

King Charles remembers Petrini as Terra Madre opens

Posted on September 26, 2026 by Tamara Bertoia

TURIN — King Charles III paid tribute to Slow Food founder Carlo Petrini on September 24, 2026, as *Terra Madre Salone del Gusto* (Mother Earth Hall of Taste) opened in Turin. The biennial food gathering is the first held since Petrini died in May at age 76.

The message was read at the Teatro Regio by Stephen Hickey, Britain's ambassador to Italy, before Italian President Sergio Mattarella, ANSA reported.

"It is with a particularly profound sense of sadness and loss that I send you this message for the opening of the 16th edition of Terra Madre," the King wrote, calling Petrini "incomparable."

He recalled a dinner at a Slow Food restaurant in Florence run by an old friend of Petrini's, whom he described as an indomitable character who embodied the movement's spirit. "I have never enjoyed a dinner more, nor laughed so much, with two such irresistibly memorable people," he wrote, according to a press release issued by the UK Embassy in Italy.

A long friendship

Their friendship began in 2004, when Petrini invited the then Prince of Wales to the first Terra Madre. They last met in Ravenna, Emilia-Romagna, during the royal state visit to Italy in April 2025, when Petrini introduced the King to local food producers.

"Carlo represented common sense, humanity, and civic values in a world that so desperately needs

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them," the King wrote.

Petrini, born in Bra, Piedmont, in 1949, founded Slow Food in 1986 to defend what he called good, clean, and fair food. He also created Terra Madre and the University of Gastronomic Sciences in Pollenzo, and died at his home in Bra on May 22, 2026, according to Il Sole 24 Ore.

Seeds of utopia

This year's edition, running until September 27, is built around biodiversity and marks 40 years of Slow Food in Italy. Organisers expect 1,500 delegates from 120 countries and more than 600 exhibitors, according to Geagency.

Italian President Sergio Mattarella also stepped into the discussions, warning that "food and the production of food resources seem to have once again become a strategic weapon," Italian newswire LaPresse reported. "Anyone who knows the land knows that even in difficult moments one must never stop sowing," he said.

The King closed with Petrini's own motto. "Those who sow utopia reap reality," he wrote, urging the delegates to remain both ambitious and hopeful.

At a fair Petrini built to give small farmers a global stage, the line now reads less like a slogan than an instruction to those who inherit his work.

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