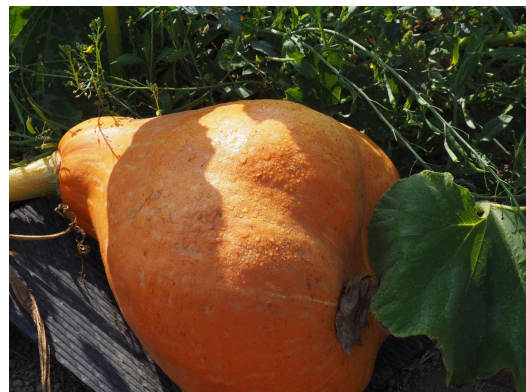




Newsletter

October 2026



What is Slow Food?

“Eating is an agricultural act. By choosing local food, we stop being passive consumers and become active co-producers in our food system.”

Carlo Petrini
Founder of the Slow Food International Movement

The Annual Summer Picnic at Gradek Ranch
Saturday, July 11, 2026



A special day in a special place....

Surrounded by the beauty of Gradek Ranch in Healdsburg's Dry Creek Valley, this year's Slow Food Sonoma County North Summer Picnic was a wonderful celebration of community, local agriculture, and the incredible bounty of Sonoma County. With shady picnic groves, and a sparkling lake, the ranch provided the perfect setting to gather with members, friends, and food enthusiasts to enjoy an afternoon at table, sharing conversation, and connection.

Oh, then came the meal....

The menu celebrated the flavors of summer with a touch of nostalgia. Guests began with classic "retro" favorites—deviled eggs, a traditional cheese ball with buttery crackers, and onion dip with potato chips. The feast continued with locally raised grilled chicken, Bodega Red potato salad, heirloom tomato salad, sweet corn on the cob, and, for dessert, a scrumptious homemade apple pie. As always, our heartfelt thanks go to the ever-talented Marie and the events team for preparing such a memorable meal. Special appreciation also goes to grill master Eric White, who once again kept the chicken sizzling to perfection!

There was more....

After dessert, some guests cooled off with a refreshing swim in the lake while others tried their luck in the drawing. Thanks to everyone's participation, more funds were raised to support our chapter's educational and community programs. Lucky winners took home wonderful prizes, including bottles of local wine, a farm basket overflowing with freshly picked produce and local olive oil, a book about Slow Food's history, a Pizza Party for Six, and Two Tickets to the Terra Madre Day Dinner. Congratulations to all our winners and thank you to everyone for your support.

A time to reflect....

One of the afternoon's most meaningful moments was a heartfelt tribute to Slow Food founder Carlo Petrini. Friends who had hosted Carlo during his visits to Sonoma County shared warm and memorable stories of his time here and his affection for our region, which he often said reminded him of his beloved Italy. Barbara, Jan, Michael, and Lisa

brought his spirit to life through their stories, and everyone joined together in singing one of Carlo's favorite songs, *Cielito Lindo*. It was a touching reminder of the friendships and values that continue to inspire the Slow Food movement.

Gathering matters....

There's something truly special about sharing a delicious meal beneath the shade of old trees with friends, neighbors, and local producers. The Gradek Ranch Summer Picnic once again reminded us that good, clean, and fair food is about more than what's on the table—it's about the people who grow it, prepare it, and gather to enjoy it together.

Thank you, thank you, thank you....

Our deepest gratitude goes to Ken and Colin Gradek and everyone at Gradek Ranch for their extraordinary hospitality. Their generosity makes this cherished annual tradition possible.

Sonoma County North Calendar

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

October

3 [Stargazer Nursery](#) Tour, Glen Ellen, 1-3 pm. [Tickets available here.](#)

11 Annual Meeting, [Farm to Fight Hunger](#), Healdsburg, 4 pm

November

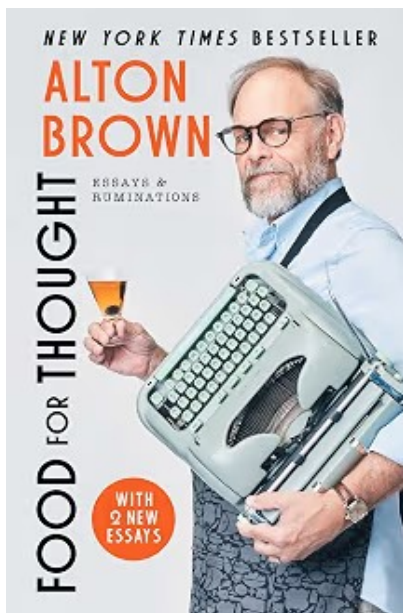
2 Slow Books, *Food for Thought*, Alton Brown, Sebastopol

10 Redwood Empire Food Bank Volunteer Day, Santa Rosa, 10 am-1 pm

December

10 Terra Madre Day Dinner, Idlewild Winery, Healdsburg

14 Slow Books, *The Language of Food*, Annabel Abbs, Cloverdale



November Slow Books

Food for Thought, Alton Brown

From cameraman to chef, musician to food scientist, Alton Brown has had a diverse and remarkable career. His work on the Food Network, including creating Good Eats and hosting Iron Chef America and Cutthroat Kitchen, has resonated with countless viewers and home cooks. Now, he shares exactly what's on his mind, mixing compelling anecdotes from his personal and professional life with in-depth observations on the culinary world, film, personal style, defining meals of his lifetime, and much more.

Spotlight: Dan Bleakney-Formby of Jupiter Foods



Last week, I sat down with Dan Bleakney-Formby, owner of [Jupiter Foods](#) in downtown Petaluma, to talk about what it really takes to run a grocery store built around putting good, clean and fair food within reach. Jupiter calls itself a "socially responsible grocer" on a mission to provision you with the highest-quality produce and pantry staples grown in our region. Last year, Jupiter earned a [Snail of Approval](#) in the Supporting Organizations category, and after learning more about Dan's ethos, it's easy to see why.

An Iowa Boy's Reckoning

Dan grew up on a family farm in Iowa, where he spent childhood afternoons walking the fields, pulling endless weeds by hand. By the 1980s, Roundup and Monsanto's promise of "better living through chemistry" had made that labor obsolete almost overnight. What looked like a silver bullet for overworked farmers has left Dan's nephews, who still farm that land today, the stewards of a devastated soil system. Even knowing the toll that herbicides take on human and ecosystem health, his nephews lack the infrastructure and market access they'd need to convert back to the regenerative practices their family once relied on.

This is the root of why Slow Food's principles matter to Dan: he watched a self-sustaining, diversified agricultural system come apart in real time. Opening Jupiter Foods was his answer to the grief: a chance to offer customers the kind of food his family once grew and to keep dollars flowing to the farmers still doing it right.

Best of Class

Jupiter's sourcing relies on a simple rule: everything Dan stocks is what he calls "best of class," meaning sustainably grown, delicious, and from as close to the store as possible. His purchasing policy also includes a social responsibility clause:

berries picked by exploited workers won't make the cut, and companies that funded the fight against Prop 37 (California's GMO labeling measure) are completely excluded.

Asked about how a farmer's products end up on his shelves, Dan shared "it all comes down to quality and food miles. I am deeply loyal to my farmers." That loyalty isn't free. It took Jupiter about six years to become financially sustainable. "It shouldn't be this hard and expensive to make something like this succeed," Dan lamented. But, as a retailer and as a customer, he sees the difficulty as part of the point. Purchasing food is an exchange of value; ideally, it's an expression of a community choosing to know its farmer. "Nobody cares more about food quality than me," he emphasized, "and nobody goes to further lengths to bring the best food to you."

57 Trucks

As for the biggest shift he wants to see among fellow Slow Food advocates, Dan doesn't mince words. "Jeff Bezos doesn't need more of your support," he said. "Our local farmers need more." On a recent work errand, Dan counted 57 Amazon trucks driving toward him over about fifteen minutes, a stark measure of how our spending habits are shaping our environment.

Dan argues that the inconvenience of shopping local "isn't a hindrance to your quality of life, it's what provides it": the walk downtown, the conversation at the register, the richness of knowing your farmer's name. Choosing Jupiter over a faceless big box store or e-tailer is choosing to spend your time and money creating the future we actually want. So, shop slow. Shop local. Take Dan's lesson that convenience today is not worth bankrupting our local food system for generations to come.

Snail of Approval



Snail Nominations

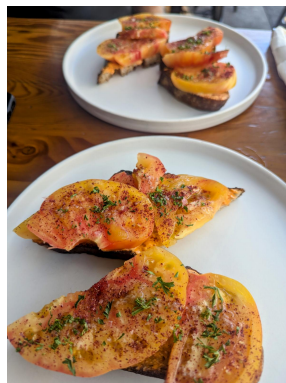
Who did we miss? Help us expand the Snail of Approval!

Take a look at our [current directory of Sonoma County Snail of Approval awardees](#). It's a beautiful snapshot of our local food system—but we know it's not complete yet.

We need your eyes on the ground to help us find the next round of awardees. Think about your weekly routine. Is there a passionate new producer at your local farmers market? A neighborhood bakery or cafe that goes out of its way to source local ingredients? A pioneering rancher or grower changing how we think about our landscape?

Nominate a Local Business Today

It takes just a few minutes, and it directly helps our local food web stay strong, resilient, and deeply connected.



From our smaller Sonoma County towns, Geyserville & Occidental.

Take a drive and taste the deliciousness of local, seasonal sourced meals.

Guess & click to find out where to find each dish.

Tidbits

Bring a Guest and Introduce Them to Slow Food!

Slow Food Roundup: A Potluck Under the Redwoods

Wednesday, August 19, 5:30 pm to Sunset
Riverfront Regional Park, 7821 Eastside Road, Healdsburg

You probably have at least one friend you always thought would be a good Slow Food member. Here's your opportunity to show them what it's all about! We invite you and a guest (or guests!) to join us for a delicious potluck supper among the redwoods, and hear how Slow Food connects our chapter to the state, national, and international movement.

Families, children, and anyone curious about Slow Food are warmly welcome. We encourage every member to bring a guest who is not yet a Slow Food member--this event is a great introduction to Slow Food. Admission is **free** for you and your guest(s). If you attend without bringing a guest, the cost is **\$5**.

We will provide home-made grilled sausage.

RSVP



Membership

Welcome New Members!

Jackie Denny, Maria Fattibene, Sabrina Huber, Marie Steckmest

[Join or Renew](#)

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



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