



# Slow Food® Saddleback

What are we Slow Fooders about? Good, clean and fair food. We seek to introduce you to, or remind you of, the suite of learning, emotional and practical day-to-day advantages to you and the community in the simple, but critical, purchase or cultivation of your local fresh food, its preparation and cooking in the /a home environment, and its consumption shared among family and friends in conviviality and company. We are not a dining club (although we count among us some very fine cooks). Each of our Saddleback events is designed to advance the manifesto of good, clean and fair food. These ideas extend into areas and subjects a long way from the growing plot, the kitchen or the dining place. They extend to farming/growing food in our region, Australia and elsewhere, as well as the quality of food grown. They extend to the presentation and marketing of food from grower/farmer through to consumer. They extend to our environment – water, air and dirt, and its relationship to the food which helps us thrive. These values also extend to ensuring that good food is available to all as a birthright, wherever they may be. It is easy to see that these values require defending in a vigorous way when the world is short of food, food wastage is at alarming levels in developed countries lucky enough to have plenty, we are running out of food growing land due to urbanisation and competing uses such as mining, and the air, water and dirt environment for the cultivation and production of food is being degraded by man's abuse. Our region and its food, problems and opportunities, mirrors the world. We urge you to be conscious of these strands, and their significance to us all. These values are well worth defending...

Below is an excerpt from an editorial in a mid-year edition of 'The Land'..We couldn't have put it better..

## **The Land says...**

"With world food security fears soaring, Australia needs to more closely monitor who is buying the farm. This has nothing to do with xenophobia, protectionism or any ideological opposition to the inflow of foreign capital, rather it involves prudent and timely investigations into how much money is flowing into our farm sector and what the potential effects may be...But our political leaders can no longer afford to ignore the growing sensitivities and urgencies surrounding food supply and policy. We've entered a farm commodity boom which just may be more than the usual flash in the pan and need to encourage energetic, talented young people back to farms. Australian agriculture is strong – despite everything governments and Mother Nature has thrown at it – because of the quality, passion and determination of the people in it. Family farmers are the key ingredient in this mix and governments need to do everything possible to keep them in the industry. So, opening the floodgates to foreign investment here may not be a sound long term move. Lose family farmers and you lose our agriculture's main competitive edge."

## **More than hot air...**

As we go to print, some unlikely coalitions have arisen to challenge coal seam gas mining and exploration in the food producing areas of North Western New South Wales. The battlelines focus on exploration licences, which can be sought and obtained against the wishes of the landowner-farmer. The NSW Government appears to be concerned over the issue, and the (new) licensing process is suspended for the time being. We have the same controversy erupting in the Illawarra over coal seam gas... At last!



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### A National Food Plan?

In earlier newsletters, we have discussed the need for leadership in the design of a national food policy which would govern the implementation of a strategy designed to retain and enhance our food production, and to guide decision makers in the public and private sectors alike on all of those issues which affect the cultivation, processing and distribution of food in Australia. **South Australia** has already gone some way down this path, with the design of a South Australian food strategy for the period from 2010 to 2015 ([www.safoodcentre.com.au](http://www.safoodcentre.com.au)). This has comprised the setting up of food bodies to coordinate and steer the groups and industries involved in the production and distribution of food, together with a food council comprised of leading members of the food industry in South Australia. South Australia began this process in 1997, with the introduction of the first South Australian food plan. It has borne dividends in that overseas exports of food from SA reached \$2.38 billion in 2008/2009. Domestic consumption remains the dominant market for South Australian food. Gross food revenue reached a record high of **\$12.4 billion** in the same year. The South Australian food strategy has set a target for gross food revenue of \$16 billion by 2015. On June 15 the **Queensland** Minister for Agriculture, Food and Regional Economies launched a food policy for Queensland. The Minister stated:

“the policy is built around seven themes that recognise the links between food and areas such as environmental protection, health and land use planning...”

This policy is seen by the Queensland government to dovetail in with, and respond to, a national food policy to be formulated by various national food bodies. In Newsletter no. 15 (Autumn 2011 at p 2) we referred to the setting up of the National Food Policy Working Group, tasked with formulation of a national food plan to coordinate production, processing and distribution of food on a national basis, both for domestic and export consumption (in the last financial year, 2009-2010 Australia became a net **importer**, rather than exporter, of food). This body apparently supersedes the Agriculture and Food Policy Reference Group, previously set up in 2005. Our hesitation in endorsing this move relates to the composition of the council. It is heavily weighted towards big players in the food industry, the interests of which do not necessarily coincide with those of you or me, our region or its opportunities. One wonders whether a person like Joel Salatin would have a seat at this table. The composition of this Council ensures that “big food” is influencing national food policy. The composition of this body has been criticised for the absence of representation by fresh food producers ([www.agitate.com.au/blog/2011/03/07](http://www.agitate.com.au/blog/2011/03/07)) There already exists a leading body representative of Australia’s food processors – the Australian Food and Grocery Council, although it is an industry lobby group on the national stage. It has policies and a voice on those issues affecting food processing and the industry, from regulation, health, labelling,

### DATES

4-11 September: Diamante Peperoncino Festival, Calabria Italy. Celebrating the region’s chilli peppers

9-25 September: Mudgee Wine Festival and Show - [mudgeewine.com.au](http://mudgeewine.com.au)

10-11 September: Strathfield Spring Festival - [strathfieldspringfestival.com.au](http://strathfieldspringfestival.com.au)

20 September – 3 October: Tulip Time Food and Wine Street Fair - [southernhighlands.com.au](http://southernhighlands.com.au)

30 September - 2 October: Great Southern Blues Festival, Batemans Bay - [www.bluesfestival.tv](http://www.bluesfestival.tv)

1 -31 October: Tastings of the Hastings-Port Macquarie’s showcase of local produce -[hastings.nsw.gov.au](http://hastings.nsw.gov.au)

1-2 October: Murrumbidgee Moving Feast: 13 wineries [murrumbidgee.org.au](http://murrumbidgee.org.au)

3 October: Irish woolfest – running of the sheep in the main street of Boorowa - [irishwoolfest.boorowa.net](http://irishwoolfest.boorowa.net)

7-9 October: Hunter Valley Semillon and Seafood - [huntersemillonandseafood.com.au](http://huntersemillonandseafood.com.au)

16 October: Gourmet in the Glen, a New England Food and Wine Festival - [gourmetintheglen.com.au](http://gourmetintheglen.com.au)

21 Oct: 6.30pm-9.00pm Ashfield’s Tastes of Asia



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marketing, R&D, to emissions trading and crisis management. ([www.afgc.org.au](http://www.afgc.org.au)). In January the Commonwealth Government announced the formation of the Food Processing Industry Strategy Group, tasked to advise/formulate a strategy for fostering and expanding (investment in) food manufacturing and processing. The issues involved in the consideration of the coordination of Australia's food supply chain have been formulated and put out for discussion... let's hope something comes of it...

### SunRice Saved (Yay!)

A meeting of rice growers and shareholders in SunRice in Jerilderie on 31 May failed to approve the sale of SunRice to the Spanish conglomerate Ebro. Ebro is the biggest rice processor in the world and the second biggest processor of pasta. While the class B shareholders voted to approve the deal, it failed to achieve the 75% of class A shareholders (rice growers) also required. While SunRice is left with a debt burden (\$200 million), the current rice yield and that expected for 2012 will be very favourable, raising prospects for a substantial reduction of the debt. The failure to approve the deal was the result of a late swing against it by some rice growers in the Riverina who saw their present links with SunRice as their processor/distributor as worthy of retention in the long term (a view with which we respectfully agree). Since the vote, the chief executive of SunRice, Gary Helou, has resigned to move to Murray Goulburn Co-operative and there have been a number of SunRice branch meetings throughout the Riverina called to consider the next move. The means of achieving a reduction in SunRice's debt burden was the major topic. We think this decision, bucking the trend towards selling key food processing and distribution industries to overseas interests, is a major one, in the long term interests of both farmers who wish to remain in the industry and Australians in general.

### "She's (not) apples, mate..."

In mid-August it was announced that a 92 year old ban on the importation of apples from New Zealand had been brought to an end as a result of a successful appeal by New Zealand to the World Trade Organisation. Lifting of the ban will allow entry of commercially mature apples, treated for Fire Blight, European Canker and Apple Leaf Curling Midge. This has been a long battle, and the result is not without implication.

**What's Mick doing?** Tending to winter calves born June/July, supplementary feeding with this year's silage, adding variety to summer feed by planting out some paddocks with tall fescue summer grass, dealing with the damp and preparing for a great season...

22 Oct: 11am-3pm Haberfield's Italian Primavera

23 Oct 10am-4.00pm Summer Hill's Grand Food Bazaar—All 3 part of SMH Crave Int'l food Festival-[www.ashfield.nsw.gov.au](http://www.ashfield.nsw.gov.au)

22-23 October: Spirit of the Vine Festival upper Hunter - [brokefordwich.com.au](http://brokefordwich.com.au)

23 Oct: Marrickville Festival provides local art, food, and products - [marrickville.nsw.gov.au](http://marrickville.nsw.gov.au)

23-29 October: Greenway Festival-Sydney's inner west -eco/art/num nums: [www.greenway.org.au](http://www.greenway.org.au)

28-30 Oct: Eden Whale Festival

28 Oct: Mullumbimby Farmers 'market bake-off. Buy local produce at the farmers' market and prepare a dish ph 66845390

29 Oct: Mamre 100 mile meal, Orchard Hills -local produce farmed and cooked by Africans : ph96705321

29 Oct: Sydney Food & Wine Fair -Hyde Park North

29-31 Oct: Leichhardt Italian Fiesta, Norton St- [sydneyitalianfestival.com.au](http://sydneyitalianfestival.com.au)

29-30 Oct: Terrigal Food and Wine Fair - [terrigalfoodandwinefair.com.au](http://terrigalfoodandwinefair.com.au)

31 Oct: Flavours of Auburn - 97351362 (Date TBC)

30 Oct-6 Nov: Parramasala Festival, Parramatta



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### **Mum's cooking: Long weekend – Monday 13<sup>th</sup> June**

Thirty-six hardy souls made their way to Kirsten and Jack's Foxground Farm on a cold and rainy afternoon to sample (other) Mum's dishes in the back shed. They opened up many BYOs, and started with a rich minestrone with pesto made by Lucie and a pearl barley vegetable soup made by Jack, accompanied by Sharon's garlic bread.

The serving table was quickly cleared and burdened by a shower of mains – dolmades by Lyn, roast beef and vegies (Greg and Kirsten N), mixed cold meats with salad, white bread and tomato sauce (Jeff), veggie lasagne (Kirsten), curried prawns and rice (Kevin), stuffed pork loin and roast veg (Jack), beef tagine and couscous (Alex), hot and sour chick pea salad (Rick and Jenny), Lebanese beans and rice salad (Jacqueline), waldorf salad (Sharon) and prosciutto-wrapped meat loaf (Elise)...all from their Mums.

The quality and variety of food offered ensured that all visited the buffet table at least twice for this course, abandoning diets and apparently diminishing appetites for dessert...but the desserts brought 'em all back to the table. The showpiece was Elise's bright green angel food cake decorated with a perfect yellow rose, pavlova (Tim), fruit compote with baked custard and lemon cake (Judith), passionfruit sponge (Fiona), rhubarb crumble (Diane), lemon delicious (Carolyn), tea cake (Wendy) and rice pudding (Libby).

All shared stories celebrating the dishes, in the conviviality of the Saddleback crowd. Many talked of a repeat event...

### **Sunday 17 July – A great day for Vitamin C**

In the middle of winter's cold spell Kirsten, Carolyn and David hosted a workshop for locals overladen with citrus. The workshop was conducted at Gerringong Town Hall on a windless but bleak Sunday. Brrrr. The class enthusiastically made Seville orange marmalade, lime relish (flavoured by limes and a red, sour mandarin from one of the participants' backyard trees), preserved lemons, candied grapefruit peel and a grapefruit cordial recipe, straight from Stephanie Alexander. When all was cooled down and sealed in jars ready for the trip home, we sat down to a lunch of fennel and orange salad, Fiji-style lime marinated fish (Kokoda), chicken with blood limes and baked ricotta with preserved lemons, topped off with a mandarin syrup cake. Yum. Our thanks to all who brought their citrus along, and to Carolyn, David and Kirsten who demonstrated its use, and value. Our thanks also to Kiama Council for the donation which assisted to defray the rent of the Gerringong Town Hall.

### **Joel Salatin in person...**

In certain circles, Joel Salatin is a bit of a superstar. He attained a level of renown when Michael Pollan wrote about Polyface Farm, Salatin's radical alternative to the predominant industrial farming/food production model, in *'The Omnivore's Dilemma'*. At Polyface Farm, the Salatin family have created a complex, multi-faceted farming enterprise inspired by, and emulating, natural systems and the innate proclivities of the component parts, plants and animals alike. Cattle graze on pasture; chickens range behind them, their characteristic industry helping to re-establish grasses, part of symbiotic cycle; pigs forage in varied habitat.

Polyface Farms then featured in the documentary 'Food Inc' and presented a vivid pastoral idyll after successive scenes revealed the torturous behemoths comprising the industrial food system in the USA – huge, excrement-carpeted feedlots, massive, robotic slaughterhouses, sprawling battery chicken sheds. Joel's straight-talking style and insightful commentary on sustainable and natural food production helped make him the break-out star of the thought-provoking film.



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Given his profile and message, Joel Salatin was always going to be sought-after during his recent Australian visit, delivering specialist workshops for Milkwood Permaculture. When Joel's Jamberoo-based workshop brought him to the Kiama area, we were delighted that he was able to join us as special guest speaker at a film screening at Gerringong Town Hall presented by Slow Food Saddleback, Greenbox Regional Food Co-op and Kiama, Wollongong and Shellharbour Councils.

On Monday 1<sup>st</sup> August, Gerringong Town Hall was buzzing as a capacity crowd gathered to greet Joel on his arrival in Australia, and to hear him speak prior to a screening of the documentary 'Green Horns'. Guests snacked on local produce in the form of soups and savouries while they chatted and mingled before the commencement of proceedings. The guest of honour didn't disappoint. Despite having just stepped off a long flight, Joel electrified the audience with his passionate advocacy for natural, sustainable farming systems and good, clean and fair food. (He might also have ruffled a few feathers with his entreaties for food growers to process on-farm, no matter what the Council zoning and regulations might allow!). The audience enjoyed inspirational film, and then the added bonus when Joel generously participated in the after-film discussion, despite his need to rest up in preparation for his all-day workshop the following day. Our sincere gratitude to Joel for his time, passion, insights and ideas; to Rebecca Bogie from Wollongong Council and Julie Errey from Kiama Council for the logistical masterplan; and to Green Box Regional Food Co-op for the great range of local produce that we cooked up to feed the crowds on the night.

### Foraging

We have delved in an earlier issue (Newsletter No 13, p 4) with the joys of foraging for wild foods in the neighbourhood. Chickweeds (stellaria media) are abundant during winter and taste similar to spinach. They look like small white flowers and hold great nutritious value. Flatweed and African olives may be eaten raw. Dandelions can be used in salads and stir fries. The root may also be chopped and fried in butter and garlic. Tips:

1. Don't crop anything too close to a main road; and
2. avoid environments which may have been polluted

These tips are from Diego Benetto, a naturalist who takes foraging tours around Chippendale, in Sydney. See [www.weedyconnection.com](http://www.weedyconnection.com)

### Milk

The average black-and-white cow produces about 20 litres a day depending on its feed, the season and the time of its lactation cycle. The milk comes out of the teat at 38 degrees, is about 87.5% water, between 3.5% - 5.6% fat and 3.2% - 3.9% protein, again depending on breed, feed and season (SMH "Good Living" 3 May, at p. 14)

### Those Kiwis again..

Fonterra has announced a NZ \$56m bond issue on the Hong Kong yuan market to fund its expanding Chinese operations. Fonterra estimates that the Chinese dairy market is on track to triple in value to \$70 billion by 2020 (SMH Business Day, 20 June 2011 at p 5)

### China strikes again

China's state-owned COFCO has taken over the Queensland co-operative Tully Sugar, outbidding local rival bidder Mackay Sugar by \$1 more per share. (SMH "Business Day" July 6, 2011 at p3)



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### Bee Alert...

In our Spring 2010 edition (p3) we discussed bees and their keepers. Our bees, their keepers and agriculture/horticulture in general face a substantial threat from the stowaway Asian bee, said to have entered Cairns in May 2007 on the mast of a yacht, and since overtaking a 50km radius of that city. This bee, about 10mm long and common in Asia and Papua New Guinea, hosts the Varroa virus, a parasite that attacks bee larvae or adult bees, feeding on their blood. While feeding, the Varroa mites transmit viruses/infections that weaken, kill or deform bees. While the Varroa virus has so far not been detected on those bees crossing into Australia, it has been detected in PNG. Asian bees rob the hives of, and drive away, European bees. They are poor honey producers. This places at risk the European bee population, which in turn impacts upon our horticulture and field crop pollination, performed largely by European bees. It has the potential to do substantial damage to Australia's orchard and field crops. Almond crops are pollinated by bees, as are apples, canola, lupins, field peas, macadamias, oranges, sunflowers and pumpkins. Almond and canola plantations in particular have a managed commercial honey bee pollination service which is included in the costs of producing the crop. It is not known whether Asian bees can pollinate commercial crops. If they can do so, it will help producers but put commercial beekeepers out of a job. The U.S has banned the importation from Australia of Queen bee and colony exports – a massive loss of market. Efforts are under way to eradicate the Asian bee colonies in the Cairns area, even to the extent of importing "honey hunters" from the Philippines – people skilled at tracking bees to hives. The Victorian, Tasmanian and New South Wales governments do not support eradication.

The Asian bee has not evolved alongside European fruit trees, and its ability to pollinate them is unknown. It threatens to displace some of the 1,600 plus species of native bees, as well as other invertebrates and birds that rely on pollen. If this bee spreads through tropical and temperate zones it will cause losses in honey production and increased production costs in protecting the European bee. There is a clear need for a co-ordinated and resourced approach by our governments to eradication, control and research. (The Land, 14 April, p.12 and 12 May, p.27

### GMO's

In mid year, Australia's first trial of genetically modified wheat and barley was announced as having begun near Narrabri in NSW, with the ultimate goal of producing more nutritious bread. The CSIRO is running the 3 year experiment and declines to disclose the gene combinations used in the trial. There are obvious concerns expressed by neighbouring organic farmers, who point to the possibility of contamination of a significant proportion of Australia's wheat crop. The trial will involve 14

To make half a kilo of honey, bees must collect nectar from over 2 million individual flowers

**The diversity of soy beans**  
A recent use of soy bean has been as building insulation, both as spray on foam and as bats. It is recommended as being free of formaldehyde and other off-gassing volatile organic compounds. It is also suggested that soy foams can expand up to 120 fold to completely fill cavities and create a leak-resistant thermal seal, and although not 100 per cent biodegradable, soy-based foam is said to have the highest content of any foam-based insulation. All news is not good however, with over half of world soy bean production of genetically modified origin and vast tracts of South American rainforest being felled to expand cultivation.

Drinking water after eating reduces the acid in your mouth by 61 per cent  
Strawberries are the only fruits whose seeds grow on the outside



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separate strains of wheat and barley, said to test the viability of enriching the wheat crops with extra nutrients, while others will focus on using nitrogen from the soil more efficiently, in theory leading to higher productivity without requiring more fertiliser.

The threat of contamination is real, as recently seen in WA and Southern NSW where seeds are alleged to have spilled from trucks driving down roads near an experimental farm. A GMO is an organism in which a gene belonging to one species is transferred to the DNA of another – for example a bacterium to a plant. This process cannot occur in nature through breeding or natural crossover. Of the crops grown worldwide, GMO's represent 77 per cent of the soya, 49 per cent of cotton, 26 per cent of corn and 21 per cent of rapeseed. The first GMO plant dates back to 1981 and in the first phase of GMO cultivation, between 1996 and 2005, they were used primarily across the Americas. Since 2006 however, the greatest growth has occurred in Asia and Africa. GMO's have not increased productivity. As they require larger areas of land and intensive monoculture cultivation, land is required for broad acre farming and cultures and traditional knowledge of farming and crop production are lost. The multi national companies that patented and produced GMO seeds control the majority of the seed market and often also produce herbicides and fertilisers. Any contamination of GMO cultivation in open fields will change the quality and state of our agriculture, taking away our freedom to choose what we cultivate and eat.

Slow Food is actively involved in a campaign to stop GMO – see [www.slowfood.com](http://www.slowfood.com) (Narrabri source: SMH May 28, 2011, p7)

### On the shelves and in the garden...

John Dory, Mirror Dory, Goldband Snapper and a spring season of redfish, garfish, leatherjacket, morwong, trumpeter, whiting, yellowfin and bigeye tuna, silver trevally, spanner crab and yabbies.

Vegetables? You bet – artichokes, asparagus, bok choy, broccoli, green beans, snow peas, silverbeet and squash. There is still some citrus around, while passionfruit and blueberries begin a Spring season. In October, Asian greens, eggplant, Australian garlic, iceberg and cos lettuce, mushrooms, peas and sweet corn are in peak, razzed up with pineapple and ruby grapefruit. Further into the season we come in to broad beans, broccoli, brown onions, celery, cucumbers, tomatoes, spinach and zucchini. Sweets? Rockmelon, mangoes, mulberries and peaches. Don't forget school prawns, Sydney rock oysters, blue swimmer crab, blue grenadier, sand whiting and yellowtail kingfish – a local speciality.

### India's booming milk demand

India faces milk shortages of up to 3 million tonnes a year and demand is forecast to hit 180-200 million tonnes by the end of 2020. The Kiwis are in it (again) as Fonterra is a joint venturer in establishing a pilot farm for 3000 cows at a reported cost of \$40 million. There are about 70 million dairy farmers in India milking an average of 2 cows each, 80 per cent of which is consumed on the farm or in the local village. By contrast, Trans-Tasman milk production totals almost 30 million tonnes a year, compared with India's 112 million tonnes. (SMH "Business Day" July 18, 2011 at p4)

In 2009-2010 Australia exported \$1.153 billion of fresh and processed fruit, nuts and vegetables and imported \$1.687 billion of fresh and processed fruit, nuts and vegetables

Peanut oil is used for cooking in submarines because it doesn't smoke unless it is heated above 450 °F