

Slow Food Panelist Reviews Waxahachie and Chautauqua

The following article appeared in the Fall newsletter of Slow Food Dallas. It was written by Dallas chef, artisan baker and consultant David Brawley who was one of the panelists at Chautauqua on September 24th.

A Trip to Bountiful

If ever a Texan town was built to embrace the Slow Food philosophy, Waxahachie would have to be at the top of the list. As you exit the travails of 35E, you enter a town that has assured its future by preserving the integrity and pace of its past. A past when cotton was king and non-corporate nutrition ruled the family dinner table.

At the invitation of the Chautauqua Preservation Society, our new leader, Michael Cox, organized Slow Food Dallas' recent participation in the Waxahachie Chautauqua, held in its restored 1902 auditorium. Our panel of local artisan producers represented the Slow Food movement. Among the other participants elaborating this year's theme -- Food for Thought and Thoughts about Food -- were keynote speaker John T. Edge, Director of the Southern Foodways Alliance; Susan Kimball, Professor, UT-San Antonio; Paxton Williams from the George Washington Carver National Monument; and Dallas' own Jamie Samford, Executive Chef, Central Market.

Our group was to discuss *The Slow Food Movement—Pleasure Rediscovered*.

Moderated by Michael, the panel was composed of Rachel Gaffney of Authentic Irish Goods; Robert Hutchins of Rehoboth Ranch; Deborah Rogers of Deborah's Farmstead Cheeses; and (me) David Brawley, ne'er do well pastry chef and baker. All I kept wondering was, how on earth did I get included on a panel of such amazing people?

After introductory remarks and an outline of Slow Food's history and philosophies (preserving and sharing our food heritage, reviving the dinner table as the center of pleasure and community), Michael individually questioned the panelists: how did you start your business? What makes your business or product slow? What is the food history of the food that you produce? What personal activities or practices allow you to slow down? And, as each panelist began eloquently describing both the satisfactions and frustrations of their specialized passion, a connection with the audience really started snowballing. Spontaneous applause broke out many times during the discussions. We had hit a nerve!

Following the discussion, there was enormous interest from the audience, regarding everything from farming practices to political objectives. Each question soon illustrated a keen degree of having understood the core values of Slow Food.

As we left, most of us were approached by individual audience members wanting to know even more about what we did. I was apprehended by a gentleman wanting to know all about the "right way" to make baguettes. As we spoke at length about techniques and sources for ingredients, he was absorbing it all and asking more questions. I have no doubt he went home and made some great bread. But it was his hands and desire that made the bread great. All he needed was a catalyst.

Being one of several catalysts that day never felt so good.

For more information, see www.slowfooddallas.org



All assembly photos in this newsletter by Marshall Hinsley.

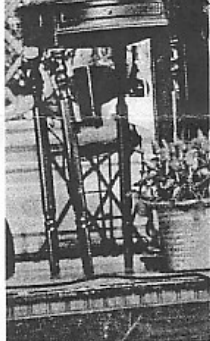
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**2005 Chautauqua prevailed,
despite threat from
Hurricane Rita.**