Slow Food® RUSSIAN RIVER

NEWS
JULY–AUG 2026

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EVENT: CELEBRATE APPLES

FREE FAIR
Celebrate
Sonoma Apples

Slow Food Russian River and **Sebastopol Grange** are hosting a

FREE public event to

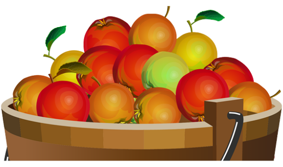
Celebrate Sonoma Apples

Featuring:

Local apples, products made with local apples, information tables,
and fun activities including:
apple tastings, and activities for children

Sunday, September 13, 2026
1-4 pm Free admission
Sebastopol Grange Hall

Reserve your spot

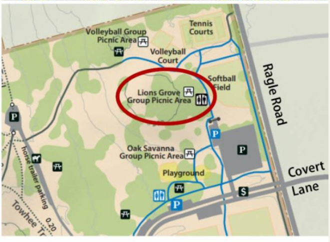


SebastopolGrange.org

SAVE OUR
ORCHARDS

EVENT: PICNIC

RAGLE RANCH
REGIONAL PARK
OPERATED AND MAINTAINED BY:
SONOMA COUNTY
REGIONAL PARKS



NEW DATE!

Join us for a

Potluck Community Picnic Dinner

in Ragle Ranch Park

RSVP

The perfect place for everyone to come together to share good food and get to know one another! We have a beautiful, shaded venue for us to enjoy one another's company and make new friends.
We look forward to getting to know some more Slow Food enthusiasts!

· Please bring your favorite **potluck dish to share**
· A plate, utensils, and beverage cup (reusable, if possible)
We will provide drinking water.

If you RSVP'd for the last date, please register again. Thank you.

Friday, August 28, 2026
5:30 - 7:30 pm
Ragle Ranch Park, Lions Grove Picnic Area
500 Ragle Road, Sebastopol, CA 95472
There is **no charge** for this event.
Parking is $7 within the park, or park outside Ragle Ranch and walk.
Map of Ragle Ranch Park

RSVP

Gravenstein
Apple Fair
2026

REPORT: GRAV FAIR

Slow Food Russian River
Slow Food Russian River
E-Z UP

Member volunteers work the Saturday afternoon shift at our Gravenstein Fair booth.

The Gravenstein Fair was a huge success!

Over the weekend of August 8th and 9th, the Slow Food Russian River booth was buzzing with excitement. Kids got to jump in and help make fresh juice. They loaded apples, pressed them, and watched sweet Gravenstein juice pour out. We delivered about 7500 samples to fair patrons young and old. There were a lot of sticky hands and super sweet smiles from kids and adults alike.

Our amazing volunteers worked hard all weekend long. They washed apples, kept kids' hands clean, carried heavy buckets, and poured juice to fairgoers. We host this booth every year to promote our local apple industry and our seasonal Community Apple Press that runs every weekend during apple season at the Luther Burbank Farm in Sebastopol.

Check our website to reserve your Apple Press space

IN THE ORCHARD

"Celebrate Sonoma Apples" Event

I'm so pleased to be writing my article this month because we have great news! We have a fun and informative festival planned for Sept. 13th, 1- 4 p.m. at the Sebastopol Grange called CELEBRATE SONOMA APPLES.

Yes, we are going to **celebrate our delicious, local apples, our apple farmers, all our apple trees and orchards, large and small**. Come taste local apple pie and ice cream, taste your way through a large variety of apples, and watch children hand-press apples into rich, fresh juice.

There will be educational displays, activities for children, and you'll have conversations with experts to help you plant and grow healthy apple trees. Have you tasted local apple cider and spirits? There will be plenty of opportunities for you to taste and compare. It is a free public event; bring your friends!

We hope you will take a moment to respond to an email invitation you'll receive with a link to a short survey. The purpose of the survey is to get an idea of how many of you have apple trees, how many orchards there are of various sizes, and what help backyard orchard owners need. It is the view of SFRR that we save our orchards one tree at a time, and we save our trees one apple at a time. Every time we buy a local apple, we are doing our part. Every time we care for a tree, we are doing our part. Every time we plant a new tree, we are doing our part.

By Carole Flaherty

REPORT: FARMER MAI

Farmer Mai heirloom grains

Farmer Mai has a field where she is conducting scientific research on wheat varieties that perform well in our Sonoma County climate. We had a wonderful day of harvesting 12 varieties of wheat and documenting details about each variety in the experimental plot.

We counted the number of individual wheat shoots (tillers), measured the max, min and median length of each tiller, and the length of each head of wheat. It was very interesting seeing the differences in how the varieties grew!
We were part of documentary film footage about Farmer Mai and the research she is doing.

We followed up our gleaning with a wonderful potluck lunch where we learned more about Farmer Mai and her heirloom grains.

By Shari Figi

Farmer Mai website

REPORT: TOUR, GLEAN, PICNIC

Farm to pantry glean at Single Thread

We had a wonderful, cool, overcast morning for gleaning in the field. Our small group picked 572 lbs. of squash and 30 pounds of green beans. We also got to take some home, which was the “fruit” of our labor.

The gardens at Single Thread are vast and gorgeous. It was fun imagining how they used all the produce in their menu.

Farm to Pantry was very grateful for our help, as getting enough volunteers is always challenging. We will certainly do this again, as it was heartwarming spending time with other Slow Foodies harvesting food for those less fortunate.

By Shari Figi

Single Thread website

OUR BOARD

Meet Pam Polizzi

Pam is our newest Provisional Board Member. She grew up in New England in a food-obsessed family, and even after living in California for 26 years, she is still amazed by California’s incredible bounty—especially here in Sonoma County.

Her love for food has only grown: she enjoys cooking, growing her own vegetables, supporting local markets, vendors, and restaurants, studying cookbooks, and planning travel centered around local culinary experiences. She is so excited to be part of Slow Food Russian River since it perfectly aligns her passion for sustainable, locally grown food with supporting our vibrant community.

You’ll see Pam writing about her food travels, with her first story highlighting her recent culinary discoveries in France.

WINE UPDATE WITH PAUL

Sonoma County's earliest grape harvest in 40 years began in July. Workers picking Pinot Noir at Dutton Ranch's Jewell Vineyard. Image from *The Press Democrat.*

Fair Farming

This year’s grape harvest, on top of being the earliest to date, is yielding an extraordinarily light crop load. One prominent Sebastopol winegrower said, “Virtually everything we have in West County is at or near historic lows.”

Growers get paid by the ton for their fruit, so they will be “taking it in the pants,” as one grower put it recently. Wineries who grow their own fruit will see their cost per ton of fruit skyrocket, since farming one ton of fruit per acre costs virtually the same as farming four tons per acre. This will cut into their already dwindling margins.

Both growers and wineries, however, have crop insurance to mitigate their losses, but there is no such insurance for the seasonal farm workers who farm and pick the fruit. Normally workers get paid by the ton, or by the number of thirty-pound lugs they pick. Picking is hard and fast work, but in a normal year they make 40-50% more in a day than usual, and they expect and depend on this annual windfall to get them through the offseason. Because of the light crop this year, a day of picking West County Pinot Noir at standard harvest piece rates would net them less than an ordinary hourly wage. As is usually the case, the most vulnerable and hardest-working people at the bottom of the food chain get hit the hardest and get the least attention in the scramble for survival.

Some wineries and growers, including my employer, Merry Edwards Winery, are paying their workers a daily wage for picking this year, which will net them a 25% increase on their normal daily hourly wage. This won’t cover their entire shortfall, but we are sharing their pain because we know we are all in this together.

Fair Farming fair supports vulnerable families and builds communities that will sustain the industry into the future.

By Paul Sequeira

SLOW FIBER WITH JOY

Craft Wool
Craft Wool
Sonoma Wool

Wool, a Slow Fiber

When we choose food from local farms, we're supporting the people who care for the land, steward animals, and keep agricultural traditions alive. The same is true for wool.

Sheep ranches produce one of nature's most remarkable fibers. Wool is renewable, biodegradable, and sheep's wool contains lanolin, a natural waxy substance with intrinsic antibacterial and antifungal properties.

Founded in Sonoma County, Sonoma Wool Co. grew from founder Amy's passion for sharing the beauty and practicality of wool. Armed with a single felting loom and wool from Pozzi Ranch in Valley Ford, she began creating simple, functional products. In 2013, she introduced them at Sonoma County's Heirloom Festival, and Sonoma Wool Co. was born.

As demand grew, Amy expanded by purchasing one of the country's remaining wool felting mills on the East Coast, creating a coast-to-coast network that supports generational sheep ranches while keeping wool manufacturing local. Today, Sonoma Wool Co. offers everything from sponges and dish drying mats, to comforters, pillows, hats, dog toys and blankets, all rooted in the belief that natural fibers belong in every home.

Food and fiber have always belonged together. By choosing wool, we support healthy landscapes, rural communities, and the people who grow the natural materials that enrich our lives.

To learn more about Amy's story and explore Sonoma Wool Co.'s wonderful products, visit **sonomawoolcompany.com**

By Joy Jacobsen

CATHERINE'S TURKEY TALK

TURKEY
CROSSING

Turkey turkeys on display at the Farmyard at the Gravenstein Fair.

Summertime

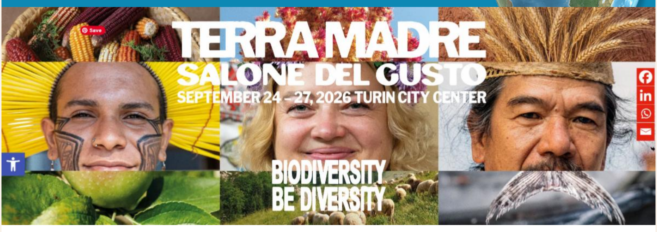
Hello! Summer seems to be flying by fast. We have 10 youth members from 6 families growing heritage turkeys this year. And growing they are! The turkey poults are now fully feathered and running around outside, jumping, flying, and, of course, gobbling! We are in the process of visiting each of our young turkey growers to wing-band their birds.

We expect to raise a little over 200 turkeys this year, with Bronze, Narragansett, and Bourbon Red varieties being offered for your Thanksgiving table.

By Catherine Thode

Visit our Heritage Turkey Project site

FROM SF INTERNATIONAL



Attend Terre Madre in Italy

Is this the year you take the leap?

... and participate in the biggest Slow Food event on the planet? You are cordially invited to join us for Terra Madre 2026! It will take place September 24-27 in Turin, Italy. A number of us from your Russian River chapter plan to participate, including Joy Jacobsen, Richard Murphy, and me. If you can pull it off, it is bound to be an experience you cherish forever.

Over the course of four days, the event will host discussions between those who work daily within the food system and those who make political decisions, in search of concrete solutions to ensure good, clean and fair food for all. At the heart of the event will be ***biodiversity***, taking center stage through Slow Food projects such as the Slow Food Farms, the Slow Food Presidia, the Ark of Taste and the Slow Food Cooks' Alliance.

Have some interest? Feel free to reach out to any number of us who have participated numerous times, including Tiffany Nurrenbern, Paula Shatkin, Jim

Reichardt, or myself. We would be happy to show you the ropes and get you set up to get the most out of Terra Madre participation!

More information can also be found here: **https://www.slowfood.com/events/terra-madre-salone-del-gusto-2026/**

By Max Caruso

FROM SLOW FOOD USA

Alice Waters Webinar

Join chef, author, educator, and food activist Alice Waters for a conversation tracing more than five decades of transforming how we think about food. Guided by her belief in the education of the senses, Alice has inspired generations to reconnect with local organic farmers, seasonal ingredients, and the shared table.

From founding Chez Panisse in Berkeley 55 years ago to launching the Edible Schoolyard Project and championing School Supported Agriculture, her work demonstrates how kitchens, farms, and schools can cultivate healthier communities and strengthen local food systems. Led by Robby Astrove and Slow Food USA Executive Director Kris Reid, this conversation celebrates the enduring power of food to spark a delicious revolution.

Thursday, August 27, 2026 at **10:00 am** PT
Sign up for the webinar

TRAVEL + FOOD

Views of Lyon's old city and *quenelles de brochet.*

Lyon, Female Cooks, and Quenelles

Exploring France is always a feast for the senses, and viewing its regions through the lens of local culinary heritage transforms a simple vacation into a genuine connection with the place and its people.

On my recent journey from the bustling markets of Paris through the vineyards of Burgundy and the rolling hills of Beaujolais, every stop revealed a distinct commitment to regional food culture. Yet, nowhere did the spirit of regional culinary heritage shine brighter than in Lyon, widely celebrated as the gastronomic heart of France.

Tucked into a cozy, traditional bouchon along the cobblestoned streets of Old Lyon, I experienced the pinnacle of Lyonnaise comfort food: *quenelles de brochet*. These delicate, cloud-like dumplings are made from northern pike sourced from local waterways, whipped with eggs, butter, and a delicate *panade* before being poached to airy perfection. Smothered in a creamy, fragrant sauce infused with freshwater crayfish — the dish is baked until golden and bubbling. It requires immense patience (both for the chef and the person ordering it), technical skill, and an unwavering respect for humble, local ingredients. It is a dish that truly honors the *Mères Lyonnaises*, the female cooks who built Lyon's famed culinary reputation from the ground up, starting in the mid-18th century. And did I mention that I had this dish not once, not twice, but three times over the course of my time there - it was that heavenly!

Experiencing dishes like ***quenelles de brochet*** in their place of origin reinforces why the Slow Food philosophy is so vital, whether in the Rhône Valley or right here in the Russian River area. Local food gives you a true taste of a place, its landscape, and its people.

I hope your next journey—near or far—brings you around a table where time slows down and every bite connects you to the people and land behind it.

By Pam Polizzi

Quenelle de brochet recipe
Quenelle de brochet video
48 hours in Lyon France (what to see, eat and do) video

HUMOR

Five "corny" food jokes:

- I tried to tell a soufflé joke, but it fell flat.
- Why don't eggs tell jokes? They would crack each other up.
- Never make plans with croissants — they're flaky!
- Which friends should you always take out to dinner? Your taste buds.
- What do computers snack on? Microchips.

LEADERSHIP TEAM

Are you interested in joining our Team?

Our Slow Food chapter has a Leadership Team that coordinates gatherings to:

- Plan events for all of you to meet each other
- Promote biodiversity and locally made foods
- Learn about the national and international Slow Food Movement.

Our team meets monthly for dinner and planning at one of our homes or a local restaurant. We are a small group of folks with similar goals who are working on various projects such as the Free Community Apple Press and the Heritage Turkey project, which you can read about in this newsletter or on our website.

We are eager for new ideas and hoping that a few of you would be interested in joining our team. If you are, please send us an email so we can meet in person. I would love to take you out for coffee – our treat – and answer your questions! We look forward to hearing from you.

RussianRiverCA@SlowFoodUSA.org

VOLUNTEER

Volunteer opportunities!

The SFRR Board can use some help with our

- Communications and Social Media (newsletter, emails, etc.)
- Event Planning (visits to farms? tours of wineries? cheese education? learning about soils?).

If you would like to support any of the above activities, we would love to hear from you! Please email RussianRiverCA@SlowFoodUSA.org.

SUGGESTIONS

What do you suggest for SFRR?

What are your ideas about future SFRR events?

- About topics for this newsletter?
- Farms we should look into for possible tours?
- New food-related businesses we might support?
- Ecological challenges we should research and report on?
- People making a difference in Sonoma County agriculture and food?

Your ideas matter, so please let us know!
Email: RussianRiverCA@SlowFoodUSA.org
We look forward to hearing from you!

OUR BOARD

Max Caruso

Shari Figi

Joy Jacobsen

Peggy Myers Knopp

Pam Polizzi

Paul Sequeira

Catherine Thode

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