

DESIGN ADVICE FROM THE SLOW FOOD MOVEMENT

Originally published in "Means by which we find our way",
Edited by David Garner and Andrea Wilkinson, Ramp Press.

The Slow Food movement has come to America seeking to take on the largest population of instant gastronomic gratification seekers. Fast food was conceived in the 1950's to fulfill a need for people-on-the-go but never imagined it would supplant one's entire diet. Now we see how fast food has become the first line food source in teens and even low-income families as well as professionals looking for a quick bite. The slow food movement started in America in 2004 by local farmers, environmentalists, concerned parents, the food industry and food lovers that feared we had lost our appreciation for good quality food, sustainable food sources as well as the art of socializing over food. Documented by author Carlo Petrini and co-founder of the *Slow Food Revolution* that began in Italy, 1986. The movement set in its crosshairs four tenants about food; *good quality, regional in origin, healthy and safe, and ecologically sustainable*. This meant returning to the basics of food production, preparation to consumption assessing what was lost and what needed to be improved to ensure the quality of every meal. Not only would food taste better the health benefit of a more balanced diet from an eco-friendly farm provided the incentive to practice slow food philosophy.

If we consider the image of fast food establishments in America we may have differing opinions about their impact on society, the health care system, and the economy but generally we would agree they are not considered to be on the high end of food taste. Systems adopted by the fast food industry reduce costs and make food preparation more efficient. Development of consistent quality (what ever that may be) is what major fast food chains attempt to achieve to ensure that you have a similar experience no matter where you are in the world.

If we compare fast food chains to visual communication design we see similarities in their business practices in order to speed production. Any technological advantage for efficiency savings in the stages of the design process is being considered. Economical sources of ingredients for design layouts such as suppliers of photography and illustration are being sought after. Design aesthetic quality while remaining high, has become homogenized to suit world markets. If we continue to adopt the fast food mentality of design we can predict the near future by exaggerating the conditions of current design practice. The Slow Food movement offers a road map to a healthier industry and richer landscape for creative freedom.