

THE BEST AT THE MARKET, IN YOUR KITCHEN AND ON YOUR TABLE

Slow Food moves faster on social activism

The movement once viewed as elitist now allies itself with such groups as farmworkers

By **LAURA McCANDLISH**
SPECIAL TO THE OREGONIAN

Vineyard tours, first-press olive oil tastings, multi-course truffle feasts. These are the events that come to mind when many people think of the foodie organization called Slow Food, the one with the little snail as its logo. Fabulous, perhaps, but focused solely on gourmet — and some might say elitist — pursuits.

While that may have been true at

some time and for some chapters, Slow Food International, with more than 85,000 members worldwide, says it's on a fast track to change. Struggling to shed its hedonistic image, the parent organization isn't advocating a new direction as much as an old one, looking to its roots that began with a leftist protest in Italy. Armed with bowls of penne, Slow Food founder Carlo Petrini and supporters in 1986 organized a passionate yet unsuccessful

demonstration against plans for McDonald's to bring its fast food to the Spanish Steps in Rome.

Now Slow Food chapters (formally called "convivia" but now allowed to use the more plain-spoken term) are not only holding workshops on cheese-making and foraging for wild mushrooms, but also engaging in debates about how to make local, wholesome

Please see **SLOW FOOD** Page FD4



MICHAEL RUBENSTEIN/THE OREGONIAN/2006

Shortcut Cooking

Corn chowder pops with a green, red Mexican twist

Green Giant Mexicorn, cumin and rotisserie chicken “make” this quick, thrifty, flavorful dish

By **KATHERINE MILLER**
THE OREGONIAN

Several years ago FOODday ran a recipe for a chowder made with chicken, porcini mushrooms, bacon and loads of vegetables and seasonings. We loved it because it was hearty, colorful and herb-y, with just the right amount of meatiness.

We figured we could simplify it and turn it into a Shortcut Cooking column. But, sadly, the results were bland and boring. So test kitchen director Linda Faus tried again, only this time giving it a Mexican flavor with Green Giant Mexicorn (corn with red and green bell peppers) and ground cumin. Along with the canned corn, she used good old rotisserie chicken, canned broth and frozen chopped onions, but you could certainly chop your own.

This time around we were happy with the flavor, and even happier with the ease of preparation. And did we mention that it's thrifty? Paired with a chewy roll and a green salad, we think it's a recipe for contentment.

Katherine Miller: 503-294-5157;
katherinemiller@wnews.oregonian.com

Creamy Chicken and Corn Chowder

Makes 4 servings

- 2 tablespoons butter
- 1½ cups chopped onions (frozen or fresh)
- 1 teaspoon ground cumin
- ¼ cup all-purpose flour
- 2 14½-ounce cans reduced-sodium chicken broth
- 2 11-ounce cans Green Giant Mexicorn, drained
- 2 cups milk
- 2 cups shredded cooked chicken
- 2 packed cups baby spinach
- Salt and freshly ground black pepper
- ½ teaspoon Tabasco sauce, or to taste

Melt the butter in a large saucepan over medium heat. Add the onion and sauté until tender, about 4 minutes. Stir in the cumin and sauté for another 30 seconds. Whisk in the flour and cook, stirring occasionally, for 2 to 3 minutes. Whisk in the chicken broth until smooth. Add the corn and milk and bring to a simmer. Let cook for 4 to 5 minutes or until the chowder is thickened slightly and the flavors have blended. Stir in the chicken and spinach and continue cooking for another 1 to 2 minutes or until the spinach is wilted. Add salt and black pepper to taste. Stir in the Tabasco sauce and serve immediately.

PER SERVING: **calories:** 440 (30% from fat); **protein:** 31.9 grams; **total fat:** 14.4 grams; **saturated fat:** 6.8 grams; **cholesterol:** 87 mg; **sodium:** 1,128 mg; **carbohydrate:** 50 grams; **dietary fiber:** 4.6 grams

Vegetarian Flavors

‘Meaty’ greens, cheeses meld in sizzling pizza

The strong flavors complement each other in a satisfying pie ideally crisped on a baking stone

By **IVY MANNING**
SPECIAL TO THE OREGONIAN

Something magical happens when robust greens like Swiss chard are sautéed in a blazing hot pan. Not only do the leaves wilt and become tender, but they also pick up a smoky, meaty quality that makes them perfect for vegetarian meals like this easy pizza.

Greens sautéed this way need strong flavors to complement and enhance them. In this recipe, I pair the greens with fontina, a flavorful semi-soft cheese, nutty Parmigiano-Reggiano, and fresh mozzarella for creaminess.

Baking the pizza on a baking stone yields a perfectly crisp crust. If you don't have a baking stone, you can use a heavy-duty baking sheet but the crust won't be quite as crisp.

Ivy Manning is a Portland-based freelance food writer and personal chef. Visit her at www.chefivy.com.

Three-Cheese and Swiss Chard Pizza

Makes 8 slices

- 1 pound pizza dough
- 1 bunch fresh Swiss chard
- 1 tablespoon olive oil
- 1 medium clove garlic, sliced
- Pinch crushed red pepper flakes
- Salt and freshly ground black pepper
- All-purpose flour, for rolling dough
- Coarse cornmeal, for pizza peel
- 4 ounces fontina cheese, rind discarded, cheese cut into ¼-inch dice (about 1 cup)
- 1 4-ounce ball fresh mozzarella, chopped
- ¼ cup grated Parmigiano-Reggiano cheese

At least 30 minutes before baking, put a pizza baking stone on the lowest rack of the oven and preheat oven to 450 degrees. Allow the dough to come to room temperature.

Cut the ribs from the chard and discard. Wash the leaves in a large bowl of cold water, drain and chop, leaving some moisture still clinging to them.

Heat the oil in a large skillet or wok over medium-high heat. Add the garlic and sauté until fragrant but not browning, 20 seconds. Carefully add the chard, pepper flakes and salt and pepper to taste; cook, stirring constantly with tongs, until the chard is wilted and tender, about 6 minutes.

Roll the dough out on a lightly floured surface into a 12-inch round. Sprinkle a pizza peel or the back of a baking sheet with cornmeal and place the dough on it. Distribute the chard and cheeses evenly on the dough, leaving a ½-inch border around edges.

Tilt the pizza peel and use a decisive jerking motion to slide the pizza onto the baking stone. Bake until the crust is golden brown and the cheeses are bubbly, about 10 minutes. Cut into 8 slices and serve.

PER SLICE: **calories:** 297 (38% from fat); **protein:** 13.4 grams; **total fat:** 12.5 grams; **saturated fat:** 6.3 grams; **cholesterol:** 30 mg; **sodium:** 695 mg; **carbohydrate:** 30.3 grams; **dietary fiber:** 2.3 grams

Slow Food: Group's U.S. leader aims at social justice

Continued from Page FD1

and delicious food more accessible to all — including those who grow much of it, the farmworkers.

The 600-member Portland chapter — the first in the United States, founded in 1991 — is deeply engaged in this shift away from pleasure only and toward policy issues. Upcoming events include a tour of, no, not a craft brewery, but farmworker housing and discussions on fair-trade certification that goes beyond imported chocolate and coffee.

“The issues related to farm labor are very complex, and the solutions are anything but easy,” Deborah Kane, vice president of Ecotrust's Food and Farms program, said at Slow Food Portland's inaugural forum on the issue in November. “But the time has arrived where it's no longer a matter of not knowing. We must move with that knowledge into action.”

The change is led in part by Slow Food USA's new president, Josh Viertel, who's based in New York City. Under his guidance, Slow Food's 200 American chapters voted to rewrite the organization's mission, emphasizing food policy and social justice, in connection with Slow Food Nation, a convergence of more than 60,000 people in San Francisco in August. Then in November, before 7,000 of the world's farmers, chefs and food advocates at the Terra Madre convention in Turin, Italy, Viertel drew on Petrini's “good, clean and fair” values, saying that we must consider those hurt most by our food system.

This shift means Slow Food is entering the territory of activist groups such as Oregon's only farmworkers union, PCUN (Piñeros y Campesinos Unidos del Noroeste), and the Portland-based Community Food Security Coalition. Asked whether the change could provoke some turf wars, the two organizations say they'd gladly partner with Slow Food USA's 17,000 media-savvy and deep-pocketed members, as long as Slow Food's concern for these issues is genuine.

“They should use their power and authority to support people who have already been working with these more disenfranchised groups for decades,” said Tera Couchman, who sits on the Community Food Security Coalition board and directs Janus Youth Programs' urban agriculture program in Northeast Portland.

Slow Food also should empower Oregon's predominantly Latino farmworkers, keeping them at the forefront of this “good, clean, fair” effort, Couchman said. Immigration reform could even become Slow Food terrain, said Ramón Ramirez, president of PCUN. About 59 percent of all crop workers hired in the Pacific Northwest (Oregon and Washington) are undocumented immigrants, largely from Mexico, according to the National Agricultural Worker Survey conducted by the U.S. Department of Labor over four years through September 2008.

Later this spring, Ramirez will lead Slow Food Portland members on a tour of model farmworker housing projects in Woodburn and Salem, and in contrast, squalid labor camps where many migrants live.

Pastaworks roots

Peter de Garmo, founder of the Portland chapter and a member of Slow Food USA's board, admits the local chapter didn't address such weighty topics in the past.

In its infancy, Slow Food Portland's focus was on Italian wines, artisanal cheeses and cured meats showcased at Pastaworks, de Garmo's pioneering gourmet emporium. Then around 1996, de Garmo and his former Pastaworks partner, Don Oman, gradually started moving Slow Food Portland away from a pure eating society model, planning events to promote Northwest producers and cuisine. Huckleberry-picking expeditions, ice cream and sausage-making parties

highlighted local ingredients. “The first incarnation here was purely about enjoying the quality of food,” de Garmo said. “We made a conscious decision that if we stay involved, it can't just feature visiting Italian winemakers and chefs.”

The Salone Northwest celebration in 2002 cemented the group's emphasis on local gastronomy. Still, workshops featured wines from Italy's Emilia-Romagna region alongside those from the Willamette Valley. Alice Waters, who catalyzed the local food revolution with her Chez Panisse restaurant in Berkeley, Calif., kicked off the volunteer-run Portland festival, executed on a modest \$3,500 budget.

However, high-end restaurants and boutique winemakers remained the dominant interest until the first Terra Madre was held by Slow Food in 2004 at Salone del Gusto, a biennial convention showcasing artisanal food products from around the world. The addition of the Terra Madre segment demonstrated Slow Food's acknowledgement of the importance of agriculture. About 5,000 farmers from around the world finally entered the Slow Food fold.

Slow Food Portland participated in the watershed moment, raising thousands of dollars to send local delegates to Turin. Attendees included The Rogue Creamery's Cary Bryant and David Gremmels, Connie and Doc Hatfield of Country Natural Beef, and Gene Thiel, a Joseph farmer who sells his popular Prairie Creek Farm potatoes at the Portland Farmers Market. Two years later, Slow Food Portland sponsored anti-hunger activists, including the Oregon Food Bank's Sharon Thornberry and Andy Fisher of the Community Food Security Coalition, at Terra Madre in 2006.

“Slow Food has an elitist image, but there we were with vegetable growers from Eritrea, where there's immense poverty, and fishermen from Spain and Japan,” Thornberry said. “It sets a neutral stage for people to try to understand each other.”

Slow Food is not only getting more socially conscious, it's also getting younger. The Terra Madre in November celebrated the 1,000 delegates age 30 and younger in attendance. Amanda Peden, who now co-chairs Slow Food Portland with former Sauvie Island Organics farm manager Josh Volk, is only 25. Like Slow Food USA President

Viertel, who is 31, she wants to draw in activists from local universities. More ethnic and socioeconomic diversity would also help, said Peden, a Whitman College graduate who grew up in rural eastern Washington.

To that end, Bryant Terry, an African American food-justice activist and chef, will demonstrate healthful Southern cooking techniques at a Slow Food event at the Interstate Firehouse Cultural Center in North Portland next week (March 18). Slow Food Portland's annual potluck dinner, hosted at the peer center for homeless youth instead of at a restaurant, and the farm labor forum at Ecotrust also embodied this shift in focus.

But can the group go too far in the policy direction of good, clean, fair, quashing all love of food aesthetics and fun? An overemphasis on activism could detract from what Ann Shriver, Slow Food Corvallis founder, sees as the movement's raison d'être: an unabashed defense of “the universal right to pleasure.” As Oregon's newest chapter, forming just last year, Slow Food Corvallis put some effort toward social issues from the start. Corvallis-chapter board members include Thornberry, of the Oregon Food Bank, and other food security activists.

So at Slow Food Nation in August, Shriver was one of the few leaders to withhold support for the U.S. movement's redrafted mission. She also bristled at a Halloween campaign that encouraged children to distribute fair-trade chocolate at the homes where they trick-or-treated.

“What they've done is wrong out all the pleasure aspects from the statement,” Shriver said. “The sensual pleasure is the thing we seek, that we want to be accessible to everyone, so that people aren't condemned to a life of obesity and living on fast foods.”

Laura McCandlish is a writer in Corvallis who blogs at baltimore.oregon.wordpress.com.

Want a taste of Slow Food? slowfoodportland.com

Monday, March 16: Free lecture by Woody Tasch, author of “Slow Money: Investing as if Food, Farms, and Fertility Mattered.” 7 p.m. at Ecotrust's Natural Capital Center, 721 N.W. Ninth Ave., second floor. RSVP to Laura Ford: lford@ecotrust.org

Wednesday, March 18: Bryant Terry, author of the new “Vegan Soul Kitchen” cookbook, will share recipes and speak, with music and poetry performances. 7 p.m. at the Interstate Firehouse Cultural Center, 5340 N. Interstate Ave.; \$8. RSVP to: rsvp@slowfoodportland.com or 503-236-4087

Timeline of conscious eating



1971

Alice Waters opens Chez Panisse in Berkeley, Calif., popularizing local, seasonal cuisine.

1982

Willamette Valley Tilth drafts the first standards for organic farming, which become blueprint for future national standards.

1986

Slow Food founder Carlo Petrini stages protest against McDonald's coming to the Spanish Steps in Rome.



Oregon Tilth is founded.

1989

Petrini launches Slow Food movement in Bra, Italy, organizing its first meeting in Paris.

1991

Peter de Garmo founds Slow Food Portland, the first chapter in the U.S.



1992

First Portland Farmers Market starts at Albers Mill (moves to Portland State University in 1998).



1997

Food Alliance — the third-party certifier of sustainable meats, dairy and produce — incorporates in Portland.

1999

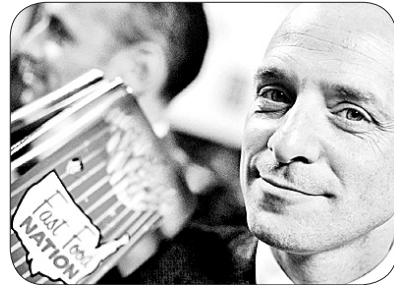
Slow Food U.S.A. forms, opening national headquarters in New York City. A chapter forms in Bend.

2000

Slow Food Eugene is founded.

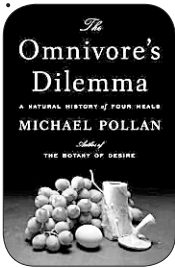
2001

Eric Schlosser's “Fast Food Nation” is published.



2004

First Terra Madre is held.



2006

Michael Pollan's “The Omnivore's Dilemma” is published.

May 2007

Carlo Petrini preaches to a 3,000-plus crowd at the Arlene Schnitzer Concert Hall in Portland.

Spring 2008

Slow Food Corvallis, Oregon's newest chapter, is founded.

Fall 2008

The Community Food Security Coalition, representing almost 300 food policy organizations, moves its headquarters from Los Angeles to Portland.