



Terra
madre
world meeting
of food communities

OCTOBER
20/23
TURIN
2004

Carlo Petrini's opening speech

As I welcome you to this extraordinary get-together, I can't hide my joy, my emotion and my gratitude at seeing you all here in this hall.

When we came up with the idea of Terra Madre a year ago, none of us imagined that as many as 1,200 food communities from 130 countries in every part of the planet would be converging here today.

Farmers, fisher persons, breeders, nomads from the Peruvian Andes to the Argentine pampas, from the Amazon jungle to the Chiapas mountains, from Californian vineyards to First Nation reserves, from the shores of the Mediterranean to the seas of Northern Europe, from the Balkans to Mongolia, from Africa to Australasia, all organized into what we have decided to call 'food communities'.

We were firmly convinced that food communities, founded on sentiment, fraternity and the rejection of egoism, have a strategic importance in designing a new society, a society based on fair trade.

Through their labor, they bind together the destinies of women and men pledged to defending their own traditions, cultures and crops.

The communities you represent are depositaries of ancient and modern wisdom. They are an important and strategic factor in human nutrition, in the delicate balance between nature and culture that underpins our very existence.

It is thus with esteem and affection that I welcome all of you, intellectuals of land and sea, from even the remotest corners of the globe.

You are the expression of human labor: in the sectors of agriculture, animal breeding, fishing, herding and food processing.

You practice the fine arts that turn milk into cheese, grapes into wine and malt and hops into beer. But you are also the expression of man's earliest interaction with nature: cooking.

Cooking as language, cooking as identity, cooking as a primary need of all humankind. It is in fact culinary skill, manual dexterity and the ability to capture the right mix of flavor and spiciness that make eating pleasurable. This pleasure has never been and will never become the privilege of a few. It is one of the physiological prerogatives of all us, a sign of humankind's serene relationship with nature and life.

Round the world, no food culture is more important than another. Every single one expresses a profound identity and its language precisely through food.

We have to respect these diversities. We have to be grateful to the art and skill of women and men capable of producing foods as simple as they are outstanding—the fruit of an ability to exploit and make do with the sometimes scant resources that mother nature has made available to us.

Feijoada in Brazil, couscous in the Mediterranean, tamales in Latin America, pakora in India, fufu in Africa, dried reindeer meat in Lapland, pasta in Italy—all foodstuffs representative of the great wisdom of humankind, of subsistence economies and of the never-ending fight against hunger.

These four days will evidence not only this wisdom but also the environmental, social and economic problems that affect our daily labor. The extraordinary of all this knowledge and know-how must not be


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CITTÀ DI TORINO


Slow Food®
via della Mendicizia Istruita, 14
12042 Bra (CN) Italy
Telephone +39 0172 472911
Fax +39 0172 472912
terramadre@slowfood.it
www.terramadre2004.org

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threatened by the logic of productivity, by the manipulation of genes, by the profit motive of a privileged few, by lack of respect for the environment, by the exploitation of workers.

The battle that we are waging to defend the biodiversity of the planet—from vegetable species to animal breeds—is a battle for civilization. The right to own land and seeds is a sacrosanct right for all the world's vegetable growers.

The pesticide and GMO multinationals are implementing policies incompatible with the environment, stressing mother earth, humbling the food sovereignty of peoples and jeopardizing the freedom of farmers and growers.

Alone and divided, food communities aren't in a position to react against this violence, while, in the meantime, the big transgenic lobbies are seeking to ridicule their knowledge and practices. What the world needs to know is that these lobbies are able to ride roughshod over the weak simply because the weak are divided and defenseless.

It is necessary to spread and share the wisdom of which you are the depositaries and which represents a great cultural heritage. Nature and culture must travel arm in arm, assisting each other reciprocally.

For this reason, the staging of this extraordinary meeting alongside the Salone del Gusto is charged with significance.

Tomorrow, the Salone del Gusto, arguably the world's largest showcase of agricultural and food products, will open at the Lingotto Exhibition Center, a few minutes' walk away from here.

The Salone del Gusto and Terra Madre aren't taking place simultaneously for reasons of organizational convenience. As I'm sure you'll understand, it has taken an immense amount of effort and commitment to organize two such massive events.

Here we are making a major cultural choice. Food quality depends on consumers who respect agricultural labor and educate their senses, thus becoming precious allies for producers.

Which is why, dear delegates, I warmly recommend you to visit the Salone del Gusto. Over the next three days, between meetings, you can pop over and enter with your pass at any time.

Take a walk through the pavilions not only to see the products on display, but also to meet all the producers and consumers who, like yourselves, conduct themselves sustainably at an economic, ecologic and social level: all of them committed to fuelling the creative force behind every human identity: exchange.

I believe that never as in this moment in time have consumers shared a common destiny. The safeguarding of our food heritage is a mutual obligation and as such can only be achieved by new ways of sharing. Only if consumers become co-producers and fully grasp the fact that production is being threatened, and only if producers assume the burden of quality, ensuring food safety, sustainability, pleasure and human rights, can we leave this difficult moment behind us.

These values and this intuition are all-embracing, as valid in the North of the world as they are in the South. They spur us to become an active part in the fight against the planetary scourge of malnutrition and hunger.

Over the next few days Terra Madre will be under the world spotlight, but on this opening day I, personally, would like to remind you that the event

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was front page news last Sunday in a minor daily newspaper in the Ivory Coast. Significantly, the headline included the word 'fraternité'.

Yes, I really do believe that fraternity is the value we have to share over the next four days and I'd like you to adopt it as a method in the course of the meeting.

Fraternity isn't the poor sister of liberty and equality.

The century that has just ended was filled with great discoveries but also with huge tragedies. Rightly enough, rivers of ink flowed with words and proclamations in defense of liberty and equality.

But little attention was paid to universal fraternity. Here today I believe we should have the courage to revive the concept as a value and a method.

Over the next few days, in more than 60 seminars, you will address the great issues of the planet's resources: water, seeds, the destruction of rural economies, agriculture's need for peace, organic cultivations, sustainable fishing, the role of women in agriculture.

This will inevitably involve argument, diverse ways of dealing with problems and different ideas and conceptions. Only fraternity will be able to turn this diversity to account and guide us in our efforts to understand and comprehend one another.

In view of its sheer size and complexity, the organizational machinery behind the event may creak occasionally, but please try to understand our difficulties. Fraternity and comprehension will make your stay all the more pleasurable.

Yesterday was long and exhausting and I could see in your faces that you were tired from your long journeys. But you have to realize that our organization hasn't the efficiency of a large company. We aren't a capitalist corporation!

Slow Food is a small association that has managed to find the support of important institutions such as the City of Turin, the Piedmont Regional Authority and the Ministry of Agriculture. But it also bolstered by the passion and heart of the hundreds of volunteers who are working here today and who have opened up their homes to accommodate you.

This is what I mean by spirit of fraternity!

Maybe it isn't utopian to hope that here at this meeting of ours we can lay the bases for a food community which, albeit distant from each other geographically, can keep in touch and enrich each other through intelligent discussion. That way many of us will feel less alone, proud of our work and ready to develop the self-esteem that generates wellbeing and happiness.

I hereby wish you all a warm and rewarding stay here in Turin.

Over the next few days you will make strong, lasting friendships, exchange experiences of life and labor, and consolidate relations of collaboration and exchange.

Memorize these faces, sensations and sentiments. One day in the not too distant future, you will be able to describe them to your loved ones.

Many thanks and welcome to Terra Madre.



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