

## **Slow Food Dallas (from Dining Out Summer 2006)**

Four years ago, Timothy Mullner, an avid traveler and food lover, brought together a small group of gourmands to participate in a tea tasting. Not long afterward, acquaintance introduced him to Michael Cox; the two struck up a friendship, which led to the Dallas's local Slow Food convivium.

Like many other conviviums around the world, Slow Food Dallas has two primary goals: education and community action. Its 150 current members gather several times a year for tastings, talks and fundraisers, all promoting Slow Food International's resounding call for variety, quality and authenticity. Past events include a showing of the documentary "The Cheese Nun" combined with a tasting of locally-made cheeses, an olive oil tasting led by an area olive grower who gave a slide-show tour of his groves, and a benefit for victims of hurricane Katrina, which featured a potluck dinner of traditional Creole favorites and a showing of a documentary film called "King Cake." Cox says it was "a really original experience."

"It's cool," he says. "The events are very low-key and affordable. It's not just about the food; it's about everyone enjoying the interaction." The group is a balance of food industry folk and lay people—from wine and food distributors to those who simply like to cook.

One of the Dallas convivium's current projects, led by member Karen Silverston, involves supporting the US's cheese industry. "Cheese is such a growing element in our culture," Cox says. "More Americans are finding the courage to start their own creameries and to make their own cheeses. Twenty years ago, it was wine; now it's cheese."

Another project coming up in the near future is an event called "Low Food, Slow Food," wherein the group will replicate a typical fast food meal—hamburgers, French fries and milkshakes — using ingredients procured from within 100 miles of the Dallas area. They are currently enlisting local bakeries to make buns and ranchers to provide beef. They also need volunteers to provide tomatoes, onions and lettuce, and to make condiments such as pickles, ketchup and mustard.

"We're taking everything back to its roots," Cox says. "It sends a message that says: 'Hey, this can be done differently.'"

Perhaps even more important than encouraging a culture of good food, he says, is supporting one's neighbors: "Dallas is a very exciting, high-profile city, but there is not always evidence of our great craftsmanship, of our ethnic diversity and the work done by local artisans. We feel it's our job to expose that richness, to lift those things up and to celebrate them."

To contact Slow Food Dallas, visit [www.slowfooddallas.org](http://www.slowfooddallas.org)

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