

Edible Zoo - Opening 1st May 2011

The chocolate maker and farmer...

Josef Zotter is putting his vision of an "Edible Zoo" into practice. Following the motto "Live and let live" the visitors to his creative organic farm are given an opportunity to get to know traditional breeds of livestock. An area around the Chocolate Factory of 27 hectares is given over to animals and humans. On this farm you will find chickens in circus caravans and also in a variety of delicious meat appetisers. The objective of the "Edible Zoo" is to re-establish a meaningful correlation between animals, meat and humans. It aims at imparting experience, knowledge and respect beyond the shrink-wrapped packs of meat that are sold for ridiculous prices in the supermarkets.

Back to the roots...

Is not only the motto of Josef Zotter, who spent his childhood in the countryside, but is also the motto of the Edible Zoo as well. Josef Zotter intends to breathe new life into old breeds of livestock. This does not mean the most profitable animals, but instead, those animals whose meat tastes the most delicious. Numerous old breeds of livestock will be raised at the zoo, ones that have completely disappeared from the market, due to the delusion of having to squeeze another litre of milk out of the cow.

The state of affairs...

Across Central Europe the share of food in household budgets has decreased over the past 50 years, from 40% to 10%. According to forecasts this downward trend is set to continue. The most fundamental things are of great importance for Josef Zotter, who has been raising his own highland cattle, goats and chickens for many years. This means appreciating the true value of our food and reflecting this in the household budget. It is appalling to see how thoughtlessly some people devour their meal. Even though food is indispensable to life, it is mercilessly undervalued. Even in Austria 150,000 tons of food is thrown into the bin, this is a wasteful use of resources. We urgently need to treat food with more respect, especially as many people in the world still do not have enough to eat. Eating should, once again, become a main focus in our lives because we eat, on average, three times per day, while we take the much-wished-for holiday only once or twice a year. We would enjoy life more if we focused on eating better instead of wandering around the world. There is no doubt that we need some time-out, but we should allow ourselves these little pleasures more often at home.

You are what you eat...

So what does that make us today? Josef Zotter's Edible Zoo hopes to encourage the visitors to change their ideas. Can we tolerate intensive mass animal farming just because we turn a blind eye to it? We are all familiar with the saying "Out of sight out of mind" but if we remember that the animal whose meat we are buying was a living being and if we deduct the 100 % trade margin, we could at least make a guess at the conditions in which it lived.

For Josef Zotter this means that if we decide to eat meat, we should only buy meat from free-range animals, preferably only twice a week, and show respect and appreciation for the animal and the farmer.

The reduction of our consumption of meat would make a significant contribution to the maintenance of the ecological balance and an enormous contribution to the topic of world famine. Experts tell us that it takes 10 kilos of grain to obtain 1 kilo of meat. Currently every European consumes an ecologic surface of 4.7 hectares, even though only 1.8 hectares are available worldwide per inhabitant. This is designated as the ecological footprint and it is clear at whose expense we trample on this earth. As a chocolate producer, Josef Zotter frequently visits his cocoa farmers in Latin America and is therefore able to experience the impact of our consumption of meat first-hand. During his last visit his farmers, who cultivate organic and fair trade cocoa in harmony with nature, told him that they can no longer find leaves and trees to build their houses in the traditional style. The surroundings have been cleared of all the trees to allow cattle to graze.

When visiting these countries, the effects of our behavior are clearly visible. Once we have opened the Edible Zoo, you will have the opportunity to see for yourself that things can be done differently.

We can't change the whole market economy but we can change ourselves!