or bricks, in which case, the cracks between the levels would provide sufficient air.

They don't like *light* which is why the drilled air holes are small and why it is advisable to keep the parcels pressed downwards and outwards.



Keeping worms happy and productive

Although worms will survive and produce castings in the abovementioned conditions, by giving them a little more attention they'll work even harder, producing more castings faster. You can achieve this by giving the worms a varied diet. Worms will eat anything that was once living but since they are operating in confined spaces, some foods are more suitable than others:

- parcels of any kind of vegetable scrap. Even citrus peel and onion skins, not recommended to be added to other types of worm bins, are consumed. In a completely processed bin of castings, the only remnants of food scraps I have ever found are pieces of both avocado skin and egg shell. I assume that worms are not particularly fond of attacking sharp edges.

- newspaper, but not glossy magazines. Other than that used for wrapping the parcels, extra can be added and, as previously mentioned, it can also be used as a cover to insulate the contents of the bin.
- manure, not too much in the summer months otherwise the bin contents will become too hot and the worms will either die or retreat underground where it is cooler. In the winter you can add a bit more as it will help to keep the worms warm. If using poultry manure it needs to be well aged.
- lawn clippings, preferably broken down but in any case added a bit at a time between the layers of scraps otherwise the bin contents will become too warm.
- straw, a thin layer.
- animal scraps and dairy products are not recommended.

You can also add to the worms' health by:

- sprinkling a handful of dolomite lime over every now and then. It will help keep the bin contents "sweet".
- reducing the size of the food scraps. The smaller the pieces, the greater the surface area for bacteria to attack, the easier it is for worms to ingest and turn them into castings. The really dedicated (and not time poor) puree their scraps in a food processor!
- shredding extra newspaper. Take a few sheets of a tabloid newspaper and with a short edge nearest you, tear strips away down the long side. If you try to do this with

the long side nearest you, you'll be trying forever. To tear strips from a broadsheet like *The Australian*, the method is reversed; tear down the short side of the sheets.

If you can create conditions favorable to worms you will be rewarded with lots of odourless castings to use in the garden.

Advantages

Once operational, apart from continuing to feed the worms, minimum effort is required to maintain it. There is no need to lift heavy, moisture-laden trays as for the tray stacking system. There is less chance of losing the worms because the bins are placed on the ground. This means that the worms are free to come and go as they please, so if conditions are not to their liking eg. too hot, too cold, too dry etc. They will stay away and return when they improve. The off the ground systems, on the other hand, where the worms are confined, require more monitoring to ensure constantly favourable conditions, otherwise, in adverse conditions with nowhere to escape to, the worms will die.

Large containers used for this system, like old bath tubs, will be easier to manage than the much smaller tray stacking systems. It also means that there is less chance of the worms drowning because the bins are free-draining.

There is no restriction on the amount of food you can add to the bin. Although it is usually recommended that you only feed the worms what they are able to consume, I have not found giving them extra to be a problem, possibly because the conditions are favourable and the worms are also free to come and go as they please. Keeping the bin 'sweet' with a sprinkling of dolomite lime also helps.

There is no restriction of onion skins or citrus peel as for the off the ground systems possibly for the same reasons as above. There is (in most cases) no need to introduce worms but if in doubt do so.

There is no need to worry if you go away; as long as the conditions are favourable and there is something to ingest, the worms will keep working. At worst, if there is nothing to eat, they will go away and return when you start feeding them again.

Using castings

Worm castings are not a fertiliser but rather a soil conditioner that helps to stimulate plant growth. Says David Murphy: 'Applying vermicast to the soil instead of fertilizer is like giving a hungry man a fishing line instead of a fish. Once the fish is eaten, it's gone; but with a fishing line, he has the means and the ability to access food far into the future. Vermicast is the fishing line, the bait and the skill all rolled into one! The biota introduced to the soil in vermicast can work away out of sight, releasing the minerals already there and trapping free nitrogen from the atmosphere.'

- Place a handful or as much as you can afford under new plantings and under tree plantings. Place a handful around existing plants, dig in and water well.
- Use in a seed raising mix.
- Dilute in water and use as a liquid fertilizer replacement. The liquid can be as concentrated as you wish as it will not burn plants.
- Use as a general soil conditioner by turning into the soil and watering well.

- Note: castings must always be turned into the soil to prevent them from drying out.

Extending the idea

If you can't find a suitable position on the ground perhaps you can go underground. Take a plastic pot, any size you like and drill some holes in the sides and bottom for worm access. Keeping the bottom in the pot makes it easier to harvest castings and prevents the sides of the pot caving in should they not be sufficiently sturdy. Dig a hole the size of your pot. Place the pot in the ground so that the rim is just above soil level. Start placing parcels of scraps etc. in the pot and cover with a lid. I use terracotta saucers as they don't absorb the heat as much as plastic. You can place another saucer right side up on top and use it as a bird bath/feeder.

In this situation, the surrounding soil is always well conditioned and aerated by worm movement and, as well, there are castings to be harvested. If you have more than one pot you can operate them like the bin system.

It is immensely satisfying to witness the conversion of a bin full of kitchen scraps, newspaper etc. into moist, dark, rich, odourless castings which can only be of benefit to our gardens and therefore ultimately to our health and well-being.

Happy recycling!

Slow Food Australia shapes up

SLOW Food's Australian working group, chaired by Australian international councillor Leonie Furber, has released a proposal to convivia inviting them to consider the establishment of a national association.

The document details the proposed purpose and structure of Slow Food Australia – one of the few countries with a rapidly developing membership which does not have a cohesive national organisation.

The working group believes Slow Food Australia would provide members and convivia with the following benefits:

- a co-ordinated Australian voice and national presence for Slow Food
- the opportunity to be a part of regional or national projects co-ordinated by Slow Food Australia with greater funding and resourcing available through national support
- local answers to local questions raised about our unique Australian situation
- enhanced Australian-based communication with members and between convivia via frequent updates/newsletters
- development of a national website and national membership programmes and materials
- significant opportunities for sharing and learning from other convivium experiences
- negotiation and maintenance of appropriate insurance covers

The working group has proposed a number of nationally-significant projects for consideration by convivia in which each of Australia's 33 branches can be directly involved.

More information will be given at a proposed national meeting of convivia leaders in Melbourne in February 2008.

Slow Food Perth / next events

- A celebration of Gabrielle Kervella's and Alan Cockman's contribution to cheese-making in Australia [date and venue to be advised]
- Feb 2008 – passata and ragout cook-off and workshop in the Swan Valley [date and venue to be advised]
- 22-24 Feb 2008 – *A Taste of Slow*: annual two-day Slow Food festival in Federation Square, Melbourne
- 09 Mar 2008 – *enogastronomia e rose*: a Slow Food long table luncheon at The Kodja Place, Kojonup

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