Educating the Slow Food Way

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Slow Food believes that by understanding more about our food and where it comes from, we will learn to combine pleasure and responsibility in our daily choices, better appreciate the cultural and social importance of food and generally, make the world a better place. Since its early days, the association has been fostering an approach to food and taste education, with pleasure and community values at its core, through the evolution of many projects: from local activities to national programs and international events. More than 20 years down the track, these ideas and experience have been summarized in a Slow Food Education Manifesto and elaborated on in a handbook with descriptions of activities and games for schools, children and adults, taken from some of the best examples from the Slow Food network around the world.

The handbook bridges Slow Food’s philosophy with the practical, building a platform of advice, ideas and organizational tools that aim to bring good, clean and fair food into reality. The Education Manifesto embraces slowness, pleasure, diversity and community. Put into practice, this means activities that engage people’s senses, mind and passion in discovering ‘real’ food - from taste test games, to planting school gardens or organizing cooking lessons - as this is one of the strongest opportunities we have to improve our food systems. Without creating the desire for “something else”, the industrial food system will always have a captive audience.

The examples included in the handbook were collected from education projects around the world but can be recontextualized to fit different geographic areas. For example, the Rio de Janeiro Convivium describes a six-phase course for children under 15 to learn about the huge variety of climates, geography and geology of their country, and the different foods that represent this diversity. The lessons include group discussions, group presentations, creating a cookbook and tastings that could be used as the foundation for a similar program in another part of the world.

Slow Food hopes that the handbook will allow any motivated person to start or enrich an education activity or program: choosing a topic and approach, creating the right conditions and organizing initiatives not only as way to educate, but also strengthen a community. As we believe that education can happen everywhere and at all times, this manual can even help add another dimension to any activity carried out in groups, including those that are not, strictly speaking, educational activities, such the meetings, celebrations, and communal meals, among others.

Download the handbook, or to find out more about Slow Food Education, visit www.slowfood.com/education