

What a farmer doesn't grow ...



“What a farmer doesn’t grow, he doesn’t eat”. This German saying referring to a seemingly parochial attitude to food and is often sniggered at and thought of as simplistic and narrow. Yet a closer look at the state of nutrition these days makes it clear that people with such an ostensibly simple mindset may actually spare themselves a lot of suffering. In any case, it is good to know what you are eating, how food is produced and how it has been processed or manufactured.

For good and healthy nutrition there are no complicated mathematical-style formulas, nevertheless, unfortunately many of us don’t really know how the foods we consume naturally taste.

Flavouring agents and enhancers greatly disturb the inherent ability that humans have to differentiate between and perceive tastes. For many of us, adults as well as children, our taste buds have become seriously distorted. Tinned fruit often tastes better – to young and old – than fresh fruit plucked straight from the tree. But why is this? One answer is simply that the world of food has been “processed” into absurdity.

Taste, seen in terms of its history of development, is nothing more than a guard at the entrance to our digestive tract. If it signals danger, that particular food won’t be allowed to pass. What a wonderful basic prerequisite for our nutrition!

However, we have to realise that because the majority of the food we buy is pre-made, the true identity of food is often no longer recognised. We have lost a direct and original relationship to the origin of our food. In our experience acquiring food is often no different to the way we purchase other objects used in daily life. We are increasingly losing our emotional relationship to food as it no longer seems to be

something special. And we no longer have the respect for nature that is required. Only if we appreciate the value of some bread, a vegetable or a piece of meat, only if we have learnt to smell and taste, and only if we are well-informed, can we consciously make decisions on certain types of foods and, for example, select regional and seasonal products.

It would therefore be incredibly useful if children again learnt how the foods which are so valuable for us grow and come into being. They should have the opportunity to become aware that wheat is grown by a farmer, that the baker bakes, the fisherman fishes, a butcher makes sausages and that lettuce is sown and harvested by a gardener. We should also teach our children how milk is turned into butter or cheese, and how juice can be obtained from grapes. However did it come about that many children have never seen a real cow and that they believe apples simply come into the world in packages of six?

Of course it is the parents that can guide their children towards good food and therefore have to teach them about healthy nutrition. What is really decisive in this connection, is that families regularly eat together again. Sunday lunch, for example, could at least be designated as a time to come together and bond. It is actually proven that children learn better, enjoy learning more and are also less aggressive and prone to depression when they eat with others at home at least five times per week.

A good approach here would be to go back to what may now be considered an old-fashioned home-made meals culture. Anyone who spent some time with good company in the kitchen during childhood never forgets the taste of freshly cooked dishes, even simple ones. Important memories are also strongly related to times spent eating together at the kitchen table; conversations and recounting stories, discussions and also the odd argument or two.

A basic ingredient for a good dish is, of course, the love with which it is made. It manifests itself in the way that even simple tasks such as peeling, chopping and stirring are given the utmost attention. The act of patiently stirring risotto, for example, is vital for a creamy yet still 'al dente' consistency. In this way good food is love transformed. It builds a wealth of knowledge about cultural connections and leads to an almost self-evident, natural respect for nature and animals.
