

Jordi Bes Lozano and Lucía Herrero

# Everyone's invited!

PORTRAITS OF THE SUSTAINABLE FOOD ECOSYSTEM IN THE  
TRANSFORMATION OF BARCELONA





## **Jordi Bes Lozano**

I am a journalist by vocation. I am moved by curiosity to understand the world around us. I was born in Girona in 1985 and live in Barcelona. I write articles about wine, food and the city I live in for various publications, including the newspapers *Ara* and *Cupatges*, and the magazines *Cuina*, *Arrels*, *La Conca 5.1* and *Papers de Vi*.

## **Lucía Herrero**

I am a multi-disciplinary artist who uses photography to observe the world and its inhabitants. The camera is my friend, and it takes me to see places and situations that are outside my own life and to share them with the public. I find reportage to be a fascinating genre. I have developed a style for my personal projects that I call "fantasy anthropology".

# Everyone's invited!

PORTRAITS OF THE SUSTAINABLE FOOD ECOSYSTEM IN THE  
TRANSFORMATION OF BARCELONA

**Published by:**

Ajuntament de Barcelona

**Editorial and Publishing Council of the City of Barcelona:**

Jordi Martí Grau, Marc Andreu Acebal, Águeda Bañón Pérez, Marta Clari Padrós, Núria Costa Galobart, Sonia Frias Rollon, Pau González Val, Laura Pérez Castaño, Jordi Rabassa Massons, Joan Ramon Riera Alemany, Pilar Roca Viola, Edgar Rovira Sebastià and Anna Giralt Brunet.

**Communication Director:**

Águeda Bañón Pérez

**Editorial Services Director:**

Núria Costa Galobart

**Editor in Chief:**

Oriol Guiu

**Editorial Production:**

Maribel Baños

**Distribution and Sales:**

M. Àngels Alonso

**Direcció de Serveis Editorials:**

Passeig de la Zona Franca, 66  
08038 Barcelona  
tel. 93 402 31 31  
barcelona.cat/barcelonallibres

**Promoter:**

Álvaro Porro, Commissioner for Social Economy, Local Development and Food Policy for Barcelona City Council and Director of Barcelona World Capital of Sustainable Food 2021

**Content management and coordination:**

Amaranta Herrero and Montse Peiron

**Texts:**

Jordi Bes Lozano

**Pictures:**

Lucía Herrero

**Editorial production:**

**som**  
la cultura de tots  
www.som.cat

**Editor:**

Toni Quero

**Editing control:**

Sílvia Günther

**Translation:**

Martin Greedy

**Design:**

Natalia Mazzarella

Barcelona, 2021

© for the edition: Ajuntament de Barcelona

© for the texts: Jordi Bes Lozano

© for the images: Lucía Herrero

© for the translation: Martin Greedy

Cover image: Lucía Herrero

ISBN: 978-84-9156-355-6



Attribution – NonCommercial -  
NoDerivatives CC BY-NC-ND

# Everyone's invited!

PORTRAITS OF THE SUSTAINABLE FOOD ECOSYSTEM IN THE  
TRANSFORMATION OF BARCELONA

# Contents

## Presentation

**6 / Portraits of Barcelona advancing towards sustainable food**

## Chapter / 1

**10 / Guarantee the universal right to healthy sustainable food**

**12 / Montse and Merche Rodríguez. The Gregal Soup Kitchen / *Stopping to make sure no one goes without***

**20 / Mariona Ortiz and Laia Carulla. Pont Alimentari / *The saving food away should not even be an option***

**26 / I eat and go shopping, just like everyone else**  
*Georgina Colomé and Mercè Darnell*

## Chapter / 2

**28 / Make access to sustainable food easier**

**30 / Alejandro Guzmán. Ecocentral / *Guaranteeing organic food in schools***

**38 / Núria Cantí. Hortec / *Looking after everyone: from the farmer to the consumer***

**46 / Àngels Fisas. Verdures i Fruits Molins / *Organic farmers with a stall in the marketplace***

**54 / Green Commerce in the market: where better? *Francesc Leyva***

**56 / Isabel Coderch. Te lo sirvo verde / *How to make restaurants more sustainable***

## Chapter / 3

**62 / Adopt healthy diets**

**64 / Laura Fernández Sau and Damià Bordes Homs. Escola dels Encants / *Healthy eating catches on in schools***

**72 / Carlos A. González Svatetz. Epidemiologist / *Less meat and fewer ultra-processed foods at the table, for health and the planet***

**78 / Just eating healthy is not possible**  
*Toni Massanés Sánchez*

## Chapter / 4

**80 / Eat less and better meat, for us and for the planet**

**82 / Daniele Rossi. Rasoterra / *Cooking with identity***

**90 / Emma Viñas. Turó de les Nou Cabres / *Herds in tune with nature***

## Chapter / 5

**98 / Promote fair trade in the food chain**

**100 / Martín Habiague and Andrea Hernández. Cuinant Oportunitats / *Kitchens in rebellion against social exclusion***

**108 / Dolors Llonch. Can Calopa de Dalt / *Wine from Barcelona with a social heart***

## Chapter / 6

**116 / Cultivate diversity in the country, at the table and in the neighbourhood**

**118 / Olivier Chantry. Cal Notari / *Trying the agriculture of the future with the flavours of the past***

**126 / Anna Bozzano. El Peix al Plat / *Barcelona is also a fishing port***

**134 / Lourdes Ponce (Pitusa). World Soup Festival / *Soups that attract diversity***

## Chapter / 7

**142 / Reduce food waste and packaging**

**144 / Mireia Barba. Fundació Espigoladors / *Rescuing rejected fruit and vegetables***

**152 / All roads start at school**  
*Lluís Sala*

**154 / Esteve Domènech. Linverd / *The supermarket that gets by without plastic***

## Chapter / 8

**160 / Create sustainable and empowering food environments**

**162 / Marina Monsonís. Situated cooking / *Cooking cannot be separated from the environment***

**170 / Ester Comas Argemí and Ferran Garcia Moreno. Justícia Alimentària / *Taking back citizen control of food***

**176 / Agroecology and sustainable food**  
*Guillem Tèndero*

## Chapter / 9

**178 / Transform the food system with everyone in mind**

**180 / Trini, Cecilia, Constantina and Pilar. Community Allotments in Can Masdeu / *Community allotments as a school of life***

**188 / Isabel Celma and Anna Samsó. Cydonia / *Self-sufficiency led the way towards agroecological consumerism***

**196 / Separating the organic waste is basic**  
*Elena Diez*

**198 / Chiara Bombardi. Mercat de la Terra / *A market to support agroecological consumption***



# Portraits of Barcelona advancing towards sustainable food

This book that you are holding contains the personal stories of around thirty people, most of them from Barcelona, and those of the projects they are running. They are a diverse range of initiatives, but they all aim, in one way or another, to bring a sustainable food system within our reach. The firm and sensitive prose of journalist Jordi Bes Lozano explores the motivations of the protagonists and the values that have transformed their lives, the work they have done and the personal satisfactions that they have derived from it. The unusual photographs of artist Lucía Herrero capture the essence and emotions linked to these people and their initiatives. We are sincerely grateful to all the protagonists for their generous effort to make the book possible.

The stories we will read are no more than a sample of the many projects that are moving in this same direction. Most of these are backed up by decades of work, and the new ones just starting up have been welcomed and celebrated enthusiastically from the start. The urgent need to transform the global food system from top to bottom is filtering through to large sections of society.

The connection between food and health can be estimated by the fact that one in five deaths around the world can be attributed to an inadequate diet, according to the analysis made by the prestigious Global Burden of Disease study carried out in 2013. The latest edition, from 2019, shows with hard data how poor diet is an increasingly important risk factor for health.

It is possible that the prominent role of the food system in the climate crisis is not so well-known: according to the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, it generates between 21% and 37% of all greenhouse gas emissions. We are, in

contrast, more aware of the real and terrible damage that intensive agriculture, cattle farming and fishing is doing to ecosystems and to the complexity of the natural order that provides us with food; and which we are part of. The predatory global agroindustrial production system, with its intense use of toxic synthetic chemicals and addiction to fossil fuels is putting the life of the planet at risk, and its days are numbered.

The horrendous social injustices, both local and global, that this corporate food model relies on, along with the rest of the global economy, are surely the aspect of the problem that we are most familiar with, mainly because there are so many people who have suffered them, and for such a long time.

The COVID-19 pandemic has highlighted the need to create a more resilient food system, one that reduces the impact of global risks. It has also revealed a widespread desire for a stronger connection with nature and to appreciate what *really* matters: health, our daily life, mutual support, care and affection.

## **A wave that is surging forward**

These stories are part of a groundswell that is pushing the food system towards sustainability, in every sense of the word. It is a slow movement that began quietly many years ago, but which has proved to be persistent, conspicuous and unstoppable.

This wave includes the 200 cities around the world that have signed the Milan Urban Food Policy Pact. Dating from 2015, the authorities that sign this agreement commit to the application of policies to advance sustainable food systems that are also inclusive, resilient, safe and diverse. At present, our

cities are home to 55% of the world's population, and they consume 70% of its food, which is produced outside the cities. They are therefore the principal destination of the food system, and the Pact is a recognition of their role and potential to transform this system, to create more ecological, prosperous and fairer economies and societies.

Barcelona is one of the cities that have signed the Pact and it has been designated the World Capital of Sustainable Food for 2021. This does not mean that the city sees itself as having a sustainable food supply, but it expresses its desire to take firm steps towards achieving this goal. This year marks the start of a process in which Barcelona and its other metropolitan towns build food policies into their social and environmental policies, and in which they raise the profile and provide support for the groups that are working to achieve the transformation of the food system, whether they have been doing it for a long time or have been inspired by the current context. Food policies and projects have been applied under the leadership of the Council's Commission for Social Economy, Local Development and Food Policy and the Metropolitan Strategy Plan for Barcelona, and a range of resources for sustainable food have been made available for the citizens. A calendar for the year with hundreds of acts has been prepared to promote the change in cultural and social habits and debates around the topic, along with an analysis of how Barcelona eats, as

the first step towards the development of a food strategy for the horizon of 2030, with the participation of many stakeholders in the city's food system. The centrepiece of the year, in institutional terms, is the 7th Global Forum on the Milan Pact, in October.

### **Good for people, the region and the planet**

Barcelona's year as capital has also seen the preparation of *Sustainable food. A manual for cities (L'alimentació sostenible. Manual per a ciutats)*, a guide for the transition towards sustainable food, based on the idea that it is good for people, the region and the planet.

People benefit from the need to ensure sufficient resources to produce, consume and enjoy safe, sustainable, healthy and tasty food in such a way as to guarantee everyone a fuller existence, naturally including those who need more resources and support.

It is good for the region if it encourages diverse and prosperous local economies that ensure the welfare of the workers and distribute the profits fairly; if it makes use of traditional diets and gastronomic knowledge; if it celebrates the diverse cultures present in the region; if it creates positive relations between urban and rural environments, and between the global North and South.

The benefits for the planet are that we produce, transform, sell, buy and dispose of food while conserving the possibility of regenerating

ecosystems and the biosphere with zero waste. It also means that we help to stop climate change and begin to adapt to it in ways that protect animal welfare and encourage biodiversity.

The *Manual for cities* identifies nine dimensions of change that support the cross-cutting nature of the transformation required. These nine dimensions provide the structure for the chapters of this book. The stories that appear may feature small or medium-sized companies working in the various branches of the food sector, social initiatives or educational experiences and voices from the world of science. Several chapters also contain the contributions of experts who add their thoughts to these personal experiences.

Stories about quiet yet powerful changes taking place, such as the creation of allotments in peri-urban areas, or in neighbourhoods or at schools; community-driven soup kitchens set up to guarantee the universal right to food; training courses for social integration in the food sector; herds of goats on the outskirts of the big city, or sharing multicultural soups in the streets.

We invite our readers to join in or continue along this path towards a future that the individuals in this book, along with countless other people, groups and institutions around the world, are showing us today. We invite you to take steps in your day-to-day lives, whether by yourself in your household, in community, with your neighbours, social or professional circle, or through

## **The portraits in this book are a sample of the many projects that are making sustainable food a reality**

public policy, for those working in government. We are inviting everyone, because, when a food production system is good for people, the region and the planet, it is because it is based on participation, inclusion and mutual support, and because it advances through the construction of a strong social fabric that brings social and democratic regeneration with it.

Everyone's invited!

**Álvaro Porro, Amaranta Herrero  
and Montse Peiron**

## **The urgent need to transform the global food system from top to bottom is filtering through to large sections of society**

# Guarantee the universal right to healthy sustainable food

People have the right to feed themselves with dignity, but this right is not guaranteed for everyone. In Barcelona, around 22% of families belonging to vulnerable groups have to cut back their spending on food in some way, whether in quantity (by skipping meals, for example) or in quality (by purchasing cheaper ultra-processed meals instead of fresh produce to save money).

This has a knock-on effect on their health: 14% of children belonging to disadvantaged sectors are obese, compared with only 4% of those from wealthier families.

The resources available to address these inequalities include a universal basic income and prepaid cards, to encourage personal autonomy. Then there are social initiatives such as community canteens, which are run and maintained by vulnerable groups as a way to encourage their capacity for self-sufficiency and mutual support. There are also donations and food banks, which can be resorted to in the event of emergencies.

There needs to be a guarantee that the food provided is healthy, sustainable and good quality. School dining halls can be used to educate children from all social classes on this topic.

# Montse and Merche Rodríguez */ The Gregal Soup Kitchen*

## **Stopping to make sure no one goes without**

*The financial crises of recent years have pushed more and more families into vulnerable situations. Sisters Montse and Merche Rodríguez decided that they needed to do something to help, so since 2013 they have been cooking and giving out food in the Besòs and Maresme areas of Barcelona, where they try to make life better in different ways.*







## **Food is not the only thing they provide**

The inertia of daily life often prevents us from taking interest in what is happening around us. Sisters Montse and Merche Rodríguez decided to take a year off work to take stock of their neighbourhood in the Besòs and Maresme district of Barcelona, and they saw that the financial crisis was hitting people hard. They saw people looking in the bins for sandwich crusts to eat and children who were not getting enough to eat at home but did not have food stamps to get free school meals. The sisters saw that “poverty was everywhere” and felt that they had to do something to help and tell people about what was happening.

Merche, who used to run a shop selling ready-cooked meals, and Montse, who drove ambulances, turned their lives around and on, 10 January 2013, they started the Gregal Food Kitchen and began to give out food. Fifty people turned up on the first day, and demand rose to reach peaks of 500. The sisters gave themselves a year to do this, but eight years later they are still working to make life better in any way they can.

Gregal has changed address several times (now it is at number 76 on Rambla de Prim, which it has just renovated), but the ideas behind it are the same. “No one leaves without a meal, wherever they come from”, says Merche. The sisters assume that everyone who comes to Gregal is genuinely hungry. They open from Monday to Friday and always offer cooked meals. The COVID-19 crisis meant that they had to serve takeaways, and they chose to serve them in reusable containers. The servings are larger on Fridays because they include food for the weekend, and they also give out bread, fruit, baby food and intimate hygiene products.

Gregal offers support that goes beyond providing food to eat. They can provide showers, doctors and lawyers, have presented CVs to companies and tried to help migrant minors as much as they can. With their volunteers, they collected money to pay for a training course as a mechanic for one of them and found a school for another who is deaf. They were also able to provide glasses for a child who could barely see and whose parents could not afford them. “You can’t imagine how he cried when he saw them with his good eye”, says Merche.

## **An openly anarchist cooperative**

The Rodríguez sisters explain that they began as “the gleaners of the 21st century”, going around looking for food from local stores. They can now rely on help from the Food Bank and Rotary Club, and since the middle of the year they are part of the Alimenta project, which encourages networking to channel surplus food towards social causes. Gregal also take products that their neighbours can provide spontaneously. “We cook what we have available”, says Merche, although they make sure the meals contain fresh vegetables and they do not use processed food. Their class consciousness is prominent in the sisters’ arguments, especially in their insistence that they are not engaged in charity. “We are working class and we have to keep up the fight for equality”, says Montse.

**The sisters assume that everyone who comes to Gregal is hungry: “No one leaves without a meal, wherever they come from”**









This is why they set up a cooperative, in which the seven people who work there all earn the same salaries, which are paid from private donations and municipal grants. They also have volunteers to help them, although they are not comfortable with the idea that they replace paid labour. The cooperative runs on anarchist principles and is proudly feminist and anti-fascist, in opposition to the lure of the right-wing parties who often show up in the neighbourhood. The sisters are also concerned that the project may be swallowed up by speculators because of their proximity to the Forum and Avinguda Diagonal, but they are not put off by difficulties.

In the first year of the COVID-19 crisis, they served more than 1,400 different people, and more than six thousand since 2013. At first many

of them were homeless, but now there are many who have a place to live but cannot earn enough to feed themselves. Many families work without contracts or in sectors which are severely affected by the economic paralysis of the pandemic, like hotels and restaurants. This is true of Jorge, a waiter with 39 years' experience in Barcelona. "If there are no tourists, there is no work", he says. He has been unemployed since the start of the pandemic and has had to turn to Gregal until the tourist business picks up, because the money he gets is just not enough. His benefits amount to 680 euros while his mortgage costs 600.

#### **Listen to provide good care**

We can never know for sure whether we will help others or need help ourselves, but everybody

**For its founders, Gregal is vital because some people will never have another way to guarantee having enough to eat**



needs a helping hand at some point. Helen is a volunteer from the Ukraine who has lived in Barcelona for 22 years, and who is now also a beneficiary of the food kitchen because she has had to close all her businesses. She explains how you "get to understand everyone" when volunteering, because you are in direct contact with people's problems and difficulties. Listening forms part of caring. "It is not easy, but it is very important", Montse says.

Some people make it out, they find work and need not come back to Gregal, but not everyone can get away. "There will always be a need for food kitchens, because some people will never have an alternative", comments Merche. She thinks that the creation of a universal basic income would help, but does not believe it will happen, and that is why she feels that Gregal is vital and will be more vital in the future. "The future is not looking very good", warns Merche, who recommends that other districts like hers need to get organized: "Either we do something ourselves, or the working classes are going to suffer badly".

### **New cooperatives to help the neighbourhood**

The Rodríguez sisters think that cooperatives "are the future for all workers". They plan to set up a new one to take charge of the school kitchens in their neighbourhood, which are normally run by a company from outside Barcelona, and another to deliver food to homes by bike at a reasonable price. It would be another way to help feed and care for their neighbourhood in a wider sense, by creating jobs and forging closer links between local people, such as the elderly who live alone.

# Mariona Ortiz and Laia Carulla */ Pont Alimentari*

## **Throwing food away should not even be an option**

*The desire to guarantee food for everyone and to create a world that respects the environment lay behind the foundation of the Pont Alimentari project. It works to recover food that is perfectly edible, but which is not available for sale, and to direct it towards those who need it most.*





There are situations so cruel that they force you to react. “How is it possible that there are families in Barcelona that do not have enough to eat, or who can only eat junk food, when the right to food is as universal as the right to education or a place to live?”, asks Mariona Ortiz, at the Fundació Banc de Recursos, aware of how much surplus food the world produces. It is closely linked to another phenomenon that angers Laia Carulla, assistant director of projects for the Rezero Foundation: “How is it possible for us to produce so much food, and then throw so much of it away?”.

In 2014, both entities set up the Pont Alimentari project to address both of these shameful situations: the food that we throw away and the food poverty in our own city. At that time, despite the lingering effects of the financial crisis that had started several years before, the need to guarantee food for everyone was countered by reticence about saving products that were in perfect condition but could not be sold. The two entities were able to put an end to this state of affairs, and the recovery of this food has expanded ever since.

Pont Alimentari acts as a mediator between the donors (supermarkets, grocery stores, events catering and facilities which cook for large groups, such as schools and hospitals, including major centres such as Can Ruti in Badalona) and the receivers, who are social entities that take charge of distributing food rescued from going to waste. They may donate it to vulnerable families or use it themselves, in sheltered housing,

for example. Making the process viable has been essential in gaining trust on all sides. This was possible through a protocol worked out with the Catalan Agency of Food Safety, which guarantees optimum hygiene and safety throughout the process. Besides, each participant signs an agreement that commits them to maintaining the food in perfect condition while it is in their hands.

Unlike other initiatives for distributing food, Pont Alimentari does not require the beneficiary families to be referred to the receiving entities by social services. There are people living in extremely fragile conditions who cannot or will not apply to social services because of the lack of real solutions they can offer. This enables the project to reach a lot more people, working through organizations such as mutual support groups or Sud Integració, for example, a group that works with homeless people and families in very precarious living conditions. Some of the receiving entities arrange for the rescued food to be collected by the same people who are going to benefit from it. This is the case of Egueiro, which focuses on dealing with drug addiction. Those living at its flats in Barcelona, where they are completing their therapy, can cycle up to 40 km in a day to visit collection centres for food that would otherwise be thrown away, such as the Bonpreu supermarket in the Mercat de la Llibertat.

### **The food that is saved**

Pont Alimentari coordinates the rescue of cooked food as well as fresh or dry produce. In 2020 it brought together 130 donors and 61 receiving

**“How is it possible that there are families in Barcelona that do not have enough food to eat, and at the same time so much food gets thrown away?”**



### **“Poor people shouldn’t have to eat food waste”**

Ortiz has always been moved by a deep-seated sense of social justice. It makes sense to her that people with limited resources should be able to take advantage of food that would be thrown away but feels that this is not the right way to end poverty. “It is a scandal that food is thrown away when there are people who do not know where their next meal is coming from, because it is a basic human right, and people should not have to eat waste food just because they are poor”, she says. It is one thing to fight against food waste, and quite another to fight poverty, which must always be handled with dignity to prevent stigmatization. Both of these problems need to be addressed separately.



entities, and it was able to rescue 456,875 kilos of food and 8,986 servings of cooked food; this is respectively seven and five times what they were able to get four years earlier. 80% of all their activity takes place in Barcelona and its metropolitan area.

Today there are many supermarkets where you can find items reduced in price because they are about to expire. This has not always been the case. According to the Waste Agency of Catalonia, each Catalan wastes around 35 kilos of food each year. This figure has not been updated for a decade, but it gives us an idea of where we started

from. “There was a time when waste prevention did not even consider the food that was being thrown away”, Carulla recalls, even though it could be addressed through prevention as well as by rescuing the food that was going to waste. For Mariona Ortiz, throwing it away should not even be an option because “it requires water, sunlight and resources to make it”, and food gets thrown away purely “for commercial and aesthetic reasons”: a tear in a packet of pasta or a mistake on a label for ham is enough to withdraw the product from sale, but it is still in perfect conditions to consume.

**The entities may donate it to vulnerable families or use it themselves, in sheltered housing, for example**



Food safety protocol makes it difficult to rescue some products, such as meat which has been on a platter, or fish, while others are much easier to handle, such as packaged goods or ultra-processed food. “One challenge for the project is to channel products that are mostly healthy” and good quality, adds Ortiz, because the beneficiaries often receive products high in saturated fats, which runs against their desire to work towards creating a more sustainable food system based on healthy produce. They also want to end their reliance on subsidies and become more self-sufficient.

### **Raising awareness in restaurants**

Rezero and the Banc de Recursos have embarked on another alliance, in this case to raise awareness and take action to reduce food waste through engaging with restaurants: the Remenja'mmm project. The goal is to overcome diners' embarrassment when asking to take home the food that they cannot finish, y encouraging the restaurants themselves to offer the service. 360 restaurants in Catalonia have signed up, 48 of which are in Barcelona.



# I eat and go shopping, just like everyone else

*Although the causes of extreme poverty form part of the power structures that tolerate and drive inequality, the people who suffer it are still stigmatised. We can only guarantee the universal right to food when we respect everyone's dignity.*

**Georgina Colomé and Mercè Darnell** / *Members of Caritas Barcelona and participants in Barcelona's Network for the Right to Proper Nutrition*

In the wake of the COVID-19 crisis, Caritas Barcelona had to triple the amount of financial support for food in 2020, compared with the previous year. In the social sector, as in previous crises, people have been made more aware of the lack of protection for certain basic needs, such as food and housing. This is mainly due to the fact that a large portion of the population have insufficient income, because of job insecurity and unemployment. On top of that, we still have not been able to set up a sufficiently developed system to guarantee income for people in vulnerable situations.

Times of crisis are also an occasion to think hard about how we can best meet these challenges, and how and when we

may be contributing to uphold structures that salve our consciences while actually perpetuating these same inequalities.

One of the most common ways for the general public to help is to donate articles of basic necessity to food banks. Unwittingly, however, this could end up reinforcing a two-level model of society in which many people's basic needs are met through food banks, excluding them from the conventional circuit of consumption. We also know that the people who rely on these charitable donations for the poor gradually lose their ability to fend for themselves. Relying on third parties for their food makes them even more vulnerable, as they lose their former habits and become more stigmatised.

## **Working from a rights-based perspective**

Approaching the issue as a question of human rights, particularly the right to food, means that we have to rethink any social interventions to prevent this social stigma and to respect people's privacy. We need to work to empower groups, encouraging neighbourhood projects run by residents and building a social economy that values collaboration. Social entities have to support actions that generate other similar processes in motion, meet several needs at the same time and have the capacity to transform lives.

Adopting this approach means we can encourage the people we support to become active and participative. This is the standpoint that has enabled the entities that form part of the Network for the Right to Proper Nutrition - a space promoted by Barcelona City Council as part of its Acord Ciutadà policy - to examine the issue in depth to create a reference document: *A collaborative model to guarantee the right to proper nutrition in the city of Barcelona*, which has been a vital part in the drive for policies and actions that focus on the right to food.

At Caritas in the Barcelona diocese, we are working on this model in two directions. The first is to support access to food for people at risk or in danger of social exclusion through financial aid, either directly or through a solidarity card: a pre-paid card that can be used to buy food in stores like any other customer. The beneficiaries can therefore continue to buy food in their usual shops and retain their sense of dignity and connection with their neighbourhood,

making use of their own capacity. The second direction consists of helping to reduce food waste by encouraging actions that go beyond the usual channel of making donations. We believe that making use of excess food creates an opportunity to break the distinction between the person who helps and who is helped, by creating food solidarity projects in which the beneficiaries can take part or find a place to work.

Recent years have seen an increasing number of actions in different sectors that coincide in the direction in which we want to move. This rise in activity lends more strength to our proposal and offers us more energies to guide us in the way we want to

## **The people served keep in touch with the neighbourhood and assert their capacities**

carry out our work. We are looking for alternatives and setting up projects that help to ensure that the people we assist can exercise their right to a sufficient, balanced diet, and that they can do this with dignity. It is not our place to question certain collective mobilizations and responses in the face of urgent needs, but we want people to think about the multiplier effect that our actions might have in the medium term if we put the people we help at the centre of what we do and adopt a posture of social transformation.

# Make access to sustainable food easier

Intensive agriculture and cattle farming and large-scale fishing destroy forests, deplete the soil and ecosystems, contaminate our water, exhaust the oceans, make the climate crisis worse and damage our health.

The global food industry prevents us from basing the economy on our communities and our food supply on local resources and seasonal rhythms. It also concentrates power in few hands, promotes unfair labour and trade relations, and increases energy use.

Easier access to locally sourced, seasonal products means making food available that is fresh, delicious and cheap, sustaining cultural eating habits and reinforcing local economies, especially when there are few intermediaries between producers and consumers. It also generates trust and satisfies the demands of both parties.

Easier access to organically grown crops or sustainable fishing means that we can contribute to preserving soil fertility, improve animal health and life in the seas, mitigate and adapt to climate change. It means supplying us with healthy food.

Agroecology takes all these factors into account to build a sustainable and balanced food system.

# Alejandro Guzmán */ Ecocentral*

## **Guaranteeing organic food in schools**

*Until around a decade ago, the idea of supplying organic food for children's school dinners was little more than a fantasy. The founding of Ecocentral, a central purchasing facility for school canteens to prepare organic, seasonal menus with locally sourced ingredients, was a turning point that made it possible.*







School lunchtime menus have always been able to offer lettuce and tomatoes, or a dish of potatoes with green beans. “Frozen”, stresses Alejandro Guzmán, who notes that this is a seasonal dish and that you can make salads with grated beetroot, parsnip or carrot, and everything can be grown organically. Ten years ago, Guzmán set up Ecocentral, a central purchasing facility for organic school dinners, and has shaken up the sector. The price of the ingredients can be adjusted to make it possible to serve organic, local, seasonal food in schools and for growers to receive fair prices. The families also know where the food their children eat comes from. The pandemic has also shown that even the most vulnerable sectors can enjoy access to organic food.

Guzmán was a partner in Manairó, a restaurant with one Michelin star, but he became disillusioned with haute cuisine. “It was really hard work and incompatible with having a family. In 2006, I was invited to a congress on slow food in Italy, Terra Madre. It was there that I learned that our model of food consumption was based on a model of society, and that was when I decided to leave the world of chemistry and glamour behind me and get down to earth”, he explains. I went to work in the bar Seco, where I went to the allotment in the morning and cooked in the afternoon and evening. After that, I worked in the bakery Barcelona Reykjavik, which no longer exists. “David Nelson - the owner - was the first person who paid me to go and look for local ingredients”, he recalls, such as older varieties of wheat. During the crisis of 2008, he made home deliveries of vegetables with Caputxeta Eco and, shortly afterwards, Joan Maria Ribas, one of the leading proponents of slow

food in Osona, set up the first company in Catalonia dedicated to supplying 100% organic school dinners: Alejandro began working as a supplier before founding Eco d’Aquí in 2011, which would later become Ecocentral.

It is located in a former factory in Hospitalet de Llobregat, which is well-connected, and from there it supplies 49 schools in Barcelona (it supplies 85 in total across the province, nearly all of which are public), especially with vegetables, but they also provide meat products. “It seemed impossible, but it is viable”, he says. They only handle produce that is certified organic, 73% of which they buy directly from the farmers, and most of these are in Catalonia. “We don’t handle anything that is not organic, because it is absurd to put toxins in food”, he argues. Only 80 cents of the 6.33 euros that families pay for their school dinners goes to pay for the food - the rest is devoted to other items, such as paying the monitors - but in organic canteens this amount is between 1.20 and 1.50 on average. The children notice the difference. The mandarins that Guzmán supplies ripen on the tree. “The kids will fight over them”, he assures us.

#### **A new model where everyone benefit**

The key to Ecocentral’s success is that everyone benefits, from the farmers to the pupils, including the canteen managers and Ecocentral’s distribution business. It is a step away from the predominant model which speculates with food. The change involves working with the farmers to ensure they limit the amount they grow to what the schools are able to consume. The invoice that the canteen managers pay is also broken down for them: on the one hand there is the cost of the prod-

**They do not serve anything that is not organic:  
“Putting toxins into food is absurd”**







## **“If you don’t believe us, call the farmer”**

Ecocentral wants to put an end to the disconnect between farmers and consumers by creating an innovative chain of agroecological shops, Eco d’Aquí, which has opened its first store in the Gràcia district of Barcelona. They have eliminated all the plastic, but the biggest change is the label, which gives the price of the product and the photo, name and contact details of the farmer, along with the source, distance in kilometres, ecological footprint (CO<sub>2</sub>) and the profit for the transporter, the store and the farmer. “If you don’t believe us, call them”, says Guzmán.

ucts and on the other there is the cost of the logistics. “Schools can buy their food at wholesale prices while the farmers earn more than the wholesalers will offer them”, Guzmán says, underlining the fact that transparency is one of their principles. They are also transparent in posting the list of farmers that they work with on their website.

Their mission does not consist only of supplying the canteens. “It is not ‘I buy a potato and bring it to you’; we have a person who plans what crops are planted; two more in charge of purchasing; another two for quality and support, and all of our drivers are ready to make an express delivery if you have forgotten to order something”, he explains. Once they arrive at the school kitchen, Ecocentral staff organize the produce. They also have reusable crates and have replaced the plastic drums that the oil is delivered in with stainless steel containers. The strength of this model is that it is subject to long-term planning, because demand is very consistent. The weakness is that there is no business in the summer, although they get around this by making preserves. When schools closed at the start of the pandemic, they had to furlough their staff and return to making home deliveries of baskets. During this time, Alterbanc, an alternative food bank, has been set up, and Ecocentral is part of it. According to Alejan-

dro, “vulnerable families are condemned to food deficiencies”, because they usually receive processed food along with milk and chickpeas, so we decided to set up a food bank that could offer them fresh, organic and locally sourced food. “There is another way to provide food support”, he insists.

Organic food still has a long way to go. Guzmán is wary of the first actions taken by Biomarket, the first wholesale market in Spain for fresh organic produce. He would like to see much more locally-sourced produce there. He also believes that schools should include the canteen in their educational programmes. One of his daughters came back from Mercabarna (the wholesale market for conventional products) with potatoes from Israel. “How is it even possible, if you want to teach children where potatoes come from, that you send them to a distributor who buys them from Israel instead of the farm which has been feeding the school for years?”, he asks. Ecocentral tries to put their farmers in contact with their little consumers. There was one of our farmers who went organic, and “the kids in the school told him how much they loved his plums, and we saw this farmer in his fifties crying because someone had told him that he was good at what he does”, he says. That’s when you know your work is really worthwhile.

**It comes from the idea that the food model is based on a model of society**



# Núria Cantí / Hortec

## Looking after everyone: from the farmer to the consumer

*The farming cooperative Hortec was set up in 1991 to distribute organic food when no one else was doing it. The food comes from member producers across Catalonia and other suppliers and can be found above all in shops that understand the products and treat them with care.*



**Hortec**  
agricultura ecològica





Hortec is an agricultural cooperative that distributes organic food, and it set out to be different from the others from the very start. It started life in 1991, when “very few people knew about organic farming”, recalls Núria Cantí, who is one of the co-directors. It was set up specifically to meet the need to distribute the produce, and although this arrangement leads to farmers planting quantities of crops that they know they will be able to sell, they can also plant larger quantities in order to sell more. The other distinguishing feature is that they always try to ensure that everyone benefits from their activity: the growers, the cooperative, the shops and the consumer.

“Everyone counts and has to be treated well”, insists Núria, who has done practically everything at the cooperative. She started one day, taking part in an assembly around 25 years ago, and has stayed on since then. She knows

what it means to work the land, because she did this, and she studied gardening, inspired by her grandfather, who was fascinated by flowers. “As far as I am concerned, plants are the best things on the planet”, she says. Hortec works above all with fruit and vegetables, although it also distributes a lot of other foods, such as herbs, edible seeds, sprouts, mushrooms, nuts, rice, pulses, dairy products and wine, preserves and fourth range products for restaurants, among others.

#### **They work with their partners and other suppliers**

The cooperative’s head offices are at Mercabar-na, which means they can offer faster service and fresher products. Part of its fruit and vegetables come from its members, who are 27 farmers in Catalonia. Their location across the country means that crops such as potatoes are in season nearly all

**They try to ensure that everyone comes out ahead: the farmers, the cooperative, the shops and the end consumer**

year round, the earliest coming from Alcanar and the latest from Llivia. The members have to sell their scheduled produce to Hortec, except for a small part that they can distribute to stores nearby, to prevent unnecessary transport. Hortec also works with a dozen or so other suppliers, who can agree on their planned crops, and another thirty who they can rely on when necessary.

They distribute their products mainly to shops. “We quickly realised that we had to work together with people who were like us”, she explains. They prefer to sell through stores that can offer customers good advice and handle the products with care, which is why they do not work with supermarkets. They try to supply locally grown, seasonal produce, but there are some items that are in demand all year round, such as tomatoes, and they need to find suppliers beyond Catalonia for them. “We know that shops need to have

#### **“If it was possible before, we can do it now”**

Núria and her family did the opposite of what most families do: they moved out of Barcelona and went to live in the country. She and her husband both raise crops in Anoia, and both are drawn to organic principles, bearing in mind that as recently as the 1950s, farmers were growing crops differently, without adding chemicals to the soil. “If they could do it then, we can do it now”, she thought, and they began to sell their organic vegetables in the markets. Then they came across Hortec, and they became members.









## **Aiming for ethical distribution**

For Núria Cantí, it is the distributor who controls the food chain, so “it is a tool that gives power, which can then be misused”. That is why she believes that it must be ethical. In the case of Hortec, she claims that it is ethical because it respects the farmers. All their workers are employed in the correct category, and they try to ensure good treatment of the shops they work with, because they are the backbone of organic consumption and they try to ensure that products “have the right price, so that consumers can afford them and be contented with what they eat”.

## **They insist that the expansion of organic foods must not make them lose sight of the need to ensure fair treatment for the growers**

a lot of variety”, says Núria, and she believes that among the consumers who want organic food “there are some who consume less animal protein and who also look for variety”.

In all, Hortec has some 600 customers, 120 of whom live in the metropolitan area of Barcelona. They also supply consumer cooperatives. They work with the food industry as well, as a way of distributing products that would be harder to sell in a shop, such as outsize carrots, but which can be used to make juices or preserves. They can also supply industrial kitchens, such as school catering services. They also provide food for social initiatives: Espigoladors and, through collaboration with Food Without Borders, the Mutual Support Network of the Congrés i els Indians district of Barcelona.

### **The challenges facing farmers**

The cooperative has gone from strength to strength, especially in times of crisis, which is when households increase their spending on food: first there was mad cow disease, then the crash of 2008, and now the coronavirus. In 2020, Hortec moved some 5.2 million kilos of food, which was around 650,000 kilos more than the previous year. Their consolidation has been

helped for many years by their status as practically the only distributor for organic fruit and vegetables. Although this is a good time for them, Nuria admits that “things could get complicated for farmers”, because there are more people than ever producing organic food and the unpredictable effects of climate change are affecting farms. To adapt to climate change, Hortec’s technician, Jordi Fumadó, believes that there will be new opportunities for farmers at higher altitudes where few crops are now being grown, or the land is not taken full advantage of.

The transition to an agroecological model has encouraged Mercabarna to set up Biomarket, a hall for concentrating business with wholesalers of organic produce, where Hortec also has an outlet. Looking ahead, Núria appreciates the desire of the European Union to increase organic farm production, but fears that it will end up “copying the same pattern as for conventional produce”. In her opinion, “if there is more organic production, it has to go hand in hand with better terms for the producer”, because we cannot forget that “it costs money to grow food, and the price has to be respected”. At Hortec, they set their prices every day in response to the market, but they always try to meet the needs of the growers.



# Àngels Fisas */ Verdures i Fruits Molins*

## Organic farmers with a stall in the marketplace

*Verdures i Fruits Molins sell their own produce at the Market of la Concepció in Barcelona. Their fields are in Molins de Rei, at the edge of the agricultural park of the Baix Llobregat, where they are holding out against urban and industrial sprawl.*







The stall of Verdures i Fruits Molins has been doing business at the La Concepció market in Barcelona for 42 years and is one of very few of its kind. The freshness of their produce convinces buyers, and this is their secret advantage: Àngels Fisas and her son, Lluís, run the business but they also work the land, so that they come to the market every day with organic products that were picked only the day before. They grow them on fields in Molins de Rei, at Can Fisas, next to the Llobregat river, at the edge of the agricultural park of the Baix Llobregat. Àngels insists that farmers should also have a place in the markets of Barcelona, a tradition that her family has maintained but also updated. “Our customers want organic produce, because they know that no chemicals are used, but they are amazed when they learn that we grow them too”, she says.

This family is part of the living history of how the fields alongside this stretch of the Llobregat river have been transformed before reaching the sea. Her son is the fourth generation of farmers, starting with grandfather Fisas, a quarryman with his own vineyard who moved from Palma de Cervelló to earn a living from the fertile land and fruit orchards that grew next to the river. It was in the 1930s, and there are receipts from that time to show that they were exporting lettuce to Germany and England. “It was Barcelona’s larder”, recalls Àngels, but the expansion of industry almost brought an end to this agricultural prosperity. Grandfather said they felt like Indians who were defending their reservations.

“Now we are important, but there is still something here that is not right”, she warns, fully aware of failed operations like that of Eurovegas, which would have put more pressure on the growers in the area. The Fisas family did more than resist their removal, they have modernized what it means to farm here.

## **Going organic is not easy, but it is rewarding**

Organic farming also benefits the land. “After sixteen years, we are starting to notice that the land seems to be at peace”, explains Àngels, but it has not been an easy road and there have been several crops lost along the way. They avoid pests by planting flowers at the margins that attract beneficial insects, but the systems need some time to become effective. “For two years I had to go chasing ladybirds to put them in test tubes and take them to another part of the field”, she recalls.

Lluís took over the business sixteen years ago and decided that they would have to go fully organic. According to Àngels, Can Fisas is determined to be “decidedly small and agroecological”, with the idea that any proposal to transform the relations between the land, the environment, the economy and work has to be based on a paradigm of equality, justice and collaboration. “A proposal that puts life in the centre of the picture”, she sums up.

## **Colours to distinguish organic from conventional**

Not everything on their stall is theirs, nor is it all organic, but they have found a way to guide their customers at a glance: their organic produce is on the brown side of the stall, while the conventional products are on the green side. They offer produce grown by fellow farmers in the Baix Llobregat (who are part of their network) and other local producers, as well as products from Mer-

**The Fisas family stress the agricultural character of the Baix Llobregat, which used to be “the larder of Barcelona”. Their holding is voluntarily modest**







cabarna, when there is no alternative to buying in food that is not in season at home. “We sell everything, because our customers want it all”, says Fisas, who can count on several restaurants among their regular customers.

We also want to recover older varieties to bring back the flavours of the past. They are collaborating with the Miquel Agustí Foundation, which is researching traditional crop varieties from Catalonia. They have around twenty varieties of tomato during the year, although one year they almost had forty different types. Even so, Lluís has to listen to his mother’s advice about which varieties are the best, because, as she puts it, “he doesn’t eat tomatoes and hasn’t got a clue about what they should taste like”. They have also acquired older seeds through other means, like that of the floreta (or carob) pea, which was a gift from Salvador, a farmer in Mataró who kept them from the time when his grandfather used to plant them between the carob trees.

### Long working days

To keep the business running, Àngels has managed to work for fourteen hours in a row. “You have to enjoy working in a market, because it can be really tough”, she admits. She has tried to cut down the time she spends at work, but still rises at half-past five to load the van and take it to the market to be there at seven. She works there until mid-afternoon, but the market remains open until the evening – nine people work on the stall in the day – and there is still work to do at home. “Yesterday I finished up at halfpast ten at night”, she says. They take orders around the clock and also make up baskets for their customers to pick up at their sustainable shops in Barcelona and Baix Llobregat. “You have to spend more time in the office than in the fields”, she says wryly, because she knows that the work in the fields

### Tomatoes do not go in the fridge

Àngels enjoys explaining to customers where each product comes from and likes to be asked about what is in season. Sometimes she is told that today’s tomatoes hardly taste of tomato at all, but her remedy for hers is as simple as keeping them in the right place. “Never put a tomato in the fridge, because it will turn red but will remain hard”, she warns. According to her, the best way is to emulate what happens in nature: let them ripen slowly at room temperature and they will have all the flavour and texture.

goes on all day. Her son tends to spend more time there, and there are three or four workers in all.

Their customers “don’t need to be convinced” of the importance of supporting local, organic farming, she asserts, referring to parents who buy from her to ensure that they give their children healthy food, young people who are food conscious and older clients who are accustomed to the flavours of the past. It encourages her to think that projects like this have a future. “There are lots of people who want to save all these things”, she says, and is happy to have sidestepped the speculators who, she believes, would rather that there were no more farmers left in the Baix Llobregat at all. “We don’t need to play that game; all we have to do is carry on, enjoy the work we do and try to keep our feet on the ground”, says Àngels. All she asks for is a little more support from the Administration, such as giving them access to new land to farm.

**Can Fisas practices agroecology, a model for farming, the economy and work that puts life at the centre and is based on equality, justice and sustainability**





# Green Commerce in the market: where better?

*There are three main pillars to a sustainable food system: locally sourced, organic food and sales channels that bring producers and consumers together. The municipal markets of Barcelona are a consolidated way of accessing food. The Comerç Verd, or Green Commerce, project aims to boost both elements.*

**Francesc Leyva** / *Fishmonger in Sants Market, Secretary of the Federation of Municipal Markets of Barcelona and head of the Green Commerce project*

The Comerç Verd programme has started in Barcelona this year to offer better access to sustainable food through the municipal markets. It is a story of meetings with shared commitments, of historic facilities and transformational infrastructures. It is also a story of ambition.

Markets have always operated as the focal points of Mediterranean settlements. The activity of customers and traders, and the movement of merchandise are images inseparable from life in our neighbourhoods and villages. There are 39 municipal markets in Barcelona, distributed among 73 neighbourhoods, and they welcome 65 million visits from locals each year, who come to the market to buy their food. They prefer it because

there are specialist stalls that have earned their trust through good service, quality products, freshness, proximity, health and, increasingly, sustainable production. There are around 8,600 traders and workers who make it possible.

Maintaining and reinforcing this established network, this access to food that is deeply rooted in our culture, is a vital part in our transition towards a sustainable food system.

We can support it by reinforcing the presence of local, organic food in our markets, and supply chains that ensure the viability of small producers. These three pillars of sustainable food have always been present, to an extent. For example, there are traders who produce their own organic crops.

However, they did not announce this fact because they were not aware of the value it confers. Enabling consumers to identify these products in the markets is the reason behind the Comerç Verd project, which is run by the Federation of Municipal Markets, the City Council's Commission for Food Policy and the Municipal Markets Institute.

The project is twice as effective when carried out in tandem with the primary sector, the farms, fishing sector and small producers. To promote it, the city has offered small producers and traders the CIAP - an exchange for locally sourced agricultural and food products - to make direct selling a real option. A retailer can place an order with a producer online, who delivers to the CIAP, where the trader can pick it up the next day. The other vital piece of infrastructure created by the Council is Biomarket, the first wholesale market in Europe to specialize in organic food. They are both located in Mercabarna, which means that the options for logistics are unlimited.

## How it works

The central piece of the project is the "Racó de Comerç Verd" label, which can be used by products that meet the criteria required, defined by agreement between the markets and technicians. At first, they are not too rigorous, because it is the first step on the path. The stalls that want to take part in the project sign the commitment to permanently abide by the criteria and in return receive support and training through the information services. They can then affix the sign on the side of the stall where they have the food that meets the criteria or apply it to the products themselves.

If selling fruit or vegetables, for example, at least 40% of the products have to be from Catalonia, ten products must be organic and 25% of all the produce must come from short supply chains. Because this sub-sector of locally sourced, organic production is fairly well established, there is a second category label, which is simply called

## To benefit producers, markets, citizens and the planet

"Comerç Verd", for stalls where the criteria mentioned above are 70%, 20 and 50% respectively.

One more example: If selling fish, at least five items must be captured in the Mediterranean, and five more bought in regional auctions.

## An inspiring start

The pilot programme started up in six markets in May. Horta, Concepció, Sants, Llibertat, Sarrià and Ninot. 57% of the stalls opted to take part, as they already meet the first set of criteria. It was welcomed warmly by a lot of the customers as well as the traders. A few days later, some of the stalls that had expressed reluctance decided to apply to join in.

Logically, we are optimistic about the prospects that Comerç Verd offers the primary sector, the market, the public and the planet. Working on this project is a constant source of satisfaction.

# Isabel Coderch

## */ Te lo sirvo verde*

### **How to make restaurants more sustainable**

*While she worked with various restaurants, Isabel Coderch saw for herself that there were many things that could be done to improve sustainability, and now she has a consultancy service, Te lo sirvo verde, to help them in this aspect. She does not expect them to be perfect, but to act responsibly, which is something that even a major chain like Udon can do.*







Alberto Gómez

## **The potential of bars and restaurants**

Even before she started her consultancy service, Coderch was aware of the role that restaurants could play in the creation of a more sustainable world, because their actions also make their customers more aware. “We cannot reorganize our food model without considering the restaurants in our city”, she says, and initiatives like that of Udon indicate that she is right. “If it decides to go organic, the impact it has is huge, and it is a sector that can transform our food model”, she argues.

**“Any kind of restaurant business can always be made more sustainable”**

Many restaurants still have a long way to go to become more sustainable. Food technologist Isabel Coderch realised that there were a number of things that could be done when she was working in school and hospital catering. “Every day, I saw lots of food being thrown away”, she recalls, but that was not the only thing that caught her attention: the school served individual yoghurts in plastic pots which she later discovered were not recycled, despite being disposed of in the yellow container. When the kitchens served fish, it was always cobbler, perch and tilapia, species which normally arrive frozen after travelling enormous distances. These observations led her to create the consultancy *Te lo sirvo verde* in 2015 to help those in the restaurant business to reduce their environmental footprint. Her clients include the Udon chain of Asian restaurants, based in Barcelona.

She calculated that each child at school wasted between 50 and 100 grams per tray per day, while the hospital wasted nearly 800 grams per patient per day, counting all the meals served. “I was shocked”, she admits, so food waste was included as one of the ten areas in which her consultancy helps restaurants to become more sustainable. This goal means going far beyond the issue of putting fresh, organic vegetables on the menu, it also includes the design of the facilities, energy

efficiency, waste disposal and mobility without exhaust fumes, among other aspects.

She is convinced that society is now much more aware and that restaurants which have not yet made efforts to be sustainable will have to do so eventually, because new laws will force them to (such as waste prevention or the ban on single-use plastics). Coderch insists that it is not about becoming wholly sustainable, but of making a commitment and starting to act. “People don’t expect restaurants to be perfect in this sense, but they do want them to be honest and to have plans to improve in environmental matters”, she stresses. Udon has been one of the pioneers. It has seventy outlets, ten of which are in the city of Barcelona, while the others are in the rest of Spain and Portugal. They have also opened up in Mexico City and the US.

### **Asian restaurants also have room to improve**

The head of R&D&I and executive chef of Udon, Alberto Gómez, explains that they felt that their product could have more flavour, and that going sustainable would improve this. “Five years ago, we started looking for suppliers who could help us to revive the flavour of our carrots”, he says. One year later, they met with Coderch and they now use 200 tons of organic, locally sourced product

## “If a chain decides to buy organic, the impact it has is huge”

every year. “If it is not organic, then we want it to be local”, he explains. Some products are imported from Asia, but their sake is made by La Seda Líquida, in Tuixent (Alt Urgell). “Our goal is to source most of our products in this way, so that we don’t have to buy so much abroad”, says Gómez.

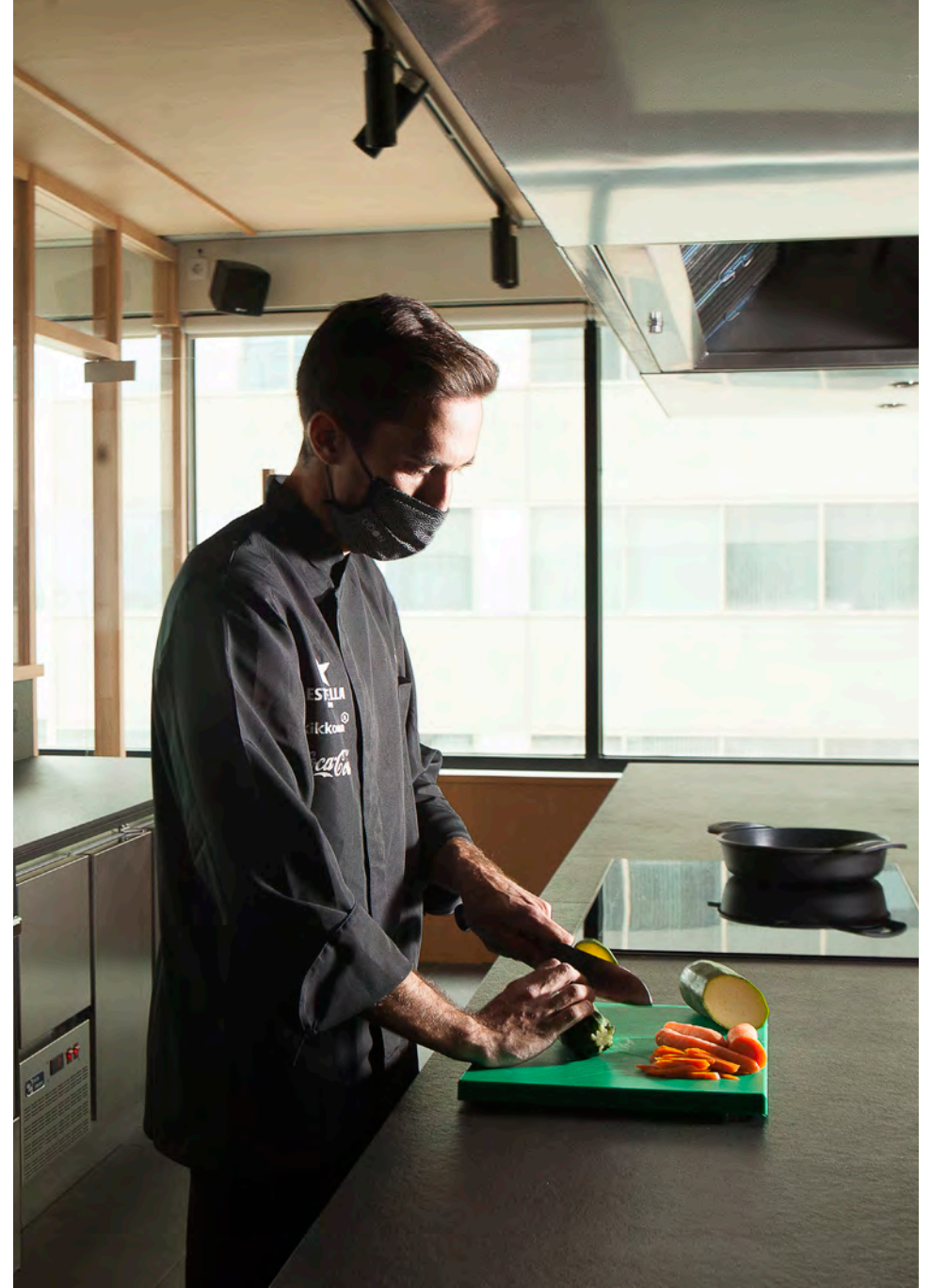
Central purchasing has made this easier, as the large volume of their orders means that they can negotiate low prices, but it has been difficult because they have a thousand workers but only have six outlets of their own, while the rest are franchises. This led them to prepare a system of internal audits to ensure that their changes are effective, with an application that sends information to employees, and they have begun awarding prizes to the most sustainable restaurants in the chain. Even so, the purchasing centre is in Guadalajara, and that means that locally sourced is a relative term: their chicken comes from the south of Madrid, both for the restaurants there and for those in Barcelona. They do have the animal welfare certificate from the European Chicken Commitment.

### Food is not the only aspect to consider

Udon has tackled more than one front: they separate their waste into six categories, their uniforms are made of organic cotton and they are working to ensure their cleaning products are

also eco. They have reduced the size of their cellulose towels in the restaurants and, by eliminating the teaspoon, they have stopped using plastic cutlery in their takeaway service. For Coderch, this is proof that even a major chain of exotic food has room to improve: if you cannot make changes to the products, you can work in other areas. “Any kind of restaurant business can always be made more sustainable”, she claims. She also finds the case of the Hospital Nostra Senyora de Meritxell in Andorra inspiring, as it no longer sends its organic waste to the tip but instead sends some 50 tons every year to make compost.

There are problems as well. It is not always easy to find alternatives – bioplastics are not as sustainable as they seemed – and “unfortunately, it is cheaper to pollute” than it is to implement a sustainability plan, according to Coderch. Even so, “if you reduce your energy and water consumption, keep your food waste in check, create a team, communicate well and attract more clients, you will be able to offset this investment”, she explains. She has absolutely no doubt about the need to take this step: there will be nine billion people on the planet by 2050, and if we continue to live as we do, we will need the natural resources of two planets. “If we really care about what happens to our children, we have to run our businesses differently”, she affirms.



## Blaming does not bring change

When children learn about sustainability at school, they take the lessons back home with them, but it is harder for adults to change, especially when they feel they are being told what to do or made to feel guilty. “Blaming others is never a good way to bring change”, she says, and this is why she always tries to convince businesses that they are doing the right thing, but they could be even better. She adds that implementing a sustainability plan is motivating for teams, because they feel they are helping to do the right thing.



# Adopt healthy diets

It has been estimated that one out of every five deaths around the world is due to poor diet. Ultra-processed products have a large part to play in this, as they are associated with obesity, high blood pressure and cancer, and a greater risk of death. Products like cakes, sugary drinks, artificial baby milk, pizzas, ice creams, ready meals are all high in sugars, saturated fats, salt and calories, and they are all poor in nutrients. They create addiction and are mainly consumed by low-income groups. On top of that, an excess of red meat causes cancer.

Work is needed in many different areas to turn this situation around and make healthy food more attractive. It could take the form of subsidies, awards and campaigns; fines or bans on unhealthy foods; shops could put the fruit and vegetables in prominent places and withdraw ultra-processed products to the rear; restaurants can offer more vegetable dishes in their menus, and social services and health centres can provide information and resources about food and health.

Schools are essential for teaching the citizens of the future about health, nutrition and sustainable food. Allotments in schools are contact with nature and a lot more can be learned from them.

# Laura Fernández Sau and Damià Bordes Homs */ Escola dels Encants*

## Healthy eating catches on in schools

*The separation of the countryside from the city is an experience we have from infancy. The Escola dels Encants is trying to remedy this and has become one of the first schools to teach about sustainable and healthy food, both in the meals served there and the workshops taught in class.*







## Network of agroecological dining halls

Vatua l'Olla is among the founder members of the Network of Agroecological School Canteens of Catalonia (XAMEC). It was set up to work with and boost agroecological school kitchens, and to offer guidance to school dining facilities that want to move in this direction. It has created a teaching resource pack for planning excursions related with agroecology for classroom activities. "For children, visiting a farm and seeing the cows that make the yoghurt that they eat is a treat", says Laura.

The new generations have the opportunity to revolutionise our ideas about food. This is what we think at the Infant and Primary school Encants de Barcelona, where children can learn about healthy and sustainable food in the midday space, which is how we refer to the dining hall, in the terrace garden and in the workshops on this subject held in lesson time. Children aged between three and five are taking part in today's class. They have to guess the names of the seasonal fruit and vegetables that Laura Fernández Sau is showing them. She is a nutritionist and responsible for Vatua l'Olla, a company set up by a group of parents who want to improve the food served at the school. The little ones also have their say. "I love cherries, watermelon, melons and bananas", says one boy, while another girl says that she has brought strawberries. "Where did you get them?", Laura asks her, surprised,

and the girl replies: "From the shop". None of the fruit that the children mention is in season when the workshop is being held, and the bananas must have come a long way. Laura asks the girl to ask where the strawberries come from when she goes to the shop again, because it is always better to eat food that is grown near to the school.

### How to learn about healthy, sustainable food

Before the guessing game, the children go to visit the kitchens, because there will be bròtola for lunch, a variety of hake that few adults would be able to recognise. They see how it looks, smell it and watch as it is prepared. The children are content at lunchtime. Olivia likes the daily menu - there are lentils as well - while Luciano Agustín likes the artichokes and broccoli. "The most nutritious vegetable in the world", he says, and these are the infants. The workshops help to

make children more aware of why it is so important to eat seasonal or ecological products. Laura describes how she explains to children why brown rice is good for them, or why they don't have many things fried in batter. "Then you realise that the children are going home and explaining it all to their families", she affirms.

The school is a pioneer in many aspects related with their dinners, where they try to make menus from fresh, ecological, seasonal, locally sourced produce. Twice a week they are served plant protein only, and fruit is available outside dinner time, so the children can get it when they are hungry, eat more of it and finish it. They can have more helpings of everything except meat. "A lot of families don't understand", Laura admits, but points out that this is in line with the recommendations by the Barcelona Public Health Agency about meat consumption and sustain-

able, healthy eating, which is what Vatua l'Olla guarantees. "It is sustainable to eat plant protein and not to have two servings of meat", she says. Apart from the times when the pandemic has prevented it, the children serve their food themselves, a form of autonomy that their families appreciate, along with the fact that they too can eat at the school with their children.

### How did we get here?

When the school was installed in prefab blocks, the food came from a catering service. This service offered ecological food but not with the quality that the families wanted. "The fish was frozen, and the fruit and veg were organic all right, but they could not guarantee the source", she explains. Some mothers who are nutritionists, and therefore aware of what healthy eating means, ended up telling the company what the menus

**The little ones learn why it is good to eat brown rice and not to have much food fried in batter**







Damià Bordes Homs

## The garden teaches the rhythm of the seasons

Although sustainable food is a core subject at this school, the workshop makes it clear that it is always hard for city children to bridge the disconnect from the countryside, especially in today's world. "Everything is so fast, and we are living in Amazon time, when 'you want something and can get it the next day', and nobody wonders where things come from any more", says Damià Bordes Homs, the teacher responsible for the school's Environmental Committee.

He grew up in a rural area and understands the importance of including nature's rhythms in teaching. "I think it is essential to bring children closer to the natural fact of the life cycle: growth, reproduction and finally death", he says. What is more, the garden gives us unlimited opportunities for teaching: maths, language, science, group work, learning to learn, autonomy, decision making, etc.

should be like. They had to do this because there is no law in Catalonia that establishes the conditions for providing healthy school dinners. Instead, "it has been left to private companies to manage our dinner times", she complains. As a result, they set up Vateria l'Olla, which won the contract to run the canteen when the school was finally transferred to a building for the 2015-16 school year.

Using ecological produce is hard work, because the vegetables are not as clean and need to be cut up, or the burgers have to be made in the kitchen, but this can be done by hiring more staff. The 6.33 euros that the families pay for each

meal means that every step along the supply chain is paid for, says Laura. It also pays for the workshops, which ensure that "the kids see the kitchen as another classroom in the school", she explains. The workshops are very important for her. "You are giving future consumers the means to make a change towards a model of nutrition that we want", she says.

## It is not established by law how healthy food should be ensured in school canteens



# Carlos A. González Svatetz */ Epidemiologist*

## **Less meat and fewer ultra-processed foods at the table, for health and the planet**

*Red meat forms part of our diet in many homes, and a third of the calories consumed by Spanish people come from ultra-processed food. Carlos A. González Svatetz thinks we have to reduce our consumption for the sake of our health, and for the sake of the planet, in the case of meat.*





**The fact that the farmer names the animal does not make the meat any less red. It is advisable not to eat more than half a kilo of meat per week**



Climate change is an enormous challenge that is putting the future of humanity at risk, but there are still ways in which everyone can do their part to assuage its effects. According to Carlos A. González, epidemiologist and senior researcher at the Catalan Institute of Oncology, “there is a profound connection between the health of the planet and ours”, to the extent that what is good for one also helps the other. One way that we can make a contribution in this situation is to make changes to our diet. We can limit our consumption of red meat, for example - the meat of mammals such as pork, veal, lamb - especially if we avoid processed food, such as packaged hamburgers or the cured meats sold in our supermarkets.

González is aware that his message is not popular with the meat industry, which is the largest food segment in Spain, but he is not saying anything that has not been said before. In 2015 the World Health Organization declared that red meat was probably carcinogenic and that processed red meat does cause cancer. He points out that this news did have an impact, and that consumption fell in the following months, but it picked up again soon after. Even so, the research which led to that statement is totally valid. “There are significant indications that show that red meat increases the risk of having cancer”, he warns.

### **Increased risk of suffering cancer**

Even though a farmer might call each animal by its name, and give them fresh grass to eat, red meat is still a cause of cancer. “If it is red, it has a pigment, heme iron, which causes extensive endogenous formation of nitrosamines, regardless of how the animal has been fed”, he says. Nitrosamines are one of the main carcinogenic factors in meat. Excessive consumption increases the risk of suffering colon and rectal cancer as well as other types, but also myocardial infarction, type-2 diabetes, obesity and strokes, González states.

He therefore insists that we need to limit our consumption of red meat to half a kilo a week (around 70 grammes per day) and stop eating processed food. While red meat does have nutritional benefits, such as vitamins B6 and B12, when it is processed “studies have not found any level at which it is harmless”, and “it barely provides any nutrients at all”, continues the researcher. Epidemiological studies into these diseases cannot determine whether it is the way the animal is raised or how the meat is processed that alters the risk of illness, because the population studied is unaware of these parameters with regard to the meat they usually eat. González says that he would only approve of a hamburger made

## Approximately 20% of greenhouse gases come from livestock farming

from a piece of meat bought from a butcher. In practical terms, he stresses that we need to stop eating cured meats every day, and replace the ham in our sandwich with an omelette, cheese or tuna.

### Reducing greenhouse gases

González speaks clearly, with the authority of a long career in research, in which he has been a reference for the European prospective investigation into diet, cancer and nutrition. This study analysed 500,000 people in ten European countries, 40,000 of whom were in Spain. Retirement forced him to withdraw from this macro-study, but he then started to study the relationship between food and climate change, which was the origin of his book *Emergencia climática, alimentación y vida saludable* (Icaria, 2020). He maintains that besides reducing our consumption of meat for the sake of our health, we should also do it for the climate, because it has been shown that around 30% of greenhouse gases come from agriculture, and most of these come from livestock. Specifically, from forest clearance to make land for pasture, and the methane released from cattle manure and slurry, which generates nitrogen dioxide (another greenhouse gas).

According to González, it is still not clear whether extensive livestock rearing generates fewer gases. “It all depends on how this kind of cattle farming is done”, he explains. Extensive farming may be preferable, as long as no forests are cut down to make pastures. In fact, it could be one of the ways to maintain small villages populated, with sheep grazing in forests to prevent wildfires, as in some parts of Catalonia. In countries like Brazil, Argentina or China, however, “extensive farming is more harmful” because it means cutting down forests, as he reminds us.

Despite all the evidence in favour of eating less red meat, González himself does not always find it easy to lead by example. He was born in Argentina, where asado is a way of life that his Catalan friends can't get enough of. Even so, when talking about it, he returns to the subject of science. “Increasing the cooking temperature of red meat generates aromatic polycyclic carbohydrates and heterocyclic amines that are considered to be the source of the carcinogenic effect”, he notes, conceding the admission that “sometimes, knowing something doesn't change what we do”, which reflects on his time as a smoker: even when you know all about its harmful effects, it is still hard to give it up. He did manage to quit, though, and has not smoked for thirty years.



## Ultra-processed food and health inequalities

Ultra-processed food are edible industrial products made from elements of other foods and a wide range of additives (preservatives, stabilising agents, food colouring, etc.). In general, they are high in sugar, saturated fat, salt and calories while being poor in nutrients. It has been estimated that a third of the calories ingested by Spanish people come from ultra-processed food, which includes soft drinks and energy drinks, crisps, cakes, breakfast cereals and pizzas, and pre-cooked meals.

Recent prospective studies indicate that eating ultra-processed food can shorten life expectancy, and it is linked with obesity, high blood pressure, cancer, metabolic syndrome and asthma, among other conditions. These diseases affect the poor disproportionately: ultra-processed foods offer cheap calories, and 80% of consumers' decisions are determined by price. In Catalonia, there are five times fewer cases of obesity in women with university degrees than among those with primary studies or no qualifications at all



# Just eating healthy is not possible

*Healthy food means a lot more than just a nutritious and balanced diet: we also have to feed the cultural, social and psychological aspects of our lives. The Fundació Alícia works to help us eat better in every possible sense*

**Toni Massanés Sánchez** / *Director General of the Fundació Alícia and winner of the Ciutat de Barcelona Gastronomy Award in 2016*

Human beings do not eat just to feed ourselves. In fact, eating for our health alone is not healthy. Nor is it possible, because we need our food to provide us with other values, besides nutritional ones. Even when, for whatever reason, people take care to ensure their nutrition is correct but do not take their cultural, social and psychological needs into account or the efficient use of resources, we know that such reductionist approaches are not effective.

The Fundació Alícia is a nutrition laboratory in which a cross-disciplinary team of scientists and cooks work together on projects to encourage everyone to eat better, whatever their circumstances. One of their areas of interest is health, where they innovate with

products and strategies applied to different ages, disadvantaged groups and dozens of medical conditions, always working with leading hospitals and research centres.

The Foundation has developed a tool, the Alícia Index, which covers the holistic aspect of food and allows users to measure the values of each specific case. These evaluations always depend both on the object (what is eaten) and the subject (who is eating), as well as the context and situation. The index is divided into three sections, because eating better means that food is healthy, sustainable and good. Each of these three sections is further divided into three sub-sections.

When we say that food must be healthy, what we mean is that it must be safe, above

all, without causing us harm or putting us at risk. However, the same piece of bread may not be equally safe for a person with or without gluten intolerance, to give just one example. The quantity of food must also be right: neither too much nor too little. Someone who is inactive does not need the same calories as a manual worker or someone who does sport. Finally, being healthy also means being balanced. We need a variety of nutrients in different proportions and frequencies depending on our age, whether we are ill, pregnant, etc.

Our food must also be sustainable. This means that it must be organic, in the sense that it is environmentally responsible and has a minimal effect on the planet. It must also be affordable, because everyone should have access to good food as a basic human right, even though it is a shameful fact that there are 800 million people who do not have this. We therefore need to ensure that people have enough to live on, not just those who buy the food, but the people who make the food as well, because without having them near us, we would have no food. Finally, our food must be practical to prepare, distribute, acquire and cook. We eat several times a day, and we need to eat to live, not live to eat.

Nevertheless, the food must be good, in the sense that things are not intrinsically good, but that we like them because we identify them with what we need - or at least that is the idea. Above all, good means ethical. In fact, we do prefer and enjoy more (the taste of) things that are in tune with our moral principles (goodness as a quality of virtue). It must also be significant: our food and meals

convey sense and meaning with regard to the cultural and social dimension of *who* (whether individual or collective) is eating. This burden of embedded meanings, values and emotions that accompanies our food explains why we find some things better (yes, better tasting), like our mother or grandmother's cooking, which are always the best in the world. Last, but not least, good food also stimulates us. As we have said, we use our mechanisms of desire and pleasure to identify what we need, but this is obviously something that changes all the time. This mechanism is very dynamic, and the point is not whether "we like it", but whether we want it. That is why we talk about food that is delicious, but also exciting.

## We need our food to provide us with other values, besides nutrients

Each of these nine parameters is assigned a number - negative, positive or neutral - to identify critical points and to spot where they can be improved. Once the prototype has been developed and implemented, we can see whether it has improved, and the impact achieved. The goal is always to increase the index value, something which can be achieved by redesigning *what* we eat, or educating, enabling and even motivating *who* eats, as well as changing the conditions, surroundings and situations.

Because if we want to eat better food, we have to eat better.

## **Eat less and better meat, for us and for the planet**

Consumption of meat and meat products is increasing around the world, especially in Asia. In Spain, consumption is four times higher than the level recommended by the Spanish Society of Community Nutrition. The excess of red meat, especially when processed, is one of the worst aspects of our diet, from the perspective of our health.

Cattle farming is also the branch of the food industry that makes the largest contribution to the climate crisis, emitting 20% of all greenhouse gases. It also absorbs a lot of natural resources, such as water and land which is used to grow cattle feed or pasture, as well as energy. Moreover, the animals in intensive farms are overcrowded and ill.

We should eat less meat. Restaurants can help by serving smaller portions of meat and processed meats, and by including more vegetarian and vegan options in their menus.

We should rely more on extensive cattle farming, which uses local resources like pastures and organically grown feed and encourages biodiversity by raising breeds that are suited to the environment, giving them enough space to allow the animals to live in comfort. We need to demand this in markets and local shops.



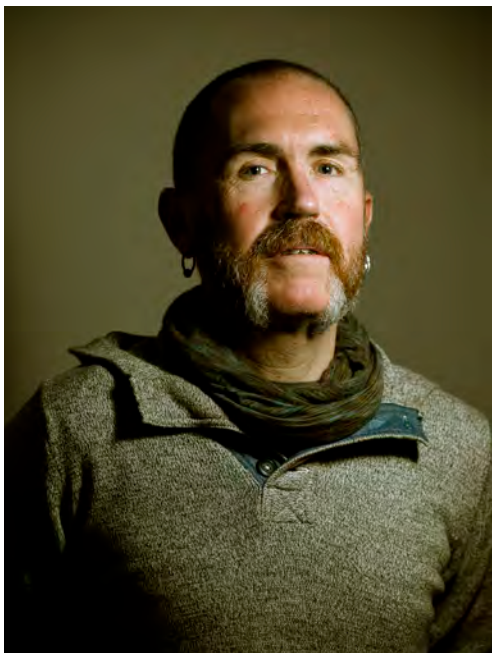
# Daniele Rossi

## */ Rasoterra*

### **Cooking with identity**

*Rasoterra is a vegan restaurant in the Gothic quarter of Barcelona where Daniele Rossi has given tangible expression to the ideas behind the city's slow food movement, in which he is one of the founders. It serves sustainable haute cuisine that also promotes local and seasonal produce which comes with names and surnames.*





Guillem Galera



Chiara Bombardi



Daniele Rossi

**“When everyone adopts sustainability, there will be no need for slow food”**

If gastronomy is a form of cultural expression, a restaurant can also have a cultural vocation. This is the idea behind Barcelona’s vegan restaurant, Rasoterra, where Daniele Rossi is a partner, alongside Chiara Bombardi and Guillem Galera. It opened in 2013 in the Gothic Quarter and is remarkable for its work to promote sustainable cooking. The result is that the ingredients of each dish are produced locally and have names and surnames attached to them. “We try to explain the products, the people and the land, which is a cultural act, it gives the dishes an identity”, says Rossi.

Rasoterra is one of the tangible expressions of Slow Food Barcelona, which Rossi and Bombardi founded in 2005. They are also behind the Mercat de la Terra, in Poble Sec, and several other vegetarian restaurant initiatives in the city: Sésamo, which

they are no longer linked with, and Bar Seco. Slow food is an international movement that was started in Italy in the 1980s by Carlo Petrini. For Rossi, it means being sustainable “in terms of the environment and also economically”, but not just for the benefit of the restaurant. “Sustainability also means local and seasonal produce, which gives you the option to eat better, with more flavour, and to think in terms of the territory and to make sure that the money goes there”, he continues.

### **Appreciate every ingredient**

Everyone is talking about sustainability now, but when they started out, no one had heard of it. People did not pay much attention to where the ingredients came from because “Spain is a land of recipes, not products”, says Rossi, before

confessing: “Sometimes I find myself explaining to Catalans what products they grow”. There has been more appreciation of the product as the amount of organic produce has grown, but there are also multinationals that can certify their food as eco. This is why it is so important to focus on what lies behind the food.

When they set up Rasoterra, they were full of enthusiasm for doing things right, with the ideal of creating “the best vegetarian restaurant in the world”, and one which would appeal to everyone, including those not accustomed to this type of food. This was a departure from the attitude of many long-standing vegetarian places, where the diners eat traditional dishes (brown rice and lentils, dahl, hummus) in respectful silence. Theirs is a bistrot which serves choice dishes and wines,

especially natural ones (without added sulfites). They feel that they have not managed to become the best, but their goal of continuous improvement still holds. The founding principles of the restaurant rest on the three Ps - planet, product and people - and the pandemic has brought forward a decision that would have been unavoidable sooner or later: to make it a vegan restaurant, as their way of saying “we need to be more sustainable still”, Rossi explains. It did not require a huge effort on their part, because the menu only had two vegetarian dishes - one with egg, and a board with a selection of cheeses. He himself is not vegan, nor is he even a vegetarian. “I started out on this venture as a foodie, interested in the whole range of flavours”, he recalls, so although meat or fish have been off the menu at home for twen-







## The table service aims to explain the products and where they come from

ty-five years, he still orders it when eating out because, as a gourmet, he wants to stay up to date.

### A unique way to create dishes

Their priority is to deal with their suppliers directly - where possible without middlemen - and most of the vegetables they use come from La Pitotxa, an agroecological cooperative in the Garraf. "They decide the menu", says Rossi, because they operate a system like that used for home deliveries: they send a list of the products available every week, and this means that the kitchen is closely tied to seasonal fare. There is only one dish which is a constant, their spinach croquettes, while they retain the basis of others, such as the taco, with variations that depend on the ingredients available, whether calçots, artichokes, cabbage or tomatoes. They only have a menu and a tasting menu. They no longer offer a lunch menu, which makes their work easier and better: "We have fewer diners, we make a living, our kitchen is not stressed, there are fewer of us working and we have time to explain things better". They try to maintain an equal relation with the staff, and everyone can contribute when creating a dish.

The road to sustainability is not always an easy one. "When we started, one of our decisions was to ensure that the water did not come in plastic", he recalls, and they were one of the first places in

Barcelona to offer tap water filtered by osmosis. They have managed to source the black rice they use from the Ebro Delta, but their sugar still has to come from far away. The building does not let them install solar panels, and they have to carry their glass bottles for a few streets to recycle them, because there are no containers nearby. Even so, they practice sustainability every day, and Rossi has even found a way to prevent any plastic from finding its way into the organic waste by mistake. Before they tie up their bag, whoever is in the kitchen takes a photo of the contents to check there is nothing there that does not belong.

The pandemic has shown them that they have plenty of loyal local customers that have enabled them to carry on, despite the absence of tourists. Rossi would like the slow food movement to disappear one day. "When everyone adopts sustainability as part of their life, there will be no need for slow food", he says. He also desires a world where people ignore labels, overlook appearances and focus on the essence of things. "I would like Rasoterra to be in a list of the best restaurants in Barcelona", but not as a vegan option, just as a restaurant, he says. Maybe the day will come when someone asks him: "What kind of cook are you, Daniele?" And he will reply: "I do plant cooking. Come in and sit down, I'll tell you about it".



## Confit of artichokes from el Prat with orange, white corn polenta and vegan chorizo

### Artichokes

• Artichokes • Mint • Garlic • Ground black pepper • Orange • Lemon

Clean the artichokes and dip them in water with lemon to stop oxidation. Put them in a tray with three crushed unpeeled heads of garlic, three mint sprigs, salt, black pepper and an orange cut into slices, and cover them with oil. Cook them for 20 minutes at 180 degrees.

### Polenta

• White polenta • Vegetable broth (6 times the amount of polenta)

When the broth boils, add the polenta and stir so that it does not stick. Cook on very low heat for at least 20 minutes. Turn off the heat when the liquid has been absorbed.

### Vegan chorizo granola

• 100 g of red rice • 50 g of pumpkin seeds • 1 spoonful of tomato puree • 1 teaspoon of smoked paprika • 1 chili

Cook the rice and allow it to cool. Mix all the ingredients in the processor until it has the consistency of granola. Spread the mixture on baking paper on a tray and cook for 20 minutes at 140 degrees, or until it is dry.



# Emma Viñas

## */ Turó de les Nou Cabres*

### **Herds in tune with nature**

*Emma Viñas' life moves to the rhythm of her goats and sheep between Terrassa and Matadepera, a few kilometres away from Barcelona. Along with her partner, Pau Garcia, they practice extensive livestock farming at Turó de les Nou Cabres, an initiative that aims to guarantee animal welfare and to care for its environment.*







Turó de les Nou Cabres is a family business that is breaking moulds. At its head are Emma Viñas and Pau Garcia, a young couple with three small children who are totally dedicated to extensive livestock farming in the vicinity of Terrassa, one of the most populated cities in Catalonia. Emma and Pau have around 450 sheep and some 120 goats that graze in the area around the farmhouse of Can Bogunyà del Mas, near the former Hospital del Tòrax. The meat from their lambs and goats, and the cheese they produce, are all sold by mail order across Catalonia.

The lives of these two farmers revolve around their sheep and goats. “They are our livelihood, so we have to take great care of them”, says Viñas. If necessary, they take their flock of sheep out to graze at night, to protect them from the heat. “If you take them out from nine to five in summer, you will see that they have stopped grazing by ten o’clock, so they won’t produce the milk and the lambs won’t feed...”, she explains. The care of their children has had to fit in with their routines. Emma starts work at two in the morning, making cheese. At five o’clock she milks the goats and continues to work until lunch time. She does office work in the afternoon, while Pau takes care of the work from eight in the morning and through the rest of the day. They try to spend more time with their children at the weekend, but the only day in the year that they take off is Christmas, for their dinner with the family.

They would prefer their animals to be of local stock, because they “are better adapted to the territory”, says Viñas, but it is not always possible. The native goat breed is the Pyrenean, but it does not give much milk, so they have the florida variety, which come from Seville. The sheep are a native breed, though. They are from Ripoll and are notable for their horns. Emma and Pau do not cut them

## **Relearning how to live in the country**

It is hard to herd livestock when a major city is just on the other side of a ditch. They have lost sixty sheep by falling in the ditch in the last year and a half because people think it’s ok to walk towards a flock with their dog off the leash. Viñas is aware that there is a lot that we have to relearn. “People migrated from the countryside to the city, and they have forgotten all about it”, she says, and that is why she spends a lot of her time on building a good relation between the urban areas and her rural world.

back. This year, they have also added latxa sheep, from the north of the peninsula, which are prized for their milk, which they will use in the same way as the goats. They used to sell all their milk, but now they keep more of it back to make their cheese, which is a soft variety. They make it in a mobile workshop that they were able to obtain through microfunding.

### **They have managed to prosper**

Turó de les Nou Cabres began life a decade ago, and it has been profitable enough to ensure that she does not need to go back to work in a hospital. “We are very happy and proud to be able to say that we earn a living from this now”, says Viñas, who stresses that it is the milk that has made it possible. “The milk means we are not in poverty”, she says, because “living off the meat means having a lot of animals or land or other rights”, and this is not their case. They are renting the farmhouse, but their intention is to move to another in the Nature Park of Sant Llorenç del Munt to expand their project with sustainable criteria, with two pens that they can show to visitors, and

**The lives of Emma and Pau are conditioned by the needs of their flocks, day and night. The only time off they allow themselves is on Christmas Day**









## Young people going back to the land

Their parents' generation (she is 37, he is 33) emigrated from a rural environment, but this generation is starting to move back there. "The seed has been planted to make everything more natural and more local", Viñas explains, to the extent that "courses for training shepherds and other farm work have never been as popular as they are now", and there are students who are learning to be shepherds at Turó de les Nou Cabres. In her opinion, "this is an indication that young people are interested in finding out how people in rural areas can live", although she admits it is a hard road, because you have to compete against "dirt cheap" prices and product from abroad.

by installing solar panels and glass walls. They also want to have their own slaughterhouse.

For now, they are content to take the sheep to the Park to graze, while the goats remain on the farmland, some 100 hectares of fields and woodland, because they need to be milked every day during ten months of the year. Emma is more in charge of the goats. She knows them all by their names: Fina, Presumida, Mini Alpineta, who is "the tallest of the bunch", she says proudly as she looks for her among the herd. That is probably because the males took longer to mate with her, a pace that has been respected by not using methods of artificial insemination. Their food consists entirely of what they are able to eat when grazing, although they can also be fed forage or other fodder, when necessary.

### **Advantages of extensive farming**

Viñas is a co-founder of Ramaderes de Catalunya, an organization that seeks both to raise the profile of women in rural areas and show the advantages of cattle grazing. Turó de les Nou Cabres was cer-

tified as organic, but they withdrew because they considered that the criteria were not restrictive enough, arguing instead for a specific certification for extensive cattle farming. They believe in "trying to adapt to the natural condition" of the animals, which benefits them, the environment and the product that makes its way to your table. "A sheep or goat knows what it has to eat in each season of the year", she says, so there are times they look for walnuts, and others when they look for acorns. "The more types of food they can eat, the better their milk and meat", she claims.

They also help to keep the forests under control. They have an agreement with the Forestry Defence Association and the Council of Mata-depera for the sheep to graze around the housing developments next to the Park of Sant Llorenç. It is a good way to prevent wildfires, to keep the woodland clean and open around the housing estates, the animals are well fed and the farmers earn a little extra money, although the amount they receive has declined over the years.

**The sheep and goats feed mostly on what they find when grazing, which varies according to the time of year**





## Promote fair trade in the food chain

The whole food industry runs on exploitation, racism and job insecurity. The producers have to sell at absurd prices, wages are low along the whole chain, with exploited crop pickers housed in squalid accommodation, frequent accidents among workers in the canning or meat industries, subject to temporary contracts and a rampant gender pay gap in the catering industry. These conditions leave little room to plan, buy and prepare food, a job that women often have to do.

Besides this, the global food market discriminates against poorer countries, forcing them to open their borders or pay export duty.

Making the food industry fairer would transform society completely, because of the large number of jobs it provides. Public contracts could include criteria for encouraging improved working conditions. Customers could buy food in their local store, which is supplied by many wholesalers with limited capacity to accumulate negotiating power or through short supply chains such as cooperatives and consumer groups. When we need to buy foods from the Global South, we should choose those which are Fair Trade.

# Martín Habiague and Andrea Hernández */ Cuinant Oportunitats*

## **Kitchens in rebellion against social exclusion**

*Not everyone has the same chance of getting ahead in life. This is the reason why the social project Mescladís, which includes Cuinant Oportunitats, was set up. It is an educational initiative that offers cooking classes to help ensure that no one gets left behind.*





The lives of many immigrants contain many chapters that are dominated by frustration. They are often condemned to the margins of society, sometimes through the application of administrative barriers, but there are some of them who refuse to accept that nothing can be done about it. Some time ago, Martín Habiague decided to leave Argentina for Europe, found himself in Barcelona and discovered that cooking was his way to make a small contribution to helping migrants – and others who are not migrants – to get ahead. His efforts are channelled through the social insertion programme called Cui-nant Oportunitats, which is part of the Mescladís social project that was set up in 2006.

Towards the end of the nineties, Martín migrated to Belgium for love and the idea that “Europe was the heartland of Human Rights”, but he soon realised this was not the case, and things have only become worse in the meantime. “We live in

the logic of a war against migrants”, he laments. To challenge this, he set up Mescladís, a series of community initiatives which also included the creation of a restaurant – there are now two, at Pou de la Figuera and in the street of Comte Borrell. They were set up to provide a source of income – they provide 90% of it while the rest comes from subsidies – and for the important role that food has. It is one of the few things that migrants do not leave behind from their homeland.

### Kitchens as a space for cohesion

According to Habiague, any dish contains ingredients that have travelled around the world – hence the name Mescladís, or Blend – and this diversity can enable us to enrich each other. “You find yourself, and can share who you are with others, and it tastes good”, he stresses. Food is also loaded with symbolism – it is a landscape, a



social act, a sentiment – and if we close our eyes and want to go to a place where our emotions and feelings are, it would be in the kitchen with the family. “It is a welcoming place, and for migrants to work in a place that welcomes them is highly symbolic”, he says.

Cuinant Oportunitats aims to be that welcoming place for people who find it more difficult to enter the labour market. They offer three-month courses with 120 hours of practice that turn out kitchen assistants and service staff. One of the teachers, Andrea Hernández, notes that besides the professional knowledge, students also acquire social skills and learn how to resolve conflicts. The courses are intended for people recommended by social entities, and others who decide to enrol by themselves. Many of them are migrants, but some were also born here and have been forced to retrain because of the crises. The students are generally aged between eighteen and thirty-five, but some are over fifty.

### Restaurants are not precarious by nature

Precariousness is often a feature of the restaurant business, but Habiague argues that there is no association. “There is a myth that says that catering is a business where jobs are always fragile, but the contracts are not like this”, he says. What some restaurants actually do is another matter. Mescladís argues that sector agreements must be respected, both for salaries and the right to two days off during the week, and they always work through contracts.

**Kitchens are highly symbolic for migrants because they are welcoming**



mescladis.

iniciativa d'economia solidària





Andrea knows very well what they need when they enrol for the course. She used to teach in Chile but came here to obtain a better future for her children, and she was lucky enough to take the training that she now teaches. Many of her students have been through traumatic situations, and her approach is always caring, but without paternalism. Both Hernández and Habiague have learned a lot about life. “I tell the kids that they always have to aspire to more, but never to forget those who have less than them”, Hernández explains, because we can always find ourselves back among those who have so little. She sees courage and concern for others among her students, and she learns from them. “Besides my job, Mescladís has gifted me the capacity to believe in human beings again”, she says.

### **Giving a chance to those who have none**

One of the groups in the most difficult situation is that of the unaccompanied minors. When they reach eighteen, they can only take jobs with one-year contracts for 40 hours a week. If they do not find one, they get a residency card without a work permit, and when they renew it after a year, they have to show a minimum level of income. If they cannot, they find themselves in an irregular situation and are barred from training or work. As a result, there were nearly 147,000 minor migrants aged nineteen in irregular situations in Spain in 2019. Mescladís campaigns for the administration to act to reduce red tape and apply a formula that does not abandon these young people: after training them and practical experience

**One third of their students find work, but they hope that there will be more**



for one year, they are hired and can renew their identity cards before moving on to the regular job market.

Cuinant Oportunitats handles between eighty and ninety students every year, and a third of these go on to enter the job market. It is not a bad percentage for the social sector, but they are not complacent and are always planning to open new paths to social inclusion. For now, they are working on the craft beer bar Birra o8 as a way of training students to become food production technicians. They also hope to be significant actors in the catering sector over the next fifteen years, as a supplier of trained workers, and for this reason they are asking the major food chains to adopt social clauses that enable them to hire their students.

### **Climate change and migrations go hand in hand**

The vegetables, chicken and drinks in Mescladís are either sustainable or locally-sourced, while their electricity comes from renewable sources and they use filtered tap water to avoid using plastic. Martín sees sustainability as essential for the environment. “It is the most important challenge we face as a global society, and migrations are a part of that debate”, he claims, because “there are millions who are being driven away from home by factors related with climate change”, and this will only increase in the coming years.

# Dolors Llonch

## */ Can Calopa de Dalt*

### **Wine from Barcelona with a social heart**

*At the farmhouse of Can Calopa de Dalt, in the heart of Collserola, the L'Olivera cooperative has shown that the tradition of making wine can still be revived in Barcelona, and it can be combined with preventing the exclusion of young people with functional disabilities from society.*







Dolors Llonch

### **A project that is fighting for viability**

At first, all of the wine from Can Calopa de Dalt went to the City Council, who used it in official receptions, but you can now buy it from wine dealers. The farm is also responsible for tending some olive trees in the land between Sant Feliu de Llobregat and Sant Just Desvern, from which they produce extra virgin olive oil, and there are other farmhouses that grow grapes, like the municipal vineyards of Sabadell, where they make the wines Arraona white and red. Despite all this work and the money paid by the local councils and the Generalitat, there are thirty-five people working at Can Calopa, and it is a challenge to stay in the black. "Financially, the situation is very hard", Llonch admits.

Collserola is a kind of green oasis, ringed on all sides by dense and highly developed urban areas. The hills of this area between cities are dominated by woodland, but there are also a number of projects that aim to revive its agricultural potential, such as the Masia of Can Calopa de Dalt. The property belongs to Barcelona City Council and it represents an unusual case of a vineyard development in a periurban setting. It is run by the L'Olivera cooperative, which tends the vineyards and produces the only wines to be made in the city. It also offers board and work for young people with functional diversity, often related with mental

health issues. Their time at Can Calopa is often the first step on the route back to autonomous existence, and a step away from social exclusion.

Can Calopa de Dalt and L'Olivera are both run by Dolors Llonch. She is 69 and could have retired already, but she is passionate about her work. Vineyards have been part of the landscape in this part of the world for centuries, but the plague of phylloxera at the end of the 19th century and the relentless pressure of the population drove them away from Barcelona. This changed when the Council, with Joan Clos as mayor, decided to emulate other European cit-

**The priority for the Can Calopa de Dalt project is for the young people to regain their autonomy and form part of their communities**



Íñigo Haughey

### **A vineyard with roots in Collserola**

The wines made at Can Calopa have been organic since the 2020 vintage. The farm possesses 3.5 hectares and has a flock of sheep to eat the grass that grows between the vines. The vineyard has been restocked by planting grape varieties that are well adapted to the land and reminiscent of the winemaking history of the region. The flagship wine is Vinyes de Barcelona red (grenache and shiraz) and, from a new planting, the enologist of Can Calopa, Íñigo Haughey, also hopes to be able to make a white Vinyes de Barcelona which could be of panseta blanca or pansalet (xarel·lo), a traditional variety in Collserola and the Vallès.

ies with vineyards and plant some of the grape varieties typical of the Mediterranean: the Greek aglianiko and agiorgitiko, the Italian sangiovese, shiraz, which is usually associated with France, and black grenache, which is widely cultivated in Catalonia. The project was set in motion around 2000, and L'Olivera took it over in 2010, with the idea of making quality wine with social value.

The task was a challenging one for the cooperative, which was set up in 1974 in Vallbona de les Monges (Urgell). Although the social function and winemaking have always been essential factors, Can Calopa also had its own peculiar

features. They found that they had to adapt to a vineyard that was already planted, and they created a residential space to act as a Special Work Centre for twelve young people who work on the vines and other jobs related with the farmhouse as the starting point on a route towards social inclusion. Unlike the home in Vallbona, where disabled people have lived for decades, Can Calopa places emphasis on them regaining their autonomy and forming part of the life of the community. L'Olivera has rented three flats in Molins de Rei, with room for nine of these young people, as places where they can go to live after spending









time at Can Calopa, with the support of a teacher from the cooperative. After that, some take another step forward and go to live on their own.

### **Inclusion at work and in life**

The young people generally arrive at Can Calopa when they are 18 to 20 years old, with a referral from the Generalitat. They generally lack a stable family background. One of the veterans is Joan, aged 27, who lives in one of the flats with two others, but continues to work at the farmhouse, where he is paid for his work. “Here I have learned to use washing machines, cook, do the shopping and manage my money”, he says. Farm work is good for him as he does not have to think about it. “I am getting better,

and now I can be responsible and work hard, and I try to do the work as well as I can”, he adds. What he really likes are video games and shops that sell electronic equipment. However, a job there would mean dealing with the public and that is something that he has found hard to cope with.

According to Dolors, these young people “come here with a lot of baggage”, so that “they are not ready for everyday life, have no self-esteem, emotional, relational or employable skills”. At the farmhouse they are helped by a team of various educators and social workers, a psychologist, a doctor and teachers for basic literacy and maths, as well as technicians for working in the vineyards and cellars. All this support does

**With time, the young residents learn to “appreciate themselves for who they are”**



bring results in the end. “In time, most of them have learned to appreciate themselves for who they are”, stresses Llonch, to the point where they can live autonomous lives “making progress in ways that is frankly astonishing”. The goal is that all of them can move on from Can Calopa, which is isolated in the hills, and settle down in a town or city, so that the residential spaces have to be relocated or downsized. Not everyone makes it, however, and a quarter of the residents relapse, which means that another approach is needed.

### **Wine tourism and teaching activities**

Those who do manage to live more or less autonomously still have problems in finding work, and

the cost of accommodation is prohibitively high. The result is that most of those who live in the flats continue working at Can Calopa. The work there has diversified over the years and the number of wine tourism activities has increased: there is now a space that can be hired for meetings and there is a wine shop that L’Olivera has registered as a social integration enterprise. Along with encouraging the social integration of the users, it also helps people whose immigration papers are not in order. The latest addition to the activities at the farmhouse are educational itineraries for families and school groups, about Collserola and the farm, explaining the ideas about social economy and support that the cooperative puts into practice.

## Cultivate diversity in the country, at the table and in the neighbourhood

In the fields, on cattle farms and in the sea, biodiversity makes ecosystems – and the whole food system – more resilient; but we have lost around 75% of the biodiversity in cultivated areas around the world. In our diets, variation provides a wealth of nutrients and flavours, but the growing list of processed foods always provide the same ingredients. In our neighbourhoods, cultural differences bring us varied knowledge and culinary experiences, but the global food system is ironing out these singular aspects and identities.

We must rediscover the biodiversity in our environment. In the Baix Llobregat, they are planting dozens of tomato varieties; in Barceloneta they are catching lots of fish without commercial names. If we choose to shop for our food and for special occasions in our local stores and independent restaurants, we are supporting a rich and lively community and reinforcing the local economy. We can create spaces to share our food culture: community kitchens, street food, collective allotments. This will also create a community.

Urban planning, tax policy and open access to public infrastructure can make it all happen.



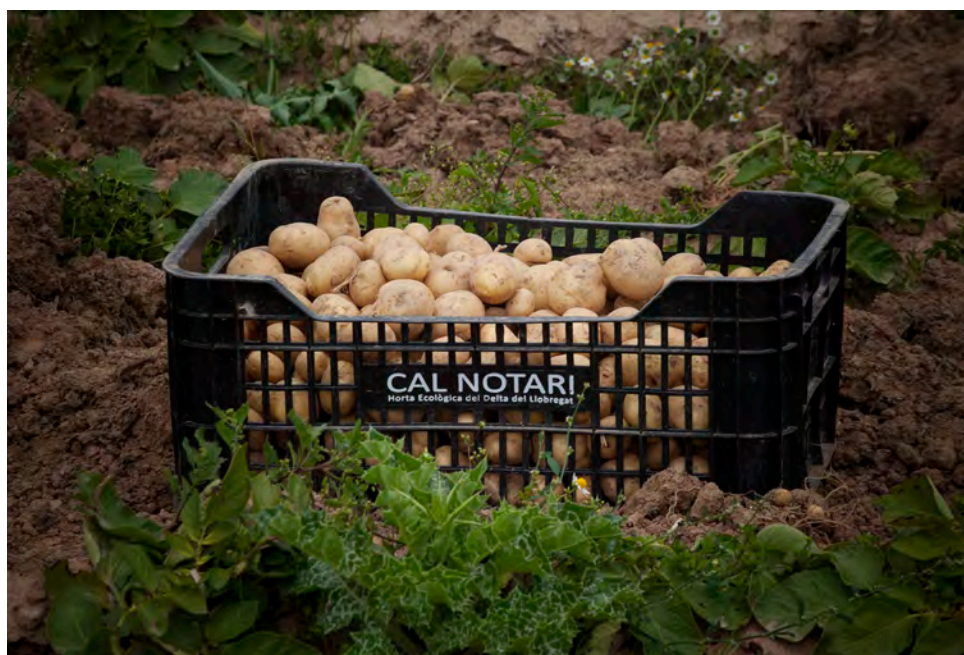
# Olivier Chantry */ Cal Notari*

## **Trying the agriculture of the future with the flavours of the past**

*Olivier Chantry is an organic farmer working in Agricultural Park of the Baix Llobregat who is practically self-sufficient: he selects fertile seeds from legacy varieties, supplies consumer groups with baskets of his own produce and is researching how to make his land more fertile to produce more by using less petrol.*







Everything flows quickly around Cal Notari. Every day, there are thousands of passengers who pass by, yet are barely aware of the existence of this farmhouse, tucked away in Sant Boi de Llobregat. They are oblivious to the painstaking work that Olivier Chantry has been carrying out here for nearly a decade. He is a farmer who runs an organic farm by applying the knowledge he has acquired from experimenting in the fields, reviving ancient farming practices and using old seed varieties to bring back the flavours of yesteryear and to be self-sufficient. The baskets he supplies for consumer groups in Sant Boi, Hospitalet de Llobregat, Barcelona, Sabadell and Terrassa contain mostly vegetables, because he only grows three types of fruit during the year: melons, watermelons and strawberries.

Olivier likes to wear his t-shirt which says “Stop the speculation!” It dates from when he started farming in the Baix Llobregat Agricultural Park, after studying agronomy theory in France and learning to cultivate the land in an agricultural project for reintegration in the labour market. The t-shirt is a relic of the Eurovegas project, which was finally stopped with the support of many agents with roots in the area, including the farming community and their consumers. This is an alliance that he also considers essential for his project, which is taking shape on 4.5 hectares in various parts of the Agricultural Park.

#### **Ancient seeds instead of hybrids**

He avoids sowing hybrid seeds, which have predominated in the last fifty years and have been the focus of nearly all the research to improve crop yields. They grow into plants with greater resistance to some diseases and fruit that looks good for a longer time after picking. The drawback is in the flavour, and the fact that the new seeds cannot

### **Growing a wide diversity of varieties**

At Cal Notari they grow varieties that are considered local and others that are not. There are more than ten varieties of tomato. “We know the names of some, but there are others we don’t know that have crossed with each other, because we used to grow seven or eight varieties that were similar”, he explains. He mentions the fat red type, the pink and red *rolis* (these are the names they have invented), a pink Barbastre variety, the Crimea black, Grushovka, the *reine des hâtives* (queen of the earlies), Marmande (raff type), the black cherry and three types of hanging tomatoes: *son gil*, *mallorquí* and *mala cara*.

be used for a second harvest, because their productive capacity is exhausted. This is how Chantry and Rocío Hernández, who also works on the project, sum up the situation. Cal Notari only plants seeds that can reproduce and they select the plants that adapt best to the environment. This process allows them to adapt to the preferences of their consumers, who they know well because they sell to them directly, and also to save money, because they do not have to buy new seeds every time they sow. “The fewer expenses you have, the more financially resistant you become”, he says.

He buys the seeds of rare varieties from specialist local suppliers, such as Les Refardes and Esporus, as well as from Italy and France. “We work with older varieties, and the flavours we want are those of fifty years ago”, says Olivier. He protests that the European subsidies for the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) have pushed farmers to do the opposite of what he wants to

**Olivier believes that his farm would not be a going concern if he did not have direct contact with the consumer**







## A future with less petrol

Chantry thinks that farming has a future, but the new generation taking over needs support and access to land, aspects which are not guaranteed now. "We need to attract city people like me to work on the land", he says, and above all find ways to ensure that the knowledge of the older generation who are about to retire gets passed on. He also has advice for young people who still do not know what they want to do: "If you learn to run a farm without needing lots of petrol, you will be able to go anywhere you want in Europe within the next fifteen years, because they will offer you the land to grow food for their cities".

do, to work for the major intermediaries, who ultimately reap the most benefit. "Prices for consumers have steadily risen, while the prices paid to the farmers have fallen", he asserts.

It is the direct sales that allow him to carry on. "We need the support of the consumer who buys our vegetables, who cares about quality and the products they want, and the prices I need to charge, but which they also find reasonable", he explains.

Olivier has three employees, and Rocío also helps out. They work full time from Monday to Friday. If there is any work that needs doing, he does it in the evenings and at the weekend, but he also tries to take a month off every year, just like the rest of his team. He has managed to keep the business going, which is not always easy. First of all, he had to learn how to farm, and now he is facing new difficulties. "Just when you start to understand how to produce, you find yourself facing extreme climate change phenomena", he says, to the point where he has lost crops worth thousands of euros due to extreme heat or torrential rainfall at the wrong time of year.

### Research to make the land more fertile

Despite the setbacks, he is a restless grower who

loves to investigate. He is engaged in a project to increase the amount of organic material in the soil. It is a well-known benefit of organic farming that this helps to fix carbon instead of releasing it, thereby helping to reduce climate change and make the land more fertile: the soil has better structure, with greater biodiversity, and the earthworms help to aerate the land, giving it better drainage and preventing water from pooling on the muddy surface. Although the organic material is the "cornerstone" of agriculture, as Olivier puts it, between 2% and 3% of it has been lost in Europe over the last half century, due to the CAP and farming practices. "We have been pressured into losing it", he claims, although it can be reversed.

Chantry has been able to increase it by between 1% and 2% in a year, using new practices such as adding the remains of cuttings in a field where he grows sweet potatoes, spinach and beans successively through the year. Allowing wild plants to grow at the edges of his fields also encourages biodiversity. Working organically as Olivier does means that more time is needed for the land to become productive, instead of spraying chemicals or purchasing hybrid seeds, but he believes that it is the only possible way forward.

**He has suffered the effects of climate change: he has lost thousands of euros due to extreme heat or torrential rain at the wrong time of year**





# Anna Bozzano

## */ El Peix al Plat*

### **Barcelona is also a fishing port**

*A lot of Barcelona residents are unaware that the city has a fishing fleet, even though it has one of the busiest fish markets in Catalonia. By arranging visits to the port, the Peix al Plat initiative aims to tell people about the fishing sector and inform them what sustainable fishing and the responsible consumption of fish means.*







Fishing is an activity that is integral to Barcelona, but very few people know how close its links to the city are. One reason for this is that the fish market is not open to the public and there is no sign to indicate the entrance in Carrer de l'Escar, only a few steps away from the Barceloneta neighbourhood. The best way to spot the place where the fishing fleet operates is to pick out the port's majestic Torre del Relotge, or Clock Tower, and we can pay a visit to their enclosure by arranging a visit through Barcelona Turisme Pesquer, which is organized by El Peix al Plat.

Barcelona's fish market has become one of the busiest in Catalonia in terms of volume of fish, even though there are other ports that have bigger fleets. There are around two hundred fishermen in the city, distributed between around twenty fishing boats: eleven using purse seine nets, while nine are trawlers – this is the least selective method – and two that use smaller scale techniques, one using longlines and the other drift nets. In 2020, under the effects of the coronavirus, the Barcelona fish market auctioned 2,145,969 kilos of fish, the lowest figure in a decade. The amount earned was a little more than 6 million euros, but the financial impacts reach beyond this. “Five jobs are created for every fisherman there is”, claims Andrés Varo, vice-president of the Confraria de Pescadors de Barcelona. Varo comes from a fishing family from Cadiz and works with purse seine nets. When he came to Barcelona in 1984, there were over a thousand fishermen and nearly a hundred boats.

### The city's wild protein

To help stem the silent decline of this activity and its sustainability, the marine biologist Anna Bozzano offers guided visits to the market through the El Peix al

Plat initiative. She started in 2013 by offering visits to adults and children, who could visit as school groups. Bozzano has no doubts about the importance of maintaining fishing in Barcelona. If it were to disappear, “tradition and culture would be lost” she warns, “as well as a great resource for our meals”. Besides, there are no other primary sector industries going on right in the heart of the city. “Fish is the only wild protein that we can get”, she adds.

She has shown a lot of people that fishing still goes on in Barcelona, and she invites them to become responsible consumers”. What she considers most important is the diversity of species. “People are very surprised when you talk about striped seabream or forkbeard”, she explains. This creates a demand for fish that form part of the day's catch, but all too often are exported to other countries where they are better appreciated. This will reduce the demand for the overfished species (in the Mediterranean this is the hake or the sardine, depending on the year). Nor is it good to buy immature fish (in fact, it is illegal to sell them. Look up “minimum catch size” on the internet), and we should look for locally caught fish, but avoid those which are overfished: El Peix al Plat also delivers fresh fish to homes, and if it includes hake, it will be from the Cantabrian Sea, where it is not so overexploited. It can also guarantee that at least half of the content has been caught using small-scale techniques.

Further advice would be to demand that fishmongers display all the mandatory information on the traceability labels that have to accompany the fish (which includes the technique used and where the fish was caught), or to choose the species which are in season (we can see this on the Generalitat

**It is especially important to choose less well-known species and only legal sizes. We should also buy locally caught fish, as long as it is not overfished**







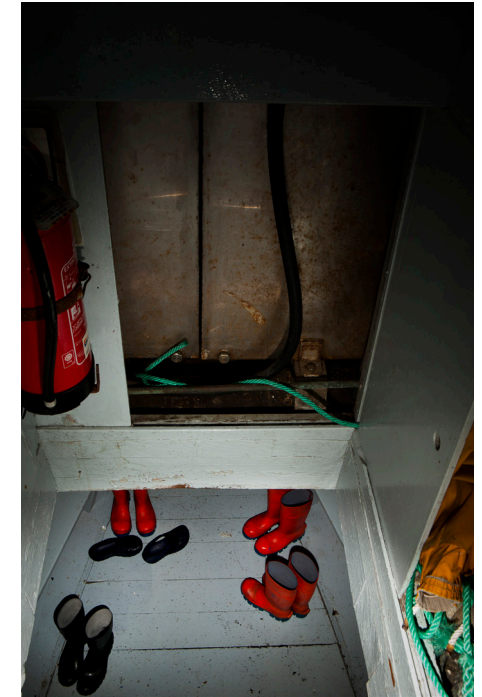
## Limiting catches for sustainability criteria is vital to conserve both the fishing sector and marine populations

website, for example [tinyurl.com/peix-de-temporada](http://tinyurl.com/peix-de-temporada)). For those people who worry about the health risks due to marine contamination, Bozzano explains that small blue oily fish (anchovies, sardines, mackerel, scad...) and Cephalopoda (cuttlefish, octopus, squid, shortfin squid) are in general short-lived and do not accumulate large amounts of heavy metals.

### Towards more sustainable fisheries

Meanwhile, Barcelona's fishermen have organized to become more sustainable. According to Varo, they have closed seasons (purse seine in December, and trawling in early spring), when they work fewer hours and capture less fish than they are permitted

to (there are quotas: a limit of 15,000 kilos of sardines and 15,000 of anchovies per boat per week), the shoes used by the trawlers are lighter and less damaging for the sea, they collect all the waste they bring up and take it to the port, and they supply fish to social services (sometimes the surplus that would have been wasted). They demand more support from the government and financing for the cost of their closed season, which would cover all the period in which eggs are laid (particularly important for species that are over-exploited and consumed in large quantities, like the sardine, says Anna). They also complain that the sea is being choked with waste, such as disposable wipes, which cause serious problems for some fishing techniques.



Varo believes that the fleet must agree to catch even less fish. That would show more concern for the sea, and they could still earn a living because prices would go up. This is already being achieved with co-management plans for the sand eel, which the Confraria de Barcelona takes part in. There are five such plans in place in Catalonia in which fishing fleets, the authorities, scientists and environmental groups all contribute. To prevent the downward spiral of prices and fishing communities until they disappear, they combine their knowledge and the interests of all concerned to limit their catches in certain places and at certain times, depending on the species, to create hope for the viability of fishing and for marine sustainability.

Bozzano, for her part, thinks that it would be "a great help to the fishermen" for only 5% of the million and a half residents in Barcelona to visit the fish market, simply because 30% of the entrance fee goes to the Confraria.

### How to make local fish identifiable

Bozzano admits that it is not always easy to know if a fish was caught here. "The fishmongers don't say that it was caught here, because people think they are caught near the port, but the boats actually go a long way off", she says.

Andrés says that locally caught fish "has the advantage of being the freshest there is". Oily 'blue' fish can be caught at five in the morning and be on sale when the shops open. The Confraria de Pescadors de Barcelona has its own brand *Peix de la Barceloneta* and the Quality symbol *Peix Blau de la Barceloneta* to promote it with. There are restaurants in Barceloneta who support it by offering dishes with less well-known species, such as the paella with white prawns.



# Lourdes Ponce (Pitusa) / *World Soup Festival*

## **Soups that attract diversity**

*The district of Nou Barris in Barcelona has welcomed several generations of immigrants who are all represented in the Soups of the World Festival, a local event that is held every year in the Via Júlia and is a fine example of cross-cultural association.*





These multi-cultural soups have become a symbol of Nou Barris. This district of Barcelona developed in the second half of the 20th century with the migration of thousands of people from around the country, but the new century brought the need to welcome a new wave of immigrants who, this time, came from all around the world. The Xarxa 9 Barris Acull integration network was set up, and now it collaborates with the Nou Barris Knowledge Exchange Network on the Soups of the World Festival. Lourdes Ponce, known locally as la Pitusa, is the most veteran activist of the Festival. As she puts it “soups are just like people”, they exist in all cultures and yet every one of them has their own personal touch. This idea has a special appeal when applied to Nou Barris. “Everyone has to have the same rights, but everyone has their own diversity”, says la Pitusa.

The idea came from another activist, Rafael Juncadella, who was inspired by a soup competition in the French city of Lille. For La Pitusa, who confesses that she loves soup, this dish is as simple as boiling a pot with whatever you have available. “If you cook it too quickly, it will boil over and probably be spoiled, but if you let it cook gently, the result is really tasty”, she notes. The festival started in 2004, which showed good timing because the pot that is Nou Barris had begun to simmer with new ingredients. “It wasn’t just people from other parts of Spain any more, but from the rest of the world”, recalls Ponce, “with the added challenge of getting their papers sorted out and often having to deal with a new language.”

### Home cooking and street cooking

The festival has been held every year since it was launched, except for a hiatus caused by the pandemic, which forced the organization to postpone the 17th edition planned for 2020. It is held on the Via Júlia, on one day in the year, and the traffic is stopped from the early hours of the morning until midday. The soups are cooked by neighbours, groups of friends and organizations, with a lot of the local residents cooking their contributions at home, while the biggest pots are cooked in the street. In 2019 there were 68 soups of different sizes: from a single pot to cauldrons with 200 litres. The volunteers make sure everything goes smoothly and the diners join long queues to get a taste of the soups. They are free to taste, and there are commemorative bowls that diners can buy for 5 euros.

Unlike Lille, it was decided not to make it competitive, because the organizers want to inspire everyone to feel welcome about taking part, says La Pitusa. This enthusiasm is very apparent in the festival, as noted by the coordinator of the Knowledge Exchange Network, Núria Laura Orbanaja. She is a volunteer and has cemented a close friendship with two neighbours who she encouraged to take part. One of them is Fina García, who cooks a stew from Bierzo every year in her kitchen in two pots, “the biggest ones” she has. She has lived in Nou Barris for forty years and is so keen on the Festival that she will do whatever it takes to take part. “I even had to put off a trip to my hometown to make my soup”, she confesses.

**Soup has to be prepared over a low heat for the best results, like the slow transformation of the communities of Nou Barris**







## Harira, a soup that has roots in the festival

La Pitusa has never cooked a soup for the festival, but from the start she has helped her Moroccan neighbours to prepare the harira on the day before. It is the traditional soup of Morocco, and it serves to break the day's fast during Ramadan, so it is a very hearty soup. It is also very easy to digest, which comes from peeling the chickpeas after soaking them, a time-consuming task that La Pitusa can help with. The other ingredients are oil and salt, herbs (coriander and parsley), vegetables (chopped tomato, celery and onion), veal, flour and fine noodles. It is served in a round bowl, a symbol of unity, along with hard-boiled eggs, slices of lemon and chebakia, the traditional cakes served during Ramadan.

When someone has finished making their soup, they can lend a hand to the cook who is next to them. It is also a "special day" for Zahra Meftah. She is one of the women who are in charge of the harira soup, a Moroccan speciality that is simmering away in the pots of the Via Júlia. La Pitusa has tasted as many as six different soups in the same edition. Besides the harira, which introduced her to the use of coriander, she also came to love egusi, which is a Nigerian soup that contains seafood, meat and vegetables. It is easy enough these days to find all the ingredients you need in the stores of Nou Barris, but when the festival started, finding coconut milk could be an ordeal, there were no halal butchers and green plantains could cost a fortune.

### Local involvement is essential

Over time, some changes have taken place. At first, everything was more homespun, and there was a focus on cooking one large soup from each continent, because it was difficult for each of them to be represented, and there used to be more servings for everyone. In the financial crisis of 2008, some participants could no longer afford to pay

for the ingredients, so the organizers decided to offer a maximum of 50 euros for soups of more than 20 litres. They have never accepted sponsors. The festival relies on the financial support of the City Council and the sale of the bowls, but above all on the involvement of the local residents. Ponce sees this as an essential factor, as indicated by the failure of the attempts that have been made to expand the event to other neighbourhoods.

Sometimes La Pitusa finds it difficult to see what difference the festival makes to the neighbourhood, but still considers it to be "an important reference point". She notices it when she hears "wonderful news", like when the pupils in the cinema project of the Trinitat Nova school decide to shoot the festival to make a short film about diversity in the neighbourhood. They were unable to shoot it during the pandemic, but the audiovisual material that they put together was selected by the Chicago International Film Festival. "There are lots of opportunities to get local people involved, and you never know when you will see the fruits, but it is a way of preparing the ground so that people can see the positive side of diversity", she concludes.

**"The Festival prepares the ground so that people can see the positive side of diversity"**





## Reduce food waste and packaging

We lose between 25% and 30% of the food grown in the world in the process from the fields to our tables. The food system uses an enormous amount of packing and packaging, much of which is forced on them by commercial considerations. Plastic is hard to recycle, and lots of it ends up in the sea, converted into micro plastics, which get everywhere in our environment.

We can go shopping with a list and a basket, with cloth or biodegradable bags and containers. We should prefer shops that sell items in bulk, and we should not reject fruit or vegetables that are a little blemished. We have to store the food in the best conditions for light, humidity and heat. We should cook using our leftovers.

Shops can offer different size portions or modulate them, avoid 2-for-1 offers or reduce the price of items before they reach their expiry date. Restaurants can encourage diners to take home what they cannot finish on their plates.

For drinks, we can take a bottle with tap water, keep a mug in the office for the coffee machine, take a carafe to the bodega when we buy wine, have reusable glasses for parties, put water fountains in the streets, in company offices and public buildings, etc.



# Mireia Barba */ Fundació Espigoladors*

## **Rescuing rejected fruit and vegetables**

*The Fundació Espigoladors was set up as a way to guarantee the right to food, but especially healthy food from local sources, and to combat the misuse and waste of food. It picks the fruit and vegetables that have been overlooked by others in order to feed families in vulnerable situations.*







It is a remarkable thing to realise that some of the vegetables that we eat in the city were grown just a few kilometres from where we live. It is both an opportunity to appreciate the food that reaches our tables and an invitation to explore the problems that these growers have to face. Sometimes they are unable to sell some of their produce in perfect conditions because they are not the right size, or they do not look attractive, and other times it is simply not worth the effort of gathering the crops because the prices are so low that they would lose money by doing it. The fruit and vegetables that remain in the fields without being collected are called losses, but the Fundació Espigoladors does not give them up as lost. Since 2014, it has ensured that they play an important role in guaranteeing

the right to food for vulnerable groups, food that is healthy and locally sourced.

According to Mireia Barba, head of the entity, “*espigolar* [gleaning] is an activity that used to form part of agricultural life, when the poorer people went out to the fields to collect what the harvesters had left behind”. Normally, they would be women. In the wake of the financial crisis of 2008, a small group of entrepreneurs, which included Mireia, decided to revive this practice, to dignify it, and the idea has blossomed. In 2020, the Foundation picked 446,794 kilos of fruit and vegetables, and out of the hundred or so producers who collaborate, half are in the Agricultural Park of Baix Llobregat or similar locations within the metropolitan area of Barcelona.

**Two thousand volunteers gather 500 tonnes of fruit and vegetables from the fields every year that would otherwise go to waste**



### It has become a professional activity

The foragers need to have insurance and permission from the farmer, who has to sign an agreement with them. When there is a field to be worked, the Foundation calls on the volunteers, who come, sharing vehicles if possible, to collect the fruit and vegetables, put them in boxes so that the social entities can pick them up directly from the farm with a van. Espigoladors works with around sixty of these entities, from the Red Cross to self-governing neighbourhood initiatives, such as the mutual support networks and groups that fight social exclusion, like the Fundació Pare Manel. As the products collected are perishable, they may be picked in the morning and find their way to the beneficiary families by

the afternoon. The volunteers are essential: there are 2,000 of them, 800 living in Barcelona. Toni Rosique is one of the most veterans, and he has seen how the process has become more professional. “It has come a long way since the start, when it was more of a volunteer thing, now it is very well organized”, he explains.

Toni is from Sabadell, he took early retirement at 57 and started to collaborate with various different entities. He used to go foraging with Colors del Món, who work with young Africans in vulnerable situations, and then continued with half a dozen volunteers more from the Vallès area. It has made him more aware of the importance of local consumption. “We need to get back to eating what is grown as near as possible to our







## Becoming more aware of the problem

The association Aprofitem els Aliments (AA) is one of the platforms that makes use of the food gathered by Espigoladors, in this case they use them in actions to raise awareness and reduce the waste of food. It was created in 2014 for this purpose, with the goal of bringing together all the participants in the food cycle under the leadership of the activist Paco Muñoz. In that year, it organized the first communal food aged dinner, which marked a turning point in people's awareness of the problem: they were able to turn more than four tonnes of foraged food into over four thousand servings. These festive, communal meals have since been held all over Catalonia, and these free meals have enabled the PAA to provoke, transform and raise awareness.

The PAA and Espigoladors are among the groups that pressed for the creation of a law for Catalonia to prevent food losses and waste, which was passed in March 2020, and requires all companies in the food cycle to have a plan to reduce and prevent food waste.

homes”, he comments, warning that farmers are “like an endangered species” without whom the landscape and economy would be totally different. It has also taught him how to use parts of food that are nearly always thrown away, like the stem of the cauliflower. “Peeled and eaten raw, it has lots of water and is delicious”, he says.

### An inclusive kitchen of their own

The Espigoladors have four branches (Baix Llobregat, Maresme-Girona, Terres de l'Ebre and Tarragona) and they want their foraged food to stay close to home. They also want to boost the transformation of their surpluses and encourage inclusive employment: their kitchen, opened in 2018 in the Sant Cosme district of Prat de Llobregat, prepares vegetable preserves made from imperfect or surplus fruit and vegetables. It was set up as a social integration enterprise with the aim of helping people at risk of social exclusion to find work. Last year they employed around fifteen people, most of them

women. Using the brand name *es im-perfect*® they make jam, vegetable spreads, fruit compotes and sauces, which are all vegan and gluten free. In 2020, they transformed 61,000 kilos of fruit and vegetables into 327,000 units of finished product.

The Foundation is supported through subsidies and donations, as well as through the sale of *es im-perfect*® products, but they insist that they need more support, such as responsible purchasing by public bodies. They are asking whether foraging could become a new area of employment or if the losses can be converted into biofuel. Meanwhile, they are working to raise awareness, in schools and among the general public. “Unless we explain why all this food is wasted, the causes and consequences of it, we won't be able to stop it”, says Mireia. One of the initiatives started this year was to pick the bitter oranges from trees growing in the Sant Andreu district of Barcelona and in Sant Boi de Llobregat. Instead of rotting away on the ground, they are being made into marmalade.

## She believes that awareness is essential to prevent food waste



# All roads start at school

*The children and teenagers at the Sant Ramon Nonat school are well on the way towards a sustainable food system. The school stands out for its Pedagogical work to instil the critical outlook that sustainability requires, especially with regard to the elimination of food waste.*

**Lluís Sala** / He is a teacher at the Sant Ramon Nonat school and has been leading the school's environmental committee for the past fifteen years

School is where we shape the citizens of the future. The school is also the setting for processes related with food that are another learning opportunity that should not go to waste. Our children and teenagers have their mid-morning snacks there, and usually eat lunch too. The topic of food also comes up in the classroom, with the employees who engage with the children at school and whose work is related with their food, such as cooks, monitors and teachers.

The school, therefore, is fertile ground for teaching pupils about healthy habits and for making future generations aware of how they can adopt sustainable food models, making

them critical in their eating habits and more proactive in reducing food waste. Schools can also drive change by extending these habits and knowledge in their local area.

Schools can work on aspects such as awareness of the value of food, how it is made and how it reaches us, technological advances, economic, social and environmental sustainability, transparency and access to information, hierarchies in waste management and shared responsibility.

## **Methodological tools**

To teach this, we need to get away from purely academic formats. We need to build

it into the character of the school and have the pupils experience it for themselves. This will enable the child or teenager learn it effectively, building critical awareness that will endure. Some of these methodological tools could include:

- Teaching pupils about the environmental impact of the production and waste of everyday food from school lunches, in plain language that is easy to follow.
- Link the climate crisis with food waste.
- Offer a contextual framework for working on responsibility, critical thinking, empowerment and student participation.
- Include non-teaching staff in the school's sustainability projects, as they are key elements within them.
- Create a relaxed atmosphere in the canteen, rethink break time activities and lunch times, replace items such as moulded trays with plates, allow the children to regulate the amounts they are served, and make spaces for participation and evaluation for all the people involved.
- Inform about all improvements made and projects started. Communicating enables us to show the work done, to be aware of what we have achieved and helps spread good habits in our area.

## **An example at Sant Ramon Nonat**

At the Sant Ramon Nonat school in Barcelona, we are actively engaged in all these issues through three main programmes: the "Green breakfast" project, a diagnosis of the canteen space shared between students and teaching staff (in collaboration with the Sustainability Committee of the Parish Church Foundation), an educational action

on food waste and waste management in the framework of the "We finish the plate" micro-network, run by Barcelona City Council as part of its More Sustainable Schools programme. The girls and boys who take part in it are the "Eskamot Verd" [Green Squad].

Specific actions would include encouraging varied breakfasts, with daily themes, or organizing marathons to make reusable containers and wrappers. Every month we choose a star food, and we study its nutritional value, the environmental footprint of producing it, how it can be wasted at school and how we can reduce this waste.

Multimedia materials are produced from all the actions, to share the results on social media ([tinyurl.com/eskamot-verd-videos](https://tinyurl.com/eskamot-verd-videos)), making

## **By experiencing it for themselves, the children learn effective, enduring lessons**

classroom visits and talking with families at the school entrance. What have we achieved? How can we do better? How can we work at home?

"All roads start at school..." is a line from the song that represents every one of the schools in Barcelona that are working hard every day with our children and teenagers to make a more sustainable city. Our schools have started a long journey with future citizens of Barcelona on a path towards a diet that is healthy, critical, aware and sustainable.



# Esteve Domènech */ Linverd*

## **The supermarket that gets by without plastics**

*Plastic packaging seemed to be an unavoidable feature of supermarket shelves and fridges until Linverd came along, the first supermarket to only sell products without packaging (in bulk) or in packages that can be reused, or at least recycled.*





It is hard to reach new horizons when the path has not yet been mapped, but everything depends on dedication to make the impossible possible, as Esteve Domènech has shown with Linverd. It is a supermarket that opened in 2021 in the Eixample district of Barcelona which aims to reduce the amount of plastic used when shopping. “We are the first people to set up an ecological supermarket with no plastic packaging”, says Domènech, who is one of the founders. Some producers and suppliers needed to be persuaded to work with them, but the opening of the supermarket and the positive response of consumers has helped to dispel some of the former reticence.

Esteve is very familiar with conventional supermarkets through his work in advertising. He worked for some of the biggest names in the food industry, persuading buyers to choose their prod-

ucts when they went shopping. As he grew older, he gradually became more aware of the importance of healthy eating, and organic products began to find a place in his home. “I could find them at the supermarket all right, but there was lots of plastic packaging”, he noted. The pandemic made him move out to live in the countryside, a step that was the final push that convinced him to open a supermarket that was free of oil-derived plastics.

It is an idea he was mulling over for three years before going ahead. There are already some stores that sell items in bulk, like the graneries which have proliferated in the last decade, but none of them are quite like Linverd. It is an organic supermarket, with a priority on local produce, without using plastics, where you can find the same items as in a *graneria* (nuts, rice, cereals, etc.) but also fruit, vegetables, dairy, eggs, packaged

**While we cannot live 100% plastic-free, we can reduce our use of it to the minimum**



goods, drinks, cosmetics, cleaning products, and even pet food. Some products have an economy range and a gourmet range, like the bulk pasta. Domènech guarantees that “a vegetarian or vegan can do all their shopping” at Linverd, and if any product has plastic elements, it is because there is no alternative or it is a health requirement, like the seal on the yoghurts. “We don’t have any packaging that is entirely plastic”, he claims.

### **There are alternatives to plastic**

When buying bulk products, the customers can bring their own containers or use those in the shop. Some items are hard to find, like extra virgin olive oil or vegan hamburgers, one of the most popular products and which are delivered frozen to ensure complete food safety. “People can taste the difference with an industrial packaged hamburger”, Es-

### **Think before buying**

Shopping at stores that sell in bulk can be part of a general change of habits. Instead of deciding on the spot in the store what you need, you have to plan ahead before you go and take the right type of container or bag with you. “The idea is to think before buying, and people are starting to do it”, says Esteve. At first sight it actually looks like it is a lot more work, but in practice it leads to considerable savings at home, from separating the waste and disposing of it in the correct container, as well as improving the environment.



## There was a demand for a shop like this: “People are aware of how contaminating plastic is”

aromatic herbs (like basil, mint and rosemary) using vertical hydroponic systems to recreate outdoor conditions, thereby saving CO2 emissions from transporting the plants to the store once they have grown. Even so, it has not been easy to reach this point. One of the recurring demands from their customers is to have a wider range of plant-based milks. At first, Linverd only had one, an oat milk, because the rest all come in Tetra Pak containers, but Esteve is trying to convince them to use glass. For the moment, the supermarket stocks neither meat or fish, but it will consider whether to do so in the future, if necessary.

### There is no shortage of reasons to cut down on plastic as much as possible

As time goes on, Esteve is noticing how all the agents in the supply chain are paying more atten-

tion to the idea of reducing plastics. Along with his partner, Jordi Vives Roura, they have created a new supermarket model that reduces the use of a very common material with huge environmental impact, because of the two centuries it takes to break down and the risk of it ending up in the sea. According to data from the plastics industry, included in Linverd's business viability plan, 61.8 million tons of plastic were produced in Europe, and Spain is the country with the fourth highest demand (7.6%). Half of it will end up in a landfill. “I believe that people are aware of what plastic is and how contaminating it is”, says Esteve, who likes to try to stay ahead of the future. He claims that at home they have done away with the plastic recycling bin, and that they are not alone in their desire to minimize their use: “You would be surprised by the people who come to Linverd and are doing the same in their lives”.



### A gap to fill

Domènech explains that, through the supermarket, he has made it possible for everyone to do their shopping without plastics, but that it is now for the consumer to decide whether this model can expand. In the first months after opening, a lot of customers have said that they have been looking for a business like this for a long time. “A lot of people had this idea, more than you can imagine, and it was something that the market was crying out for”, he says, and that encourages him to be optimistic: “If the idea has occurred to many people, then it has a future”.

## Create sustainable and empowering food environments

We take decisions on what to eat every day of our lives, and we are influenced by what we see in the street, market, bar, the media and social networks. We are also guided by our tastes and the options that are compatible with our daily activities. Cities teem with invitations to eat badly but attuned to the rhythm of urban life.

In Spain, 77% of food advertising is for unhealthy items, and 46% of these should not be shown, according to the WHO. They use gender and beauty stereotypes that can encourage eating disorders. On the other hand, our food labels mislead us instead of informing us.

To turn all this around, our urban planning can do a lot to help. It can limit the availability of ultra-processed food in schools, demand an assessment of the impact of granting licences to shops and restaurants or encourage urban agriculture. Regulating advertising with public health criteria can help to adjust preferences towards healthy and sustainable food.

The goal of all these changes is to make sustainable food the most accessible and desired option.



# Marina Monsonís

## */ Situated cooking*

### **Cooking cannot be separated from the environment**

*Our decisions about what we eat have repercussions across the whole food system. Through creativity, the artist Marina Monsonís urges us to use values from our past to move towards a sustainable agricultural ecology: the historic role of women, family and culinary traditions, the achievements of struggles for social justice...*





Choosing what to eat is a political act with enormous potential for changing things. Aware of the power of the decisions we make about food, the artist from Barcelona Marina Monsonís applies creativity in various ways to encourage the transition to an organic agricultural model. Her actions highlight the ties between traditional cooking and new versions derived from migrations. She talks of anti-racism and stresses the vital and often scorned role of women throughout history. She explains the importance of conscientious consumption of fish to push the industry towards practices that respect the marine environment and the planet, while supporting the fishing sector at the same time.

Marina was born in the Barceloneta district. Her father is a stevedore and her grandparents lived from fishing, when her grandmother would mend the fishing nets. In an artist's residency in

Baltimore (United States) she realised how important it is to preserve the memory of the fishing district of Barcelona. Her work with social movements in Baltimore taught her that "a lot of people don't know what they are eating", when she was asked to do an art project in community allotments where children were planting vegetables, yet "they did not know what to do with the vegetables", she recalls. She decided to create a graffiti using the recipe for gazpacho.

#### **The bases of eco-feminist cooking**

In Baltimore, Monsonís became known as "the gazpacho lady" and returned to Barcelona with the idea of starting projects that brought together art, politics and cooking. She became involved in working groups that combined experimentation, creativity, magic, co-learning and information exchange. Eco-feminism is one of their main com-

## **Marina creates educational art activities to promote responsible and coherent cooking**



## **Minority and unfamiliar fish**

Marina has worked with fishermen and the fishmongers of Barcelona to defend the importance of eating local and lesser-known species to prevent overfishing. She reels off some names: *bissu, rata, canana, bròtola, sarg, esparrall, malarmat* or *arnès, viret, pagell, cinta, moixina, aranya, mòllera, burro* and *caru*. Those who enrol on her workshops have started to shop for them, and the price of some species has risen. "This won't happen on its own, without education", she says.

ponents. "My projects are tied to values that are related with the tradition of women's cooking", she says, an idea that is linked with the process of learning through gestures, aromas, orality, touch and texture. She argues that all these elements are inherent in ecological cooking, because they include issues like using all parts of a fish: "You can fry the bones with the head to make soup, and use the guts to make garum", she explains.

She also places a lot of weight on anti-racism. "Kitchens are places of cultural appropriation, and we consume products that are in vogue and which reach us through an extractive colonial process", she says. The avocado is one example that is the centre of attention, but it also happens with fish, when European boats make huge catches off the coast of Senegal, leaving the small local fishermen with problems. "Their form of subsistence has been totally disrupted and many of these

people are forced to migrate here", she says. So, while we can buy fish caught there at low prices "our local fishing sector is in crisis", she continues.

#### **An artist involved in what goes on around her**

It is her way of putting things in context, and acting politically at all times, that are a constant feature of Monsonís' work, who likes to talk of "situation cooking". In Plaza Poeta Boscà, next to Barceloneta Market, she did a collective graffiti project with pupils of the Salvat Papasseit school, with the recipe for fish stew ('suquet de peix') provided by El Chacho, a local fisherman. She worked with dancer Juan Carlos Lérida on a performance to prepare this dish, making it into a ritual of proximity, which is a typical feature of her actions. She prepared dinners for the Stevedore's Union and made a book of traditional recipes with illustrations by Carla Boserman. Both of these tied the









### **Chacho's fish stew recipe, or from Ostia**

This is a straightforward recipe, one which was considered an everyday dish, and Monsonís recommends using local fish, like forkbeard, whiting or catshark. Start by adding oil to the pan and heating it. When hot, add slices of garlic to brown them. Add some smoked paprika and stir before adding a splash of white wine and the cleaned fish. Allow them to cook until the eyes turn white and the flesh begins to flake off. Finally, add some chopped parsley. You can also replace the fish with potatoes and vegetables of any kind.

conflicts that have shaped the district (such as the union activity of the port workers) with seafood. She has helped to set up a community kitchen in the district through the city's Memoria Viva project. More recently, she has been working with the art cooperative La Fundició, in Hospitalet and the Agricultural Park of the Baix Llobregat. She is also active in the cooking project of MACBA-Barcelona Museum of Contemporary Art and gives workshops in civic centres. She has just published *Cuina situada*, a reference book with around ninety recipes and kitchen tips of all kinds, which also has illustrations by Boserman.

Marina enjoys explaining how she 'hacks' the recipes to get to "the meaning and the heart" of them, an idea that is best grasped by her idea for making *bunyols*, a kind of fish dumplings. "Why use cod if it

is in danger of extinction?", she asks. She therefore suggests using another "overlooked species", such as the catshark or forkbeard, or even leftover vegetables, suited to the recipe's zero-waste credentials and use of common ingredients.

She defends the use of ingredients that have meaning for the people cooking and the place, restoring a sense of history that enriches the process and eliminating what is not appropriate. We should not assume that unfamiliar fish always have a lot of bones, and choose species like the canana, or flying squid, which Monsonís claims is tastier than its better-known relative. Nor should we assume that old recipes require a lot of time to prepare. "There are a lot of traditional recipes that are very quick to make", she insists. If you don't believe her, try Chacho's fish stew.

**She recommends getting to "the meaning and heart" of recipes: "Why make cod dumplings when they are in danger of extinction?"**





# Ester Comas Argemí and Ferran Garcia Moreno */ Justícia Alimentària*

## **Taking back citizen control of food**

*Justícia Alimentària (Food Justice) is an NGO dedicated to supporting the transformation of our food model to make it healthier, fairer and more sustainable. It asserts that its existence alone is a success, because it opposes the power of the large corporations, demanding that they be restricted so that control over our food is once again in the hands of ordinary people.*





Improving the food system involves a far-reaching transformation. Our food system and the way we make and obtain food has changed radically in the last fifty years, through the “green revolution” and the industrialization of the agricultural sector. The few farmers that have managed to survive do not know where their food goes, they only know that they are part of a global market. “Society is no longer fed by farmers, but by the major corporations”, warns Ester Comas Argemí, who is the chair of *Justícia Alimentària*, an NGO that works to give citizens control over their own food, instead of the great majority relying entirely on these companies.

Originally, the NGO was *Veterinarius Sense Fronteres*, which was founded in 1987 with the aim of raising farm productivity in underdeveloped countries, recalls Ferran García Moreno, who took part practically from the start, driven by an existential crisis he suffered while working for a large company. Its gradual conversion into *Justícia Alimentària* began when *Via Campesina* coined the term ‘food sovereignty’ in 1996, which helped them to identify the nature of the problem. Its goal is to make the food system “healthier, fairer and more sustainable”, says Comas, who is an agricultural engineer and has volunteered for the group since 2007, when she discovered her affinity with their vision.

### **The basis for changing things**

Food sovereignty is, according to García, “an idea in the battle for power over food” and means focusing on aspects like human rights, the environment and feminisms. Defending their ideas places them in opposition to corporations, and especially “their capacity to condition food policies”, he says. Besides, they can “disguise it in

### **Food certificates with a trick**

There are more and more products with stamps to certify desirable qualities for consumers, but Ferran warns that there are “tricks” behind this. First of all, they are created and run by the corporations themselves, so there is no public scrutiny of what they mean. He gives the example of *Interporc*, which brings together pork producers. They have an animal welfare stamp, but the standards required to obtain it are “negligible”, he warns. Another example is that of *Danone*. It has yoghurts called *de pastoreo* which are made using milk from Galicia, where García has checked that any farm chosen at random “can have more pasture than those used by *Danone* for making their yoghurt”, he says.

various ways, like setting up institutes that seem independent, but which are not”, he adds.

*Justícia Alimentària* works in Spain and countries in Latin America and Africa. The campaigns they run are based on rigorous research. “When we say that the system makes us ill, we base this on information that we gather from scientifically respectable sources, such as the WHO, the public health services of independent states or institutes, and we supplement it with our own field research”, explains Ferran, who is the research coordinator. It can also exchange information with other organizations that work along the same lines.

Its latest research focuses on ‘greenwashing’. In a few years, companies have gone from de-

**Three quarters of the food advertising in Spain goes on unhealthy products. More and more of it is on the internet, where there are no filters**





nying any negative effects on the environment or health to boasting that they are fully engaged in the process. “The attributes that the cause of food sovereignty champions, like locally-sourced and healthy food, are now part of the sales pitch of the major corporations”, warns Garcia. For Ester, “it is all about confusing the consumer”, and tricking you into thinking a product is healthy when it is not.

### Campaigns that use facts to fight the system

The first campaign was “Stop, people live here!”, run ten years ago to demand measures to counter the negative impacts of multinationals in Africa. There have been half a dozen more since then, like “Carne de cañon” (Cannon fodder), which focused on excessive meat consumption,

or “Dame veneno” (Gimme poison). This campaign warned that 70% of the food we eat is processed or ultra-processed, and that 25% of public health spending in Spain goes towards treating diseases caused by bad eating habits. This is why they demand proper nutritional labelling (they are “radically opposed” to NutriScore), taxes on unhealthy products and regulations for food advertising, especially when aimed at children, an idea that makes the corporations “especially nervous”, claims Ferran. Three quarters of the food advertising in Spain goes on unhealthy products, he says, and more and more of it is on the internet because there are no filters.

The “Planet Sugar – 25 Grammes” campaign had the most repercussions: in Catalonia it led to the creation of a tax on sugary soft drinks. “A lot of people now realise that sugar is bad for you”,

says Ferran, and Ester stresses that “governments accept these measures when they see that there really is support for them from society”. Even so, they do not think that their work should be measured by the tangible results it has had. “It is an enormous success simply to be here”, affirms Comas, because Justícia Alimentària is the link that fills the space between the large corporations and citizens starved of information. It has a thousand members and a hundred volunteers around the country, with around forty people employed as staff. Its financing comes almost exclusively from public donations, and it offers training courses for specific groups, such as Vocational Training students or teachers.

### More voices that talk about sustainable food

We can mention three magazines. *Agrocultura*, founded in 1999 and published every quarter by the L'Era-Espai de Recursos Agroecològics Association, which offers tools and ideas for farmers and whoever has an allotment. *Soberania Alimentària* was created in 2010 and today the El Pa Sencer cooperative publishes three editions every year to discuss everything that affects rural life, agriculture and food. The latest contribution is *Arrels*, set up in 2020 by the SOM\* publishing house, as a quarterly that views the rural world from a cross-sectoral perspective. All three are printed and have subscribers or members, and they also offer online materials.

**The main feature of major corporations is their capacity to condition public food policy**

# Agroecology and sustainable food

*A reference centre for urban agroecology will channel energy towards the main areas we need to work on if we are to advance towards healthier, fairer and more sustainable food circuits in our cities. One such centre is planned for Barcelona, sufficiently empowered to drive the transition.*

**Guillem Tintero** / *Environmentalist, with a master's in Environmental Economics and Politics (UAB), co-coordinator of post-graduate studies in Stimulating Local Agroecology (UAB) and founding partner of Arran de terra, SCCL*

The way in which we feed ourselves not only shapes the landscapes, biodiversity and living conditions in rural areas, it also affects our cities. Barcelona has seen the number of initiatives based on consuming locally sourced organic food (consumer cooperatives, farmer's markets, etc.) proliferate over the last few decades, along with hundreds of urban agriculture projects and dozens of campaigns to defend urban and periurban agricultural spaces. Even so, the disparity between the pace at which these projects grow and the pressing situation of the ecological and social crisis raises the question of what new kind of resources are needed to provide sufficient disruptive power to act as catalysts.

Reference centres for agroecology have this capacity. They are projects in which we can prepare and set in motion the urgent transformation in full of our dominant food circuits (corporate, fossilized and globalized) into healthier, fairer and more sustainable systems. The concept of agroecology requires them to be fair and sustainable in every sense of the words, to include not just the farming practices but also the living conditions of the people who work in the food sector, the economic structures that shape it and the environmental, social and economic consequences it produces.

What these centres do is to develop, in collaboration and at the same time, the areas to

work on to achieve the agroecological transition of urban areas. Among others, they include the permanence and conversion of the professional urban market gardens that have survived the "planning tsunami" to organic techniques, the establishment of new shorter sales circuits and the installation of multi-purpose kitchens and workshops for professional, training and community use, the creation of ample neighbourhood allotments, setting up nodes for the ecosystem of local groups committed to agroecology, or the introduction of logistics hubs that provide infrastructures, services and strength for the distribution of locally sourced food in the city.

## United we stand

There are many advantages to having such a diverse range of activities going on in the same place, such as the creation of synergies between the different areas, a clear multiplier effect on the positive effects that each separate activity has, and the building of a powerful agroecological hub that can act as a reference, a source of inspiration and a think tank for local networks of agroecology initiatives.

These centres, therefore, can make significant contributions to the creation of empowering and sustainable food environments in two senses. On the one hand, as places where ideas about the sustainable food and cities of the future can be presented and scrutinised. The other, more practical sense is the contribution they can make to answering some of the most important problems we are currently facing: guaranteeing the universal application of the right to sustainable food, putting con-

cerns about sustainable agriculture and food at the centre of the political and social agenda, encouraging a leap forward in the consumption of organic, locally sourced food, making our metropolitan food circuits more democratic and local and our cities more resilient by reinforcing their "green infrastructure" through public and community-centred management of the public spaces, and supporting the empowerment and inclusion of marginalised groups.

In the neighbourhood of Vallbona, in the north of the city, Barcelona has an unmissable opportunity to create a centre of reference for urban agroecology that will be a paradigm and one of a kind in the world. Although there are other similar centres in

## We need a powerful beacon to inspire and multiply the effects of agroecological initiatives

Madrid, Seville, Paris or Cape Town, none of these are as complete as the one planned for Vallbona. If all the potential obstacles are finally overcome, the AgroVallbona project will take shape in successive phases in two sites next to each other in the area: the former Ritz Granja, which has been unused for decades, and La Ponderosa, one of the last remaining agricultural spaces in Barcelona which has continued to grow vegetables.

AgroVallbona therefore represents a great opportunity for all of us that we cannot afford to miss out on.



# Transform the food system with everyone in mind

The major corporations that control the food system influence public food policy and make it harder to spread messages to move towards more sustainable food. The damage that poor nutrition causes – to the public purse as well – is plain to see. It is therefore urgent that we make the control of the food system more democratic.

One of the ingredients is for people to get involved as social and political agents. For example, we can create spaces for debate or start participative processes to identify what our neighbourhoods need, their strengths and weaknesses, based on the experience of the residents, and use this to look for effective solutions in real situations. This means adopting the principles of inclusion and equality.

This involvement and empowerment of the citizens will be stimulated if we can include sustainable food in all levels of formal and informal education, from infancy to specialisation.

Involvement also means starting proactive initiatives with the financial and social model of sustainable food production, including manufacturing, consumption and online business.

# Trini, Cecilia, Constantina and Pilar

## */ Community Allotments in Can Masdeu*

### **Community allotments as a school of life**

*The Can Masdeu project is a focal point for the squatter and alterglobalization movements, as well as for agroecology, in this case due to the house's community allotments. Neighbours have been growing vegetables here for their own use for nearly two decades, and they are the source of new learnings, links and friendships among the community, and an escape from city life.*







There is enormous satisfaction to be earned from working a strip of land, watching your vegetables grow and picking them to eat and share. In rural areas, an allotment is part of a lot of people's lives, while in our cities the custom has largely been lost. In Barcelona, there is a lot of interest in community allotments - there are 129 of them - to the point where demand outstrips supply for both council-run ones and those created by local initiatives. This is true of the community allotments of Can Masdeu, an autonomous property at the base of Collserola where terraced slopes that were formerly cultivated were restored to make organic allotments for people to grow their own food.

It was shortly after 2001 that the squatters moved into Can Masdeu, which stood on land abandoned for nearly fifty years belonging to the Hospital de

San Pau. Once the initial legal issues were resolved, with decisive support from local associations in Nou Barris, the squatters in the property "offered plots of land to local residents who wanted them", recalls Trini Cuesta Sánchez, from the Roquetes district, who was actively involved at the time. It was a way of strengthening the ties created in the action and it addressed some problems inherent in the local planning. "Neighbours came along to restore the allotments, because we needed this space", says Cecilia Carrillo Navarrete, who joined in a couple of years later; she lives in the Prosperitat area and comes from Ecuador.

#### **Caring for the land and other people**

Can Masdeu has allotments for the house and the community, shared out in forty plots measuring

**"I haven't bought lettuce or onions for years...".  
Constantina is also experimenting with plants  
from her country, Equatorial Guinea**



### **A space for learning and to disconnect**

The community allotments encourage co-learning and offer new ways to see the world. Especially with the people coming from all over the world to live and grow crops in Can Masdeu. "It is direct contact with life", says Pilar. Unlike the allotments in the city, there are no cars here to disturb the peace. So much so, that the birdsong and smell of the wet earth after rainfall is the ideal combination for Constantina to close her eyes and imagine she is back in the rainforest where she was born. "It relaxes me", she smiles, along with the other activists: the allotments are their way of disconnecting from the concerns of everyday life.

a maximum of 40 square metres each. Most of them are shared by two or three people. They do not see themselves as users of the allotments, but "activists for nature, life and the environment", says Cecilia. It means a sincere appreciation of life, your surroundings, the land and your companions, and it shows in your respect and care for others. At first there were a lot of people, and it was hard to convince them of the benefits of organic techniques, but the passage of time and a new generation of growers have turned things around. "We are now 100% organic and respect the environment", affirms Cecilia.

Although the pandemic has woken the desire for nature in many people, there are no plans to expand the allotments, to prevent damage to the valley, so they have chosen to close the waiting list

for the time being. Those who are in it will have to help out on the allotments until one becomes free. They are assigned in order of inscription by the assembly, which has the last word in all decisions. It includes all the allotment users, those on the waiting list and the community of the house. It also organizes committees to solve the day-to-day issues. Pilar Gil Rubio joined the allotments a few years ago. "I felt very welcome from the start, it is like a large family", she says. Trini remembers the day when everyone was expecting the birth of the first child in Can Masdeu, and Cecilia explains that when someone dies, they are remembered in a ceremony held around a lime tree. There are recreational spaces as well. There are strong ties between the allotment users and the residents in the house, because of all they have achieved together.









## **Women are becoming the protagonists**

Women played a vital role in the local support during the early days of the squat at Can Masdeu and, in time, they have gradually become a majority on the allotments, at 75% of the total. "Women have earned themselves a space", states Cecilia, who sees it as a natural process and part of the larger picture of increasing female presence in other areas. Trini claims that the increase in the number of women has resulted in a more collaborative mood in the project. "It is much better now", she insists.

## **Water is scarce and highly valued**

The use of water is the source of most of the problems, especially in the summer when it is most lacking, and it must be managed carefully. They are trying to alleviate the problem with drip irrigation and restoring basins and wells, but the project is advancing very slowly. When the use of water is restricted, the WhatsApp group goes into meltdown, but there is a place to solve arguments: the conflict committee. "Anything can happen in a family", says Cecilia thoughtfully, while Constantina Mañé Okomo, who joined the allotment users in 2014, laughs: "But nobody ever gets hurt!". Some Sundays they also take part in organizing the PIC, a programme run by the Social Centre of Can Masdeu with a range of free activities that are open to anyone who wants to join in. The sessions include a dinner which is also a fund raiser, to supplement the monthly quota of one euro paid for each plot.

The four activists try to eat only the vegetables from their allotments - they also share them with each other and have made friends by giving them away - but it depends on the season. "I haven't bought any lettuce, tomatoes or onions for years...", says Constantina, who is also experimenting by growing plants from Equatorial Guinea, where she is from, such as okra or a type of coloured corn known as chis. They are aware that they need to do something about the pests, starting with the mosquitoes, or else they risk having hardly any tomatoes again like last year. The allotments are not easy to get to, which is why some of the elderly members have had to give them up, and not everyone cares as much for the environment, leaving plastic waste scattered around the hillsides. Despite all these problems, the activists feel that life is better with the allotments, and they are committed to keeping them going.

## **Community allotments encourage co-learning and offer new ways to see the world**





# Isabel Celma and Anna Samsó */ Cydonia*

## **Self-sufficiency led the way towards agroecological consumerism**

*The Cydonia cooperative was set up in Barcelona 25 years ago to provide around fifty families in Poblenou and neighbouring districts with organic fruit and vegetables and other handmade products. They have been inspired by health, ecology and social justice from the start.*







It is not particularly challenging to order a basket of ecological produce today, or to have it delivered to your home. As a gesture, it is a fairly normal part of people's lives in some cities, but it certainly wasn't 25 years ago. That is when Cydonia was founded in Barcelona. It was only the second cooperative for agroecological consumerism in the city, and it provided residents with fruit, vegetables and other ecological produce. Isabel Celma is one of its most veteran members and can confirm that those who come to join the cooperative do so "for one of three reasons: for health, ecology or for social justice". Having said that, the most common result is for everyone to finally adopt all three because, as she says, sooner or later "you realise that you can't leave one out".

Isabel has been a vegetarian for forty years, and she joined because she wanted to eat healthy food. Cydonia had been set up shortly before by a group of friends who also had a good reason to start it: Alicia. "She was diagnosed with cancer and was advised to eat organic food", recalls Celma, so her neighbours in the Clot district decided to copy *Germinal*, the pioneering cooperative in the city, and set up *Germinal Clot* with ten members who would meet in a small store that they shared with a furniture restorer. Alicia did not survive her condition, but she was behind the seed that was planted, which turned out to be a fruitful one: the cooperative broke away from *Germinal* and moved to larger premises in Poblenou, changing its name to Cydonia (which is the name for quince in Latin and Greek).

#### **What commitments are entailed**

The cooperative's close links with the neighbourhood are on display even when the shop's shutters are down, because they are painted with a portrait of Manel Andreu, a historic champion of local caus-

#### **How members change what they eat**

Joining Cydonia has helped to change each members' relationship with the food they eat. "Once you start living this way, there is no way back", says Isabel. She was the leader of the cooperative for a decade and lived through various booms when people began to take an interest in eating better, such as the period after the mad cow crisis. She would dissuade those who were not really interested in committing to the project, telling them "if your only reason for joining is to get cheaper food, don't do it".

es. The entity is self-run and is organized through meetings where everyone has to take on some of the work to keep things going. There are 46 baskets to fill every Wednesday and they do not stop, even in August. Each basket is for a family unit who have to help out from time to time to ensure that things are as they should be. If they can't adapt to the timetable, they can help with the cleaning. Everyone also has to chip in with a second job, such as preparing invoices for the members or contacting suppliers.

The food is organic, or at least made by hand. Their main supplier of fresh vegetables has always been Martí, a farmer in the Maresme area, but they are now also buying from a couple of growers in the Baix Llobregat. "We are diversifying because there will come a time when Martí cannot keep us supplied", says Isabel, because he is getting close to retirement, and he may be forced to leave the land he works because the owners want

**Cydonia is a space that runs itself through assemblies. Those who join do so for health, ecology and social justice**







## **The future of consumer cooperatives**

The waiting list for joining Cydonia eventually led to the creation of two new cooperatives in Poblenou, Estèvia and Mespilus, and it has helped others to grow. Supermarkets have now started stocking fair trade products, which Isabel does not approve of, because she feels that products with social value should only be sold in stores that can ensure fair working policies throughout the whole supply chain. According to her, “people go there because they have so much on offer, it’s easier for them to just pay and go”.

to build on it. Cydonia tries to pay a fair price, to the point of negotiating higher prices “Martí, you can’t charge us just 90 cents for this. Can’t you see you’ll be losing money?” they told him once.

### **They also have cosmetics and cleaning products**

Besides contacting producers directly, they also work with distributors. They supply vegetables, but also bread, eggs, fresh dairy products, mushrooms and sometimes meat (lamb, for example). They also deal with a lot of bulk products (nuts, pulses, rice, etc.) and others which are packaged (preserves, coffee, juices, wine and even cava, which they make themselves), along with the cleaning products and cosmetics. “A family can get by with just the stuff we have here”, claims Isabel, especially if they are vegetarians, like her family. Although they insist on seasonal and local produce, they cannot get everything. Their pack-

aged milk comes from Germany because, according to Celma, it is “very hard to find it here”.

In the beginning, joining a cooperative was an act of political militancy, and there used to be a long waiting list. Although the options for buying organic food have grown enormously, Anna Samsó became a member of Cydonia only a few years ago. “I used to buy organic food in a store, but it was expensive, and as I found myself with time on my hands, I was able to make more of a commitment”, she explains. Taking this step has changed her views on food – she eats more vegetables and less meat than before – and she knows what products are in season and tries new things – in cleaning products and cosmetics as well, by learning from the others. “You get more used to it and end up buying more things here”, continues Anna, who has added shiitake mushrooms and beansprouts to her diet since she became a member. She was helped by attending a workshop given by Isabel, who has done dozens of them, as well as writing two books on nutrition and healthy eating.

The cooperative also promotes responsible consumerism. “We have real food that is sustainable and not ultra-processed”, says Celma. Besides, the members barely pay more than cost price for the products: they only charge 2% on the fruit and vegetables and 10% on the rest. They also pay a monthly fee to cover the rent and utilities, and it has always been enough. “We are one of the few cooperatives in Catalonia that have consistently been financially sustainable”, she says. Important decisions are taken by all the members in their quarterly assembly, where they go over the accounts, while the day-to-day stuff is for the committee and a steering group. They are also proud of having chosen ethical finances from their earliest days (Coop57 and Triodos Bank).

**“A family can get by with just the stuff we have here”, claims Isabel, one of the most veteran members**



# Separating the organic waste is basic

*Use a latticed bin for organic waste, only use compostable bags in it and make sure, above all else, not to put other types of waste there. That is all you need to do to ensure that farmland remains fertile and to prevent serious losses and costs.*

**Elena Diez** / *Head of environmental education programmes prior to the implementation of organic waste collection in various towns. Executive director of Rezero*

The only way to lower the environmental impact of the waste we generate is to reduce its amount and toxicity, and by making it into a resource. To make use of it, we need to separate it for collection.

Of all the municipal waste created in the metropolitan area of Barcelona, the organic part is the largest (by weight), at 33%. However, only around 40% of all this organic waste actually gets disposed of in the brown containers. This has two seriously negative consequences.

The first is that we lose the option to take advantage of 60% of our organic waste. It is also the most ecologically valuable resource among all the waste we produce: it helps

to sustain the fertility of the land, which is necessary if it is to continue to feed us.

When we harvest the crops, we also collect all the nutrients that have enabled them to grow. By composting the organic waste - which is a process of controlled fermentation in which microorganisms break it down - we obtain a compost that returns these nutrients to the soil when it is applied to the land. It is how we close the circle, and it is remarkably similar to the traditional practices of rural life: organic waste was stored in dung heaps and, after the right amount of time had passed, it was put back on the land in the form of fertilizer. Composting is

also a very simple and cheap process, and it does not require any kind of central organization. The other option - sadly, the most widespread choice - for fertilizing the land is to use chemical products, which require a lot of energy to make and contaminate the ground water.

The second negative consequence of not separating our organic waste comes from the fact that most of it is disposed of as general waste, and the presence of organic material is one of the biggest problems associated with handling this waste. If it makes its way to the landfill, organic material will release lixivates for many years. This is a highly polluting liquid that requires landfills to be made waterproof. It also releases

## Organic waste is the most ecologically valuable part of all the waste produced

methane, a greenhouse gas even more powerful than CO<sub>2</sub>, which is why we need to install tubes and chimneys in landfills to burn off this methane. Thirdly, it smells awful, which means that the landfills need to be covered with earth every day. If this waste is taken to an incinerator, the organic waste adds substances to the smoke such as dioxins or furans, which are highly toxic and difficult for the chimney's filters to contain.

The correct separation of organic waste therefore supplies an essential asset to ensure continued food production and

prevents harm and considerable expense. Avoiding the problem of bad smells and seepage at home is as simple as having a bin with a lattice design to allow air to circulate, and to use biodegradable bags. In other words, bags made of organic material.

If we use plastic bags, we will prevent air from reaching the waste, but we will also hinder the composting process - the bags will have to be opened and removed, although part of the organic material will stick to it, lowering the quality of the compost made. Tiny fragments of the bags will reach the compost plant, obstructing the air flow and creating bad smells, eventually making their way to the final compost, along with the pollutants in the inks, if the bags are printed. If the biodegradable bags are printed, the ink will be made of organic material. Low quality compost is not as good for the fields, and this is why it is cheaper. Depending on the quality, it may be used for gardening, public works or the restoration of natural spaces.

### For climate emergency as well

Separating our waste, the organic matter and the others, is also important for the climate crisis. In Barcelona, the processing of municipal waste is responsible for emitting more than 10% of all the greenhouse gases released. If we separate them properly, these emissions can be reduced by 10%.

Therefore, the direct involvement of the city's residents from their homes (and shops, restaurants, industries, offices, etc.) by adopting simple habits can have very positive results. All promotion and support provided by the authorities will be worthwhile.



# Chiara Bombardi */ Mercat de la Terra*

## **A market to support agroecological consumption**

*The creation of the Mercat de la Terra has been a turning point for Barcelona, because it has become a point of reference that every week enables consumers to make contact with the producers of organic food which is made locally and grown in the region.*







## The market is an exponent of agriculture sustained by the community



There is no need to leave Barcelona to appreciate the powerful changes that links between the country and the city can generate. You only have to take a walk around the Mercat de la Terra in the Tres Xemeneies Park on a Saturday, at the point where the districts of Poble Sec, el Raval and Sant Antoni meet. It is a constant flow of people who have realised the importance of eating well, and who are grateful for the chance to make direct contact with producers of organic and locally grown food. The organizers include Chiara Bombardi, who is also a co-founder of Slow Food Barcelona. She explains that the market makes “farming sustained by the community” possible, to acknowledge the work of farmers who also preserve the local landscape, economy and biodiversity. The families who go to the market “have the guarantee that the food they buy is good”, while the farmers receive a fair price, which will ensure their future.

Every Saturday, between six and seven hundred people do their shopping there. Most are Barcelona residents, although there are also some tourists. Teresa Puig goes there often with her reusable shopping bag, and she loves the diversity of products on offer that have not spent any time in cold storage. “You are helping a local farmer. I am happy to be able to shop here”, she says. The

coronavirus has attracted new shoppers, and some local residents have only just started using the market. “We are trying to buy more products grown here”, explain Susana and Genís, after buying some artichokes from Laila Chaabi, one of the growers who has had a stall here from the start. It has been a few years since Laila took charge of her family’s property in Sant Boi de Llobregat and she hopes that the growing interest in locally-grown produce is more than a passing fad.

### Rebuilding the local food network

Consumption benefits everyone. “If there is demand for a product, with a sector of the population clearly interested in it, the farmer will have the confidence to produce it”, Chiara explains. She trusts that this will be enough to prevent the countryside being overrun with transgenic products and pesticides, making it possible to rebuild a rural economy that can support young people who want to work on the land. The origins of the market stretch back to 2005 and the founding of Slow Food Barcelona. “We found that there was very little local produce and it was poor quality”, she recalls, so they began to work on rebuilding a network of local organic growers, and to create a market as an outlet for their products right in the centre of the city.

## What you can find there and when

You will find around forty different stalls at the market throughout the year, although there are only some twenty-five every week because they appear in rotation. The goal is for there to be a little of everything, with fruit and vegetables as the main feature, because they are at the base of our cooking. There will also be bread, meat, cheese, honey, preserves, wine and beer. There has been a recent trend towards more urban products, which has seen the appearance of fermented Japanese food and Kombucha made of local products, although Bombardi stresses that their main goal is still to be a showcase for regional products.

Sales have risen in the pandemic, but some products have lost favour with the fall in tourism, especially honey and preserves. The market is struggling to find a way to offer fish as well, and its attempts to sell cooked pulses have not met with success. The market also has a busy calendar of events: December and January are focused on artichokes, February and March are for the calçotada, June, July and September are dedicated to the sardinada and October has the Oktober Fest. In April, May and November there are gastronomy days dedicated to rice cooking, white asparagus from Gavà and soups.





**The producers explain what they do and remove any doubts about how they work**



There was a lot of opposition to overcome before it could happen. The municipal markets did not welcome the idea of a street market and the city bylaws did not make it easier, but the team of Jordi Martí and Sergi Sarri persevered and made progress in the District of Sants-Montjuïc. They were helped by the need to make the Three Chimneys park more attractive, tainted as it had been by social conflicts and its many walls dedicated to showing urban artwork. At first, the market was held every three months, and later

every month, but it did not really become a success until 2015, when it was held weekly - except August, when it closes for the holidays.

#### **The producer is the best certificate**

A certificate of organic production is very welcome if you want to have a stall at the Market, but it is not necessary. “The best certificate is always the presence of the producer”, says Chiara. They can explain what they do to everyone and remove any doubts about how they work. She offers the exam-

ple of the cheesemakers of Formatgeria del Tòrrer, Montse Blanch and Nicanor Coscollola, who are not inclined to get certificates, but who are completely open about how they do what they do. They make goat’s cheese, and they have worked out a way to feed the goats with local crops that they grow themselves, applying the logic of the closed circuit.

The market is supported through the weekly fee paid by the producers who have stalls there, cooking events and subsidies. It aims to be sustainable, which is why it declared itself plastic-free two

years ago. It has also given space to AbonoKmo, an innovative idea by Diego Waeher to transform organic waste into vermicompost. Anyone can bring their organic waste, and every three months receive a litre of compost to use on their plants. Waeher hopes that this gesture will help “to make us aware of our consumer habits and waste”. A number of open-air markets have opened in Barcelona in recent years, hoping to expand organic consumption in Germanetes, Fort Pienc, Sants, Guinardó, Sagrera and Vallcarca.

# The nine dimensions of sustainable food

- 1 /** Guarantee the universal right to healthy sustainable food
- 2 /** Make access to sustainable food easier
- 3 /** Adopt healthy diets
- 4 /** Eat less and better meat, for us and for the planet
- 5 /** Promote fair trade in the food chain
- 6 /** Cultivate diversity in the country, at the table and in the neighbourhoods
- 7 /** Reduce food waste and packaging
- 8 /** Create sustainable and empowering food environments
- 9 /** Transform the food system with everyone in mind





The global food system is one of the main risk factors for our health and is responsible for between a quarter and a third of our climate crisis.



Barcelona is one of the 200 cities around the world that have acknowledged their role in the situation, as the main users of the food system, and who are committed to exploiting to the full their potential to advance with determination towards food systems that are sustainable, healthy, prosperous and fair. One prominent strategy is to publicise and support those citizens who are already working on this transformation.



Schools that educate children about healthy eating, or projects that train people at risk of marginalization to dignify the food industry, markets that offer access to locally grown organic produce and build trust between growers and consumers, community allotments that bridge the urban-rural divide and favour mutual support, or arts events that entice us to include sustainability and equality in our eating habits.

The thirty or so stories that we find in this book, directed by Álvaro Porro, Amaranta Herrero and Montse Peiron, are a sample of the many projects that bring sustainable food a little closer to Barcelona. It is good for people, the region and the planet.

Would you like to be a part of it, in your context and your daily life? There is so much at stake!