

The Food Capitals

by Délice Network

The City Network
on Food & Gastronomy



Activity Report

2024



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Editorial



2024 has been an important year for the Délice Network. Together, we have strengthened our role as a catalyst for international collaboration in the food sector while embracing innovation and celebrating the diversity of our member cities. As we close out another year, I am glad to celebrate with you our collective intelligence, and I am particularly proud of the launch of our new identity: The Food Capitals by Délice Network.

This rebranding represents a crucial moment in our journey, positioning us as a dynamic global platform for cities committed to food excellence. The Food Capitals by Délice now serves as a banner under which we unite, showcasing all the culinary stories, talents, and values of our network.

Throughout the year, our members actively engaged in learning, sharing and connecting. Highlights included our physical gatherings, starting with the Annual General Meeting in Mérida, Mexico, where we explored the rich heritage of traditional cooking, and the Study Tours in Puebla and Stavanger, where we learned more about centuries-old culinary traditions and vibrant food festivals. Beyond these in-person events, we also organised online Digital Food Talks, covering topics from urban farming to the art of pitching culinary stories, ensuring continuous dialogue and learning within our global community.

Collaborations between member cities also flourished, fostering cultural exchange and enriching the network. From Brussels' participation in Miam Lausanne to Helsinki hosting a Gothenburg speaker at the Food Conference, these initiatives show the strength of our shared vision. The Pueblos del Maíz project in Mérida and Puebla's presence at the Lyon Street Food Festival further showcased our capacity to bridge traditions and innovation.

We are pleased to welcome San Antonio, Texas, as our newest Food Capital in the network. We look forward to many fruitful collaborations and exchanges!

Last but not least, we also created a powerful example of storytelling with the Food Capitals Promotion Video Project. This series of promotional videos brings the spirit of our network to life through attractive visual narratives that will be launched in 2025. Additionally, participation in international funded projects like School Food 4 Change reflects our commitment to addressing global challenges with sustainable and future-forward solutions.

As we look ahead, I am filled with optimism. Together, we are shaping a future where food continues to unite, inspire, and transform. Thank you to all our members and partners for making 2024 an extraordinary year.

Felipe Garcia,
President,
The Food Capitals by Délice Network



Lyon Street Food Festival 2024 © Brice ROBERT



Study Tour in Puebla © City of Puebla



© Miam 2024 Florence Shih - Emilio Acerbi - Lausanne à Table



The Paella Challenge © City of San Antonio



Study Tour in Puebla © City of Puebla

2024 At a Glance

February

Lausanne at Stavanger Food&Fun

Lausanne's Chef Alba Farnos Vinals joined Stavanger's Food&Fun, creating a festival menu together with Michelin-starred chefs. (page 12)

Digital Food Talk #2, Urban Farming

Members explored visionary urban farming projects, from rooftop gardens to hydroponic farms that are nourishing cities, communities, and visitors. (page 11)

April

Digital Food Talk #3, How to pitch your Food story to journalists?

This online meeting about food marketing focused on pitching food stories to journalists, featuring expert Mary Rittmann. (page 11)

May

Brussels at Miam

The 6th Miam Festival welcomed a large crowd, with Brussels as a special guest. Featuring joint culinary creations and local artisans, this showcased the power of collaborations between Food Capitals! (page 12)

Study Tour in Puebla

Just before the Mérida AGM, 10 members participated in a Study Tour in Puebla focused on Culinary Heritage, highlighting the city's rich traditions, modern gastronomy, and innovative approach to tourism. (page 10)

AGM in Mérida

The Annual General Meeting in Mérida launched the new brand "The Food Capitals by Délice Network" and explored traditional cooking in the context of sustainability and innovation. (page 9)

June

Pueblos del Maíz in Mérida

During the Network AGM in May, Mérida organised a two-day parallel program bringing together San Antonio, Tucson, and Gandino to further explore the Pueblos del Maíz collaboration. (page 12)

Digital Food Talk #4, The Food Capitals: and now?

A virtual update on the "Food Capitals" brand to answer questions and gather feedback for finalising guidelines and usage. (page 11)

Puebla at Lyon Street Food Festival

Puebla showcased its vibrant food and culture to 52,000 visitors as the international guest city at Lyon Street Food Festival. (page 12)

Study Tour in Stavanger

Another group of 10 members participated in a Study Tour in Stavanger, exploring Gladmat, Scandinavia's leading food festival, and gaining inspiration from its sustainability-focused lessons and ideas. (page 10)

September

Digital Food Talk #5, Video promotion of your food destination

A meeting on the promotional video project, with a discussion on how to create impactful videos with guest expert Loïc Mabilly. (page 11)

Izmir delegation at Gaziantep Food Festival

Izmir representatives joined Gaziantep's GastroANTEP Festival, strengthening their partnership through food, culture, and collaboration within our global network. (page 13)

Lyon welcomes Wroclaw

A group of 16 chefs, restaurateurs, and city representatives from Wroclaw explored Lyon's food scene and met the Network director and local members. (page 13)

November

Helsinki Food Conference hosts Gothenburg speaker

Helsinki hosted the "Makers of Helsinki's Food Culture" conference, featuring inspiring speaker Chef from Gothenburg Sofia B. Olsson. (page 13)

December

Digital Food Talk #6, Meet the New Director!

The last meeting of 2024 welcomed Jessica Ferey as the new Director and bid farewell (and huge thanks!) to Elisabetta. (page 11)



The Food Capitals Team

The team at the Lyon HQ who kept a close and caring eye on our Network in 2024:



Elisabetta Bernardini
Executive Director
Until mid-December 2024



Jessica Férey
Executive Director
Starting mid-December 2024



Camille Chaumeron-Jourdan
Program Developer

The New Brand The Food Capitals By Délice



In 2023 and 2024, Délice Network developed the brand “The Food Capitals by Délice Network” recognising cities committed to enhancing their food and gastronomy scenes. The brand was soft launched in 2024 and official brand guidelines and a promotional video were created to support members in showcasing this new identity. The brand aims to promote cities globally, encourage collaboration, and inspire innovation. The launch marks a significant milestone in 2024, strengthening the Network’s global culinary impact.

→ Please contact The Food Capitals HQ for brand guidelines and logos: delice@delice-network.com

The Food Capitals by Délice Network City Members

26 Cities

The Network remains stable and secure.
And two new applications are on their way for 2025!



- Barcelona**, Spain
- Brussels**, Belgium
- Busan**, Korea
- Cali**, Colombia
- Chicago**, USA
- Gaziantep**, Turkey
- Gothenburg**, Sweden

- Guangzhou**, China
- Helsinki**, Finland
- Izmir**, Turkey
- Lausanne**, Switzerland
- Leipzig**, Germany
- Lisbon**, Portugal
- Lyon**, France
- Madrid**, Spain
- Malmö**, Sweden
- Mérida**, Mexico
- Montreal**, Canada
- Puebla**, Mexico

- San Antonio**, USA*
- Stavanger**, Norway
- Tartu**, Estonia
- Tbilisi**, Georgia
- Torino**, Italy
- Tucson**, USA
- Wrocław**, Poland

*New member

→ Find out more about the member cities [here](#)

Focus On a New Member

San Antonio



San Antonio, Texas (USA) joined The Food Capitals in 2024 to connect with our member cities interested in food policies that enhance the lives of citizens, and the livability and continued attractiveness of our cities.

San Antonio's culinary scene reflects its history: for over 13,000 years, indigenous people foraged roots, harvested pecans, and hunted game. Drawn to the San Antonio River, Spanish colonists, Canary Islanders and European settlers brought new flavors, spices and ingredients from Asia and Africa. This confluence and crossroads of cultures combined with unique flavors creates a cuisine that is distinct to San Antonio.

San Antonio's gastronomic scene is true to its roots but continues to evolve. The culinary schools in the city continue to add emerging chefs to the restaurant scene. The city is also home to the only Culinary Institute of America campus in Texas, focused on Latin American cuisine, and to St. Philip's College -Department of Tourism, Hospitality and Culinary Arts campus. San Antonio also has several programs for high school students, including the Texas Restaurant Association San Antonio Chapter's Texas ProStart. As a result, San Antonio's cultural heritage and culinary scene are a large portion of San Antonio's robust tourism economy of 34.8 million visitors with an overall economic impact of \$19 billion.

→ [More info](#)



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Network Members Get Together



© City of Mérida

May → Mérida, Mexico

Annual General Meeting

The past, present and future of traditional cooking

The Network's Annual General Meeting (AGM), from 27-30 May 2024, hosted in Mérida, Mexico, centred around the theme "Back to Origin: The Past, Present, and Future of Traditional Cooking." The event brought together city representatives from 11 member cities along with culinary experts and local stakeholders to discuss strategies for preserving culinary heritage while embracing creativity and innovation.

Key Topics & Discussions:

- * **Preserving Culinary Heritage:** Experts explored ways to sustain traditional cooking methods, with key discussions on the Milpa Maya's recognition as a World Agricultural Heritage and strategies to safeguard endemic foods.
- * **Innovation & Tradition:** The session "Can Traditional Cooking Coexist with Innovation?" featured international and local chefs discussing various insights on preserving the essence of traditional cuisines while incorporating modern innovations.



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- * **The Importance of Corn:** As a staple of traditional cooking, its role in cultural and gastronomic heritage was highlighted through discussions, a cooking workshop, and the "Pueblos del Maíz" initiative. (page 12)
- * **Sustainable Gastronomy:** Panel sessions explored how cities can implement policies to protect food traditions and foster sustainable culinary ecosystems.

Program Highlights:

- * Participants experienced the local food scene through site visits to the Refettorio Mérida, Meliponary Xcunya, and Hacienda Santa Cruz, showcasing sustainable food initiatives, promoting food justice and preserving ancient cooking, harvesting and farming traditions for future generations.
- * Tasting Events & Culinary Experiences at various restaurants celebrated the diversity of traditional and contemporary Yucatecan cuisine.

→ [More info](#)

May → Puebla, Mexico

Study Tour

Four centuries of traditions on your plate

From May 24-26, 2024, the Network members visited Puebla, Mexico, to explore its rich culinary heritage and modern gastronomy. Delegates from five cities experienced local flavours through workshops on Mole Poblano and ancestral recipes while discovering Puebla's use of gastronomy as a tourism tool. Highlights included a Mezcal tasting, a visit to Museo Amparo, and discussions on sustainability. The tour showcased how Puebla blends tradition and innovation to promote culinary tourism.

→ [More info](#)



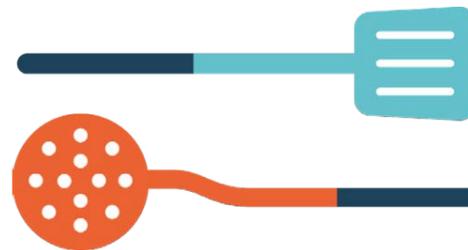
June → Stavanger, Norway

Study Tour

Discover Gladmat, Scandinavia's leading food festival

From June 26-28, 2024, the Network members visited Stavanger, Norway, to experience the renowned Gladmat food festival. Delegates gained inspiration from workshops and discussions, particularly on sustainability practices in food production and festival management. The event featured chefs from Malmö and Tartu, showcasing innovative cooking with a focus on minimising waste. Participants also explored behind-the-scenes festival operations, deepening their understanding of sustainable food practices and strengthening the Network's global culinary connections.

→ [More info](#)



Beyond these in-person gatherings, our Network stays connected through online discussions, like the recurring **Digital Food Talks**.

Digital Food Talk #2

Urban Farming

The Network's first online meeting of 2024 focused on "The Nourishing City: Urban Farming Projects Feeding Communities." Experts Eric Duchemin (Montréal), Pauline Baril (Lyon), and Costanza Bernardi & Nicholas Di Piazza (Turin) shared insights on urban farming initiatives, from rooftop gardens to hydroponic farms, and their role in feeding communities and local businesses. The meeting also welcomed the newest member cities Tartu and San Antonio, expanding the Network's global connections.

Digital Food Talk #3

How to pitch your Food story to journalists?

This Digital Food Talk explored how to pitch food stories to journalists and effectively welcome them to restaurants. Expert Mary Rittmann, VP of Communications & Tourism at Visit Tucson, emphasised the importance of chefs and food professionals engaging with journalists beyond serving meals. She shared tips on preparing chefs with key talking points about the destination, helping them promote local food scenes and connect with media on a deeper level.

Digital Food Talk #4

The Food Capitals: and now?

Representatives from 11 cities gathered for a Digital Food Talk to discuss the new "Food Capitals" brand, launched at the Mérida AGM. Attendees explored key topics such as logo usage, communication guidelines, trademark protection, and social media strategies. The session included feedback and insights from members to ensure a clear, regulated implementation of the brand across all cities. This discussion marked an important step in the brand's development.

Digital Food Talk #5

Video promotion of your food destination

18 cities connected for a Digital Food Talk about creating impactful promotional videos for food destinations. Expert Loïc Mabily, co-founder of Cheese Naan agency, shared his audiovisual expertise, emphasising emotional narratives and human experience. The session also highlighted the Food Capitals Manifesto and the upcoming city promotion videos, set to launch on social media in 2025, marking an important milestone for the brand.

Digital Food Talk #6

Meet the New Director!

To wrap up 2024, members gathered online to say a heartfelt thank you and farewell to outgoing director Elisabetta Bernardini. It was also a chance to meet the incoming director, Jessica Férey, who is excited to start this new journey and help develop the network, maintain and strengthen connections and build new initiatives for the future.



→ [Members can access #DigitalFoodTalks replays here](#)
 → [Or by contacting the network HQ](#)
 / delice@delice-network.com

Collaborations, Projects & Initiatives

Lausanne at Stavanger Food&Fun



From February 21-24, Stavanger hosted “Food&Fun”, a part of the “Gladmat” festival (see *Study Tour in June 2024*, page 10). By connecting with member city Lausanne in Switzerland, the festival invited Chef Alba Farnos Vinals from Gram restaurant to join their international corner and collaborate with a local chef to create a festival menu. At the conclusion of the event, Alba shared her excitement for the event, “It was really great; I had so much fun and made gastronomic connections from across Europe.”

Brussels at Miam

For the first time this year, a Network member, Brussels, participated in the Miam Festival in Lausanne as special guest. The 6th edition of the festival took place from 18-20 May 2024 and attracted several thousands of visitors. Some key figures: about 50 stands featuring vendors from within 100km of Lausanne, gastronomic events, live music, and a menu with 100% local beverages.

Brussels ran 5 stands (3 food stands, 1 entertainment stand, and 1 grocery stand), where artisans included local products in their recipes to foster synergies between the two cities. An example: special beer was brewed in collaboration between Lausanne’s La Nébuleuse and Brussels’ La Mule breweries.

→ [More info](#)

Pueblos del Maíz in Mérida

After the Network AGM in May, Mérida hosted a special two-day parallel program focused on the project founded by Délice Network members in 2022: Pueblos del Maíz. This event brought together representatives from Mérida, San Antonio, Tucson, but also the city of Gandino/Bergamo, Italy, to improve and compare their understanding of corn’s cultural significance. Participants, including many chefs experienced in cooking with corn and incorporating it into traditional dishes, spent the two days in discussions, workshops, and culinary experiences, boosting cross-city collaboration. The program highlighted the vital role of corn in local traditions, strengthened the bonds between these cities and set the stage for future joint projects under the Pueblos del Maíz initiative.

→ [More info](#)

Puebla at Lyon Street Food Festival

In 2024, Délice Network continued its partnership with the Lyon Street Food Festival, showcasing Puebla as the international guest city. Since 2016, member cities have participated in the festival to highlight their culinary traditions. For this edition, Puebla featured talented chefs serving traditional dishes to 52,000 visitors, celebrating street food culture. This event provided an important platform for Puebla to present its food, culture, and destination to a global audience.

→ [More info](#)



Izmir delegation at Gaziantep Food Festival

On 16 September 2024, a team from Izmir visited Gaziantep for the renowned GastroANTEP food festival, a key event in Turkey’s food scene. This visit, following the 2022 Study Tour, highlights the ongoing partnership between these two cities in celebrating food, culture, and cooperation, showcasing the network’s ability to connect despite challenges.

→ [More info](#)

Lyon welcomes Wrocław



On 30 September 2024, a delegation of 16 chefs, restaurateurs, and city delegates from Wrocław visited Lyon to explore its renowned food scene. The group toured iconic venues and restaurants and met with Network Director Elisabetta and Lyon representatives for a discussion on the benefits of being part of our international network. This enriching bilateral visit highlights the importance of strengthening connections across cities through collaboration and exchange.



Helsinki Food Conference hosts Gothenburg speaker



On 4 November 2024, Helsinki hosted the “Makers of Helsinki’s Food Culture” conference, bringing together food professionals from various sectors. Gothenburg’s Chef Sofia B. Olsson, a past speaker at our 2023 AGM, was featured as a keynote speaker. She shared inspiring stories on how restaurants can promote city branding, sparking new ideas and collaborations. The event was a great success, showcasing the power of food in fostering international connections.

Food Capitals Promotion Video Project



Throughout 2023 and 2024, Délice Network members worked together to create a powerful promotional video to launch “The Food Capitals by Délice Network” brand (see page 6). This collaborative project involved collecting video rushes from all member cities, showcasing their unique food cultures and gastronomy scenes. The result is a common video along with individual promotional capsules for social media. These videos are designed to promote the brand globally, inspire innovation, and strengthen connections across cities, acting as a key marketing tool for members. The videos will be disseminated starting in 2025.

→ [Watch the videos](#)

International Funded Projects

SchoolFood4Change

2024 Highlights & 2025 Outlook

In 2024, the European project SchoolFood4Change (SF4C) made significant strides in transforming school food systems across Europe. The Whole School Food Approach (WSFA) continued to be developed and implemented across participating cities, strengthening sustainable and inclusive school food policies.



Key Achievements in 2024

Among the highlights, Estonia received bronze-level WSFA certifications for its schools, while France's Dordogne region hosted SF4C partners to exchange on organic school catering. Slovakia advanced sustainable food education, and Belgium explored the role of sustainable catering in school food policies. Additionally, SF4C published the guide 'Innovative Criteria and Models for Procurement of Sustainable and Healthy School Meals' to support municipalities in implementing improved procurement strategies.

Key initiatives were also launched in replication cities, further expanding the project's impact beyond the original partner locations. For instance, Nova Lima, Brazil, implemented the initiative From Local Farmers to Children's Table, strengthening local food networks.

Délice's Contribution to SF4C: Engagement and Knowledge Sharing

As a contributing partner, Food Capitals by Délice supported the project in 2024 by participating in the organization of monthly City Cafés, virtual meetings that foster exchanges of best practices among participating cities. We also translated the City of Lyon's 'School Catering Guide: Ensuring Quality Mealtime Experiences', which will soon be available to help cities implement sustainable school meal policies aligned with SF4C objectives.

In October, Délice attended the SF4C General Assembly in Prague, where partners shared their progress and discussed innovative strategies for sustainable school food policies. The event featured inspiring initiatives from SF4C cities, including Milan's Farm-to-School Twinning and Essen's successful Canteen Day.

Looking Ahead: The Final General Assembly in Lyon 2025

As the SchoolFood4Change project enters its final year, preparations are underway for the SF4C Final General Assembly, scheduled to take place in Lyon from June 4 to 6, 2025. This event will be held alongside the Food Capitals by Délice Network Annual General Meeting, offering a unique opportunity for cross-network collaboration.

Under the theme "Food Policies for the Future: Ensuring Justice, Sustainability, and Culinary Heritage", the event will bring together policymakers, school food experts, and city representatives to discuss public food policies, sustainable procurement, and food literacy. The collaboration between SF4C and Délice cities will create a valuable platform for sharing knowledge on food policies across Europe and beyond.

→ [More info](#)

→ [Resources on school food systems](#)



This project has received funding from the European Union's Horizon 2020 research and innovation programme under grant agreement No 101036763. This article does not reflect the opinion of the European Commission. The European Commission is also not responsible for any use that may be made of the information contained therein.

Coming up in 2025!

→ June 4 to 6 2025

Annual General Meeting in Lyon

Co-hosted by the City of Lyon, this year's Annual General Meeting will focus on the theme **Food Policies for the Future: Ensuring Justice, Sustainability, and Culinary Heritage**.

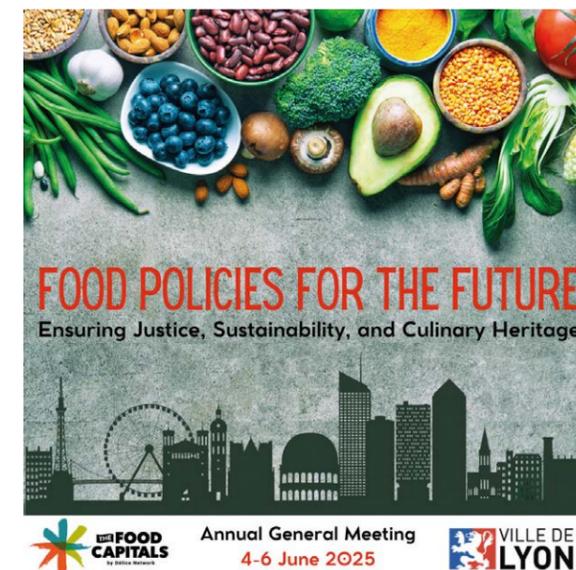
Join us to explore these important topics:

- * **City-Countryside Link:** Highlighting farmers' role in food security and the interdependence between urban and rural areas;
- * **Social Justice through Food:** Promoting access to healthy, affordable food for all;
- * **Gastronomy and Cultural Heritage:** Connecting with local stakeholders who make Lyon the capital of gastronomy while reinventing traditions for today's ecological and social challenges;
- * **Children's Education on Food:** Focusing on sustainability, healthy eating, and ensuring nutritious meals in schools.

In addition to these discussions, you will have the opportunity to:

- * Take part in the network's statutory General Assembly (for network members only);
- * Visit some of Lyon's most inspiring local food projects, showcasing how the city blends its strong culinary heritage with contemporary ecological and social initiatives;
- * Share and be inspired by the latest strategies and projects of The Food Capitals members.

→ [Program and registration info here](#)



SchoolFood4Change

The SchoolFood4Change will hold its final General Assembly in Lyon at the same time as the network's AGM. This will be a chance to meet the partners and replication cities of the project as well as learn about the project's findings.

#Digital Food Talks

In order to stay connected, The Food Capitals by Délice Network also gathers online during special virtual meetings, the #Digital Food Talks. These 60-minute online sessions allow the members to keep connected regularly. They offer members all year long the possibility to share and exchange on ideas, initiatives and projects.

→ [Check the website for upcoming dates](#)

**More events and collaboration
opportunities coming soon!**



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