Slow Food® RUSSIAN RIVER

NEWS
JAN – FEB 2026

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EVENT: TOUR & TASTING

Little Saint Farm Tour and Food Tasting

"The farm is where it all begins."

Nestled along Westside Road in Healdsburg, **Little Saint Farm** is an eight-acre regenerative property and the source of the vibrant vegetables and hand-cut blooms that shape Little Saint's seasonal menus, stock their market stands, and fill the spaces at Little Saint with color and care. Grown with intention by a dedicated team, everything harvested is rooted in their commitment to soil health, biodiversity, and community.

The Little Saint Farm team will take us on a tour of the farm and share with us what opportunities are available to grow food throughout winter and what practices we should implement to prepare our soil for the spring planting season.

We will then be escorted to their library area, where we will enjoy happy hour with their stellar grazing table of some of their favorite appetizers. Everything is directly from the farm! This plant-based restaurant has been written up In *Food & Wine, Inside Hook, EaterSF, the Observer, Parade* and *Sonoma Magazine,* to mention a few.

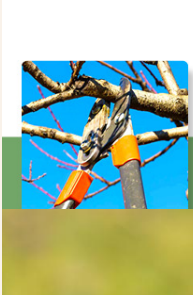
We can purchase our own beverages from the bar or a bottle of wine from their shop, where they have 800+ bottles that feature producers who seek to lessen their impact on the earth.

So, join your fellow Slow Foodies for a wonderful afternoon of learning, eating, and drinking at Little Saint Farm!

Thursday, February 19, 2026
Farm Tour 1:00 - 2:00 pm,
Appetizers and Drinks 2:15 - 4:15 pm
$50 per person
(includes the Tour and Grazing Table of appetizers)

Little Saint Farm
25 North Street
Healdsburg, CA 95448

Gst your ticket



EVENT: PRUNING WORKSHOP

Apple Tree Pruning & Care Workshop

Learn the art of pruning and tree care at this hands-on Regenerative Workshop.

'I highly recommend this workshop to anyone growing apple trees, young or old, one or many. The Ethic orchard is the perfect place to hold this workshop because it has apple trees of all ages and sizes. I hope to see you there."
-- *Carole Flaherty*

Get ready to learn all about pruning and tree care at this in-person event at **Ethic Cider's Home Orchard**! This workshop is perfect for both beginners and experienced persons looking to enhance their knowledge. Our expert speakers will share valuable tips and techniques to help you improve the health and productivity of your trees. Don't miss this opportunity to connect with fellow gardeners and neighbors to gain practical insights to take your skills to the next level. Come ready to learn.

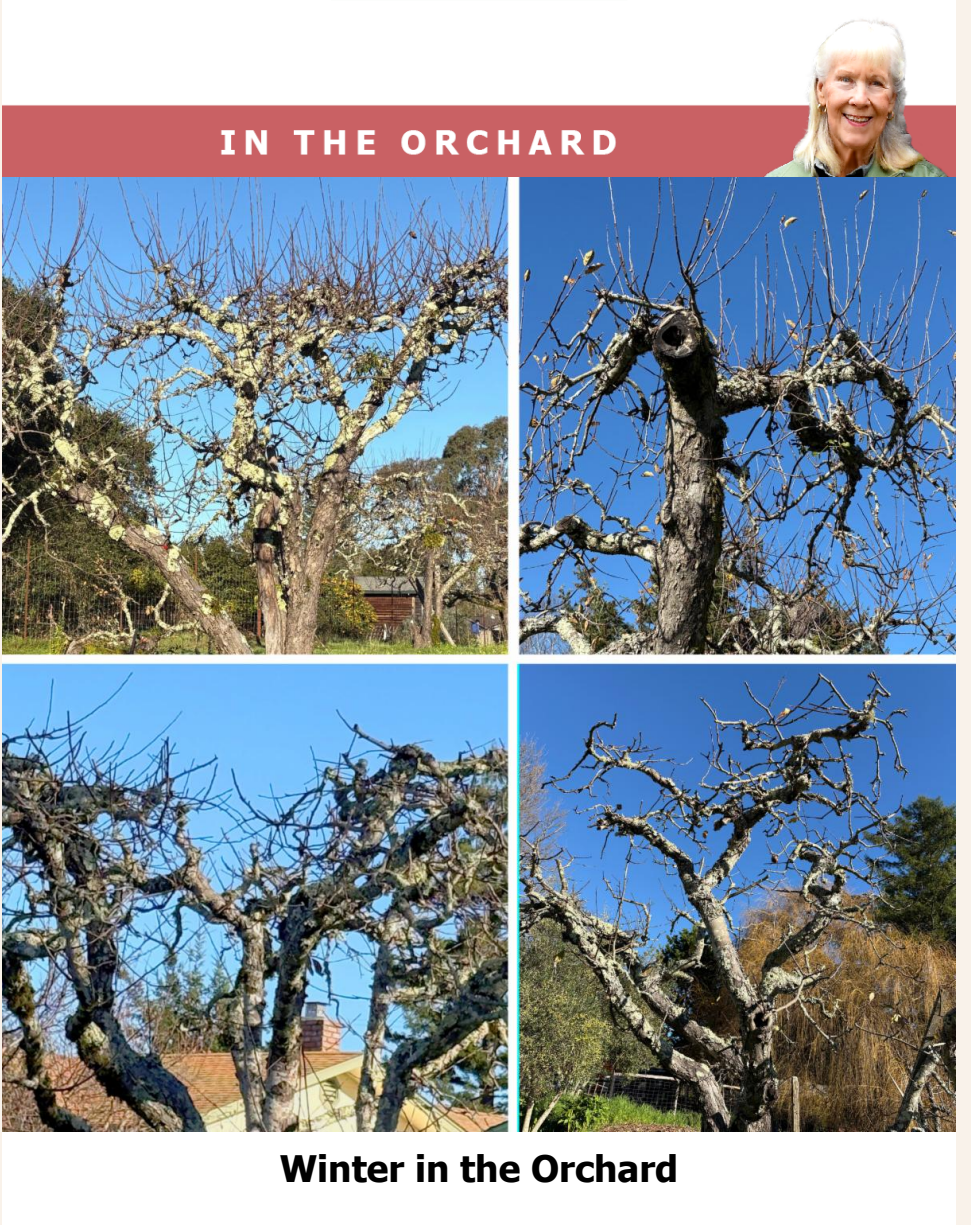
This event includes a cider tasting after our workshop. Both non-alcoholic & alcoholic options will be available.

Sunday, February 1, 2026
(Rain date: February 8)
1:30 to 4:30 pm
Taught by Wendy Krupnick with Ned Lawton
$71 per person
Limit: 24 attendees

Ethic Cider Home Orchard
8490 Occidental Road
Sebastopol, CA 95472

Get your ticket

IN THE ORCHARD



Winter in the Orchard

Winter has arrived in Sonoma County so it's time to address certain chores in the orchard. To tell the truth, I love to prune apple and pear trees, so it is not a "chore" for me. There is a certain sense of order to pruning, and as I become more experienced, I find that I approach a tree with less trepidation and can more clearly envision the finished form. Luckily, most of my trees are under 9 years old and are fun to prune. I spend a lot of enjoyable time standing back and walking around the trees, thinking about the main scaffold branches, then the smaller branches and twigs as I plot my pruning strategy.

What about pruning those apple trees dotting our county that were planted 60-100+ years ago? I have over 60 apple trees planted around 1915; many of them are very tall. The photos above show an example of an unpruned old Gravenstein and then some close-up shots of other trees that have just been pruned.

The question I get asked the most about pruning these old trees is what to do with the mass of 'sprouting hair' shooting up from high branches? Basically, I cut most of them off down at the branch and leave only a few with 3-4 buds, or about 4" long. As hard as it is to reach these twigs to prune, it is just as hard to pick the apples. I prune off higher branches so fruit will grow lower on the tree.

I'm hoping that this 'oversimplification' and the photos will encourage some of you to give it a try -- lightening their load will help these old trees. Of course, all the standard pruning rules also apply to old trees, such as cutting off dead and diseased wood, removing crossing, crowded or downward branches and suckers, and removing mummified fruit.

The orchard floor
Each year I write a reminder to keep the orchard floor clean. Old apples left on the ground are great hosts for codling moths (hey, there's a worm in my apple!). The best practice is to dispose of them in your compost bin or compost pile as long as you cover the pile with a thick layer of dirt. In addition, pruned or fallen apple wood provides winter shelter for moths under peeling bark.

Videos and books I recommend
I have selected a few pruning videos I think are best. There are many more good videos online.

This **video** by Orin Martin is the best video on pruning apple trees I've seen. I also recommend his excellent book **FRUIT TREES FOR EVERY GARDEN**. Orin also has a very short and excellent **video** on how to prune a new apple tree to a central leader, and here's a **video** on how to prune a 3-year-old Golden Russet apple tree.

While previewing videos on pruning apple trees, I ran across a captivating **video** from Michigan State University about pruning a large, old, out-of-control apple tree. We have many trees like this around here, and it's easy to leave them well enough alone (to breed codling moths). However, if you have one on your property, this video will show you that it can be pruned and become a productive tree you can be proud of…and it's a hoot to watch!

The University of California ANR has put out a new edition of **The Home Orchard**. I highly recommend this book.

Want to learn how to graft fruit trees? Want to chose among hundreds of apple varieties and have your choice grafted on a rootstock for you? Come to the **Rare Fruit Growers Scion Exchange** at the Veterans Building on February 21st.

Comments or questions? Write to applecore@slowfoodrr.org
By Carole Flaherty

HISTORIAN

Some photos from our archives: 2003-2008 including Naples, Italy, Mexico, and local.

Memories from Your Historian

One of the great things about being a founding member of Slow Food Russian River is all the amazing memories of our events over the last 24 years. I had to ask others who have been around to enjoy these years of celebration and learning to get some of the dates and locations correct. Though some of these details might not be exactly right, the details remain wonderful. So here goes:

In 2008 (I think), we had a hugely successful picnic called the SlowFoodFastFood picnic, at (I think) Saralee's Vineyard. It was a huge group effort, and it was worth every minute.

Our members gathered during Gravenstein season to slice and freeze Gravensteins at Della Fattoria in Petaluma, late at night. Then, as the event neared, we met there again, this time at night, to help bake tons of apple galettes for the picnic.

The day before the picnic, we all gathered to make hundreds of ground beef patties to barbecue. Almost all the food was local and organic, including the ketchup and the buns. We had really special guests too - Carlo Petrini from Italy and Alice Waters from Chez Panisse. I'm sure there were more.

OOPS, Carlo was not happy with the mustard….it wasn't local or organic! Vinnie Cilurzo from Russian River Brewery came and poured great beer. I still have some of those glasses.

I believe this was a fundraiser for the early stage of the Gravenstein Apple Presidia, and I am pretty sure we made about $15,000, which kept us going for quite a few years.

You are all invited to join us sometime soon, to get together and create a community that lasts a lifetime. Maybe you can help us create another big event!
By Paula Shatkin, Historian for Slow Food Russian River

REPORT: MUSHROOM FORAGING

Slow Foraging--Mushrooming in Slow Motion

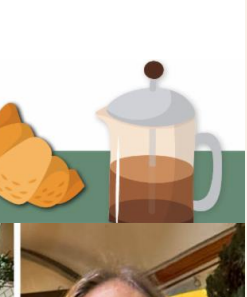
My friend once told me the best way to find black trumpet mushrooms. "Go where you expect them to be, sit down, and relax. They will appear as if by magic." Slow down, in other words, and allow your eyes to see them.

Our second annual mushroom forage at Salt Point State Park was a lesson in patience and a smorgasbord of wild mushroom varieties. Unlike last year, when we couldn't catch a break from the weather, this year's weather could not have been better timed. The forest had plenty of mushrooms to find, but without overly wet or unpleasant foraging conditions.

Twenty or so adults, along with two precocious kids and one adventurous teen, joined Jacob Katz and me on a walk through the woods. We found hedgehogs, chantarelles, matsutakes, black trumpets, candy caps, yellow feet, corcoras, and pig's ears. There were a few delays, mostly rounding up missing participants, as well as a few detours. We stopped for snacks and sat along a huge fallen log slowly decomposing on a leafy, shaded hillside. One person skinned a shin.

Afterward, we sat around the sorting table and sorted and chatted and ate the rest of our food together. We identified the mushrooms we found and discarded the unidentified or inedible specimens. We swapped mushroom recipes, mushroom stories, and mushroom knives.

Everyone went home with lots of wild mushrooms for Thanksgiving dinner.
By Paul Sequeira



REPORT: BREAKFAST

Report: Terra Madre Day Breakfast

We had a wonderful turnout for our Terra Madre Day breakfast at Americana Restaurant, where we honored three farmers: Elizabeth from Singing Frog Farm, Mia of Farmer Mia, and Tiffany of Wise Acre Farm. Everyone introduced themselves, gave a bit of insight, and shared their connection to Slow Food. Then, all three farmers gave wonderful talks about their farms and what they do, and the impact on others as well as the farming community in general. It was very insightful, and everyone seemed a bit moved and proud of what some tireless people are doing right here in our county.

The farmers said they were honored and rarely get to eat out, so being treated to breakfast was special. Samantha of Americana Restaurant (Snail of Approval) also spoke about her history and her farm-to-table restaurants. She got her start in Valley Ford at the Estero Cafe and even helped coordinate vendors at the Bodega Bay farmers' market!

Attendees enthusiastically suggested we make this an annual event.

WINE UPDATE WITH PAUL

The Ideal Dinner Wine

Wine is part of my dinner. When I sit down to eat my pork chops, I am not focused on critic scores or brand prestige. I want something balanced that pairs reasonably well with the food on my plate. Something with a moderate price tag. Fancy wines are for occasions: holidays, birthdays, even dinner guests, but not for everyday consumption.

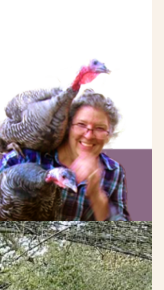
Unfortunately, the perfect winery in my imagination is not conducive to moderate pricing. I imagine an impassioned vigneron tending local vines carefully, then harvesting and vinifying them on a small scale. My ideal vigneron is committed to a place, and to expressing their vision of that place through wine.

Cost of ownership, in particular, makes it difficult to produce inexpensive wine in Sonoma County. As a satellite of San Francisco bordered by Napa and Marin, land and development costs are high, and starting even a small winery or vineyard requires taking on debt. Older operations that own their land outright have the advantage. Newer ones must either scale up or increase prices to manage their debt load. That is why almost all lower-priced wines are produced by larger or older wineries, or from fruit grown in appellations with a lower cost of ownership, like Lodi or Mendocino.

Furthermore, it must be said that growing grapes carefully requires more work. More handwork, more observation, more care, more time. This increases engagement and demonstrates intentionality, but it also costs more money.
All of this makes it harder to find the perfect local wine for dinner, but there are still some great values to be had, especially from larger or more established producers. Without giving up on your ideals, don't let your idea of perfection become the enemy of a good dinner wine.
By Paul Sequeira

More info:

- Less expensive regions offering value:
  Mendocino
  Lodi
- More established producers offering value:
  Gundlach Bundschu
  Rodney Strong
- Newcomers offering value with less expensive varieties:
  Raft
  Grenachista



CATHERINE'S TURKEY TALK

Project members helping introduce a handsome young Bourbon Red tom into his new pen, to meet some lovely, but shy ladies (hiding out of frame!)

Turkey Recap 2025

Well, we did it! We wrapped up our 20th year of the Heritage Turkey Project with the help and support of the good folks of SFRR, and all you other turkey enthusiasts!

The 2025 turkey project size was the largest since pre-COVID times. We had a total of 10 hard-working youth from seven families, including 3 families new to the project this year. And, we have a few more families interested in joining the project for the 2026 season!

January is the time for inspecting and fixing fences, making repairs to structures, and of course, setting the mood for the oncoming breeding season! This usually involves cleaning the pens and shelters of winter debris, putting fresh straw in the laying boxes, and boosting the calcium and protein in our turkey feed to help their bodies prepare for laying season. Heritage turkeys are seasonal layers, laying from early spring to midsummer. We usually see the first few eggs from our breeders around the second week of February, and by early March, we'll have incubators humming to start another year of the Heritage Turkey Project.

So, a huge thank you for all your support over these 20 years. Many of you have been purchasing turkeys every year for several years, and there are even a few who have purchased turkeys from us since the very first year of the project, back in 2005!

Wishing you all a very happy New Year and many thanks for your generous support of the Heritage Turkey Project.
By Catherine Thode

FROM SLOW FOOD USA

Members of Slow Food Cooks' Alliance Leadership Committee: Jennifer Hill Booker, Gabriel Balderas, Drew Deckman, Kären Jurgensen, Fernando Divina

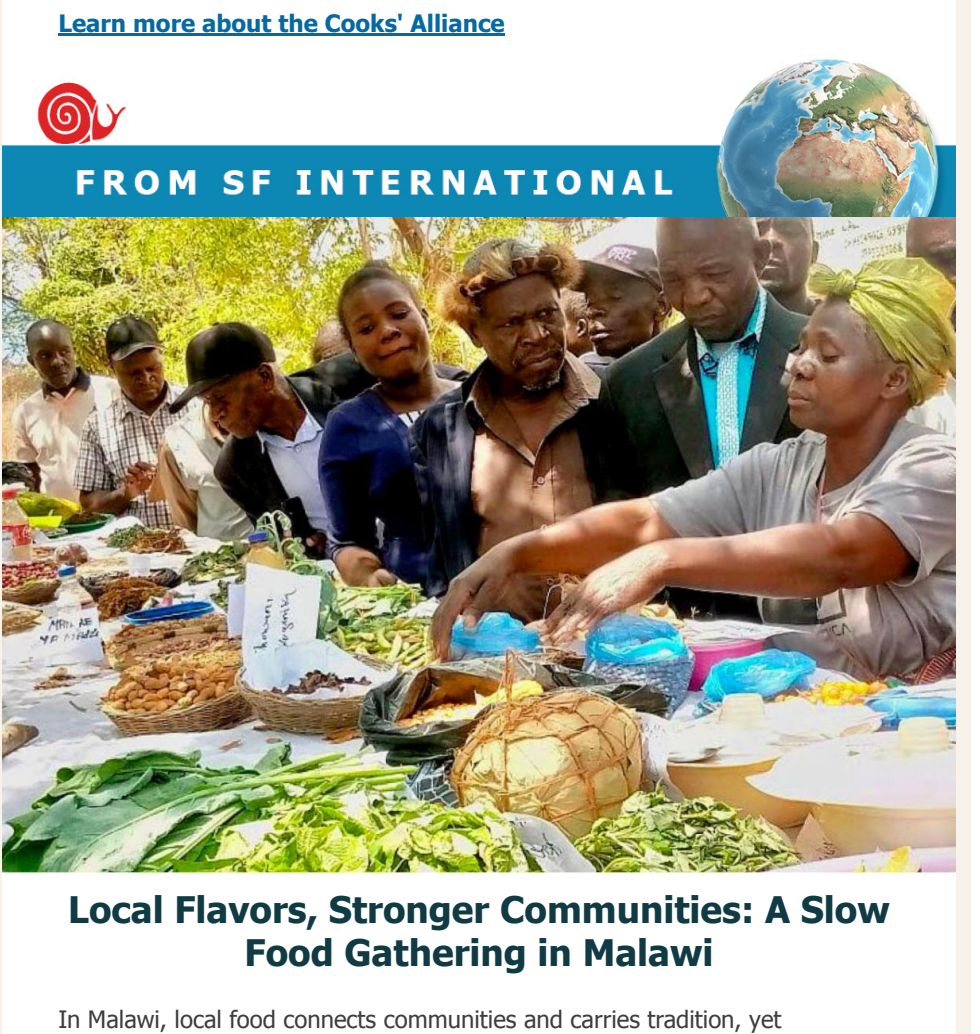
Slow Food USA Cooks' Alliance

The Slow Food Cooks' Alliance is a network uniting cooks across the country to support local producers, influence policy, and awaken eaters to the rich food cultures and biodiversity of our planet.

- **Connect.** To give cooks an opportunity to learn from and support one another in changing their workplaces and food systems for the better.
- **Support.** To strengthen direct relationships between producers and cooks, resulting in collaboration, friendship, and solidarity.
- **Network.** To develop the Slow Food network by bringing diners, producers, and restaurateurs into the network.
- **Engage.** To support Slow Food events and campaigns locally, regionally, nationally, and globally.

Learn more about the Cooks' Alliance

FROM SF INTERNATIONAL

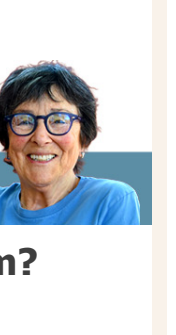


Local Flavors, Stronger Communities: A Slow Food Gathering in Malawi

In Malawi, local food connects communities and carries tradition, yet smallholder farmers and chefs face daily challenges, from climate change and unpredictable markets to limited resources and reliance on imported products. In this context, sharing knowledge is a vital investment in the future of the country's food system, helping strengthen supply chains, preserve traditional crops, and promote sustainable practices so that nutritious, locally grown food is valued and accessible to all.

It was within this framework that Machinjiri in Blantyre hosted a **gathering of farmers and chefs**—an event designed to bridge gaps, nurture partnerships, and celebrate Malawi's rich culinary diversity. Organized by the Slow Food Cooks' Alliance, Earth Market farmers, and Parousia Caterers, with support from the Slow Food Negroni Week Fund, the workshop brought together 48 participants committed to a future where Good, Clean, and Fair food is accessible and valued.

Learn more about this recent event



LEADERSHIP TEAM

Are you interested in joining our Team?

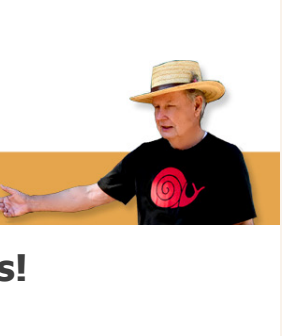
Our Slow Food chapter has a Leadership Team that coordinates gatherings to:

- 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.

Info@SlowFoodRR.org
By Paula Shatkin



VOLUNTEER

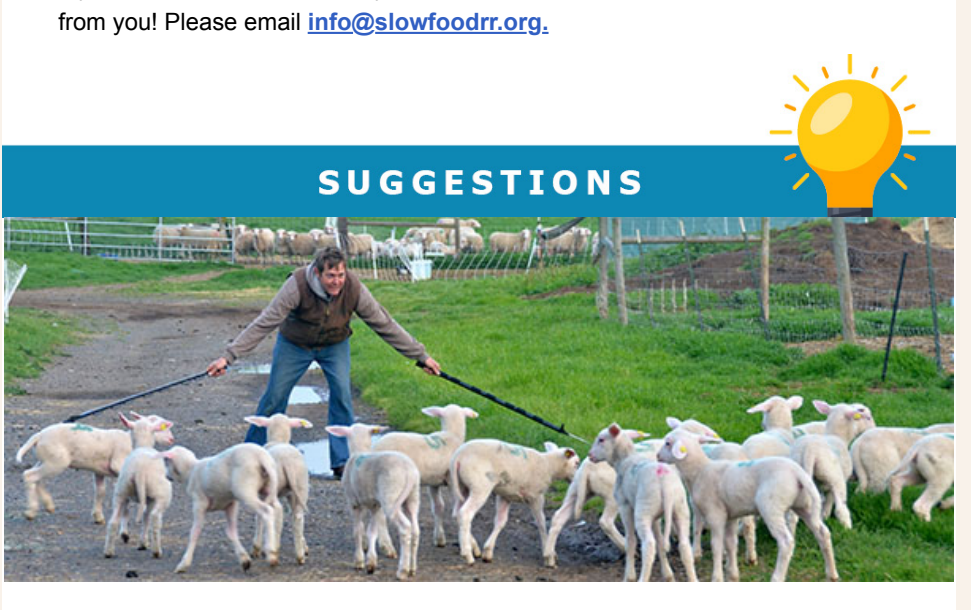
Volunteer opportunities!

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?).
- We are looking for one or two people to serve as SFRR representatives on the Sonoma County Snail of Approval review team.

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

SUGGESTIONS



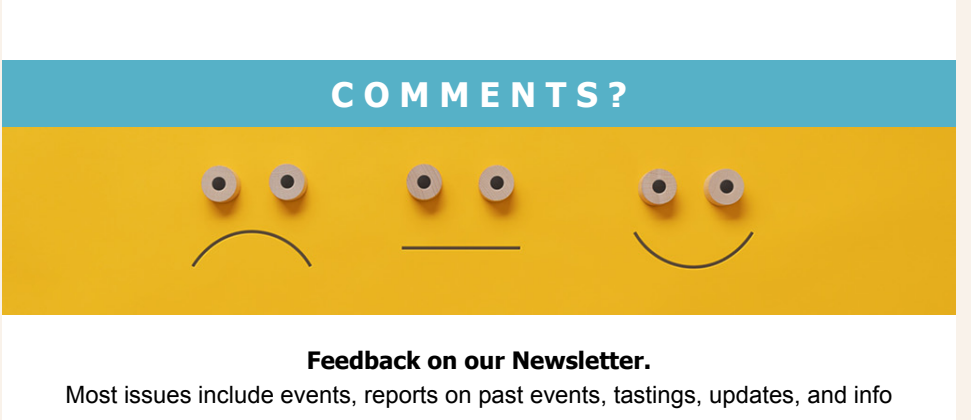
What do you suggest for SFRR?

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?

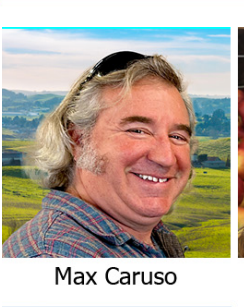
Your ideas matter, so please let us know!
Email: **Info@SlowFoodRR.org**
We look forward to hearing from you!

COMMENTS?

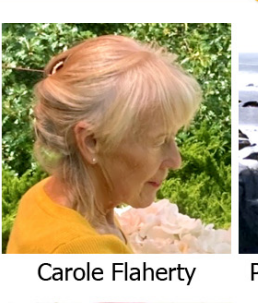


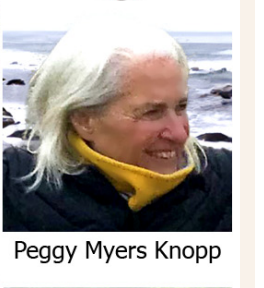
Feedback on our Newsletter.
Most issues include events, reports on past events, tastings, updates, and info from both Slow Food International and Slow Food USA.
What are *your* thoughts?
Email to: **Info@SlowFoodRR.org**

OUR BOARD


Max Caruso

Shari Figi


Carole Flaherty


Peggy Myers Knopp

Paul Sequeira

Paula Shatkin

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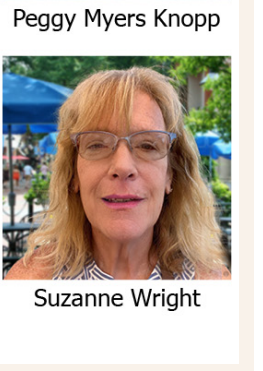
Suzanne Wright

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