

# WINE TOURISM LIFESTYLE

## ON THE FAST TRACK WITH SLOW FOOD

**In October this year, more than 190 000 people attended Terra Madre and the Salone del Gusto in Turin, Italy, events organised by the Slow Food Movement. Donald Paul was in attendance.**

by Donald Paul

Terra Madre (Mother Earth) is a closed gathering of 1 500 food communities from five continents that involves 5 000 farmers, breeders, fishermen and traditional food producers, plus 1 000 chefs and 400 teachers and university representatives. For five days they networked, exchanged ideas and, most of all, affirmed their belief in the principles of the International Slow Food Movement.

The Salone del Gusto (Festival of Tastes), open to the public, showcased more than 700 approved Slow Food producers who set up stalls, sold their foods, hosted tasting tables and workshops and generally mingled with other producers. More than 172 000 people passed through the vast halls of the Lingotto Fiere, the former Fiat automobile factory that now is a convention centre, retail mall and hotel. The Salone is jointly organised by Slow Food, the Region of Piedmont and the City of Turin with the help of corporate sponsorship including Lurisia, De Cecco and Lavazza.

Visiting Terra Madre as guests of Slow Food were two of South Africa's top chefs: Margot Janse (Le Quarter Francaise) and Reuben Riffel (Reuben's), both from Franschoek. Also attending was Elizabeth Susanna Eglington, community coordinator of the Organic Producers of Klein Karoo who took five colleagues with her, and Noel Oettle, the community co-ordinator of the Rooibos Producers of Suid Bokkeveld and Wuppenthal with his colleagues.

"I used the workshops and the networking set up and I have already benefited," says Elizabeth, who farms organic chillies and olives. She'd been searching for a productive use of the pulp left over after the olives were pressed and someone from Spain emailed her with the name of a researcher who had been experimenting on just this topic. "On a bigger level, the five people that accompanied me now realise that our efforts to grow organic produce is not some funny little idea brought in by a greeny from town, wanting to make money out of Woolworths, but that it's a worldwide phenomenon."

Interestingly, the two producer groups were not proposed by either the Johannesburg or Cape Town branches of the Slow Food Organisation. Elizabeth says she heard about it through a friend who saw Terra Madre advertised in London and asked her if she was going. She contacted Slow Food's head office who were only to pleased to have representatives from South Africa. When I spoke to the president and founder of Slow Food, Carlo Petrini, he expressed a keen interest in visiting the country.

Petrini was born in Bra, a village in Piedmont, Italy, studied sociology in Trento and became involved with left-wing group called ARCI (Associazione Ricreativa Culturale Italiana). He became involved in organising traditional music festivals (Cante [jeuv] and realised that the young people who attended these festivals also needed to eat. As he was passionate about the

farmers in the nearby Langhe hills and their traditional produce, he decided to form the Free and Defending Association of the Friends of Barolo and soon these traditional foods were being sold at the music festivals.

From this grew Arcigola, the Wine and

that operates in 150 countries and has more than 80 000 members - about 270 of which are in South Africa.

The decision this year to include chefs - or what are officially termed 'kitchen experts' was a political one, according to Slow Food's official 2006 Terra Madre handbook; it wants them to become 'aware of the situation of agriculture around the world, of the continuous erosion of biodiversity, of the risks of homologation that a globalised market involves, and of the disarming ignorance of the new generations about such issues'. Such kitchen experts included multi-Michelin-star chef Alain Ducasse, Ferran Adrià (el Bulli) and Alice Waters (Chez Panisse) adding support. Ducasse told the assembly that the chef's role is that of a "catalyser" who can promote the production of not only of quality foodstuff but encourage diversity. "Good taste is the basis of good nutrition and we must develop a range of tastes beyond fat and sugar. Our children must become aware of the relationship between consumption and what we eat."

The Slow Food Movement's pledge is for food to be good, clean and fair. Good food reflects the competence of the producer; clean food understands that we need to practice sustainable farming and that each stage in the agro-industrial chain should protect ecosystems and biodiversity; and fair food requires that the labour conditions under which food is produced and processed respects human rights. If it all sounds far too political, then just



Food League of ARCI in July 1986, and which took its name from its links with the magazine La Gola ("gola" means appetite). Three years later they issued a manifesto and announced the formation of The International Slow Food Movement. Today, as the president of Slow Food he presides over a movement

a single day among the stalls will convince you of the success of the gastronomic revolution so far. For example, Margot, Reuben and I found ourselves at a table with a charming, articulate man by the name of Gianluca Gorgano. He's a winemaker and president of Valier S.P.A. a wine distribution company. He brought to the table an unopened bottle of wine called Vin Triple A.

"This is what all this is about," he said, gesturing to the crowded aisles and crush of people. "I made only 600 bottles." And he proceeded to pour us each a glass. "This is real wine. It is like a shooting star; you drink and it's gone, but the memory is there. The memory of taste. That's what is important."

The wine is from Sicily and made from zibibbo grapes, an ancient cultivar. Apparently, it is made in a traditional way, in jugs buried in the ground and with no added sulphites. After six months it is taken from the jugs and racked but not filtered before bottling. The result was a cloudy, very fresh and full-tasting wine that called for slices of the capocollo that they make from free-ranging Suino Nero dei Nebrodi (black swine of Sicily) or maybe a little moustacchino (biscuits made from dough mixed with grape must and stuffed with walnut meat and nuts).

If I'd been convinced of the power of slow food before, we left Gianluca ready to carry the revolution.

For information about Slow Food in Cape Town call (021) 705 4317 and in Johannesburg (011) 648 0653.