



Dear food.

Give to receive.

Text by Carlo Petrini

Photos by Tessa Bunney



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**GentleBooklets** It is a series of long-form articles written by different authors. The booklets, designed for a quick read, feature texts and images. We have kindly asked to the authors to comment on the term “kindness.” Authors and photographers have donated their work.

The motivations behind the project are the same as those of Gentletude, the desire to spread awareness about the need for “kindness” in our society, a society too focused on personal success to remember the basics of everyday living and respect for the environment that hosts us.

Our decision to present these ideas in a series of publications is due to the awareness that, in order to stimulate people to think about these issues, it is necessary to present some concrete examples. In this case, the examples are provided in the texts written by the authors.



## **The potential of a land**

Thirty years ago my colleagues and I decided to give life to Slow Food, starting substantially from the love toward our land of origin, the Piedmontese Langhe, a territory that had an outstanding potential and a very strong historical connection with gastronomy.

In those years the gastronomic area didn't have the appeal and the media interest it has today, it was much more enclosed in the provincial sphere.

Even through good connections in Burgundy, we understood that here we had a great potential to build up a small enterprise, which within time has eventually transformed into a small cooperation, than in an association and in the end in a movement. Strengthened by this belief, in 1988 we held a conference in Alba with the attendance of all the wine producers on the theme "Can Langa stay at Cote-d'Or as Piedmont stays at Burgundy?".

Said like this it seems incomprehensible, but for the wine lovers it is obvious: Burgundy is the most important wine region in







the entire World. Can Piedmont be compared to Burgundy? And then can the Langhe, more specifically, be linked to the Cote d'Or, the region of Burgundy from where the most prestigious wines come from?

The main reason we decided to hold the conference was to stimulate producers in having the consciousness of living in an outstanding land.

From that moment on, we started a journey that has attracted countless tourists, who come here still today as we once used to go to Burgundy.

To make the people understand how rich and prolific our land is, I'd like to recall an event: we once had as our guest one of the biggest producers of wine in the U.S., the Californian Robert Mondavi, and we accompanied him to see the extension of the vineyards in La Morra, located in the Langhe. At a certain point he asked me if I heard a noise, and I said no.

He turned to me and said he was hearing people sleeping, because if there were a land with that kind of potential in California it would have already been exploited American style.

Slow Food was therefore founded on the willingness of the Piedmonteses to preserve and implement the potential of a land that has always produced high quality products.

The name Slow Food comes from the antagonism with the term Fast Food, not that much for what Fast Food symbolizes but rather as a warning to retrieve the indispensable time to satisfy one of the men's essential needs, time that doesn't necessarily mean to go slowly but that wants to recapture life paces tailored on men's happiness. To the fast food we opposed the antithesis of the slow food.

### **“Tasty, clean, right”... and pleasant**

According to Slow Food, food quality is based on three fundamental pillars: food must be “tasty, clean and right”.

Tasty and clean can be easily understood, but what about right? A food is right when it respects the work of those who produce it. If I produce a tasty food that respects environment but on the other hand exploits the workers, meaning both farmers, immi-





grant workers and artisans, we can't speak of justice. It is fundamental to mainly safeguard those who are part of the first ring in the production chain.

All these three characteristics must coexist, otherwise we can't speak of food quality. In addition to these three pillars, Slow Food is also based on what we refer to as right to pleasure.

There are two important factors in our life that grant the continuity of the species: eating and making love. Activities that, due to their importance, are repeated because they give pleasure.

A person does not eat or make love suffering: pleasure is physiological in our lives and the right to pleasure can't be reserved only to those who have money and capacities, it is rather a universal right.

Beware though, 'cause I'm not referring to greediness or excess, as love has nothing to do with pornography.

Unfortunately pleasure has often been related to selfishness, to avarice, to egoism. On the contrary, one of pleasure's characteristics is sharing.

If there's no sharing, there can't be plea-

sure. The entire gastronomic culture worldwide has always been sublimated and exalted by sharing, in fact all our social agreements are consumed at the table, the sacramental religious act in our religion is the joined meal.

However, pleasure not always corresponds to good food, it's a matter of education, knowledge and comparison.

In 1986 the methanol case in wine arose fear throughout Northern Italy, dozens of people died. Yet they felt pleasure, due to their scarce knowledge and care from an organoleptic point of view, in drinking wine made from toxic waste.

Without gastronomic education there can't be gastronomic pleasure.

**Respect and love for the territory:  
a new form of education**

Through the projects we support, we try to work for creating consciousness and knowledge towards food and productive processes, both from theoretical and practical points of view (for example, with Taste Labs).







Since 1989, moreover, we support the Safeguards, meaning projects of protection and promotion of high quality and value local products that are threatened by extinction. This is the answer to another problem that has been threatening us for the past 50 years: the loss of biodiversity.

In the past 100 years we lost 70% of the biodiversity of the planet, thousands and thousands of animal and plant species are simply disappearing because this food system is not working, it is a structure that privileges strong races against weaker ones, good looking races against those aesthetically ugly.

The Safeguards go quite in the opposite direction, implementing strategies that can help producers to defend a particular product through a fair price on the market.

We also believe that it is fundamental to support new generations' education and above all to make them realize that the respect for environment, agriculture and products of the earth are not only the base of the Italian culture, but also the starting points for the construction of a sustainable future.

We then set up a project, “Vegetable gardens in Schools”, and later moved on with the creation of 10.000 vegetable gardens in Africa, an idea born to give centrality to the African primary sector and to ensure the inhabitants a space of authentic food sovereignty.

In 2004, the movement, with the birth of Mother Earth, passed from a presence in 40 countries to the current 170.

This means that, while before Slow Food was considered a movement for those that have “full belly” and discuss about gastronomy, it now has a wider universe of meanings.

From there on Mother Earth changed our lives, the vision, the strategy, to the extent that the International Council of Slow Food is currently represented by 52 people in charge of 52 different areas of the planet (just to make an example, Caribbean Area, South America, Central America, North America, Sub-Saharan Africa, Maghrebian Africa, etc.).

This network, which has been created after the foundation of Mother Earth, allowed us to expand our ideas on an international





level. If we analyse the first steps taken 30 years ago to appraise an enological area and we compare them with the project of the 10.000 vegetable gardens in Africa, I believe we can see a common thread, with the unique difference that we are now focusing on much more complicated issues. We came a long way from the problems of the Langhe to an overview that can enclose all the areas on Earth.

I believe that today the work made by Mother Earth falls within a community of destiny that goes beyond the borders of our movement. In every corner of the world there are thousands and thousands of associations operating for the environment, in terms of solidarity and voluntary work.

I am deeply convinced that every single action of this network has inside that feeling of humanity that we forgot long time ago and I think that Mother Earth is a huge part of this humanity.

A very good friend of mine, Edgar Morin, an icon of the twenty-first century thinking, said this beautiful phrase once: “everything must start over and everything has started over already”.

This sentence should be an inspiration for young people: everything needs to change even if there are already people that are trying to dismantle the stalemate we have been living in for the past few years.

I believe that Mother Earth has yet to bear fruit, we just need to have the patience to wait.

When I founded Slow Food I wanted from the beginning that it could be a free movement, it shouldn't be a party, nor a union or an association.

Ours is a movement of thought and of activity in which every person must find its place to do what he or she wants.

Young people are a strong part of the movement, it organizes itself, operating and proposing projects independently, often representing, as expected, the forefront of our association.

The moment the University of Gastronomic Sciences was born, then, our movement was implemented, putting in online contact hundreds of young people for discussing the future topics regarding food.

There is a Piedmontese motto that says: "if the old could and the young knew", but in







my opinion it should be changed as follows: “if the old people knew when to step aside and the young people could realize what they want, it would be much better”.

Right now, the main concern of the young generation is the uncertainty for the future. Instead of helping the new generations, however, we keep proposing incorrect paradigms because the paradigm of growth and realization only through money accumulation is over.

We're most likely going to pass through a phase, which I believe will be painful, looking for new paradigms.

This is the first generation that will live worse than its fathers. If this living less well is finalized to one's own realization, to happiness, to an harmonic living with nature and other people, to thinking of one's own good less important than the collective well-being, then there will be less suffering. If, otherwise, we'll continue with the paradigm of self-realization through money, suffering will be much more bitter.

However, I am an optimist, I see in new generations a much deeper sensitivity than their predecessors.

## **“Piedmontese” kindness**

I wouldn't use the word kindness only with the altruistic meaning, the openness towards others, or generosity.

I believe that one of the main elements of kindness is of course making others feel good, but also and especially those who practice it.

In these terms we don't live in a kind society. Preparatory for kindness would be the attempt of understanding the other person's complexity, the constant exercise of empathy with the needs and the difficulties of the people that surround us.

We were brought up learning to not detect these complexities, to set aside problems and to not solve them; indeed, we have to stay on the stage all ready to smile.

Who does not understand this is not kind, because kindness is not a matter of behave. As said by our Pope, kindness is not something candied and, quoting the Piedmontese dialect, we are often a little bit “munie quacie”, somebody that seems nice but who is actually focused exclusively on himself.





## Conclusions

People often ask me how I've been able to organize all this, Slow Food, Mother Earth and the other projects. I reply that I didn't do anything, it all started spontaneously. This is why I want it to remain a fluid movement, because a structure would kill it.

An exaggerated structure kills ideas, while thinking must remain the centre of all this. When people ask me which are the pillars of our philosophy, I always reply that they are affective intelligence and austere anarchy.

Said like this they seem two oxymoron but they have actually created the guidelines of what we built up till now.

With affective intelligence I mean the intelligence of the heart, the real kindness, since we are full of rationality but poor of affectivity.

With austere anarchy, instead, I mean the orderly and organized way of doing what we want or wish.

I, Italian, can't go to an African farmer and impose him to cultivate a certain vegetable. He knows best what his land can produce.

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I may be helpful, but he will teach me if and how.

The structure must be fluid, we should start thinking that ideas will develop in a different way compared to how they developed in the past.

Ideas can't be organized, but they have their internal dimension that structures them and a natural order that creates the equilibrium in the world.







## AUTHOR

### Carlo Petrini

Gastronome and founder of the Slow Food movement. After the Sociology Degree, in 1977 he got interested in wine and foods and actively participated in the birth of Gambero Rosso. He founded the “Libera e Benemerita Associazione degli Amici del Barolo” which will become later “Arcigola”. He’s the creator of several food and wine events at international level, such as “Cheese”, the “Salone del Gusto” of Turin and more recently the manifestation “Terra Madre”, in 2010 at its fourth edition. In 1986 in Bra he founded Slow Food, an international non-profit organization that deals with the protection of the local products and with the spread of the wine and food culture in the World. In 2004, due to one of his initiatives, the University of Gastronomic Sciences was founded, first athenaeum of this kind in the World. In addition to being a journalist, he wrote several books, among which the manifesto of the Slow Food movement, “Buono, Pulito e Giusto”. Principi di una nuova gastronomia” and his latest work “Terra Madre. Come non farci mangiare dal cibo”. In 2008 the newspaper The Guardian listed him among the 50 people that “might save the World”.

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

## PHOTOGRAPHER

### Tessa Bunney

Since graduating from West Surrey College of Art and Design in 1988, she has worked as a documentary photographer undertaking personal projects and editorial photography as well as a wide range of commissions and residencies nationally and internationally. Her work has been published widely including the Guardian Weekend, The Financial Times Magazine, foto8, Geographical, National Geographic, The Sunday Times Magazine, Private Photo Review, Daylight, HotShoe and the British Journal of Photography. The project Hand to Mouth which explores the lives of villagers and nomadic shepherds in Romania's Carpathian Mountains which was exhibited and published by Impressions Gallery, Bradford in 2007. In 2010, she undertook a commission for Hereford Photography Festival about the Hereford cow which was exhibited at the Festival that year and was artist in residence at Jyväskylä printmaking centre in Central Finland exploring the landscape of the frozen lake which she published as an artists book in 2012. She is currently based in Vientiane, Lao PDR working on her ongoing project The Corridor of Opportunity. [www.tessabunney.co.uk](http://www.tessabunney.co.uk)







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## **GENTLETUDE**

Gentletude is a neologism composed of the words “gentilezza” (gentleness/kindness) and “attitudine” (attitude). It pursues the aims for a better world without violence, arrogance and rudeness.

A world where caring and paying attention to others, common sense and balanced competitiveness are the most important things.

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