Chapter 1

Appetite and Thought

The Origins

In Bra, a small city in Piedmont on the edge of the territory known as the Langhe, a group of young people were involved in social issues in the middle of the 1970s. They were connected with ARCI (Associazione Ricreativa Culturale Italiana), the national recreational association on the political left; their high level of activism was motivated by a strong cultural commitment; and they made their presence felt. Bra was undergoing transformation, but a century of industrial production had left its mark, shaping destinies and outcomes, urban landscapes and moments of repose.

> Our town was ringed
> by a belt of factories
> where blackened men scraped and hung hides;
> in the April sun the air smelled of leather.

We its citizens, every one, leaving here
bear within us a heaviness of stone
of thick fog and extracts of tannin.[1]

[Bra] has a heart that's been tanned
and left to dry in the sun
beneath the gaze of old gardens.[2]

The leather-tanning industry was created in the nineteenth century and was closely tied to the raising of cattle and the historical presence of numerous clog makers and cobblers in Bra; it enjoyed a boom during World War I thanks to orders placed by the military, employing about a thousand people at its peak, but has been declining gradually ever since. At the period described by poet Giovanni Arpino (whose mother came from Bra, and who lived there himself for a long time and never lost his ties to the place) it still employed two hundred people.

After World War II the production of tannin began in the city. It is one of the basic substances used in the tanning process, and its pungent smell grabs the nostrils with an "odor that weighs down the air like a thick dust and clogs your breathing with the stench of decomposition."[3] Velso Mucci, a cultural and political activist and author of the novel *L'uomo di Torino* (*The Man from Turin*), confirms that you could never get away from the smell; he speaks of "a town where the permanent gamut of smells runs from the great morbid stink of rotting scraps of hide to the acrid sulphurous whiff of chemical tanning agents."[4]

But there are other smells that permeate the air of Bra:

the huge armpit of the town is pervaded every October by strong exhalations of must that bring with them, from inside every

courtyard, whirling swarms of fruit flies. The people of Bra are making their wine. With a couple of tubs of grapes that they have harvested and dragged down from some tiny vineyard clinging to a steep hillside or hidden in a winding hollow of the clay hills, they all make their own wine at home.[5]

The same author gives us perhaps the best description of the town of Bra as it struggled along in the 1970s: "An agricultural economy based on small holdings, in an area passing jerkily through the artisanal and paternalistic phase of industrialization."[6]

Yet, along with pollution problems and a few handsome examples of industrial archeology, the age of tannin left another heritage: a history of workers' cooperatives that the socialist leader Camillo Prampolini called "exemplary" and a strong tradition of joining organized groups, whether Catholic, laic, or socialist in color. This tendency to form organized groups, called *associazionismo* in Italian, manifested itself as early as the nineteenth century with the formation of numerous occupational associations in agriculture, labor, commerce, the trades, and the military (until late in the twentieth century the concentration of barracks was another feature of the town). Of these associations, a few are still active today, like the Società di San Crispino e Crispiniano, which used to be made up of shoemakers and repairers, and the Società dei Contadini (Society of Peasant Farmers), the representative organ of the market gardeners, who were and are the most important component of the agricultural sector. Bra also gives its name to a cheese, although not a single round of this dairy product is produced in the city: it is actually brought in from the valleys of Cuneo, but traditionally it was the dealers in Bra who aged it and marketed it.

So all in all we are not talking about a gastronomic capital. Bra stands a little apart from the Alba basin, which is something of a des-

tination for seasonal tourists and Sunday visitors; there one can find sleepy and little-known towns, and sample the variety of cultures that mingle between the Po and the Alps. Being born in Bra means having homemade wine from the courtyards of urban apartment buildings in your blood, not Barolo (the great red wine of the Langhe), but it also makes you sensitive to what it means to have a heritage of wine making, agriculture, and commerce. Having been born into a tradition of *associazionismo*, and having joined the ARCI ourselves, we wanted to compare this heritage with others from all over Italy.

This was the background of those who, in 1980, formed the Free and Praiseworthy Association of the Friends of Barolo, the nucleus of the future Arcigola. The promotion of wine and food, and thereby of tourism, was not a fashionable idea at that time and place, and there wasn't the faintest sign that this kind of tourism would become the great resource that it has. But that's what this unprecedented association was aiming at: to create awareness of local products and awaken people's attention to food and wine and the right way to enjoy them. And so we had our first tasting courses, organized sampling sessions and get-togethers, set up circuits for distribution, and began selling wine and specialty foods by mail order.

One of the most significant early events was held in the Palazzo dei Dogi, at Mira near Venice, in celebration of the wine and food of the Langhe. Massimo Martinelli from the Cantine Razzi led the wine-tasting, spoke about wine and vineyards, and told stories, and the Brezza family, owners of a restaurant bearing the family name in Barolo, prepared local dishes. The whole affair managed to combine information and pleasure in a way that characterized everything the group tried to do. Another case that comes to mind was a festive banquet organized for a meeting of philosophers at the University of Urbino by a couple of youthful founders of the association, Gigi Piumatti (today one of the editors of the *Italian Wines* guide and editor

of the periodical *Slowine*) and Marcello Marengo: for perhaps the first time an austere citadel of high culture was permeated by the pungent odor of truffles, while the scholars, loosened by wine, reflected expansively on taste. Then there were the introductory courses on wine given to the students of the Itis Avogadro of Turin, and the Week of Barolo and Barbaresco held at Bra and modeled on similar courses given in Burgundy. Sheer willpower overcame a thousand organizational and economic obstacles to make these occasions happen, and through them we came into contact with people who, not long after, joined us to form the steering committee of Arcigola and then Slow Food. So the group began to grow as its own collective purpose turned into a search for a new identity. I myself, as a member of the national council of the ARCI, traveled throughout Italy in order to get to know its regions and its markets. But plenty of people do that without seeing the need for action and change: from Guido Piovene in the 1950s to the 1970s, those who made the "grand tour" of the Italian peninsula always took its geopolitical segmentation and its mosaic of regions as given, and considered the highly industrialized north and northwest (Lombardy and Piedmont) as the only model of development. But if you paid attention to material culture and thought about people's working lives and everyday routines, and the basic enjoyment of earthly goods, you began to see the enormous potential of Italy's agricultural and regional heritage, in terms of both its traditions and its economic potential.

Bra was still the laboratory for our ideas, and after the Friends of Barolo a cooperative was founded to help organize tourism and various sales and promotional activities. Next the Osteria del Boccondivino, a novel attempt to combine the atmosphere of a good restaurant with locally inspired cuisine, quality wines, and modest prices, opened its doors. The experience of working with ARCI, the organizational ability developed on the ground, the emergence of an opera-

tive base, and the building up of a network of contacts throughout Italy—these were the pieces of a puzzle. The pattern that emerged was of a group united by a shared interest in, and affinity for, cooking and the ways that food and wine go together. And in the space of a few years this little platoon and its scattered affiliates would become a worldwide association, attracting a membership interested in food and wine, certainly, but also in preserving agricultural and cooking traditions, keeping local products viable, and promoting conviviality.

On the organizational plane, an assembly of the ARCI at Abano Terme gave the go-ahead to a new federation that left full operational independence to the various initiatives that were taking shape in those years, ranging from Legambiente (the Environmental League) to the UISP (Unione Italiana Sport Popolare—Italian Sport for All Association); then in July 1986 the foundation of Arcigola gave the autonomy and the dignity of a "*lega enogastronomica*" (a "league for food and wine") to a structure that was already in existence and starting to coalesce. Our new constitution was celebrated over the course of two memorable days: first in the historic Tenimenti Fontanafredda at Serralunga d'Alba; then in the courtyard of the Boccondivino in Bra, with a dinner that only came to an end as dawn broke, following a last toast with a 1939 Barolo bearing the signature of Aldo Contemo; and finally in the castle of Barolo itself, at a meeting of the 62 founding members, who elected me president of the new fraternity.

The name "Arcigola" is a play on words: "Arci" comes from ARCI, but it is also a prefix meaning "arch-," and many founding members had a connection to the magazine *La Gola* ("*la gola*" = appetite for, enjoyment of, food; gluttony), so "Arcigola" suggests "ARCI-Gola," and also "archappetite" or "archgluttony." *La Gola* (1982–1989) was an original attempt to approach the culture of food and wine through disciplines like philosophy, sociology, literature, and anthro-

pology. This monthly, published in Milan by an editorial cooperative, drew curiosity and interest from its inception and induced many people to attend tasting courses, come to social gatherings, and learn how food is produced.

For many isolated and curious gourmets, who were searching not just for wines and local specialties but also for a cultural setting and credible guidance, the arrival of the new association was a revelation: membership in Arcigola went from 500 to 8,000 in three years. This exponential growth was also fed by our publishing ventures, restaurant and wine reviews, organized trips and tastings, and discussion of ideas that would have sounded crazy a few years earlier, like slowness, taking things easy, and conviviality. The uniqueness of local foods everywhere and the concept of the traditional were suddenly being defended from a new point of view, by new groups of people.

In 1987 *Il Gambero Rosso* ("The Red Prawn") was born; this was a special insert dedicated to food and wine that Arcigola took part in producing for the left-wing daily *il manifesto*. Then came the idea of creating a guide to the wines of Italy; within a few years it became the reference book of choice for enthusiasts, producers, and restaurant operators.

With the launch of Slow Food Editore (Slow Food Publishing) in 1990, the movement gained an emblematic name and a powerful vehicle of identity. At a time when the restaurant trade was starting to suffer from the media's exclusive focus on places that were competing for Michelin's three stars, with scant attention paid to the kind of modest eating establishment traditionally called an *osteria* ("hostelry") in Italian, the guidebook *Osterie d'Italia*, the first volume in the Slow Food catalogue, took a stand against journalistic conformity and discussed the restaurant business using subversive terms like "tradition," "simplicity," "friendliness," "moderate prices," and above all "*territory*"—a word I will use throughout this book in

exactly the same sense as the French word *terroir*: the combination of natural factors (soil, water, slope, height above sea level, vegetation, microclimate) and human ones (tradition and practice of cultivation) that gives a unique character to each small agricultural locality and the food grown, raised, made, and cooked there.

By 1989 the membership had reached 11,000, and Arcigola had been renamed Arcigola Slow Food. It became an international association as the level of communication among members and sympathizers, inside and outside Italy, rose and the rest of the world grew more and more interested. Why do we call it Slow Food? The name was coined when a number of our members took part in a demonstration against the opening of a McDonald's in the Piazza di Spagna, below the Spanish Steps in Rome. But what it really conveys is our critical reaction to the symptoms of incipient globalization (the term did not exist at the time, but "fast food" did). Slow Food became an international movement in December 1989 in Paris, where delegations from around the world met at the Opéra Comique to sign the *Slow Food Manifesto* reprinted at pp. xxiii–xxiv above. And that is how, in just three years, there came into being a worldwide movement aimed at gaining and spreading knowledge about material culture; preserving our agricultural and alimentary heritage from environmental degradation; protecting the consumer and the honest producer; and researching and promoting the pleasures of gastronomy and conviviality. Today Slow Food has 75,000 members throughout the world, and it is growing.

From "New Epicures" to Ecological Gastronomes

Gastronomy took hold among the aristocracy and the bourgeoisie thanks to its capacity to bring people together. Associations of food

lovers go back a long way and take different forms. Some derive from the "tasting panels" of Grimod de la Reynière, who founded gastronomic journalism with the *Almanach des Gourmands* of 1803; similar panels were formed in Italy by Umberto Notari in 1929 in connection with the monthly *La cucina italiana*. Others originated as clubs combining bacchic revelry and poetry. In Italy clubs of this kind are indistinguishable in origin from the academies, and they sprang up in provincial towns everywhere as assemblies of (mostly male) people dedicated to the pleasures of wine, good eating, and conversation. Sometimes they were ephemeral, sometimes they lasted for a generation or so, but always they reflected a certain mentality, a certain epoch, a certain social class, and a certain economic context. In the twentieth century, gastronomic associations were also influenced by the cultural policies of the state: fascism discouraged them, except for the Touring Club Italiano, which dominated gastronomic culture during the twenties and thirties, but they revived in the Italian Republic after World War II as incarnations of the provincial spirit, fidelity to tradition, and a desire to bring back the rituals and feasts of the past. A taste for the scenic attached itself to gastronomy: costumes of dubious medieval origin and ceremonies of supposedly goliardic character were employed to enhance the fame of a particular kind of cured meat or a special dish. Reigning over all the other associations that sprang up in the wake of the postwar return to hearty eating was the Accademia Italiana della Cucina, founded at Milan in 1953, with branches throughout Italy. It was a gastronomic fellowship with a strongly marked social identity and cultural ambitions extending to the publication of guidebooks and collections of conference papers. Seen from outside, the Accademia was for VIPs and their substitutes, welcoming only people of the right sort and putting on show the appetites of people who had never been hungry in their lives. Though it was not overtly political,

by the very nature of its membership it belonged on the conservative side of the political spectrum.

Born out of the diaspora of organized groups on the left, Arcigola and the team that produced the monthly *La Gola* belonged on the opposite side. Arcigola was created by a group of women and men who were born, and who live, in a part of Italy where people are raised to be able to talk about good wine and traditional local dishes, and who understand the way improved nourishment has redeemed the population from age-old poverty. The first people to call themselves "*arcigolosi*" or "archeaters" were an offshoot of that sector of 1970s political militancy that coalesced around the daily *il manifesto* and opposed other factions like the greens, the orange-clad followers of Bhagwan Shree Rajneesh, the marijuana smokers, and the vegetarians. Yet people on the left, no matter how sophisticated and modern they might be, had an odd relationship to gastronomy: eating well was something they did privately and unobtrusively, and they were mostly detached from and not much interested in the part of the economy that does grow and sell high-quality food, though a large part of the Italian population makes its living in this sector. This was the attitude taken by the leftist intelligentsia when Arcigola was launched in 1986: they looked down on us as a bunch of good-timers interested only in stuffing ourselves, while from the other side, the food and wine specialists affiliated with the Accademia Italiana della Cucina distrusted us left-wing gastronomes as incompetent intruders with an ideological agenda.

With ostracism coming from both sides—and flowing from a longstanding identification of communism with the spirit of Franciscan poverty—Arcigola immediately saw that it had to create an identity that would clear up that misunderstanding. The early members felt a sense of happiness and release as they laid claim to the pleas-

ures of the table and the bottle, and they viewed conviviality as its own reward. An illustrative and amusing account of the matter was given by Enrico Menduni, a director of the ARCI, in the first issue of *Rosmarino*, the early and short-lived house organ of the association, under the title "A mezzogiorno qualcosa è cambiato" ("At noontime something changed"). Menduni charted the gastronomic history of a generation, and it was a choppy passage indeed, including rotgut wine consumed in *osterie*, cold cuts eaten at the Feste dell'Unità ("Feasts of Unity," the Communist Party's nationwide social gatherings), and tasteless food served in vegetarian restaurants, before the left finally made up its mind that "we want to eat well too."

Ironically, and with a healthy dose of playful spirit, we strange paladins used to refer to ourselves as "neo-*forchettoni*" ("the new epicures"), "*golosi democratici e antifascisti*" ("democratic and antifascist gluttons"), and "*nuovi edonisti*" ("new hedonists"), and for a while we had a mission to convert the entire left to good food and to pleasure in general. It was no accident that Arcigola showed up at the Feste dell'Unità in the summer of 1987 and organized a competition to recognize the best restaurateurs taking part in what was, at that time, the largest popular fair and family outing in Italy. We were convinced that to raise the quality of the food and drink served at the festival was a fit goal, as a matter of both politics and civility. Arcigola also took an active part, as I've said, in the creation of *Il Gambero Rosso*, the food section of *il manifesto*, in 1986. And, still within the ambit of the print media, it collaborated with the Communist Party daily *L'Unità* from 1988 to 1990, first through the columns of "AR," a supplement dedicated to tourism and gastronomy, and then in the pages of a section called "L' Arcigoloso" that came out every week for two years.

In 1994 the congress of Palermo approved the decision to go international, and in 1996, at the first Salone del Gusto at Turin, Arcigola

Slow Food opted definitively to combine ecology and gastronomy with the launch of the slogan "L' Arca del Gusto" (The Ark of Taste). Though we never ceased to affirm the cultural worth of gastronomy and the right to pleasure as indices of the quality of life, for a long time we still had to worry about justifying a choice that was often portrayed as purely hedonistic and a political retreat. Folco Portinari, an intellectual who took an active part in creating Arcigola and elaborating its initial ideas, invited the readers of "L' Arcigoloso" at Christmas 1989 not to trust either "moralistic revolutionaries" or "people who never laugh."[7] The task of the new association was to combine styles and notions that were thought incompatible until that time: excellent quality and affordable prices, enjoyment and health, delight in life's pleasures and social awareness, quickness and lazy rhythms. The purpose? To create an original and unusual social group that would be open, democratic, and uncontaminated by particular interests, and that would avoid making itself ridiculous with rites, protocols, and trappings.

The common identity of the members was strengthened by highlighting four major themes:

1. To study material culture, get to know about it, and spread that knowledge. This is the movement's principal theoretical and behavioral guideline: namely, that it is pointless to sing the praises of fine wine or the smell of good bread if you don't know how they are produced.
2. To preserve our agricultural and alimentary heritage from environmental degradation: the organoleptic profile of the food we eat (in other words, how it strikes our sensory organs) is being constantly impoverished. If that doesn't deserve high-quality production, what does? And then there is the artistic, historical, and environmental heritage of the places where we once bought and

ate food, like cafés, *pasticcerie*, bakeries, and the many sorts of shops run by craftspeople selling their own wares—all of them threatened by the invasion of fast-food chains and stores selling jeans.

3. To protect the consumer and the honest producer by letting people know, without rhetoric or bombast, where to find the right combination of quality and price, neither praising things that are good but expensive nor those that are cheap but substandard.
4. To research and promote the pleasures of gastronomy and conviviality, in a genial and tolerant manner that encourages an approach to food based on the hedonistic advantages of deeper knowledge, the education of the senses, and harmony around the table. In this sense the local representatives of Slow Food, the "fiduciaries" as we call them in Italy, or "convivium leaders," as they are known elsewhere (the term "convivium" will be explained below), should not be dedicated militants but people who seek gratification, friendship, and diversion.

November 1987 saw the publication of the *Manifesto dello Slow Food*, drafted by Folco Portinari and signed by myself and personalities from the world of culture, the arts, and politics like Valentino Parlato, Gerardo Chiaromonte, Dario Fo, Francesco Guccini, Gina Lagorio, Enrico Menduni, Antonio Porta, Ermete Realacci, Gianni Sassi, and Sergio Staino. It urged readers to "stop the fast-food virus and all its collateral effects" and made a "modest proposal for a progressive (in both senses) recovery of mankind as individual and species, and a clean-up of the environment so as to make life livable again, starting with the elementary pleasures." Arcigola embraced slow life, not just slow food, and in so doing it took its cue from *La Gola*; this magazine, created by Gianni Sassi and edited by Alberto Capatti, was the first real sign of interest on the part of Italian high

culture in material civilization and the relationship among economics, ideology, and aesthetics. Arcigola Slow Food demonstrated to all and sundry that we were not just a bunch of people out for a good time, that we were dedicated to a project that would have an impact on everyday life and the way people function in the worlds of production, distribution, and consumption.

In 1991, the year of the second national congress at Perugia, the association emerged as a new phenomenon in the food and wine market in Italy. It brought together several tens of thousands of enlightened consumers, supplied them with publications, supported the education of the senses of taste and smell, promoted gatherings and large-scale events, and thus had enough weight to exert a considerable degree of influence on the market for good-quality food and wine. The convivium leaders and their collaborators became a cohesive team of operators in the area of food and wine around the country. Defense of tradition, enhanced appreciation for high-quality food, and knowledge of material culture underlay a range of initiatives that were really making a difference: for the first time mass education about nutrition was being accomplished with a light touch and in an agreeable way, favoring contact between producers and consumers and inventing original channels and methods for promoting their common interests.

Over the years the association grew. In the beginning we were militants of the left, tired and disillusioned, but as our activities and initiatives spread, other types of people were drawn into the orbit of Arcigola. Our tasting courses; our trips to the Langhe, Burgundy, and California; the publication of *Vini d'Italia* (Italian wines) at the end of 1987, the *Atlante delle grandi vigne di Langa* (Atlas of the great vineyards of the Langhe) in 1990, and the *Guida al vino quotidiano* (Guide to everyday wine) in 1992 brought the nascent community of passionate oenophiles closer to us—a group that was swelling along

with the wine renaissance in Italy and attracting a whole subculture of young and enterprising producers. Arcigola Slow Food chose the snail, the symbol of slowness, as its emblem.

If there was a risk of becoming no more than a circle for wine bibbers, we evaded it by moving on different fronts. In December 1989, at the founding Congress of the International Slow Food Movement at Paris, Arcigola presented the *Almanacco dei golosi*, an inventory of the best craftspeople in food and historic places to eat out in Italy, in the tradition of the French gastronome of the nineteenth century, Grimod de la Reynière. In 1990 it was the turn of *Osterie d'Italia, sussidiario del mangiarbere all'italiana*, the first guidebook to eating places that offer good regional cuisine at moderate prices. These publishing ventures gave many food craftspeople, owners of *osterie*, and restaurateurs good reason to regard Arcigola as the best place to find out what was happening and what others were doing.

By now the overall intent and approach were well defined. The "*arcigoloso*" was an alert consumer, filled with curiosity, who wanted to take part at first hand and to learn; he or she frequented restaurants and wine cellars, shunned pseudoscientific presumptuousness and black-and-white pronouncements, respected the work of those who chose the food trades, and displayed tolerance. She participated in initiatives like the Fraternal Tables that undertake to bring aid to various parts of the world afflicted with war, famine, and poverty, because in the new millennium those who have grown, along with Arcigola Slow Food, to relish eating require two essential qualities: generosity and respect for the human environment. She is jovial and optimistic by nature and is able to communicate these qualities in daily life, and especially at meals: you can't enjoy good food and be greedy and ungenerous at the same time. Nor can you be a gourmet and not care about the environment: people like that wind up as

dupes, exalting food and cooking that are clever but phoney. The project we call the Ark, launched on December 2, 1996 on the occasion of the first Salone del Gusto at Turin, sounds an alarm about the imminent loss of fruits and vegetables, animal species, and food products that form part of our collective memory and our patrimony of flavors. The project to found Presidia (see p. 93 below) responds to this threat by trying to resurrect older modes of production and revitalize local economies, pointing to a new way for world agriculture. So we come full circle: the new epicures have become ecological gastronomes.

An International Movement of Good Taste

Slow Food became an international movement on December 9, 1989 at the Opéra Comique in Paris, when delegates from fifteen countries signed a founding protocol signifying their adhesion to the ideological principles contained in the *Manifesto*; these focus primarily on quality-of-life issues in the widest sense, and on the harm that has been done over the centuries to our material culture. The founders pledged to respect individual cultural autonomy everywhere and to promote initiatives that will help and encourage people to get to know their own region and the things that set it apart better, while at the same time promoting active contacts leading to a better knowledge of, and appreciation for, the cultures of other regions.

The meeting at Paris, lasting from December 7 to 10, 1989 and including debates and dinners, tastings and gala evenings, was the end point of a long trajectory. From the beginning Arcigola had felt the need to escape the old habit of forming associations for purely municipal and corporatist reasons. The countless dining societies

founded in Italy in order to enhance the reputation of the local wine, the local olive oil, or some traditional local dish were all provincial affairs destined to wither and die; on the other hand, the tricolor Italian flag had been reduced, by the beginning of the 1980s, to a worldwide symbol for spaghetti, pizza, mortadella, and Chianti in flasks. Neither of these was the road to the world of flavor we sought. Many factors signaled the need for a new approach, open to exchange and reciprocal discovery: the consumption of better-quality wine, the advent of wine and food tourism, the entry of new generations into the hallowed sanctuaries of quality production, and the new mobility and accessibility of food and wine themselves.

The Slow Food project was born in Italy in opposition to the fast food that landed on our shores and tried to take over, so the awareness that the issue was international was there from the start. The name we chose for our project, and the irony behind it, have caught on. Its force and its bite come from the choice of an English-language name conveying a stance that people all over the world immediately understand. In taking a stand against McDonald's and Pizza Hut, multinationals that flatten out flavors like steamrollers, we know that we have to fight our battle on their ground, using their weapons: globalization and worldwide reach. If fast food means uniformity, Slow Food sets out to save and resuscitate individual gastronomic legacies everywhere; if haste threatens the enjoyment of tranquil sensory pleasure, slowness is an antidote to hurry and the gulping down of nourishment; if the new ways of absorbing nutrition create stereotypes that trample local cultures, Slow Food urges people to recover the memory of regional gastronomic practices. If hamburgers are being consumed mechanically and giving the same stimulus again and again to the sense organs of the young, then we have to undertake a campaign of permanent

education of the taste buds; if the places in which fast food is eaten are aseptic and nondescript, let's rediscover the warmth of a traditional *osteria*, the fascination of a historic café, the liveliness of places where making food is still a craft; if the handing down of knowledge about material culture from generation to generation seems about to cease as lifestyles and eating habits become industrialized, then let a new international movement keep the knowledge alive and tell people where to go to find it. If deranged habits of nutrition and fraudulently labeled foodstuffs threaten our health, then let's rediscover the well-being that comes from healthy food; if the invasion of agriculture by the chemical industry and senseless management of the land are menacing the environment, Slow Food supports growing methods that respect nature; if consolidation of the media is wiping out alternatives, the construction of an international movement fosters the exchange of information, analysis, historical research, and techniques of production.

Slow Food was born in Italy, but it does not speak for food and wine "made in Italy." On the contrary, the spread of the movement means receiving new input, mingling countless voices, discovering allies who think alike while respecting one another at a distance. It also means running the risk of misunderstanding and betting your trust on values like pleasure and quality that can vary enormously even within the bounds of Europe. But such a variety of people have joined or expressed support that Slow Food has become like a nerve center, getting and soliciting news about resources, products, and dining rituals that are universally enjoyable precisely because of their singularity. In order to learn how to find slow pleasure, one has to travel, read, and taste, abandoning the temptation of entrenched isolation: to eat a different kind of food in every street in the world is the best answer to fast food. Close to one another and yet distant, the members of Slow Food find their strength in

this gift of ubiquity, but in a way radically opposed to what the media and McDonald's have to offer: slow culture is growing, it is heterogeneous but strongly cohesive, and it creates an elite without excluding anyone.

Being part of an international movement makes it possible to create real gastronomic identities that are not the result of ignorant fantasy or a media campaign; to practice cultural relativism in a sound way, learning and teaching that taste and distaste are the result of historical processes and cultural sedimentation; to overcome gastronomic chauvinism by incorporating diversities. Tradition, as a cultural goal, can only be recovered with a polycentric and multicultural approach of this kind. The magazine *Slow, messagero di gusto e cultura* (Slow, international herald of taste and culture) is the instrument of this project. We hoped and planned for a long time before it finally appeared in April 1996 in three editions, Italian, English, and German. With issue number eleven in September 1998, Spanish and French versions were added, and the magazine now speaks five languages. Its editor, Alberto Capatti, is an intellectual who has played a fundamental role in studying the history and development of nutritional culture in Italy; a large part of my personal education comes from him, and he has given the whole movement much greater cultural depth. *Slow* espouses a shared project that, by promoting the culture of food and wine, makes the profound recognition of diversity its foundation—diversity whose extent it does not want to reduce. In defiance of globalization, Slow Food recognizes the importance of identity, and of language as its principal component; defying all forms of conservative traditionalism, we are putting out a magazine of cultures, not of a monoculture. As we present, debate, revise, and translate our ideas, many of which were judged strange and obscure at first blush, they end up as part of the public discourse. Born on the Internet but printed on paper, written

by collaborators from every country but produced in Bra, *Slow* is the cultural measure, as well as the organ, of the movement.

Pleasure Denied, Pleasure Rediscovered

> Let's admit it: the word "pleasure" still has a faintly dubious ring. A man devoted to work and raising a family is assumed to be an upright citizen, but a man dedicated to pleasure—you never know. Would you want your daughter to marry someone like that? We behave as though work and raising a family were proper and natural things, but pleasure we treat as somehow artificial, a luxury for a few—most likely undisciplined and shameless—people. Yet pleasure . . . is just as natural as, if not more natural than, work (which may itself be a source of pleasure for that matter), or duty and sacrifice, ideas that really are primarily determined by culture.

That was how Giorgio Bert began his article "Fisiologia del piacere" (The physiology of pleasure) in the July 24, 1989 issue of *L'arcigoloso*, and it was not the first time, or the last, that the pioneers of Arcigola Slow Food took a stand justifying and promoting pleasure. Indeed, the *Manifesto* signed at Paris in December 1989 was subtitled "International Movement in Defense of the Right to Pleasure."

Yet pleasure was, and is, a thorny subject: moralistic people feel itchy at the sound of the word; if you are involved in any sort of social cause or movement, your fellows will rebuke you for mentioning it; others will cite health concerns; and almost anyone will regard an interest in pleasure as a sign of superficiality. They all make the mistake of considering pleasure as synonymous with "excess." Hence the common prejudice (whether in good faith or

bad). Above all, dedication to pleasure is theoretically impossible, for excess is simply incompatible with a steady routine. This is true in biology (our senses, for example, can become so accustomed to smells pleasant or unpleasant that we no longer perceive them) and in psychology too, for there is no form of pleasure that the passage of time will not make us take for granted or even dislike, no matter how lovely it may be at first. If habit blunts pleasure, then obviously we can't organize our lives around it. What is the consequence? Simply that in order to live pleasurably, we need to broaden the range of things that give us pleasure, and that means learning to choose differently, even to live differently. From there to gastronomy is an obvious step: alimentary monoculture (in other words, the restricted range of foods and flavors experienced by those who simply accept what is most easily available) blanks out the pleasures of the palate, because, no matter how much we like them, it makes them habitual. So embracing variety and difference really means performing an impossible trick every day—that of making an ephemeral and voluptuous pleasure last.

Next question: Is it risky for your health to make gastronomic pleasure a priority? If you look around you and think about models and codes of behavior, the situation we are in is a little like the Italian Renaissance, when the humanist Platina (Bartolomeo Sacchi) wrote his famous treatise *On Right Pleasure and Good Health*. Composed in 1465 and printed in 1470, this treatise on the art of cooking and dining helped to make his name and gained a following. Conservative and revolutionary at the same time, the work revived the medical concept of a personal "regime," rules for living based on profound knowledge of the body and aimed at achieving a balance between instinct and self-control, desire and wisdom, and—precisely—pleasure and health. Here is what Massimo Montanari wrote in *L'arcigoloso* for December 30, 1989:

The ideal of balance was the foundation of the philosophical, medical, and dietetic treatises of Greek and Roman antiquity, so it made perfect sense that this value system was revived by the culture of Renaissance humanism. For the humanists, classicism was a philosophy of life, as well as the philological study of texts.

Simple though it was, Platina's program was a genuine revolution against the cultural reality of the preceding centuries, for in the Middle Ages the classical ideas of regime, measure, and diet (in the literal sense of daily rules to be followed by individuals in order to optimize their health while enjoying life's pleasures to the full) had been undercut by ideologies and attitudes grounded in the contrary notion of "excess." Excess meant extremes of both abundance and deprivation. Food in the Middle Ages was a visible sign of wealth and power. Powerful men displayed their strength and fitness to command through their ability to eat and drink in large quantities. The opposite excess, extreme deprivation, was seen as a sign of perfection and saintliness: think of the ascetic practices of the hermit monks who mortified their own flesh through hunger in the belief that physical pleasure would lead them away from the spiritual realm and into sinfulness. The most insidious of pleasures, along with the closely related one of sex, was the pleasure of eating, or as it was called in medieval Latin, *gula* (literally "gullet," but used to mean "appetite for food" and so "gluttony," just like *la gola* in modern Italian), because no one could avoid it entirely. Once it got hold of you, you would come to appreciate it more and more, and it would pull you down. So the Middle Ages saw a proliferation of anticulinary techniques designed to cancel the sensory appeal of food and turn it into a tasteless, formless mass.

Pleasure was pushed to the outer limits of the range of positive ethical and cultural values, and excess took its place as a criterion for

behavior. That is where the dichotomy between pleasure and health comes from. Health concerns overrode all else, and dietary science dominated the literature on food with the theory that everything people ate had to be justified on grounds of health. Food only had value from that point of view. Yet as Madame de Sévigné noted, "health is the pleasure of the other pleasures. If the other pleasures are all eliminated, one may perhaps live longer, but health itself will vanish along with them."

We are now half a millennium away from the Middle Ages, but all our modern schizophrenia does is keep the medieval philosophy of excess alive and make it worse. We still mortify the flesh when we sit down to eat, denying ourselves wine and tasty treats under the illusion that that will keep us perfect and immune. Food is prescribed like a "natural" pharmaceutical. But how natural can it be when it is completely cut off from all that differentiates one individual, one region, one season, from another? Lack of attention to what's on one's plate is often a symptom of a broader mental outlook. Some people even maintain that a richly varied intake of food is economically unrealistic nowadays, or incompatible with the amount of time available. But monotonous eating is actually a recent and invasive phenomenon, related to consumerism and higher disposable incomes and the devaluation of food as pleasure. If anything, the opposite is true: less disposable income makes it almost compulsory to vary one's diet according to what is available. If you want proof, look at what people eat when they don't have much to spend, or what they eat in wartime. And then look at what people today are buying with the money they save on food: superfluous possessions suggested to them by advertising campaigns, high-tech toys, designer clothing, and even worse, expensive medical and health-industry solutions—face-lifts, saunas, cosmetics, workouts—to problems originating with how they nourish them-

selves in the first place. Moralizing about how our bodies look, with all the tortures and deprivations that that entails, is a plague. As for the idea that nobody has time anymore, we have more free time than any generation in history, with our reduced working hours and long weekends.

The upshot of this ideology is widespread obesity in the very same western world blinded by the myth of perfection, a world where people eat industrially produced cookies, snacks, hamburgers, and carbonated soft drinks whenever they feel hungry, because that is what's easiest: quick bites, ideal for grabbing between one activity and the next, which you don't have to sit down and eat with other people.

Although from the strictly religious standpoint gluttony may still be one of the seven deadly sins, the real reason for this cannot be the pleasures of the palate themselves, but—once again—overindulgence. The most rigid theologian will confront an anomaly in the world outside the Vatican: nuns and parish priests savoring, with appreciative expertise, stuffed turkey at Christmas with a bottle of Barbaresco, and for dessert, panettone with a bottle of Moscato di Scanzo, in the quite correct belief that they are not sinning at all and are not the slaves of vice if they enjoy the same sorts of pleasure at every feast day in the calendar. It is all a question of measure and self-control. It is a sin to be intemperate, to throw oneself into a hunt for limitless pleasure. It is not a sin (indeed it is temperance, a cardinal virtue!) to enjoy wine and food as they are meant to be enjoyed. Not for nothing is the word *il bendidio* (God's abundance) a synonym for food in the Italian language.

The pleasures of the table are the gateway to recovering a gentle and harmonious rhythm of life. Go through it and the vampire of advertising will lose its power over you. So will the anxiety, conformism, and suggestive power of the mass media that the shifting

winds of fashion impose. Let go of standardized, sterile models. Freedom to choose could raise the quality of life and bring pleasure within reach of large masses of mankind. To be able to sit on the terrace of a café without being poisoned by the exhaust fumes of automobiles; to visit historical cities at a gentle pedestrian pace; to stay in tourist attractions that haven't been ravaged by speculative overbuilding; to eat choice foods produced by local craftspeople. . . .

The answer to the environmental and existential degradation caused by the fast life will not come, contrary to what a certain late-yuppie ideology would have you believe, from searching even more intently for "quality," if that means an exclusive refuge for the elite from the madding crowd. Upscale patterns of consumption, quite apart from the ideology that underpins them, are no longer a defense against degradation, and paying top price no longer guarantees quality of life. A good example of this occurred at the end of the 1980s in the United States, where Perrier water had become an upscale item and a status symbol among those who had arrived and those who were scrambling to do so. When it turned out to be contaminated with gasoline, 160 million bottles had to be withdrawn from the market. It is true that people are drinking more bottled water all the time on account of the deteriorating quality of the tap water. But what sense does it make to import mineral water from the other side of the ocean?

Slow Food will teach you how to distinguish between one kind of quality and another. There is the kind we may call "hard," because of its huge environmental and energy costs. Quality of that kind could never be produced in adequate amounts, at least not the way it is presently conceived of and consumed. For example, if everyone wanted to play golf instead of being satisfied with soccer, or even with simply being a soccer spectator, there would be no way to provide courses for all of them. And then there is the kind of quality

that Slow Food wants to promote, a "soft," renewable kind that improves quality of life for the largest possible number of people. The search for it may not free the world of all its unhappiness, but it will make it a much more enjoyable place.

McDonald's Versus Slow Food

Many people see Slow Food as the direct antagonist of fast food, especially McDonald's. This view would be true if it were not so reductive, and if we had ever mounted an explicit campaign against the king of the hamburger chains. The fact is that we have never fully linked arms with the angry crowds on the streets of Seattle and Genoa, or said, with José Bové, that "when a hamburger place springs up, Roquefort cheese dies." The French union leader who became famous for trying to block the spread of McDonald's in his country—in particular for the incident at Millau, in the south of France, that earned him some jail time—and who is today one of the leaders of the antiglobalization movement has voiced ideas that have often cast a spell over us. But when he adopts a strategy of direct action, he chooses a path leading to head-on confrontation with the multinationals, the path of the guerrilla fighter, that we prefer not to take. That is not the slow style. Our choice is to focus our energies on saving things that are headed for extinction, instead of hounding the new ones we dislike. But if you want to revive a tradition and give it fresh life, often what you need is a new toolkit and some avant-garde ideas. When we refer to "new agriculture," for example, we are not talking about some kind of rural archeology.

Since McDonald's is the leading symbol of the new American imperialism, let's take a closer look at its history in Italy, which simply mirrors its presence in the modern world and which it would be

quixotic to try to ignore. The huge American chain had a hard time getting started in Italy, opening its first outlet at Bolzano in 1985, which was relatively late in comparison to the rest of Western Europe. Controversy exploded around the one that opened on March 22, 1986 in Piazza di Spagna, and there were other clamorous cases in which towns tried to keep them from coming in (Casamassima, a small community near Bari, drew national attention). When in 1995 it bought up a competitor, Burghy, from the Cremonini group of companies (about which we will have more to say in a moment), the number of McDonald's hamburger places in the Italian peninsula went from 33 to 142 overnight, and from that point on there was no stopping them.

McDonald's penetrated Italy with a strategy the success of which, if you analyze it, shows you where the antidote lies. In other countries it began in the outlying regions and worked its way toward the main city centers, but in Italy it took the opposite tack. There the major cities were the first to be offered the McDonald's hamburger, and it was the provinces that stuck to their *osterie* and the other public places they did not want to give up. The Italian market for McDonald's in the 1980s and 1990s was already "Americanized" or else deprived of other gathering places: adolescents looking for somewhere to get together, organized outings of schoolchildren eager for the myths and the thrills they had seen on TV, wanderers in the shopping districts, and city-center office workers.

Here is what Mario Resca, the president of McDonald's Development Italy from 1995, had to say in a booklet published in 1998: "We are McDonald's, the most famous brand in the world, and we intend to conquer Italy." And moreover, "To fight McDonald's will take an awful lot of money, and really broad shoulders."[8] Signore Resca is right, and Slow Food realized that fact perfectly clearly even then, when we were not an association with "broad shoulders" and the

last thing we had was "an awful lot of money." To resist the colossus we turned to another pair of "broad shoulders," those of the Italian provinces. We went to the places where McDonald's couldn't get a foothold, awarding (and gratifying) the *osterie* that served traditional dishes with our snail symbol.

Others may take the fight to the streets; Slow Food has a different idea: to rescue eating establishments, dishes, and products from the flood of standardization. Today the hanging signs of the traditional *osterie*, eclipsed for years by sandwich shops and places serving nouvelle cuisine fast-food style, are returning once more to the neighborhoods of Italy, thanks in part to our efforts to promote them, our books, and our conventions. It is all too easy to confuse standardization with globalization. Globalization is absolutely desirable when it creates networks of communication among diverse realities instead of leveling them. It offers real advantages to poorer countries as long as they can escape the logic of "conquest" that only creates wealth in the colonizing countries by exploiting the resources of those they colonize.

But let's continue with our visit to a fast-food place. What is it we don't like about McDonald's? Mostly the food itself, along with the condiments, which are the same everywhere, despite the attempts of the giant chain to adapt them to local taste in every country it colonizes. It is all very well to claim that in Israel there are fast-food places that don't serve cheeseburgers and dairy products, that the ones in India don't use beef, that in Saudi Arabia they pause five times a day so Muslims can pray, and that in Italy they don't use cucumbers. But these are all countries in which no one ever dreamed of reducing the ritual of mealtime to biting into an insipid bun containing ground meat whose origin you know you'd sooner not think about, even if it is certified and traceable to its source.

The real quality of the food remains hidden; despite all the effort

they make to convince us that a Mcmenu contains nothing but good Italian ingredients, the information supplied is disappointing and sometimes not quite correct. In 1998 Mario Resca claimed (and information made available subsequently on the Web site of McDonald's Italia backs this up) that by now over 80 percent of the ingredients and raw materials used in their Italian outlets comes from Italian suppliers, including Inalca (beef), Amadori (chicken), Star (frying oil), Eisberg Italia (vegetables), Coca-Cola Italia (beverages), Peroni and Heineken (beer), and La Giara (olive oil).[9]

Today the Star and La Giara brands are no longer included in this list, and the oil arrives in McDonald's "restaurants" in individual packages bearing a multinational brand. Let's not even discuss Coca-Coca Italia, which is obviously no more than a branch plant; the same thing goes for the beer. The result is obvious: there are no real Italian products, in the sense of things produced locally and differing from one region to another, behind the claim that "our suppliers are Italian," and the same thing holds true in the hundred and more countries around the world to which fast food has spread.

Inalca is one of the main companies in the Cremonini group, the one that sold the Burghy chain to McDonald's. All over Europe, Inalca owns herds of Holstein-Friesians, a breed of cattle originating in Holland and the Friesian Islands, and the most familiar dairy cow in North America; Inalca slaughters more than 200,000 of them every year. Holsteins are easy to recognize: they are the ones with the dappled white and black coats. In Italy the Holstein, which yields more milk than any other breed, has taken the place of dozens of native breeds that gave milk with different or superior flavor and protein content, which was used to make various kinds of cheese that are getting harder and harder to find. And that's not all, for Holsteins also pose a threat to our splendid native Italian breeds of meat cattle because of the scale on which the food chains operate. When

mad cow disease, which (surprise, surprise) only affects Holstein cattle, broke out, breeds like Piemontese, Chianina, Marchigiana, Maremmana, Podolica, and Romagnola suffered unjustly from the fall-off in beef consumption and the ban on traditional cuts, although anyone familiar with the scrupulous care that small herders dedicate to their animals had very little reason to fear that their meat was less than wholesome.

But here's the main point: How are these Holsteins raised before being ground up into hamburger meat? First of all, they are pumped for three years so as to produce milk yields two or three times higher than the average, using intensive methods that would be enough on their own to undermine the claim to quality. Then, when their milking days are over, they are converted into a beef breed by means of a different (but just as high-pressure) feeding program to accelerate their growth, because more and more ground beef is needed all the time. In a few months they wind up in our Big Macs, complete with a certificate of origin identifying them as "Italian meat" from the Cremonini group. Not exactly what you would call an impartial statement of fact.

Now let's look at the chicken: Amadori does business to the tune of around 700 billion lire annually, supplying us with such delights as McChicken patties and Chicken McNuggets. That these birds come from Italy is not in doubt, and we cannot even claim that they are battery-raised. Their feet do touch the earth, but each one has virtually no room to move, and sometimes their feet are so atrophied that the animals would collapse under their own weight if they were let loose in the open. In 48 to 56 days the cocks grow from nothing to around 3 kilos (6.6 pounds) and the hens to around 2.2 kilos (4.8 pounds), eating feed supplied by Amadori and receiving repeated injections of antibiotics to keep them "healthy." The stress inflicted on them during this microexistence, the absence of "animal

well-being," shows in the meat, from which you would never be able to get the kind of good stock you can from a mature free-range chicken. These are born, gain bulk, and are slaughtered in less than two months, while a traditional chicken takes at least five or six months to reach the same weight.

Eisberg Italia is the company that supplies McDonald's with the vegetables for the mixed salad that goes along with their hamburgers. It was founded in 1995 by Stefan Cserepy and has the capacity to produce 1,200,000 kilos (2,640,000 pounds) of salad vegetables annually, doing business worth more than 4 billion lire in 1997. Needless to say, we are not talking about organic, or even simply seasonal, farming here: tomatoes, lettuce, carrots, and cabbage are guaranteed all year round. This is not agriculture with a seasonal rhythm, it is an industry running at full throttle, and the last thing it has to offer is variety of either odor or flavor, from one week or one month to the next (see chapter 2). The risk from transgenic organisms comes mainly from the suppression of biodiversity and large-scale industrial monoculture.

Finally we come to the French fries, another staple of fast-food places everywhere. Originally they were prepared daily with fresh potatoes, but in 1966 MacDonald's began using potatoes peeled, sliced, cooked, and frozen in huge plants, which guaranteed that, like everything else served in any fast-food place worthy of the name, they tasted the same everywhere. How so? By using the right amount and kind of frying oil, which gives them their flavor. Until 1990 the mixture contained 93 percent animal fat, which gave the fries their characteristic taste, but criticism about the resulting high cholesterol levels (there was more saturated fat in a single gram of fries than there was in a whole hamburger) led to a bit of sleight of hand. The animal fat was replaced by vegetable oil, but the original flavor was kept by adding aromatic substances, mysterious additives

of unknown composition that have become the lifeline of the food industry in an age like ours of frozen, dehydrated, and sterilized food (i.e., food robbed of its original flavor).

The nutritional balance sheet has yet another item in the debit column: the way the food is eaten in a McDonald's establishment. The raw fluorescent lighting, the uncomfortable stools, the shared tables, the cardboard containers all act as inducements to eating quickly, without chatting; it is like a visit to a protein filling station. The ritual of sitting down together to eat, with its attendant sociability and personal service (not to mention gastronomic values) is sacrificed to practices deriving from Taylorism (assembly-line methods). Many young people wind up preferring wine bars as places to meet, because the cheapness of hamburgers is not enough to make up for the loss of pleasure, as we shall see below. McDonald's couldn't help but notice this, and its recent advertising campaigns in Italy are built around a pretense of sociability, featuring birthday parties and family gatherings. This celebration of the old-fashioned extended family (a purely Latin phenomenon derided in the English-speaking world) is irrelevant, and apart from that, it is hard to accept birthday parties with French fries and dinners with smiling families guzzling soft drinks.

Notwithstanding all this, Slow Food is not against McDonald's just because it hates hamburgers and French fries and regards spending a long time around the dinner table as compulsory. A slow pace can sometimes become agonizing; who doesn't recall some terrible wedding banquet like that? Conversely, fast food doesn't have to be disagreeable, and there are some traditional ways of eating it—archetypes of McDonald's in a way—that we point to as customs worth saving in our guidebooks, like the *lampredotto* (a kind of tripe) ritually eaten in the *piazze* of Florence; or *pani ca' meusa*, the spleen sandwich of Palermo; or *morzeddu*, the bread stuffed with stewed

tripe of Calabria. So it is not just a question of opposing slow to fast, but rather of highlighting more important dichotomies, like carefulness and carelessness or attentiveness and haste: attentiveness to the selection of ingredients and the sequence of flavors, to how the food is prepared and the sensory stimuli it gives as it is consumed, to the way it is presented and the company with whom we share it. There are endless degrees of attentiveness, which in our view are just as important whenever and wherever we take nourishment, whether it is a meal at home or in a restaurant, a drink in an *osteria* or a sandwich at a bar, lunch in a school cafeteria or in an airplane. The real difference in quality among these experiences does not lie in how much time is devoted to them, but in the will and the capacity to experience them attentively.

It is worrying that fast food has been able to capture such widespread and indiscriminate support among youth. That many young people like to eat that kind of food and drink that kind of beverage probably has something to do with a new attitude to nourishment, and a pricing policy that brings hamburgers within reach of every social class. But the fact that children and adolescents see fast-food places as favorite spots in which to meet and communicate (sometimes the only such spots, aside from discotheques) remains puzzling. Fast-food places are actually "immoral," if we think of the Latin root from which the word "moral" derives. *Mos* in Latin, with its plural *mores*, refers to the "customs," the universe of habits and behaviors to which a people conforms, although no law codifies them in black and white. Fast food, with its planetwide standardization, has swept away all these traditions, these *mores*, when it comes to food. Admitting for the sake of argument (although it isn't true) that consumers of fast food get as much pleasure from that as others might from savoring a glass of Barolo or gathering merrily around the dinner table—still, how is it possible to renounce the practices, the

rhythms, the layers of cultural sediment that make up our history and our identity without running the risk of turning into barbarians? Adopting the same ancillary role that children's television programming does in the afternoon, fast-food places now organize and host children's birthday parties. In this they are given a strong push by the reduction in urban space suitable for play and the absence of carefully thought-out consumer alternatives. In a vacuum of political, civic, and family responsibility, quality is given up for lost. Even on the part of a public that cares about wine and cheese at dinnertime, a laissez-faire attitude persists toward the rising generations, who are left to their own devices. Let them stuff themselves with hot dogs and dribble ketchup everywhere; "when they're old enough the kids will develop a taste for Barolo."

The real mistake here is that we are favoring an inclination that doesn't belong to our history, in the hope that when they grow up, young people will recover their lost palates. But bad habits contracted in youth—the target age for fast food—rapidly become ingrained, and the upshot is a loss of identity, of the heritage of individuals and societies. And at the new McDonald's, opening soon, they are adding more seats all the time.