

Review Article

SLOW FOOD: A PRIMER

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Abstract: The Slow Food Movement is a global, grassroots organization with a new political vision. It is an international organization that is against fast food, which is regarded as having adverse effects on health and happiness. It promotes local food and traditional cooking. It started in Italy in 1986 and has spread around the world. It aims to increase community awareness of the value of clean, sustainable, local food. It seeks to prevent the disappearance of local food cultures and traditions. This paper is a primer on slow food.

Keywords: Slow food, fast food, Slow Food Movement, social movement, foodism, politicization of food

INTRODUCTION

The production and consumption of food are processes that are common to all human beings. Food is something to be protected and cherished. In today's globalized world, the food industry is showing its limitations in terms of food waste, prevalence of obesity in children, damage to the environment, and increase in the number of people experiencing hunger. The American food system has been transformed by a technological revolution.

Slow food is the antithesis of fast food, as illustrated in Figure 1 [1]. Fast and slow are shorthand for philosophies of life. Fast is busy, controlling, aggressive, hurried, analytical, stressed, superficial, impatient, active, quantity-over quality. Slow is the opposite: calm, careful, receptive, still, intuitive, unhurried, patient, reflective, quality-over-quantity [2]. Proponents of the slow food movement strongly protest against the globalization and industrialization of food, which is destroying many food flavors and varieties around the world. They believe that food should be grown and bought locally, and consumed in the traditional manner. Slow food works in the international context with the aim of promoting everyone's right to food that is good, clean, and fair and safeguard the production of traditional foods.

CONCEPT OF SLOW FOOD

Slow Food (SF) is an organization that was founded by activist Carlo Petrini in Italy in 1986. It came out of protests against the opening of first McDonald's in Rome, Italy. Petrini believes that "everyone has the right to good, clean, and fair food." He claims that quality food should be available to all classes of people, not just the rich. As an alternative to fast food, slow food promotes local foods and traditional food production and cooking. Slow food was the first established part of the broader slow movement and has spread worldwide. The slow food alternative is based on food that is good, clean, sustainable, and fair. It links gastronomic pleasure and environmental responsibility.

Slow Food is an international social organization that produces and publishes several dissemination documents such as related to the Manifesto, governing rules, social impact reports, and conference proceedings. It pursues the global transformation of every aspect of the current food system. It claims that "feed the planet is possible." To achieve this requires collaboration between local supporters or volunteers and local administrations and commercial food enterprises. It also requires a change in the general mindset about food and consumption habits [3].

The three main objectives of SF are [4]: (1) education of taste; (2) defending the right to material pleasure and conviviality; and (3) preserving the survival of endangered agricultural products and practices. In terms of taste education, the movement conceives of individual taste as a manifestation of culture and society. Educational outreach is an essential pillar of slow food's activities, which include school gardens, visits to farms, children's cooking clubs, conferences, and workshops.

SLOW FOOD MOVEMENT

Slow Food has grown into an international movement organized around the protection of local food economies. The Slow Food international movement (slowfood.com) officially began in December 1989 when delegates from 15 countries signed the founding manifesto in France. The movement strongly opposes the universal folly and the degrading effects of fast life."Their objective is directed against globalization of agricultural products or globalization of fast food. In the name of capitalism, *Fast Life* has changed our way of being and threatens our environment [5]. The collective effect of the members is guided by values, structures, and processes embodied in some guiding principles at every level. The movement encourages members to become guardians of tradition and devotees of regional cuisine.

The Slow Food Movement (SFM) has expanded to include over 100,000 members with branches in over 150 countries including Italy, Japan, Germany, United States, France, United Kingdom, Canada, and Switzerland. Slow Food USA currently has 200 chapters located in New York, San Francisco, Denver, etc. It has the goal to teach children where food comes from and how food is grown.

OBJECTIVES OF SFM

Slow Food Movement (SFM) aims at promoting food that is regionally, ethically, and sustainably produced, and convivially consumed. Its main goals involve preserving traditional dishes and meal times and returning to traditional forms of farming. It is predicated on ethical modes of production and consumption [6]. Consequently, the movement promotes organic farming because of its health benefits for consumers and the environment. Their motto, "Good, clean and fair food" explains their philosophy and fundamental principle [4]:

- *Good:* A quality, flavorsome, and healthy food with cultural relevance, available, and accessible to all and is part of our local culture.
- *Clean:* Food production and consumption that does not harm the environment or people. Insure that environmental justice principles are applied in the fields as farmworkers plant and harvest.
- *Fair:* accessible prices for consumers and fair conditions and pay for producers and all workers. Fight for dignity and economic justice.

The philosophy of Slow Food is not limited to food. The approach has inspired organizations in different areas to adapt a slow life, slow attitude, slow money, slow credit, slow sex, slow tourism, slow journalism, slow death, slow growth, slow cities, and slow architecture, which all work in the defense of local cultural heritage and sustainability.

The movement incorporates a series of objectives within its mission, including [7]:

- creating "Praesidia" grassroots organizations to promote slow foods to the public
- forming and sustaining seed banks to preserve heirloom varieties in cooperation with local food systems
- preserving and promoting local and traditional food products, along with their lore and preparation
- organizing small-scale processing (including facilities for slaughtering and short run products)
- organizing celebrations of local cuisine within regions

- promoting "taste education"
- educating consumers about the risks of fast food
- educating citizens about the drawbacks of commercial agribusiness and factory farms
- educating citizens about the risks of monoculture and reliance on too few genomes or varieties
- developing various political programs to preserve family farms
- lobbying for the inclusion of organic farming concerns within agricultural policy
- lobbying against government funding of genetic engineering
- lobbying against the use of pesticides
- teaching gardening skills to students and prisoners
- encouraging ethical buying in local marketplaces
- raise strategic awareness about sustainability and social justice issues surrounding food

BENEFITS AND CHALLENGES

Slow food provides an alternative food approach that favors healthy, local, community-based food production and consumption. It guarantees a better future. The Slow Food Movement aims to preserve biodiversity. A direct way to protect biodiversity is buying SF products. SF advocates see themselves as ethical agents who are engaging in hegemonic struggles, sharing their passion and helping others gain autonomy from the global industrialized food system. They organize protest against the development of high-speed lifestyles. SF principles encourage us to refrain from consuming ready-made and mass-produced meals. The Slow Food Movement provides activist-based platform for combating the global homogenization of food. It works with small farmers in several nations on efforts to save endangered agricultural varieties and breeds. For proponents of SFM, eating and sharing food represent joys central to life.

While the slow food movement is more accessible for many, it did not eliminate all of the socioeconomic barriers faced within the movement. The movement faces strong opposition in penetrating fast food cultures, which are still growing, especially in the developing world. Most national governments are pursuing policies that favor multinational food production and consumption. Critics argue that slow food has spread in the US through a certain gastronomic society, which is essentially white and wealthy. They point out that not everyone can afford to buy organic, locally grown food. The preparation of slow food can be an additional burden to whoever prepares food.

CONCLUSION

The Slow Food movement was established in Italy as protest against the dominance of fast food chains, supermarkets, and large-scale agribusiness. It is an international non-profit organization supported by their affiliates and enthusiasts. It promotes itself as supporting ethical modes of food production and consumption. Although most people already believe in the cause of sustainable food, SFM has an uphill battle against the powerful corporate and government forces enabling industrial agriculture that remains the bedrock of cheap food available to many people.

Although food and diet trends often come and go, the Slow Food Movement endures and is growing fast. It is becoming almost part of mainstream. It is here to stay. More information on slow food can be found in books [8-11] and journals on food such as *Appetite* and *British Food Journal*. SFM is open to all and the diversity of its members is one of its greatest strengths. To find out how you can be involved with the Slow Food Movement, you can visit their website: <http://www.slowfood.com/>

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Figure 1: Slow food and fast food [1].