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Slow Food®

THE ARK OF TASTE

HOW TO BUILD THE WORLD'S LARGEST CATALOGUE
OF FLAVORS: A HERITAGE TO DISCOVER AND SAVE





Slow Food Foundation
for Biodiversity

Terra
madre

Editors

Serena Milano, Raffaella Ponzio, Piero Sardo

With the collaboration of

Francesca Baldereschi, Silvia Ceriani, Laura Drago, Azer
Garayev, Eleonora Giannini, Ursula Hudson, Marina Mainardi,
Ludovico Roccatello, Veronica Veneziano

With technical and scientific assistance from

Carlo Bazzocchi, Daniele Bigi, Sergio Capaldo,
Mauro Cravero, Silvio Greco, Federico Infascelli,
Gwyn Jones, Paola Migliorini, Luca Nicolandi,
Cristiana Peano, Giovanni Perri, Andrea Pieroni,
Francesco Sottile

Translation and editing

Charles Barstow, Simone Gie, Bess Mucke, Carla Ranicki

Layout and graphics

Alessia Paschetta

Photos

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Giuseppe Cucco, Marco Del Comune, Julie Evans, EventoLive,
Giuseppe Fassino, Konstantin Gebser, Marcello Marengo,
Oliver Migliore, Paolo Andrea Montanaro, Alberto Peroli,
Fokke van Saane, Paola Viesi, Slow Food Archives, Slow Food
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INTRODUCTION

PRESENTING THE FOOD BIODIVERSITY OF THE GREATER CAUCASUS

Historically crossed by the Great Silk Road, Azerbaijan boasts spectacular natural landscapes, superlative cultural traditions and centuries of fascinating history as well as rich food customs and a distinctive culinary heritage. Located on the western coast of the Caspian Sea and in the east of the South Caucasus, the country's advantageous geographical location and favorable climate have resulted in the development of a unique agrobiodiversity and a wealth of diverse gastronomic traditions.

Extremely varied soil and climate conditions across Azerbaijan have led to greatly diversified genetic resources and animal breeds. This variety of crops and breeds has evolved over thousands of years of agriculture and pastoralism, thanks to careful selection by farmers, and is in urgent need of protection and preservation.

The project's focus area is the Greater Caucasus, the major range of the Caucasus Mountains. The importance of mountain ecosystems and their cultural heritage is enormous. Mountain areas are an integral part of the global life support system and are also home to numerous ethnic groups and indigenous peoples who maintain traditional ways of life in harsh conditions while preserving their unique artisanal and gastronomic cultures.

In Azerbaijan, these cultural and environmental riches—and the interaction between them—have produced an immense heritage of food diversity that represents a hidden gastronomic treasure for the area.

But this diversity is now under threat. Valuable local varieties and breeds have been developed by farmers over the centuries, but many of these are now being replaced by modern hybrids and are at risk of extinction.

The Greater Caucasus region still has a rich heritage that must be preserved and promoted. Rediscovering local products and traditional recipes means reactivating channels to promote territories and cultures, creating new opportunities for the future of local communities.

THE COVCHEG PROJECT: MAPPING AND PROMOTING THE REGION'S FOOD BIODIVERSITY

The COVCHEG project (Community-based Value Chain Enhancement in Azerbaijan's Greater Caucasus mountains) offers an invaluable opportunity to map and promote the country's agricultural and food biodiversity.

The project aims to foster the economic regeneration and well-being of rural communities in the Greater Caucasus mountain region through the promotion of a rural community development model that combines agrobiodiversity maintenance, economic development and poverty reduction as mutually supportive objectives, achievable through the sound management and productive use of agrobiodiversity resources.

The pilot project area includes five districts within the Shaki-Zaqatala and Daglig-Shirvan economic regions: Shamakhi, Ismaili, Gabala, Shaki and Qakh.

The project will work in these districts to add value to local identities and gastronomy, preserve biodiversity and cultural heritage and create sustainable livelihoods. It will not only advance the knowledge and skills of the beneficiaries but will also result in a specific model for food chain development and tourism products and practices in the pilot districts, which overall will serve as a model for further multiplication nationwide. In the longer term it will positively influence the state of natural resources and the social environment and decrease levels of unemployment and outmigration as well as strengthening the resilience of the local areas.

Together with booklets on biodiversity and the Presidia, this publication is part of a series that aims to help develop a better understanding of some key concepts related to food—from biodiversity to the meaning of good, clean and fair—and provide practical advice on identifying products for the Ark of Taste, as well as how to start food biodiversity promotion activities.

Slow Food has been working to safeguard agricultural and food biodiversity for over 20 years, and through its Presidia and Ark of Taste projects it has achieved concrete results in many countries around the world.

The Ark of Taste, the international Slow Food project cataloguing and calling attention to over 5,000 food products at risk of disappearing in 150 countries, will serve as the starting point for a major awareness-raising campaign to promote small-scale farming in the districts involved in the project.

The Presidia are projects established to save artisanal food products, native animal breeds, plant varieties, traditional farming and fishing techniques, ecosystems and rural landscapes at risk of extinction. They involve communities of small-scale producers who are willing to collaborate and jointly establish production rules and ways of promoting their products. They preserve ancient knowledge, encourage sustainable practices and promote local areas.

WHAT IS THE ARK OF TASTE?



The Ark of Taste is an online catalogue of foods at risk of disappearing that are a part of the cultures and traditions of the entire world.

Plant and animal species are to be found onboard the Ark, but also processed products, because, together with plant and animal biodiversity, cheeses, cured meats, breads and sweets, expressions of farmers' and artisans' knowledge are also disappearing – knowledge that exists not in written recipes, but as complex and rich skills and practices passed down through generations.

In October of 2012 in Turin, the Slow Food International Congress reaffirmed the centrality of biodiversity, relaunching the Ark of Taste project as a fundamental tool for the future of the association that will involve convivia, producers and local communities. The International Executive Committee asked the Slow Food Foundation for Biodiversity (Slow Food's technical arm) to develop and coordinate the Ark of Taste project, together with the **National/Regional Commissions** and with the collaboration of the **University of Gastronomic Sciences**.

WHAT IS ITS PURPOSE?

The Ark was created to **point out the existence** of these products, **draw attention** to the risk of disappearance and **invite everyone to take action** to help protect them, by seeking them out, buying and consuming them; telling their story; supporting their producers; and, in some cases (such as the case of endangered wild species at risk of extinction), promoting their conservation and reproduction.

The overall objective is not to create a seed bank, a collection of genetic material or museum to exhibit traditional knowledge, but to rediscover and give value to these resources in order to support local economies.

In 1999, Slow Food used the Ark of Taste to launch the first Slow Food Presidia, and even today, **nominating a product for the Ark is often the first step to it becoming a Slow Food Presidium.**



HOW TO IDENTIFY A PRODUCT FOR THE ARK

WHERE TO START?

Each of us has our own channels, experiences and networks. We need first of all to reflect and recall if we have come across a particular product in our professional or personal lives that is no longer present on the market or is available only in small quantities.

DON'T REINVENT THE WHEEL

It is important to understand whether any research has already been done in the region, or if texts, catalogues of varieties and breeds, or recipe books that describe the raw ingredients already exist. It is also useful to visit botanical gardens; seed banks and varietal collections at agrarian schools, universities or research centres. These can provide many interesting starting points. **But it is not enough.**

TALK TO CHEFS, JOURNALISTS, GASTRONOMES, EXPERTS AND PRODUCERS

It is not sufficient to have found a product in a catalogue, on the internet, in a museum, in a seed bank or a botanical garden to nominate it for the Ark of Taste. The questions we must answer are: "Does this product still exist? Is it currently on the market? And if not, is it still produced at home?"



IT IS NOT NECESSARY TO VISIT PRODUCERS

The Ark is primarily about products, not producers. So it is not necessary to know the producers or to have visited their farms. We can discover Ark products by talking to the elderly, cooks, journalists, experts (e.g. local veterinarians, agronomists, food technologists and anthropologists), market vendors, etc. Of course, if we can talk directly with the producer, we can obtain more detailed information, but it is not essential.



VISIT FARMERS' MARKETS

It is important to visit local markets, concentrating on the less common products and asking vendors questions. Note down product names (in all languages and dialects), buy samples of the most interesting products, take them home, taste them and show them to local chefs, agronomists and elderly people, asking them if they recognize them, and whether they have maintained the same characteristics over time or if they have changed.

ASK LOTS OF QUESTIONS; NEVER STOP AT THE FIRST ANSWER

The job of identifying and describing Ark products is enjoyable and fascinating but also complex. It is similar to the work of an investigative journalist, a sort of "taste investigator". Describing a product requires patience. We need to ask many questions and often the same question to a number of people, comparing the responses. Never stop at the first answer. Those who produce, cook or consume a product might omit certain details they take for granted. So we need to dig deeper. Often the particularity of a product rests in those small details: a particular spice used, type of fermentation or smoking method, for example. At times, in order to discover an interesting product, direct questioning (e.g. "Is anything particular produced in your area?" "Is there a product that is or was eaten during festivals?" etc.) is not enough.

For **edible plants**, describe the shape, weight, color, flavor, etc. Don't stop at the species (it's not enough to note that it's a tomato or a cherry): we must note if it is a specific variety, what distinguishes it from the others, if it is linked to a particular area and in what way, if it is propagated with local or commercial seeds, whether it is an ingredient in particular recipes, etc.

For an **animal breed**, describe the animal's characteristics – size, shape of horns, color of its hide/hair, etc. – and describe the purpose of its breeding, noting what products are made from it (meat, cured meats, cheeses, etc.).

For a **processed product**, describe how it is made, including the various steps, and indicate if the ingredients are produced locally. Is it linked to a specific variety (for example, if it is a type of bread, is it made with a particular wheat or rye variety?) or a native breed (if it is a cheese or cured meat, is it made with the milk or meat of a native breed?).

If it is a **cheese**, check and note if it is made from raw milk or pasteurized milk.



TASTING

Tasting is an essential instrument to evaluate a product. It is very important, however, to consider its subjective nature. Each tasting is conditioned by the personal preferences and cultural background of the taster.

Usually, only a comparative tasting would allow somebody to understand that each producer can influence the product through personal variations.

The sensory qualities of a food are defined by:

- appearance
- color
- consistency (liquid, solid, crunchy, succulent, tender, smooth)
- taste (sweet, salty, bitter, acidic)
- aroma

There are at least three elements needed to establish sensory qualities (also called organoleptic qualities):

- balance (the harmony between the aromatic and flavor components of a product)
- terroir (the ability of a product to express organoleptic characteristics connected with the territory of origin)
- complexity (how the organoleptic qualities evolve over the course of tasting)

A simple product finishes on the nose and palate with the same organoleptic characteristics as were present at the start. A complex product, on the other hand, will change during tasting; the perceptions will evolve and last longer.

Tasting is more effective when it is comparative, done not with just a single sample of a product, but by trying to taste the product from multiple different producers.

A comparative tasting allows us to understand the basic characteristics, the qualities that give a product a distinct identity.

WHAT ARE THE CRITERIA FOR SELECTING A PRODUCT?

1. PRODUCTS SHOULD BE OF INTERESTING QUALITY AND CAN BE: DOMESTIC SPECIES (PLANT VARIETIES, NATIVE ANIMAL BREEDS); WILD SPECIES (ONLY IF RELATED TO TECHNIQUES FOR COLLECTING, PROCESSING OR TRADITIONAL USES); PROCESSED PRODUCTS.

WHAT ARE DOMESTIC SPECIES?

Alongside wild plants and animals, there are the plants and animal breeds selected by mankind. With domestication, nature becomes something familiar, controlled by humans (domus = home). Domestication does not refer only to planting seeds or taming an animal, but means selecting and, therefore, progressively changing plants and animals until they are best adapted to the environment and guarantee better production.

WHAT IS A CULTIVATED VARIETY (OR CULTIVAR)

A variety (or cultivar, for perennial crops) is a set of cultivated plants, clearly distinguishable by their morphological, phenotypic, physiological, chemical and qualitative characteristics. A variety is stable, maintaining its distinctive characteristics even when it is propagated by seed. Native or local varieties are clearly identifiable and usually have a local name. These often arise from selection by individual farmers or communities and are characterized by good adaptation to the environmental conditions of an area. They are consequently more hardy, resistant to stress, and have less need for external inputs such as water, fertilizers, etc. They are closely linked to the culture of a community (for example in customs, recipes, knowledge, and dialects).

Some examples...

Carla apple (Italy), brown beans from Öland Island (Sweden), Lorient cabbage (France) and the Akkajidaikon radish (Japan) are native varieties.



WHAT IS A PLANT POPULATION (OR ECOTYPE)?

An ecotype is a population within a species (plant, animal, or otherwise) that is genetically adapted to a particular place and/or set of environmental conditions. It differs from a variety (or cultivar) mainly in the sense that it is not the result of a commercial selection. Ecotypes are generally understood to be populations that, due to their isolation from each other, may eventually become separate varieties. In any case, they are still characterized by a higher natural variability very important for agricultural biodiversity.” It can happen that, if they are adequately studied and well selected, they can enter into the classification of a variety or cultivar.



An example...

The various populations of pink apples from the Sibillini mountains, grown in Marche (Italy).

WHAT IS A BREED?

A breed can be defined as a group of domestic animals from the same species with defined and identifiable exterior traits (passed on to descendants through heredity), which can be distinguished and separated from others of the same species on the basis of visible characteristics (size; color of coat or plumage; shape of the head, limbs, horns, tail, etc.). For a breed to be officially defined as such, it must be registered. The recognition of breeds and the registering of animals as belonging to that breed is something which has usually happened through the collaborative action of farmers. A native breed is linked to a specific area of varying size where it has developed or naturally adapted over time. They are more rustic and, even in extreme environments, generally require less attention and less food. For the Ark of Taste, it is important to connect a breed to a product like a meat, milk, cheese, or cured meat product.

Some examples...

Mirandaïse cattle, a beef breed originally from Gers in the Midi-Pyrénées region of France; the



Bianca di Saluzzo Chicken from Piedmont, Italy; and the Villsau sheep from Norway's northwest coast, one of the oldest sheep breeds still surviving in Northern Europe.

Breeds originate in specific places, but in some cases—and this usually happens because some of their characteristics are particularly useful—they can spread to other parts of the world. A breed might be at risk of extinction in its native area but common in other parts of the world, like the Toggenburg goat, originally from the Swiss canton of St. Gallen but now found in many other Alpine regions.

WHAT IS AN ANIMAL POPULATION?

A population is a group of individuals of the same species with related characteristics. Like in the case of breeds, the role of farmers is crucial in recognizing a population based on visible characteristics (feathers or plumage, size, shape of the horns or tails, etc.) and behavior (productivity, fertility, etc.) A population is to a breed what an ecotype is to a cultivar, that is, it is less established and not officially part of a breed registry.

An example...

Animal populations of Mushunu Molo chickens (in Kenya) and the goats of Roccaverano (in Italy).



WHY CAN A WILD SPECIES BE NOMINATED?

The Ark recognizes products connected with the knowledge and culture of a community. In fact, Slow Food considers biodiversity not only genetic material, and above all, as part of culture (territory, know-how and traditional techniques). So, why catalogue wild products as well? Because often they are connected to traditional harvesting, fishing, or processing techniques and indigenous cultures. Safeguarding wild products means protecting the knowledge that is handed down within communities to preserve the ecosystems in which these products grow (like forests, mountains, and lakes). In the animal kingdom, fish are the most diverse group of large wild species. Therefore, it is also possible to nominate a variety of fish connected to a traditional fishing technique or method of conservation (like salting, drying or smoking).

Some examples...

Some wild products are linked to complex techniques, such as Manoomin rice (USA), which is harvested by canoe and then dried and smoked, or wild coffee from Harena (Ethiopia), which is sun dried then toasted. Others are linked to simpler techniques, such as radic di mont (Italy), collected in the mountains and preserved in extra-virgin olive oil. Wild products often have cosmetic and medicinal uses as well as culinary.



WHAT ARE PROCESSED PRODUCTS?

Processed products refer to cheeses, cured meats, breads, desserts, beverages, preserves and so on, which have evolved in order **to conserve food** (milk, meat, fish, cereals, fruit). These numerous products are the fruit of rural knowledge handed down over generations in every corner of the world, the result of creativity and skill. The smallest variations can result in very different foods – think of the thousands of types of cheeses that have come out of the same three ingredients (milk, rennet, salt), or cured meats, where at times the only difference is the cut of meat, a spice or the type of wood used for smoking. Artisanal processing practices allow the creation of particular products that are able to, more so than the raw materials alone, narrate a local culture and protect producers from fluctuations in the seasons and market. Often, it is possible to safeguard varieties of plants and local breeds by promoting the processed products connected with them (a cheese or cured meat can save an animal breed, a bread can save a type of wheat, etc.)

For Slow Food, processed products are also biodiversity, together with the breeds or seeds of wild and domesticated species.

2. PRODUCTS MUST BE OF PARTICULAR SENSORY QUALITY, AS DEFINED BY LOCAL TRADITIONS AND USES.

Chemical or physical analyses are not sufficient to judge the quality of a product, but nor is tasting. The **origin** of the product must be understood (In which area did it originate: in the mountains or plains? In an urban or isolated zone? In a humid or arid climate? In a narrowly-defined or vast area?). **The communities** must be consulted (Is the product known by everyone or by a small number of people? Is it considered a high-value product, destined for festivals and ceremonies, or a poor-man's food?). **Processing techniques** must be understood (Is it a raw or pasteurized milk cheese? Is the curd cooked, uncooked stretched? Is the cheese fresh or aged?), as well as **conservation** methods (Is it smoked, wrapped in straw, etc?).

Then of course, we taste to evaluate organoleptic aspects. A product is interesting if it is complex, meaning if it evolves in the mouth, offering perceptions that change and last. **Tasting** can identify potential defects (notes of rancidity, excessive acidity, etc.), identify the main organoleptic characteristics (aroma, taste, consistency), understand if there is equilibrium and harmony between the various taste and smell components, and if the product expresses its territory and typology well. At times an element that seems a defect is actually typical for that area, for the local tastes or for the typology. For example, bitterness in goat's cheese is a defect, but it is a typical characteristic of some alpine cow's cheeses.

Ultimately, it is fundamental to consider the palate of the community from which a product originates. A European product could be difficult to understand and appreciate for an African taster, just as an Asian product could be difficult to decipher and appreciate for a European.





3. PRODUCTS MUST BE CONNECTED TO A TERRITORY AND TO THE MEMORY, IDENTITY AND TRADITIONAL LOCAL KNOWLEDGE OF A COMMUNITY.

Territory is a key element for biodiversity. It is not sufficient for a product to be just local. The adjective “local” tells us very little about the history and traditions of an area. It is possible to locally produce recently introduced improved varieties, hybrids or products unrelated to the local culture. The products that interest us, on the other hand, are strongly linked to their territory, not just as in terms of climate and environment, but also in a **cultural, historical and physical context**.

Territory is soil, air, water and climate, but also language, dialects, religion, craftsmanship, architecture and landscape. Far from its territory of origin, a seed, vegetable, fruit tree or animal breed becomes simply genetic material.

Edible plant varieties and animal breeds are best able to fulfill their potential in the territory in which they have acclimatized over centuries thanks to the activities of humans. For this reason they are more resistant and require fewer external inputs (fertilizers and herbicides in the case of plants; veterinary care, water and food in the case of animals). They are therefore more sustainable, both from an environmental and economic point of view. When you hear that a product is the same everywhere, that there are no differences between one region and another, between mountain and plains and so on (which happens a lot), don't give up, continue to ask questions. You will find the differences: it will be thanks to a particular terrain, the use of a herb or spice that is found only in a particular valley, and so on. The challenge is to try to link a product and a vast territory with a precise identity: an island, a mountain, the path of a river, or a group of hills. If you cannot find a difference, not even in the smallest details, it means that this is not such an interesting product.



HOW LONG BEFORE A PRODUCT BECOMES TRADITIONAL?

Some organizations have specified a minimum number of years after which a product can be defined as traditional: this may be 50, 30, or even 25 years. Slow Food considers that a simple number of years is not enough to guarantee that a product is traditional. Golden Delicious apples, for example, are grown around the world (from Chile to Europe and Australia) and account for 80% of world apple production. But this is not a traditional product because the link to a local community and area is much less important than the genetic component (i.e. the variety, which is the same everywhere and particularly stable, expressing the same

characteristics regardless of the territory). Yet this variety is a hundred years old and was identified at the beginning of the 20th century.

The same situation applies to a vast number of commercial varieties of peaches, grapes, plums etc. that are at least fifty or sixty years old.

Slow Food answers this question by considering the **collective memory** of a community. To decide whether a product can be considered traditional you need to answer the following questions: “Does the product belong to local culture? Is the knowledge required to cultivate, process and consume it passed down through the generations?” You can find this out by approaching the oldest producers in the community and asking them whether the product was already cultivated or processed by their parents and grandparents. One response is not enough. It is necessary to check whether it is a shared memory.

Some pointers that may be helpful: Has the product left traces in the work of local artisans? Are there any artisanal tools (wood, copper, stone, reeds) used to work or preserve a particular cheese, or collect and dry a particular fruit? Are there mortars and baskets to hold a certain cereal? Is it present in the language, dialect or folk songs? Has the product been present at fairs and markets for some time? Has it influenced local architecture – are there old mills or dairies?”. In addition to asking the elderly people of the community, make enquiries with women, chefs, food journalists, experts (agronomists, veterinarians, food technologists, etc.). It is also important to search the available literature: Are there cookbooks? Books on festivals and local traditions? Catalogues of products? It is essential to cross check by using as many sources of information as possible.

IS IT POSSIBLE TO NOMINATE THE SAME PRODUCT IN SEVERAL COUNTRIES?

Yes, after having identified the differences, even if small.

Artisanal products are never the same because they are influenced by many factors: altitude, soil composition, climate, local knowledge, personal creativity and so on. When a product is found in



many countries with the same name we need to investigate further. Ricotta, for example, is produced across Sicily, but if we dig deeper, we discover that it can be made from cow, sheep or goat or mixed milk; fresh or aged; baked; smoked; coagulated with fig branches, and so on. Couscous is produced across the Mediterranean, but looking deeper, we discover a universe of variations made of different cereals (wheat, millet, rice, corn) and of other raw materials (there is even a couscous made of water-lily seeds). And just wheat couscous, for example, can be made with different local wheat varieties, different sized grains, or flavored with dried herbs, leaves or roots, etc.)

When there are no apparent distinctions, it is because the differences have not been studied and described, not because they do not exist. In Italy in the 1960s, wine was red or white. Today a universe of different wines exists, which change according to the vine variety, the territory, winemaking techniques and ability of individual producers. Promoting diversity is fundamental to saving small-scale producers. Uniformity, flattening and superficiality (those who say “this product is the same everywhere”) favor producers of large quantities at the expense of quality. The fact that a product could be widespread over very large areas, often with the same name, does not mean that it is not at risk in each of the territories where it is traditionally prepared.



Some examples...

We can allow on the Ark the plum slatko from Bosnia and Herzegovina and wild fig slatko from Macedonia. We can nominate Jabal ‘Amel freekeh from Lebanon, freekeh from Jenin in Palestine, or that from Idleb in Syria. It is possible to nominate feta cheese (in its original version) in various areas of Greece, Turkey and Macedonia. Naturally, we would not nominate Danish feta, though the largest producer of feta in the world operates in Denmark.

4. PRODUCTS MUST BE PRODUCED IN LIMITED QUANTITIES.

On the meaning of “limited quantity” or “small scale”, the debate is open and agreed definitions are few. It is, in fact, a relative concept that depends on context (the case of a Mediterranean island is very different from the Amazon) and the type of production (growing onions is not like producing saffron or an aged Alpine cheese), and it is very difficult to give a certain number or precise formula. In the case of the Ark of Taste (but also in other projects like the Presidia and Earth Markets) we are interested in selecting products that could not be mass- or industrially-produced. In practice, “we are not able to calculate what is right, but we know very well how to recognize what is wrong” (Schumacher, 1973).

The products on the Ark are tied to a specific territory and the knowledge of a community, and it is precisely these two elements that define their limits. It is not possible to increase the quantity

produced over a certain limit without fundamentally changing the nature of production. If the volumes produced grow too much or too quickly (time is also an important variable), it increases the production area of the crops (which moves towards the model of monoculture), multiplies the number of animals being raised, intensifies the growing methods or leads to importing primary materials from outside of the production area (sometimes from very far away), and mechanizes many if not all of the steps of the production chain, giving up craftsmanship at the risk of not obtaining the same quality.

The Ark of Taste is a catalogue of products, not producers. Therefore, it is not necessary to have an exact figure for the quantity produced (data which is, however, essential in order to have a Presidium), but it is important to at least identify an order of magnitude, to establish if we are dealing with an artisan or an industrial product. To further understand this concept, you can read *Small is Beautiful*, published in 1973 by the economist and philosopher F. Schumacher.

5. WHAT DOES 'RISK OF EXTINCTION' MEAN?

A traditional product's risk of disappearing can be **real** or **potential** – in other words, it doesn't have to be almost extinct. A real and imminent risk is evident when the knowledge and skills necessary to produce it belong to one or a few producers, mainly elderly. It is not enough to have a written recipe or simple oral explanation in order to produce a cheese, cured meat or traditional dessert. Traditional processing methods are the work of artisans and learning the practices means working with them for years. The risk of extinction is real also when a product is made for home consumption only. Or when the introduction of ultra-hygienic laws swiftly renders places of maturation or production, equipment, or materials that are important for the characterization of a product illegal. In case of a risk of extinction, the risk is real when the number of units still produced is small (a few hundred or thousand). It is difficult to reverse a process of genetic erosion when numbers are so low. It requires a commitment from institutions, experts and funds to support breeders and financing of reproductive projects. The risk is **potential** – in other words medium- or long-term – when the social situation (of producers or consumers) and the environmental situation (of the ecosystem) are such that a reduction in the quantity or number of producers can be predicted for the coming years. The signs of risk are many and diverse: changing trends in consumption; a market that no longer appreciates



the product and pays very little, gradually reducing its profitability; depopulation of the area and emigration in search of new livelihoods of people traditionally able to produce the product; loss of generational transmission; alteration or disappearance of rural ecosystems and landscapes; loss of support from national and international agricultural policies, and a lack of attention from institutions. The looming threat of industrial products similar to the traditional ones, which confuse consumers and orientate them towards homogenized and standardized versions, can quickly expel traditional products from the market, as they are more vulnerable, fragile and have less support from advertising and marketing.

CAN A FOOD PRODUCED ONLY FOR HOME CONSUMPTION BE NOMINATED?

Yes. A product that survives only in family traditions but is not present on the market, even if produced in abundance, represents an extremely fragile system that risks disappearing in the space of a generation.

In the Balkans and many other ex-Soviet Union countries for example, small privately owned companies previously did not exist, only large public cooperatives. In these countries artisanal products have survived only in families, and now, little by little, some of these are returning to the market.

Here two different situations exist. Either a product is made exclusively by families for home consumption and is not sold, or a product is also present on the market, but in a non-authentic version, with a standardized recipe or with different raw materials. In both cases it is important to nominate the product handed down in families before it is too late. It is not necessary to understand if the production in question has the necessary commercial or sanitation requirements. The product can board the Ark regardless.

The interpretation and application of these criteria must always take into consideration the different local contexts – the geographical, cultural, societal, economic and political differences of the communities involved.



GENERAL RULES

Nomination of a product must also follow these general rules:

The name of the product included on the Ark must be usable by any producer, and not privately owned by any producer or collective entity: it cannot be a trademark. The products that board the Ark of Taste belong to the community, to the territory they come from and where they were developed, to the generations that have handed them down, and to those who have preserved them. They are not the private property of a single company. Any new business or young person living in the area must have the option to cultivate, raise, or transform a product from the Ark. Therefore, the Ark of Taste does not contain any brand name products registered or patented by the private sector.

Some practical examples include: Nutella® is not on the Ark, but a traditional gianduja chocolate-hazelnut spread could be; Marlene® apples would not join the Ark, but instead any of the hundreds of varieties of apples that have continued to survive around the world could. Huguenot® (a cow's milk cheese invented by a South African producer that has given his product an invented name that can be copyrighted) would not board the Ark, but an Italian caciovacallo, a Polish oscypek, or an aged French p elardon, or other cheeses typical of their respective communities could.

Using the Slow Food logo, name and trademark (or any variations thereof) is forbidden on the labeling of Ark products. Correct use of the Slow Food trademark and the 'Ark of Taste' name is established by the guidelines in the document Code of Use for Slow Food Logos – an attachment to the Slow Food International Statute (www.slowfood.com/about-us/key-documents).

The Ark selects a product and not individual producers. The Ark does not require the knowledge of producers, their involvement or control over the production chain.

An Ark profile describes appearance, color, flavor, but it is not necessary to know the details of the entire production. To give a simple example: an apple variety selected for the Ark subsequently could be cultivated using organic or conventional methods. The Ark limits itself to drawing up a profile, highlighting that a particular product is disappearing. It is an alarm signal, an appeal to take action around the world.

As a result, the label or packaging of products listed on the Ark may not use any of the logos of Slow Food (the snail) or other connected organizations or projects (like the Foundation for Biodiversity, Presidia, etc.). It is possible to discuss the Ark of Taste project through other tools: brochures, booklets, articles, websites, etc.

In many countries, Slow Food has established important relationships with chefs who, in addition to participating and collaborating in Slow Food activities, use products from the Ark of Taste, Presidia, or products grown or made by small local producers in their cooking.

Slow Food encourages chefs to note on their menus the names of the producers to give transparency and to promote a specific project – the Slow Food Chefs' Alliance – to truly create a network of restaurants working to safeguard biodiversity.

The Alliance is a project that was created to promote Presidia, but is gradually expanding to include Ark products and local good, clean and fair producers in general. In the case of chefs using products from specific Slow Food projects, like the Ark of Taste or Presidia, it is advised to apply in the menu the name of the product (or to include a list in an additional page) and to include a sentence describing the respective projects. Other products may be indicated with an asterisk, with a note referring to the producers that follow the Slow Food values of good, clean and fair.

In all cases, materials made available to the public should include an explanation of the Alliance.

For more information on this matter, it is possible to review the project regulations online: <https://www.fondazioneSlowFood.com/en/what-we-do/slow-food-chefs-alliance/>



HOW TO NOMINATE A PRODUCT

Anyone can nominate a product without being an expert, having particular skills or being a Slow Food member. It is possible to nominate a product from one's own area, but also from other communities or another country. You can nominate a product by filling out the simple form available on the Slow Food Foundation for Biodiversity website:

www.fondazione Slow Food.com/en/what-we-do/the-ark-of-taste

The nomination form can be sent to the national/regional commission – in countries where they exist – or directly to the Slow Food Foundation for Biodiversity. The Foundation website lists the countries in which a commission exists and the relevant contact information to put you in touch with local workgroups.

These two bodies – the local commissions and the Slow Food Foundation for Biodiversity – will verify that the nomination fits the criteria established for the project.

The Slow Food Foundation collaborates with advisers from different countries.

If nomination forms are incomplete, additional information will be requested from the nominator.

After approval, the next step is to include a brief description of the product on the online catalogue.



HOW TO COMMUNICATE

THE ARK OF TASTE

TO ACCOMPANY THE GROWTH OF THE PROJECT, VARIOUS COMMUNICATION TOOLS ARE AVAILABLE IN MULTIPLE LANGUAGES

www.fondazioneSlowFood.com/en/what-we-do/the-ark-of-taste



The website for the Slow Food Foundation for Biodiversity contains a complete and updated outline of the project, an online catalogue of approved products that can be searched by country, product type or product name, and a new, simple and easy-to-complete nomination form. The nominations received, in any language, are published in the section “Nominations from around the world”, along with the names and comments of those contributing to the project. In this section, visitors can search incoming nominations. A page of Frequently Asked Questions is available for visitors to orientate their activities and contribute to the project’s growth.

On the Foundation website home page, news on the project (new countries involved, testimonies from nominators, interviews with cooks, etc.) will be published. It is therefore important to receive reports from the ground regarding events (such as a display of Ark products during a fair, meetings or conferences devoted to the project), interesting initiatives and testimonies, because they enrich the news section and can also inspire other associations to organize similar events.

SLOW FOOD AND TERRA MADRE INTERNATIONAL NEWSLETTER

The international newsletter, sent regularly in eight languages to 90,000 recipients across the world, contains a focus on the project, allowing the presentation of different content (updates on new countries, products, photo galleries, quizzes, etc.).

PHOTO GALLERY AND VIDEO TESTIMONIES

Photos sent by nominators and those from the Slow Food archives are published on Facebook and the Multimedia section of www.slowfood.com. Videos are also important: those able to create films are invited to interview the custodians of biodiversity. Videos can be sent together with documentation for nominating a product and can also be attached to the form on the sight, or archived in the Granaries of Memory, a collection of videos containing testimonies from custodians of local traditions, cultures, and biodiversity collected from around the world by the University of Gastronomic Sciences (<http://www.granaidellamemoria.it/index.php/en>).

WHAT IS THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN THE ARK OF TASTE AND THE PRESIDIA?

While the Ark of Taste is a catalogue of **products**, the fundamental characteristic of the Presidia is the relationship with the **producers** and the creation of an initiative to support them. Starting a Presidium means visiting them, understanding how they work and what their difficulties are and understanding their social and cultural context and their market, in order to succeed in putting a promotional initiative into action.

The Slow Food Presidia directly intervene to safeguard a traditional product at risk of extinction (a product from the Ark) and represent, therefore, the next phase after cataloguing on the Ark. Naturally, it is not possible to have as many Presidia as there are products on the Ark. The hope is that many other organizations and institutions will also mobilize to save these products.





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ANIMALS PROTECTION
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