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**Slow Food: We need to relax and savor life**

08/11/2003

Ted Slanker drove in to Plano the other night from his farm in Powderly, where he raises beef cattle and other livestock the old-fashioned way: solely on pasture grass, and without artificial hormones or antibiotics. This is unusual; nearly all the beef eaten in America is raised on grain, and much of it with other factory-style methods disdained by farmers like Mr. Slanker. Though you pay a premium price for it, grass-fed beef is much leaner and meatier-tasting than standard beef, nutritionally superior, and prized by gourmets.

Supporting farmers like Ted Slanker and their way of life is what the international Slow Food movement is all about. Mr. Slanker came to the Central Market in Plano to attend an organizational meeting of the North Texas convivium, or chapter, of the movement, which began in Italy in 1980. Slow Food's founders loved meats, cheeses, produce and other foods native to Italy's regions, and feared that the pace of modern life, the industrialization of food production and the siren song of convenience were driving these things to extinction. Also at risk were the timeless cultural rituals of cooking and eating, and the ability to savor, in the company of friends and family, the unfettered pleasure of good, honest food from the land. These things are vital to what it means to be fully human, fully alive – and in depriving us of them, the folly of our fast-food way of life diminishes us all.

Slow Food is far more than a club for people who like to eat. It's a way of thinking about the relationships among food, pleasure, culture, community and the good life. Chapters worldwide identify local culinary and agricultural food traditions, and work to educate the public about them, and promote their enjoyment.

Texas is one of the nation's great food regions, but its true culinary treasures and traditions are often overlooked as we hurry by. Timothy Mullner, who leads the new local convivium, tells us, "Dallas is a fast-paced metropolitan area. If there's a city that needs to slow down and enjoy the good life and good food, it's this one." We couldn't agree more. Are we allowed to hope that Slow Food in Dallas takes off, er, quickly?

*(To learn more about Slow Food, visit the DMN Daily blog at <http://www.dallasnews.com/opinion/blog>)*