

## The Slow Food Movement

A lot of people are trying to go “back to basics” when it comes to eating, which is a good thing. There are many approaches to do so, including buying locally, buying organically grown, making more foods from scratch, and buying less processed foods. All of these are great approaches for eating healthy and knowing where the food one purchases is cultivated.

Another approach to healthy eating that encompasses all of these, and that began in Italy, is termed the “Slow Food Movement.” What is slow food? It is an “idea, a way of living, and a way of eating. It is part of a global grassroots movement with thousands of members in more than 150 countries, which links the pleasure of food with a commitment to community and the environment” (4). In addition, the Slow Food Movement focuses on connection with

- traditional seeds
- food production
- food supply
- food purchasing
- food preparation
- traditional recipes
- traditional ingredients
- eating
- food waste removal (5).

### BENEFITS OF THE SLOW FOOD LIFESTYLE

There are clearly many benefits from the Slow Food lifestyle. First and foremost, a person’s health will benefit from choosing foods that are better for him/her. In addition, eating at fast food restaurants is not part of the Slow Food Movement! Thus, people will more likely cook their own foods, or, when choosing to eat out, they

will more likely go to a place that has healthier choices. The slow food movement is better for the environment as well as the farmers who follow organic practices and have smaller farms. Supporting local farmers is always a plus and keeps the economy strong where people live.

People who really follow this movement have strong ties to all aspects; however, if one of your clients or a friend is thinking about trying to improve health and everyday life, choosing what fits into a person’s lifestyle can still lead to better well-being and optimal food choices. More importantly, just thinking a little more about what a person will eat next may make him/her choose something healthier over something more convenient.

Because there is no published research on the Slow Food Movement and its impact on health, the following sections will discuss research on related areas. Thus, evidence on community gardens and the French Paradox will be presented.

### COMMUNITY GARDENS

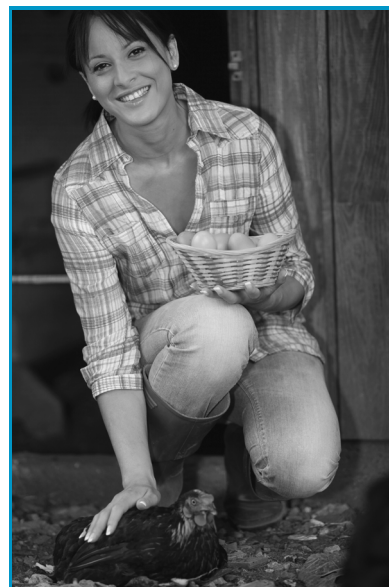
A recent study reported that individuals who participated in a community gardening project reported physical and mental health benefits as well as economic and family health benefits because families often worked together in their gardens (1). More compelling is that these researchers reported less food insecurity among their participants, as well as improved dietary intake from gardening, which also has been reported by others (6). Participating in the Slow Food Movement does not necessarily mean you would need to participate in a community garden, but this could be one way you could begin to look at food differently.

School gardening also has become more popular, although the effect of school gardening as an intervention in

childhood obesity prevention has not been evaluated. Davis et al. (2) evaluated the effects of a 12-week after-school gardening, nutrition, and cooking program (called “LA Sprouts”) on nutrition intake and obesity risk in primarily Latino children attending the fourth and fifth grades in Los Angeles, CA. In this pilot study, 104 children completed the program. They reported that the children who participated in this program had significant increases in dietary fiber intake and significant decreases in blood pressure. They also reported that, in the overweight children, there was a significant decrease in body mass index compared with those who did not participate in LA Sprouts (2). Although these children were not exposed to all of the Slow Food Movement principles, gardening was a positive influence on their dietary intake and allowed them to become closer to their food source.

### THE FRENCH PARADOX

Rozin (3) states that “The modern developed world has a surplus of very accessible



## A Nutritionist's View



inexpensive food. Amid the enormous variety of different foods are superfoods, such as chocolate, which are particularly appealing and calorie dense.” Rozin has studied the French Paradox, where it seems that those in France eat more energy-dense foods without the obesity epidemic observed in the United States. Rozin (3) states that those in France spend more time on eating, but they consume less food because they are focused on the experience of eating. Thus, this parallels the Slow Food Movement because the enjoyment of food is a big part of this movement. Personally, and without research to back it, my opinion is that we, individuals in the United States, have decreased our enjoyment of food and eat with more guilt-ridden thoughts than ever before. If anything, people need to stop rushing their meals and start eating together, instead of eating in front of a computer or in their cars. The more we enjoy our food, the less we will likely eat, and this simple strategy may lead to weight loss.

### MY PARENTS

My parents, Antonio and Felicetta Volpe, were Italian immigrants. They taught my

siblings and me, our spouses, and all of their grandchildren, to garden, jar foods, and to eat “from the land” because my dad also hunted and made his own wine. My mom made everything homemade (e.g., spaghetti, ravioli, soup, bread), and that tradition carried over to my siblings and me. I feel blessed to have had such amazing parents,

who taught us these traditions, and to eat as a family and enjoy food, which is a celebration — whether during a holiday or not — food is a celebration.

### References

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5. Slow Movement. [cited 2012 Jan 9]. Available from: <http://www.slowmovement.com/connect-food.php> 2012.
6. Smith C, Miller H. Accessing the food systems in urban and rural Minnesotan communities. *J Nutr Educ Behav*. 2011;43(6): 492–504.

### Recommended Resources

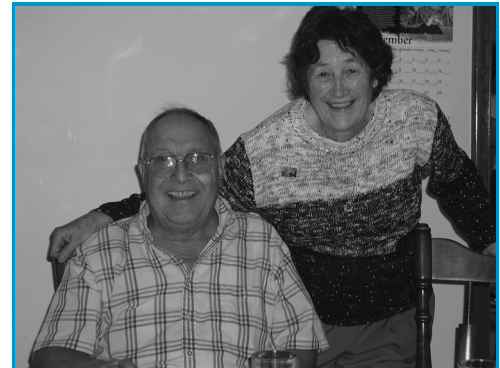
[http://www.slowfoodusa.org/index.php/slow\\_food/](http://www.slowfoodusa.org/index.php/slow_food/)

<http://www.slowmovement.com/connect-food.php> 2012.

<http://www.slow-food.info/>

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Photo courtesy of Stella Lucia Volpe.



In memory of my wonderful parents, Antonio and Felicetta Volpe, who taught me, among many things, the importance of eating good food and enjoying it with family.



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