

## **The Effect of Slow Food Movement on Restaurants: The Case of Seferihisar “Sefertası”**

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### **Abstract**

*The Slow Food movement has three dimensions which began in Italy at the town of Bra in 1986. These three dimensions are: Good, clean and fair. First dimension is Good and it covers the real taste, aroma and appearance of the food. Second dimension is clean and it covers sustainability that means production methods which don't damage the ecological system, respect the bio-diversity and foods which are safe for human health. Last dimension is fair and it covers the social sustainability which means that workers are not exploited during production. The dimension of fair also covers a fair price for both producer and consumer. The aim of the study is to express how to implement all the processes from purchasing to serving and what to focus on in the slow food movement. In this context it was presented as a case study of a restaurant named “Sefertası”, which is part of the Cittaslow network in the town of Seferihisar, in the Province of İzmir. A semi-structured interview form was used to collect data and face to face interviews were conducted with the business manager. Descriptive analysis of the qualitative research methods were applied to data analysis. As a*

*result our findings show that the business practices of local products and local producers pay particular attention to issues that are outstanding. Despite lack of some of environmental practices the restaurant is good at locality and sociality. It is a good example that the restaurant is able to trying to embrace the slow food movement.*

**Key words:** *Slow Food, Tourism, Sefertasi Restaurant, Seferihisar*

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## **Introduction**

In Slow Food's assessment, the territory is intimately linked to biodiversity and multiculturalism which is most immediately threatened by industrial agriculture and the monocultures it encourages. For this reason, the Slow Food movement continues to work with specific small-producer communities to preserve and sustainably promote regional foods (Schneider, 2008:389). The Slow movement's initiatives show that the promotion of local, typical products can preserve them and their associated traditions, but simultaneously cannot help to abstract and commoditize the products. In instances where a food has been central to local culture and cuisine, Slow Food's assistance has had some effect on the continuing consumption and production of the product Loades (2005, p.63). The local initiatives play a big role in sustaining this locality. Because if costumers continue to buy local products, the local producers will keep their business. So the local foods will be sustaining. Slow Food's intention is to bring the taste, tradition and experience back to consumers' food consumption. The aim is to support small, local food producers and perhaps strengthen their position in the market, as opposed to international and industrial food producers at the same time Bratec (2012). However there are few studies of slow food, or slow food restaurants in Turkey. Therefore to fill the lack of studies in this field, we studied a restaurant named "Sefertasi", a restaurant which joined the "Cittaslow" network in 2009, in Seferihisar. We wanted to show how the restaurant is affected by the "slow food movement" and how it operates.

## **Slow Food Movement**

The Slow Food movement emerged from the turbulent political and social environment of Italy in the 1970s. While Slow Food owes much of its distinctive character to the town of Bra, it also reflects the energies and commitments of its principal founder, Carlo Petrini. Named a 2004 European Hero by Time magazine, Petrini has insisted for over thirty years on the role of pleasure and taste as a means of preserving distinctive local cultures from the homogenizing effects of industrialization and globalization. From its origins in the Italian Left to its current work in defense of small-scale food producers and biodiversity, Slow Food has similarly retained a local focus while aspiring to a more global reach Schneider (2008, p.385).

The Slow Food World Congress to be held in Turin from October 27-29, the sixth in the history of the movement, has been organized in conjunction with the fifth Terra Madre event. Its purpose will be to discuss the political and cultural issues that underline the daily work of the 1,500 convivia [sic] and more than 2,500 food communities that operate in 130 countries round the world Slow Food (2012, p.1).

Slow Food's model of gastronomy is similarly focused on both the biological and cultural aspects of food production and consumption, with a similar multidisciplinary approach Schneider (2008, p.388). The Slow Food movement emerged from an area where industrialization has brought both prosperity and economic decline, motivating young residents to develop an alternative model to the industrializing food sector by building on the area's natural resources, its culture and the social capital embodied in the many old, local associations Meulen (2008, p. 242). The Slow Food movement is focused on countering the loss of local distinctiveness as it relates to food, conviviality, sense of place, and hospitality. Mayer and Knox (2006, p. 32), state one example of the Slow Food program that highlights the importance of territory is the so-called "Salone del Gusto," a biannual fair that showcases products made by local artisans. At the fair, consumers can taste and buy products thereby gaining an awareness of what certain localities produce and how it tastes. The Salone is financially and politically supported by the Regional Authority of Piedmont in Italy. The event highlights the diversity associated with different territories and aims at educating the public about the product's taste and heritage.

Slow Food implicitly aims to connect the three E's of sustainability. Its programs focus on creating an "aware consumer" who would in turn support local small farmers and local business owners. Through such local consumption practices, it is argued, people can give local producers the opportunity to derive an income, thereby helping to maintain the equity part of the three-E triangle. Slow Food promotes environmentally sound production through organic farming and by raising awareness about the dangers of genetically modified products and their threats to biodiversity. Slow Food programs in Italy showcase how the three E's are connected. A program is related to Slow Food's efforts to promote small, locally owned restaurants in Italy. These restaurants, known as osterias and trattorias, serve traditional local cuisine, are mostly family owned, have simple service and a welcoming atmosphere, serve good-quality food, local wine, and most importantly charge moderate prices. Slow Food saw the opportunity to support these smaller restaurants as an alternative to fast food places Mayer and Knox (2006, p. 322).

Slow Food envisions a world in which all people can access and enjoy food that is good for them, good for those who grow it and good for the planet. Slow food oppose the standardization of taste and culture, and the unrestrained power of food industry multinationals and industrial agriculture. Slow food's approach is based on a concept of food quality that is defined by three interconnected principles: good, clean and fair (Slowfood.com, 05.03.2014).

**GOOD:** a fresh and flavoursome seasonal diet that satisfies the senses and is part of the local culture.

**CLEAN:** food production and consumption that does not harm the environment, animal welfare or human health.

**FAIR:** accessible prices for consumers and fair conditions and pay for producers.

Schneider (2008, p. 390), referred that these three terms help mediate the dialogues between scientific and traditional knowledge; rather than simply valorizing [sic] one side over the other, Slow Food advocates insist that both science and tradition have a part to play in presenting food that is good to eat.

Slow Food created the Ark of Taste and the Presidia. The defence of plant species, animal breeds and knowledge at risk of distinction has always been the cornerstone of the work. In 2004, Terra Madre asserted itself as Slow Food's most important, ambitious initiative: a dream come true that, every two years since then, has extended its influence over every continent, improving the work and the self-esteem of thousands of food communities, who now see their sacrifices and ideas acknowledged in the network and through the network. Terra Madre makes clear to all the injustices of a global food system that depletes the planet's resources and compromises the future for the generations to come Slow Food (2012, p.3).

Petrini, (2001) states that slow food is part of a movement for change that advocates sustainable, less greedy and slow life. For the movement, food is central to everyday life. If we were only able to eat Slow Food, if fast food restaurants and supermarket ready-meals did not exist, then our whole lifestyle would have to change. Meals would have to be cooked, time to do this would have to be found and families would have to work together to get their food. It could change the entire way that we live in industrialized countries. He emphasises that this growth in interest in local products linked to their regional or local heritage is valuable for the tourism industry, and has for many years been supplemented by what actually appear to be many of the components of Slow Food and Slow Cities, in urban, semi-rural and rural environments. Since its identification as a food on the verge of extinction, the traditional form of pork fat (lardo di Colonnata) has made the tiny Italian town of Colonnato a mecca for culinary tourism. ( Heitmann at all, 2011, p. 115).

There is an alliance network of chefs and restaurateurs who are committed to supporting Slow Food's biodiversity-protection projects, using local ingredients, respecting the seasons and working directly with small-scale food producers. The chefs who belong to the project undertake to use at least three Presidia products on their menu, prioritizing those from their local area and naming the producers who supply the restaurant along with the Presidia logo. The Alliance network is currently active in Italy, where it involves 300 restaurants. Alliance pizzerias Tomato, mozzarella, buffalo mozzarella, olive oil, all strictly Italian. But more importantly, a wood fired oven and a long natural leavening for the dough, no less than ten hours. Alliance pizzerias work according to the traditional recipe and favour Slow Food Presidia, small-scale farmers and craft brewers (Slow Food Foundation, 2013, p. 11).

### **Slow Food Movement in The Restaurants**

Looking at the Slow Food Movement's properties it is obvious that the movement mostly affected the restaurant business of local food. We observed that the local food is an important prosperity for tourists in different studies . In Yurtseven and Kaya's (2011) investigation it is observed eating local food is very important for slow tourists. Sims (2009) showed interest in local food by tourist and its effects on tourism in three dimension; first, increased tourist consumption of local foods will support local economy. Second, buying local products will reduce the carbon footprint and the last one promoting local food products is one way to differentiate the destination among other competitors and attract a steady stream of visitors.

The Slow movements express this shift, and localizing the menus in restaurants and canteens were some of the first issues they tackled, so that food became the crucial link between culture, tradition and spatial identity Loades (2005, 77).

Safeguarding cultural heritage, environment, rare breeds and nutrition should be the first concerns of small-scale winegrowers, horticulturists, butchers and restaurant owners who are struggling to survive in a competitive market. ItalCook is a school for restaurant chefs who want to improve their skills in regional Italian cuisines. It is based in Jesi, in the Marche region, and has grown from the collaboration between a local restaurant and a Slow Food convivium Meulen, 2008, p. 239). According to Hjalager (2002), existential gastronomy tourists are unlikely to be found in crowded chain or popular restaurants. For them, that is important to go special restaurant where only the local people eat. Erguven (2011) states that with the increasing life quality and sustainability consciousness, and at the same time increasing demand for organic and local food, effects the slow food movement. Kim (2009), in his qualitative study has built a model that consumption of local food a destination and according to the model there are three factors about eating local food in destination motivational, demographic and physiological factors.

As a tourism product the local food being offered to tourists in many different ways during their holiday. Such as; in direct purchases from farms and in the restaurants, which allow the local products in their menus Yurtseven and Kaya (2011, p 264). It may mention that along this tourist demands suppliers start to put more local products on their menus.

Nowadays there are numerous examples of food and beverage production as an important element of destination development where local produce and authenticity fit well. Many ecotourism companies have taken advantage of this; they offer exploration holidays that embrace the culinary arts of different communities with which they engage Dickinson and Lumsdon (2010, p.4-5).

From the restaurants' perspective, local products add consumer appeal and represent a way of differentiating between the competition. Starr et al., (2003) pointed out that local restaurants are more likely to buy local products. And he also specified that for local restaurants, the important factors are supporting other local businesses, buying products that minimize impact on the environment, choosing products that are grown and processed locally, and being located in one of the agricultural regions.

Martinez et al, (2010, p. 32), showed that five surveys conducted of foodservice directors in several States, some of whom already purchased locally, 19 identified several motives for local food purchases by institutional foodservice directors, including public K-12 schools, colleges, universities, and hospitals. Desire for fresher produce or increased consumption of fresh fruits and vegetables was important in all of the studies. Support for local farms, businesses, and community was the top motivation cited in three studies. Two studies ranked public relations as the first or second leading motive. Ability to purchase small quantities was a reported benefit in two studies. There is an extremely widespread perception that the use of local food and drink is essential to securing the attributes of quality and taste, two of the fundamental factors identified as creating excellent eating experiences (Enteleca Research Consultancy, 2000, p. 6)

Special restaurants, locally produced food products, natural shopping centres, traditional life culture, organic farming and products are rated high in importance and high in satisfaction by sustainable gastronomic tourists (Yurtseven, 2011, p. 21).

Dall'Aglio (2011, pp. 101-102), presented the slow travel's dimensions in six items: CASTLE: Contamination, Authenticity, Sustainability, Tempo, Length, Emotion. He

determined guidelines for some sectors including accommodation, catering, guiding services and destination management etc.

Some of the guidelines of catering services is below:

**Contamination** -In specific occasions, provide places to cook/prepare recipes together, present rituals and preparations of the local cuisine made by representatives of the local community

**Authenticity** -Show in the places typical wine and food, products and handicrafts, dedicating short description about the history/origin of the product and allowing the purchase

**Sustainability** -Use typical products that are seasonal and produced organically. Carry out separate collection of garbage for as many materials as possible (organic, glass, plastic, spent oil, aluminium, paper, batteries, etc.)

**Time** -Re-define the menu periodically inserting seasonal typical products/recipes.

-Plan carefully the graphic layout and the contents of the menu, adding stories, images, traditions, etc. that may contextualize the products and the recipes

**Length** -Add to the menu a “Slow” section that contains dishes that belong to the tradition. Such section, in case separated from the menu, will have to tell suggestive elements of the dishes/products (places of production, makings, alternative traditional recipes, curiosities, etc.)

-Use different supports (menus, walls, tablecloths, furnishings and fittings, etc.), to tell about the elements linked to the local cuisine and typical products

**Emotion** -The cook/ maître can prepare some courses, both in front of the customer and with his active participation

-The cook is at the customers’ disposal to satisfy their curiosities linked with gastronomic products and local recipes (origin, history/relation with the territory, secrets for a better preparation/ cooking/presentation)

One slow restaurant case is from Tokyo, Japan named Cafe Slow. The cafe promotes slow and ecological lifestyle by selling whole foods, organic foods and fair trade products. Cafe has special day, every Friday evening, cafe only uses beeswax candles for lighting and listening live music so the people enjoy eating and chatting under the candle light (Dall'Aglio, 2011).

## METHODOLOGY

Qualitative research methods have been used (case study design) in this study. In research, first the main and sub-questions designed and semi-structured interview form, observation and document investigation used to gather the data. The data triangulation provided by this way because it is important to ensure reliability and validity in qualitative studies (Yıldırım and Şimşek, 2011, p. 277). So a semi-structured interview in 2014 February with Mrs. Soyer

who is the operator of the Sefertası Restaurant in Seferihisar, first slow city of Turkey, have been conducted. Interview took two hours and with in-depth interview, observation and document analysis, a descriptive analysis was conducted using the deductive method.

## FINDINGS

### General

“Sefertası” restaurant was founded by Seferihisar municipality at old municipal police building near the village bazaar to introduce local dishes and slow food which are two important components of the Cittaslow movement. It is emphasized that the local dishes of Seferihisar came out of the houses and put a big step to be a well-known brand ([www.seferihisar.bel.tr](http://www.seferihisar.bel.tr)). The Project which Seferihisar municipality runs is giving opportunity to ladies of the local women’s cooperative for selling the local dishes by transforming an old building to a village bazaar. Local producers are selling tomato and mandarin marmalade, olive oil, olive oil soap, wine and different kinds of hand crafts such as glass, tile and woven products. Mrs Neptün declares they are running Slow food concept by cooperative with these words;

*“We are running slow food concept by cooperative, with the help of e-commerce we are trying to send the local vegetables and herbs to any town in Turkey. Mandarin marmalade for instance, 5 years ago no one was producing mandarin marmalade but now nearly all of the ladies producing for the cooperative. Besides there was wedding cookie which used to be produced here by placing in red pack, nowadays we are trying to produce same cookie with different flavours such as gum and carnation. Another product of this area is Armola cheese. It contains goat cheese, yogurt and milk. We just had the registration of Armola cheese.”*

Mrs Soyer who is the manager of the Sefertası restaurant declares that the municipality owns the restaurant but the woman cooperative has the right to use the name. She describes the opening process as below;

*“It had been 3 years since sefertası resataurant started to serve in here. It was a ruin before we started to use this building owned by government Office. Then the government Office returned the building to the municipality. After it was returned to us I came up with the idea of a slow food concept restaurant and suggested it to the municipality president. After a couple of renovations, to the building, this is the result. The back yard was like the building where they used as a storage. With the building we redesigned the back yard too. We kept the mandarin trees and created a beautiful garden dining area. The kitchen and the toilet wwere side by side but we separated them. ”*

Sefertasi restaurant is at the city centre of Seferihisar town. When we analyse the town of Seferihisar we can easily see the villages are more touristic than the town centre. For example at Sıgacık village house pensions and restaurants are in a majority. Question of client portfolio of Sefertasi restaurant, replied by manager as “generally local tourists”. It is observed that the

location of the Restaurant definitely attracts the clients. The manager declares that they are planning to set up another branch at seafront of Seferihisar in middle or long period. The mission and vision of the restaurant is;

*“To keep the old foods and values in culture and to keep people away from frozen food. We never say people do not eat hamburger, they can eat hamburger but not hamburgers using frozen meat. If the hamburger meat is fresh daily there is no problem to eat it.”*

It is observed that the name of the restaurant has been chosen to keep the traditional values alive. The manager declares that the restaurant was established to prepare traditional Turkish home cooked food in a pot which translates to “sefertasi” in Turkish. She adds;

*“We are serving our dishes in pot to houses and places of work, as our fathers used to do, with a special pot called a “sefertasi” with their lunch in it. In this way we are trying to keep our culture”*

### **AboutActivities**

The restaurant has local visitors due to the location and generally people who are working at government offices are coming for lunch. Because of this the manager of the restaurant says in order to have traditional food they had to add some classical dishes to the menu. She explains this situation below;

*“This was a “slow city” before the citta slow activity arrived here. You call it traditional kitchen, slow food or whatever. The people here live a natural life; they grow their own vegetables and have their own eggs from their own chicken hut. Because they have traditional food or slow food at home they look for different food from us. Local people are looking for something different to what they have at home, but people who come from other cities or countries, like Izmir and Greece, are looking for our restaurant. ”*

About the daily menus such as soup of the day , dish of the day or desert of the day, the manager of the restaurant uses local vegetables and weeds in the preparation of the food or they put it on the side of the dish when serving it. She says they are always adding the local weeds, vegetables and pumpkin desert to the menu.

She shares the information below about the menu;

*“We have no menu card for instance. We create a new menu daily, as requested by our clients. If any of our clients request a particular dish we can include it on the menu for the next day. Sometimes some of our clients like to eat some dishes from different parts of Turkey such as manti from Kayseri, we let our members, from the cooperative prepare the ingredients and we cook it for the day after even it is not from our region. We also prepare meals with ingredients which are in-season locally; we never freeze ingredients from another season. ”*



The manager of the restaurant declares how she gets the products by pointing out local producers and local products as below;

*“While we are choosing our ingredients select our vegetables from the local bazaar and our meat from a local butcher. At least we are trying to support local producers.”*

Unlike other regular restaurants the manager of the sefertasi restaurant states that she never buys products from wholesalers. She gets the daily necessities from daily bazaar where she can find fresh vegetables and products. But she says she cannot buy some products, like rice and sugar because they are not grown locally locally so she buys that kind of product from the markets. Here is her own words;

*“Clients want creamed cake as a desert from us. There is no possibility to prepare creamed cake using local products so we buy instant cream to produce that kind of dessert. We could produce it naturally but it take too long.”*

It takes the same amount of time to prepare dishes in the restaurant as it does in the home. And she says they are trying to keep the “home cooked pot food culture” in the area. The most popular food is a local dessert called “Şinkonta” and “Samsades”.

The manager says that the employees of the restaurant are locals and therefore very well experienced. Because we are a government company the prices we pay are fair for both workers and clients. The company never waste food leftover at the end of the day. They take the leftover food to poor people. Besides this they have no other policies to use leftovers because the budget they have is not enough.

Also, *“I would like to say that the company has only just started to serve meals. It is just the beginning, we have not yet completed all the things we want to do. But we think it will be better in time.”* She admits that they are not yet a 100% “slow food restaurant” but that they will be soon.

## **DISCUSSION**

With the slow food movement, locality and protecting local values are important issues. Local authorities, in Slow cities and the regions, where locality is important realized the implications of this. “Slow food” success is linked to local people’s adoption and participation in the process. When cities become slow, some entrepreneurs may affect this movement and open business such as hotel, restaurant, souvenir etc. And we can also add this public business. Whether public enterprises or private enterprises, these businesses will be offered to tourists as places with local values that residents produced. Our sample business, Sefertasi Restaurant, has opened for this reason. It is in collaboration with women’s cooperatives which is supported by the municipality.

Sefertasi Restaurant is a non-profit organization, which is one of the basic elements of slow business. It (Sefertasi) is also a cooperative (another element of slow business) In this sense,

the restaurant, in collaboration with women's cooperatives, offers their products in support of local people. Systems and practices in the restaurant need to include sound environmental management principles. The manager is also looking at energy and waste management issues (which have not as yet been fully addressed) as the restaurant progresses. Looking at the business practices, it is important that it pay attention to local products and local producers. Using “mess kit” for package service is outstanding very creative and a nice application.

In terms of the business customer base and the concept of the restaurant we can say the restaurant is in a paradox. That is, the restaurant’s mission is to offer local foods but the location of the restaurant is in the city centre where there are always local people. Local people eat the same food in their home so they demand something different to eat. For this reason, the manager added some dishes from different regions, which are also cooked by local women from the cooperative. Restaurants with the same concept (restaurants offering local food to tourists) could be established in tourist spots of the region (for example Sigacık).

Seferihisar is famous as a place in which Mandarins (Satsuma) grow well, and the restaurant is fortunate to have a number of trees, on site, which provide shade on hot summer days. The emergence of this “local” style restaurant is an important step along the road to the implementation of the slow food and slow tourism concepts. Restaurants like Sefertasi, where local people, prepare and present local food, from local products is important in maintaining local cultures and values and as such should be encouraged.

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