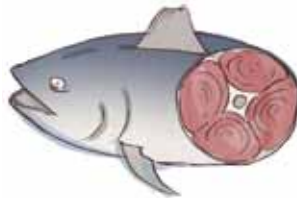


# When You Shop, Use Your Head!



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## Slow Food®

Slow Food has produced this publication as part of the *4Cities4Dev* project. *4Cities4Dev* is a project co-funded by the European Union involving Slow Food in collaboration with four European cities: Turin (project leader), Bilbao, Riga and Tours.

Slow Food is an international association that works to defend food biodiversity, disseminate taste education and bring producers and consumers together. Insofar as it believes that the planet is influenced by the food choices each of us make, it promotes sustainable agriculture and knowledge of food and its origins. Slow Food has more than 100,000 members and supporters in 150 countries.

Slow Food promotes food that is good for the palate, clean for the environment and fair for producers and consumers, raising the profile of the former's labour and protecting the latter's wallet.

# To start with...

When we shop for food, our choices are affected by a number of factors, the most common being price, advertising, personal taste and health effects.

Other factors – such as the effect our purchases have on the environment, on the local economy and on the landscape – are less immediate but just as important.

This brief guide will help you to be more aware of the consequences of your daily choices.

For example, it will show you how buying local food helps the agriculture and economy of the area in which you live, and how buying only what you need and opting for unwrapped products or products with essential and recyclable packaging reduce waste and refuse.

Your wallet is a powerful weapon: choosing a product means supporting an idea, the work of many producers and a whole community.

Sometimes it's hard to get hold of the information necessary to make conscious choices.

It is our duty as responsible citizens to find out the provenance and quality of what we buy and it is our right to be suitably informed.

In view of the consequences good or bad eating habits have on our health and the environment, the above applies all the more to our food.

Let's not forget that food production takes up a huge amount of resources. Seventy per cent of all water consumed by the planet, for example, is used in agriculture. If everyone were to eat meat in the amounts to which we in the West are

accustomed, the entire surface area of the world would be insufficient to feed the livestock necessary.

Eating is an agricultural act. Shopping for food is a political act. The choices we make have effects on models of agriculture, agricultural and food policies, on the environment and on biodiversity.

When we shop for food, we should be curious, watchful and far-sighted, learning to combine pleasure and responsibility.



# Eat Less Meat

To produce one kilo of meat, 36.4 kilos of CO2 are released into the atmosphere, and it takes about 15,500 litres of water and seven kilos of vegetable feed. Countries in the Global South are producing soya and corn to provide cheap feed for the intensive livestock farms of the North.

The figures speak for themselves: to go on eating meat at the levels of consumption to which the West has grown accustomed is unsustainable. For example, if the populations of China, India and Brazil alone were to start eating the same amounts of meat, the entire surface area of the earth would be insufficient to feed all livestock.

In industrial livestock farms, animals are crammed together, unable to move or graze or mate. Calves are slaughtered after an average of just six months, hastily fattened with hyperprotein feed in a race against time whose sole aim is to produce as much as possible, as cheaply as possible and as quickly as possible without scruples about quality, animal welfare and health protection.

## The solution?

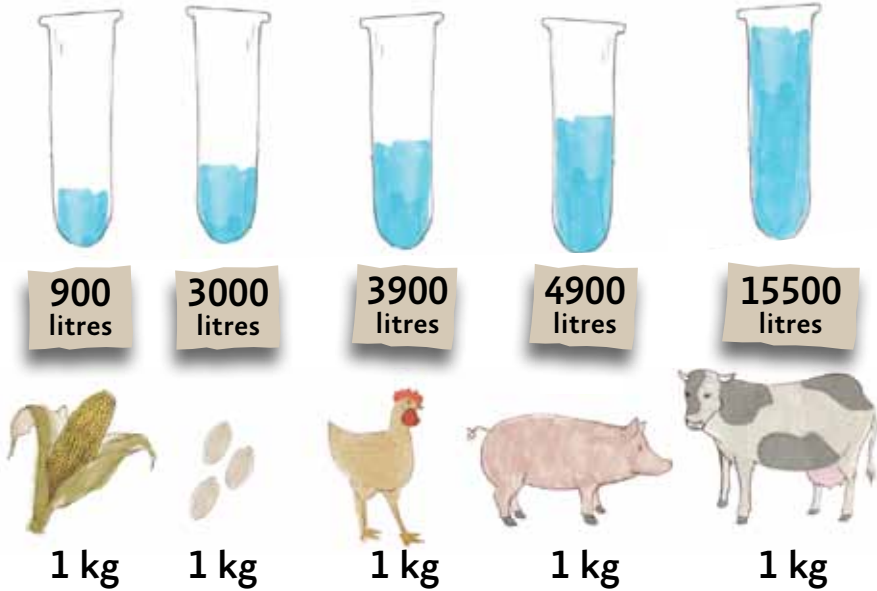
You don't have to become a vegetarian, you simply have to consume less, better quality meat from sustainable farms, possibly from local breeds.

To avoid waste you should also favour less familiar cuts and meat from closed-cycle farm that reuse manure as fertilizer.



# Intensive livestock breeding

Intensive livestock breeding consumes an exorbitant amount of water. The table shows data about the water needed to produce 1 kg of food.



Litres of water required to produce 1 kg of some foods

## What happens ...

### ... to the environment

According to FAO, livestock produces 18 per cent of the greenhouse gases that trap the warmth of the atmosphere, causing:

- the melting of icecaps;
- the raising of the sea-level;
- natural calamities such as overflows and storms;
- the thinning of the ozone layer;
- the acidification of the oceans;
- constant and growing desertification.

## ... to people

- higher resistance to antibiotics;
- the appearance of new human, especially viral diseases (eg, flu epidemics);
- damage due to pollution;
- lack of land for the production of food for human consumption and an increase in land for the production of animal feed;
- greater poverty among people who live off subsistence farming based on climate balance (dry and rainy seasons);
- a higher incidence of diseases related to overconsumption of animal fats and protein: cardiovascular pathologies, cancer, diabetes, hypertension, obesity.

## Good practices and buying tips

- base your diet on **vegetables** that can replace meat (above all, legumes);
- consume **less**, better quality **meat**, avoiding that from intensive farms;
- **vary** the types of animals and breeds you choose from, favouring alternative meats (farmyard animals, game, lamb) and less familiar cuts;
- beware of **prices**: excessively low prices are often indicative of animal and/or environmental exploitation;
- favour meat from consortia, associations or companies that follow strict **regulations** on feed and animal well-being and provide clear information about traceability;
- eat meat from animals raised and slaughtered **locally**, possibly from small-scale livestock farmers specialized in native breeds;
- take a more tolerant view of the presence of **fat**, which is proof of animal wellbeing;
- read **labels** carefully.



# Eggs

On January 1 2012 the European Union announced the abolition of battery cages for brooding hens, veritable traps in which each bird is entitled to a space consisting of a square with sides of 23.5 centimetres.

In reality, the cages have not actually been abolished but enlarged (the sides of the square in which the bird lives have been lengthened to 45 centimetres) and must contain a nest to lay eggs in, a roost at least 15 centimetres wide and a litter to scratch about in.

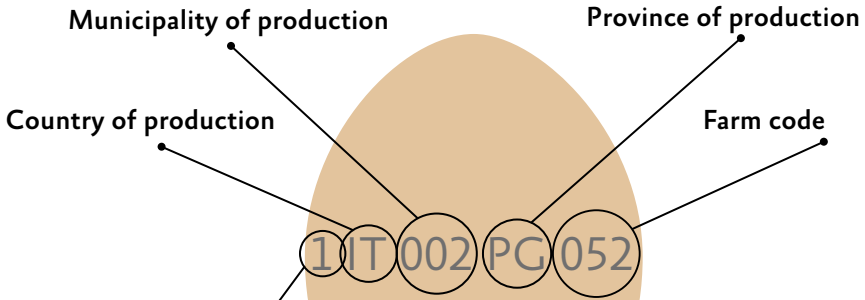
This, nonetheless, is a first step forward, though not all the EU countries have embraced the ruling: Italy, France, Spain, Poland, Belgium, Bulgaria, Cyprus, Greece, Hungary, Latvia, The Netherlands, Portugal and Rumania are all still missing from the list.

Consumers, though, may choose to buy eggs from “free range” hens (don’t be taken in by the words “barn hens”, which aren’t the same thing!), left free to scratch about without being forced into confined spaces and fed on cereals they can peck at freely. Birds growing in these conditions are healthier because they are free to perform all the movements of a “natural” life. Their eggs, moreover, do not contain the colouring agents often added to battery chicken feed to hide the poor quality of yolks, and are thus healthier, more nutritious and tastier.

Since 2004, it has been compulsory for the shells of all hen eggs produced in the European Union to be stamped with a traceability code indicating the type and the site of the farm from which the eggs came. But the code is not at all easy to understand.



Here is a table to help you when you buy eggs:



**type of farming**

- 0 = free range, with vegetation, organic feed, one hen/4 sq m
- 1 = free range, with vegetation, one hen/2.5 sq m
- 2 = barn (in a closed shed with the lights on all the time), nine hens /1 sq m
- 3 = cage, 13 hens/1 sq m



code 0  
Extensive free range



code 1  
Intensive free range



code 2  
Barn



code 3  
Cage

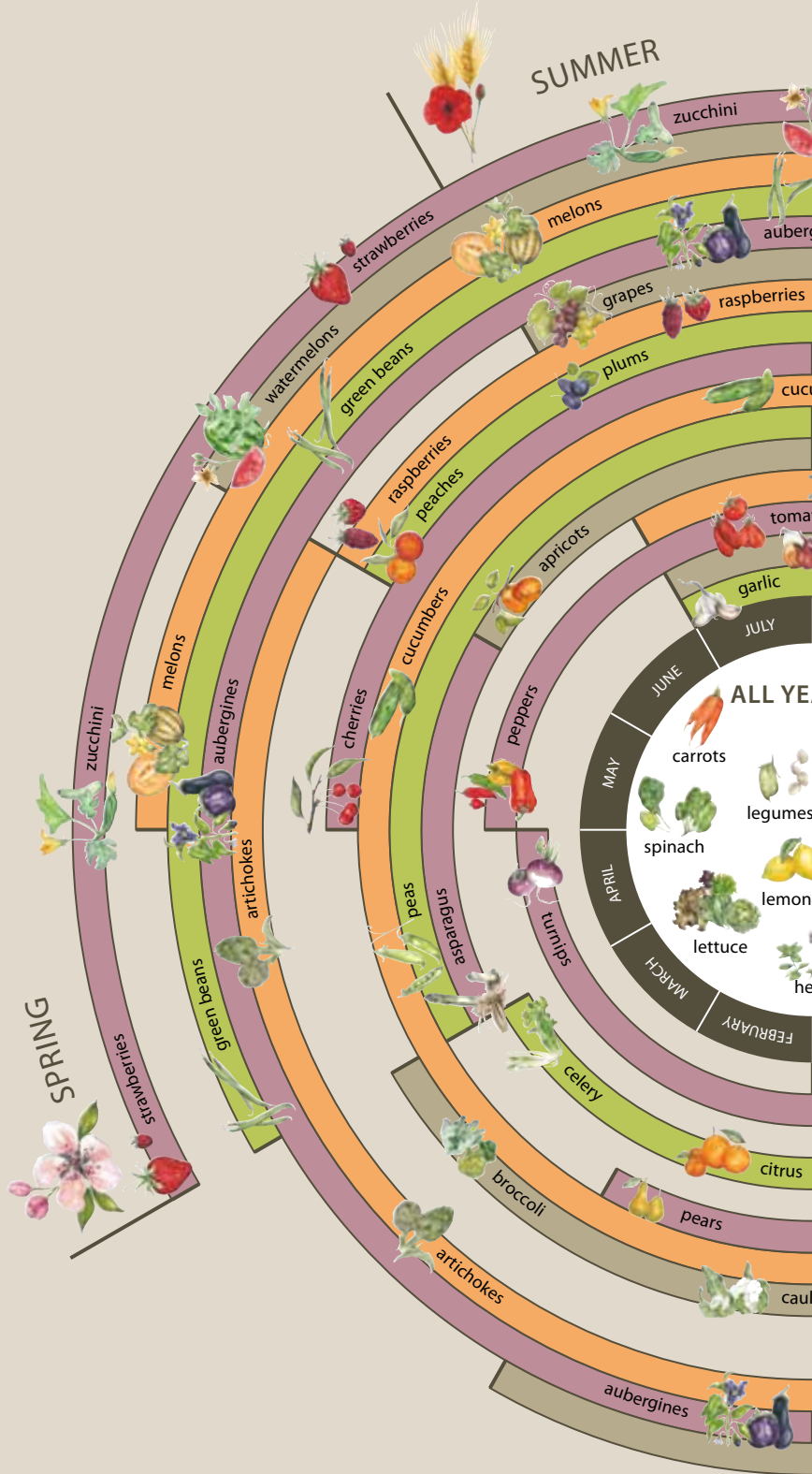
# The Wheel of the Seasons

Eating seasonal fruit and vegetables means opting for crops with low external inputs, avoiding products from hothouses with a high environmental impact or products from distant countries. It means consuming products at the moment in which they are at their best in terms of quality and taste. A runner bean or a tomato grown in the open air in the right season is certainly better than one grown in a hothouse or one that has been picked unripe and has travelled for thousands of kilometres!

Today, however, we are no longer used to the cycle of the seasons, and the market increasingly offers us strawberries in winter and oranges in summer.

To offer you a few suggestions, we have prepared a wheel of seasonal fruit and vegetables (valid in all the countries of the Mediterranean) which provides handy tips for anyone keen to eat following the seasons.

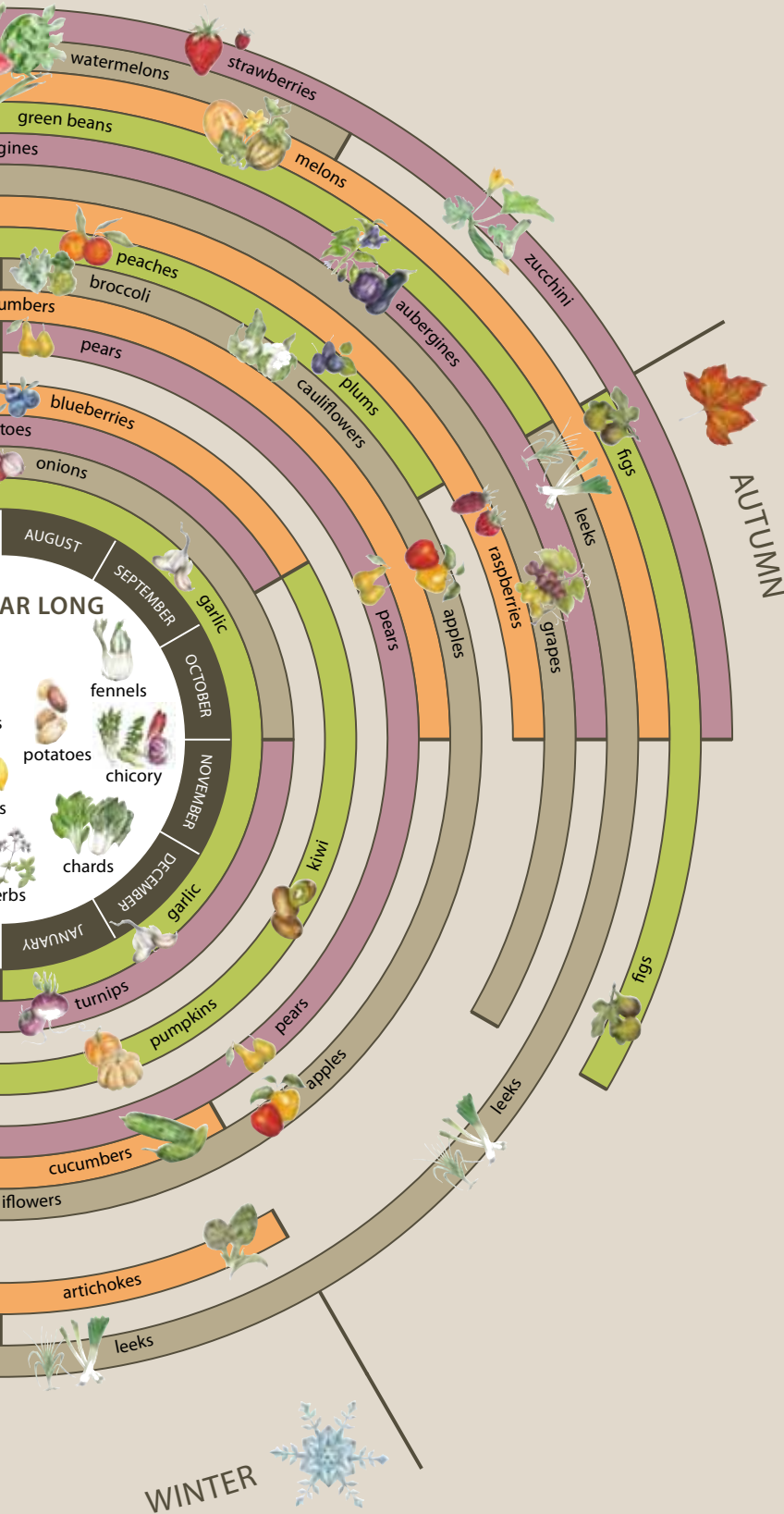




Edited by



Slow Food®



- pull off the wheel
- stick it on your fridge
- follow the advice!



spring



summer

autumn



winter



# How to choose fish

Why should we be careful about how much fish we eat? Isn't eating more fish the top tip of any dietician?

The problem is that, whether out of conformism, fashion or simple laziness, we always eat the same fish species. As a result, a number of species, such as bluefin tuna and salmon are now endangered.

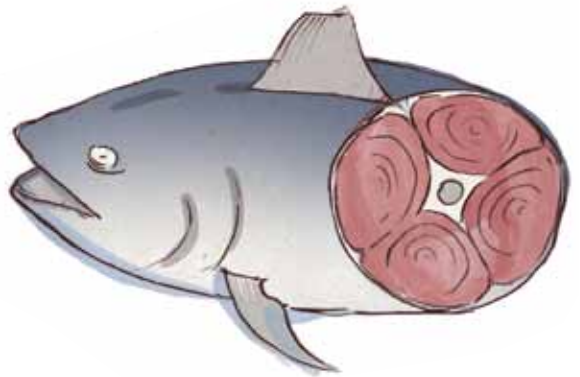
But since most fish farms also create problems for the environment, buying farmed fish (other than clams, mussels, oysters or fish from organic farms) is not a viable alternative.

The solution is not to stop buying fish, but simply to opt for lesser known species from the seas closest to us, which are just as good and have no contraindications. If we learn to follow a few simple rules (respect minimum size; respect seasonality by avoiding eating species in their reproduction season; vary choices by learning the names of "forgotten" fish and recipes involving them), we can still continue to enjoy the food the sea has to offer.

As is the case of fruit and vegetables and all food in general, choosing local, seasonal fish is the best solution for enjoying food to the full without compromising the environment.

In short, it is possible to eat well today without jeopardizing our chances of continuing to do so tomorrow.

Patience and a healthy appetite – these are the most effective arms we have at our disposal.





# A Mediterranean Calendar

## winter

mullet  
bream  
sardine  
amberjack  
pandora  
anchovy  
monkfish  
bonito  
mackerel  
common clam  
turbot  
octopus  
cuttlefish  
dolphin fish

## spring

horse mackerel  
mackerel  
gurnard  
sea bass  
bream  
amberjack  
bonito  
sea bream

## summer

horse mackerel  
sole  
sea bream  
amberjack  
Pandora  
gurnard  
bream  
sardine  
anchovy

## autumn

albacore tuna  
sea bass  
mullet  
turbot  
gurnard  
dolphin fish

## all year round

grey mullet  
striped sea bream  
pickarel  
saddled bream



**never buy!**

salmon

bluefin tuna

farmed tropical prawns

swordfish

date shell

whitebait

**and go easy on:**

brown grouper

cod



**To find out more:**

• Slow Fish, Slow Food's campaign for sustainable fishing  
[www.slowfood.com/slowfish/](http://www.slowfood.com/slowfish/)

# Labels

The label is the principal tool at our disposal to find out information about the products we buy. Unfortunately, what the label tells us today is hardly ever what we need to know: either it's scanty and generic or it's evasive and persuasive in the style of an advert. The food industry tends to provide us with generic, unessential information because it prefers to gloss over many of the production stages.

It is thus necessary to learn to decipher the language of labels.

What do we want to find out from a label? What the ingredients are for a start. But while some labels are clear, others may be ambiguous. The notorious term "natural flavourings", for example, is generic, fails to specify the ingredients that give the product flavour and may comprise products extracted from plant and animal primary ingredients using solvents, enzymes and so on.

Another, often vague piece of information is the origin of primary ingredients. In most cases, an Italian product par excellence like pasta is effectively produced and packaged in Italy, but may often be made with wheat from Australia or Canada. It would be handy to know this, but producers opt for the easy, reassuring "produced in Italy". But this tells us nothing about the origin of the wheat.

It would also be useful to know whether any special treatments (irradiation, refining etc.) or to have detailed information about the entire production chain (such as the presence of GMOs in animal feed). These are data that ought to be available to any customer when he or she buys a product, but unfortunately only very rarely do we find them peeping out from among the marketing slogans.

A label is much richer in information and more detailed when it appears on the product of a virtuous supply chain.

It is no coincidence that labels on certified organic, biodynamic, fair trade and Slow Food Presidium products are the ones that tell the stories behind the food we buy the best.



## Roveja di Civita di Cascia® Presidio Slow Food

Legume secco

I Presidi sono progetti di Slow Food che tutelano piccole produzioni di qualità, realizzate secondo pratiche tradizionali.

[www.fondazione Slow Food.it](http://www.fondazione Slow Food.it)

Se necessario di come  
All'occorrenza si utilizza come  
Diserbo: manuale  
Trattamenti: non richiede interventi di tipo fitosanitario  
Se necessario si utilizzano olii e zolfo  
Irrigazione: solo se la pioggia è scarsa  
Raccolta: si raccoglie a mano dalla fine di luglio all'inizio di agosto  
La raccolta è molto faticosa: le piante si staccano a mano e si lessano sul grato ad  
essicare. Dopo la trabattatura, la granella è passata  
a setaccio per eliminare le impurità  
Conservazione: in ambiente fresco e asciutto  
Consigli per il consumo: il seme cuoce in circa 30-40 minuti,  
dopo un ammollo di circa 12 ore. Macinare a pietra o tostare in farina da polenta,  
della farcchiatas nella pasta locale  
Cultivata da: 4 produttori aderenti all'Associazione Produttori  
della Roveja di Civita di Cascia

### RICETTE

**Minestra di Roveja:** soffriggere sedano, cipolla e carote e aggiungere la salsa di pomodoro. Versare la Roveja precedentemente soffita, farla insaporire per alcuni minuti, aggiungere acqua quanto basta e portare ad ebollizione. Aggiungere della pasta per minestra.

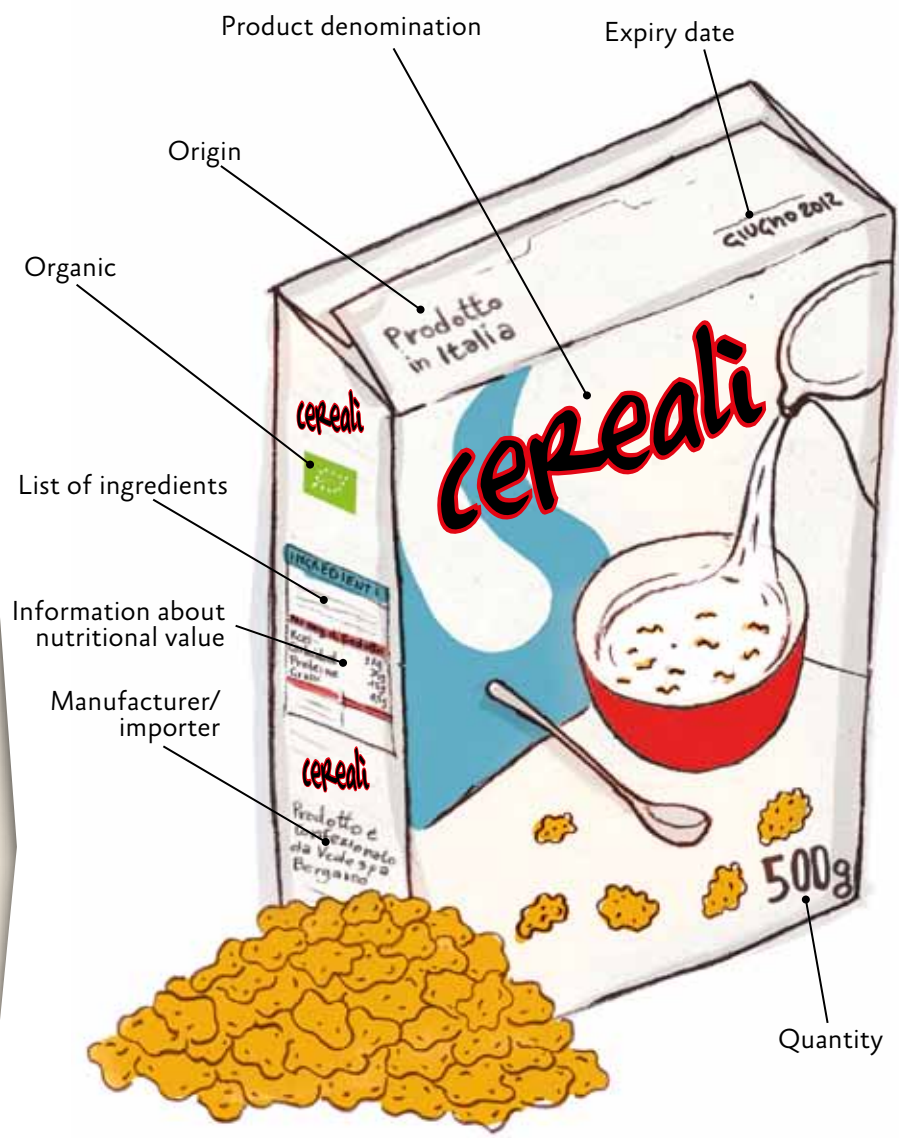
**Crostini di Roveja:** insaporire la Roveja con cipolla e peperoncino. Lasciar cuocere fino ad ottenere un composto denso. Disporre la Roveja su delle fette di pane abbrustolito, condire con olio e servire subito.

N \_\_\_\_\_ Origine: Italia

Slow Food has presented a new, more complete and transparent type of label in which basic information is presented clearly and accompanied by a description of the product: from the history that makes it unique to the context in which it comes into being and its ecological footprint.

Blending information and narrative makes the label a precious, even “revolutionary” tool, capable of orienting not only individual consumption but also general production choices.

# One example



# Packaging

By packaging we mean the wrapping material with which products and foods are packed.

There are many different types of packaging but, insofar as they are designed to be disposed of once opened, all have a very strong impact on the environment. To avoid waste and the production of huge quantities of refuse (today packaging accounts for 30 to 60 per cent of total refuse), it is necessary to ponder over their suitability and quality.

- The first point to make is that packaging isn't inevitable; fresh produce, for example, doesn't need it. Buying an unwrapped cabbage at the market is a way of saving and also means not wasting the material that would have been necessary to package it.
- If you are forced to buy a packaged item, learn to recognize the material the packaging is made of. Try to avoid plastic at all costs (it is produced with fossil fuels, is harder and more expensive to recycle and is much more pollutant). Opt for paper or cardboard, glass, aluminium, organic fibres and biodegradable or recyclable materials in general.
- Besides plastic, learn to recognize so-called heterocomposites such as tetrapak, types of packaging made of different materials assembled together, which are also hard to dispose of.
- Avoid products with more than one layer of packaging: for example, snacks or crackers in boxed packs.





The main purpose of a piece of packaging is to preserve a product for a longer period, often necessary in the event of transport from the place of production to the place of consumption. This is why, insofar as they travel shorter distances and are generally consumed shortly after purchase, local products can do without packaging.

The consumer usually chooses a packaged product out of laziness. But why opt for a tray of tomatoes wrapped in plastic when you could buy loose unwrapped ones and, in so doing, pick out the best? Last but not least, with unpackaged products it's also possible to save money.



# Buying Criteria

More fruit and vegetables, more wholemeal foods, less meat and sugar, a varied diet – these are our main suggestions for healthy balanced eating.

But what criteria should we adopt in choosing the products we buy every day?

Here is a brief summary of factors to consider when shopping for food:

- give preference to local and **seasonal** products;
- rediscover traditional, **local** products;
- be suspicious of products with overlong lists of **ingredients** and incomprehensible names;
- avoid, as far as possible, products with **additives**, colouring agents and preservatives;
- choose products that come with suitable **information** about cultivation and/or breeding and/or processing techniques;
- avoid unnecessary packaging or give preference to **packaging** with biodegradable or recyclable materials to reduce waste;
- buy only what we need in order to reduce **waste**.

