

SLOW FOOD NATION —

Two Members Share Their Personal Observations

Changemakers Day* at Slow Food Nation

Contributed by Barbara Bowman

I ATTENDED a workshop titled “Reframing the Slow Food Conversation to Support Food Justice.” I chose it because Josh Viertel, the new and first president of Slow Food USA, was a panelist. I wanted to see him in action.

Moderator Hank Herrera opened the session by saying that the chain link fence built around the Slow Food’s Civic Center dinner was a troubling symbol of the group’s exclusivity. Where were the people who lived in this neighborhood?

The panelists reported that 300,000 citizens of Oakland are served by one supermarket and many convenience stores with small offerings of high-priced, high-carb foods. The panelists used the phrase “food apartheid” to describe the difference between the food systems of the Oakland hills and flatlands.

Except for Viertel, panel members expressed anger over Slow Food’s power, resources and bravado. They asked Slow Food to NOT take over the Food Justice movement, but instead support existing grassroots organizations.

Josh Viertel is a good listener. He concluded, “Slow Food can’t lead; how can we serve?”

* In collaboration with Roots of Change (ROC), Changemakers Day convened leaders focused on sustainable food systems. The day’s goal was to create concrete and effective collaboration.

On Being a Good Neighbor

*Contributed by
Stephanie Chiacos*

THE DRIVE DOWN to San Francisco couldn’t have been more beautiful. When I arrived at Van Ness Avenue, white tents glowed in front of me. The crowd was multi-cultural, multi-colorful and multi-lingual, with a broad socio-economic range and every age bracket. The atmosphere was festive and the farmers/producers joyful. I tasted my way through the market, buying a bag of Bronx grapes and a round of Red Hawk cheese from Cowgirl Creamery, and then found the Victory Garden that had grown tall, wide and bountiful. In the garden were various farmers and producers using their 20 minutes to educate the masses.

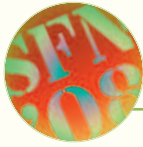
On my way over to Herbst Theater, I dodged the crowds waiting patiently in line for the many Slow-on-the-Go purveyors dishing up delectable meals. Others were eating at a giant communal table constructed of thick 20-foot planks balanced on pieces of scaffolding.

At the theater, I settled down for a panel discussion among Carlo Petrini, Alice Waters, Eric Schlosser, Wendell Berry, Michael Pollan and Vandana Shiva, moderated (and translated) by Corby Kummer. The focus of the discussion was the future of Slow Food in America and how we can

Slow Food
Nation '08



(continued on page 2)



SLOW FOOD NATION On Being a Good Neighbor

(continued from page 1)

bring more Americans to the table. Several comments during the discussion stood out for me:

- 1) We must bring immigrant farm workers into the movement. (*Eric Schlosser*)
- 2) We need to achieve social justice and respect for the people who don't have what we do; take responsibility for the lack of focus on human rights; and acknowledge our interdependence with workers in all phases of our food production and delivery systems. (*Carlo Petrini*)
- 3) We are in a food apartheid now; we must be protectors of the poor. (*Vandana Shiva*)

4) We must return to solarized farms; move from monoculture to diversified farming; create the infrastructure to support regional agriculture; and build a food culture that values farming. (*Michael Pollan*)

Actions recommended by the panelists:

- Plant a small garden.
- Buy locally.
- See food not as a commodity but as a sacrament.
- Regard eating as an agricultural act.
- Do everything we can to broaden the movement and help each other.
- Try each day to consume a little less and waste a little less.
- Have the will and spirit to confront politicians and create a small revolution.
- Influence by example, and speak for those who cannot be heard.

FOOD TRADITIONS IN GUATEMALA

by Marilee Wingert



AS PART OF THEIR DAILY MEAL preparations, the women of Pachay las Lomas in Guatemala, the “Chicken Ladies,” make use of a *pedra*. This is a volcanic stone slab that functions as a grinder to crush, mash, and puree such foods as corn, coffee, chiles, and tomatoes. The use of the *pedra* goes back thousands of years. The *molcajete*, the three-legged stone mortar and pestle that is associated with Mexican cooking, evolved from the *pedra*. Because of its durability, the grinding stone is passed from mother to daughter. One of the village leader’s prized possessions is her grandmother’s *pedra*.

The handheld grinding tool is called the *brazo*, or arm. Ingredients are placed in the center of the slab and the heavy *brazo* is rolled rhythmically back and forth over the food until the desired texture is reached. By age 10, all of the village girls are skilled in the use of this tool.

Over time, much like a cast iron pan, the *pedra* becomes seasoned. Seasoning allows flavors to transfer from one preparation to the next. The Chicken Ladies are aware of electric blenders, but they prefer the *pedra* since it produces food that is *mucho mas rica*—much more delicious.

In the photo above, a puree is being made which became part of a ceremonial chicken soup prepared last December for a celebration to honor the scholarship donors from our Slow Food convivium. At present, 36 students are enrolled in school through the scholarship program. That number includes one young woman who is now in her second year at the university as a result of funds pledged by one member for an entire college education. The extremely grateful students expressed their thanks, not only for the important economic support, but also for the moral support that accompanies it.

BOOK SOUP



A Brief Memoir of a Book-Loving Chef

by Kevin McKenzie

I WAS RAISED IN LOS ANGELES, smack dab in the middle of the entertainment industry. Because my parents were part of the 60's Hollywood jet set, I was often a "latch-key child." That is when books entered my life. Although I loved roaming the streets, causing havoc with the other members of my Schwinn Stingray bicycle gang, there had to be some down time. Those were the moments when I escaped into the fantasy of books.

The world of books saved my life in many ways. Beginning at about the age of ten, I devoured books in my spare time, often reading as many as three or four a week. I read everything from Carlos Castañeda and Richard Brautigan to Hemingway, Steinbeck, and Henry Miller. The only reason I graduated from high school in Suffolk, England in 1975, was because I could pass tests based solely on what I had learned from books.

I was not the kind of kid who did well in school. In fact, all sixteen of the schools I attended as a child experienced quite a bit of difficulty trying to keep me in my seat. Attention Deficit Disorder was not the buzz word that it is now and I was written off as a hyperactive pain in the neck. Consequently, it's no surprise that I became a professional chef, entering the world of kitchens in London's Hard Rock Cafe at the age of fourteen.

Kitchen work was perfect for me. I loved the adrenaline rush of a busy service and thrived on multitasking. The more work I was given to do, the calmer my inner world felt. Before long, I knew in my heart that I had found my home.

By 1978 I was working as a pantry chef at Michael's Restaurant in Santa Monica, California. At the time, Michael's was considered one of the nation's top establishments, along with Chez Panisse, Le Cirque, Ma Maison, L'Hermitage, and others. It was the dawning of the California Cuisine movement and the show was wild. Michael's was owned by 29-year old Michael McCarty; the kitchen was headed up by Jonathan Waxman and a host of other young chefs, many of whom are now household names.

Although I had been cooking for a few years by then, this was my first entrée into the world of fine cuisine. The pace was fast and the learning curve steep, and I began to turn to cook books to keep up. Jacques Pepin had just come out with his masterpieces, *La Cuisine* and *La Method*, and the Time-Life series edited by Richard Olney was just beginning to appear. These books were the first among thousands to come that I turned to for ideas and techniques. During my shifts at Michael's I would religiously study the movements of my colleagues, trying to soak up as much as possible. Then I would go home and study my books to fully understand the craft of what I had observed.

As my aspirations and dreams grew, I moved on to the literature of food to get the feel of being the top dog in a restaurant. I could relate my own experiences in a busy kitchen to those of George Orwell (in *Down and Out in Paris and London*) and of Chef Fernand Point at La Pyramide in Lyon, France in my all-time favorite book, *Blue Trout*



(continued on page 4)

BOOK SOUP



(continued from page 3)

and *Black Truffle* (by Joseph Wechberg). Chef Point trained almost all of the great chefs of France from the past century. This group was known as The Band de Bocuse after Paul Bocuse, one of the first apprentices of note in La Pyramide's kitchen and the first French chef to become a media superstar.

Over the years I expanded my repertoire to include everything from M.F.K. Fisher and Elisabeth David, to A.J. Liebling and James Beard. At one point I had so many food-related books in our house that my wife threatened to leave if I didn't make room for her and the children. I thought this was a bit over the top—why would anyone prefer room to sleep over such an incredible library?

By the mid-80's, after stints with Jeremiah Tower in San Francisco, George Perrier in Philadelphia and others, I was ready to take on my own kitchen. So in 1986 in Seattle, I opened my first restaurant. I called it Rover's after a 19th century children's book called *Rover's Dinner Party*. Rover's was a small house that I remodeled into a restaurant with gardens, which was innovative at that time. Dining was in four separate rooms, and one of them was lined completely around the ceiling with my collection of books. As time went by, customers began to bring me rare cook books in trade for food, and I loved chatting with these fellow book nerds.

I have continued to collect books, although now I use them to stay current with what is happening in the food world. I especially like to browse through books by top chefs such as Alain Ducasse and Thomas Keller. Although I tend not to use their recipes, I learn a lot about presentation from the photographs, and about new techniques and flavor combinations. Anthony Bourdain's *Kitchen Confidential*, published a few years back, was a welcome addition to the modern lore of what it means to be a chef. Although Anthony's

background is New York and mine is the West Coast, we are about the same age and share many similar stories. It was a hoot to have someone finally break the glamour bubble and give people a sense of what it is really like in many of this country's kitchens! (I do not like the way cooking is glamorized in certain books or television shows because it leads many young people down the wrong path. I have stopped teaching at professional cooking schools because it is disappointing to teach adults without the aptitude or stamina to be professional cooks. Their minds are full of fancy about having their own food network show, without an understanding of how they must pay their dues.)

But my favorite books are still the older ones, from the great food writers who lived in Paris during the mid-twenties, or colorful chefs like James Beard. I also cherish books and recipes from regions of America, especially those put together by ladies' cooking leagues, foragers and hunters, and anyone who has a handle on smoking or preserving. Basically, I am a cook-book addict and I find it almost impossible not to buy them when they are put in front of me. I wouldn't change that for the world, if for no other reason than some day I will have a great library to donate.

The life of a working chef is not an easy one, and now that I am in my early fifties, my body tends to hurt much more than my eyes and I love to sit down and read. Many Americans seem to share this fascination with food and its lore, and cook books sell like hot cakes. Some day I may be fortunate enough to write one of my own. Then I will have completed the circle of love of food and the written word. Until then, I am content to enjoy the work of others and am very grateful for those chefs who are talented enough to write about the fruits of their craft with the same passion, skill and knack for creation that they do in their kitchens.

GALETTE

Original Fiction by Harvey Brody



THE AUGUST MARKETS enthralled Jules. The melons drove themselves blind with sugar, his favorite O. Henry peaches did their short juicy dance. This was it, not the promise that comes with spring, of asparagus and favas, but the accumulation of the year's heat pumping the produce as if it were the flexed and oiled biceps of a bodybuilder. The summer strawberries with their dimpled golden seeds showed no trace of spring's white core. The market sample was one more trigger he welcomed, as though sitting down to tea and a dozen madeleines in a lush garden clearing with Marcel Proust, both of them shoeless, yet dressed in crisp linen suits. Or, was it more congenial to have his muse dipped in alcohol at the boating party of Renoir's luncheon?

Jules was never far from reverie; he was born looking forward, backwards, and sideways. This was always his way, but when he started cooking none of it made any sense. There was a Vacancy sign rooted in his head and his thoughts headed off like comets into outer space. He knew what Tom Jones had eaten during foreplay, what Leopold Bloom served Molly for breakfast on the only morning of their existence, and even knew how to prepare Klingon quagh. So it was Carl Jung in an apron, not Julia Child, that Jules imagined he was watching prepare coq au vin.

Jules couldn't help himself. After finishing his degree at the C.I.A. in Hyde Park, he was invited to further his education at the very underground Le Cordon Noir, not the very accessible Le Cordon Bleu—"Le Cordon Blah"—as they liked to call it. It was there that Jules realized the oh-so-obvious: food didn't just *bring* memories but *created* them. Every food had a tendril in the cultural landscape and that landscape was nowhere better understood than in the art of literature, painting, film, and language. These provided the Big Kitchen that Jules could cook in. Personal memories prepared in

the Big Kitchen exploded with taste and held the universe together. His universe. It only took him three years after his formal training, sweating in galley kitchens for twelve hour shifts, to learn how to play with his food.

The first special menu Jules created in his first restaurant, called La Famille Jules, was for Halloween. Halloween, the eve of All Saints Day, gave birth to its antithesis: a "petty-thieves" day menu. With Kurt Weill and Bertolt Brecht's *Three Penny Opera* playing and sung in German, he served Stollen Kisses, Fleeced Lamb, Plucked Maidenhead Fern, Pinched Halibut Cheeks, A Salted Cod, Lifted-Skirt Steak, and a Tart of Poached Pears. They came for the food, had a good laugh, and Jules made money.

And then, this Strawberry got in line with all the other Strawberries, all equally succulent red, all circling like electrons around the nucleus that was Jules. Out of that firmament he plucked his strawberry galette. The one he made at the beginning of summer, when the bing cherries had plumped and darkened. The one he made many summers ago for Ann, the young woman who would become his wife. The strawberries were mixed with those plump bings and some freshly dried cherries that had a languorous soak in Calvados. The galette dough was brushed with sweet butter and honey. This was his love sonnet, heart red, rustic and beating with the heat that overwhelmed him.

He recounts to her, because he cannot contain himself, because he does not want to contain himself if their ardor is to be believed, his favorite movie scene involving food and sex. He describes that scene in Sergio Leone's "Once Upon A Time in America." It concerns the smallest of a gang of Jewish adolescent hoodlums on the

(continued on page 6)



lower East side of Manhattan in the early twentieth century. A little kid with street smarts and beautiful eyes sets his sights on the barely-teenage, tenement slut who will “put out” for pastry, especially the Charlotte russe with whipped cream. The scene opens with a shelf level pan of the pastries, as he chooses the biggest 5-cent russe and tells his compatriot Fat, the son of the delicatessen owner, to “wrap it up pretty.” His knock on the girl’s door is answered by her mother who informs him that the object of his desire is taking a bath. He sits at the top of the staircase he has just climbed, in the dingy hallway of the building, to wait. He sets the wrapped russe down in front of him. About 30 seconds pass, and after a quick glance at the still closed door, he pokes a forefinger into the folds of the wrapping to scoop up the whipped cream that has stuck to the paper. He carefully unties the package, unfolding the leaves

of the wrap and leaving the russe exposed. He picks up the cherry atop the confection, studies it, giving all his hormones time to align themselves in the food or sex camps, then puts it back. He finds more of the whipped cream to finger from the wrapping. He starts to retie the package, looks at the still closed door and after a brief but exquisite pause, nabs the cherry and eats it. He looks at the door one more time; his adolescent patience for sex is overwhelmed by his sweet tooth, and giving into it, he voraciously devours the rest of the Charlotte russe, scooping it up with his hand, shoving it into his mouth and licking his fingers. Just as he finishes this binge the girl emerges with a “What do you want?” to which he replies “I’ll come back some other time.”

“Is that some other time, now?” Ann asked.

The next morning Ann slipped out of bed at dawn. Before leaving she split the left-over galette in two, wrapped a piece for herself in plastic and left the other half for Jules.

TONGUE-TIED IN ITALY

A Travel Essay by Lynda Salter Chenoweth

ONE OF THE JOYS of foreign travel for me is the opportunity to roam local farmers markets and food shops in search of seasonal products and then return to a well-equipped apartment to cook what’s been purchased.

My favorite green-grocers in Cortona, Italy, are Roberto and Nunciantina, a married couple who have a *frutta e verdura* shop just off the Piazza della Repubblica. I have shopped in their store frequently over the years, and have delighted in Nunciantina’s unflagging determination to improve my Italian vocabulary and pronunciation.

On one memorable occasion, I entered the store on a rainy winter’s day in search of ingredients for a soup I was planning for dinner that night. Nunciantina greeted me

with a smile and waited with a quizzical look for me to utter (badly) what I wanted. “Ha il ferro, Nunciantina?” I asked. She stared at me in disbelief. “Ferro?” “Si,” I said, “per suppa.” She walked over to some metal display shelves in the store and started to shake them. “Questo é ferro!!” she exclaimed in exasperation, pointing out that I had asked for iron. She waited for my next assault on the Italian language. I had obviously mispronounced what I wanted, so tried another approach. “Seme?” I asked, hoping that the word “seed” would indicate I was after a vegetable product rather than a mineral. “Ah!” she exclaimed, “farro. Si, si.” Shaking her head in amazement, she produced the quarter kilo of farro I requested and waved me out the door.

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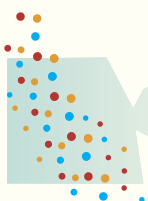
TONGUE-TIED IN ITALY



(continued from page 6)

Farro, also known as emmer wheat, is considered by some to be the second wheat to be domestically cultivated. Until early Roman times, farro was the most important cultivated form of wheat in the Near East, Africa, and Europe. (The first cultivated wheat seems to have been einkorn wheat, grown in cooler climates such as northern France and the southern Alps.) Farro was

used in ancient times to prepare porridge and a form of polenta. It was too hard to be ground into fine flour so was cracked to form a kind of bulgar. Today, farro has regained popularity as a healthy, essential ingredient in soups. (Try it instead of pasta or rice in a broth-based soup with tomatoes, sautéed onions, and cavolo nero – the dark kale to be found in our farmers markets.) It can also be cooked like couscous for cold salads, side dishes and, pre-soaked, as a substitute for rice in a risotto dish. In Italy, the latter is called “farrotto.”



THE REVOLUTION WILL NOT BE MICROWAVED: Inside America's Underground Food Movements

by Sandor Ellix Katz

A Book Review by Eric Smith

WHEN I WAS YOUNG, my mother made Chicken Kiev. I do not mean for dinner from time to time but rather, by the dozens. She wrapped the chicken breasts around parsley butter, dipped them in egg and breadcrumbs, wrapped them in packages of four and froze them. Later she delivered them out of a cooler in the back of her Volkswagon Squareback. The deliveries were made to various households where the lady of the house didn't have the time or inclination to cook for a dinner party. She could thaw the chicken and sauté it in butter, and smile when the first guest gasped at the butter squirting out of the chicken as it was cut. Little did I know that without a commercial kitchen or permits my mother was a part of the food underground.

Sandor Katz's book, *The Revolution Will Not Be Microwaved*, was among several books on food unfortunate to appear in the shadow of *The Omnivore's Dilemma*. In the book, Sandor discusses many forms of the underground food movement. He uses a lot of interesting statistics and historical research as well as stories of the people involved. He tells the tales with great empathy, understanding, and humor. Sandor connects well with people and can communicate clearly what he discovers to his readers. There are exemplary recipes in

many of the sections and the graphic design has a certain radical 60's charm.

Sandor's book takes you to a few places you did not plan to go. While most of us believe in seed saving and clean water rights, few of us will look for food in the dumpster behind the supermarket or compost our own waste. But knowledge always expands our perspective and the story is told so well that we enjoy the ride.

Since I work in a highly regulated food industry, I found myself being jealous of underground food producers. The rules (when there are no regulations) were simple: establish your values and live them. Which is highly preferable to being confronted with code books and checklists provided by the Department of Food and Agriculture and the county Health Department.

Ultimately, *Revolution* is a book filled with hope. Others are telling us our food system is broken, while Sandor says, "Which one?" He pulls aside the curtain to reveal a complex web of food systems. They may not be sanctioned but they work, and will continue to do so for a long time.

The book is available at most bookstores, but the most pleasant place to purchase it is the tasting room of Preston Vineyards, 9282 West Dry Creek Road, Healdsburg.



▲
*Chef
Mateo
Granados*

◀
*On September
21, 2008 the fifth
Meal in the Field
was hosted by
Tierra Vegetables
and Slow Food
Sonoma County.
Chef Granados
again produced a
delicious meal
with products
from Tierra—
including sausage
made from
Lee James' ram.*



WELCOME NEW MEMBERS!

Cynthia Albers, Sebastopol
Mary Barsony & Michael Kozart, Sebastopol
Robert Bell, Cotati
Zureal Bernier & Anna Symonds, Healdsburg
Scout & Jonah Boese, Healdsburg
Mark Caldwell & Kevin Burton, Healdsburg
Courtney Delello, Santa Rosa
Marianne Farrell & Dierdre Venables,
Healdsburg
Stephen & Betty Gould, Calistoga
Dee Grohmann, Healdsburg
Karen & Ben Huffines, Rocklin
Roanne & David Kaplow, Petaluma
Eric & Laura Lee, Petaluma
Ron Lindenbusch, Petaluma
George Marcos, Bodega
Kathy & Bill Nicols, Healdsburg
Linda Seppi, Santa Rosa
Mark & Suan Tharrington, Cloverdale

COMING EVENTS

Slow Food Sonoma County Convivium

Our calendar is a flexible and shifting document, so here is a heads-up about convivium events coming in this fall.

OCTOBER 11, 3 PM

ARK OF TASTE POTLUCK DINNER Medlock-Ames Winery

Chalk Hill Road, Healdsburg COST: \$35
To register, e-mail Lisa Hunter:
lkhunter@aol.com

NOVEMBER 8-14

SONOMA-GUATEMALA FOOD TRADITIONS EXCHANGE

- **November 8, 4 PM**
Reception for Ana Maria Chali Calan
Susan and Bill Daniels' home, Santa Rosa
- **November 10, 5:30 PM**
Cooking Class & Meal
Relish, Healdsburg
- **November 14, 6 PM**
Meet-Up
Bill Hawn's home, Cloverdale

DECEMBER 6,

HOLIDAY TAMALES with Elissa Rubin-Mahon

Jackie and Frank Denny's house,
Santa Rosa COST & TIME : TBD

*PLEASE NOTE: Registration information for
the above events will be emailed in October
and November.*



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