



By Stephanie Georgieff

As many of you may remember from past issues of the **TRIBUNE**, I have had the dubious honor of being the lone Macedonian American in the USA Delegation to Slow Food International Gathering of Food Communities. This bi-annual gathering (called Terra Madre) has taken place in Italy since 2004 as an opportunity for farmers, chefs, educators and fisherman from sustainable food communities to network about our global food system. At my first Terra Madre in 2008, when I walked into the registration hall, I was so proud to see a table for The Republic of Macedonia. I left my card with the volunteer at the desk, and took my seat in the Olympic Stadium. As I watched the crowds of over 7000 people gather, I heard music playing over the loudspeaker, songs and melodies from around the world. I recognized Macedonian music, and then saw the flag being waved across the stadium. I ran towards them, and in my best-broken Macedonian greeted this Slow Food delegation. They had a small consortium of Chest-nut Honey producers present, and a single table in the exhibit

not a formal exhibition, just a small table with a few pamphlets. At the 2010 Terra Madre, I was again part of the USA Delegation, and this time, Slow Food Macedonia had an established chapter network, several Presidia products and was part of the Presidia Market Place at Salone de Gusto, a global artisan food show featuring sustainably produced products from around the world. I reconnected with the Macedonian Slow Food Chapter, and made plans to visit the land of my ancestors the next spring. My travels and experience were presented at the Convention in Ohio in 2011.

I was so moved by the creativity, ingenuity and warmth of everyone I met in 2011. Often, when we have relatives in another country, our experience is defined by family obligations. Delightful as they can be, this situation doesn't always allow you to see the country in its full display. When I traveled as a food and agriculture explorer in Macedonia, I saw the land of my Baba and Dedo with new eyes; as a diverse, lush and delicious landscape with traditions and culinary offerings I had never before enjoyed. What also struck me was that the Macedonians were using their education and technology to create a vibrant economy based on their culture and culinary offerings. I saw that the Macedonians were living the blue print for what we in the rest of the world call "the new economy." I interviewed mayors, farmers, vintners, brew masters, cheese makers and agricultural academics from a broad swath of Macedonia. With each conversation, each visit, I couldn't help thinking that I really wanted to connect North Americans and the Macedonian Diaspora to this emerging culture in Macedonia. What I witnessed was an undiscovered jewel that I really wanted to share with anyone who would listen. I wrote, spoke and did several radio programs on the food

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