

THE ARK OF TASTE GOES TO SCHOOL

Project
for Primary Schools

INTRODUCTION



Aims of the project

The “Ark of Taste Goes to School” education project has been developed as part of the “Food is Culture” project, funded by the Creative Europe Program in the framework of the 2018 European Year of Culture Heritage, and the activities it envisages will develop over the two-year period 2019-2020.

The general aim is to convey to European citizens the concept that their food heritage is also a cultural heritage, as well as a formula for expressing their belonging to the European continent and a tool for better understanding of the wealth and uniqueness of cultural variety.

Interaction between the cultural and gastronomic sectors thus becomes functional to the protection and valorization of the European food heritage. Over the last few months, activities have been developed in different ambits to create interactions between art, gastronomic culture, tradition and creativity. Among these are a cooking competition for European chefs and cooks, another for European citizens, and a multimedia exhibition on “The Ark of Taste” for which we would like your creative contribution.

Slow Food has thus identified a new medium for recounting its commitment to the defense of biodiversity, art and creativity as a means of achieving an ambitious goal: namely the discovery and preservation of local areas (economies, crafts, products, environmental balance and so on).

For this project we feel it is of unique strategic importance **to involve schools to so that, under the mindful guidance of their teachers, students can learn to identify food products at risk of extinction in their respective local areas.** But the main aim is to teach students a method for interpreting their own local area, a unique capacity to observe and experience the communities in which they live, be it an urban context or a rural or coastal environment. Our daily choices and our ability to interpret our own local area are the only solution to the problem of the erosion of food and agricultural biodiversity.

The Ark of Taste Project

The Ark of Taste is a catalogue of products that belong to the world cultures and traditions and are at risk of disappearing. Onto the Ark are “loaded” not only plant and animal species but also processed foods because, alongside plant and animal biodiversity, cheeses, charcuterie, breads, cakes and confectionery are disappearing, too. These are all expressions of rural and artisan knowledge, unwritten but complex and characterized by skills and practices that have been handed down for generations. Slow Food has been developing the Ark of Taste as one of its main tools for years now: the key objectives of this platform for the promulgation of knowledge of endangered food products and promotion of ecologically balanced are food sovereignty and access to good, clean and fair food for all communities. The Ark of Taste was created to flag the existence of the food products in question, to warn of their risk of disappearance, and to call on everyone to do their bit to safeguard them by sourcing, buying, eating and speaking about them, by helping producers and, in some cases (namely wild species at risk of extinction), by protecting them and fostering their reproduction. The aim of the Ark is not to create a seed bank or a museum to exhibit traditional knowledge but to rediscover these resources and valorize them. In 1999, Slow Food used this catalogue as a springboard to launch the first Slow Food Presidia, and the nomination of a food product for the Ark still often leads to the setting up of a Slow Food Presidium.

Practical Guidelines

This teaching kit is designed to accompany the class/group on its discovery of the Ark of Taste. It is a practical tool for learning a holistic method for approaching the reality that surrounds them. The focus is on the **discovery of local food products** but the ultimate aim is to help and **take concrete action to protect biodiversity**.

It is precisely biodiversity that is at once the cornerstone and the guiding thread that binds the key concepts of the story: environment, culture and taste... in other words, *clean* food, *knowledge* and *taste*.

These are the concepts on which the Slow Food philosophy is based. Then comes pleasure, the driving force and the spark for the complex work ahead.

The final aim is to **identify a local product to save and load on the Ark of Taste**, to get to know it and make it known.

Preparation and set-up

First of all, we suggest you read the full story (see below) and then analyze the activity cards to become familiar with all the teaching aids. It is advisable to read the story to the class a chapter at a time and follow it up with the activity proposed on the corresponding card (e.g. Chapter 1 and Activity Card 1).

The get-togethers will last about an hour. We suggest you keep them relatively close together so that the children do not forget the plot of the story and the concepts taught in the activities.

The teaching kit consists of:

1. Story “There are heroes in our midst – The Ark of Taste goes to school”, divided into four chapters. Each of the four chapters has a key theme and is accompanied by an activity card.

- Chapter 1 – There are heroes in our midst - *Biodiversity*
- Chapter 2 – The Days of the Great Grayness - *The environment, clean food*
- Chapter 3 – The Village of Traditional Knowledge - *Culture*
- Chapter 4 – The Bite of the Apple - *Taste*

Synopsis: The story takes place in Ark Valley, a place where all things are different one from another but risk disappearing on account of the Great Grayness that is invading it. The narrator of the story, Mother Snail, accompanies the two main characters, Anita and Ettore, on their way to save the Valley. During the journey, the children and the other characters discover the elements that permit so much diversity: environment, culture and taste. Guided by the wise Mother Snail and using their curiosity, they manage to save the valley.

2. Four teaching activities. Each teaching activity develops one of the four key concepts with a “theme box” and a sitography.

- Teaching activity 1: What's your lettuce? - *Biodiversity*
- Teaching activity 2: How far have you got? – *The environment, clean food*

- Teaching activity 3: Food Hero Concentration - *Culture*
- Teaching activity 4: The Bite of the Apple - *Taste*

3. Poster to fill in and keep in the classroom, once the product to be saved has been identified.

Final tasks

We wish to thank you for choosing to follow this course which, we hope, will offer you a new approach to food, new ways of interpreting your local area and, above all, concrete tools to raise awareness of a cultural heritage that deserves to be discovered and protected.

Following the guidelines set out in the kit, at the end of the course we would like you to identify a product from your local area to board on the Ark of Taste. And that's not all: the product chosen by the students should then be used as the main ingredient in a recipe that brings out its qualities to the full (this may be a traditional recipe, a family recipe or a recipe of your own invention). Remember that the product to board on the Ark may be a processed foodstuff: i.e., a cheese, a cured meat, a type of bread, a piece of confectionery, a beverage or a preserve.

Send your recipes in Word format to educazione@slowfood.it

Additional teaching aids

- ***Bite Size Slow Food***

<https://slowfood.com/filemanager/Whatwedo/INGexpo.pdf>

- ***Ark of Taste***

www.fondazione Slow Food.com/en/what-we-do/the-ark-of-taste/

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