

Guest Speaker: Jackie Chalmers of New Oxley Garlic, *Naturally!* spoke to us about the Slow Food Movement. When Jackie attended the Chamber's AGM she realized that some of the initiatives she has been working on personally might mesh well as a partnership with the Chamber to “get our town going”. One of these concepts is “Slow Food”. Jackie hosts “Spirit of the Hills” yearly at her Ranche west of Claresholm. In 2009 she started with the idea of hosting an art exhibit and sale for two artists who were also friends of hers, other local, high-calibre artists and artisans were invited and the first year she featured a baker’s dozen, lucky number 13. She and her family own a historic ranch, which is a very welcoming and relaxing venue for this event. She promoted Spirit as a “Southern Alberta block party” encouraging folks to bring their own lawn chairs, sit back and enjoy the music, meet the artists, eat good, clean, fair local food, and visit with the neighbours. Jackie planned for 200 and 500 people attended the first year. Last year they enjoyed the same level of success.

A new theme she plans to include this year is “Harvest of the Hills”: good, clean, fair, local food, a vision of the Slow Food Movement. In October of 2010 she attended the Terra Madre (Mother Earth) conference in Turin, Italy as an official delegate from the Slow Food Calgary Convivium. Some of the worldwide group's foci are: water, sustainability, the land grab in Africa, globalization, family agriculture refuses GMO, honey and bees, the Granaries of Memory- traditional wisdom, agro biodiversity and food sovereignty, food policy and of course, slow food. We, as individuals, make a difference by supporting and showcasing our local producers and therefore becoming co-producers. Forming a Slow Food Southern Alberta Convivium is now one of her goals. They will be meeting in Lethbridge on Wednesday, March 23, 2011 at Harvest Haven, all are welcome. Events like “Spirit”, Tasting Workshops and projects like school gardens and hospital food that tastes good could be organized to further the Slow Food movement locally. “Spirit of the Hills”, featuring “Harvest of the Hills” would be one of these slow food events showcasing not only our regional artists and artisans, musicians, but also local producers to promote and present and sell their products. Jackie realized she would need help to organize such a large event and that possibly the Chamber of Commerce would like to collaborate with her.

“Spirit of the Hills” takes place on Fair Day, the first year she coordinated the start time of the event with the Fair Chair, Syd Gray, she wanted it to be

complementary to the Fair not in competition with the Fair's great activities planned that day in town. Spirit brought tourists to our town. They enjoyed the parade, viewed the bench show, camped in local campgrounds and spent their tourist dollars here. Visitors commented that they were impressed with the murals, the beautification of our town--Communities in Bloom/flowers.

She also shared that "culinary tourism" has become the new buzzword and suggested that exploration and development of these kinds of projects could benefit our town/chamber/businesses. A full time market featuring the good, clean, fair local products available could be a real draw for the town. People are looking for destinations away from the urban centres and we are strategically placed between two dynamic and growing urban centres.

Collaboration and cooperation would be beneficial not only to Jackie in staging Spirit of the Hills but could serve to expand the business base in Claresholm. With the tremendous success of the first two shows Jackie explained that her and her family can no longer stage "Spirit" without some volunteer community support. It's a win/win – introduce more folks to Claresholm by way of a fun day at the Fair and at Spirit and bring dollars in that can be spent with our local producers and other business not only on "Spirit" day but also in the longer term throughout the year.

Questions from members: "What are the "slow foods" grown/produced in our area?" Southern Alberta offers all of the following products: organic beef, grass fed beef, pork, pastured poultry, natural lamb, smoked rainbow trout, Peking duck, organic & free range turkey, organic canola oil, organic flours, fruit berry wines, local dairy products including feta, yoghurt, butter, cheese, milk, buffalo mozzarella, honey, garlic, eggs, bison, fruit, vegetables, berries, tomatoes, and sausage. "Slow Food" is the opposite of fast food. It promotes eating as a shared experience with friends and family, with food sourced locally as much as possible and of course, prepared with love.

The Slow Food Movement emphasizes raising food in a sustainable way with little or no chemical inputs, no GMO, no battery or confinement feeding of any livestock; it honours the small farmer, recognizing supporting good, clean, fair local food producers strengthens a community on many levels. It is a basic human right to have access to good, clean, fair local food no matter where we live in the world. Slow Food promotes thinking globally, but acting locally. There is much emphasis put on Traditional

Wisdom by honouring women, farmers, the elders and the indigenous, and to see these people not as remnants of our past, but as the path for our future.

Roxanne asked Jackie what her vision was if Harvest of the Hills were to be incorporated into Spirit? Jackie thought that the south side of her shop lends itself well to an “art gallery”, which would feature regional invited artists. She is hoping to confirm a booking with “Celtic Cowboy”; an internationally celebrated musical group from Turner Valley, featuring their style of music ties in nicely with the theme of the Fair. More research needs to be done re: food for consumption the day of Spirit. In the past a concession-style format was used but this needs some fine-tuning. She will be seeking information from the Slow Food Calgary Convivium; they host a Feast of Fields annually that parallels much of what Jackie would like to do with Harvest of the Hills. Local producers could showcase their product(s) using Booths/tents. Salone del Gusto presented in conjunction with Terra Madre in Italy, was a massive trade show featuring food from all over the world. She will share ideas she cleaned from Salone with the vendors participating in “Harvest” and collaborate with them on the best method for showcasing and promoting their products.

Her ranch is located 10kms from the highway and visitors had no trouble finding the venue with their strategically placed signage.