

Slow Food movement part of MCC's future

Sustainable systems specialized courses offered this spring

By Sally Mesarosh
and Maureen Zimmerman
SPECIAL FOR THE REPUBLIC

Maria saves her fruit and vegetable peels and dumps them every morning into her backyard compost heap. Carlos and Kari take the light rail to the Phoenix Farmers Market on Saturday mornings, where they buy fresh eggs and grass-fed beef. Pilar shops at a grocery-chain store, but buys mostly local, organic produce. Mike is a chef who buys locally grown produce in season. He prepares Mediterranean-style food as part of a shift toward more light, healthful cuisine.

What do these people share in common? They are using sustainable food practices. The Slow Food movement began almost two decades ago, and is now approaching the tipping point, with more and more people engaging in some type of Slow Food practice. Slow Food programs bring the values of eating local, sustainable and just food to schools and campuses. They work to revitalize and renew disappearing foods and food traditions, and they advocate for a national food policy in which all peo-



DELYNN BODINE

Maureen Zimmerman (right), a nutrition instructor at MCC, and horticulture instructor Suean Stewart offer classes in sustainability.

ple can eat food that is good for them, good for the people who grow it and good for the planet.

This spring, Mesa Community College will begin to offer specialized courses in Sustainable Food Systems, leading to an AAS degree and/or a Certificate of Completion.

A Google search of the term "sustainable food systems" brings up a plethora of jobs, which require demonstrated knowledge of modern and traditional food systems, and key environmental, health, wellness, and local community development issues related to sustainable food systems.

Job opportunities abound for those with degrees. The jobs are with corporate America, nonprofits, research groups, restaurants and bakeries, grocery stores and farms, and government and educational institutions. A cursory look at these jobs would indicate that acquiring the knowledge and skills to help champion sustainable food practices is likely to add value to resumes.

One of the new classes being offered this spring by the Nutrition Program is Cooking Life-FON 135. Maureen Zimmerman, MCC nutrition faculty, said she developed this course last year to replace a

more traditional cooking class that was popular but is no longer the way people cook and live.

"The new course, Cooking Life, is more of a Rachael Ray-type cooking class, with a Slow Foods twist; it will focus on basic cooking techniques for healthful and enjoyable eating, with an emphasis on strategies for maximizing the use of whole, local, seasonal, and nutrient-dense food while applying the dietary recommendations for optimal health," said Zimmerman. "There will be many opportunities to learn about sustainable food living including growing a small "kitchen" garden and field trips to some sustainable restaurants and bakeries."

Every student will receive a complimentary copy of the new sustainable foods book, "Grub," co-written by Anna Lappé, the daughter of Frances More Lappé, who wrote the best-selling book in the 1970s that alerted Americans to the social and personal significance of a different way of eating.

The Sustainable Food Systems Program at Mesa Community College will be approached in an interdisciplinary manner with a chef, a registered dietitian, and an agriculturist teaching the new Cooking Life class together.

More information: Zimmerman at zimmerman@mesacc.edu, 480-461-7328, or www.mesacc.edu/dept/d19/fon/programs/sustainable.html.