



VADEMECUM

How to Start a Convivium

Make the Slow Food philosophy real at the local level!

As a member-based organization, Slow Food would mean very little without people like you who support and further our work to bring pleasure back to the table, educate consumers, defend agricultural biodiversity, build strong food communities and create a system that makes good, clean and fair food available to everyone.

On joining Slow Food, you become a member of a convivium, a local chapter of the Association and a community of food producers, artisans, co-producers, scholars and researchers, students, families, journalists, activists and many others. Opening a convivium is a way to share the Slow Food philosophy in your local community by cultivating the appreciation for pleasure and quality in daily life.

Each convivium is as unique as the region it's in and its people, culture and food traditions. What all convivia have in common is their desire to bring Slow Food to their communities, whether by seeking out local food producers and supporting them through projects, events or partnerships; starting up school gardens or educational programs; organizing workshops, lectures, classes and conferences; or bringing together people to celebrate the joys and pleasures that food can offer.

This document is intended to explain what a convivium is, how to start up your own, as well as to answer any questions you might have about the process.

Please don't hesitate to contact us if you would like any more information.

Welcome!

Slow Food International Headquarters

What is a Convivium?

The word convivium is Latin from con (with) + vivere (live) and highlights the conviviality that is at the very core of Slow Food's philosophy. Convivia are local Slow Food chapters made up of individual Slow Food members. Each new member is assigned to the convivium nearest to him or her (convivia in plural, and convivium in singular).

The convivium structure and organization are explained in detail in the Slow Food Convivium Protocol, a document you will receive from Slow Food if you take the next step to starting a convivium. Each convivium has a committee headed by a convivium leader (or co-leaders), one or more vice-leaders, a secretary and a treasurer - all positions are voluntary. At the beginning, one person can serve as convivium leader, treasurer and secretary. When the convivium grows beyond a certain number of members, these roles should be divided amongst the committee members.

The Slow Food International Statute defines the role of a convivium as follows:

- a) to promote the philosophy of the Association;
- b) to develop a local network of individuals who share the principles of Slow Food and work for their diffusion; this network is the local community of Slow Food;
- c) to extend the Association's organizational presence by recruiting more members;
- d) to establish relationships and collaboration with public bodies, gastronomic associations, protective consortia, producer associations and communication media, in order to contribute to the development of sustainable food systems and awareness about food production;
- e) to collaborate with other associations or entities for the protection of the environment and respect for nature, a necessary condition for the safeguarding of gastronomic heritage, as well as the defense and the promotion of traditional knowledge and diverse forms of popular culture;
- f) to establish and maintain collaborative and friendly relationships with other convivia;
- g) to implement activities of promotion and support for the Association's international and national projects and programs.

Slow Food convivia are the embodiment of the Association's philosophy at the local level, and it is therefore important that all activities are carried out in an inclusive manner that ensures equal-opportunity and welcomes all to participate in events and activities (not least to get more people acquainted with the Slow Food philosophy in practice). Convivia are not tools for personal or professional gain, promotional or otherwise.

Starting a Convivium

1) Assemble the founding members.

A group of at least five people must be assembled in order to start a new convivium. These must be individuals (not companies or other kinds of entities) that support Slow Food and its philosophies. These people will want to actively put into practice the Slow Food philosophies at the local level. These five people, to be the founding members, could be selected at an initial meeting prior to starting the convivium. How these people are selected, all depends upon the number of people interested in initially starting the convivium. These people will most likely form the first convivium committee and fill positions such as leader or co-leaders, treasurer and secretary, membership officer and other leadership roles, all of which are voluntary.

The founding individuals must be current paid up Slow Food members. If any person in the founding-five is not a paid up member, they must join Slow Food or renew membership when submitting the signed copy of the Convivium Protocol form to open a convivium. This form is included among the start-up documents you will receive from Slow Food.

2) Hold your first meeting.

Your first meeting can be held whenever and in whatever setting you choose with anyone who is interested in participating. They do not have to be Slow Food members but should be interested in being part of the convivium.

Issues to discuss at this initial meeting:

- What is the purpose of your convivium?
- What do you hope to achieve?
- What type of activities, programs and events are you interested in doing?
- What particular food interests are there among the group and in the area?
- What local producers, restaurants and organizations can you partner with?

The name of your convivium should contain a geographical reference of the locality of where you live and where you will be undertaking the Slow Food activities, eg a town, a village, or a city name, but not a province or state or country. If you open a convivium in a large city (more than 300,000 inhabitants) you are required to add something to the name of your city - a neighbourhood, suburb, zone or quarter of the large city (e.g. "Bordeaux-Aquitane Convivium" or "Les Bitourges Vivisques-Bordeaux Convivium"), as there may be existing convivia in the area or other convivia opening in the future.

The other task of the first meeting is to officially select a committee and a convivium leader. The leader is the driving force behind the convivium. Responsibilities include coordinating convivium activities and maintaining communication with Slow Food. The structure of the committee is outlined in the Slow Food Convivium Protocol.

Now you're ready to contact Slow Food and to formalize the opening of your convivium.

Contact the International Headquarters:

Slow Food

Piazza XX Settembre, 5 - 12042 Bra (CN) Italy - Tel. +39 0172 419611 - Fax +39 0172 419755

In the following countries* there is a toll-free number:

Austria	0800 28 11 41
Belgium	0800 79 329
Canada	1 866 266 6661
Ireland	1800 553 930
Spain	900 986 946

**Calls are answered during business hours, Central European Time (GMT+1).*

Once you advise the international headquarters that you are interested in opening a convivium, you will be emailed the Slow Food Convivium Protocol and attachments – the documentation required for opening and approving the convivium – along with the International Statute and the Code of Use for Slow Food Logos.

Your reference person in the international headquarters (geographical area co-coordinator) will want to know the name of your new convivium and the geographical area it covers – you can provide this information when you send in the signed convivium protocol. The area co-coordinator is there to help with any concerns or questions you may have. If, during your first meeting, the founding group produces a plan about the initiatives you would like to undertake, you are welcome to share that as well.

Check the list of Slow Food convivia close to you on Slow Food web site:
http://www.slowfood.com/about_us/eng/where.lasso

Sample Convivium Activities

Convivium activities are very important for Slow Food as they allow members to meet and share the passion that binds them together. The following are common types of activities that convivia organize to contribute to making the Slow Food philosophy a local reality.

- School gardens in primary schools
- Sensory Taste Education with children, youth and adults;
- Field trips for students to farmers' markets, farms and producers;
- Local gastronomic tours: visits to local farms, food artisans, specialty stores and wineries;
- Charity events: auctions, dinners, lotteries, etc, to raise funds for Presidia or Terra Madre projects in developing countries;
- Tastings and dinners with good, clean and fair products and to highlight Ark and Presidia products in your region.
- Inviting producers to meet with members and/or local press; organizing buffets for members;
- Cooking classes and Taste Education courses
- Exchanges with other convivia
- Conferences or lectures on food issues

Examples:

I. Canada - Prince Edward County Convivium: 100 Mile Barbeque

In Canada, the Prince Edward County convivium hosts an annual camp-out barbeque party and music festival. It serves primarily as a social event, but also provides a platform for fundraising and gathering new members. In 2008, the theme was "eating local", with chefs from across the province competing to create the best dishes using only food grown or raised within 100 miles of the site.

II. Kenya - Central Rift Valley Convivium: Exchanges and Education

The Central Rift Valley Convivium in Kenya is active locally and internationally, participating in exchanges, promoting organic agriculture in schools and holding regular events to celebrate traditional dishes. Their largest gathering to date attracted over 200 people, who came to eat, exchange farming tips and recipes, and award local producers for the quality of their goods.

III. Ireland - Tipperary Convivium: Spring Festival of Local Products

In Nenagh, Ireland the Slow Food Tipperary Convivium runs an annual Spring Festival. The event features an abundant mix of local products, from foraged greens to a host of local cheeses, and always attracts a diverse range of speakers and demonstrators. A main focus of the convivium is spreading the message that food is a crucial part of society, both past and future, and includes visits to Neolithic and Celtic cooking sites throughout the week to complement the festivities.

IV. Argentina - Mar de Plate Convivium: Film Festival

Drawing inspiration from Slow Food on film, the Mar de Plate Convivium in Argentina staged its own film festival. Utilizing contacts in the media and hospitality trade, the Convivium was able to show films at a local hotel and host a market to showcase the work of "mujeres del abasto," women who helped feed the destitute after the collapse of the Argentinean economy.

V. Indonesia - Lippo Karawaci Convivium in Jakarta: Taste Workshops

To combat childhood obesity, the Lippo Karawaci convivium has been running Taste Education workshops at the Slow Food Festival in Jakarta for the past three years. These 20 minute sessions are designed to be as fun and interactive as possible, with the children playing games, followed by a short discussion to learn about taste, sensible eating and a balanced diet. The children also have the chance to explore the Slow Food Village - an extensive selection of food plants and the products derived from them. By adopting this approach, the convivium hopes to show students the link between plant and plate and start an appreciation of origin and flavor that will last a lifetime.

VI. Republic of Côte d'Ivoire - Chinata Convivium: Co-operative Farming

On the Ivory Coast, Slow Food Chigata promotes co-operative farming and brings women together to enjoy healthy and tasty local food. Convivium leader Mariam Ouattara has created several groups, each around 100 women strong, who offer mutual support in the fields to improve the quality of the food they produce and eat. At first glance building a barn together may not seem like a convivium activity, but the food security provided is an integral part of spreading the message of 'good, clean and fair' worldwide.

Once you become a convivium leader, you will have access to an online guide to organizing Slow Food activities, projects and events written by leaders from all over the world.