



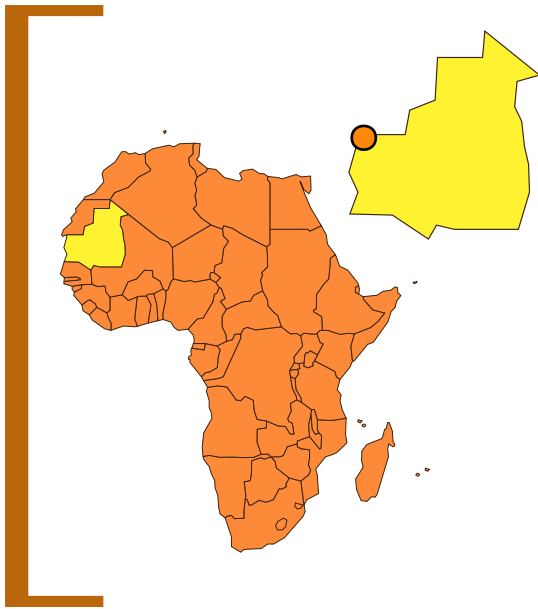
Imraguen Women's Mullet Bottarga Mauritania



Slow Food Foundation
for Biodiversity

Slow Food Presidia are local projects that work to improve the infrastructure of artisan food production. The goal of the Presidia is to guarantee a viable future for traditional foods by stabilizing production techniques, establishing stringent production standards, and promoting local consumption. The Presidia project is coordinated by the Slow Food Foundation for Biodiversity, which organizes and funds projects that defend our world's heritage of agricultural biodiversity and gastronomic traditions.





The place:

The Islamic Republic of Mauritania is an area, predominantly desert, of over one million square kilometers with 700 kilometers of coast. Along this coast, in the North, is the famous Banc d'Arguin, made a National Park in 1976 to safeguard the natural environment and extraordinary marine and lagoon. The nearest large city is Nouadhibou, the principle port of Mauritania.

Production area:

Villages along the Arguin Bank and Nouadhibou

The Presidium

The survival of the Imraguen is bound up with mullet fishing: mullet is a staple food in the fishing community's diet and their villages on the beach are moved according to fish movements. The presidium is based on a cooperative of Imraguen women - assisted by a local NGO, Mauritanie 2000 - who live in Nouadhibou, the second largest city in Mauritania. The Presidium producers buy mullet from the fishermen and transform it.

The protagonists:

- The Imraguen are an ethnic group predominantly dedicated to fishing and transforming the fish that live all along the coast of Mauritania. Their presence in the area predates the large Arab migration from Maghreb that began in the 11th century.

- 2 Cooperatives, composed of about 30 Imraguen women from the Nouadhibou area and the Banc d'Arguin, produce the fish products and, in particular, they produce bottarga with the eggs of the red mullet. The women of the Cooperatives are the nucleus of the Presidium.



The traditional extraction of the bottarga from the mullet along the coast of Mauritania. The work is done on the ground with limited concern for hygiene and safety.





The bottarga for personal consumption and for the local market is dried under the sun in the open air on boards and tables set on the sheet metal roofs of their houses



The local salt is not suitable for a quality production



Furthermore, the traditional production uses a minimum amount of salt, risking bacterial contamination

- The NGO Mauritanie2000, begun in 1994, is the Presidium's local partner, given the common interests and activities between their own program ("Femmes et Peche") and Slow Food's project.

- The Orbetello Lagoon Fish Cooperative, a Slow Food Tuscan Presidium, is the Presidium's technical partner.

- The Slow Food Foundation for Biodiversity plans and follows the various phases of development of the Presidium.

The stages of the project 2006

An informal first contact was made in 2005, but it was during a visit by a Slow Food delegation February 9-15, 2006 that a deeper relationship was established with the NGO Mauritania2000 representatives Nedwa Oumoulbenine of Nouakchott and Marième Mint Dahoud of Nouadhibou. Through the NGO, the Slow Food experts came to know the social and economic situation of the local population as well as the responsibilities of the National Park and they began working with the women of the SAVA Cooperative.

Those who participated in this first trip: Raffaella Ponzio and Séverine Petit (Slow Food Foundation), Massimo Bernacchini and Massimo Paoletti (Orbetello Lagoon Fish Cooperative) and the photographer Alberto Peroli (technical partner of the Slow Food Foundation).

From October 11 – 26, 2006 the Orbetello Cooperative hosted a group of women from the NGO Mauritania2000 and one of the Cooperatives at Orbetello. During their stay in Tuscany, the women visited the Cooperative's production workshop and learned the techniques to produce bottarga. There, also, the women produced the bottarga that would be sold at Salone del Gusto, using raw material brought from Mauritania. Augusto Cattaneo, food technologist and project consultant, gave a technical course to the three Mauritanian





Massimo Paoletti (Lagoon Fish Coop.) demonstrates the technique used at Orbetello to extract the delicate bottarga without damaging them



The bottarga drying on wooden planks



guests in Orbetello.

From October 26 – 30, 2006, in Turin, two of the principal events organized by Slow Food were held simultaneously: Salone del Gusto, a world exhibition and market of quality food, and Terra Madre, a world meeting of food communities which together saw the participation of some 9000 producers, researchers, cooks and others united in daily contact with the issues related to agriculture, fishing, breeding, the environment and biodiversity all over the world.

At Salone del Gusto the representatives from one of the Cooperatives and the NGO Mauritanie2000 introduced the bottarga that they produced during their training in Orbetello, selling the entire production, 40 kg, for a price of 120 euro/kg. The proceeds have been used to fund the activities of the Presidium and to improve the facilities and the training of the women.

From December 14 – 20, 2006 a new trip to Mauritania was organized to provide follow-up and to reinforce, locally, the previous experiences and the relationships that had been established. Massimo Paoletti and Augusto Cattaneo, accompanied by Simone Beccaria (Slow Food Foundation), worked in close collaboration with Marième Mint Dahoud from Mauritanie2000 and the women from the Cooperative, who in the meantime had identified and rented a new production workshop that is more spacious, sanitary and equipped with electricity and running water. During the visit the main activities concentrated on the possibility to carry out the entire bottarga production locally: from obtaining the fish to the extraction, the salting, the drying and the preservation.



The label of the bottarga sold at Salone del Gusto



The Cooperative rented a new production workshop that is more spacious, wired for electricity and easily connected to running water. The workshop is made up of three painted rooms with cement floors and a sandy courtyard.



2007

For Slow Fish (an event dedicated to sustainable fishing that was held in Genoa May 4 – 7, 2007) the bottarga production/training took place temporarily in an artisan workshop, equipped with refrigeration, air conditioning, fresh and salt water, clean rooms, and aluminum and Teflon counters, located in front of the port of Nouadhibou. This workshop is equipped to meet the EU sanitary regulations and is the best solution for a quality production while waiting for the Presidium's own workshop to be outfitted so that it meets the regulations to be able to export to European countries.

The fish purchased at the artisan fishing port of Nouadhibou. The unit of measure is the "Peugeot", which contains about a ton of fish.





The Cooperative has been equipped with hairnets and aprons in order to work in a hygienic manner; on the occasion of the visit to Mauritania a supply of latex gloves was also provided





The fish are cleaned, to limit the damage caused by transportation from the boats, trucks and containers to the workshop



The extraction of the bottarga is reproduced as close as possible to the process followed in Orbetello and demonstrated by Massimo Paoletti, working hygienically, quickly and delicately





A greater amount of salt is now being used. The production uses a large grain salt from Spain, imported by a local fish producer



At the end of the salting stage, the bottarga are washed under fresh running water





Between activities, four frames were constructed for the drying process, using mosquito netting brought from Italy and the artistry of a local carpenter





The drying takes place in one of the rooms of the new workshop, which has been sanitized and equipped with a fan to circulate the air



Once dried, the bottarga is vacuum-packed using a small domestic machine



The small local fish restaurants, which sometime produce small quantities of bottarga, can be involved in the project, offering their customers a quality product



Through the founders of Mauritanie2000 who participated in the work, the proper techniques can be shared with other cooperative.

Activities Planned for 2009

- Buy land for the construction of a workshop equipped to house the entire production cycle, to obtain a quality bottarga
- Equip the workshop with suitable instruments, buying and sending them to the production site
- Train a fishermen group and collaborate with them in the project. Currently only women producers are involved and it is necessary to control the entire fish production chain
 - Completing the training of new producers to create a stable and continuing work group
- Develop the production of a local salt so that there is a sufficient supply that is economical and completes the local production chain. Spanish salt is used currently
- Assist the women to participate in national and international events to promote the product
 - Produce communication materials in various languages, like photo-stories and dépliant
 - Provide the producers with technical support through visits to the production site

The total amount required to realize these activities is 90,000 euros:

Purchase of the land, workshop, equipment 60,000
Training and consultancy 20,000
National and International promotion events 5,000
Communication 5,000

**The necessary funding being sought is 64,000 euros,
according to the following breakdown:**

Purchase of land, workshop, equipment 47,000
Training and consultancy 10,000
National and International promotion events 5,000
Communication 3,000

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