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**ADOPT SLOW-FOOD COOKING  
FOR BETTER HEALTH**

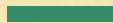


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HEALTH







**Rujuta Diwekar**



“ Good food comes from farms, is cooked in kitchens, takes time to prep, and goes bad if it is not looked after. Anything that takes only two minutes is good for profits, not for people or the planet.







Slow food is food that is carefully prepared using traditional cooking methods and organic ingredients and is intended to be eaten and enjoyed slowly for maximum benefit.

The slow food movement was conceived by Carlo Petrini in 1986, in defiance of a proposed McDonald's at the base of the Spanish steps in Rome. Though modest in its beginnings, Slow Food now has national associations in over 160 countries.

However, in the Indian context, slow food is not a new concept. Our Nani, Dadi, and moms have been doing slow cooking forever. When we were growing up, the hearth at home was always warm and ready for the next meal. There was always freshly cooked food at each meal, and it was made from locally-sourced seasonal produce. The chutneys, papads, podis, and achars that we relished with our thali were homemade and free from any additives.

In modern times, things have changed a little bit. Instant, packaged, store-bought happiness has taken precedence over slow cooking. Fast food has become a matter of convenience that also supports people's busy schedules. Sadly "Work and leisure" have won over

"slow cooking" when it comes to the battle for time.

**Ms. Himanshu Kapoor**, a nutritionist, founder of C. Green Organic Future Foods, and a pioneer in slow food in India says that the basic motto of the slow food movement is to consume food that is honest, fair, and good quality. Upon asking, how in her opinion has the Indian slow food scene changed? She said that even though most Indian households still cook most of their meals at home, many shortcuts have entered our kitchens in the name of convenience. For instance, people are not even setting curds at home, instead, consuming store-bought ones daily. Most of our podis, pastes, masalas, pickles, papads, batters, and spreads come from the stores. This is doing us more harm than good.

We don't realize that we are consuming a lot of additives and preservatives in the name of home-cooked food. With a little effort and planning we can make or ask our helps to make these at home the old-fashioned way and enjoy the fresh goodness of these condiments. She also said people should view cooking as a cathartic and meditative activity rather than a tedious task.





## Slow Food philosophy

The slow food philosophy proposes that one should consume

- **Seasonal food:** Seasonal fruits and vegetables are fresher, more flavorful, and more nutritious than food consumed out of season. Nutrient loss and environmental costs are minimal as there is no need to store and process them. Since there is no need for preservation, they are also devoid of any chemicals that may harm our bodies. Furthermore, research has shown that eating seasonal food promotes the health-supporting microbiome of your body. Our gut bacteria changes for good and eating seasonally contributes to this. Eating seasonal food is a good way to maintain a healthy, disease-free body.
- **Locally grown food:** Travelled food has less freshness and nutritional value than its local counterpart. Eating local food promotes local farmers and improves the community's economy. It also reduces the burden on the environment as there is minimal or complete lack of packaging, processing, and transportation.
- **Organic food:** Organically grown food is free from pesticides and chemical fertilizers. It is good for

the environment as it does not contaminate the ground with chemicals and is grown without disturbing the soil biota. It is good for health as it is nutrient dense and is not laced with harmful chemicals.

- **Least processed food:** Eating whole unprocessed food is good for health as well as the environment. Instead of tetra-packed juices pick up a fruit and eat it. Eat whole unpolished grains and dals for wholesome nutrition.
- **Home cooked food that is cooked using traditional recipes:** For maximum health benefits from a dish take an ingredient and cook it as your grandmother would cook. Add coconut to the dish if it needs it. Cook it in ghee, mustard oil, or gingelly oil as the traditional recipe would require it to be cooked in. Old wisdom stands on hundreds of years of experience; if we respect it, we will surely be blessed with good health.





In this era of easy access to supermarkets with aisles flooded with packaged and processed food, it is very easy to fall into the convenience trap of a monotone diet. We pay the price of this convenience with our health. Unmindful food habits and consuming fast-food cause many deficiencies and lead to lifestyle and metabolic diseases. This needs to change.

The philosophy of slow food is ingrained so deeply in Indian culture, that it is not difficult to adopt slow cooking in our daily diet. Slow food helps bring diversity to our diet and provides us with wholesome nutrition. Here are a few points that will help you bring slow-cooked food to your dining table with the added benefit of boosted health.

- **Plan your meals in advance:**

Squeeze out a few minutes in your day to plan your meals. Initially, it may seem like a task but in the long run, it will become a habit and help you enjoy a wholesome breakfast, a balanced lunch, and a light healthy

dinner daily. Planning your meals in advance will also ensure that the ingredients are available in the house and this will prevent you from reaching out for that packet of frozen or instant food.

- A traditional meal of “roti sabzi dal chawal (RSDC) with salad and raita” is the epitome of the Indian slow food concept. Keep this RSDC framework in mind to plan your meals and play with permutation and a combination of local seasonal vegetables, including all varieties of dals, and different kinds of local rice and millets. This will help you plan a whole balanced meal that will give you complete nourishment.
- Go back to your roots by adding a variety of millets to your diet.
- Make your podis, chutneys, and batter at home. If needed, pay your cooks and maids a little extra as an incentive to help you do so. Set your curds at home. If possible identify home cooks who supply homemade papads and pickles and procure these goodies from them. Store-bought papads and pickles have a lot of additives to increase their shelf life, and they are harmful to your health.
- Try and make your dips and spreads at home.
- Plan your meal around local seasonal fruits and vegetables.





- **Support local organic farmers by procuring vegetables from them:** Many organic initiatives these days provide vegetables directly from farms to consumers' homes. You can visit these farms to see their sustainable practices and also check what vegetables are in season. The system of home delivery is very convenient and makes fresh vegetables accessible daily. This is convenient for the farmer as well as the consumer, as the farmer gets a loyal customer; and the consumer receives a regular supply of fresh organic seasonal vegetables.
- Take out time to sit and enjoy the meal. Try not to eat food on the go. Sit and enjoy the meal, taking in the flavors and eating consciously. This will always prevent you from overeating or undereating; if you enjoy the food, your body will also wholly accept its goodness.
- **Opt for good fast foods that are, in fact, slow food in disguise:** In the Indian scenario, dosa, idly, stuffed paranthas, and eggs can be treated as fast foods. They can be prepared quickly and are healthy and wholesome. Fruits and nuts can also be included in this category.



## Few slow food recipes:

Here are a few easy recipes that could help you with home-cooked dips and chutneys instead of store-bought ones

1. Hummus- take one cup boiled chickpeas, 2 tbsp roasted and ground sesame seeds, 3 cloves garlic,  $\frac{1}{4}$  tsp cumin powder,  $\frac{1}{2}$  lemon,  $\frac{1}{2}$  tsp salt and blend to smooth adding  $\frac{1}{4}$  cup olive oils. transfer this to a bowl and garnish with  $\frac{1}{2}$  tsp olive oil and sprinkle chili powder. This homemade delicious dip will make you forget store-bought dips. It goes well with salad, nachos, pita bread, and even roasted papads.
2. Coriander chutney- Take a small bunch of coriander leaves, clean, wash, cut, and put them in a grinder. Add 1 tsp cumin seeds, one green chili, and salt. Grind them together in the mixer adding a little water if needed. Add a tbsp of lemon juice or more if you want it tangier. store it in a jar and use it for 3 to 4 days. This chutney goes well with cheelas, pakodas, and paranthas. It can be had as a staple with all your meals adding to the

- benefit of leafy green to your meal.
3. Instant ginger chilly pickle- this is a winter staple in most North Indian households. It boosts immunity and reduces inflammation of any kind. Wash and dry 100g ginger and 50g chilies completely. Carefully cut them into small pieces. put them in a mason jar and add the juice of 5 lemons and 2 tbsp salt. Give it a quick shake, coating all the pieces uniformly. this will last for one week if kept outside.



## In conclusion

**"Ghar ka khana"** is the simple answer to many complex health issues, and with a bit of planning and careful forethought, you can include slow food in your busy schedules and bring home the gift of diverse, flavorful, additive-free food and good health to your homes.

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## About Organo Et School

Organo Et School empowers people to embrace eco-living mindsets, behaviors, and habits. We recognize that for any positive impact to be sustainable, it must be long-term and inter-generational.

Organo Et School is a learning initiative set up by Organo in 2017 and has been facilitating field visits and workshops for Schools and Interest Groups. Organo Et School has had over 25+ schools, 6500+ students, and 3000+ adults participate over the last 7 years.

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