

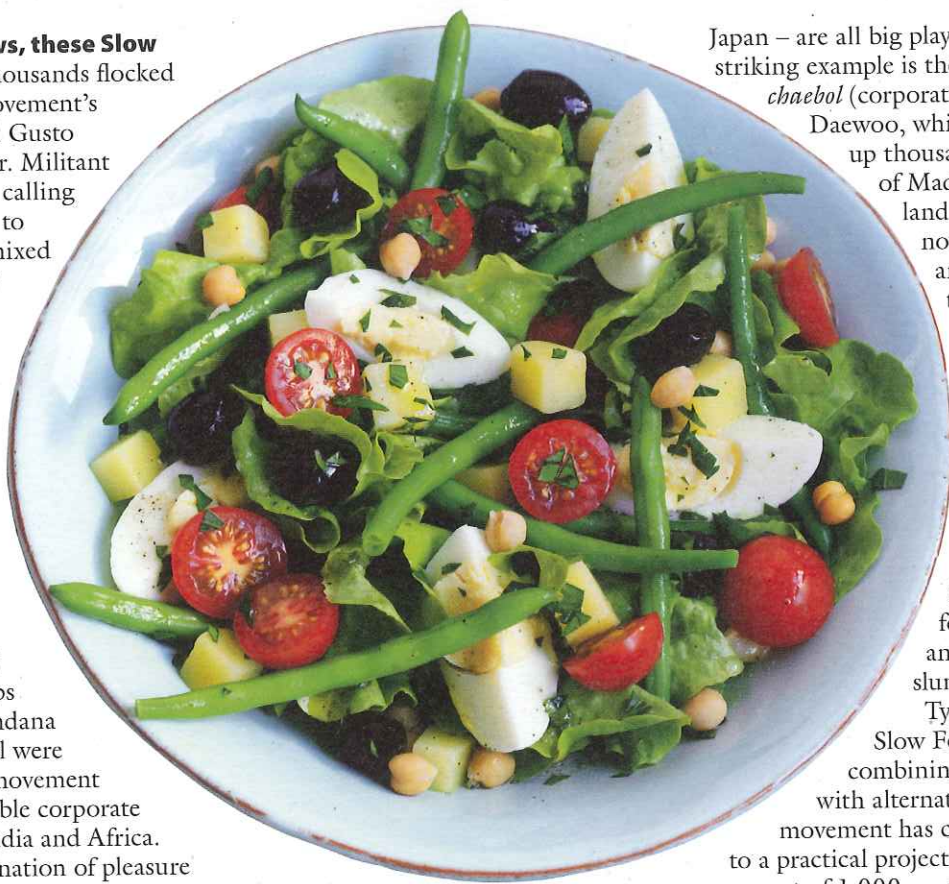
Slow Food delights in a new pleasure principle

A political stand and an enjoyment of good food are two vital ingredients in this thriving movement.

Strange bedfellows, these Slow

Fooders. Tens of thousands flocked to Turin for the movement's bi-annual Salon del Gusto festival last October. Militant Senegalese farmers calling for armed struggle to defend their land mixed with *aficionados* of the finest cigars and the best organic wines. Eager shoppers rubbed shoulders with dedicated activists. Bartender Chris Macmilian was there from New Orleans to provide a history of the cocktail and serve up mint juleps and gin fizzes. Vandana Shiva and Raj Patel were there to rally the movement against unsustainable corporate monoculture in India and Africa.

The odd combination of pleasure and politics that have inspired the movement from its Italian beginnings still seems pretty durable. At the festival, away from the hustle and bustle of the booths selling artisanal foods from across the globe, a space was provided where activists could catch up on regional issues and plot campaign strategies against genetically modified crops and animals and in favour of a 'Slow Fish' sustainable alternative to mega-trawlers and drag nets. Displays included dozens of varieties of apples – part of Slow Food's championing of species diversity in the face of an industrial agriculture bent on reducing all crops to a few varieties most easily adapted to mechanical growing and harvesting. Slow Food



has even created an Arc of Taste where it lists endangered foodstuffs, both vegetable and animal.

Back in the main hall Carlo Petrini, the firebrand President of Slow Food International, thundered from the stage: 'The best way to stop the African land grab is to support your own farmers.' Millions of acres of agricultural land (mostly in Africa but also in Latin America and Central Asia) have been purchased by transnational corporations and national sovereignty funds since the food price crisis of 2008. Countries with growing populations and shrinking agricultural resources – China, South Korea, the Gulf States,

Japan – are all big players. One striking example is the giant Korean *chaebol* (corporate monopoly)

Daewoo, which has bought up thousands of hectares of Madagascar. This land grab (which has now gobbled up an area similar to the size of Spain) commits the agricultural resources of poor countries to the export of food or non-food crops like biofuels and flowers. Small farmers are forced off the land and into urban slums.

Typical of Slow Food is the combining of critique with alternative. The

movement has committed itself to a practical project in localism: the support of 1,000 gardens in African schools, villages and metropolitan peripheries. They will be managed by the communities and cultivated with sustainable methods (composting, natural preparations against infestations and insects, sensible water management). They will grow local varieties and follow the principles of intercropping, making use of the mutually beneficial cohabitation of various fruit trees, vegetables and medicinal herbs.

Slow Food remains a broad church uniting small producers, pleasure-seekers and activists for a fair and sustainable food economy.

www.slowfood.com

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