

THE BIGGER PICTURE

‘Slow food’

Bronwyn Richards explains ...

We use the term Slow Food as a descriptor for the approach we take to food and producing food. Broadly, it is a way of saying no to the rise of fast food and fast life. It's taking time to enjoy simple pleasures, starting at the table. Most importantly for us, it is also about producing local food with no food miles, and sharing our food knowledge.

This approach is based on a concept of food defined by three interconnected principles: good, clean and fair.

GOOD: quality and healthy food. A fresh and flavoursome seasonal diet that satisfies the senses and is part of our local culture quality, and healthy food.

CLEAN: production that does not harm the environment, animal welfare or our health.

FAIR: accessible prices for consumers and fair conditions and pay for producers.

United Nations calls for change

In 2012, the United Nations Rio+20 Conference on Sustainable Development called for enhancing food security, nutrition and more sustainable agriculture, initiating the formulation of Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) that have subsequently been integrated in the UN's Post-2015 Development Agenda.

All United Nations organizations and agencies have adopted a framework for advancing environmental and social sustainability.

While the conference acknowledged that the Green Revolution had increased total global agricultural production by as much as threefold in 50 years by using high-yielding varieties, irrigation and high levels of chemical inputs, it also made it very clear that the situation was far from being ideal, and that past agricultural performance was no longer a guarantee of future returns.

The UN stated categorically that the current trajectory of growth in agricultural production and productivity is unsustainable with food production on land and in aquatic systems dominating much of the global terrestrial surface, and having major negative impacts on the Earth's ecosystems.

Access to food and adequate nutrition are problems that are affecting more and more people in many countries around the world. With a present global population of 7 billion people, the UN Food & Agricultural Organisation estimates that the amount of food produced in the world could currently feed 12 billion people.

Nonetheless, more than 1 billion are still suffering from hunger, whilst 1.5 billion adults are overweight.

It is estimated that 40% of the total daily global production of food is wasted; production that is also putting the Earth's resources under increasing pressure. These are all symptoms of an unhealthy and unequal food production system. By the 2012 conference Rio-20 Conference The UN FAO had radically changed its thinking embracing Sustainable Food and Agriculture recognizing that small farms are more productive and resource conserving.

Small-scale farmers produce 70% of the world's food while they have just 20% of the land.

The 2014 FOA Symposium in Rome acknowledged that diversified farming systems in which the small-scale farmer produces grains, fruits, vegetables, fodder, and animal products in the same field or garden out-produce the yield per unit of single crops such as corn grown alone on large-scale farms.

A large farm may produce more corn per hectare than a small farm in which the corn is grown as part of a poly-culture that also includes beans, squash, potatoes, and fodder. But, productivity in terms of harvestable products per unit area of poly-cultures developed by smallholders is higher than under a single crop with the same level of management. Yield advantages can range from 20% to 60%, because poly-cultures reduce losses due to weeds (by occupying space that weeds might otherwise occupy), insects, and diseases (because of the presence of multiple species), and make more efficient use of the available resources of water, light, and nutrients.

By managing fewer resources more intensively, small farmers are able to make more profit per unit of output, and thus, make more total profits—even if production of each commodity is less.

The inverse relationship between farm size and output can be attributed to the more efficient use of land, water, biodiversity, and other agricultural resources by small farmers. So in terms of converting inputs into outputs, society would be better off with small-scale farmers.



Chickens now at DOJO

Mark Barrington adds the filling to the sandwich

We don't have any rotisserie chickens in Braidwood at the moment, so I decided to rectify that. I spent several weeks tracking down the best possible chickens and I came up with charcoal chickens. They've got a bit more fat in the skin and they're good sized birds. They're size 18 birds, which means they can feed a family of four hungry people, no problem, and more if some of them are small kids.

The difference with these birds is they scald them at a lower temperature when they're plucking them. As a consequence of this, it leaves more fat in the skin which is nice and thick. The skin is where a lot of the flavour lies. So, you need to have a chicken with more fat in the skin if you're going to do a proper rotisserie chicken, because the temperatures on a rotisserie are much higher than in a normal oven. And it's a strong, radiated heat. It is the caramelization of the proteins and the fat that actually gives you the flavour.

It also puts, or keeps more, moisture in the breast meat and in the drumsticks. So, the meat's altogether more tender and moist despite the high temperatures at which they're roasted, you're getting more flavour and more moisture.

Not only are they good as the hot chicken that we all know and love, but they're also particularly good in the following days.

PLUCKING GOOD

Once it has cooled, pop it in the refrigerator, and you can slice bits off for sandwiches any day of the week. You can also reheat them, and best to do so fairly slowly. But they reheat, and you can use them in further cooking, in stews and casseroles. You can use the carcass for making stock. There is a lot you can do with a cold chook.

We have rotisserie chickens available Fridays and Saturdays, 10:30 until 2:00 from DOJO. If you walk into the courtyard, you'll see there's another little door to the left of bakery, that's where the chooks are.

We're also able to offer you some interesting salad. We're not going to do lettuce, tomato and cucumber, because you can do that at home. Instead, we've got things like pickled beetroot with feta; and we've got a pasta salad with blanched broccoli and a garlic yoghurt dressing.

As with all of our products, we make everything from scratch. I don't grow the chickens though, to be honest, but everything else we make from raw ingredients.

We're not buying dressings in, it's all made here, on the premises.

On Friday and Saturday mornings, we have started to do some filled baguettes, and some filled bagels, some smoked salmon and cream cheese bagels as well. We're planning on doing hot filled rolls, and some Bánh mì Vietnamese rolls. They're nice and spicy and chilli.



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