Slow Food’s Ark of Taste Welcomes Milestone Passenger

Slow Food’s features forgotten and endangered foods that belong to the local culture, history and tradition of places all over the planet. The Ark of Taste groups them into categories – animal breeds, fruits, vegetables, baked goods, cheeses and so on – and serves as a unique resource for anyone interested in rediscovering the heritage of food biodiversity that humans have accumulated over the centuries. Honey produced by the Gourmantché people of Tapoa region of Burkina Faso has been selected by Slow Food as the 5,000th passenger to board its Ark of Taste.

Slow Food has selected this honey, of particular importance to the identity of the indigenous Gourmantché people, as a sign of support for the country’s local communities. Terra Madre Burkina Faso was held for the second time on 2-3 February, organised by Slow Food in the capital Ouagadougou. Despite serious challenges from the threat of terrorist attacks, local activists decided to go ahead with the event to show that good, clean and fair food can be a force for peace. Slow Food delegates came from across Burkina Faso and from Benin, Côte d’Ivoire, Ghana, Mali and Togo to participate in the gathering which is making the Slow Food network in West Africa stronger than ever.

Choosing Tapoa honey as the 5,000th Ark product sends a strong message of solidarity with all the farmers and food producers who are defending their food traditions, and therefore food biodiversity, despite the growing difficulties they face due to the terrorism and political instability affecting some African countries. It is also significant that the product is made by bees, whose declining populations are one of the clearest indicators of the risks we face as human activity continues to throw natural equilibriums off-balance.

Work is being done on the honey with the Gourmantché people thanks to the Fondazioni for Africa Burkina Faso and the Italian Agency for Development Cooperation. Local beekeepers have joined together into the Tapoa Honey Producers’ Association, which runs a honey-processing facility in Diapaga, the provincial capital, and ensures that honey is of good quality and sold at a price that is fair for producers. The growing dangers caused by the country’s political situation are slowing the projects run in Tapoa by the NGO ACRA, which had started a marketing project for the Tapoa honey.

Tapoa honey

Honey is of great importance within the Gourmantché tradition, used in celebrations to mark the life of the community, in religious and animist rituals and
in traditional medicine. It is an ingredient in classic preparations like *boulli*, a porridge made from grains; *eau blanche*, a non-alcoholic drink offered to guests on their arrival; and *dolo-miel*, a fermented drink made from millet and baobab flour. In the arid savannah, the bees *Apis mellifera adansonii* gather nectar from many different plants, producing an excellent multifloral honey as well as highly fragrant single varieties from trees including shea, tamarind and the rare *Daniella oliveri*.

Source: www.slowfood.com/ark-of-taste-welcomes-5000th-passenger

**Ark of Taste**

Launched in 1996 at the first Salone del Gusto in Turin, the *Ark of Taste* includes many foods that are a key element within the culture of indigenous people. Inclusion in the online catalogue of the Slow Food Foundation for Biodiversity is the first step in ensuring that these products are not lost forever. This is supported by the actions and creativity of Slow Food’s network around the world. At local levels, Slow Food members and supporters, artisans, chefs, and local markets adopt the Ark of Taste product, organise events with producers, use it in recipes and highlight it on menus, activating a promotional circuit often based on gastronomic word of mouth. Through the Ark of Taste, Slow Food is working to save the planet’s biodiversity.

**FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS (FAQs)**

**Finding Funding**

Many people write to us at *Bees for Development* requesting funding to start a beekeeping project. We are not a funding organisation, however we do offer much useful information on our website Resource Centre which can assist with setting up projects – including preparing a proposal and finding funding. Here in *BfD Journal* we include useful information on funding opportunities.

Please consider whether you really need funding from an external source. Another approach to mobilising funding for a community group might be to establish a Village Savings and Loan Group (VSLG). Why not encourage community members to form a savings club to support local saving and borrowing? This can work well for beekeepers. In Ethiopia, Plan International have been developing VSLGs and *Bees for Development Ethiopia* have been working with them to combine training in beekeeping skills and knowledge, with a savings and loans mechanism.

**What is bee bread?**

Many articles refer to ‘bee bread’ – but what is it? A forager bee flies back to her nest with pollen that she has collected and carefully combed and pushed into the hairs that form the pollen baskets on her two back legs. Each pollen load may weigh 10–20 mg! On arrival at the brood nest, the forager deposits each pollen load into a cell. Now the house bees take over: they moisten the pollen with honey and use their heads to push the pollen down into the cell. When the cell is full of pollen (and it may contain pollen of different colours from different flower species), it is covered with a thin layer of honey. Now the pollen undergoes mild fermentation, brought on by yeasts: this helps to breakdown the tough pollen coat, makes it more easily digestible and helps to preserve it too. Pollen stored by bees in comb is named ‘bee bread’ and is vital for good honey bee nutrition.

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**TELL US YOUR STORY**

We accept articles and short reports on new or improved beekeeping techniques, information about bees and beekeeping in your country and your events. We welcome your comments and responses to articles we have published.

Articles should be 800–1,600 words in length and accompanied by images. Items can be sent by post or in email text or attachment in Word or pdf format. We accept images as colour prints or digitally saved as jpeg files. Images sized for website use are not suitable for printing.

If it is not possible to include your submission in the *Journal* we may place it on our website. All the information material we receive is added to our databank on beekeeping worldwide.