



# FOOD LITERACY & SENSORY EDUCATION PROGRAM

*Reconnecting Taste, Body, and Nature*

VCIL FOOD LITERACY X FOOD VISION X BUTGROUND





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# Description

The Food Literacy & Sensory Education Program invites participants to rediscover this relationship - beginning with the most fundamental human ability: the ability to taste.

We are living in a time of overlapping crises: climate change, biodiversity loss, soil degradation, pollution, economic instability, and the fragmentation of communities. Though they appear as separate problems, they are deeply interconnected. At the center of many of these crises lies something profoundly simple and deeply human: **food**. Today's industrial food system is responsible for nearly one-third of global greenhouse gas emissions, driven by monocultures reliant on chemical inputs, methane from livestock, and deforestation for farmland.

Every day, through what we eat, we participate in shaping the world around us. Food connects soil, water, ecosystems, farmers, markets, culture, and the human body. What we choose to eat does not only influence

our personal health - it also shapes landscapes, economies, and the future of our planet.

Yet in the modern industrial food system, this connection has largely disappeared from our awareness. Most of us encounter food only as packaged products on supermarket shelves, far removed from the soil that nourished it, the farmers who grew it, and the ecosystems that made it possible. Eating has gradually become a routine act rather than a conscious relationship with life.

The **Food Literacy & Sensory Education Program** invites participants to rediscover this relationship—beginning with the most fundamental human ability: **the ability to taste.**

# Description

## Taste as a doorway to wisdom

“Tasting” is more than a sensory pleasure. It is one of the oldest forms of human intelligence. The scientific name of our species, *Homo sapiens*, derives from the Latin verb *sapere*, which carries two meanings at once: **“to taste”** and **“to be wise.”**

This linguistic root reminds us that understanding the world does not come from intellect alone. It also emerges from our capacity to sense, experience, and feel the subtle qualities of life.

From early human evolution, taste helped our ancestors distinguish nourishment from danger. The discovery of fire, the transformation of raw ingredients through cooking, and the exploration of flavors shaped cultures, communities, and even the development of the human brain.



To become a **good taster** is therefore not merely about appreciating delicious food. It is about restoring a deeper sensitivity—one that allows us to recognize the authenticity of food, reconnect with nature, and rediscover the stories hidden within every ingredient.



# Description



Good taste begins with good nature

True flavor is never created by factories. It begins in living ecosystems.

The richness of taste reflects the vitality of soil, the diversity of plants and microorganisms, the purity of water, and the care of the people who grow and prepare food. When agriculture works in harmony with nature—when soil is alive, crops grow in balance with their environment, and animals are raised with respect for natural rhythms—food develops complexity, depth, and nutritional richness.

The celebrated French chef Alain Ducasse once wrote: “Before cooking, I never forget there is nature; real taste comes from clean nature.”

In this way, **taste becomes a language through which nature speaks to us.** When ecosystems are degraded by chemical-intensive farming, monocultures, and pollution, food loses both its vitality and its flavor. Poor soil leads to poor taste—and ultimately to poorer health for both people and the planet.

Learning to taste attentively is therefore also a way of learning to listen to nature.



# Description

## Food and the human body: an inner ecosystem

Food is the most intimate bridge between our bodies and the natural world. Every meal is a biological conversation between ecosystems outside us and the living systems within us.

Inside the human digestive system lives a vast microbial community—our gut microbiome—an ecosystem that influences metabolism, immunity, and even mental wellbeing. What we eat shapes this inner ecology.

When diets become dominated by highly processed foods grown in depleted soils, our bodies gradually lose the diversity of nutrients needed for resilience and health. This imbalance contributes to the growing prevalence of chronic diseases such as diabetes, cardiovascular disease, and metabolic disorders.

Understanding food therefore means understanding how **our bodies are ecological systems** deeply intertwined with the food systems around us. Through this journey, we begin to awaken our unique senses and gradually discover ways of living in balance with nature—breathing together with the natural world as part of a living ecosystem.



# Description

## Food and the human body: an inner ecosystem

The **Food Literacy & Sensory Education program** is designed as an experiential learning journey that reconnects participants with food through taste, knowledge, and ecological awareness.

Cultivating **food literacy** means understanding the full journey of food: how it is grown, how it is processed, how it is distributed, and how it becomes part of our daily lives. When we begin to see this entire web of connections, eating is no longer an unconscious act but becomes an informed and mindful choice.

From this foundation, food literacy gradually expands into **food citizenship**. This means that each food choice is not made solely for personal health, but also contributes to nurturing a more just and sustainable food system—one in which farmers are fairly rewarded, ecosystems are respected, and communities are cared for and strengthened.



# DRAFT ITINERARY

Date: April 21 - 25, 2026

Location: Đà Nẵng





# DAY 1

*Food to body (inner ecosystem) for homo sapiens*

- Introduction to Food Literacy & Taste Education in today's context
- Exploring human beings (Homo sapiens) and the role of taste
- Understanding how our senses work in perceiving food
- Learning the connection between food, digestion, energy, and the gut-brain axis
- Exploring the gut microbiome as our inner ecosystem
- Observing personal eating habits and body signals
- Practicing mindful eating (slow, aware, intentional eating)





# DAY 2

## Food taste experiences



- Reflection and sharing on personal eating experiences
- Guided tasting of the five basic tastes:
  - + Sweet
  - + Salty
  - + Sour
  - + Umami
  - + Bitter
- Observing and describing flavors through all five senses
- Understanding the fundamentals of flavor and gastronomy
- Exploring the connection between food, memory, and emotions (psychology of food)



# DAY 3

## Food culture & Eco system

- Reflecting on personal food experiences
- Exploring food culture (family, local, and national traditions)
- Understanding diversity through climate, geography, beliefs, and customs
- Identifying personal food identity and eating behavior
- Exploring food systems:
  - + Production (farming, natural resources)
  - + Consumption (processed food, lifestyle)
  - + Waste (food waste and environmental impact)



# DAY 4

## Food literacy citizenship facilitation



- Group work: identifying challenges within food systems and daily life
- Exploring how education and awareness can create change
- Developing ideas and approaches for solutions
- Participating in a field trip:
  - + Observing soil, water, forests, and ecosystems
  - + Understanding ingredients, production methods, and local culture

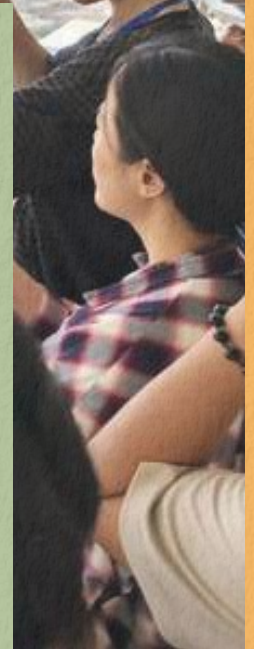


# DAY 5

## Food literacy citizenship facilitation



- Learning how to design and facilitate food literacy experiences
- Developing ideas to apply learning in local communities
- Group work and presentation of program concepts or prototypes
- Receiving feedback and refining ideas
- Final reflection:
  - + Key learnings
  - + Challenges and suggestions
  - + Next steps for personal action



# Who Should Join?

This program is for anyone curious about the deeper relationships between food, health, culture, and the environment. It is especially suitable for local community leaders, educators, chefs, food entrepreneurs, sustainability practitioners, students, and conscious consumers who wish to develop a more mindful and meaningful relationship with food. No prior background is required—only curiosity and openness to learn through the senses.



# EXPERT & FACILITATOR

## Ms. Hyun-Sook Kim

Ms. Hyun-Sook Kim (Loto) is a “taste philosopher” and a specialist in developing culinary education programs, with many years of experience working in Japan and Korea. For more than a decade, she has conducted in-depth research on the role of taste, food, and sensory experience in education.



Loto is also an author of books on gastronomy (the study of food and culture) and serves as a team coach at the alternative university Mondragon Team Academy (MTA) in Seoul. MTA is an educational model focused on team-preneurship and learning-by-creating, where students learn entrepreneurship by starting and running real businesses as part of their learning process.



# Butground

Butground is a sustainable food culture platform that promotes conscious food consumption and restores the connections between fields, tables, and people. Through education, community programs, and eco-gastronomy field trips, we create meaningful first experiences of regenerative eating. We also design diverse food culture projects that transform everyday meals into shared and connected experiences.

Expert &  
Facilitator





# PARTICIPATION FEE

Sliding scale from  
0 vnd to 10,400,000 vnd  
(for membership)

Sliding scale contributions:

- Supported tier: 0 VND
- Base contribution: 7,500,000 VND - Covers the variable costs of the workshop, including venue, accommodation and travel for the facilitator, site visits, and workshop materials.
- Generous contribution: 10,400,000 VND - In addition to covering all core costs, the extra amount helps support participants with limited financial capacity and contributes further to the facilitator's expenses.





# PARTICIPATION FEE

## NOTES

As a community member, you will be informed of the actual total cost of the program for a group of 10 participants.

This cost includes the venue for the workshop, accommodation and travel for the facilitator, site visits, and workshop materials.

This cost does not include logistical support, design, and program coordination by VCIL Community, nor the facilitator's coordination fee.

Based on the actual cost and the available budget, we will determine the appropriate level of support. If the total financial contributions do not meet the minimum required amount, the program will not be able to take place.



WHY DOES VCIL COMMUNITY USE  
A SLIDING SCALE MODEL?

**TOWARD A REGENERATIVE ECONOMY**

The current financial and economic system reinforces a mindset of scarcity. As the market economy expands, more and more aspects of life become commercialized. Market transactions are often anonymous and distant in nature, which can weaken human connection, as the system tends to prioritize individual profit maximization. As a result, people become increasingly dependent on money to meet their needs.

Those in more vulnerable positions are more likely to be left behind in this process of development. This is clearly reflected in the rising cost of higher education today. The ladder of social mobility becomes harder to access for those who come from financially limited backgrounds.

To build a compassionate society, we need a different way of relating to money and organizing our economic systems. Meaningful change begins at the individual level, then extends to organizations and communities. The VCIL Community is built with a commitment to diversity and inclusivity.





# PARTICIPATION FEE

With these values, VCIL Community seeks to open doors for those who might otherwise be excluded due to financial constraints. The cost of a program should not be a barrier to participation. Imagine a potential changemaker missing the opportunity to grow—simply because they temporarily lack financial means. Relevance and genuine need should be the primary conditions for accessing education.

At the same time, educational programs must remain financially sustainable in order to continue operating. The responsibility for sustaining these programs belongs to the collective of participants. To support this, learners are invited to feel a sense of co-creation and shared ownership. A transparent system of costs and resource-sharing helps reinforce these values.

Through this approach, participants can better understand one another's different financial realities. The relationship between people and money can gradually shift toward a mindset of abundance. Each person carries their own unique "treasures," and when community resources are shared effectively, a truly inclusive environment can be created.

The **"Sliding Scale Contribution Model for VCIL Community Members"** was created to embody and support this vision.



# PARTICIPATION FEE

## HOW DOES THIS MODEL WORK?

To ensure alignment in values, spirit, and long-term sustainability, VCIL Community currently applies this model within its member network only.

For programs using this approach, the minimum total cost required for the program to take place will be shared transparently. Participants can then choose their level of financial contribution from the following options:

- 0 VND (Supported option): Participate in the program with full financial support.
- Base contribution: Covers the variable costs of the program, including venue, accommodation and travel for the facilitator, site visits, and workshop materials.
- Generous contribution: In addition to covering core costs, the extra amount helps support participants with limited financial capacity and contributes further to the facilitator's expenses.

VCIL Community will review all registrations, estimate the total contributions, and inform participants whether the program can proceed.

This model is grounded in trust—trust that each member will choose a contribution level that reflects their current financial reality.



# PARTICIPATION FEE



## **SUPPORTING THE SLIDING SCALE: PAY-IT-FORWARD FUND**

The 0 VND (supported) spots are funded by the Pay-it-Forward Fund. This means that the cost for participants in this tier is covered by someone who came before them. Those who receive support are invited to continue the cycle by contributing back to the fund at any time, with any amount—whether more, less, or equal to what they received.

In addition, participants in this tier are asked to write a reflection and share a post-program report, as a way of passing on knowledge to other community members who may not yet have the opportunity to join.

The fund is built through voluntary contributions from community members, profits from VCIL Community projects, and external funding sources. It is dedicated exclusively to supporting educational programs organized by VCIL Community. The number of available 0 VND spots for each program depends on the current capacity of this fund.

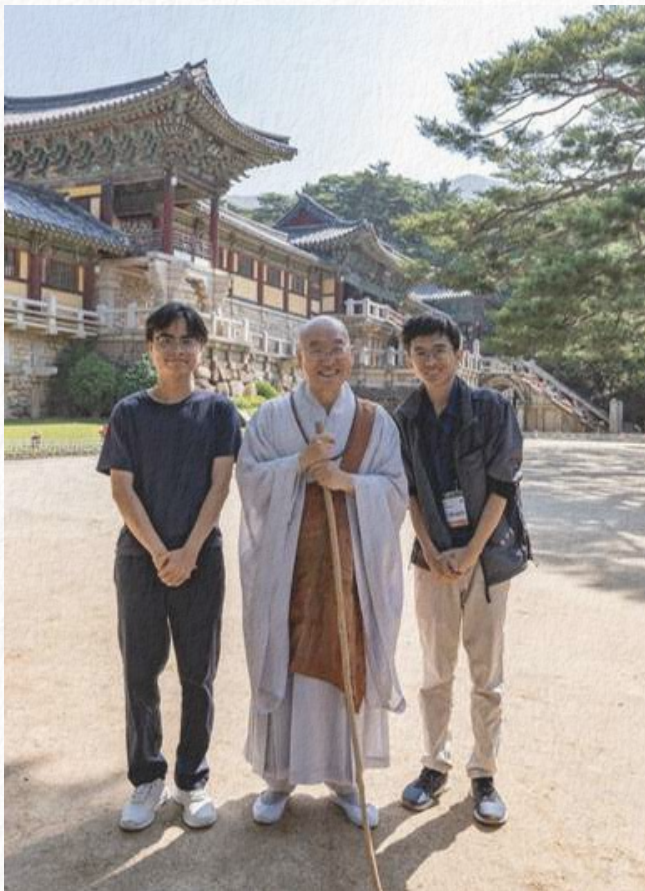
Register here



# ABOUT US



**Vcil Community** is a network and community of people who advocate paradigm shift toward a regenerative and well-being society through alternative education and social innovation



VCIL Community core team at a study tour hosted by Jungto Society Korea

There are 4 main areas that Vcil Community has dedicated to:

1. Alternative Education
2. Social Entrepreneurship & Alivelihood
3. Regenerative Development
4. Community & Ecosystem Building

# CONTACT US

## VCIL Community

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