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14-COUNTRY "ECO-GASTRONOMY" RESEARCH PROJECT COMES HOME TO MONTREAL

On January 25, 2017, at 2:00 pm, the **University of Gastronomic Sciences'** Dr. David Szanto will present "Stories of Eco-Gastronomy: Foodways from around the World," a public talk at the **Westmount Public Library** in Montreal, Québec. This event constitutes the final phase of the 2015–17 **Eco-Gastronomy Project**, a 14-country research and knowledge-exchange initiative about food and food systems.

Szanto's presentation will focus on distinctive elements of food culture from a range of different countries, including Ecuador, Scotland, Singapore, Mexico, Korea, and Norway. Themes include the socio-economics of **biodiversity tourism**, the media politics of **deep-frying Mars Bars** and **consuming whale meat**, and the psychology of **'happy' cows** and other food animals.

"Food and food culture are complex and constantly changing. Participating within these cycles of change is critically important for understanding and sharing knowledge about food," says Szanto. "Ten years ago I came home to Montreal after finishing a master degree in gastronomy. Now I'm coming home again, after a year and a half immersed in eco-gastronomy, and thinking about what the next iteration will be. Meta-gastronomy?"

The talk will be complemented by a digital version of the Eco-Gastronomy stories, presented on the Library's new **interactive multitouch table**. This innovative platform includes the software application **Local Stories** (from Dutch developer Doklab), which allows users to examine the library's archival and special collections, as well as new material such as the Eco-Gastronomy content. Dr. Szanto will be **demonstrating the touchtable story** at the Library on January 13, 2017.

Westmount's **Online Services and Archives Librarian, Lora Baiocco**, was pleased to make the touchtable available to a library outsider: "It's a great tool to make visible parts of the library's collection that visitors don't usually get to see. But it's also a way for our guest speakers to create another version of their talks—one that visitors to the library can interact with both beforehand and afterwards." Baiocco has built several other stories for the touchtable, often drawing the Library's vast collection of historic postcards.

A collaboration between Italy's University of Gastronomic Sciences and local partners, the Eco-Gastronomy Project aims to develop an ecological-philosophical vision of food. David Szanto received his PhD in gastronomy from Concordia University, and is a Montreal-based professor, researcher, and artist. For details, see the attached backgrounder or www.unisg.it/ecogastronomy.

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For event details, see the attached poster.
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BACKGROUND

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WHAT IS ECO-GASTRONOMY?

Eco-gastronomy is a concept that views food systems through an ecological-philosophical perspective. It is an approach that merges the 'thinking-doing' of food (gastronomy) with an acknowledgement that when we think and do things with food, many different effects are produced. Sometimes these effects happen in real time, and sometimes later; sometimes they happen close to home, and sometimes further away.

Importantly, eco-gastronomy recognizes that food and food systems are made up of material elements, language and representation, and interactive processes. This means that any interaction with food can produce political transformations, environmental and social change, shifts in symbolic and conceptual meaning, as well combinations of all of these.

Eco-gastronomy is not limited to industry, or agriculture, or academia—it encompasses all food realms. It indelibly links food and humans, while bringing attention to the responsibility that all people have for the health and well-being of our food ways—producers, activists, cooks, academics, artists, politicians, and industrialists alike.

Between 2015 and 2017, the Eco-Gastronomy Project visited Seoul, Mexico City, Singapore, Dili (Timor-Leste), Edinburgh, Wrocław (Poland), Oslo, Copenhagen, Dublin, Toronto, Quito, Torino, Minneapolis-St. Paul, Portland (Oregon), and Melbourne. Montreal is the final stop of the project.

UNISG AND DAVID SZANTO

The University of Gastronomic Sciences was founded in Italy in 2004 by Slow Food International. It offers undergraduate and graduate programs involving multi-experiential learning in classrooms, workshops, and in the field. The university's aim is to build academic credibility for gastronomy while acknowledging that learning about food takes place through the mind and body, the heart and gut, as well as through all of our senses. To date, nearly 2000 students from 75 countries have attended.

Dr. David Szanto was one of the first English-language master students at UNISG in 2005, going on to work for the school in communications and outreach, as an instructor and program director, and now as UNISG's professor-at-large. In 2015, he earned a PhD in gastronomy from Concordia University in Montreal (Canada), the first of its kind.