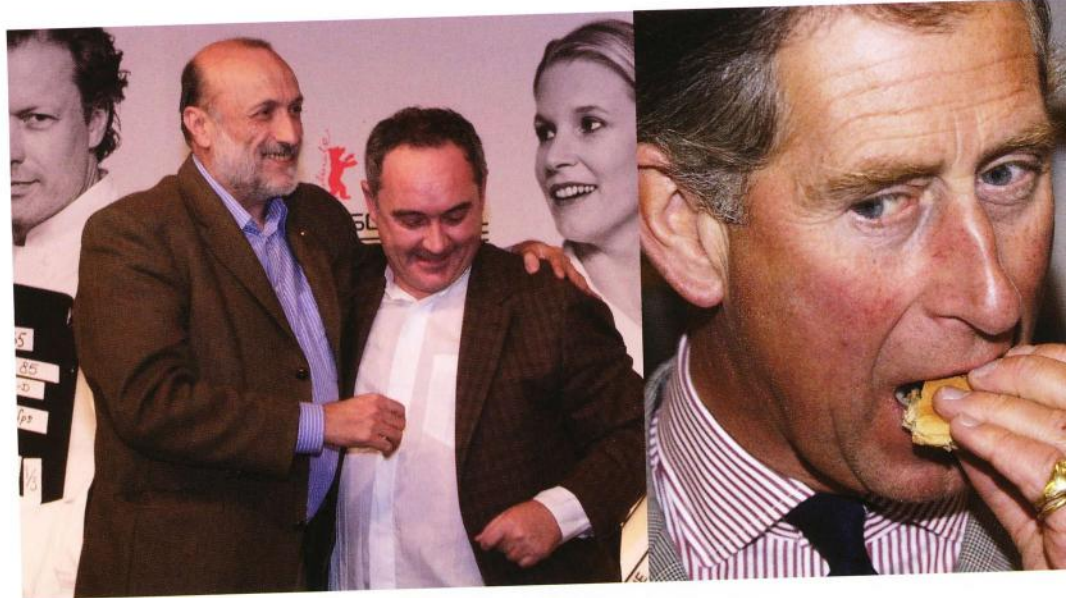


The journalist Carlo Petrini (left), with spanish cook Ferrán Adrià and Terra Madre patron Prince Charles.



# The culinary discovery of slowness

Fast food is out, **slow food is the order** of the day. Gulping down food and eating pleasure are mutually exclusive. Food production is also increasingly opting for decelerated and sustainable manufacture. A trend that slow food has helped to promote.

It all began in 1986 with a public noodle-eating event on the Piazza di Spagna in the heart of Rome. The U.S. hamburger maker McDonalds had just announced its intention to open a restaurant at the foot of the city's famous Spanish Steps. The journalist Carlo Petrini and a few of his colleagues were up in arms against this move. They set up a huge table and served pasta to the passers-by in good old Italian tradition. Fast food – no thanks! The protest could not prevent the U.S. company from putting its plans into practice, but the legendary action did mobilise campaigners for the good taste.

Carlo Petrini's credo is that true pleasure lies in slowness. "I want to know the history of a meal. I want to know where the food comes from. I like to imagine the hands of those persons who cultivated, processed and cooked what I am eating." Slow Food was founded, and Petrini and his comrades-in-arms set off on a search for trattorias, wine shops and farms that were keeping the culinary memory of the Apennine Peninsula alive. They should not fall victim to the industrial dictate of yield. Too small, not enough growth, yield too low – those were the arguments of the managers in the plants and associations that had led to a situation in which the majority of the once 1,500 types of apple had fallen through the grill and Golden Delicious, Jonagold and Red Delicious today account for over two thirds of EU-wide apple consumption. Unfortunately, the apples are only one example of many, as many other former types of fruit and vegetable had been unable and are still unable to meet the requirements of the yield race.





Photos: picture-alliance/dpa & ZB, INF, photo/Bulls/Pressnet, Messe Stuttgart, Stefan Abmeyer/Slow Food Magazin

**Britain culinary entertainer  
Jamie Oliver campaigns against  
fast food.**

Since its international start in 1989, Slow Food has developed into a multinational non-profit organisation, with 83,000 members, who are united in approximately 1,000 local chapters known as "convivia". They include numerous "celebrities", such as Britain culinary entertainer Jamie Oliver, who untiringly campaigns against fast food in his programmes and advocates enjoyment of healthy food, or Austria's exceptional cuisinier Eckart Witzigmann, who heads many campaigns for healthy food at school.

### The truffle among the cheese varieties

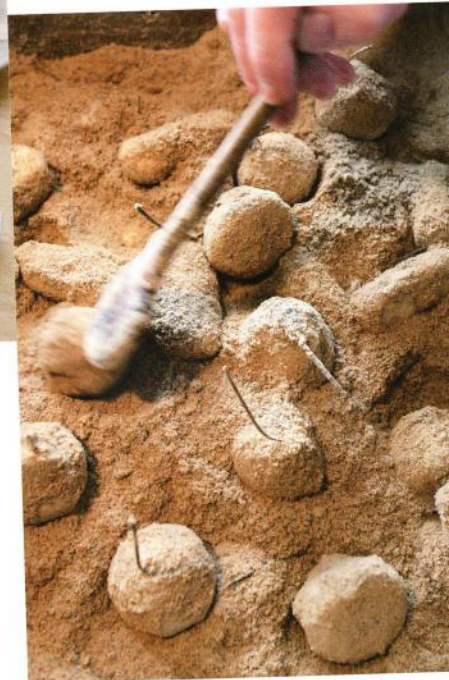
Today, Slow Food busily seeks to draw attention to and find a market for delicacies that deserve protection: like the favourite dish of the prince of poets Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, for example, Teltow turnips, or the seafood of the Chilean Robinson Crusoe island and saffron from Spain's Jiloca valley; as well as food that has been "crafted", such as the "Ahle Wurscht" (= Ahle sausage meat) or the Würchwitz mite cheese from Germany or the Three Counties Perry, a traditional English beverage







**Würchwitz mite cheese**  
**from German**



made of fermented small Perry pears. They all find shelter on the "Ark of Taste".

Sometimes, not even the experts know its passengers. After all, who associates anything positive with mites? Yet mite cheese with its extraordinary taste ranks among connoisseurs as the "truffle" among the cheese varieties. Instead of in mould fungi or bacteria, the dried lowfat quark (curd cheese) matures for up to half a year in wooden boxes inhabited by special cheese mites, which very slowly ferment it. To prevent the cheese from being eaten up the mites are fed with rye flour – an intensive and individual care, which is rewarded by an extremely long preservability of up to 30 years and a taste that is very hard to describe and is most similar to the particularly spicy Harz cheese. The cheese fell increasingly into oblivion after the last world war, and its more than 300-year-old history would have probably been completely forgotten too during the days of the GDR had it not been for the sense of tradition of an old farmwoman and the engagement of the teacher Helmut Pöschel from the village of Würchwitz with its 650 inhabitants in Saxony-Anhalt. "The search for the originals often resembles archaeological work," says hotelier Otto Geisel, who heads Slow Food Germany and who has replaced scallops and foie gras with regional specialities such as Limpurg beer and Franconian crayfish at his starred restaurant "Zirbelstube" in Bad Mergentheim.

### The "Green" Prince

The "World Fair of Good Taste", the "Salone del Gusto", in Turin is a true feast for the eyes, nose, tongue and palate. This culinary summit of slow food attracts almost 200,000 visitors with its over 450 stands, degustations, live cooking shows and a broad general programme relating to all aspects of nutrition, nutritional crafts, regional specialities and eating pleasure. The mite cheese and other culinary treats, of course, are also represented. Alongside manufacturers and scientists, the chief crowd-

pullers are the many chefs demonstrating their cookery skills communicating the message of slow-paced savouring to the pleasure-loving multipliers.

The specialist trade fair "Terra Madre" has been affiliated since 2004. 5,000 farmers from all continents meet here to exchange experience. Terra Madre is ennobled by its prominent patron, Pope Charles, who insisted on attending the opening event in order to strengthen the Slow Food network through his presence. The "Green" prince particularly emphasised the farmers' enterprises with their agricultural know-how that had evolved over many years, their close bond with the land and animals and their responsibility for future generations.

German epicures need no longer necessarily travel to Turin since, along with the market of good taste, a slow food trade fair has also established itself in Stuttgart. In spring, it surpassed all expectations with over 70,000 visitors. □

[www.slowfood.com](http://www.slowfood.com)

Michael