



Newsletter

June 2026



What is Slow Food?

"Slow Food is simply food that tells a story—of the people who produce it, the traditions that shape it, and the connections it creates."

Carol Diaz
SFSCN Board Chair
Member Since 2008

The Food History Corner: Ranching, Poultry and the People Who Shaped Sonoma County



Indigenous Stewardship of the Land

Long before Sonoma County became known for wine and farm-to-table cuisine, the region was shaped by Indigenous stewardship of the land. For thousands of years, Coast Miwok, Southern Pomo, and other Native communities actively managed grasslands, oak woodlands, and waterways through practices such as seasonal burning, selective harvesting, and careful ecological observation. These methods supported healthy ecosystems, abundant wildlife, and the open landscapes that later attracted ranching and agriculture.

The Rise of Ranching in Sonoma County

As European settlement expanded, ranching became a defining feature of Sonoma County's economy and culture. Waves of migration brought Portuguese immigrants from the Azores, Swiss Italian ranchers, Irish farm workers, and later Mexican and Latin American laborers, each contributing skills, traditions, and knowledge that shaped local food systems and rural communities. Early ranching established traditions of dairying, beef production, and sheep herding that continue today. Increasingly, modern ranchers are blending these traditions with regenerative practices designed to improve soil health, restore habitat, and sustain agricultural livelihoods.

Regenerative Ranching Today

Those who joined our tour of [Stemple Creek Ranch](#) in early May saw many of these practices in action. Last fall, members also toured [Knight's Valley Wagyu](#), recipient of a Snail of Approval in 2025, which exemplifies regenerative meat production. [Marin Coast Ranch](#) in Tomales, honored with a Snail of Approval in 2024, raises USDA-certified grass-fed beef and lamb. Both Stemple Creek and Marin Coast offer direct-to-consumer meat sales through their online stores. Supporting ranches committed to producing food that is good, clean, and fair helps strengthen a more sustainable local food system.

Petaluma's Poultry Boom

Sonoma County's agricultural heritage is also deeply tied to poultry production. Beginning in the late nineteenth century, Eastern European Jewish immigrants seeking economic opportunity and refuge from persecution played a significant role in building the region's thriving poultry industry. Their hard work and entrepreneurial spirit helped transform Petaluma into a national center of egg production.

A key factor in Petaluma's success was the work of inventor Lyman Byce, who arrived in California in 1878. Inspired by the region's mild climate and growing poultry industry, he developed an improved egg incubator that solved one of the industry's greatest challenges: maintaining consistent, safe heat during incubation. His innovation helped fuel a remarkable expansion of poultry production, and by the early twentieth century Petaluma had earned the nickname "Egg Capital of the World," producing millions of eggs annually.

This legacy is still celebrated today through Petaluma's annual [Butter & Egg Days Parade and Festival](#), held each spring.

Continuing the Tradition

The tradition of responsible poultry farming continues across Sonoma County. In 2023, [Wise Acre Farm](#) in Windsor received a Snail of Approval for its commitment to good, clean, and fair food production. While not in Petaluma, but more centrally located in Windsor, they offer pastured chicken and various size farm fresh eggs. The eggs are available in a self-serve vending machine - the ultimate convenience! Stop by anytime.

Looking to the Future

Understanding Sonoma County's agricultural story means looking beyond vineyards and tasting rooms. The county's landscape and food culture were shaped by Indigenous land stewardship, ranching, dairy farming, immigrant poultry operations, and generations of labor from diverse communities. Today, many producers are embracing practices such as rotational grazing, habitat restoration, and carbon farming while drawing inspiration from Indigenous ecological knowledge. Together, these traditions offer valuable lessons for building a more resilient and sustainable food future.

Sonoma County North Calendar

Mark your calendars, and look for an invitation with details about a month before each event.

June

- 6** Sonoma County North Table at Luther Burbank Farmers Market, Santa Rosa, 8:30 am-1 pm
- 29** Slow Books, *Slow Noodles*, Chantha Nguon, Windsor
- 19** Sonoma County North Table at Cloverdale Farmers Market, 9:30 am-1 pm

July

- 11** Annual Summer Picnic at Gradek Ranch, Healdsburg
- 19** Tabling at Cloverdale Farmers Market, 9:30 am-1 pm

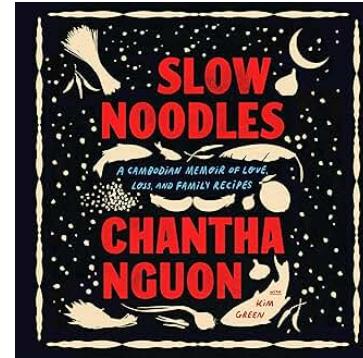
August

- 10** Slow Books, *Why I Cook*, Tom Colicchio, Cloverdale

June Slow Books

Slow Noodles by Chantha Nguon and Kim Green

In *Slow Noodles*, Chantha Nguon recounts her life as a Cambodia refugee who lost everything and everyone—her house, her country, her parents, her siblings, her friends—everything but the memories of her mother’s kitchen, the tastes and aromas of the foods her mother made before the dictator Pol Pot tore her country apart in the 1970s, killing millions of her compatriots.



From her idyllic early years in Battambang to hiding as a young girl in Phnom Penh as the country purges ethnic Vietnamese like Nguon and her family, from her escape to Saigon to the deaths of mother and sister there, from the poverty and devastation she experiences in a war-ravaged Vietnam to her decision to flee the country. We follow Chantha on a harrowing river crossing into Thailand—part of the exodus that gave rise to the name “boat people”—and her decades in a refugee camp there, until finally, denied passage to the West, she returns to a forever changed Cambodia.

Through it all, Nguon relies on her mother’s “slow noodles” approach to healing and to cooking, one that prioritizes time and care over expediency.

Spotlight: Christine Piccin



Earlier this month, our Slow Books group managed to snag seats at the SRJC [Culinary Café](#), where culinary students run the show as part of their training. The room carried the particular energy of people learning how to do something difficult in public: servers moving with intense concentration, students quietly conferring near the kitchen doors, diners basking in the glow of young people focused on

learning to perform their vocation well. Behind both our access to Café Rose and much of the determination humming through the room was Slow Food member Christine Piccin.

Christine teaches in SRJC’s culinary program, where students learn far more than mother sauces and sanitation standards. In her classes (she’s currently teaching Intro to Culinary Arts and an advanced course focused on cooking meat and seafood), lesson plans naturally broaden into conversations about industrial agriculture, family food memories, and the complicated ethics of feeding people for a living.

Pick One Thing

One thing I appreciated immediately while talking with Christine was that she has very little appetite for culinary absolutism. After decades in professional food spaces (and her own recovery from industry burnout) she has arrived at a philosophy that feels both gentler and more durable.

“I tell my students, if you can support one farm or one rancher that’s raising the bar, you’re making a difference,” she said. “Pick one thing, and stay in the game.” Honestly, it felt like useful advice not just for future chefs, but for all of us trying to survive modern life with our values intact.

Build the Bridge

Christine joined Slow Food Sonoma County North about a year ago after orbiting adjacent food spaces for many moons. What drew her in, she said, was the people: gardeners, cooks, farmers, and eaters all trying sincerely to build a more connected food culture.

That belief in human connection clearly shapes the way she teaches. These days, many of her students arrive with little direct experience growing food or cooking from scratch, but Christine does not greet that reality with cynicism. Mostly, she believes young people are hungry for mentorship, collaboration, and opportunities to participate meaningfully in community life.

Christine believes that “everyone should try and make a connection with someone who’s just starting out... This generation really needs that personal interaction around food,” she said, “and it’s our job to build the bridge.” Christine’s outlook feels especially grounding for Slow Foodies like us, who can sometimes feel overwhelmed by the calculus involved in making a Good, Clean and Fair food choice before we even make a grocery list. She reminded me to start at the human level first.

Stay Connected

Christine encourages Slow Food members to plug into the magic her students are creating at SRJC:

- Sign up for the [SRJC Culinary Café & Bakery](#) email list to be notified when reservations reopen next season.
- Learn more about [Shone Farm programs](#) and events and sign up for [Shone Farm email updates](#).

Both are wonderful ways to support the next generation of farmers, cooks, and food-system leaders right here in Sonoma County.

Snail of Approval



New Snails!

Farmer Mai's regenerative, agroecological farming practices reflect the values of good, clean, and fair food. Through dry farming, intercropping, pollinator habitat restoration, and deep soil stewardship, Mai grows heritage and climate-adapted grains that help capture carbon while supporting long-term land health.



Mai also stone-mills culturally significant heirloom grains, including Ark of Taste Sonora Wheat, honoring the stories of immigrant and refugee communities who preserved these seeds. Through leadership in the California Grain Campaign, mentorship, and education, Farmer Mai continues to strengthen local food traditions and community resilience in Sonoma County.

The flour and freshly rolled oats are available directly on their website, at select retail locations, and now through FEED Cooperative in Sonoma County.



We are delighted to recognize **Spread Kitchen** in Sonoma, a restaurant that embodies the Slow Food mission by blending Lebanese-inspired traditions with a California seasonal twist. From handmade dishes crafted with flair to a menu that flows with the rhythm of the local harvest, they are a testament to what happens when heritage meets local respect. Every plate serves as an educational journey and a deep commitment to honoring culinary roots through authentic, vibrant cuisine.

They are dedicated to scratch-made quality. Beyond the plate, the team's dedication to sustainability is inspiring; while minimizing food waste and supporting a fair, respectful workplace.

Singing Frogs Farm in Sebastopol, a regenerative, no-till farm is a standout example of biodiversity in action—building living soils through cover crops, composting, hedgerows, and habitat-rich ecosystems that support watersheds, pollinators, and long-term soil health. Their careful stewardship results in nutrient-dense food known for exceptional freshness and flavor, often harvested within a day of delivery.



Beyond the fields, they are deeply rooted in community and education—sharing knowledge through workshops, farm tours, newsletters, and mentorship, while supporting fair labor practices and strong local food networks. Singing Frogs is a true model of farming that regenerates land, nourishes people, and embodies the values of good, clean, and fair food.

Tidbits

Events from Our Food Partners

Gold Ridge Organic Farms

Paella at the Farm

Saturday, June 20, 2026

11 am - 3 pm

3387 Canfield Rd, Sebastopol

Free entry - food, drinks & tour tickets for purchase on the day.

Membership

Welcome New Member!

Anthony Adams

[Join or Renew](#)

Editors: Carol Diaz, Allison Eckert, Kate Hendricks, Lisa Hunter



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