

or nuance.” He uses grapes with high fixed tartaric and malic acid, along with high yield, and prefers Central Valley grapes - French Colombard and Chenin Blanc - which are cheap, readily available in large quantities, and which happily resemble the neutral aroma and high acid profile of Italian Trebbiano.

The battery itself should consist of no less than 3 barrels; most consist of six or seven barrels. There are those who claim that you only need one wood. Others want upwards of six kinds of wood, and since junipers are protected in Italy, juniper barrels are particularly prized by their owners. But the aging itself, says Bertolli, is more influential than the wood itself.

Fermentation (which can take about a year) is generally done outside the battery, so the conversions from sugar to alcohol and alcohol to vinegar have largely been completed by the time the aging in the battery begins. The yeasts and acetobacters (bacteria which perform the second fermentation from alcohol to vinegar) remain in the aging vinegar, but die off as the sugar level rises over time. This

aging process takes a long time - the 12-year aging demanded by the Italian consortium is only a beginning - and the longer the vinegar is aged, the more refined and complex its flavors become. By the time 25 years have elapsed the vinegar is very viscous as well.

Barrels are as venerated in Paul Bertolli's partnership as they are in Italy. He has established a relationship with a cooper in Italy, so he has access to barrels “done right.” A barrel takes at least five years of use for flavors to harmonize in the battery, but many families have barrels that are hundreds of years old. The barrels improve with age, so that when an old barrel begins to bleed, a new barrel is built around it. This *rivestimento*, as it's called, gives the vinegar maker a barrel with a new lease on life but with a venerable inside. Since the old wood remains in contact with the aging vinegar, the “new” barrel stays in its place in the battery without compromising the vinegar. According to Bertolli, the combination of the gradual dissolution of the barrel and the vinegar sediment (referred to by Ital-

ians as the “patrimony”) is what really affects the *balsamico* as it ages.

The *acetaia* itself is like a living organism, responding to seasonal changes. Paul has his own *acetaia* in Sonoma, along with several partners in the area with *acetaie* of their own - it's a family owned enterprise. He is using his *balsamico* products in his restaurant, of course, but isn't planning to sell it. Oliveto has a website where you can see clearly how something like *balsamico* fits into Paul's philosophy.

You can purchase *aceto balsamico tradizionale* by mail and at many specialty food stores. Places such as Corti Brothers, Zingerman's, Williams-Sonoma, Dean & DeLuca and Zabar's all have multiple grades for sale. Be prepared to spend upwards of \$50 for a 100 milliliter bottle, but with the intensity of truly fine *balsamico* even such a small bottle should last for a long time. Then be prepared for a special treat. *Balsamico* may be the ultimate Slow product, and its continuing mysteries are part of the attraction.

Joan Gussow, author of *This Organic Life*, addressed the Slow Food congress in July of last year. A little over a month later she was invited to speak before the Investors' Circle, a “non-profit national network of angel and institutional investors, foundation officers and entrepreneurs who seek to balance financial, social and environmental returns,” at a meeting in Boston. Her comments on the ecological impact of “fast foods” ring especially true in light of current concerns over the Patagonian Toothfish, aka “Chilean Sea Bass.” Her speech, as delivered:

The Incompatibility of Food and Capitalism

by Joan Dye Gussow, Ed.D., MS Rose Professor Emerita Nutrition and Education, Teachers College, Columbia University

I think my comments this morning fall under the heading, “the incompatibility of food and capital-

ism.” I know a fair amount about food and almost nothing serious about capitalism, finance, invest-

ment and so on. So all I am going to do is to present to you several of the dilemmas that have occurred to me

in the 30 plus years I have been in the field of food, stories suggesting that the way money and food interact is not healthy. Woody told me I didn't have to tell you how you could do anything about these dilemmas. Which is a decided relief.

The first dilemma I'll describe isn't directly about agriculture, but about food which is--despite the appearance of much of what passes for food these days--a product of agriculture. My two other dilemmas directly involve agriculture.

When I began studying nutrition education as a "mature" student more than 30 years ago, it was generally asserted that nutrition education was a failure, that people were eating badly despite years of effort to make them eat well. The food scientists' answer to this presumed failure was that we probably needed to fortify popular foods with the appropriate nutrients so that people could be well nourished in spite of themselves.

I spent a good deal of time in my early years in the field, discrediting both those ideas. Nutrition education was not a failure, I pointed out; it had simply not been tried. The total government support for nutrition education was much less than the television advertising budget of a single soft drink company--and it still is. Moreover, trying to fortify what people were already consuming would not eliminate the need for nutrition education but reduce it to absurdity, i.e. "drink your Coca Cola because it contains your Vitamin C" and so on.

Eventually I came to understand that there was an underlying problem: food industry growth. Food is unique among consumer products

because we can't keep expanding our capacity to consume it; we can eat only about 1500 pounds of food a year, even if we're willing to expand our waistbands--which increasing numbers of us seem willing to do. That means that food sales cannot normally increase more rapidly than the population, which apparently is not fast enough by current business standards. With enough consumer confidence, we can be coaxed into owning 25 pairs of shoes, countless clothes, three houses, two cars and a truck, and closets-full of old computers and palm pilots. But there's no point in accumulating food since it eventually spoils, and we can only eat so much of it.

The food industry's solution to this problem has been, and continues to be, to invent ways of making us pay more for less of the food raw materials, by adding what they call "value" to the products consumers buy. That usually means eliminating the little woman--with "ready-to-eat" meals, and using less of the product's basic ingredient--the most glaring example being juice drinks which often contain only 10% actual juice but lots of cheap sugar and water (and of course, added vitamin C, folate and whatever else will sell). It's great for profits because consumers will pay a lot more for two ready-to-eat dinners than they would have to pay for the ingredients of two ready-to-eat dinners. The other way to make people buy more is to produce irresistible fattening foods and then "solve" the problems that creates with diet foods that require consumers to pay for not getting any calories.

And the reason nutrition education

seems to have failed is because so many of the products that this inventiveness produces are not only confusing in their composition and origins (like those juice drinks and diet foods), they are things that people would be better off not eating--or drinking (like those diet foods and juice drinks).

There were no juice drinks or diet foods when I was a child--just juices and foods, and it's hard to go wrong drinking juice and eating ordinary foods. In fact there were only 800 items in the supermarket in the year that I was born. I could have taught someone to eat well from such an array in about 2 hours. Today there are 30 to 40 thousand items in the typical supermarket; through the 90's they were introduced at the rate of about 15,000 a year--about 41 a day. Many of them have the life expectancy of fruit flies, and no eater can have any real knowledge of their composition, safety, or usefulness. Oftentimes, the purpose of a new food product is only clear because advertising has explained how to use it.

Once I understood that food industry growth was the underlying problem of nutrition education, I knew I needed to talk to an economist. At that time, none of my acquaintances knew an economist--they did not have the God-like omnipresence they have achieved in recent years--but I did find an economics student who was studying under Samuelson at MIT. I invited him over and presented him with my dilemma. How can the food industry survive, I asked him, without having to grow faster than is good for our health? What kinds of

no growth theories were there? He didn't know of any-said there weren't any, which I found out later was wrong. But at least I had cleared the air. The need for continual growth in the food industry was and is leading to the creation of astonishing numbers of complicated and often unhealthy products whose composition is a mystery to the average shopper and--as an industry consultant once happily announced to a roomful of my peers--will keep nutrition educators in business forever, trying to explain to consumers how to use them in an ordinary diet. I think that's insane, but I don't know what to do about it. That's item number one.

Item number two has to do with another uniqueness of food as a consumer item. Not only is its consumption limited by nature, but nature is essential for its production. If we are to eat, we need to keep our ecosystem functioning, providing all its free services like pollination and cycling of nutrients, modulation of weather, and so on. And since the big ecosystem that keeps us all alive is planet-wide, we need to worry about whether local ecosystems everywhere are being protected. We don't worry, of course, because we don't know how dependent we are and few of us have any idea where our food comes from. When I ask audiences of eaters whether they know the origin of a single item they ate the day before, they usually can't guess even the continent.

To an extent most people are unaware of, much food production is being moved overseas. That's because growing food requires land, labor and capital, and while capital can move freely, land and labor can't.

Much food production has therefore gone to where land and labor are cheapest, which is not the U. S. A couple of years ago, an economist named Steven Blank wrote a book with the ominous title, *The End of Agriculture in the American Portfolio*, the thesis of which was that agriculture would move overseas because investing in it is just not profitable. As Fred has just told you, that's putting it mildly. On average, farmers and ranchers now get 7-8% of every dollar of food system profit. In 1999, production costs rose 20%, and commodity prices fell an average of 7%.

Years ago, I bought a container of 100% pure apple juice from a New York City deli. In that apple producing state, the label was a shock: "Contains concentrate from W. Germany, Austria, Italy, Hungary, and Argentina." Today it would probably read "Contains concentrate from China," since that nation, desperately short of cropland--and water--to feed its own people, has set out to become the world's major apple juice producer.

Unfortunately, the World Bank, among others, encourages the rich to eat from the soils of the poor as part of "structural adjustment." Poor nations are urged to use their best lands to produce not rice, beans and corn for local consumption, but strawberries, red peppers, broccoli and other exportable crops to pay off their insupportable foreign debt. Production for local consumption is pushed onto less productive and/or more fragile lands whose inevitable misuse ultimately compromises the carrying capacity of the planet. Consuming the products of others' soils makes us ignorant of the limits of our own carrying capacity and of our own depen-

dence on the natural world. So dilemma number two is that floating money looking for profitable agricultural investments is destroying the natural systems on which our food system depends.

And finally, my third and last dilemma--A month or so ago, I heard a talk by Carlo Petrini, director of Slow Food, an organization that grew out of Italian concern over the disappearance of traditional foods and the communities that produce them. One of the things Petrini talked about was the possibility of making goat prosciutto. Since I was listening to him in translation, I never got straight whether or not anyone had actually made goat prosciutto, but I was, in any case, more interested in the reasons why they would want to, and the ecological consequences of the popularity of certain foods.

As we all know, goat cheeses of various sorts have become widely popular in recent years. Most people also know that making goat cheese requires goat milk, but many fewer people have in mind that you only get goat milk when you make baby goats, otherwise known as kids. Cows, as I sometimes have to remind my students, don't actually "give" milk. We take it from them, after we have inseminated them and gotten them to produce a calf for whom cow's milk is nature's food. Anyway, when you have a lot of goats' milk, you have a lot of kids and the question is do you have a market for all of them? So Petrini wanted to see whether a market could be created for kid prosciutto.

The ultimate purpose of this intervention would not be merely to use up kids, however, but to save the small Italian communities that tra-

ditionally make prosciutto. They are being ruined by success; concentrating the growing demand for prosciutto in areas where it is traditional, Petrini said, is causing ecological havoc. The same is true, of course, for any food or other product which has fit comfortably into its environment, and suddenly becomes a fad. The fad for blackened red fish, for example, did in the fishery. Which is something to worry about when the world-wide web can reach into a community and create a world-wide demand for anything. And as I said up front, food is especially vulnerable because to produce food you have to have a functioning ecosystem. Looked at overall, these three dilemmas seem to me to suggest that, at the moment, the effects of

profit-making on the food system are almost entirely negative. My own response to this conclusion has been to try to demonstrate that more local food systems in which people are closer to the sources of their food--and thus might willingly pay enough for food to protect them--are both possible and palatable. And I'll be happy to talk about that later, since I've written a book about the lessons I've learned from trying to eat locally. For now, however, I want to close with a brief quotation from someone I have only lately learned to admire, the Indian novelist Arundhati Roy who is currently campaigning against nuclear arms and large dams in her native India. This is what she said: "When you go to Europe or America for the first time, you arrive

in a city where you don't see any mud, and everything looks really nice, all the cars and the steel and the glass. But I look at a car and I think 'somehow this came from earth and water and forest.' How? I don't know. But you need to know--you need to know what the connection is; who paid the price of what." That's exactly what I would say about the foods we eat. We need to remember that somehow they came--and must continue to come "from earth and water and forest," and we need to know how, and who paid the price." And now that you know what the connections are, I would hope you can use your clout as investors to help create local food systems that are economically sound, ecologically sustainable and socially just.

Baum Forum and Slow Food Collaborate on A Growing Concern

by Hilary Baum, member of Slow Food New York City

Farmers, chefs, food enthusiasts, environmentalists and others passionate about quality food will slow down together with nationally recognized speakers and delicious regional food and wine for A Growing Concern, an action-oriented weekend of educational and culinary activities in New York City on October 5th & 6th, 2002. "The Baum Forum is bringing together a collaboration of so many who care so deeply about what we eat, where it comes from, who pro-

duces it and at what costs. This event is a wonderful coalition with a common agenda: nothing less than a delicious revolution," according to Slow Food U.S.A board member Alice Waters, program co-chair and presenter for A Growing Concern. Designed to inspire action and raise awareness about critical food system issues facing both producers and consumers, this multi-faceted two-day event will offer an abundance of information, inspirational discussions, and hands-on activities.

Conference sessions and workshops will explore compelling food and farming issues in the context of culture, environment, and politics. Featured presenters include outspoken experts and visionaries such as chef-activist Alice Waters, journalist Michael Pollan, educator Marion Nestle, publisher Michael Batterberry, farmer Elizabeth Ryan, authors Frances Moore Lappé and her daughter, Anna, the UK's Patrick Holden, activist Joan Gussow and many more. Participating chefs include Alain Sail-