Slow Food EVENTS in Central Oregon

Here at home, Slow Food High Desert (SFHD) regularly sponsors "slow" events in Central Oregon, including a few that are right around the corner:

Farm to Table Dinner

Sunday, June 26, 3 p.m. at Central Oregon Community College (COCC), Bend; a meal prepared by the Cascade Culinary Institute students; $95; proceeds will go toward providing a scholarship to a deserving culinary student and to stock the new culinary kitchens; co-sponsored by the COCC Foundation.

August Bounty Dinner

Sunday. Aug. 14 at Maragas Winery, Bend; local chefs will be preparing local foods to show case the best of Central Oregon's bounty; food, drink, music and more.

Plots to Plates Farm School

Two-week programs, May to October, Terrebonne; by Sarahlee Lawrence from Rainshadow Organics and Sweet Medicine Nation from Four Winds Foundation; a hands-on farm school where students learn how to be good, fair, sustainable farmers; mission: to educate and foster ecological renewal, economic viability, and social justice in local, sustainable food education programs; plotstoplates.wordpress.com.

Farmers Market

Fridays, 3-7 p.m., Redmond Greenhouse, Hwy 97; SFHD hosts a booth each week during the summer.

Movie Night

Monthly at COCC; SFHD shows critically acclaimed movies and documentaries related to food issues; see the "Slow Food High Desert Facebook page for upcoming movies and events.

How SLOW is YOUR FOOD

The Slow Food movement remains active here in Central Oregon





by Chef Bette Fraser / for The Bulletin Special Projects

When you sit down at the table to have a meal, do you know where your food comes from, how it was produced and by whom?

This question should be asked when we are eating at home or at a restaurant, both here in Central Oregon and when we venture out into the world.

Of course, the glib answer is that our food comes from the grocery store. But the food doesn't magically appear in the grocery store. And where do restaurants or fast food chains get their food?

These questions and others were a concern to a man in Italy named Carlo Petrini during the late 1980s. Italy has long had a culture of enjoying the pleasures of the table, whereas the people of the U.S., in particular, have moved to a fast food culture that has forgotten what good food is all about.

Petrini started what was to become the International Slow Food Movement, which has made people around the world — including people here in Central Oregon — care again about where they get their food.

Slow Food is an international nonprofit organization with members in 150 countries who are committed to the concept that food should be good, clean and fair. It boasts more than 100,000 members in more than 1,300 chapters worldwide, and a network of 2,000 food communities that are determined to practice sustainable food production.

Central Oregon even has its own Slow Food chapter: Slow Food High Desert.

With the rise of fast food and an even faster life, along with the disappearance of food traditions and interest around the world — where it came from and what it tastes like — the birth of Slow Food was long overdue.

Our food choices were affecting the rest of the world, not just ours in the U.S. but what others were doing around the world as well. Slow Food founders and members saw an opportunity to band together to discuss these problems and to get involved, to educate and to learn.

Now more than 20 years later, programs, education and literature is disseminated regularly to individuals, schools, countries and governments around the world.

Slow Food has started programs like Terra Madre, a biennial event in Italy that brings together small scale farmers, chefs, fishermen, food artisans and youths from around the world who work to protect biodiversity, to improve the food system and to preserve the taste of food.

Another program is called Slow Food in Schools. Chapter members reach out with community based youth food education projects, teaching cooking classes and planting schoolyard gardens to give kids hands-on opportunities to see where their food comes from.

Slow Food High Desert welcomes new members all the time. Membership is $25 per year, and events are discounted to members.

How can you eat more slowly?

First, stop and think about what you are eating at every meal. Sometimes we get caught up in the idea of just putting food in our mouths and forgetting about the pleasures of eating a great meal with family or friends or enjoying local foods, like Oregon strawberries, at the height of the season.

Next, purchase fresh, seasonal and local products. Not only does it reduce your carbon footprint, it helps your neighbor — the farmer or rancher. And you get the benefit of food that just tastes better.

There are many shopping avenues available to you other than the traditional grocery store for the purchase of your family meals: farmers markets, Community Supported Agriculture, Central Oregon Locavore, buying directly from the farm or ranch, and growing it yourself.

We also need to ask the restaurants that we frequent where they get their food. We can vote with our fork and with our dollars. If we support the idea of slow food — good, clean, fair food — we can all do it every day with every meal.

Sit down and enjoy your meal. Eat slowly; eat locally. We will all be better for it.

Chef Bette Fraser is the proprietor of The Well Traveled Fork, hosting cooking classes, culinary tours and providing catering services. She can be reached at WellTraveledFork.com or 541-312-0097.