

Wellington Symposium of Gastronomy

**11ath Symposium of Australian Gastronomy
In Holiday Mood**



Wellington New Zealand, 16-18 March 2001

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Cover: Preparing the stew. Australian possums are pests in New Zealand. Photograph: Belinda Lodge

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Introduction – Michael Symons

Te Papa Party

At the final, triumphant party to this symposium, we marvelled at tiny canapés that were entire dishes in themselves - avocado soup in a shot glass, a thimble-full of black pudding as a tiny tart tatin, a small cone of fish and chips, a duck dumpling gripped in unopened wooden chopsticks, and so on. Starting with soup and ending with dessert and cheese, this was a stand-up meal in miniature, a formal menu for the fingers.

The menu had been dreamed up by Peter Thornley and produced at his Icon restaurant overlooking the harbour from Wellington's proud new Te Papa museum. In other words, we ate brilliant little icons designed by an iconic Wellington chef in Icon within the city's biggest icon on its natural icon. You had to be there.

The organising committee had scarcely discussed the party. 'I'll talk to Peter Thornley', David Burton suggested, and it happened. And yet it well represented the determination of this symposium to feel like a normal symposium, comfortably so, but deliberately to re-invent the 'rules'.

A series of often perilously ambitious dinners have climaxed every symposium since Phillip Searle's legendary 'Clowns' conclusion in Adelaide in 1984. Early, the Wellington organisers resolved not to have a banquet. Instead, we would have the logical wind-up, a party. What a daring departure! The only risk is that a highly energised group silenced periodically by Thornley's stunning transformations of previously tedious hotel titbits in relatively glamorous surroundings might still be acclaimed a banquet. If so, it was an alternative banquet, a Thumbelina party.

Consonant with Brillat-Savarin's advice, Symposiums of Australian Gastronomy have explicitly sought to couple good theory with good practice – they have combined nourishing discussion with reasoned meals. As practical gastronomy, they have been reflexive. This has meant not merely famous banquets and the consistent publication of *Proceedings* (with the glaring exception still of Sydney in 1996), but the supplementing of papers and menus with explicit commentaries on the latest findings. This introduction describes Wellington's experimental waywardness. (These *Proceedings* conclude with further reports by Gay Bilson, who is now the only person to have attended all symposiums, Michael Symons, Lois Daish and David Burton.)

Internet conference

The most obvious departure was taking the Australian symposium off shore. The background to this is that symposium founder Michael Symons happened to be in Adelaide in June 2000 when a meeting there decided for good reasons to delay their event until the Adelaide Festival of Arts in early 2002. This extended the customary 18-month gap by a further year, so that Symons promised to explore the possibility of doing something in Wellington when he got there. From the start, he knew he had to interest the only person he already knew in Wellington, cookery writer Lois Daish, who had been to three symposiums. But the pair made no move until the conjunction at the last possible minute of Scott Minervini's encouragement from Hobart and Mietta O'Donnell's death prompted a 'we only live once' letter from Symons to Daish and to

David Burton, another food writer to whom Daish had now introduced him. With Lois Daish's inspired addition of bookshop manager Laura Kroetsch, who was taking a sabbatical, we formed an effective committee that managed to organise a highly successful symposium in under two months.

The idea was greeted with enthusiasm among key figures in Australia, even when notice was going to be too short for them to attend (several Victorians were tied up with their local food and wine festival). Scott Minervini and the committee of the previous symposium in Hobart were especially supportive, seeming to maintain the enthusiasm of the previous event as well as identifying with the New Zealand climate, island status and peripheral neglect.

An exception was one or two people in Adelaide who could not understand an Australian symposium in New Zealand (no problem this side of the Tasman) and who pointed out that their group had already claimed the '12th Symposium' title. Nonetheless, they were somewhat mollified by the 'symposium on holidays' proposal, together with an acceptance that the actual 12th would officially become the 11ath. Incidentally, organisers of the 14th might think of restoring the proper numbering, and so like a lift miss the 13th.

We selected the date for several reasons, principally to honour the 18-month periodicity while remaining as far out as we could from Adelaide. Given the short notice, we decided to break the usual Monday-Tuesday pattern in favour of a weekend, sacrificing the possible interests of restaurant professionals but perhaps minimising other losses. In the event, our initial guess of 'perhaps 40' participants was exceeded by one. The committee viewed the speed as largely positive, and not merely for capping our own commitments. We could borrow the lessons, while delivering a refreshing intimacy and spontaneity. Within days, we exceeded agreed minimum numbers for both attenders and paper-givers.

The Internet helped. Eight weekly committee meetings were supplemented by frequent digital memos. Responses were speeded up, and the cost of international communication was brought down. The modified mailing list was just one of the reduced ambitions and expectations that permitted a fee (\$NZ300 or \$A250) that was approximately half the ruling rate.

Lois Daish immediately suggested that we use the Cuisine Centre at Moore Wilson's, that she had successfully hired for an earlier food writers' guild conference. This gave us a kitchen (usually used for demonstrations) in a spacious meeting room above a culinary department store that provides the catering trade and public generally with good food, wine and equipment. The support of the Moore family went well beyond duty.

Opening party

The opening dinner is a good example how self-imposed constraints can stimulate innovation. The committee agreed to do without nametags again, but on condition that other measures were taken to make the many newcomers feel welcome. One answer was to reverse the usual symposium practice of opening with a stand-up party (moving it to the closing night), and to mix everyone up according to a seating plan. After pre-dinner drinks, the committee members (plus Margaret Brooker, who was coopted) called out names to join them on each of five tables.

On the other hand, the tradition of starting with something local was met. The choice of cuisine might not appear particularly local, but, as David Burton explained on the night, the city has an extraordinary number of Malaysian restaurants. Vim Rao was an obvious choice as caterer because she had enrolled for the symposium with alacrity and is a leading restaurateur with not merely Kopi (Malaysian-based) but also Bouquet Garni (French-based). Her nicely judged menu of familiar, carefully cooked Malaysian foods was as welcoming as any doctor could have ordered.

The relative absence of Sydney-siders was now evident (only two of them). This might suggest that Sydney people have now moved on from the symposium, leaving it to the periphery. However, participation was also conspicuously low from New Zealand's largest city, Auckland (only two of them, too). This raises the possibility that life in the big cities is reaching unsustainable velocities, crammed diaries leaving insufficient time to taste and to think. Those who most needed a break could apparently not afford to take it.

Coffee

The 'holiday mood' was reflected in seaside touches, especially the conceit of the symposium being set in a 'bach' (the North Island word for holiday house). Committee members returned from the local coast with table decorations and additions to a beach umbrella tableau that included a device called a Thermette. Also named the Benghazi Boiler because it was invented by troops in the desert during the Second World War, this is a painted metal water jacket that can be boiled with a few twigs.

We were seated randomly for the first four courses of Saturday's lunch using rocks painted with our names and pulled out of a basket like gambling balls. Everyone received a tea towel to serve as serviette and souvenir with such tourist motifs as sheep, kiwis, maps and the pavlova.

While such devices suggested a weekend at the beach, for the more urban-minded, we also became a café. As Chris Dillon analysed in his paper, Wellington now has an exceptionally strong coffee culture, represented by the installation by his company of an espresso machine and barista for coffees on both mornings from 8.30 am. A short queue formed at every opportunity, the Tasmanian delegation went off on a café quest before catching their plane on Monday, and this innovation is bound to be repeated in future symposiums.

Lazy Lunch

Responding to the symposium's sub-theme, Michael Symons rang Sean Moran, a previous participant who provides real holiday feeling food at his restaurant on Bondi Beach in Sydney. Because of current expansions to his business, Sean declined coming to cook, but urged that we contact Jacob Brown, who was born in Dunedin, had spent his youth in Auckland and now worked in Sydney. He had been with Gay Bilson at the Bennelong restaurant before becoming chef at Fuel in Darlinghurst. Recently returning to Sydney from an overseas trip, Jacob was indeed keen and proved the right person for the task. The committee had decided they wanted a relaxed, long lunch mixed with papers as if on holidays. Billed as 'The Lazy Lunch: This lunch is so lazy that it takes twelve hours', eating and talking alternated wonderfully through the day.

Why don't we start every day with Scampi Newburg? Possum stew is absolutely perfect for late afternoon ... (as well as being a well-established Australian colonist). Jacob Brown provided an interesting, locally based menu in a series of beautifully paced courses – the paper on 'word of mouth' answered by a salad of tongues, cheeks and ears. It all felt so natural that it was easy to forget him beavering away in the kitchen with the help of local cook and photographer, Belinda Lodge. It was so relaxed that this couldn't have been a second landmark banquet, or could it?

BYO Wines

The BYO tradition has figured since the first symposium meal ever when participants were invited to bring their own brown bread, and at last it would actually be wines, everyone's local wine. We opened the selection just before Margaret Brooker's paper and the panel discussion on New Zealand regional foods. Not everyone saw themselves as a wine person, but the number was just right for crowding around a table, comparing notes and doing the bonding that wines quickly achieve.

The choice of wines proved that our sense of regionality is more than geographical. Several Wellington participants chose wines from Marlborough on the South Island because Martinborough is closer but not yet well enough established to have captured their hearts. Mary Brander brought essentially a joke wine from Queensland perhaps because she would prefer to be living back in Canberra. Sandy Michell got around the problem of living on the Gold Coast by returning for her choice to her family base in Adelaide. Indecisively, Michael Symons and Marion Maddox brought one Australian and one New Zealand bottle. Jane Adams of Sydney contributed an aged sauvignon blanc from Cloudy Bay, because she has long been a publicist for that company.

After their initial sampling, the regional wines accompanied Jacob's fourth (possum) course. For the fifth, we followed David Burton with his suitcase packed with the now somewhat depleted collection and carried our own rolls (with tongue left over from the tongue-in-cheek course) down to the harbour front. We set up on a sculptured wooden bridge over a motorway overlooking the foreshore and still waters, alongside a wedding party being photographed and overlooking raucous rowers. The committee had cut back on the original intention to have a beach bonfire partly for fear of the weather, which, of course, turned out to be perfect.

Not much more than a week earlier, Lois Daish had come up with the idea of visiting a fringe theatrical production called the 'Native Chef' at Masi Café (called Reds when it belonged to Chris Dillon of Supreme coffee). With a backdrop of slides, the improvised show starred Erolia Ifopo as cookery book author Barbara Cartland and as her actor self, along with Paul, who also made the coffees. It was fun setting for Jacob Brown's final, ice-cream course.

Themes

The excellence of the thirteen papers, despite such short notice, demonstrates the strength of gastronomic writing and thinking these days. Various authors decried the marketing machine's inroads on word of mouth, reduced a room of foodies to tears over religious fasting, examined culinary biographies under food industrialisation, challenged the clichés of arrogant French and food-less English, pointed to the nineteenth-century trade that centred on the Tasman and making for close links between especially Tasmania and the South Island, ... And that was only the beginning.

Barbara Keen's appeal not to dismiss the culinary efforts of her New Zealand farming forebears gave form to unconcealed moments of shameless nostalgia throughout the weekend. The *Edmonds* cookery book, produced by a baking powder manufacturer, is the classic on every shelf of a nation of scone makers, and used by Nancy Pollock to introduce a discussion of the definition of gastronomy. Everyone (on both sides of the 'ditch') loves the pavlova, as Jennifer Hillier showed.

The nostalgia was balanced by reports of good things happening all over the place. Jane Adams crusaded on behalf of farmers' markets. Zannie Flanagan organised a tasting of Australian and New Zealand olive oils (even if NZ production is still so small that it comes in little more than perfume bottles), and preceded that with a metaphysics of oil. Paradoxically, themes are hard to pick out precisely because discussions were so interlocking and all encompassing. Chris Dillon and Jane Adams expressly listed how their topics illuminated earlier ones.

Throughout, twenty or so New Zealanders discovered the excitement of serious gastronomic chat. Meanwhile, sixteen or so Australians discovered that New Zealand is much more than snow-capped mountains peopled by bungee and base jumpers. The visitors learned that a 'bach' (or 'crib' in the south) is a shack or holiday house, that 'delis' are still really 'dairies', that ordinary tea is 'gum boot', that 'hokey pokey' survives, and so on. Most shockingly, they discovered only a short flight away a caffeine-vibrant culture reared on the 'bowl latte'.

Slow Lunch

Richard and Maria Pia Klein have an Italian food business in Wellington – with plans to open a trattoria. People will be flocking if our 'Slow Lunch' is any indication. They had lit the flame under the chick peas on Friday evening to accent the slow cooking. Their summery Italian menu was accompanied by two 'seasonal beers' (Blonde Mac from Nelson and Emerson's Maris Gold from Dunedin) selected by Adrian Harrison, a Martinborough chef with a passion for brewing. This lunch led into a panel discussion of the Slow Food movement, of which Richard and Maria Pia have started the Wellington chapter.

The Slow Food movement has a brilliant manifesto, and the local convivium's recent launch had stimulated discussion about Slow's benefits. We re-visited the discussion with the help of three real enthusiasts, one lapsed 'lone scout' and one long-term leader whose loyalties were fading. Against the promised personal pleasures and pressure group benefits, we heard suggestions that the movement might be too Italian-oriented, centrally organised and succumbing to institutional and sponsorship pressures.

At a recent Wellington meeting, the Slow Food philosophy was reduced to one word, 'tradition'. Whilst traditions are surprisingly quickly invented (think of the tomato in Italian cooking), the term bothers Australians and New Zealanders. Indeed, during the panel discussion, Mary Brander suggested that the central tenets were, in fact, fresh, seasonal, local. Whether such goals are best pursued within the ambit of Slow Food then becomes the question. This again illustrated differences between our two countries. For some reason (could it be the public relations boost for olive oil?), Italian food rates much more highly in Australia.

Cultural cringe

Australians have a helpful name, 'cultural cringe', to refer to the unreasonable denigration by Australians of their own culture and their subservience to others. A.A. Phillips invented the term in an article, 'The Cultural Cringe', in *Meanjin* in 1950, in which he wrote: 'Above our writers – and other artists – looms the intimidating mass of Anglo-Saxon culture. Such a situation almost inevitably produces the characteristic Australian Cultural Cringe.'

Both countries have suffered cringe about their food, which the symposiums helped dispell in Australia. But there is another interesting aspect; we in the Antipodes have tended to 'look back to the Northern Hemisphere with scarcely a sideways glance'. That is, Australia and New Zealand have not always noticed their respective strengths. Pointing this out, New Zealand playwright Roger Hall recently further pinpointed the countries' relationship as 'sulking jealousy on the one hand and almost total indifference on the other' (*Listener*, 31 March 2001, p.59). As well as each looking more to themselves, the two countries can learn much by comparing, contrasting and learning 'sideways'.

In its free-spirited way, the twelve symposiums have provided a powerful forum and morale booster for Australian thinking and acting. They have helped push that country to the gastronomic forefront in recent years. But, in marked contrast to the international spread of Slow sometimes through its adoption of the propaganda techniques of its enemies, the symposiums have only now crossed one, relatively open national frontier. Yet more great mutual benefits are promised.

Future

This event might have spawned more Wellington Symposiums that, like the Oxford version, are stationary. But there has already been talk of a Dunedin event, and the Australian symposiums have undoubtedly gained (as the Wellington success has confirmed) from being non-institutionalised, experimental and peripatetic. Equally free-spirited New Zealand Symposiums of Gastronomy could even link up with the Australian events in some manner - various other associations combine for every third or fourth conference, for example. This would keep up the cross-fertilisation.

Or New Zealand enthusiasm might be expressed in some entirely different way.

The Wellington Symposium
(Symposium of Australian Gastronomy in Holiday Mood)

Cuisine Centre, Moore Wilson's
Wellington New Zealand, 16-18 March 2001

Program

Friday, 16 March

6.30-9.00: *Welcome to our Bach*

Register with Laura. Please hand in your BYO local wine (or to David on Saturday)

7.15: Greetings: Laura Kroetsch and David Burton

7.30-8.30: **Five Tables**

A Wellington take on Malaysian food by Vim Rao, one of the city's leading restaurateurs and owner of Bouquet Garni and Kopi

Hosts: Margaret Brooker, David Burton, Lois Daish, Laura Kroetsch and Michael Symons

8.30: Lighting the chickpeas - Maria Pia starts cooking the 'Pasta e ceci' for Sunday's 'Slow Lunch'

Saturday, 17 March

8.30-noon: Coffee (Supreme)

9.00: **The Lazy Lunch (first course)**

This lunch is so lazy it takes twelve hours. The chef is New Zealander Jacob Brown, who has worked in Sydney under Gay Bilson at the Bennelong Restaurant and most recently as the chef at Fuel

9.45: Welcome by Lois Daish

10.00-11.00: *Holiday Mood*

Chair: Lois Daish

Michael Symons, 'Word of mouth'

Marion Maddox, 'Fasting for feasters: The body on holy-days'

11.00-12.00: **The Lazy Lunch (second course)**

12.00-1.00: *Surviving the Colonies (Part I)*

Chair: Karen Pridham

Roz Dibley, 'Out of the roasting pan and into the wok: Women and culinary change in New Zealand'

Tony Simpson, 'The shocking origins of the New Zealand scone'

1.30-2.15: **The Lazy Lunch (third course)**

2.15-3.15: *Surviving the Colonies (Part II)*

David Burton, 'The politics of flavour: Absorption versus imposition in French and British colonial cuisines'

John Fitzpatrick, 'Food, warfare and the impact of Atlantic capitalism on early Australia and Aotearoa/New Zealand'

3.15-3.45: *Regional Wines of Australia and New Zealand*

Opening and tasting our BYO wines

3.45-5.00: *Regionalism in New Zealand*

Chair: Michael Symons

Margaret Brooker, 'Regionalism in New Zealand food - Does it exist?'

Panel discussion: Mavis Airey, Margaret Brooker and Linley Scott

5.00-6.00: The Lazy Lunch (fourth course)

6.00-8.00: The Lazy Lunch (fifth course)

A take-out course. One option is to rendezvous at the Para Matchitt bridge – a big wooden art work between Civic Square and the Lagoon

8.30: The Lazy Lunch (final course)

We conclude lunch at a special performance of 'The Native Chef' with Erolia Ifopo at Masi Café, 49 Willis Street (just back from Chews Lane)

Sunday, 18 March

8.30-noon: Coffee (Supreme)

9.00-10.30: *Culinary Heritage*

Chair: Dianne Kenderdine

Nancy Pollock, 'Gastronomy, the New Zealand scene – Edmonds' sure to rise'

Jennifer Hillier, 'The proof of the pavlova'

Barbara Keen, 'Lost food'

10.30-11.00: Break for biscuits

11.00-12.30: *The Basics*

Chair: David Burton

Chris Dillon, 'The revolution in Wellington coffee culture'

Jane Adams, 'Market forces: From paddock to plate. The growth of farmers' markets in Australia and New Zealand'

Zannie Flanagan, 'From butter to olive oil in one generation (Confessions of a part Maori Australian olive oil producer)'

12.30-2.30: *Green and Gold versus Black and Silver: The olive oil taste-off*

Organised by Zannie Flanagan

12.45-2.15: **The Slow Lunch**

Maria Pia was born in Lecce, the capital of Italy's southeastern region of Puglia. She and husband Richard Klein run an Italian food shop in the Wellington suburb of Khandallah, as well as heading the Wellington Slow Food chapter
Beers selected by Adrian Harrison

2.15-2.30: Oil-off results

2.30-3.30: *Has Slow Food Moved too Fast?*

Chair: Laura Kroetsch

Panel discussion: Mary Brander, Bill Bryce, Barbara Keen, Richard Klein and Scott Minervini

3.30-4.30: *Symposiums Present, Past, Future*

Chair: Lois Daish

Open discussion

7.00: **Te Papa Party**

Catered at Te Papa museum by Peter Thornley. Raised on a farm in Southland, Peter worked in Blake's hotel in London before opening Thornley's in Christchurch and then the French Farm in Akaroa. He is now chef at the museum's Icon restaurant

The Wellington Symposium

(Symposium of Australian Gastronomy in Holiday Mood)

Cuisine Centre, Moore Wilson's
Wellington New Zealand, 16-18 March 2001

Rules of our bach

Welcome to our bach! Please observe the following:

Car-owners please do not park on-site; we need to leave all possible spaces for shoppers.

If you haven't brought your BYO bottle of local wine Friday evening, please get it to David Burton before Saturday afternoon. (Moore Wilson's below us has good selection for last-minute purchases.)

Your Moore Wilson's card is necessary for purchases in all departments except 'Fresh'

Those who volunteered to help serve should find their names on a roster. If you are yet to volunteer, consult Laura. (None of the duties should take you away from any of the proceedings.)

Some of the early meals have carefully randomised seating arrangements. Please abide by the plan – you never know whom you might be sitting with. There'll be other opportunities for choosing your own place.

Coffee is available continuously both days from 8.30 am until noon. We hope we've got absolutely the best coffee and baristas. If you're quiet about it, you should be able to grab a cup during or at least between individual papers. Tea's available, too.

Your souvenir serviette is meant to last you through both lunches (that is, our bach offers the usual eccentricities, which include keeping your serviette between courses, washing it if necessary Saturday night and not forgetting to bring it back Sunday).

Saturday is the last day of daylight saving, so please feel to take an extra hour's sleep.

Paper-givers, your maximum allotment is 25 minutes.

If anyone wants to make a short statement during the final session 'Symposiums past, present and future', please contact the chair, Lois Daish.

Biscuit bringers, the tradition is to publish the recipes, so can you get them to Laura?

Photographers, please send Laura prints of any appropriate snaps for publication in the *Proceedings* (which Laura and Michael intend to publish within weeks!).

The Committee (David Burton, Lois Daish, Laura Kroetsch and Michael Symons)

Welcome to Our Bach – Suze Baird

Symposium in a holiday mood... well the feeling was there on arrival at the Moore Wilson's Cuisine Centre in a new guise of a New Zealand "bach". Once the bottle of local wine and batch of biscuits was deposited, a folder received, a quick glance revealed some familiar faces amongst the background murmur of long and short vowels. Time to get acquainted and re-acquainted over a glass of wine and small Malaysian taste delights of mini lamb murtabak with cucumber and yoghurt raita, chicken satay with peanut sauce, and fine fish cakes with coconut coriander chutney. Here were New Zealanders and Australians passionate about food, whether they are caterers, chefs, cooks, scholars, writers, historians, or teachers. A read of the programme soon showed that food, in the true sense of nourishment, was going to be very much a partner of the words from those presenting.

A welcome from Laura Kroetsch and David Burton highlighted the informal nature of the symposium, and, in the vein of our two countries' shared agricultural background, names of dining companions were read out and we were suitably mustered to our tables to meet others over dinner. Suddenly, beyond the faces and conversation, the New Zealand bach setting was apparent. Here and there were familiar (to the Kiwis, that is) maps on the walls, and the tables were set with centre pieces of paua (abalone) shells for the coarse salt and pepper, seaweed, and other beachy reminders. At each place setting was a palpable treasure — one to take home from any beach-combing outing, such as this would be. There sat a smooth beach pebble, each with an individual's name scripted in glittery ink! Alongside was the "souvenir serviette" of a New Zealand tea towel depicting anything from native birds, sheep, or the favourite tourist spots. More than a few of us were somewhat concerned about sullyng these mementos. Others had designs on their neighbour's tea towels.

Dinner was all too close and filling the air with spicy aromas to tease the appetite further — time to eat! Vim Rao of Wellington's Kopi Malaysian restaurant was thrilled to be able to share her food and further the traditional dishes from her home town and passed on from her mother. Wellington has embraced the flavours of Malaysia and boasts a record 25 Malaysian eateries. Kopi (which means "coffee" in Malay), not only meets the approval of Malaysian diners, but has met much success with the western



palate, with the marriage of flavours in the dishes and the provision of great coffee to end the meal. The dishes Vim chose for this occasion were all favourites: roti chenai, vegetable gado-gado, beef rendang, and baby squid in tomato

onion sambal. Here were great balanced flavours and textures, and a chance to really feel the "bach-spirit", with the satisfying tearing of roti to collect up the juices, and all washed down with a beer! Holiday mood? Yes indeed!

Notes for Welcome - Lois Daish

1. Don't usually have scampi for breakfast
2. But this isn't breakfast. It is the first course of lunch.
3. If this seems a peculiar idea, let me explain what it's all about.
4. An underlying theme of this symposium is to look at what happens to our attitude to food when we are on holiday.
5. When you are on holiday, the usual patterns of what you eat when start to break down. You eat what you feel like, when you feel like it. Cornflakes at 5 o'clock, a steak first thing in the morning. Whatever vegetables the roadside stall has to offer, scampi newburg for breakfast.
6. We decided to call this daylong succession of unexpected meals, lunch because lunch is the meal about which we have the fewest preconceived ideas. Everyone has a clear image of what dinner is and what breakfast is, but lunch can be anything at all. –

a Marmite sandwich on the back porch,

a formal three course meal in a the boardroom of a bank

a lovers picnic in the backseat of a car

a time to sit down in a restaurant with your boss and then be fired. An occasion known as being lunched.

a time to meet a friend who doesn't get on well enough with your spouse to risk inviting for dinner.

Or for that matter an ex-spouse, with whom a lunch hour is as much as can be managed without old wounds being opened up.

Or "doing lunch" to test the water with a new acquaintance

7. Making this all possible is Jacob Brown, born in Dunedin and living in Sydney, And assistants, Belinda Lodge and James Porritt.

So now for the first group of papers. Each speaker has 30 minutes to call their own. I'll ring the bell after 25 minutes, if they are still talking, in the hope that there will be at least 5 minutes for discussion.

Fitting that the first speakers are the "lovely couple", Michael Symons and Marion Maddox. Michael founded the symposiums in 1984, and if Marion had not taken a job in Wellington last year, this symposium would absolutely not have happened.

Word of Mouth (Our word of mouth/their marketing) – Michael Symons

‘by word of mouth: by speaking, as distinguished from writing or other method of expression; orally. Also *word of mouth* sb. phr., oral communication, oral publicity...’ (*The Compact Oxford English Dictionary*, 1991)

The girl learning to cook at her mother’s table ... The hilarity and bonding of women preparing an elaborate feast ... The artisan handing on the skills of baking, smoking, butchery...

These are traditional pictures. They are nostalgic and even sexist. But they share the attractive feature of face-to-face communication. A similarly cherished gastronomic image is the street market, where forthright shoppers meet golden-tongued stall-holders. Healthy table conversation enlightens witty guests and socialises children, and we learn at each other’s tables. We trust personal recommendations about good restaurants.

We need to cultivate, safeguard and celebrate this *word of mouth*. If we don’t treasure our conversations, they will be further corrupted by powerful and highly organised opposition.

The model

My discussion gives utmost value to *individuals with appetites*. I suggested to the last symposium that these appetites are the basis of human rights.¹ Organisations only gain legitimate authority by serving appetites. Unfortunately, organisations readily develop alien goals, meaning goals at best incidental to appetite, and the profit motive is a notable case. Organisations thereby begin corrupt the very thing they are meant to serve.

In particular, food corporations redirect appetites through advertising, packaging, spin doctoring, legal action, and so on. That is, they subvert ‘word of mouth’ with ‘marketing’. The paradigm is supermarkets, whose ‘self-service’ explicitly replaces the personal contact of small retailers with marketing.

The mass media of print, film, radio and television increasingly intervene in interpersonal conversation. Breakfast newspapers unapologetically supplant mealtime conversation by, as the cartoonists depict, burying husbands behind them. Likewise, the evening television news saves couch potatoes from even having to look at each other.

Right across the board, these media now impart instruction on meals, demonstrate recipes and sell foods

I shouldn’t make the distinction sound too simple. For example, when a waiter talks about the menu, is this word of mouth or marketing? Yet we can usually distinguish between genuine conversation and commercialism. We know when a waiter speaks as a human being with an appetite or as a cypher, reciting ‘our chef has prepared for you tonight...’ or ‘have a nice day’.

After these generalisations, which belong to my continuing interest in a liberal, gastronomic philosophy, I turn to concrete examples of democratic as opposed to institutional communication, examples of intrusion and resistance. The distinction between ‘our word of mouth/their marketing’ illuminates a range of issues.

Intrusions

The enormous weight of advertising is only the most blatant attempt by corporations to shape word of mouth. It is not just because of advertising that I have almost given up reading newspapers or watching television; I remain happily innocent of crime, political propaganda, trivia and low-fat foods.

Back in the 1970s, I worked as a journalist for the same newspaper company as P.P. McGuinness. Paddy boasted that his articles were never censored. I claimed that my articles were never not censored. He became an important right-wing columnist; I write gastronomic books. The cuts were often silly things - I can remember not being able to mention that a pop star had 'Jesus saves' on this t-shirt – and they were often more sinister. Gabriel Lafite worked on the public relations campaign for the 'Steel Can Plan for Recycling', through which steel manufacturer BHP paraded its claims to recycling throwaway drink cans. But steel was harder to recycle than aluminium, and so Gabriel left with armfuls of documents about the charade, including attempts to prevent journalists learning that cans were not recycled but dumped. BHP had only recently resumed advertising with John Fairfax and Sons over some other conflict, so my article never appeared.

Large corporations standardly use lawyers to shape opinion through such devices as libel writs, which shows up in the rare cases when individuals are not intimidated, as in the McLibel case. The corporation offered Helen Steel and Dave Morris a deal in which they were to stop making public statements; they could continue to say what they liked in private. The plaintiffs' response was okay, we'll stop, so long as the company also restricts itself to private statements to friends and neighbours.²

People called McDonald's have been advised to give up and changed the name of their shop at an early stage. You might not know the small American newsletter called the *Digest: A newsletter for the interdisciplinary study of food*, but *Reader's Digest* stopped them using 'The Digest' for short.

Large corporations aim for the heart of any culture, from billboards to schools. The food industry consults on educational syllabi and cereal manufacturers sponsor course materials for hard-pressed teachers (as Barbara Keen raised in her symposium paper on 'Lost Food'). I noticed Coke posters on power poles the other day in Wellington. Such sites are usually reserved for Bill Posters (who will be prosecuted), and so circuses and rock concerts, but that image might suit Coke.

Going to the movies, I used to presume that when the main feature starts, the commercials finish. The Coca-Cola company owned 49 percent of Columbia pictures through most of the 1980s so that its products showed up favourably and Pepsi less so. Even more systematically, brokers bring Hollywood together with manufacturers, tourism promoters, and so on, in so-called 'product placement'.³

When the stars walk past a billboard, pick up a recognisable consumer item, keep a known food brand in their kitchen, or visit a known shop, it is safer to suppose that money has changed hands.

Corporations intrude into private homes through door-to-door sales, Tupper-ware parties, the sides of cereal packets and milk cartons, sponsorships, the wad of material with bills and loyalty programs, ad-ons to the internet, and the growth of gossip science. Public relations has sought a scientific basis since researchers developed the concept of

community ‘opinion leaders’. Believe it or not, research is now conducted into the office grapevine specifically to manipulate it.

Companies now conduct so-called ‘buzz marketing’. They pay undercover members of appropriate market segments to create a buzz about everything from hand-held video games to Vespa scooters.⁴

Those trained in American business methods were first to adopt a false familiarity in their conversational style, for example, dropping the occasional ‘Yes, Mike’.

This cynical manipulation through ordinary conversation is now extended from false familiarity to false sensitivity. At Nutri/System, a company that packages complete freeze-dried meals for dieters, counselors are told to ‘Greet client by name with enthusiasm’. But it gets much more subtle than that. For example, when the client complains about receiving little support at home, the counselor knows to employ such statements as ‘I’m so glad to see you. I was thinking about you. How is the program going for you.’⁵

Dieting

Body image is a key element of interpersonal communication, part of the ‘presentation of self’. We like to look the part, and the food industry plays upon this. Slim symbolism has proved a potent marketing device. Furthermore, dietary modification has been an ideal excuse for terrible food. Accordingly, the industry has re-positioned many of its most highly processed foods as low-cal, lite, Weight Watchers, etc.

Ordinary milk (pasteurised, homogenised, but fresh) is now largely superseded by shelves of ‘milks’ with proprietary names like *Skimmer*. These are largely if not entirely composed of powdered milk. It makes fluctuations in supply more manageable, and turns milk into a much more tradeable commodity, so why not play with the composition at the same time? In Australia, the range of milk substitutes are not labelled ‘fresh’. But, in New Zealand, everything in a milk-like container is clearly labelled ‘fresh milk’, even when labels admit ‘milk solids’ form at least part.

So thoroughly has the propaganda corrupted popular knowledge that I have watched a person demand a cappuccino with *Skimmer* just so they could allow themselves chocolate cake. The slimming quality of modern foods is one of the great fantasies of the new Dark Ages or twilight years, for the food industry actually plumps people up. Its starving models sell *more* food.

Food marketing is not just a constant stimulus to greed. It does not only support desk-bound lives from school upwards. People also over-eat when they are unhappy and the food is bad. That is, the food industry has an investment in dis-satisfaction.

At the 1987 Symposium in Melbourne, Professor Mark Walqvist drew attention to findings that dining alone reduces life expectancy dramatically.⁶ In fact, dining alone is roughly as dangerous as smoking. It seems that when we give up being social eaters, we suffer. So, rather than worrying about non-fat fictions, it seems that we might live longer with more table conversation. But who would make money out of that?

Gastronomy

I spoke at a conference of tourism academics in Adelaide in February 1999 with the not unpleasant theme, ‘*Tourism and Hospitality: Delighting the Senses*’.⁷ But the two

volumes of papers show that most tourist research is designed to benefit the industry, not the tourist. My favourite title was 'Accessing the disability tourism dollar', and the intentions were no doubt noble.

The justification for tourism research is 'jobs', 'visitor rates', 'international competitiveness' - not the rewards of travel, human curiosity, let alone individual appetites. They did not ask 'Should we go to Greece this year?'⁸ This year's conference has just been held in Canberra (7-10 February 2001) under the more accurate heading, '*Capitalising on Research*'.

Despite the individualistic rhetoric these days, the benefit of universities generally is shifting from individuals to industries. The aim is training and improved technology. Money is, as they say these days, the 'driver', and not enlightenment for its own sake, not happiness, not improved dining.

The Vice-Chancellor of Sydney University, Gavin Brown, believes that Australia needs a 'good dose of aspiration', which means that 'leading universities should lead'. He proposes 'close cooperation with parliamentarians, with business and industry.' Getting on with it, he demands a 'much loftier goal than training people to fill some presently identified slots' - he wants to fill the 'human infrastructural needs of our business and industry'.⁹

The liberal arts are essentially aimed at discerning individuals - and so governments have been retreating from their support. Gastronomy, too, has notoriously been aimed at individuals. Lovers of eating and drinking have long been demonised as 'self-indulgent' and 'greedy'. But now that the provision of meals has become a recognised industry, gastronomy has begun to enter the cloisters, and will no doubt be further captured in support of the hospitality, culinary tourism and food processing industries.

People want to know about the physical, social and mental pleasures of good dining, but industries and organisations are anorexic, that is, lack appetites.

Recipes

Food marketers intervene in the passing around of recipes. A clear illustration that came up in this symposium is the Edmonds cookery book, the classic New Zealand text, published by a baking powder manufacturer and contributing to the national predilection for scones. Today, the back of the box carries an historical note entitled 'Edmonds Part of New Zealand's heritage' and one side still has a scones recipe.

I have collected dainty recipe booklets from the 1920s promoting aspics, jellies, and moulds of various kinds published by the Davis gelatine company. As detailed in *One Continuous Picnic*, from the 1950s, the Golden Circle company inserted pineapple into the recipe pages initially through competitions in women's magazines.

Especially during the 1990s, numerous contributors to newspapers, magazines and cookery books praised the so-called 'Mediterranean diet' or 'Mediterranean cuisine'. This concept did not spring up unaided. Rather, it was pushed by the International Olive Oil Council to promote a key component, olive oil.¹⁰

When I did a count in 1993, close to fifty Australians journalists and some restaurant cooks had already been taken to 'conferences', usually around the Mediterranean (Spain in 1992, Italy in 1994, Tunisia in 1994, etc) and sometimes in the United States (Cambridge, Mass., in 1993, San Francisco in 1994, Hawaii, etc). These conferences often involved a mysterious body called the Oldways Preservation and Exchange Trust.

It enabled journalists to drop such lines as, 'Chatting to the Marchese the other day, he pointed to his groves and explained...' Even respectable reporters sometimes did not acknowledge that the IOOC paid them to attend the conference, let alone that it was essentially a public relations exercise.

The IOOC also organised events in Australia often using nutritionist Rosemary Stanton and often bringing out cookery writer Diane Seed, author of, among other books, *Diane Seed's Mediterranean Dishes* for the BBC. A three-day seminar in Sydney in 1994, entitled 'A celebration of the regional cuisines of Italy', featured another imported cookery writer, Valentina Harris.

The Mediterranean cuisine (if such an entity can be said to exist) is attractive, and so is olive oil. But let's get clear what the IOOC represents. The main merchandisers of olive oil in Australia (and presumably New Zealand) are the margarine manufacturers - Flora with Bertolli and Meadowlea with Vetta. And the margarine companies want to do down dairy foods!

Good food writers explain who's paying and good cookery writers give the provenance of recipes. Those who do not cite their sources raise suspicions. It might be safer to assume that their recipes have come from packets.

Symposium

The symposium operates largely by word of mouth. Like other conferences, we come together face-to-face. Newcomers usually learn about it from other participants (aggravating the mis-perception that it is 'by invitation only').

As I wrote in the introduction to Fifth Symposium (1991), the symposium follows a 'dinner party model', and 'great restaurants and private meals are also invariably based on restricted numbers and generous dictators'. Dinner parties do not have TV cameras breezing through; sponsors are unusual; people are free to gossip. Dinner parties are central to word of mouth culture, and so is the symposium.

Unlike most business, professional and academic conferences, we've tried to avoid commercialisation, to keep our amateur status. This is one event not stamped with logos. The symposiums may have had long lists of acknowledgements, but have relied on friends not sponsors, and our friends tend to belong to small business not large.

Back at the first symposium in 1984, participants came together to share a then unspoken topic (food), which was exhilarating. Since then the world has gained an over-abundance of food and wine festivals, conferences and master-classes. They are found in every city and wine district, mostly marketing driven. They are showrooms of celebrities, tourist destinations, brand names and profitable ingredients.

So these days the symposiums are almost unique in providing a semi-public opportunity to engage in talk and enjoyment relatively impervious to marketing.

Not that the symposium is free of Expo effects. I should confess that in March 1993 the IOOC arranged a public debate in the old Parliament House, Canberra, as a segment of the Seventh Symposium of Australian Gastronomy. It featured the then usual IOOC spokespeople, Diane Seed and Rosemary Stanton.

New technologies

On the face of it, new information technologies assist word of mouth. In my university days, a Gestener was deemed a subversive device, and the revolution has since gained photocopiers and cheap printing. Email enabled this symposium to be organised in two months.

During those weeks, I learned the hard way that email seems like conversation, but lacks instant feedback, so that misunderstandings cannot be corrected as you go. Even delays of a few days seem like snubs. The words are written, and things look much worse in print. The precise words can be passed on. Besides, the internet is already bursting with marketing.

Accordingly, I've decided that, while email has some qualities of word of mouth, it's better to talk over lunch. Likewise, mobile phones that on the face of it improve conversation often disrupt it. They create a virtual world on our streets and in our supermarkets.

Money, the driver

If I am sounding pessimistic, this comes from an understanding of money ... Money is usually thought to be a means to purchase *things*. In fact, it gives power over other people. When we purchase carrots, we use money to direct other people to grow them, to build the trucks to carry them, to conduct research, and so on. Carrots themselves cannot be bought.

An immediate problem with money is that those with plenty have disproportionate power, with recognised cultural and health effects.

But it is even more complicated than that. We usually think that affluence means more things. In fact, affluence means more power over each other. The expanding economy therefore become increasingly frantic, with more directions to each other, with more intense marketing.

So, I'm generally gloomy about the degradation of 'word of mouth'.

Café society

Trying to be more cheerful,¹¹ I can point to some thriving aspects of cities. We still invite each other to meals, and these often reflect the importance of talk rather than show-off dishes. Reputable authors are still selling cookery books. On the shopping round, we still bump into friends.

Restaurants offer separate tables – we go there for specific conversations, most notably for seduction or courtship, that is, trying out as life-long dining partners. Cafés are different in that their bumping tables encourage a more chaotic interchange. Cafés are very word of mouth.

In Europe in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, the news and debate at coffeehouses augmented the Enlightenment's communications explosion.¹²

Susan Parham spoke as a town planner at the symposium in 1990 of the 'risky aspect of cafes'. She talked about the 'physical closeness to others the café allows – and the chance to listen to interesting conversations as well as the dangerous and exciting opportunity to meet someone unknown'.¹³ Interestingly, she wondered why Australians

(only a decade or so ago) were ‘indifferent if not hostile to everything the café stands for ... the mixture of contemplativeness and introspection’.

Take a break

Finally, I initially assumed that my topic did not address the theme suggested in the symposium’s sub-title. Only after mapping out all the other sections, I realised that ‘word of mouth’ applies even here. It provides a key to the ‘holiday mood’.

Travelling overseas, we might be bemused by unfamiliar tradenames (just as we become nostalgic about key proprietary products that remind us of home – Vegemite being a classic even for New Zealanders), but we also grow irritated to find the same old global logos lining our path.

On holidays at our bach, we hope to get away from the clamour of newspapers, television and junk mail. We seek pristine environments not desecrated by billboards. Instead, we expect time to read, to chat over coffee, to walk along the beach (talking), to spend time cooking together, to linger over meals, to philosophise into the night ... to think. In sum, we want space to get back in touch with our appetites.

We need a break. We must celebrate ‘word of mouth’ as if our health, sanity and civilisation depend on it.

¹ Michael Symons, ‘Pursuing happiness together’, Eleventh Symposium of Australian Gastronomy, Hobart, 1999, forthcoming

² John Vidal, *McLibel*, London, Macmillan, 1997, p.126

³ For product placement in the light of the ‘transfer of creativity authority ... into the purely quantitative universe of the CEOs,’ see Mark Crispin Miller, ‘End of story: Advertising’, in *Seeing Through Movies*, New York, Pantheon Books, 1990, pp. 186-246

⁴ Ellen Goodman, ‘How close Zane came to be stuck with a corporate label for life’, *Guardian Weekly*, 165(9), 23-29 August 2001, p.29

⁵ George Ritzer, *The McDonalidization of Society: An investigation into the changing character of contemporary social life*, Newbury Park (California), Pine Forge, 1993, p. 135

⁶ Mark Walqvist, ‘Social activity and food’, *Proceedings of the Third Symposium of Australian Gastronomy: A multicultural society, Melbourne, March 8-10, 1987*, Adelaide, 1988, pp. 130-135

⁷ Janine Molloy & Jenny Davies, eds, *Tourism and Hospitality: Delighting the senses (Proceedings of the Ninth Australian Tourism and Hospitality Research Conference, 10-13 February 1999)*, Council for Australian University Tourism and Hospitality Education (CAUTHE), 1999

⁸ In full, the former title is: ‘The business of hospitality: Accessing the disability tourism dollar and implications for small and medium sized hotel enterprises in Western Australia’; the second title is hypothetical

⁹ Gavin Brown, ‘The rising cost of aiming high’, *The Australian* (Higher Education section), Wednesday, 18 April 2001, p. 33

¹⁰ Michael Symons, ‘Olive oil and air-conditioned culture’, *Westerly*, 39(4), Summer 1994, pp. 27-36

¹¹ For the celebration and reclamation of conversation, see e.g., Michel Jeanneret, *A Feast of Words: Banquets and table talk in the Renaissance*, trans. Jeremy Whiteley and Emma Hughes, Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 1991; Peter Burke, *The Art of Conversation*, Ithaca (New York), Cornell University Press, 1993; Theodore Zeldin, *Conversation*, London, Harvill Press, 1998

¹² see e.g., Aytoun Ellis, *The Penny Universities: A history of the coffee-houses*, London, Secker & Warburg, 1956

¹³ Susan Parham, ‘A table in space: A planning perspective’, *Proceedings of the Fifth Symposium of Australian Gastronomy: The pleasures of the table, Adelaide March 10-13, 1990*, Adelaide, 1991, pp. 76-82

Fasting for Feasters: The Body on Holy-days – Marion Maddox

(Marion Maddox, Religious Studies, School of Art History, Religious Studies and Classics, Victoria University Wellington)

In 1501, St Columba of Rieti died, aged 34, after a life of increasingly intense fasting. In 2001, 40-odd foodies sat down to an all-day lunch cooked by Jacob Brown. No two behaviours could look more opposite. No two worldviews could seem more profoundly at odds. However, I want to suggest that there are more similarities between the not-eating of medieval mystical women and our own eating than might at first appear; and that those similarities are instructive.

Religion and Material Life

This paper is a first attempt to think through an Honours level religious studies course I will be offering as of 2002, called 'Soul and Body: Religion and Material Life'. It is billed as an exploration of religious understandings of the body, and materialist accounts of religion, through the themes of sex and food. 'Soul and Body' will study both materialist critiques of religion and materialist theologies: it aims to understand religion from the ground up rather than from the heavens down.

Why take on such a topic? One conventional view of religion is that it is concerned with things of the spirit, which it pitches against the flesh in an unequal struggle aimed at the ultimate triumph of the former. It is, supposedly, anti-body, anti-matter.

Of course, there also exists a substantial materialist literature on religion, most famously from Marx. To him, religion is the ideological justification of a dangerously inverted world, the means by which we mistake the real for the imaginary and the alterable for unalterable reality. By religion, as we all know, Marx had in mind primarily Christianity. Indeed, in some ways, the 'religion-against-the-material' view is an argument, not about religion in general, but within Christianity. Christianity is unique in the extent to which it emphasises doctrine over other dimensions¹. The religion-versus-matter issue seems much less pressing, say, in Judaism. As a typical example, one standard introduction begins,

The Hebrew language is a very concrete mode of expression, preferring stories or images to express an idea rather than more abstract concepts. In a parallel way Judaism expresses its beliefs and attitudes more through its ritual nexus than through abstract doctrine. The earliest work of rabbinical Judaism, the Mishnah (end of second century CE), is concerned with agricultural laws, benedictions, festivals, the relationship between men and women, issues of civil and criminal law and damages, ritual purity, and the temple ritual and its sacrifices. In the discussion and formulation of such issues the rabbinical sages gave expression to the ethos of Judaism. The ordinary Jew today may know little about the sophisticated analysis of Jewish theology and doctrine which went on among philosophers in the Middle Ages, or about the speculations of the Kabbalists. In so far as he is a traditional Jew, however, his life will be structured around the halachic rituals which shape his approach to God, to his

fellows, and to the world about him. For him they are the prime repository of his faith.²

Beyond the so-called ‘world religions’, that is still more the case; indeed, the religious thought of Indigenous peoples has frequently seemed to their Christian colonisers so thoroughly grounded in the material that it has taken generations for the traditions to even be recognised as religious³.

Within the Christian and post-Christian societies of the west, the materialist perspective is most commonly associated with religion’s critics. However, much religious thought, even in those societies, is itself deeply materialist. Many theologians point out that the conventional view of Christianity as ultimate idealism owes much more to the 4th and 5th century neoplatonists than it does to the Bible. William Temple, the former Archbishop of Canterbury, used to argue that Christianity is, through-and-through, a religion of the material. More recently, feminist and ecologically-oriented theologians have inherited the materialist strand of Temple’s Christian socialism, arguing that a Christianity which loses its focus on the natural world and the body has lost its *raison d’être*. To them, Christianity affirms the value of this life, the here-and-now. Many, like the German feminist theologian Dorothee Sölle⁴ and the New Testament scholar Krister Stendahl⁵, go so far as to say that there is no room in a Christian metaphysics for any concept of an ‘other world’ or ‘afterlife’—that it at best trivialises, at worst betrays, both the joys and the sufferings of the here-and-now. Serial symposiasts might remember Michael Symons’s papers some years ago on the theology of theologian-cook Robert Farrer Capon, a distinctively gastronomic prophet of the material. To all these thinkers, the heavenly banquet—we might say, the very long lunch—is best understood as a metaphorical spur to ensuring a more equal distribution of this world’s feasts.

Tradition—what tradition?

But is it enough for these prophets of the material to simply announce Christianity as ‘really’ materialist? If they are right, where did the conventional view, of religion—especially Christian religion—as ultimate idealism, come from? Their problem, surely, is similar to those feminist theologians who argue that Christianity is not ‘really’ patriarchal, or those ecotheologians who argue that it does not ‘really’ promote environmental destruction. There are highly convincing biblical and theological arguments in support of both views; but do they undo the centuries of misogyny and landclearing, carried out in the name of religiously-sanctioned male- and human-chauvinism?

In other words, what are the boundaries of a tradition? How far is one obliged to take into account not just those strands with which one finds oneself in sympathy, but also the parts one has trouble with?

Part of the discipline of religious studies involves trying to understand beliefs and practices vastly different from one’s own; and to understand them not simply as exotica (‘My! How strange!’) or as mistakes (‘My! How deluded!’) but to see them as part of the way in which people make sense of their lives. A complementary challenge is to avoid domesticating them into one’s own frame of reference—losing, in the words of patristics scholar Peter Brown, a sense of their ‘disturbing strangeness’⁶.

At the same time, religious studies is not a discipline given over, as its critics sometimes suggest, to uncritical relativism. Religion is one of the near-universals of human culture; like other human enterprises, it can be done well or it can be done badly. What you

think amounts to 'well' or 'badly' depends, of course, on your frame of reference, including your religious frame of reference. There, the discipline of religious studies rubs edges with theology (for all the force with which many practitioners on both sides deny any such friction!). If you are a theologian, your job includes defining what is good and bad religion. If you are a scholar of religion, your job includes identifying and analysing what criteria someone might use to define some religion as 'good' and some as 'bad'. It is harder, in the religious studies framework, to denounce something you don't agree with: first, you have to develop a sympathetic understanding of its appeal to others.

Fasting and the Body

Religious fasting is, for me, such an example. Frankly, I find it very hard to understand. Except when sick, I have scarcely missed a meal in my life. The few times circumstances have caused me to go without, the experience has produced, not spiritual ecstasy, but unholy bad temper.

Fasting is surely an extreme of religious practice that best bears out the view of religion as fundamentally dismissive of material life and, especially, material pleasures; indeed, that is why I took it as the theme for this paper. As a step towards thinking my way into RELI 408 Soul and Body, I have chosen to take on surely one of the most difficult tasks: a sympathetic understanding of religious fasting for gastronomers. Here, we should find the rub for Sölle, Stendahl, Temple and Capon.

First, a disclaimer: true to my discipline, this paper is an exercise in religious studies, not apologetics—still less of evangelism! While we may emerge better equipped to understand fasting, I have no brief to encourage us to do it.

What Drove Medieval Fasters?

The asceticism which led St Columba of Rieti to an early grave fitted patterns of fasting particularly associated with women through the high middle ages. Their actions have long been interpreted through the writings of their—mainly male—hagiographers, and in the light of more recent views of religion and the body. Medieval female ascetics have lived in the modern imagination as haters of their bodies, as women driven to 'punish' or 'deny' their flesh in favour of spiritual exaltation.

But that is not necessarily how they saw themselves. Analysing these women's own writings, medievalist Carolyn Walker Bynum has sparked a dramatic reinterpretation of why they fasted and how they understood the resultant suffering.

One common explanation for medieval fasting women is that they were the medieval version of what are now called anorexics. Such explanations, Bynum points out, 'seem to assume that we are in the presence of a trend which we can call either the 'secularization' or the 'medicalization' of behaviour'; that the same behaviours, perhaps biological or psychodynamic in origin, were once explained theologically and are now explained in terms of physical or psychological disorder. But, she concludes, that categorisation overlooks some relevant evidence. Shifts in fasting demographics dispel any simple explanation: during the patristic period, virtuoso fasting was exclusively attributed to men, and from the fifteenth century on stories of dramatic abstinence are told of both sexes; but in between, they are told only of women. 'No biological cause could possibly explain such discrepancies in distribution'.

Moreover, the idea that we have simply renamed a consistently recurring phenomenon overlooks the fact that not all medieval fasting was seen at the time as saintly; some abstinence from food was, then as now, seen as the product of physical or mental illness. Indeed, some fasting mystics performed miraculous healings on people whose illnesses manifested as refusal to eat. Conversely, modern ascetics such as Simone Weil demonstrate that at, although rarer, some twentieth-century fasting remains likely to be understood religiously rather than medically⁷.

If women's fasting is not the product of universal biochemical or psychodynamic forces, it may be interpreted as the product of misogynistic or body-hating religion. This explanation looks particularly compelling when we recall that many female ascetics combined their abstinence from food with celibacy (whether married or not) and with extreme forms of self-mutilation. It seems logical, to modern sensibilities, that they must have hated, feared and wished to punish their bodies.

Body and mind

Again, however, Bynum warns us to look more closely at their world and at their own interpretations of their behaviour before leaping to a conclusion. Medieval ascetic women did not, by and large, write about hating, fearing or despising their bodies, although such sentiments were sometimes attributed to them by their male hagiographers. It is not that medieval Christianity contained no element of body-hatred; but that was not the main emphasis in women's religious experience. Aiming to put interpretations of women's asceticism in perspective, Bynum concedes that 'some sense that body was to be disciplined, defeated, occasionally even destroyed, in order to release or protect spirit is evident in women's piety'; but points out that 'a negative or dualist concept of the body does not seem to have been the most fundamental notion of body to either women or men' in the high middle ages. She gives some examples of women who exhibited 'an extravagant fear of any bodily contact'; however, their dread of being touched seems to point to negativity about the bodies of others, rather than about one's own⁸.

From there, Bynum goes on to remind her readers that the body also carried crucial positive meanings to medieval Christians. Medieval theology placed unparalleled emphasis on the human side of Christ's divine/human nature, and medieval fasting has to be understood against that background. 'Fasting', she says, 'was thus flight not so much from as into physicality. Communion was consuming—ie, becoming—a God who saved the world through physical, human agony.'⁹

In the religious experience of medieval women and men, physicality was a central issue—so much so, that it overrode categories which modern readers might see as more significant. For example, although religious devotion is often manifested physically, in phenomena such as the stigmata, 'miraculousness' as such was not the point; there is very little interest in medieval sources as to whether people got their stigmata through prayer or self-infliction, or, indeed, whether the wounds were visible or invisible. The point of physical expressions of piety, whether in the form of fasting, wounds or illness, was fusion with Christ, whose physical suffering saves the world.

Physical suffering, religiously interpreted, went along in medieval piety with elaborate devotion to the eucharist, extravagant feeding of the poor (both miraculously and by more conventional means) and a wealth of visionary and literary elaboration of ideas about food as nurturing—a complex of symbolism which would bear gastronomic

interpretation in its own right. At the centre of this system stood an intense awareness of the body.

The fasting of the medieval mystics may strike us as strange, repellent, even neurotic; but this, to modern eyes, apparently most world-denying and matter-denigrating practice cannot be seen as the 'assault on the flesh' or 'denial of the body' which it is conventionally taken to be.

Indeed, the relation between fasting and the body seems remarkably consistent through a long stretch of pre-modern Christianity. A reading of Bynum and of Peter Brown's exhaustive study of patristic asceticism¹⁰, for example, reveals some significant continuities. Both patristic and medieval fasters began with a very high view of the body. Created good, it was subject to the Fall, but was redeemed by Christ through the incarnation and crucifixion. The radical mind-body dualism which became so important in western thought after Descartes, carrying ideas of the body as an agent of deception, was not part of the mental furniture of the ascetics who preceded him. Desert fathers and medieval women shared a conviction that the element of the self which they needed to tame was not the body, so much as the will. The body was a means to that end. By denying themselves food, they aimed to cool the passions, to calm their rebelliousness and, especially in medieval asceticism, to fuse their own experience with that of the crucified Christ. To that extent, their interpretation of their own non-eating was the exact opposite of modern weight-watchers, for whom the will is a means to controlling the body.

Pain and pleasure

According to Bynum, the overriding impression which comes across in the writings of female ascetics is a glorification of pain. Before writing off such mysticism as merely masochistic or perverse, Bynum cautions us to remember how little medieval people could do to control pain. Moreover, in a strictly gender-stratified society, such cures as were available were more likely to benefit men; women's socially-approved response to pain and illness was patient suffering rather than treatment.

Female mystics went a step further: not merely accepting pain when it came, they actively sought it in ways which cannot help but strike modern readers as bizarre. As well as such obvious forms of religious devotion as fasting and self-infliction of the stigmata, for example, they courted infection, not just by serving the sick but, in some cases, by drinking the water which had been used to bathe infected wounds or leprosy.

In such feats of extravagant asceticism, we may see much to amaze, appal or repel us; but what we do not see, according to Bynum, is an attempt to control or deny the body. On the contrary, these fasting women went out of their way to intensify their experience of physicality. They saw pleasure and pain not as opposites, but as blended. They spoke, apparently without irony, of 'delicious suffering', of Christ's 'healthy wounds', of pus tasting as 'sweet as communion'¹¹. Elaborate suffering was the essence of *imitatio Christi*, the imitation of Christ, 'fusing with a Christ whose suffering saves the world'. In doing so, they found a new meaning for their own limitations: 'Luxuriating in Christ's physicality, they found there the lifting up—the redemption—of their own'¹².

What does our long lunch have in common with St Columba's long fast?

Perhaps not much; but I do think there are at least a couple of comparisons which are not entirely frivolous. One is a common refusal to fly from matter. Perhaps we would not all couch our activities in terms of a quest for redemption, but we might all insist, with Bynum's mystics, that the way to find meaning is to pay more, not less, attention to the material world in which we find ourselves, and to the bodily experience through which we come to know it. That is so strong a theme in many of the papers at previous symposiums and in other writing familiar to this audience that I will not say more about it here.

Another common thread is the acceptance of ambivalence. Like the medieval mystics, foodies know that there is no life without death, no feeding without suffering, no enjoyment without an awareness that that enjoyment is not universal, that not all can yet sit at our table. It is to this second possible overlap between Columba's dining and our own that I wish to devote the rest of this paper.

What can we learn from our commonalities?

I suggest that the admittedly unlikely quest for commonalities between medieval fasting and post-modern feasting throws into relief some aspects of our own world to which we could well pay greater attention. In particular, I suggest that eating thoughtfully, as we have done and will do today, is as much a countercultural statement to our world as fasting was in the world of the medieval ascetics.

Bynum's subjects fasted in a world constantly aware of the precariousness of its food supply. That made food a particularly potent symbol. Biblical references to food took on extraordinary vividness and intensity:

Because Jesus had fed the faithful not merely as servant and waiter, preparer and multiplier of loaves and fishes, but as the very bread and wine itself, to eat was a powerful verb. It meant to consume, to assimilate, to become God. To eat God in the eucharist was a kind of audacious deification, a becoming of the flesh that, in its agony, fed and saved the world.¹³

We do not live in a social world built around scarcity, but in one structured around abundance. However, we know that the images of a land flowing with Coca-Cola and polyunsaturated fats which flicker across our TV screens are part of an elaborate fantasy. They are the conscious expressions of a world unable to bear the knowledge of its own greed and inequality. Over the last eighteen months, I have become increasingly aware of the difficulty our society has in acknowledging pain. That difficulty has a curious effect: we seem almost equally unable to enter intensely into pleasure. What passes as pleasure is, more often than not, over-produced cliché. Where Bynum's fasters fused pleasure and pain in intensity of experience, we avoid intensity, seeing pain and pleasure as opposites, but, in our desperation to deny the one, almost equally allergic to both. The standard way of dealing with the glaring inequalities of feasting and starvation in our world is a retreat into polystyrene-packed, vacuum-sealed, deep-frozen monotony. In a world which sublimates its awareness of its own great injustices by engulfing it in enforced mindlessness of TV dinners, thoughtful eating may be one appropriate form of repentance.¹⁴

¹ See Wilfred Cantwell Smith, *Faith and Belief*, Princeton University Press 1979.

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- ² Alan Unterman, 'Judaism', in John Hinnells (ed), *A Handbook of Living Religions* Harmondsworth: Penguin 1984, pp. 19-55.
- ³ See eg Tony Swain, *Interpreting Aboriginal Religion: An Historical Account* Australian Association for the Study of Religions, Beford Park (SA), 1985.
- ⁴ *Suffering* Philadelphia: Fortress Press 1975
- ⁵ 'Immortality Is Too Much and Too Little', *The End of Life*, discussion at the Nobel Conference, Gustavus Adolphus College, St. Peter, Minnesota, 1972.
- ⁶ Peter Brown, *The Body and Society: Men, Women and Sexual Renunciation in Early Christianity* London: Faber and Faber 1988, p. xv.
- ⁷ Caroline Walker Bynum, *Holy Feast and Holy Fast: The Religious Significance of Food to Medieval Women* University of California Press 1987, pp. 194-196.
- ⁸ p. 11
- ⁹ *ibid.*, p. 14
- ¹⁰ *op. cit.*
- ¹¹ *Holy Feast and Holy Fast* *op. cit.*, pp. 245-246.
- ¹² p. 246.
- ¹³ Caroline Walker Bynum, 'Feast, Fast and Flesh', p. 3

Out of the Roasting Pan into the Wok: Women in New Zealand and their Culinary Histories – Roz Dibley

Introduction

This thesis started out as a personal journey exploring the relationship between culture and food. Food and cooking are such an important part of my family identity that I was interested in whether this is the case for other women. For me, food is as much a cultural imprint as language or music and there is an intimate relationship between the two. So I set out to explore this relationship with women and look at their food habits. I was interested in their early memories of food and how they learnt to cook. I was also interested in the changes to food habits over their lives and the reasons for these changes. In part, this was my own nostalgic feeling about the past, fed to some extent by life stories brought out by women around the world and the changes in their lives.¹ I saw a gap in the literature in New Zealand and wanted to fill it. Because I think this thesis tells the story of not only the 24 women that I spoke to, but also about New Zealand and the changes this nation has been through in its food history. Research such as this can add to information on changing food habits of New Zealanders.

The research

Using a feminist framework and oral history as a methodology, coined here as culinary histories, I set out to interview 24 women, here called the narrators, and talk to them about their cooking and eating experiences throughout their lives to date. Oral history is a method of research that relies on a researcher and narrator talking about history from the personal perspective of the narrator. In many senses, it is a method that relies on the development of relationships and is often suited to women because of the informal approach it takes. There is a body of feminist literature that discusses how oral history provides an invaluable means of generating new insights about women's experiences of themselves in their worlds.² In this sense, the research methodology, culinary histories, was ideal for such a project. We started with their first memories of cooking and ended with their cooking now and what had influenced them over their lives.

The women were aged from their 40s to their 80s and came from a range of cultural groups. There was no deliberate strategy to choose any particular ethnic group. Table 1 shows the main cultural groups that women came from.

The research technique used, snowball sampling, relied on my building up a sample of 24 women from all the sources or networks that I had. Friends and family were my main links with many of the women. This was followed up with contacting women through the Wellington Community Net.

Finally, this is an exploratory study. I think it is the first time something like this has been done in NZ and it is something that deserves further research – with any study like

¹ A body of literature has recently become popular written by women about their experiences of growing up and the food they ate and about food from other cultures. Some include Ring (1996), Field (1998) and Luard (1996)

² Two book stands out in particular, Gluck and Patai (1991) and Reinhartz (1992).

this, you dig up more questions than answers and this is to some extent the place I am in now.

Table 1: Cultural mix of women

Area	Country	Number
Oceania	New Zealand, Samoa,	9
Americas	America (Chinese)	1
Asia	India, Sri Lanka, Cambodia, Vietnam (Chinese)	4
Europe (including United Kingdom)	Scotland, Ukraine, Greece, Hungary, Ireland (Jewish), Czech Republic	7
Middle East	Palestine, Iran	3
Total		24

Background to thesis

Well first, some background on what the thesis is about. It started out looking at the links between cooking and culture. It is commonly agreed that there is a link between these two.³ I was interested in this link in two distinct ways:

1. The effect of immigration on women coming to New Zealand and changes they might have made; and
2. Changes that New Zealand women have made to their food and what has influenced them.

New Zealand was officially colonised by the English with a Treaty signed in 1840. Not only did the English bring their laws with them, but also their culture, including food habits. They didn't really pick up any of the local foods but rather transplanted their own ideas and habits to the other side of the world. These food habits sustained until well into the 20th century and were picked up and have had a profound effect on the indigenous people, Maori.⁴

Of course, since this time, a lot of things have changed. Just looking at the 1996 Census shows a huge change in Wellington's population with a range of ethnic groups now well represented. Pakeha and Maori went from being 85 per cent to about 70 per cent of the Wellington population between 1991 and 1996.

With this, there has been a change in eating habits, with a seemingly endless range of new products and ingredients available. Eating Chinese, Thai, Italian or Mexican is a choice that we have when walking down Wellington's streets.

But what is happening here, are we sharing our food habits with each other or are we eating other people's foods for other reasons and are they the foods that immigrants bring here? This study attempted to explore these issues by looking at the food habits of these 24 women. It by no means representative of New Zealand as a whole but goes some way towards telling the stories of New Zealand women through food.

³ The thesis explores this in more detail. To provide some example, there are books such as *Ethnic and Regional Foodways in the United States*.

⁴ Tony Simpson (1999) has written extensively about the food culture that the British settlers brought to New Zealand and to some extent, on the influence of this food on Maori. However, to my knowledge, there have been no books that look at the cultural influence of the English on Maori.

So what did the interviews tell me? I've divided my initial thoughts into three main areas.

- Out of the roasting pan: growing up in a food culture
- Into the wok: changes in women's food habits
- Just what are we eating in Aotearoa: changes in New Zealand food as experienced by women

Out of the roasting pan: growing up in a food culture

The first part looked at how women remembered food being cooked when they were young. Most of them remember their mothers or grandmothers in the kitchen (and in a few occasions, cooks). Their mothers or grandmothers passed down food habits to these women. They relied on their memories of how their mothers cooked and there was practically no use of cookbooks at all. These women felt that cooking in their childhood was similar to people in their immediate communities. For women who were immigrants to another country when they were young, there was a process of adaptation and also consciously keeping certain traditions. Some of their food was still based on their cultural cuisine and they lived in communities that were similar such as Indian communities in Tanzania or a Greek community in Romania. Only one woman lived in an ethnically mixed community with blacks. The interviews gave me a feeling that they were able to articulate the differences between their cuisine and the food from their own countries.

Apart from a few things maintained through tradition, the food was part of the environment in which you were in. You had to adjust yourself according to the place. Coco

There were many ways these women learnt how to cook. Something that stood out with the New Zealand women was the rurally based society that most of them came from. In many New Zealand families, children (both boys and girls) had to help in the kitchen from a young age. The family farm required all members of the family to help out. The older daughters often played a key role in ensuring that meals were on the table and took quite a bit of responsibility for cooking.

I would feed the little ones and have their lunches ready. By the time, my mother came in (from milking), I'd have the boy's breakfast on the table, and they would all be fed and all the lunches would be made. In the evenings, I cooked the dinner; she might have prepared it but I actually cooked it. Whetu

There were a few women who learnt by being in the kitchen and they also had to cook when young. Often it was class-based as both parents worked. Sandy, an American Chinese had to start cooking at about the age of seven for this reason.

It was just something that you did, you just automatically started cooking. After a certain stage, you had to have the meal on the table on the table from when my parents arrived home from work. Sandy

In these cases, both parents worked and cooking was an economic necessity. Most of the other women were not taught to cook but absorbed cooking by watching and seeing what was done. They may have been in the kitchen watching their mother or grandmother but in many cases, they did not have to cook and only started when they got married. One example is an Iranian woman who married a Pakistani and went to

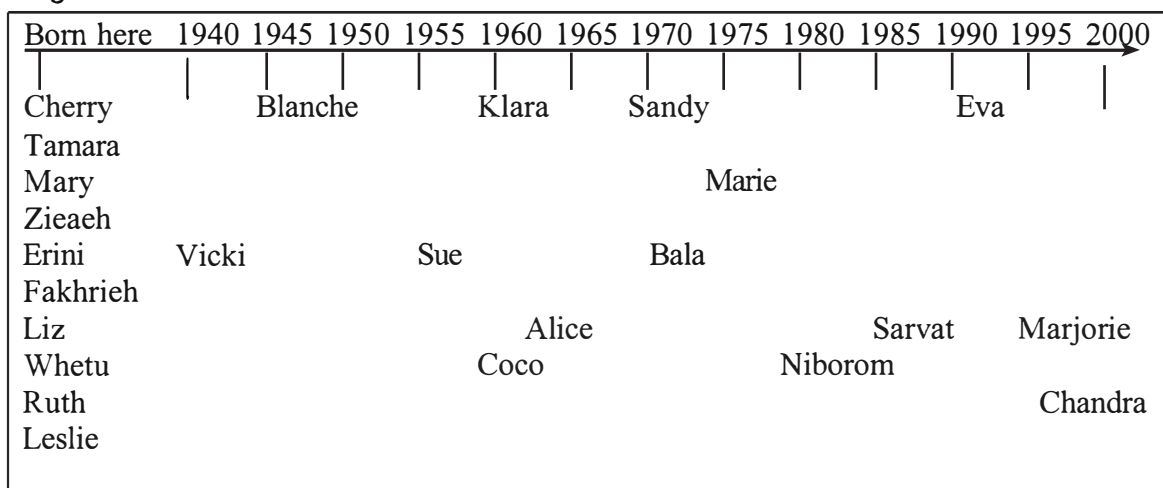
live in Pakistan with him. She commented that, though she had never cooked before in her life, she instinctively knew what to do.

When I got married, I had never done anything in the kitchen . . . and settled down in Pakistan. I was so worried because I had never done any cooking. . . . But I thought my husband liked to have Iranian meals and I was surprised that from the very first day that I started cooking Iranian dishes there that I could get it absolutely correct like my mother because I had just watched her during the years. But I never did it. Sarvat

Into the wok: changes in women's food habits

The aim after looking at earlier memories of cooking was to look at the changes women made to their food habits over their lives. Certain changes were as expected. Immigration to New Zealand was bound to have a profound affect on food habits. I thought it would be interesting to see if those women who came here earlier had changed their food habits more than others had. I had the opportunity to interview women who had been here from as early as the 1940s to last year (Figure 1).

Figure 1: amount of time been in NZ



However, I found that there was no relationship between the length of time spent in New Zealand and consistency of food habits. One of the women who had been here since 1959 essentially still cooked the same food as she always had while others had dramatically changed what they cooked from when they remembered or what they had in their original country. Other factors influenced them more than immigration. I'll go into these briefly.

One of the main influences for women was marriage and the influence of their husbands on what they cooked. In many cases, big changes occurred if marrying someone from another cultural group. This was both positive and negative. Marriage was often the first time that these women were in charge of cooking and running a household. In a few cases where it was negative, women had to change the way they cooked, often forgoing their cultural foods for others. Sandy was an example of this.

When I first married a Kiwi and was living in California and I went to a lot of trouble, because I love Bird's Nest Soup. I just love it, it's very time consuming and I went to a lot of trouble to prepare this birds nest soup for my husband and was very proud of it. I presented it to him on the table. He looked into the bowl and he said, "Sandra, there is a feather in my soup" and he refused to eat it. Sandy

After this experience, she went on to cook less Chinese food and was quite cautious about what she served him because he was so suspicious of her food. In commenting on this influence on her food habits, she said:

Basically in my generation, I tried to keep my husband happy with what he enjoyed. It is a pity really because I sacrificed my culture in favour of his.
Sandy

However, most cases of marriage between different cultural groups meant a sharing of cultural traditions and flexibility in food habits. Mary married a Tamal and went to live with him in Singapore and this has greatly influenced her cooking. She says that she still makes the recipes her mother-in-law gave her when she was in Singapore and gets curry mixes sent over from her sister-in-law. In many ways, curries have replaced New Zealand traditional food as the food her daughters and her have for special occasions.

His family had a lot of influence. His mother was very encouraging. I had a helpful and supportive mother-in-law, we would go around there for dinner and she would give me recipes, hints and clues. That was her attitude. She was incredibly helpful and supportive, generally speaking like that. And she gave me recipes and we used to go there for meals. If I liked anything, she'd give me recipes straight away. Mary

Changes mentioned most often by women related to health and time, and in many respects had more to do with messages they were getting through the media and from health professions and the fact that they had to juggle cooking with other things in their lives. Two of the following quotes illustrate this:

People don't have that time any more. Certainly I don't, a quick grill and a salad is probably . . . when I get home, I get home at about 6 and I know that in the evening, I've got about an hour to assist my daughter with her homework. Usually I have some work to do by then so what we can squeeze in, in the way of cooking and eating, we squeeze into the shortest time possible. Whetu

Very big difference here. I stop using oil a lot and grease and butter. Many times now, I like to boil the vegetables only. Not because I find it tasty, I don't like the taste but it is healthy. Fakhrieh

This takes me to the last part of my thesis, that of changes to New Zealand food and the role of other cultural groups in this.

Just what are we eating in Aotearoa in the 21st century

As alluded to at the beginning of this paper, there have been a lot of changes to the food that New Zealanders eat. This piece of research has attempted to explore these changes by talking to the women who have been cooking the food and making the changes. It is interesting to see whether any of the influences can be linked with increased migration

from non-white countries from the 1970s onwards. Prior to 1970, Britain was the main source for immigrants to New Zealand. Deliberate preference was shown for immigrants from countries with similar political and social institutions.

Because of this policy, food habits were fairly static for a lot of the 20th century. Baking, dairy products and meat and three vegetables were the stable diet of a lot of people in New Zealand.

The big one I remember was potatoes, onions cut up in white sauce and poached eggs. Mary

Women like to be good bakers because it was the one time they were creative and innovative with what they really did. Because really in the old days if you went out to dinner, there was a meat pie, casseroles and there was roasts but the meat was fairly static. If the women had an afternoon tea, she would bake and make a beautiful sponge and cakes and they looked good and you felt good. Ruth

It is only in the last 50 years or so that immigration has included people from a diverse range of cultures. But is this why the food habits of people in New Zealand has changed so much in New Zealand? Of the women I interviewed, they all made changes to how they cooked for one reason or another. These changes can be divided into two areas – different cultural influences and wider societal influences.

In looking at the cultural foods cooked, those women who mentioned their mothers and grandmothers as being the biggest influences on what they cooked over their lives essentially still cooked very similar food with minor changes. On the whole, these were women from other countries as well as two of the Maori women. They didn't really use cookbooks and most of them had only started cooking when they got married.

Those that had dramatically changed their food habits from what their mothers cooked noted travel, books and husband and children as being influences on themselves.

I suppose travelling and more particularly, because I didn't find the European foods terribly impressive compared to Asian food. A lot of the cooking I do now is influenced by my time spent in Asia. Whetu

The most interesting point and one that indicates a gradual loss of cultural links to food habits is the wider societal influences on women. Quite a few of the women were choosing to cook food based less on its cultural value and more on nutritional value and the length of time it takes to cook it. It has also taken the social aspect of food and eating away, as one of the women pointed out.

For all of us, these days, time is a real problem. And it's a real tragedy because, in the days when you took some time to cook, it was your social life or it contributed heavily to your social life and you could communicate with each other. Sandy

The cross sample of women spoken to in this research give us some ideas about the issues of changing food habits in New Zealand in the 21st century. The women were concerned about the nutritional value of the food they ate and ensuring that they ate healthy food. However, this takes place within a number of other pressures that they have in their lives. They are finding that they need to balance a number of things. Others are still cooking fairly similar foods. However, immigration has had little effect

on both those that moved here but also those that were already here. Many of the women had grown up eating the foods of their cultures, the kitchens had been places of memories.

Wider global changes are now affecting what these women cook and often nutrition is driving them more than culture. This can be seen in the wider society in advertisements and other media. The amount of low-fat cookbooks and products has increased hugely. The influence of nutrition has meant a huge increase in a Mediterranean diet; this has no link at all with immigrants to New Zealand – Italians, Spanish and Greek making up about 2% Wellington's population, behind Pacific Islanders and Asians. Yet the biggest cultural change in what these women ate was that they had started to eat pasta and olive oil. Paradoxically, the woman from the Middle East cooks with far less olive oil because it is expensive and because she has been told that oil is bad for her.

Finally, many of the changes that New Zealand women spoke about were echoed by a woman who came here from Iran last year.

I have changed a lot from the previous generation to my generation – in the way in which ingredients have been used in food, in the system of cooking and the way things have been cooked. Previously we used to use animal fat; the greasier it was, the more delicious. Now we are not using animal fat but are using vegetable fat. There is a lot of usage of vegetables and herbs . . . now days, gas ovens and microwaves have made things easier. The freezer has made a big difference. Zieaeh

I was struck by how similar the changes had been for women on different sides of the world.

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The Shocking History of the New Zealand Scone – Tony Simpson

About twenty years ago two important things happened in my life which have largely determined its pattern since, although I was almost completely oblivious to this at the time. In 1980, I returned to Wellington from living for some years in England. And that same year, after fourteen years of marriage, I became sole housekeeper not only for myself but for my ten-year-old son. From these two beginnings I can trace an interest in food and cooking which has not only grown to be central to my daily concerns, but has informed two books which I've written in the interim.

Living in England and travelling in Europe had introduced me to a cultural tradition, particularly that of France and Italy, which located the social activities associated with eating at the centre of life. Nor was this experience confined to my European forays because I discovered you could do it in England too. To those used to the notoriously bad cooking of the English this may seem curious, but as I'm sure that you're aware there's always existed a tradition of good eating in Britain alongside the habit of eating over-boiled cabbage and rubbery fish to which English suburban domestic, and institutional, living seems regrettably prone. This alternative tradition, as those who have studied it will know has deep roots in English history, but it vanished from sight for many English people during the industrial revolution when the emphasis was on feeding the new urbanised industrial proletariat as cheaply and as minimally as possible.

And as most people are also aware it re-surfaced again immediately post war, possibly as an explosive reaction to rationing. Most commentators associate its origins with the epiphany allegedly experienced by Elizabeth David during a sojourn at a frightful hotel at Ross on Wye in 1947. Truth to tell, if I read another reverential account of that famous moment I'll scream. In fact that food renaissance is as much to be attributed to the efforts of the socialist Raymond Postgate, who set out in the same period to improve not just the eating habits of the English middle class but the diet and daily food routines of the whole population. Elizabeth David may have helped to rescue from popular oblivion an English food tradition as rich and varied as its European comparitors, but that came much later in her work. Postgate, although less well known, is important because he not only initiated the publication from 1951 to the present of *The Good Food Guide*, an annual register of restaurants which serve food worth eating (and emulated since in many countries), but was also responsible for much other writing on the desirability of everyone eating well, not just the wealthy. As far as Postgate was concerned, fine eating had been the prerogative of the English ruling class for too long. Nowhere was it written that to be working class was to eat like a pig, and he made it his business to change English eating habits within a generation.

Well, whoever was responsible, it's the mark of the success of both Postgate and David that, while they may not have changed the predilection of many of their fellow citizens for dreadful food, nor stemmed the tide running strongly towards industrially based mass catering and fast food chains, they contributed to the creation of a lively food culture of excellence and good eating not only in the home but in the restaurants and pubs, the enjoyment of which has become one of the central features of my own regular visits to Britain.

The French, the Italians, and others, to the extent that they were aware of these developments, and who had known all about the desirability of such a cultural tradition

all along, no doubt shrugged off once more the impossibility of understanding the cold and hypocritical English, and their incomprehensible liking for England and its impossible weather, and went about the business of enjoying their daily living as usual.

For myself, I grew used to eating out regularly and well, and faced my imminent return to culinary New Zealand with dread and foreboding. Prior to my departure for Europe, New Zealand had not been a Mecca for gourmets. My experience of the return home, in that regard at least, immediately confounded me. In the space of the few short years of my absence New Zealand had ceased to be the more or less virtually restaurant-less food wilderness of my recollection, and we had become a fully restauranted society. Since that time this has grown to be a country in which it is possible to eat well even in the remotest places.

I'm sure that the good citizens of Hokitika will forgive me my lack of faith if I say that about six years ago I had occasion to visit their town and to stay overnight. With fear and trembling I enquired of my hosts where it was proposed that we should eat. They replied ominously: "The Café de Paris, here in this pub." Which did absolutely nothing to calm my foreboding. Except that then, to my astonishment, I was taken into one of the best restaurants in which it has ever been my pleasure to eat. Afterwards I asked to meet the chef, who turned out to be a very urbane Parisian who had married a New Zealander and come home with her. He was fascinated by the fact, by the way, that if you wanted venison or wild pork to cook with, you mentioned it to someone, and a couple of days later they turned up with a whole dead deer or pig that they'd shot.

The question of living with a ten-year-old son was rather more prosaic, less grand, and more problematical. Growing boys need feeding. Not only that but they grow bigger every day until they become adolescents and eat everything in sight with an appetite of legendary vociferousness. Feeding the brute became an imperative daily task. This was in theory not a problem. Of course I could cook. What male of my generation ever thought otherwise, particularly those who were called upon to do so seldom or never. But in my case it was true. My granny, who lived with us off and on for extended periods when I was a child, had seen to that, and I had picked up the rudiments almost unawares. This was unusual in young men of my generation.

It also had unexpected consequences, not the least of which was to make many of those of us who could cook popular as student flatmates among those males who could not. It also meant that those who could cook did all the cooking with the inevitable result that they ended up living as the only male in flats of women. This suited both parties. It scared off wandering and unwanted males, and also meant that the men who could cook did so only once or twice a week instead of every day.

But those skills were long behind me, and I had to begin again. I therefore did what any sensible person would do in those circumstances. I purchased the *Edmonds Cookery Book*, and began. So far, so good. My son, the main object of this exercise, ate what I prepared, sometimes more enthusiastically than others, flourished and grew larger. I must, I decided, be doing something right, and of course I should have been content to leave it at that.

But one of the bugbears of being a social historian is that you can't leave things alone. I figured that the food I was preparing must have a history and I began to read about it. There was no shortage of books on the subject, I instantly discovered. I was also instantly hooked by the discovery that English food had a rich social history. That was right up my alley. But that also set me off on a new train of thought. This was a tradition that we had presumably inherited from the English immigrants who had made

their home here. There must have been a transition at some point, but where had it been and how? Thinking back to the food of my childhood I thought I could see it in some ways, but not in others. I filed that thought away for future reference.

It took me about twenty years and ten books published to get back to it. But I knew I would eventually. What brought it into focus was some work I was doing to try and come to terms with one of the two big facts of nineteenth century New Zealand social history – that between 1861 and 1881 over half a million immigrants entered New Zealand, a society which up to that point had probably numbered its overall population – Maori and pakeha – at about a hundred thousand or so. I ended up writing a book about it, which is called *The Immigrants*.

The important thing about it from the point of view of this session was that it entailed reading the numerous first hand accounts written by the emigrants (largely from Britain) who came to New Zealand from 1840 to 1890.

The fascinating thing about these accounts was that they were full of talk about food and drink, interwoven with recipes. The subject seems almost to have been an obsession with our forebears; certainly it was central to their concerns. It took me quite a while, however, to appreciate that what I had in front of my nose was the answer to my two-decades-old question. What did the way we ate tell us about the society and culture which had grown up here? It had, of course, developed from the immigrant experience. But when I turned to the bibliographies to track the cultural analyses I had hoped to find there, I found very little. Some interesting original work had been done under the auspices of Otago University, long the intellectual centre of nutritional and domestic studies in New Zealand. There was one extant attempt that I could find which set out to discover a pattern in our culinary history. And that was all.

Obviously, here was an important gap waiting to be filled, and so, as it was pretty obvious that no one else was going to do it, I set out to explore the origins of New Zealand's food culture. Those origins are to be found, of course, in the long tradition of European, and particularly English and Scottish food which our forebears brought here with them, and which culminated in the rural kitchens of the eighteenth century, one of the important transition periods of the English culinary tradition. This was the cuisine that our forebears attempted to recreate when they came to New Zealand in the last century, although it took a rather peculiar form.

This was because the eighteenth century, as well as being a time of significant prosperity for some groups within European society, was also a time of significant famine and want. It was followed by the immense economic and technological upheaval which we call the industrial revolution. It was the responses to these crises which drove literally millions of emigrants from Britain to all the corners of the earth during the century which followed. It was the same crisis that stimulated the technical innovations, and the global agricultural economy, which have had such a formative influence on the development of our food tradition.

The social circumstances from which our ancestors largely came were also significant formative influences. Particularly in rural Britain, from whence the great bulk of New Zealand immigration was drawn in the two decades from 1865, the contrasts of plenty and want could barely have been more extreme, with some people living extremely well, and almost cheek by jowl with them many others living badly to the point of starvation, and from time to time beyond it. But it applied equally to immigrants of urban origin. Friedrich Engels still riveting account of life in mid century Britain, *The Condition of the Working Class in England in 1844* contains accounts of the London

poor scrabbling in the streets for rotten vegetables and potato peelings; two decades later a survey of children in London's Bethnal Green found that 83% had nothing but bread to eat for seventeen out of twenty-one meals a week. Rickets, dental caries and scurvy, all conditions of malnourishment, were rampant.

For many emigrants their experience of adequate eating began on the emigrant ship. For those in the steerage this was often also their first chance to see at close quarters the contrast between what they were given to eat - adequate but basic or even rough fare - and what the first class passengers had to eat in the cabin. Many steerage passengers appear to have drawn an important conclusion from this. In their new country one of the things which was going to be different was that they were going to eat better. New Zealand settlers certainly partook of this rule if their extant writings are anything to go by.

But when they arrived they had first to accustom themselves not only to the existence of another culture in place with its own quite distinct food traditions and techniques - which they did by largely ignoring it by the way. They had also to adapt to a topsy turvy world in which the seasons were all widdershins, the climate was much milder (at least in the north part of the country), Christmas was in summer, the harvest was in March, and their traditional calendar of festivals, hallowed by centuries of European agricultural life, was meaningless as a result. Nor were many of the ingredients, which they were used to taking for granted readily to hand. Where was the Michaelmas goose? And what was the point of an autumn harvest celebration in what was now spring?

As if this was not enough, important culinary innovations were coming thick and fast. These included the cookbook, as we now know it, the coal burning stove, and a host of new foods, additives, and preserving techniques. These all had to be incorporated into a social life which also had to be invented for a new country, and which made not just food but using it as a basis for entertaining one of its central features. No wonder so many, faced with such a daunting task, turned to the demon rum, and spawned not only one of the world's most vigorous prohibition movements, but, eventually, some of the first and finest vineyards outside Europe.

Somehow, nevertheless, the invention of a new way of life, including new foodways, was achieved. We are the people we are today as a result.

What has any of this to do with scones, shocking or otherwise as their history may be? Quite a lot actually, because one of the consequences which followed from the social history of the arrival of the British cuisine in New Zealand was, as I've mentioned, the growth of a culture of hospitality based on food. And that's where the scone comes in.

When our nineteenth century ancestors had fed themselves to their own satisfaction they then began to look about and to find some use for the surplus food that they still had in abundance. It must have blown their minds by the way. They'd come in many instances from communities where you didn't get enough to eat as a matter of course, and now they had more food than they knew what to do with. One of the most fascinating documentary resources I encountered when I was writing *The Immigrants* was the letters sent back to relatives and friends in England by rural labourers - one of the most depressed occupations of the time - who'd been brought to New Zealand as assisted immigrants in the 1870s. These letters are full of amazed references to the quantities of food available. And what they did with the surplus was to entertain one another and feed one another.

The American novelist Eric Linklater who came to New Zealand in 1951 and wrote about us in his subsequent autobiographical account *A Year of Space*, was a bit sniffy about this tradition. He said:

New Zealanders, like the Scots, think that baking is the better part of cookery, and spend their ingenuity, exhaust their interest, on cakes and pastries and ebullient vast cream sponges. Soup is neglected, meat mishandled. I have seen their admirable mutton brought upon the table in such miserable shape that the hogget – so they call a sheep of uncertain age – appeared to have been killed by a bomb, and the fragments of its carcass incinerated in the resultant fire.

I recollect the same era rather differently for its vast afternoon teas, its profusion of biscuits of every description, and above all its scones, with dates, with cream, with butter and, best of all, with raspberry jam. This tradition we created for ourselves because of a happy conjunction. Abundant raw materials and the invention, by Henry Shacklock, of the indigenous coal range. There it was heating the water and boiling the kettle, so why not use the oven to bake a batch of scones? So what's shocking about that? Nothing in itself. The shocking thing is that we've abandoned this tradition that we have wrought for ourselves from our own historical experience, apparently without a moment's thought, in favour of mass, industrialised food. It's ironic that the very thing our forebears struggled with all their might to escape has been recreated for them in the country they colonised as a result.

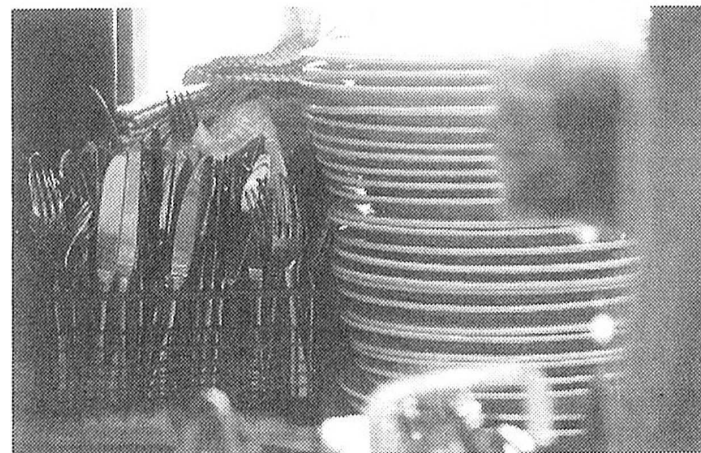
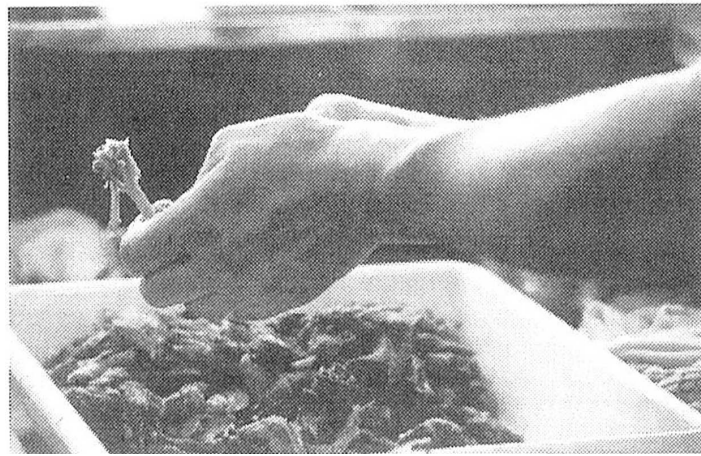
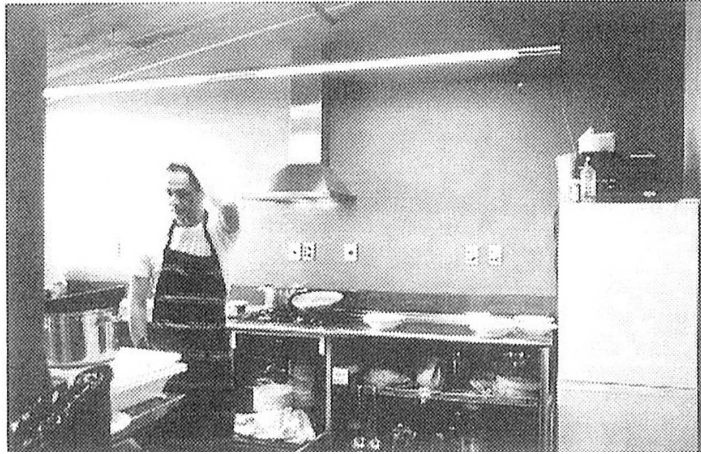
We may fool ourselves that we are now a fully restauranted country as I said earlier but the fact is that in a very real sense we are not. Most New Zealanders don't eat in a restaurant from one year's end to the next. That pleasure is, statistically speaking, indulged in by a very small number of us. The rest eat mass produced crap. It will get worse too, not better. In future not only will our culinary goose be cooked, it will probably be made out of genetically engineered soy.

Of course, having said that, it's important to remark that most of those affected by these developments continue to eat their way through two and three meals a day entirely oblivious to any debate that may be going on, pleased only that what they eat now is often much better in terms of variety, abundance, and quality, than they themselves have experienced in the past, and certainly much better than the food available to their ancestors. If they've thought about it at all they would probably ask: why the fuss; what does it matter?

In point of fact it matters a great deal to the sense of identity which is at the core of human autonomy. Food is important to this sense. When people move from place to place they take that identity with them, and they adapt both the food they eat, and through that, the identity itself, to their new circumstances. The Swedish food ethnologist, Beatriz Borda, expresses this thought very elegantly in the following passage:

The place of food in everyday life is both taken for granted and imbued with cultural, social, and personal significance. Everyone must eat, usually several times a day, and this situation leads to highly patterned and regularised behaviour. Indeed, most human life is similarly patterned and repetitive, otherwise everyday life would be lost in details. But the biological need for food and the social act of eating combine to give food patterns a particular meaning, a kind of cultural power.

What's truly shocking about the history of the scone is that we have abandoned it, and in doing so we have foolishly given up the cultural power and autonomy of identity which owning the scone and the culture of hospitality afforded us. This is something we should all mourn and regret.



The Politics of Flavour: Absorption Versus Imposition in French and British Colonial Cuisines – David Burton

Marseilles is known to everyone as the home of the true bouillabaisse and around its neatly manicured harbour, filled with the yachts of the rich, dozens of expensive restaurants fully exploit this fame.

Yet just a few blocks back from here is the Arab quarter, a shady hillside they call the kasbah.

Its narrow streets scarcely rate a mention in the guide books, save to warn tourists not to venture there after dark, or to stay in the Algerian hotels (advice I myself purposely ignored for the sake of research). And yet, provided you can ignore the seedy pavement bars filled with obviously under-employed men wearing white shoes and brimming with gold in their teeth and various other parts of the anatomy, a café provides some of the most fascinating café dining in Marseilles.

It won't be the most salubrious of surroundings and very likely the menu will be chalked up on a blackboard, in Arabic as well as French for the very sound reason that virtually all your fellow patrons are likely to be from the Mahgreb – Algeria, Morocco and Tunisia.

The French are scarcely to be seen in a place like this. They have far too high regard for their own cuisine to be bothered with that of their former colonies, and, besides, many would refuse to set foot in such a place for the very reason that it is Algerian owned.

The greatest prejudice is to be found among the so-called *pieds noirs* (literally 'black feet'), the displaced former French colonists from Algeria who formed the early rump of support for Jean-Marie Pen and the National Front.

Ironically, these same *pieds noirs* have helped to introduce a small number of Arabic food items into the mainstream, namely, couscous, merguez sausages and harissa spice paste, all of which are now standard items in French supermarkets.

If you are lucky, you might also find other Arabic ingredients at the street markets scattered through the towns and villages of southern France, while in Paris you will find them, along with spices from the Caribbean and snails from Africa, at the Barbes market, relegated to the empty space beneath a motorway flyover.

North African restaurants are common in Paris, which boasts some fifty Creole restaurants and a sprinkling of Vietnamese also. But, on the whole, you have to say that the cuisine of France's former colonies has had a rather slight impact on la Metropole.

Compare this with Indian food in Britain, today so ubiquitous that quite apart from all the Patak's canned curry masalas in the supermarkets, there are some eight thousand Indian restaurants.

Now you might argue that the Indian restaurant in England is a relatively recent explosion, dating only from the arrival in the 1970s of the Bangladeshi community, bringing entrepreneurship and a post-colonial adventurousness. But there had always been a few Indian restaurants operating in London's West End, ever since a subaltern in the Indian army, Dean Mahomet, opened the Hindoostanee Coffee House in Portman Square in 1809.

On a domestic level, Indian food became entranced even earlier, albeit in a debased form, 'curry'. One of the first British 'currey' recipes appeared in 1747 in Hannah Glasse's *Art of Cookery*, while in 1772 the author of *The Complete Housekeeper and Cook* also told how to make 'curry the Indian way'.

By 1773 curry had become the specialty of at least one London coffee house, and from about 1780 the first commercial curry powders were on sale in England. The idea of made-up mixtures of powdered spices was by no means new to the English – recipes for two such compounds having been on the rolls of Richard II's master cooks as early as 1390.

For the fact is that the English have what the French lack, a natural affinity with highly seasoned and spicy food, and have done for the past two thousand years. In the middle ages, ginger, pepper, mace, cloves, cinnamon and galingale went into most dishes made for those who could afford it, while the rest made do with mustard and vinegar, herbs, wine and beer. It was not until the middle of the seventeenth century, when spices became cheaper and lost some of their kudos, that the decline in their use set in, though they were still seen – as they still are – in the puddings, cakes and pickles made for the gentry.

The English took to Indian chutneys and pickles with alacrity, spawning a host of imitations using marrows and melons as a substitute for mango, and even inventing one or two of their own original chutneys, such as piccalilli. Even the taste for tomato ketchup, Worcestershire sauce and bottled sauces such as H.P., O.K. and Flag, reflect the English love affair with spices, since nearly all these products are full of them, not to mention immense quantities of vinegar and, often as not, sugar, creating the classic sweet-sour flavour, perfectly familiar to the Chinese, the Indians and most Eastern peoples, but considered an abomination by the French.

For while certain three-star chefs may have begun experimenting with spices in the 1990s, much to the disgust of their more conservative peers, highly spiced food has no place in French cuisine. Indeed, since its appearance in the mid-seventeenth century, modern French cuisine has based its worldwide pre-eminence on the championing of herbs, salt, pepper and acidic flavours at the expense of spices and sugar. The style, as manifested in La Varenne's seminal 1651 work, *Le Cuisinier Francais*, sought to re-establish France's Roman roots and shrug off medieval influences, which had been imposed by Mediterranean traders and rulers.

'Fine herbs are wholesomer, and have something in them more exquisite than spices', claimed Charles, seigneur de Saint-Evremond in one of his letters. The French now used disdain for spices as an expression of their own culinary superiority. A French nobleman travelling to Poland in the mid-seventeenth century complained of banquets so rich with saffron and spices that no Frenchman would be able to eat them.

Little wonder, then, that when France began to build its empire, it tended to impose its own cuisine everywhere it went, rather than absorb the cooking of the indigenous people, as the British did in India and the Dutch did in Indonesia.

Today, almost without exception, in every country throughout the French-speaking world, you will find baguettes, croissants, patisserie of all kinds, French cheeses, pates, terrines, charcuterie, blood puddings and others products of the pig, not to mention good coffee, beer and wine, much of its imported from France.

From the French point of view, these products were considered absolutely essential to the well-being of their colonists, and, besides which, they did not view the introduction

of their cuisine and the culture so much as an imposition as the gift of civilisation – their *mission civilisatrice*.

For while the French are as driven by the profit motive as any other Europeans, they were not stand-offish. Where the British remained distant from their subject peoples and practised indirect rule, the French were passionately assimilationist. Less Calvinistic than the British, infinitely more relaxed in their dealings with the indigenous peoples, the French thought nothing of taking African or Tahitian women as mistresses. There does not appear to have been the same stigma attached to the mulattos in the French West Indies as to the Anglo-Indians of India, for example, because the French sought to make of the African a Frenchman.

This attitude, as it relates to cuisine, is encapsulated by a French colonial in Ivory Coast during the early twentieth century, responding to an observation by the traveller Henri Bordeaux that the indigenous people seemed to be very thin:

‘They don’t know how to feed themselves, or even take care of themselves. We are teaching them.’

‘But you always know how to feed yourself if you want to’ [Bordeaux replied].

‘Don’t believe it. You not only have to be able to find your food, but cook it as well.’

Thus it is today in major cities of Francophone West Africa such as Dakar, capital of Senegal, and Abidjan, capital of Ivory Coast, among the squares and vast tree-lined boulevards, the concrete and glass high-rise buildings and the solemn remains of colonial architecture, there are restaurants, patisseries and supermarkets which might just as well be in Mediterranean France.

It’s the same in New Caledonia. Walking down the aisles of any of the enormous supermarkets in Noumea, it soon becomes obvious that nearly everything has been imported. For those with the money to spend, there are great pyramids of French wine, perhaps fifty varieties of French cheese, French ice-cream, even ready-cooked French vegetable dishes such as ratatouille and celeriac puree. In the charcuterie section there is everything dear to the French culinary heart – saucisson de Paris, saucisson de Lyon, boudin noir, smoked bacon, Burgundian-style parsleyed ham terrine, foie gras – the difference here being that some of it is locally produced.

The letters LOC on the labels of fresh meat distinguish the inordinately expensive local beef from the bulk of the meat, which is brought in from elsewhere. Even the vegetables and fruit seem to come mostly from New Zealand. The main challenge, indeed, is to find the indigenous product – yams, taros and sweet potatoes. The plethora of imported food and drink can be partly attributed to New Caledonia being considered part of the European Union. This means there are no taxes on imported items, resulting in such anomalies as bargain-priced French wines and cans of Fosters beer imported from England and brewed there under licence, when the original Australian product is made just across the ditch.

Such luxuries are demanded by highly paid French officials, such as the judiciary and the army, who receive high salaries because they are posted so far from France. They push up the cost of living, so that cheese, for example, is prohibitively expensive for many of the indigenous kanaks. In the case of vegetables, importation is partly a necessity due to the extreme scarcity of arable land in New Caledonia.

And yet, underlying all these factors, one suspects, is an unhealthy degree of colonial culinary cringe: an attitude that if a food product comes from France it must be better, even if it comes from the deep-freeze or out of a tin.

So it is, too, in a place like Montreal or Quebec City, where classical bourgeois dishes such as coq au vin or boeuf bourguignon are indistinguishable from those of metropolitan France, despite the centuries Quebec has spent in isolation.

Even the famous dishes of Quebec, the pies such as cipaille or tourtiere, the ragout de boulettes or the thick ham and pea soups of the rural folk, are little more than colonial variations on traditional peasant dishes of France.

The Creole-Cajun cuisine of Louisiana, too, is often held up as a model of the melting pot, yet at heart, it is little more than the response of French cooks to the incredible richness of seafood and game found in the bayous. They make a lot of noise about the various cultural influences on the food in Louisiana, yet really the influences of these various groups have been so small they can be summarised as follows. From the Native Americans came chillies, file powder and corn; from the Spanish jambalaya, red beans and rice, chorizo sausage, aubergines, olive oil and coffee; from Haiti, the techniques of drying and smoking fish, fruit juices, rum, avocados, chokos and bananas; from the Italians, the muffuletta; and from the Germans, sausages and beer.

So it's all a neat little model we have here, isn't it? On the one hand, we have the absorption of Indian food by British and, on the other, the imposition of classical French cuisine on their colonial peoples. But, of course, it's not as clear cut as that.

For a start, the British did begin imposing their food habits upon the Indian cooks they employed from the mid-nineteenth century onwards; it was only during the first two centuries of their presence that wholesale absorption of Indian food took place. The seventeenth- and eighteenth-century merchants in Bengal, the so-called nabobs, may have adopted Indian food and customs from their mistresses, but such habits became steadily rarer during the nineteenth century. While Indian food was still offered in taverns and punch houses as an alternative to plain English fare, it was no longer the norm.

The overland route to India, fully functioning by 1838, and then the opening of the Suez Canal in 1869, considerably speeded up the transit of both goods and services from Europe, including the Victorian fashion for French cuisine. The improvement in communications also brought the memsahib.

While the memsahib has been often and perhaps wrongly blamed for introducing a disdain for things Indian, there can be little doubt that she fought strongly against Indian food.

The Englishman who had come out long before her had been more or less content to eat anything his Indian cook put before him. By the late Victorian era, however, a new generation imbued with the notion of the White Man's Burden began to look upon such 'native preparations' as inferior and culturally backward – especially in the bitter backlash which followed the so-called Indian Mutiny of 1857.

In 1878 colonel Kenney-Herbert was writing his *Culinary Jottings* for Madras:

Our dinners today would indeed astonish our Anglo-Indian forefathers ... Quality has superseded quantity, and the molten curries and florid oriental compositions of the olden time – so fearfully and wonderfully made – have

been gradually banished from our dinner tables. For although a well-considered curry, or *mulligatunny*, capital things in their way, - are still very frequently given at breakfast or at luncheon, they no longer occupy a position in the dinner *menu* of establishments conducted according to the new *régime*.

The new regime of French food was now considered the last word in good taste, though faced with the task of providing overblown French fare, without proper fare or tuition, and using primitive charcoal stoves with rudimentary implements, it is little wonder that what the Indian cook produced fell somewhat short of classic French cuisine – or even plain English, for that matter.

The many entrée, savouries and other new courses that appeared in the late Victorian and Edwardian eras were usually bad imitations of French cuisine disguised with a great deal of gaudy decoration – a style which persisted right up until the last days of the Raj and can still be found to some extent on the ‘non-vegetarian’ menus of the ‘British clubs’ in India today. I particularly remember, for example, Chicken à la King at the Mahabaleshwar club in 1988, which consisted of a square ‘fortress’ of mashed potato, complete with barbican and moats, decorated with diamonds of red pepper, and filled with chopped chicken in a runny mass of white sauce, which ran out on to the plate as soon as the walls were breached.

In other parts of the former British Empire, such as New Zealand, the imposition of British cooking was almost total; indeed, apart from the use of kumara, watercress and eels, it is hard to think of any influence that Maori cooking might have had on the early British settlers here. Obviously, the settlers adapted to the local species of fish, and adopted New Zealand’s crayfish, whitebait and oysters as delicacies, but the lesser shellfish such as mussels and pipis were never taken seriously, while to this day there is still only limited pakeha acceptance of traditional Maori foods such as paua, kina and muttonbirds.

And if the French are to be accused of ethnocentrism with regards their cuisine, of imposing their cuisine on their subject peoples, this has to be qualified very greatly according to the countries you are talking about.

For the pattern of French colonisation was far from uniform, and quite a different picture emerges if we compare the demographics of New Caledonia, where nearly half the population is European, with Tahiti, where only about 12 per cent of French Polynesians are of full European descent and where there has been a great deal more intermarriage – and intermingling of the cuisine. The Tahitians, after all, were the ones who introduced the French to the idea of marinated raw fish, in the form of poisson cru.

In the French West Indies – Martinique, Guadeloupe, St Martin – and in Reunion and the other Francophone islands of the Indian Ocean, too, Creole cuisine has emerged as a force in its own right, a Gallic-African fusion reflected in it a passion for garlic, tomatoes and chilli, and a willingness to allow tropical spices and French herbs to coexist in the same dish.

Creole cuisine also admits cultural influences which have nothing to do with either France or Africa – the boucanage of the indigenous Arawaks and Caribs of the Caribbean, for example, or the many influences of the Spanish elsewhere in the Caribbean, or the heritage of India in the islands of the Indian Ocean. Turmeric and ginger, for example, are among the most important aromatics here, and, indeed, Indian

origins can be traced for the four basic classes of dishes shared by all these Indian Ocean societies – Reunion, Madagascar, the Seychelles and Comoros. These are curries of meat and fish, the fresh chutneys known as rougail, the green vegetable dishes known as bredes, and the pickled vegetables known as achards.

As for Algeria, where the French actively encouraged settlement by non-French Europeans – Spaniards, Italians and Maltese – a pan-Mediterranean cuisine emerged, incorporating local Arab influences, and owing very little to French cuisine. Cuisine pied noir was, indeed, one of the very first eclectic modernist cuisines such as we now see in California, Australia and New Zealand.

Nor can we overlook the overriding influence of terroir – the importance of geography, or what plants and animals can and can't be grown or reared in hot climates, and the necessity for European colonials, whether French, British, Portuguese, Dutch or whatever, to be flexible in the manner of adapting local ingredients new to them.

The French were certainly not slow to adopt palm hearts in the tropics, for example, while in their willingness to sample bizarre game animals and even insects, they outshone the British. It is not, after all, so very unusual that a people prepared to eat frogs, snails and larks should be found making fricassees of iguana in Guinea or ant-eater steaks in French Guiana, fruits bats in New Caledonia or, in Vietnam, python braised in a court bouillon.

In a sense, this adoption of indigenous food products by British and French colonialists can be seen as a form of absorption, while the influences of other minorities thrown together as a result of allowing the immigration of Chinese or Indian traders and importing slaves or indentured labour, can be seen as a form of imposition.

So I believe my dialectic of imposition versus absorption still stands. What should be obvious by now, however, is that if imposition is the thesis and absorption the antithesis, then the synthesis is surely fusion.

There are a great many antecedents to modern fusion food in the colonial cooking of both France and Britain, and, indeed, of all the European colonial powers. It was not the fusion food we have seen in Australasia and California, since it did not arise from a conscious search for the new, but out of pragmatism, of having to make do with what local ingredients and cooks were available. Nevertheless, it is an antecedent which gives a whole new respectability to the idea of fusion food, and which constitutes one of the very few happy outcomes of European colonial expansion.

Food, Warfare and the Impact of Atlantic Capitalism in Aotearoa/New Zealand – John Fitzpatrick

(John Fitzpatrick, School of International and Political Studies, Flinders University of South Australia)

This written paper has a substantially different emphasis from my spoken presentation at the Wellington symposium. In an attempt to produce some sort of coherent written paper quickly, I have decided to leave out almost completely the comparative references to the Australian environment and Australian Aboriginal patterns of food production and military resistance to European settlement, and concentrate on the Maori and the New Zealand environment. The comparison with Australia reappears only in the brief discussion of '*terra nullius*' issues in the last sub-section.

As the limited range of sources, the overdose of long quotes, the sketchy referencing and the intermittent sections of bulleted points indicate, the paper is very much still in process. Where I am especially uncertain of something, I have included explicit questions. For the most part, however, I have tended to err on the side of presenting my interpretations fairly unproblematically, in the interests of providing a reasonably clear argument which people can identify and respond to. But it is all problematic, to a greater or lesser degree, and I would be most grateful for any feedback, especially the sort that saves me from entrenching silly propositions in a more developed version of the paper.

Maori society before European contact

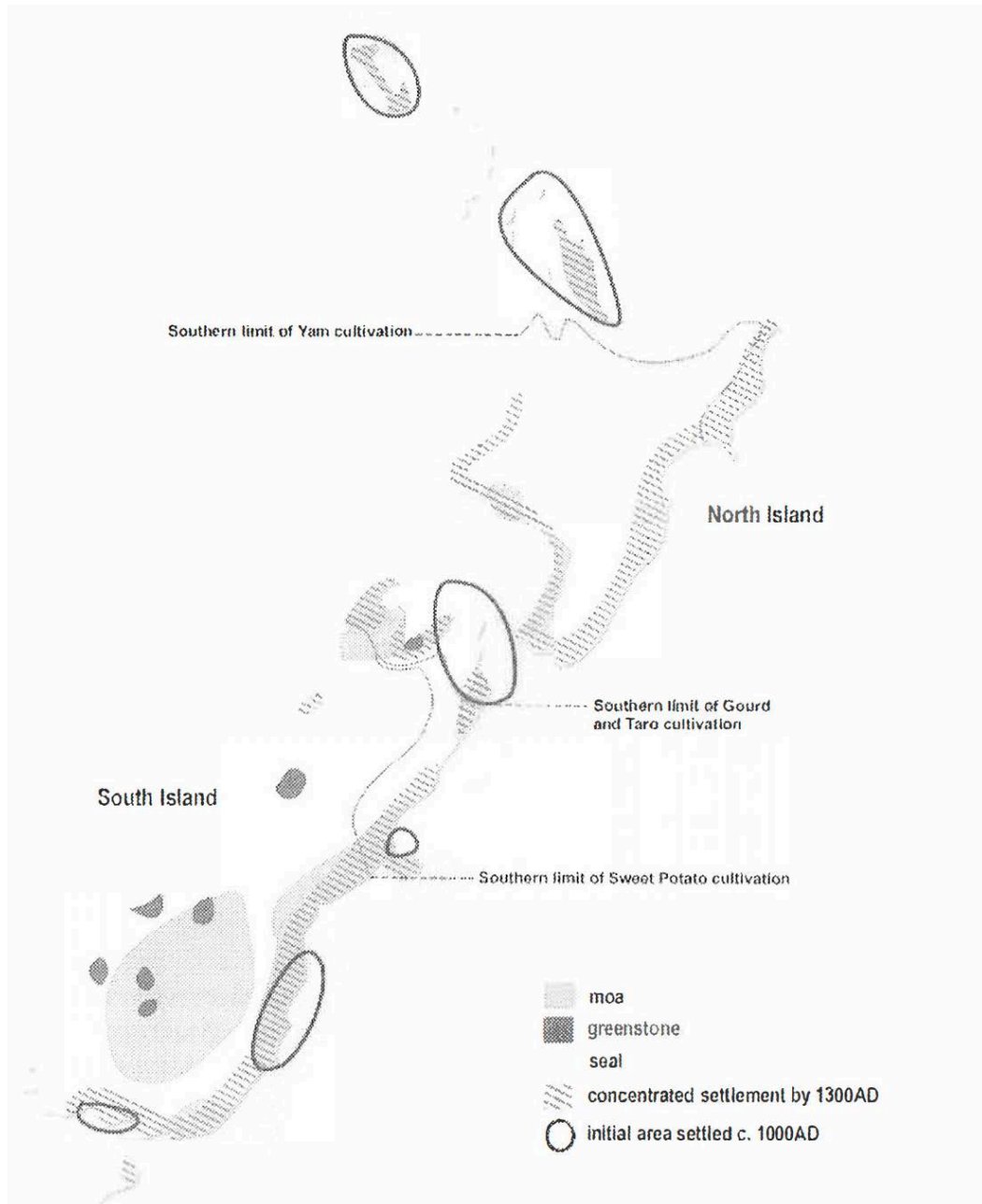
The Maori are generally thought to have first arrived in New Zealand, voyaging south and east from the region of the Society Islands in eastern Polynesia, some time around 800 AD. 'By the twelfth century, settlements were scattered around the coasts... from Northland to South Otago' (Davidson, p 6). Some authors assume several waves of colonization, and even return visits to the Society Islands, others a single colonization, maybe even a single canoe. At any rate, two important protein food sources common elsewhere in Polynesia – pigs and chickens - evidently did not make it to New Zealand or survive if they did. A species of dog and rat did, and both were eaten by the Maoris at the time of European contact. Other than these, the only non-human mammals were two species of native bat. This may have left Maori even more susceptible than Australian Aborigines to imported European diseases (Crosby).

In addition to the loss of the pig and the chicken, much of the tropical and sub-tropical repertoire of cultivated plants from the Polynesian homelands was inappropriate for the New Zealand climate. Coconuts, breadfruit, sugar cane, banana and pandanus – if there was an attempt to introduce them – did not survive. Yams, taro and aute (paper mulberry) did survive, but 'at the limits of their climatic tolerance' and confined to the northern part of the North Island. The most successful of the root crops was the kumera, a south American/Amerindian sweet potato that had somehow entered the Polynesian plant repertoire. But even it was limited to the North Island and a narrow coastal strip in the northern and eastern part of the South Island (see Map 1). It could also be grown only as an annual.

The great counterweight in the early centuries to these problems with introduced food resources was the ready availability of indigenous meat resources, above all the moa (flightless birds of various sizes, some very large) and fur seals (some also very large). Without natural predators and with no experience of human hunters, these animals are assumed to have been relatively easily hunted by the Maori, but also particularly vulnerable to being hunted to extinction. As Map 1 shows, the regional distribution of these major meat resources was pretty much the obverse of the distribution of cultivable plants - the main concentrations of both being in the South Island, plus Cook Strait in the case of the seals. Maori were also very skilled at catching and preserving fish (a resource which was more evenly spread).

Finally, in the area of non-food resources, stone was obviously of great importance to the Maori. Archaeological evidence suggests that by around 1200 AD a wide variety of stone was being exploited (and exchanged) for tool making across most of the two main islands. However the finest and hardest stone - greenstone or pouanamu - was concentrated above all in the barren West Coast of the South Island, an area well away from most of the major food resource areas, both vegetable and animal. Its large-scale use, by the middle centuries of the pre-contact period, made possible a 'technological revolution' in tool and weapon production (Barber, p). It was also highly valued for ornamentation and evidently functioned as a currency for exchange. Given the 'complementary' distribution of food and stone resources in different zones across the two islands, and the skill of the Maori as seafarers (plus their evident skill in preserving foods), it seems probable that quite developed exchange networks existed in the pre-contact era. This earlier situation may be reflected in the strong Maori belief in their right to both the North and South islands, in contrast to the British attempt to limit Maori claims to prior ownership to the former at the time of annexation in 1840.

Map I: Settlement Patterns and Resource Distribution in Aotearoa before European contact



The ‘Little Ice Age’ and the extinctions era

In the first phase of settlement and expansion across the two main islands, more or less complete by 1200 AD, climatic conditions appear to have been relatively mild. Around 1400, it is now assumed, the climate began to cool, leading to a period of exceptional cold from around 1600 to 1800, corresponding to the ‘Little Ice Age’ often invoked in ecological explanations of political outcomes in the northern hemisphere. These colder conditions presumably intensified the problems of growing imported food crops already only marginally suitable to the local environment, and they would also have had negative implications for fishing:

There were shorter summers and storms lashed the forests and eroded seashores. Estuaries once rich with fish and shellfish became silted. The open sea and harbour mouths were hazardous to fishermen. Bird life declined and the growing season for crops were shortened by one or two weeks. The Little Ice Age made the trade winds unpredictable and volcanic cloud often blacked the stars needed for navigation. Slowly, Pacific inter-island travel came to a halt (Barber, p 19).

The crisis of food supply and general survival for the Maori in this period was exacerbated by the advancing pattern of extinctions among the large game. Most discussion of this seems to emphasize the general issue of the sudden impact of human predators on animal populations long unused to any natural predators (plus the general impact of introduced dogs and rats on smaller species and on the eggs of larger species). But maybe there was also a more specific conjunctural effect. Presumably, decline in food resources in one area (eg available fish stocks) would be likely to increase pressure in others (eg the moa). At any rate, the transformations around this time were dramatic.

by the fourteenth century the large species of moa and elephant seals were scarce in the South Island and almost non-existent in the North. The native swan, the flightless goose, Fisch's duck, the New Zealand eagle and the native species of goshawk, coot and crow had all become extinct. By the fifteenth century, fewer birds of fewer species were being caught in most North Island communities, while all species of moa were virtually extinct in the North Island and had become rare in the South (Salmon, p 39).

Several critical results followed from these inter-linked environmental changes. First, there was a major decline in the contribution of animal protein in Maori diets in general (presumably this was part of the background to the prevalence of cannibalism by the time of European contact). Second, the principal location of viable food resources, now predominantly agricultural, was in the North Island, mainly on the coasts and in the Northland peninsula (though the remaining seal populations had contracted in the other direction, to the extreme south of the south island). Third, there was evidently a serious decline in South Island population. Though estimates of total Maori population in the mid-17th century range from 100,000 to 200,000, it is suggested that the population of the South Island may have been below 2000.

In addition to this general pattern of population contraction to a limited region, other features associated with the cultivation of the kumera further intensified the dependence of North Island populations on specific sites that would need to be defended strongly in time of war. Usable land was scarce, even in the north. Usable cleared land was scarcer still. The preparation of heavy clay soils for successful cultivation required the movement of vast quantities of shells and gravel for mulching purposes. Substantial underground storage pits were constructed to preserve kumera supplies through winter.

To borrow Michael Mann's terminology, North Island Maori in the in the late pre-contact era were strongly 'caged' to particular locations and particular clusters of resources (control over valuable estuaries for fishing could also be added to the above list of such resources). This was in marked contrast to the position of most pre-contact Aboriginal populations in Australia (and also to the scattered Maori populations in the south Island). Such ecological 'caging' is seen by Mann and other sociologists/anthropologists (eg Carneiro) as a precondition for the emergence of the state and the social stratification necessary to underpin the continuous development of

state forms (something that can be successfully ‘resisted’ by populations like the Australian Aboriginals, who have the opportunity to spread widely and in small groups over extensive territories providing a diverse range of resources for subsistence). The pre-contact Maori can hardly be said to have developed ‘state forms’, but the sharp contraction of food resources in the three or four centuries preceding European contact does seem to have produced substantial increases in stratification and ‘political’ organization at the tribal level. In particular, it led to a relatively organised warfare, fiercely fought but also significantly ‘rule-governed’, and above all to the proliferation of fortified ‘pa’.

In all horticultural regions by about 1500, population pressure and a growing competition for resources and prestige were reflected in the construction of elaborate fortified villages (*paa*) and foodstores, the secret burial of the dead, and the display of wealth in greenstone ornaments and probably also in carving. Warfare apparently intensified, evidence of cannibalism begins to appear, and life in many parts of the country becomes increasingly militarised, with consequences that are recorded in the tribal histories –surprise attacks, inter-group vendettas, social upheaval and forced migrations (Salmon, p39).

European contact and the ‘fatal impact’ thesis

Leaving aside the relatively tangential contact from a Dutch expedition under Abel Tasman in 1642, the era of European contact can reasonably be said to begin with two English voyages under James Cook in 1769 and 1773-4. There were also two contemporary French expeditions under Jean de Surville (1769) and Marion de Fresne (1772). European and American sealers and whalers began to appear in the 1790s. The newly established British colony at Sydney (Port Jackson) also started to make an impact at this time, notably in demand for cheap raw materials like flax and timber. Anglican and Wesleyan missionaries appeared from 1809 to 1821, and by the 1820s both missionary settlements and a settlement servicing the whaling fleets (stores, grog shops, brothels, etc) were established in the main contact zone of the Bay of Islands.

But even by 1840, when the British government annexed both islands, the more or less permanent European population over the whole of New Zealand is estimated at around 2000. There were thus 70 years of clear ‘Maori dominion’ between the first major European contacts (and the first introduction of crucial new foodstuffs) and the onset of substantial European settlement, which occurred only after the annexation and after the Treaty of Waitangi. Moreover, muskets were already emerging as a major item in Pakeha-Maori trade by the early 1810s, and a new cycle of intra-Maori warfare set off by this development had largely been completed by the early 1830s, with muskets and the new military tactics associated with their use now diffused among all the major Maori groups in the North Island, the Cook Strait and the northern fringe of the South Island.

Thus when European settlers began to appear in volume after the annexation in 1840s, they were for a substantial time outnumbered by a Maori population armed with, experienced in, and organised for the collective use of European weapons. Initially, therefore, the European population grew only with the consent and even encouragement of most Maoris, who had been conditioned to believe in the value of co-operative economic dealings with the Europeans (and surely the manifest virtues of the introduced

foodstuffs, above all the potato, must have been a major factor in implanting this attitude towards the pakeha).

By the later 1850s, this generally favourable Maori attitude had increasingly been broken down, with organised resistance to further land-selling, the emergence of the Maori 'King movement', and the onset of the main phase of the European-Maori (or New Zealand) wars. By this point, the demographic balance was moving decisively against the Maori, and their power position was furthered weakened by major new developments in the military technologies available to their opponents. Even so, as James Belich observes, it 'required 18,000 British troops', with the new rifles, extensive artillery, and 'careful preparation and logistical organization to defeat them...On the extant record...this was a unique feat of resistance to nineteenth-century European expansion' (Belich, p 291). Moreover, Belich argues, 'Maori autonomy persisted long after the wars, and perhaps the reason for this was less Pakeha benevolence than latent Maori military power'. Maori autonomy was 'protected in two apparently very different ways: through centres of resistance, and through centres of 'collaboration', with the former in practice creating the space for the political effectiveness of the latter.

The largest centre of resistance was the King movement, whose territory came to be known as the King Country. At least until the mid-1980s, this area was an independent state, making and enforcing its own laws, conducting its own affairs, sheltering fugitives from Pakeha justice, and killing Europeans who crossed its borders without permission (Belich, p 306).

Precisely when the King movement state came to an end, Belich suggests, remains unclear, but the 'conventional cut-off point' of 1881 'is unsatisfactory, and 1890 may be more realistic'. The size of the area it controlled is also open to dispute.

[However] a survey in 1884 indicates that it encompassed 7,000 square miles, nearly one-sixth of the North island...Thus, in the late nineteenth century, an independent Maori state nearly two-thirds the size of Belgium existed in the middle of the North Island. Not all historians have noticed it (Belich, p 306).

Viewed from this perspective, the 'contact phase' initiated by the European intrusion into the New Zealand archipelago was more than just a few decades of pre-history in the early 1800s, before a decisive European takeover after 1840. Instead, it extended over more than a century, and involved a complex process of collaboration and conflict between two agricultural, militaristic, maritime, colonizing and trading peoples who valued similar resources and 'contended' for common territorial space in remarkably similar ways.

The 'fit' was far from exact, of course: for instance nothing in pre-contact Maori history prefigured the European use of vast regions, especially in the South Island, for pastoralism. However, if one were locating indigenous peoples in settler colonial 'neo-Europes' on a spectrum based on the 'similarity' to or 'difference' from the European intruders, the Maori would arguably stand furthest along the 'similarity' end of the spectrum. By contrast, the Australian Aboriginal populations as a group – even taking account of the great internal differences between that group- would arguably stand furthest along the 'difference' end of the spectrum. I don't have the time to properly develop this argument here, but some thoughts on the Maori response to European contact, and the complex ways in which new foodstuffs weave through the story, are sketched out below.

New foods, new trades, new literacy

European contact brought both 'Old World' or Eurasian crops and livestock and also 'New World' crops – a secondary version of the original 'Columbian Exchange' transmission of the latter plant repertoire from America to Europe. Of this 'New World' repertoire, the Maori before European contact had only one significant cultivar adaptable to the temperate to the colder conditions of New Zealand: the kumera.

Eurasian livestock, above all sheep, were to be of enormous importance to eventual Pakeha involvement in the global economy, and the pig (which replaced a critical part of the Polynesian animal repertoire which the Maori had lost in the relocation to New Zealand) was enormously important to the Maori from the outset. But as regards the transmission of plants, the most important for the Maori were the New World/Amerindian cultivars. These included a superior sweet potato; corn (not effectively introduced till the 1790s); and above all the white (or in a European context 'Irish') potato. The great significance of the white potato for the New Zealand climate lay in its combination of cool climate tolerance with high calorific yield in comparison to major European staples like wheat and barley, as exemplified in Table 1.

Table 1: Varieties of Old and New World Staples (in millions of calories per hectare)

Chief American Crops		Chief Old World Crops	
Maize	7.3	Rice	7.3
Potatoes	7.5	Wheat	4.2
Sweet potatoes and yams	7.1	Barley	5.1
Manioc	9.9	Oats	5.5

Source: Crosby, *The Columbian Exchange*, p 175

The Maori almost certainly hold the record for the most rapid adoption of the potato as a food staple outside the Americas. With their long history as skilled cultivators of root vegetables, coupled with the intense constraints they encountered trying to adapt a subtropical plant repertoire the colder regions of New Zealand, they were uniquely well placed to grasp the significance of the new Amerindian import. What took centuries in the introduction of the potato into Europe took seems to have taken only decades in New Zealand. As noted above, European navigators introduced the potato around 1770. By 1805, 'immense quantities' of potatoes were reportedly being produced by Maori in the northern Bay of Islands. By 1813, large Maori potato plantations were reported at Bluff, in the extreme south of the South Island (the major zone of surviving seal populations and of the new European seal fisheries aimed at the global market).

By the latter date, the extensive trade in potatoes and pigs (also flax) for muskets with Pakeha whalers and sealers was about to take off, and this is considered under the next heading. But there has arguably been excessive attention given to this relatively brief phase, and the cycle of intra-Maori warfare associated with it, at the expense of the longer term and more broadly based phenomenon of Maori food production aimed at trade with European settlers on land. According to Crosby, North Island Maori 'flung themselves into farming and pastoralism, and even the beginnings of industrialism',

selling both to local Pakeha settlers and ‘all the way to Australia’. The proceeds were then systematically invested ‘in more horses, sheep and, beginning in the late-1840s, in a flour mill craze’.

In 1857, the Maori of the Bay of Plenty, Taupo and Rotarua, about 8000 of them, had 3000 acres in wheat, 3000 in potatoes, 2000 in maize, and perhaps 1000 in sweet potatoes. They owned nearly 1000 horses, 200 cattle and 5000 pigs. They owned ninety-six plows, forty-one coasting vessels of about twenty tons each, and four water-powered mills (Crosby, p 261).

It seems reasonable to link this enthusiastic Maori embrace of introduced foodstuffs - and of trade with the pakeha based on extensive ‘cash crop’ production of these foodstuffs - to their receptiveness to another new technology transmitted by the pakeha, namely literacy. The initiative in devising an alphabet for (and presumably thereby helping to standardize) the Maori language, came from the missionaries; and missionaries had a vested interest in emphasising the linkage between Maori readiness to learn to read and their readiness to convert to Christianity. However, many historians emphasise the instrumental Maori attitude to a broad range of borrowings from the pakeha, including Christianity. And from this perspective the economic rationale for acquiring literacy (and numeracy) is pretty obvious. As Crosby puts it:

In 1849, Governor George Grey stated that in his judgement, a larger proportion of the Maori were literate than of any population in Europe. Dr. Thomson tells us that he knew of Maori who were literate and bilingual, who could navigate with a compass, play chess, and ‘calculate the area of a plot of ground so as to sow two bushels of wheat to the acre, or the live weight of a pig, and its value at three pence a pound, deducting one-fifth as offal’ (Crosby, p 260-61).

New foods, new military technologies, new political organizations

The potato (and other new food sources like the pig) would appear to have contributed on several levels to a new cycle of intra-Maori warfare in the early decades of the 19th century, with each of these effects initially working primarily to the advantage of tribes in the main northern contact zones. In this sense, the expansion of food resources in this period set off a rapid dynamic of ‘combined and uneven development’, which in some ways echoes the cycle of ‘caging’ and struggle over unevenly distributed resources produced by the contraction of food resources in the extinctions/Little Ice age Era which preceded European contact. It seems reasonable to suppose that the impact of the new foods fed into the new cycle of military developments in a number of related ways:

- By direct contribution to population growth, and consequent disturbances to the existing balance of tribal power
- By reducing the period each year in which the bulk of tribal resources had to be concentrated on direct agricultural activity, and thus making possible more sustained, long-distance military campaigns
- By giving Maori leaders control over new resources which could be traded with pakeha ship captains (and sometimes with missionaries) for muskets, and also for ostensibly non-military items which could be adapted to military use, like axes

- By raising a limited number of geographical locations to special strategic prominence as points from which it was possible to control a large proportion of trade with pakeha shipping

Perhaps the most graphic demonstration of the revolutionary impact on Maori society of the overlapping introduction of new food sources and new military technologies is contained in early reports of food/firearms ‘exchange rates’. A summary of these reported rates is given below for the years 1814-1827, a period of maximum instability, as the new weapons had begun to transform Maori warfare but had not yet been evenly distributed over the competing tribes and regions.

Table 2: Food/firearms exchange ratio 1810s/1820s (cost of one musket)

Year	pigs	Baskets potatoes
1814-15	8	150
1818-19	25	No data
c 1820	15	200
1827	10	120

Source: *New Zealand Historical Atlas*, 1999

The intra-Maori wars of this period involved raids which ranged the length and breadth of the two islands, and even one to the Chatham islands which virtually wiped out the Moriori - a group of early offshoot Maori colonists who had developed in isolation in the Chatham group for perhaps 5-6 centuries and were in no way prepared to deal with Maori schooled in the militaristic traditions of the main islands and armed with muskets to boot. These wars were undoubtedly very destructive and more important for the longer term than the raid on the Chatham Islands may well have been the destruction wreaked in the South Island by raiders from the north. This may have helped to set back post-contact Maori population growth in regions which not accessible to substantial Maori settlement from the onset of the Little Ice Age till the introduction of the potato. If so, the raids would have helped to preserve the majority of the South Island as a region which Europeans could subsequently occupy with minimal resistance from established Maori populations.

This last comment is just a guess – I haven’t found anything yet which really discusses this issue. However, it is clear that the existence of a kind of ‘*terra nullius*’ in much of the South Island became a critical part of the geopolitical equation in the middle and later 19th century, which helped to counter the impact of Maori military and political resistance in the north. Of course, given their long term history of settlement and resource use across the whole of Aotearoa, the Maori did not see the south in that light. Indeed, the immediate resort to long-distance raids from the north in the new round of intra-Maori wars was eloquent testimony to the core role of the southern regions in the Maori historical consciousness. But agents of the British state did distinguish between the two islands in regard to the status of prior Maori occupation. When Hobson claimed sovereignty on 21 May 1840 over the whole of New Zealand, he claimed the North Island on the ground of cession (by the chiefs who signed the Treaty of Waitangi) and the southern islands ‘on the basis of discovery’ (Owens, p 52). Moreover, the lack of substantial Maori populations in the south - which provided ideal conditions for the introduction of sheep and turned out to possess most of the easily worked alluvial gold fields - was a crucial factor in tipping the balance in favour of economically and

politically viable European occupation at a point when this might otherwise have been a close-run thing. 'With few barriers to Pakeha expansion Otago and Dunedin were to dominate the New Zealand economy from the late 1850s to the 1880s' (Barber). 'The south quickly became, at derisory cost, an area of flourishing European development outside the sphere of effective Maori resistance' (Gardner, p 63).

The new round of wars in the 1810s and 1820s had also produced a visible upsurge of cannibalism, and the wars appear to have been represented by Maori to the missionaries as motivated by long accumulated tribal payback grievances. Missionaries and other contemporary observers appear to have believed, or chosen to believe, this account of the motive forces behind the wars, rather than looking for a more 'generic' socio-economic logic behind them; and this contemporary European perception seems to have been influential also in the academic historiography of the early contact period until relatively recently.

However, as noted above, the period of maximum instability, as muskets diffused throughout the main inhabited regions of the archipelago, was only around 15 years, and was concluded by the early 1830s, well before the Treaty of Waitangi and the British annexation. Though the wars seemed to European observers merely to have reasserted an irrational tangle of tribal divisions and ancient hatreds among the Maori, it is worth asking whether there is not also some positive connection between the new degree of political organization in this period for intra-Maori conflict and the capacities of a large section of the North Island Maori to produce a supra-tribal political organization for concerted Maori resistance to Pakeha encroachments through the King movement some decades later. Certainly, there seems little doubt that the military innovations of this period, particularly changes in pa construction to meet the challenge of firearms, were a significant way station towards the extra-ordinary Maori resistance to professional British military forces in the European-Maori wars from the 1840s to the late 1860s.

The important link between military innovation and political innovation on the Maori side of the New Zealand Wars is brought out very well by by Belich. The Maori soon came to recognize that they could not meet substantial professional British forces, armed with modern rifles, in the open without disastrous results, he argues; and they were therefore forced to focus to concentrate on essentially defensive strategies to hold key strategic positions. However, such defensive strategies had to be able to deal with assailants armed not just with modern rifles but also with modern artillery. The result was a highly innovative elaboration of defensive earthworks, trenches and hidden firing platforms for the 'modern pa', which prefigured the trench warfare techniques of World War I on the Western Front. This 'modern' military achievement reflected a 'modern' political achievement on the part of the King Movement - in providing the logistical and organizational realization of the plans of Maori strategists and engineers, and in managing the process of rotating 'callups' which allowed a maximum force of part-time Maori 'warriors' to be deployed against a British force of permanent, professional 'soldiers', without completely disrupting the agricultural base of Maori society.

The King Movement had few of the institutions of a European style state – it experimented with some, such as police and tax, without great success – and this deceived some contemporaries (and historians) into imagining it was ineffective and narrowly based. In fact, it mobilised in war a higher proportion of its resources than most European states were capable of at the time, though its methods were much less formal, and by 1863 encompassed the majority of Maori, though practical factors meant not all could fight for it. The movement was only an anti-landselling 'league' in a secondary sense: its primary purpose

in opposing land sales was to protect Maori independence...The South Island Maori who sent ammunition, the Ngapuhi who protected escaped Kingite prisoners of war, and the warriors who marched to distant Waikato to support traditional enemies – all did so, in the words of a Urewera chief, ‘to show sympathy for the island in trouble’. Using the term ‘nationalist’ for this phenomenon may be somewhat deceptive and Eurocentric, but not using it is even more so (Belich, 1997, p 88).

Given his emphasis on both the modernity of the military challenge faced by the Maori and the modernity of their military/political response to it, Belich seems relatively unimpressed with the continuities between early patterns of Maori military organization and their later achievements with the ‘modern pa’. From a broader sociological perspective, however, it seems worth thinking about elements of continuity between successive stages of ‘caging’ (and associated processes of political, social and gender stratification) of Maori populations in military conflicts over scarce resources. In the Little Ice Age/extinctions period, the scarce resources were mainly the increasingly restricted zones allowing for reliable food production on a substantial scale. In the early contact period, control over key points of access to the Pakeha for trade purposes became a crucial new area of conflict. In the Kingite/New Zealand Wars period, protection of diminishing Maori land resources against large-scale encroachments by the Pakeha became the dominant issue. But the pattern of strong economic and geopolitical ‘caging’ to particular locations is a common feature of each period. And a more specific tradition of substantial, collective ‘earthworks’ dictated by the demanding environment for Maori horticulture in the pre-contact period may also have some bearing on Maori engineering achievements in ‘trench warfare’ in the period of the New Zealand Wars.

(An intriguing side-question here is whether the centrality of horticulture to Maori society was directly acknowledged in the political nomenclature of the King Movement. The first king was a North Island Maori chief named Te Wherowhero, who called himself King Potatau I. In my admittedly limited reading, I have yet to encounter any commentary on this choice of name. Is the similarity to ‘potato’ purely coincidental? Or was it a deliberate reference to the potato, and is this point so obvious to New Zealand historians that they do not even bother to comment on it?)

New foods, new weapons, new diseases and the ‘fatal impact’ thesis

The notion that Maori society was being torn apart from within by a senseless and directionless military anarchy was one part of a broader ‘fatal impact thesis’ which gained wide currency among the missionaries and other interested European parties in the 1820s and 1830s. Identifying the new Zealand situation as one more instance of an indigenous population in irreversible decline as a consequence of European impact, this was an important part of the discourse advocating British annexation as the only reasonable response to a deteriorating situation in the 1830s. Missionaries peddled estimates of up to 80,000 Maori deaths from war and disease between 1800 and 1840 (Buck). Similarly, the ‘British Resident’ James Busby, in an influential letter to the Colonial Secretary in 1837, portrayed a race in rapid decline as a result not just of war deaths and the impact of venereal and other diseases, but also from a complete loss of faith in their own capacity to resist the Pakeha:

Disease and death prevail even among those natives who, by their adherence to the missionaries, have received only benefits from the English connection; and even the very children who are reared under the care of missionaries are swept off in a ratio, which promises, at no very distant period, to leave the country destitute of a single Aboriginal inhabitant. The natives are perfectly sensible of this decrease...they conclude that the God of the English is removing the Aboriginal inhabitants to make room for them; and it appears to me that this impression has produced amongst them a very general recklessness and indifference to life (cited in Crosby, p 250).

A set of long term estimated figures for the Maori population assembled by Crosby is represented in Table 1 below. Tony Simpson pointed out at the Wellington symposium that these figures are based on outdated sources and, in particular, that the suggestion of more reliable 'census' data after 1857-8 is misleading. It is now persuasively argued that census figures in the later 19th century substantially under-represent the Maori population, reflecting an interest in doing so on the part both of pakeha who wished to minimize the extent of the residual Maori claim to land and independent political presence, and also of Maori and part-Maori wishing to blend if possible into the dominant population. Pressure of other work has so far prevented me from tracking down more plausible overall figures, and this needs to be a first priority in rewriting this current version of the paper. But my primary interest here, as I pointed out in the symposium discussion, is in the very sharp fall between the estimates for around 1840 and the first census figures for the late-1850s, around the start of the main phase of the European-Maori wars. Figures in this range for the late-1850s appear to be accepted not just by Crosby, who has clearly incorporated a large dose of 'fatal impact' assumptions into his account, but also by historians such as Belich and Owens, who are strongly critical of the thesis of a major 'fatal impact' before annexation,

Table 2: Estimated size of the Maori population of New Zealand, 1769 to 1921

Year	Population
<i>Estimates:</i>	
1769	100,000-200,000
1814-15	150,000-180,000
1830s	150,000-180,000
ca. 1837	“Does not exceed” 130,000
1840	100,000-120,000
1846	120,000
1853	56,400-60,000
<i>Census:</i>	
1857-8	56,049
1874	47,330
1886	43,927
1896	42,113
1901	45,330
1911	52,723
1921	56,987

Source: Crosby, Alfred W. (1989), *Ecological Imperialism: The Biological Expansion of Europe, 900-1900*, p. 260.

In the absence of a proper discussion of the issues here, I will simply list a number of reasons for thinking that the relationship suggested by these figures – namely a sharp decline in Maori populations after British annexation and extensive European migration – remains plausible. These reasons are couched as a criticism of a series of ‘tendencies’ in the alternative proposition which served as part of the advance rationale for the annexation – namely that of a general ‘fatal impact’ and accelerating population decline before annexation.

- Tendency of self-interested parties like the missionaries and the British ‘resident’ Busby to exaggerate Maori decline to justify British annexation
- Tendency of Europeans to generalize from a-typical conditions in the first major contact zone, the Bay of Islands, to the situation of broader Maori populations less exposed to intense European contact
- Tendency to generalize from impact on Australian Aboriginal and Amerindian populations, after substantial European settlement, to impact on Maori before substantial settlement
- Tendency to misunderstand the dynamics of Maori warfare and its role in Maori social structure, and to exaggerate the degree of ‘anarchy’ and the scale of death and destruction resulting from intra-Maori wars
- Tendency to overestimate the pre-contact Maori population, and consequently to also overestimate the extent of population decline by the 1830s. (The trend in modern scholarship seems to be away from higher pre-contact figures like 200,000 and back towards Cook’s estimate of around 100,000. It is worth noting that Cook is generally held to have been if anything overly conservative in population estimates elsewhere in the Pacific).
- Tendency to overestimate the impact of European disease in the pre-annexation period, in which there were still few Europeans in the archipelago, in contrast to the post-annexation period in which European populations increased rapidly both in absolute numbers and geographical spread. (For instance, Belich points out that where Maori retained control of land and substantial political autonomy until relatively late in the post-annexation period, ‘the decline of the Maori population...was less severe’).
- Tendency to under-estimate the potential for new foods like the potato to increase the Maori population and offset the impact of warfare and disease (Once again, the problem may lie in generalization from a-typical conditions in the Bay of Islands, and from the early frenzy to acquire muskets – even if this entailed devoting the majority of potato and pig production to the musket trade).

Overall, there seems to be a strong case for concluding that European proponents of annexation based on the fatal impact theory in the 1830s were (knowingly or not) engaged in self fulfilling prophecy, especially since the annexation eventually had to be backed up by a massive professional military intervention (massive in a relative sense) to deal with a relatively late burst of military resistance by a Maori population who were allegedly already on the verge of disappearing as a race. As J.M. Owens concludes:

At particular times and in particular places, numbers of people died as a result of disease, war or social upheaval; but whether the total population declined between 1769 and 1840 is open to question. If 'anarchy' was a misleading term and if depopulation cannot be established, the impact of the Europeans was probably not as fatal as contemporaries believed. The situation was to change when Europeans began to settle in more significant numbers, which they were doing even before the Treaty of Waitangi was signed (Owens, p 50).

New foods, 'new lands', 'terra nullius'

This brief, concluding discussion on terra nullius issues returns, very sketchily, to the core political and historical problem which started me thinking about the Aboriginal-Maori comparison in the first place, and which then led on to the preoccupation with the food/warfare/political organization relationship which largely dominates this paper. My comments here are organised under a number of sub-headings, designed to highlight various aspects of the comparison.

Long-term prior occupation

Aboriginal Australians as a group arguably have the strongest claim to 'their' land on the basis of long-term prior occupation' of any 'indigenous' people confronted with European settler colonial in the modern era. Maori arguably have the weakest claim among 'indigenous' peoples on such a basis. Obviously this criterion does not provide any historically grounded explanation for the relatively greater Maori success in asserting their claims, whatever political and legal resonances it may have in land rights debates in Australia today.

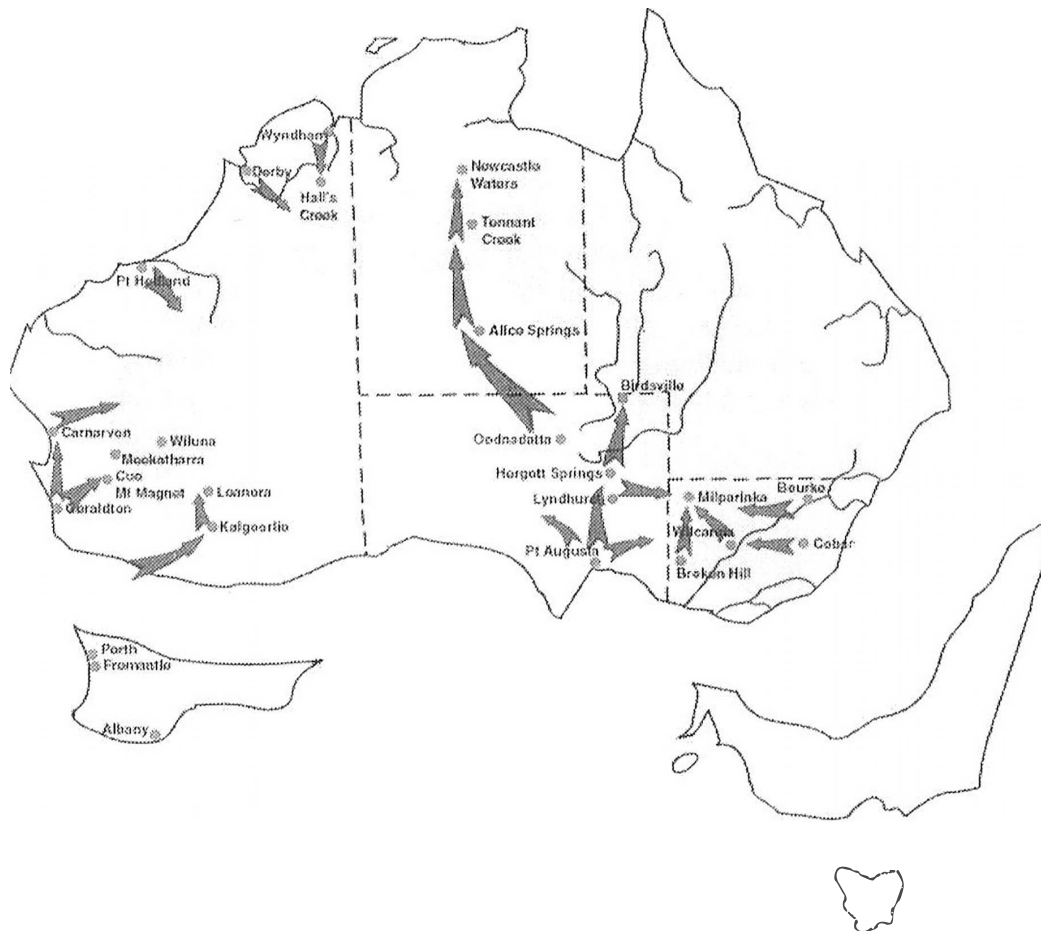
Short-term prior occupation/concurrent occupation/effective exploitation of the land

On this criterion, the situation is more mixed, but on balance the Aboriginal land rights claim may still be stronger than the Maori. Clearly there was a major Maori occupation of the North Island and a limited part of the South Island for many centuries before the Europeans arrived, and their use of the territories accessible to their existing plant repertoire should have satisfied the most exacting European demand for effective exploitation of the land in a 'Lockean' sense. However, the Maori in the immediate pre-contact centuries had lost the ability to occupy most of the South Island in substantial numbers; and, as noted earlier, Hobson effectively made a kind of *terra nullius* claim over the latter in 1840, claiming it by right of 'discovery' rather than by right of cession via the Treaty of Waitangi as in the case of the North Island.

As for Australian Aboriginals, they were effectively occupying all major regions of the Australian continent by the time Europeans arrived, even if the forms of their occupation and economic exploitation of the land were less congruent with the 'Lockean' criterion of the European invaders on this issue, with its inbuilt prejudice against 'nomads' and hunter-gatherers'. But on the criterion of concurrent occupation, the Australian Aboriginals should arguably have been regarded as having an extremely strong claim. This is dramatised in the geopolitical manipulation of 'Australia' in Map 2. This essentially detaches the southeast 'Boomerang Coast', Tasmania and the southwest corner of Western Australia, from the vast mass of 'continental Australia', on

the grounds that the detached areas represent the only regions of significant European population concentration even by the mid-20th century. (If we are talking only about the 19th century', the whole of Western Australia should arguably be excluded from the European-occupied area, since the recorded European population of the entire state was only 49,782 in 1891, 'leaping' to 184,124 by 1901).

Map 2 shows that vast areas of 'continental Australia' – both the central desert and semi-desert 'Aboriginal grain belt' shaded on the map, and virtually all of the tropical and sub-tropical coast regions outside the northern end of the Boomerang Coast - were virtually unoccupied by Europeans in the middle and later 19th century, but effectively occupied by Aboriginal populations throughout this period, as they had been for millennia before. From the late 19th century onwards, this 'continental Australia' was the source of more and more of the export commodities which supported the living standards of European Australia. But until the triumph of modern industrial transport and extraction technologies through the 20th century, Europeans could not exploit these continental regions even in an extractive way without heavy reliance on subordinate non-European populations - such as the Aboriginals themselves and the 'Afghan' camel drivers, whose transport routes are marked with arrows on the map.



Finally, it should be emphasised that even the temperate and sub-tropical coastal regions of the 'Boomerang Coast' had remarkably low European populations through to the end of the 19th century, with the exception of the four colonial capitals and a few significant provincial towns like Newcastle and Geelong. The most substantial area of non-

metropolitan towns in the 'Boomerang Coast' in this period was not on the coast at all but in the 'Inland Corridor' behind the 'Great Dividing Range'.

Treaty versus military resistance

The absence of treaty between Britain and Australian Aboriginal populations, comparable to the Treaty of Waitangi, has become a major reference point in debates over 'Aboriginal reconciliation' in contemporary Australia, with many claims that producing some sort of Treaty today is an essential precondition for forward movement in this area. However, it was clearly not the Treaty of Waitangi itself that secured for Maori relatively better recognition of their rights as prior occupants of the land. As Claudia Orange observes, 'treaties with indigenous peoples have been not unusual in the history of British imperial expansion. Most have been shelved or forgotten' (Orange, 1987, p 1). If Waitangi 'remains a central issue in New Zealand. [a fact which] puzzles many New Zealanders', the cause is to be found not in the treaty in isolation - nor in unusually benevolent application of it by British imperial authorities, let alone by the European settlers - but rather in Maori success in endowing the treaty with retrospective significance by their remarkable military and political resistance during the New Zealand Wars.

Maori versus Australian Aboriginal military resistance

That the Maori were unusually successful in this respect, however, does not mean that the Maori fought for their land and the Australian Aboriginals did not. Both populations offered impressive military resistance to European occupation, given the imbalance of technological and organizational resources on the European side. But they resisted in very different ways with very different political consequences: in ways which substantially derived from earlier patterns of military conflict among themselves, and importantly, from their hunting and food production systems in the pre-contact period.

Expanding Europeans, to borrow Geoffrey Scotts' phrase, demonstrated a strong propensity towards 'seeing like a state', and thus towards 'seeing' genuine prior occupation only where they confronted state-like forms as they understood them. A substantial section of the North Island Maori were remarkably successful in 'looking like a state' for a critical around the mid-19th century, for a people who had still been confined by a stone age technology and an inadequate plant repertoire before the main European contact less than a century before. The key to this lay in their extraordinary military achievements in defending substantial territories - and important strategic points guarding these territories - against professional military forces equipped with advanced military technologies and logistical techniques. And the key to this, I have suggested, lay in the links between their military organization and their agricultural/horticultural organization in the pre-contact period - or at least in the period of strong territorial 'caging' of North Island Maori populations towards the end of Little Ice Age/extinctions period.

Australian Aboriginals, by contrast, were poorly equipped by their pre-contact history for the organization of substantial numbers of warriors in the systematic defence of fixed territorial positions. This was probably particularly true of their capacity to defend critical resources like water-courses in the relatively open and under-forested country of the southeastern 'Inland Corridor', the pivotal contact zone in the first half of the 19th century. On the other hand, Aboriginals were in some ways better equipped than pre-

contact Maori for guerilla fighting in areas where they could exploit the advantages of forest cover and difficult terrain. Above all, they were much better equipped than pre-contact, pre-firearms Maori in the crucial area of having the means to kill or maim opponents at a distance.

Aboriginal three-metre spears, thrown with a spear thrower by experienced hunters, 'were a match for muskets' in the still inefficient phase of European firearms in the first half of the 19th century: ie a match for precisely the kinds of muskets which revolutionised intra-Maori warfare from the 1810s to the early 1830s. Around four spears could be thrown in a minute, a faster and more reliable discharge rate than the muskets of that time. Properly thrown, they could cover between 60 and 100 metres 'with deadly accuracy', and could cause serious injury at 60 or even 70 metres. Australian Aboriginals therefore were not nearly so impressed as were Maori in the early contact period by the European possession of weapons which could kill at a distance. They soon realised the inadequacies of muskets –inaccuracy at distance, slow reload, tendency to misfire – and were prepared if necessary to confront small groups of armed Europeans directly with their spears, though they were particularly effective in guerilla attacks.

The major military encounters between Europeans and Maori came relatively late in the contact period, after the Maori had acquired muskets and more advanced rifles in quantity and become proficient in their use through the intra-Maori wars. However, if they had been required to confront armed Europeans with their own pre-contact weapons and fighting strategies, it seems likely that the result would have been devastating for Maori, given the partly psychological impact that muskets –with all the above inadequacies – had upon Maori fighters not equipped with them in the intra-Maori wars. In common perceptions of the 'warrior' status of indigenous populations in European settler states, the weight of popular reputations surely lies on the Maori rather than the Australian Aboriginal side. But it seems plausible to think that - if there had somehow been a military encounter between a group of pre-contact Maori and a similar size group of pre-contact Aboriginals armed with spears and spear-throwers – the latter would probably have won, because of their superior technologies for killing at a distance.

If one wanted to locate the 'underlying' reason for the difference between the two indigenous peoples in this area, the most plausible place to look is in the area of pre-contact means of food production (just as it is in regard to the superior Maori capacity for organised military defence of fixed positions). Aboriginals needed efficient means of killing at a distance to hunt substantial, tough-skinned, fast-moving game like kangaroo. Maori would appear not to have had a comparable food-related need for such weapons, even before the extinction of the large mega-fauna, and still less so thereafter.

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Regional Wines of Australia and New Zealand

Participants at the Symposium were asked to bring a bottle of local wine for a tasting. This struck many with a heavy burden of responsibility, as they had to decide which wine would do justice to their particular locale. Some from wine rich areas were spoiled for choice while others had a frantic search. For instance, while Queensland is known for growing fabulous rainforests and frangipani it is not renowned for its vineyards. But, this didn't phase one recent Brisbane emigre who tracked down a winemaker not far from the city.

Some bought wines that were well known favourites as others launched fearlessly into the unknown. Their were sentimental choices like wedding communion wine, and intriguing choices like the lesser known siblings of Grange Hermitage and Cloudy Bay. There was wine that was swapped for a ham sandwich, albeit "a very nice ham sandwich," we were told. Others were led by advice from a trusted wine purveyor.

The highlight of the tasting was when the remainder of the wines were bundled into a suitcase and wheeled down to the wharf. There, as the sun set over Wellington we sipped from them all, or at least many, and smiled at curious onlookers.

Wines bought by delegates to the symposium

WHITE

Borthwick Estate 2000 Sauvignon Wairarapa Valley
Brajkovich Signature Series 2000 Kumen Chardonnay Kumen
Chifney Chenin Blanc Reserve 1995 Huangarua Vineyard
Cloudy Bay Te Koko Sauvignon Blanc 1997
Felton Road Chardonnay 1999 Central Otago
Gladstone Pinot Gris 2000 Wairarapa
Hunter's 2000 Sauvignon Blanc Marlborough
Matakan Estate Pinot Gris 1999 New Zealand
Merlen Rhine Riesling 1991 Marlborough
Morworth Estate 1998 Riesling Christchurch
Palliser Estate Riesling 1995 Martinborough
Palliser Estate Riesling 2000 Martinborough
Pegasus Bay Chardonnay 1999 Canterbury
Pegasus Bay Riesling 2000 Canterbury
Penfolds Adelaide Hills Chardonnay 1996 Trial Bin
Shaw and Smith Sauvignon Blanc 2000 Adelaide Hills
Shingle Peak Sauvignon Blanc 1999 Marlborough
Stoneleigh Vineyards Riesling 1999 Marlborough
Stoney Vineyard 1998 Aurora, Tasmania

RED

Barratt Piccadilly Valley Pinot Noir 1988 Adelaide Hills
Chain of Ponds, 'Ledge' 1997 Shiraz Adelaide Hills
Craig Knowe Vineyard 1994 Cabernet Sauvignon Cranbrook Tasmania
Diamond Valley Vineyards, 1999 Cabernet Merlot Yarra Valley

Domaine A 1991 Cabernet Sauvignon Stoney Vineyard, Tasmania
No Regrets, Pinot Noir 1998 Tasmania
Parker Terra Rossa Cabernet Sauvignon 1998 Coonawarra South Australia
Stefano Lubiano Pinot Noir 1999 Tasmania
Margrain Rose 2000 Martinborough

– **Angela Burford**

Regionalism in New Zealand Food: Does it exist? – Margaret Brooker

I must make it clear from the outset that I'm only talking about European food in New Zealand, not Maori food.

Looking at the geography of New Zealand you might expect that the food would be regional. There is a considerable variation in the climate of the regions of New Zealand: the sub-tropical north, the cold winters and hot summers of the inland areas such as central Otago, Canterbury and the central North Island, the high sunshine/ low rainfall areas such as Nelson and Marlborough, and Hawkes Bay, the heavy rainfall areas such as the West Coast of the South Island and Taranaki. And the other factors, such as soil type, which go to make up the individual character of a region, differ from region to region.

The produce of the regions is related to the individual conditions which pertain there: in central Otago there is stone fruit, in Taranaki dairy produce, in Dargaville kumara, in Bluff oysters, on Stewart Island mutton birds, in Kaikoura crayfish - the latter three a harvest of the natural resources rather than introduced produce.

As you would expect the particular produce is more readily available, and in some cases exclusively, in the region where it is produced. So you might go to central Otago and get a variety of apricots only available locally because it has a short season or doesn't travel well. The exception tends to be The West Coast of the South Island. That is a region known for its 'wild foods' - whitebait, venison, crayfish and possum. Yet as a visitor to The West Coast you will have difficulty finding those to buy, although you may encounter them on local menus. That is because the 'Coasters' tend either to operate a barter system or send their bounty to Christchurch where they will fetch a considerably higher price.

The regionality of the produce has resulted in some localised tastes. From my personal observation South Islanders are much fonder of broad beans than North Islanders. Likewise, Southlanders have a liking for swedes not shared by the rest of the country.

The regional produce has not really translated itself into regional dishes or regional cuisines. No one area has really developed a regional dish based on its local produce. Auckland, for example, doesn't have a signature dish in the way that Lisbon has pork and clams; nor does Nelson have the equivalent of bouillabaisse in Marseilles. Dunedin is known for cheese rolls but when I was last there I asked at the Information Office where I could go to get one and the staff didn't even know what a cheese roll was.

This general lack of regionally specific dishes is remarkable even that, in the early days of New Zealand settlement, conditions conducive to their development existed. Transport was much more arduous and slower than today and that combined with absence of refrigeration meant that there was less transportation of food. However, in those days most New Zealanders ate very similar dishes and meals throughout the country. This can be explained by the way New Zealand was settled and the similar origins of the settlers. Tony Simpson's book *A Distant Feast* elaborates on this. It has taken a long time for New Zealanders to lose the mindset of this early cuisine. Nor has

any one area developed a regional style. Any differences in style tend to reflect the sophistication of the diners and put crudely is a city/ province divide.

I have just completed writing the third edition of *New Zealand Food Lovers' Guide*, which is in essence a shopping guide as to where to find the best food, both produce and prepared foods, in New Zealand. When I was writing the introductions to the individual regions I noticed the recurrence of the word "diverse" and its synonyms. Since the *Guide* only features absolutely top quality foods the picture might be a little distorted but in many regions there is no common thread between the foods.

Some concentrations, such that there are, of certain types of foods (the best foods) in areas are not related to the territory at all. Christchurch has a proliferation of confectioners; Auckland is well provided with dessert makers. Although Canterbury is the grain belt of New Zealand I think that the fact that it has a lot of good bakers is a coincidence. Wellington also has lots of good bakers and by no stretch of the imagination could you relate that to the Wellington terroir. But the Wellington breads are not distinguished from their Canterbury counterparts by style. Aside from the differences due to atmospheric yeasts and local water they are not region specific.

Often the food produced in a region could be produced in any region - it is produced where it is because the producer just happens to be there, such as the superb ice cream in Dunedin, and the chocolates at Mangawhai, or because the market is greater, which accounts for some of the foods produced in Auckland.

Yet in my observation New Zealand food producers are becoming more aware of regionalism in food. At a time when transportation methods are faster than ever and food from far afield is widely available regionalism is developing. Wine producers in New Zealand have led the way and regional varieties and styles of wine are well established - Sauvignon Blanc in Marlborough, Pinot Noir in Wairarapa, for example. Olive oil is following suit: from just planting whatever cultivars were available in the early years olive oil producers are now recognising which cultivars thrive in particular regions. Thus in the Nelson area there is a concentration on Tuscan cultivars, in Northland on J5 and in Gisborne on Verdale. Some producers are even intending to blend to make regional oil, consistent from year to year.

I think that the trend towards regional food when conditions encourage globalisation is fuelled by the same reasons that have fuelled the Slow Food movement. Astute marketing is another factor - marketers have recognised that the sense of specificity and specialness and belonging and difference which are part of regional food are a strong marketing tool. There has been a huge growth in the number of Wine and Food Festivals, and markets, and now food trails are being developed. Hawke's Bay is the best example of such development. Not only does Hawke's Bay now have three markets selling local produce, it has a festival, a food trail and other food tourism ventures. Two of its newest food products are related to the fact that it is a wine producing area - salsa balsamica, and verjuice.

But the developing regionalism in food is still about produce, not a cuisine made with the produce. Chefs are increasingly highlighting the local produce on their menus and mention the specific provenance of, for example, lamb, or crab or strawberries. But the

dishes and even the style of dishes they create with the produce of the regions is individual to them as chefs, not particular to the region.

So, does regionalism exist in New Zealand food? Yes as far as produce is concerned, but no as far as cuisine is concerned.

Note on Contribution of Home Cooks to Regional Foods – Lois Daish

Hearing mention of the role that chefs do, or do not, play in regional cuisine, makes me want to put in a word for home cooks, based on my reading of fund-raising cookbooks, calls to the talkback programme I used to have, and responses to my *Listener* columns.

Here are a few off-the-cuff examples:

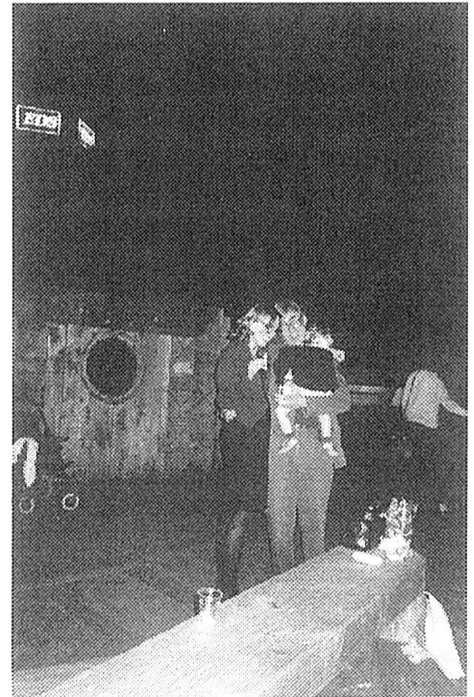
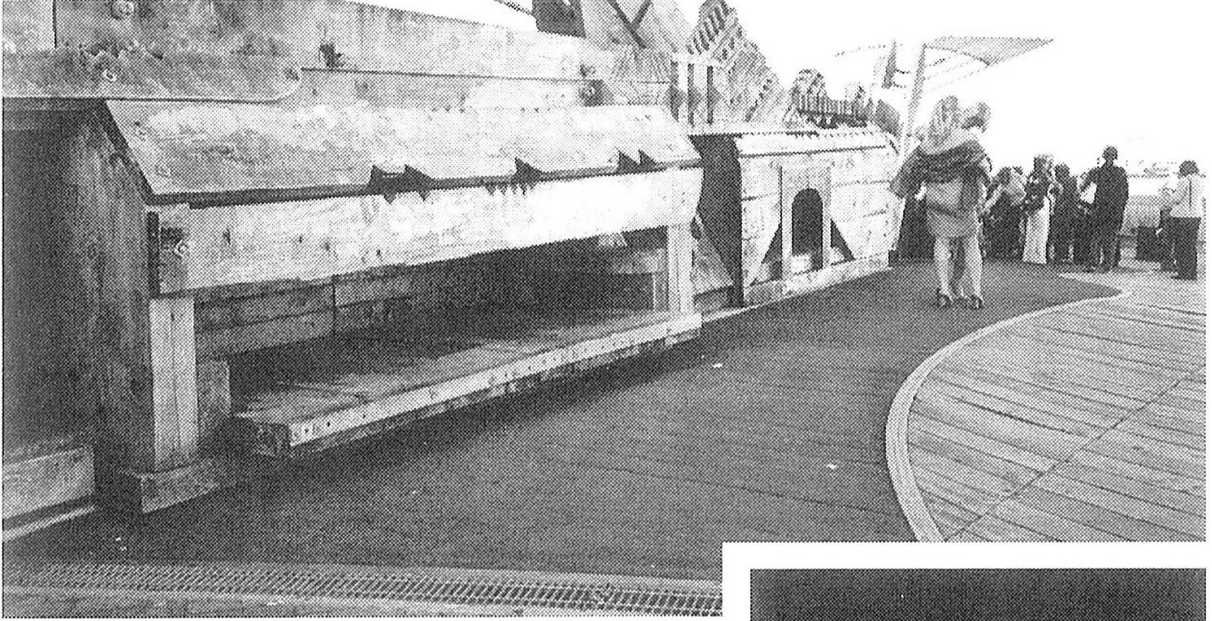
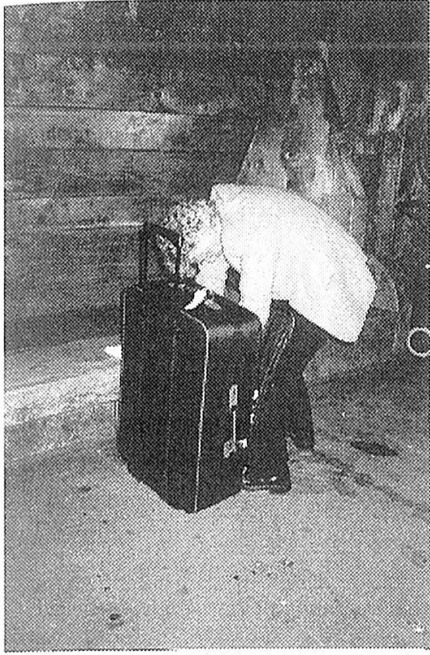
From local cookbooks: a book from Golden Bay had an incredibly large number of recipes for orange cake; one from Nelson had even more apple recipes than is usual, and also recipes for when there is glut of passionfruit or chokos.

From radio listeners: a cluster of callers from Wainuiomata with various versions of mutton pies (small meat-packed pies made with raised pastry similar to English pork pies). Heated discussions on doughboys (dumplings) particularly from callers in provincial towns. Also fried bread made by dropping lumps of bread dough in hot fat.

The most lively discussions on the show were about how to prevent various faults in pavlovas, how to guarantee crisp crackling, how to cook trout, wild pig, wild duck and whitebait. The callers were almost always more interested in what the other callers' recipes were than they were in my city restaurant suggestions.

From responses to my column: recipes for walnut cakes from Banks peninsular (an area with many walnut trees), camp oven recipes from provincial towns close to the wildest bush areas. Boil-up, a Maori version of a pot-au-feu, using pork, potatoes and puha or watercress, cooked very slowly for a long time, with a lot of water so more like a broth than a stew. I thought this was a Gisborne specialty, but readers from other areas with a large rural Maori population said they make it too. There appears to be no Maori name for the dish. Restaurant chef in Gisborne made an up-market version using beef fillet and gnocchi (instead of doughboys or fried bread)

It seems to me that it is less useful to look to chefs to invent or develop regional specialties, than it is to look at what people already cook in their own homes, particularly away from the big cities.



Gastronomy, The New Zealand Scene: Edmonds Sure to Rise

– Nancy J Pollock

(Nancy J. Pollock, Dept. of Anthropology, Victoria University, Wellington)

Introduction

Edmonds has dominated the food scene in New Zealand as the company that standardised baking powder, and thus became the mainstay of New Zealand housewives in “Keeping their tins full”. That expression represents the epitome of several responsibilities, particularly for rural women, who had not only to feed the shearing gangs that regularly came to work on their farms, but these women also had to contribute their scones and cakes to the numerous community gatherings. A woman’s baking thus marks her fulfillment of her social commitments. When she could be sure that her sponges would rise and her scones be light and fluffy because she was using Edmonds’ baking powder, she felt safe in her own social position.

Edmonds is thus a major icon of New Zealand culture, along with the kiwi, and buzz ‘o bumble (see the postage stamps brought out in the 1990s that depict each of these icons). Edmonds produced a cookbook of recipes that housewives could use to produce a range of products, drawing on the baking powder and other products such as Jelly that the company manufactured. Those cookbooks in themselves are a fine source for examining key changes in New Zealand food habits (see Murray and Pollock 2000).

The strength of this one company as an icon of New Zealand’s heritage was put further to the test when the Edmonds building in Christchurch was deemed due for demolition in the mid-1990s. The outcry came from far and wide – what had stood for so long with the slogan “Sure to Rise” was under threat of falling. That the timing coincided with a strong feminist voice, more women in Parliament, and a general appraisal of the value of women’s contributions to a society whose economy and place in the globalised world depended on its primary produce made the debate all the more heated. The debate itself was not gendered, as many staunch Kiwis defended their four and five generations that had been raised with Edmonds in their kitchens. The company stood for good home cooking.

The House of Edmonds is thus a uniquely New Zealand icon, centered around good household cooking. It thus holds a key place in New Zealand gastronomy, taken in its broadest sense. But at the same time that raises the question of what is Gastronomy, and can we identify certain key features that mark out New Zealand gastronomy from the other gastronomies in the world.

My own position is that of an anthropologist whose concerns focus on the concept of “Good Food” as it is interpreted in different cultural settings. In particular I am examining how that concept influences the decisions that householders make when obtaining and preparing food for their residents. The large question prevails as to how Good Food is interpolated within wider issues of food security. I will argue here that Edmonds Sure to Rise baking powder has persisted as one vital element in maintaining food security in New Zealand.

Gastronomy - What is it?

Gastronomy is not a term widely used today in common parlance, yet most people have a general idea what it means. The *Shorter Oxford* dictionary defines the term as “The practice, study or art of eating and drinking well”, so in that sense it is one step removed from the scones and the baking powder and refers to food in its social context. The suffix ‘nomie’ suggests that those practices are somehow regulated or conform to certain norms or laws, so the baking powder is the means to ensure the cook meets her domestic obligations both physically and socially.

While the term appears infrequently in much of the food writing throughout the twentieth century, its multi-disciplined setting was firmly established in 1825 by Brillat-Savarin, the renowned and much acknowledged father of food writing. His comprehensive view stated that “Gastronomy is the reasoned comprehension of everything connected with the nourishment of man” (*The Philosopher in the Kitchen*, Penguin 1970:52). He saw gastronomy as pertaining to all the various branches of science, as it “governs the whole life of man” (p.52) from the material to the political and social. Its influence is felt by “all classes of society” (p.52). But each branch had its own approach to what is termed in the French title of his book, *The physiology of taste*. They “examined, analysed and classified all foodstuffs and reduced them to their basic elements. They plumbed the mysteries of assimilation, followed inert matter through all its metamorphoses, and saw how it might come to life. They observed the effects of diet, both passing and permanent, for a day, a month, or a whole lifetime. They noted its influence even on the faculty of thought, whether the mind was affected by the senses, or responded itself without the cooperation of its organs; and out of all these labours a grand theory emerged, embracing all mankind and that part of creation which can be made animal” (p.51). These circumstances preceded the advent of Gastronomy, “a science which nourished men was at least as valuable as that which taught how to kill them; poets sang the pleasures of the table, and books with good cheer as their subject offered their readers views of greater depth and maxims of more general interest” (p.51).

The classification of food under a whole range of different headings marks his noteworthy contribution. He saw food as pertaining to many different sectors of human existence, and thus provides us with a salutary reminder of its multi-disciplinary facets in the modern days of over compartmentalization. Nutrition has become a sub-discipline of medicine, while domestic science has virtually disappeared from school curricula, to be replaced by wider considerations of food and health. Food writing has become an art form in great demand that provides a more enduring image than the many television programmes that present food as a form of entertainment.

Gastronomy nevertheless remains relatively undeveloped as a distinct scholarly discipline, as Symons noted (1995: 24). That it was seen to pertain more to the body than to the mind may be a further casualty of the Cartesian dichotomy. Certainly food is an integral part of any ethnographic account of a society by an anthropologist. But for the most part it has been included under the heading of Economics, i.e. as part of production, where the consumption element has been ignored, or trivialised as “women’s work”. Attempts by Audrey Richards and Rosemary Firth in the 1930s and 1940s to show that feeding households was an important part of societal life met with little follow up. My own Ph D fieldwork on *Breadfruit and Breadwinning on Namu*, an atoll in the Marshall Islands had to be couched in economic terms within the academic climate that then prevailed, and food decisions were seen as based on what was

produced. It was only with the dual innovations in the social sciences that saw the examination of women's contributions to society as critical, and the growth of consumerism, that a new approach to Gastronomy emerged. The publication of a volume edited by Margaret Arnott, entitled *Gastronomy, The Anthropology of Food and Food Habits*, published in 1976 set out specifically to encourage "further scholarly study of food habits". My own paper on dietary change in that volume launched me into a career examining food as a consumable item within particular social contexts, and into many debates with nutritionists.

Today the anthropology of food has a wide following. We have an International Commission for the Anthropology of Food, which is a sub-commission of the International Union of Anthropological and Ethnological Sciences (IUAES). This international body has gained momentum as our participants come together from all five continents to share critical views of the place of concepts in our broader thinking. The ICAF meets regularly both at the IUAES meetings every four years, and at least once a year for specific topics, such as Mediterranean diet, meat, or 'Fluid bread', the topic of this year's symposium. Books such as Mintz' *Sweetness and Power* have contributed significantly to broadening the approaches as well as the interest in a food or foods.

Food in all its dimensions, including the physical and social dimensions as well as the metaphysical and mythological is now firmly established as a key element of anthropological endeavour. Many theses and papers are being published in local languages to meet the needs of recording the place of food in cultural heritage. English is not the only language of food. It is a language in its own right, and slowly gaining recognition as such.

New Zealand Gastro nomy

New Zealand's place in today's world is that of a primary producer. Her contributions to food may be seen more in terms of the lamb and beef and dairy produce. But from within we have seen a vast diversification of that produce to include apples, soft fruit, fish and wine. The good old 5 kg block of cheese has been replaced by a wide range of boutique cheeses, such as those produced locally at Lindale that draw on that dairy heritage, but place it to meet the demands of the modern consumer market.

Whether that place as a primary producer to meet consumer demands qualifies New Zealand for a particular place in the worldwide picture of gastronomy remains to be argued. I believe that it does. Part of the "Clean, green image" that is integral to our attraction to outsiders is not just the acres of pasture-land, as opposed to the penned stock production of the US and other meat manufacturing nations. It includes a diversity of foods that we are keen to keep free of as much genetic modification as is possible. Those foods represent a healthy diet, that is guaranteed, whether eating at home or in a restaurant or take-away bar. The use of wholesome food that has not travelled vast distances and/or been frozen adds to the attraction of New Zealand foods. Consumers are much more discerning than they were 20 years ago, and now demand the best product they can afford.

New Zealand's history as a food producing nation has been outlined by Burton (19) and Simmons (2000). Both authors show how the colonial past has influenced food habits. But other influences such as the proximity to Asia, so long overshadowed by ties to Europe, are evident not only in the many Chinese restaurants but also in the wholesalers who sell the specialist spices and ingredients that make Asian food so distinctive in

taste. Australia's influence on Kiwi cuisine has yet to be evaluated, and vice versa. The ever increasing Pacific island population in New Zealand has already stamped its coconuts and root crops on the markets of Otara and Porirua, as well as on the recipes that use coconut milk and bananas as key ingredients. Nevertheless, New Zealand's small size and distance from northern hemisphere markets provide on-going challenges to both the producers of good food, and those consumers who would like to access those good foods.

As we considered Edmonds' contribution in the opening part of this paper, we saw how important the sharing of food has been in the history of New Zealand's social existence. Keeping the tins full and providing a plate piled high with chops, and spuds and cabbage and pumpkin, followed by a steamed pudding has been a mark of New Zealand cuisine. It is fast disappearing as new ideologies about the body, and warnings about the negative values of animal fat emanate from all the many media sources. The new ideology of eat five vegetables a day, and fish together with the outreaches of the Mediterranean diet now available from home-grown produce, our own olive vines, wheat grown for making pasta, and our plentiful supply of wine. We should be one of the healthiest nations in the world, but such good food comes with its own price.

The practice of eating at restaurants and take-aways has grown over the last 30 years, as a distinct move away from the farm-fed staff meals, and even the "tins" of cakes and scones, using Edmonds' baking powder! Home entertaining moved into a new genre. The five different groups that Frances Clements devised to represent New Zealand food consumers in the 1970s have merged. The traditional Sunday roast family with its meat and peas and carrots now consumes pasta, pizza and other 'ethnic' foods occasionally. The YUPPY households are even more eclectic than ever, eating out more often, and cooking less at home. Even Edmonds' cookbooks have kept up with the times by including microwave dishes in recent editions.

I attribute the development of 'civilized' restaurant culture to the end of the "6 o'clock swill" when the main preoccupation was to down as much beer before 6 p.m. closing as possible. When licensing hours were extended to 10 p.m. and even later, the restaurant emerged into its own as a place to dine, and to consume wine as well as, or instead of beer. Men and women were seen dining together, or in larger groups of friends and work-mates, particularly on a Friday night. Consequently the range of restaurants and eating places increased dramatically, and Courtney Place, Wellington was known for having 120 eating places in its small environs. Food as a marker of social status took on new dimensions, as named places were dropped into the conversation at work or in social circles. And chefs were drawn back from overseas to meet these new demanding levels of food service.

This has marked a new era in New Zealand gastronomy. We must ask whether New Zealand gastronomy emerged in the 1980s and 1990s, and if so from what base. If we take Brillat-Savarin's broad base to taste, then every society has its gastronomy, which is marked by its own foods. I have documented Pacific island gastronomy in this sense of a homogeneous root and tree starch food as the essential element, but within that each society emphasizes particular roots differently. In Hawaii, *po 'I* and fish is the key dish, with *po 'I* as the fermented form of taro, while in Fiji it is *dalo* (taro) which should be eaten with fish (Pollock 1992 – *These Roots Remain*). For Maori the fern root and seafood marked their early cuisine, with the *hangi* as the main mode of cooking. The sweet potato and the pig introduced later have given Maori a dynamic cuisine, elements of which are still practiced today, particularly at community events.

So the question emerges as to what determines New Zealand gastronomy? Is it the particular foods used, their mode of cooking and presentation. Or is it some particular forms of cooking in the home? Alternatively the term may be reserved for some form of what may be termed 'elite' cuisine, and does that mean the foods, their presentation, or the total ambience in which the food setting is conveyed to the diners?

If we use Brillat-Savarin's *Meditations* as a guide we may generalise across social spaces, if not across time. Viewed from his 'political economy' perspective, translated today into the tourist perspective, and what foods are avidly traded overseas then Canterbury lamb or Bluff oysters are rivalled by newer dishes such as venison (*cervena*), or mussels or salmon served with fresh vegetables, and perhaps some Timaru potatoes. Any of these foods may be served at home, or ordered in a more public eating-place. Their treatment may be different, perhaps more elaborate in a restaurant, but the food itself offers the 'Taste of New Zealand' whether private or public. The total eating experience may also be marked by the company, the social dimension, and the setting. But fish and chips is also part of New Zealand's gastronomic experience, with fish locally caught, and fish and chip shops rivalling one another for the prize of the best in the land. The supermarket itself is a gastronomic experience, especially now that provenance of produce is likely to be displayed. Savouring the flavours that are titillated by viewing rather than tasting is surely part of the art of gastronomy.

And again we must ask what part do gastronomes play in the creation of a gastronomic experience? Are these merely chefs written in Greek terms? Or is New Zealand cultivating its own persona who know their food, know how to present it, and can excite their consumers. The changed orientation of cooking for cash as a highly competitive but very acceptable profession is yet another innovation in the last twenty years. Still overseas experience is necessary to merit the social appraisal necessary to hold a top job in the food industry. But many Kiwi males and females are making their mark on society with their attention to details of food presentation. So I would argue gastronomes are present in the community, some receiving public accolades through 'cooking for cash', while many others receive their accolades for their many private 'cooking experiences'.

Food writers have become an essential part of the gastronomic experience. They are in demand through newspapers and the several glossy magazines, and the Listener, because the public is hungry for their presentations of the ideas behind food. The recipe book is no longer enough to satisfy the curious. Now we have a two-volume work on the *Cambridge History of Food*, which must be extracted and interpreted for the New Zealand scene. The competitions for book awards are notorious for inclusion of analyses of food habits and explanations of the various dimensions of gastronomy.

Conclusions

To take gastronomy in its multi-faceted form, as set out by Brillat-Savarin almost two hundred years ago, we are offered a multiplicity of approaches to what we eat and why. Our sense of inquiry has raised this legacy of food as more than biological need to the level of ideology to be challenged and explored. At that level it has become legitimate for study.

As social scientists we are wont to pose questions, only some of which can be answered. Here the question of whether there is a New Zealand gastronomy has been explored. I find there is a New Zealand dimension to gastronomy that is unique, not only because of

the foods, such as Canterbury lamb, but because of the healthy attitudes to food which have been developed from prehistory through colonial times. Polynesians enjoyed their food, as the many visitors to the Pacific, including Captain Cook noted with considerable disgust. Maori have maintained that love of food and combined it with the foods that have been added to their food inventory. Thus generations of Kiwis have grown up eating well, enjoying their food, and not too concerned what outsiders' opinions may be. But as the world concern not just about the quantity of food available, but about the quality of that food, and its provenance, so New Zealanders are able to capitalize on their "good food" that they have on their doorstep.

Food standards have become a dominant concern in today's world of regulation and health warnings. Meeting the stringent demands to enter overseas markets has been a test for the producer/business person. Both meat and fish, and vegetable foodstuffs have to comply with international certifications. Edmonds more than a hundred years ago was a pioneer in establishing certain standards for New Zealand food, initially with baking powder and later with other products.

The scone or sponge cake had to meet social standards, or it was relegated to the pigs. So gastronomy is about standards across space and time. Our viewpoint on the millennium that has just past has given rise to much rethinking of where New Zealand has been and where it is headed in the future. The raising of standards, along with the raising of new food crops, and new dishes to excite the modern palate and meet new criteria in busy lifestyles are all part of the ever changing dimensions of gastronomy. New Zealand as a primary producer of good food is marketing its products for consumption. In its final analysis gastronomy is about the social acceptability of certain foods. It is an integral part of our knowledge base, both within and beyond our cultural settings. We draw on that knowledge daily, and at times are led to questions such as whether possum stew is likely to become part of New Zealand gastronomy.

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The Proof of the Pavlova – Jennifer Hillier

If you ventured into the Tuscan hills to the west of Florence in the late nineteen seventies, you might well have come upon a small restaurant called the Cantina di Toia. The menu featured mostly tried and true local dishes except for the surprising inclusion of a confection called the pavlova. With its familiar name and meringue-like base, the dish offered little challenge to the conservative tastes of these Tuscan diners.

Given that the Tuscan culinary repertoire features many celebrated dishes, it would, however, have surprised them to see how thrilled the odd venturesome Australasian traveller felt to behold their one and only gastronomic icon.

In *One Continuous Picnic*,¹ published in 1982, Michael Symons observed that: ‘Australians overseas, discovering how nationalistic they can become, tend to rush into pavlova production at the slightest provocation’. And he was, in fact, the expatriate cook of the pavlova at the Cantina di Toia. I remember him having a lot of trouble peeling the aluminium foil off the bottom of the meringue. It was before the time of baking parchment and the stove was the cheapest domestic variety, so badly insulated that tea towels quickly dried by its sides.

Around this time, Australians were not the only antipodeans rushing into pavlova production and ‘long distance nationalism’. In swinging London, New Zealand baby boomers were upset to discover their national dish falsely claimed by Australians. Adding insult to injury, Barry Humphreys was priming his English audience to be even more patronising. Like many Australians, Humphreys’ success was launched from the London stage and his satire honed by English snobbishness towards the antipodean diaspora. In the early 1970s, indeed, Humphreys’ Edna Everage was the quintessential Aussie chauvinist on the issue, extolling the pavlova as ‘our national treat’ on a ranking with the lamington, the meat pie, the blowfly, the funnel web spider, the grey nurse shark and the gladiolus, as Australian mascots destined to adorn a national stamp issue. By 1983, in *Dame Edna’s Bedside Companion*, a more cosmopolitan Edna was fully up to speed with the New Zealand claim. In a section commending ‘The All Cake Diet’, she advocated: ‘after your usual breakfast, lunch on a pineapple and passionfruit pavlova, New Zealand’s world famous meringue.’

However, given that the Kiwi claim to the pavlova was anything but ‘world famous’ at this point, New Zealand culinary nationalists might have been forgiven for finding Dame Edna’s apparent conversion to their cause a bitchy putdown.

At this time, as Michael Symons records, English food authorities were also being drawn into the pavlova debate. The 1977 *Good Food Guide* to British restaurants listed ‘pavlova’ in its glossary of food terms, and described it as a New Zealand dish, only to change this to Australian the following year. In a personal communication with Symons, the editor of the glossary observed that because of the controversy about whether ‘the wretched thing’ originated in NZ or Australia she had initially been ‘reduced to doing a straw vote count’. Apparently a ‘rash of pavlovas in English restaurants’ obliged her to distinguish it from both the meringue and the ‘more sophisticated vacherin’.²

¹ M. Symons, *One Continuous Picnic: A History of Eating in Australia*, Duck Press, Adelaide, 1982.

² *Ibid.*, p. 152.

The world has moved on apace since then. Nowadays, Australian chefs are the hottest London imports, so hip, I thought they'd never reproduce such a naïve and nostalgic dish. But no, Susan Parham emails from Islington that in fact the pavlova is the 'height of cool, with Nigella Lawson doing one on TV, citing Stephanie [Alexander]'.³ And though they might hesitate to describe the pavlova as 'the wretched thing' today, the English food establishment still feel called on to adjudicate the colonial squabble over its origins.

In the 1999 *Oxford Companion to Food*, the majority of the 'pavlova' entry is devoted to the struggle over national origins. No behind the scenes 'straw-vote counts' here: rather an open hearing of the evidence for the rival claims according to the best academic canons. First there is a judicious summary of 'the Australian claim' that the pavlova 'was invented in 1935 by Herbert Sachse, an Australian chef, and named by Harry Nairn of the Esplanade Hotel Perth'. Then 'the Australian author Symons' is called briefly to the bar, and 'concedes' that the actual product had made a prior appearance in New Zealand, but suggests that its naming was an Australian act. Finally, a more extensive hearing is granted to 'Helen Leach [appearing] on the New Zealand side', who decisively 'marshall [s] evidence to demonstrate that both the name and the dish were put together in New Zealand at some time before 1935, thus antedating any Australian activity'.⁴

If we find such Olympian pronouncements somewhat inadequate, then a Wellington Symposium provides a very appropriate forum for revisiting Australasia's remarkable culinary emblem and the issues surrounding its origins.

As a postgraduate student researching recipes, the pavlova is proving to be a rich repository and an excellent case study. It touches on many themes: history, identity, nationalism, festivity, practical versus specialised knowledge, orality versus textuality, formal versus informal structures of knowledge, etc. While it raises all these things and more, in my paper today, I would like to pick out just three things: academic paradigms and the legitimisation of knowledge; community oral transmission versus industrial textual transmission; and the ways in which nationalism configures itself within the globalising economy.

A tale of three paradigms

Perhaps the most pragmatic reason for choosing the pavlova as a case study for my PhD was not only the great variety of written and oral recipe traditions to draw on, but the existence of expert commentary on it as well. However, once I got into the material, I was surprised at how little this commentary 'progressed' the debate. Now what I find more interesting is not the development of the debate as such but how orthodoxies are constructed. I'd like to start by reconsidering the Australian and New Zealand 'sides' of the pavlova debate, as identified in the *Oxford Companion*, and then to recast them as presenting different paradigms for interpreting the social context of the pavlova.

In her paper addressed to the Oxford Symposium of Gastronomy entitled 'The Pavlova Cake: the Evolution of a National Dish',⁵ the New Zealand anthropologist Helen Leach starts dramatically with the emotional controversy surrounding the pavlova:

³ Personal email communication from Susan Parham in London, February, 2001.

⁴ A. Davidson, *The Oxford Companion to Food*, Oxford 1999, pp. 584-587.

⁵ *Food and Travel*, Oxford Symposium on Food History 1996, Totnes: Prospect Books, 1997

It is a well-known fact, and source of heated nationalistic debate, that both Australia and New Zealand lay claim to the invention of the pavlova cake. ... The West Australian chef, Herbert Sachse, claimed to have invented it in 1935.⁶

She then develops her criticism of Symons in terms of a contest between two opposing paradigms. On the New Zealand side, she argues for the 'cultural evolution' of the pavlova among a community of women cooks. On the Australian side, she implies that Symons' account of the role of Bert Sachse exemplifies the 'myth of the heroic inventor'. She dramatises the contrast with the statement that: 'All the ingredients are present to stir up national outrage, ... with the added spice of gender exploitation, and of rivalry between professionals and amateurs'.⁷

I'd like to reconsider this contrast, starting with the Australian side and the 'myth of the heroic inventor'. 'Myth' and 'invention' it is, but not on the part of the author of *One Continuous Picnic*. In the 'interest of historical accuracy', Leach sets out to reconsider Michael Symons' verdict. She shows the art of selectivity by quoting:

We can concede that New Zealanders discovered the secret delights of the large meringue with the 'marshmallow centre', the heart of the pavlova. But it seems reasonable to assume that someone in Perth attached the name of the ballerina. As Bert Sachse implied, he distilled, or codified, a widespread New Zealand idea, to which was added a catchy name, and all of this was legitimate, common and like the crystallising of genius.⁸

Symons' paragraph actually concludes with this sentence:

In those days of sea travel, New Zealand was closer than Perth to Australia's main centres, and had almost joined the Federation. For us to be confident the pavlova is a truly Australian dish, it's a pity it didn't.⁹

In an earlier passage he documents his New Zealand research saying:

From ... recipes published in 1933 and 1934, I think it fair to say that the Meringue Cake was common in New Zealand in the early 1930's. Its form varied, but it was to all intents and purposes what we know as a 'Pavlova', sometimes even complete with passionfruit on top.¹⁰

The tone of the pavlova story in *One Continuous Picnic* is, as Stephanie Alexander says, the 'fairest'.¹¹ It certainly does not lapse into jingoistic pronouncements: Indeed the final paragraph in the pavlova section says that the dish 'was adopted from New Zealand'. Moreover, Symons' portrait of Herbert Sachse, 'the small settler who turned into a cook' reads nothing like a promotion of male professional status versus women as amateurs. We hear from Symons that Sachse's first wife Mary taught him to cook anyway. Subsequently, he learnt his trade as a shearers' cook, and despite his contribution he made no money out of the pavlova. Ironically, in 1955, Sachse was

⁶ Ibid., p. 219.

⁷ Ibid., p. 221.

⁸ Leach, p. 219.

⁹ Symons, p. 151.

¹⁰ Ibid., p. 150.

¹¹ S. Alexander, *Stephanie's Feasts and Stories*, Allen & Unwin, Sydney 1988, p. 261.

approached by a salesman from the Swan Lake Pavlova Co. 'I can make them with my eyes closed. But good luck to you if you can make them commercially.'¹²

While Symons reports that Bert Sachse said he 'invented' the dish, he does not employ the word himself. He says that Bert Sachse 'sought to improve the Meringue Cake', and clarifies this with the following:

There was a prize-winning recipe for Meringue Cake in the *Women's Mirror* on April 2, 1935. It contained vinegar, but no cornflour and was of two parts filled with whipped cream. The recipe was contributed by 'Rewa', who happened to be of Rongotai, New Zealand. If Sachse read the *Women's Mirror* and other magazines for ideas, as his widow told me, he might have seen this recipe.¹³

I suggest the tenor of Symons pavlova piece is tentative and speculative. He certainly isn't wedded to the ideas of nationalistic chauvinism or heroic acts of creation. He seems to have made a very serious attempt to include the New Zealand story, acknowledging that his research relied on the help of New Zealand librarians.

Leach could well have tried for a more speculative tone because her assertion about the naming of the pavlova is actually quite inconclusive. She says:

Because we cannot date Miss Finlay's first 'Pavlova' earlier than 1934, it cannot be used to dispute Michael Symons' claim that the naming was the critical Australian contribution. However, there is firm evidence for the New Zealand application of the name to a large soft-centred meringue cake in 1934.¹⁴

The recipe Leach then submits is for 'a large cake made from four egg whites, one breakfastcup (eight ounces) of sugar and one teaspoonful of vinegar' named 'Pavlovas No.1'. At the risk of continuing the pedantry, I can't see how this meringue can have a soft-centre as it misses the essential ingredient of cornflour. Surely the name pavlova should represent the distinctive, soft-centred meringue. I think this might be called a disjunction between signifier and signified.

What's more the 1934 recipe does not have the singular name, 'pavlova'. The name seems to denote a batch (pavlovas) and it bears a numerical coda (No 1). It is called 'Pavlovas No 1' because it needs to differentiate itself from 'Pavlovas No.2.', a recipe for small flavoured meringues also mentioned in *One Continuous Picnic*. Even if this recipe could have produced the true pavlova's soft-centre, I think it's a bit misguided to stake New Zealand's culinary pride on a recipe with the very un-sexy title of 'Pavlovas No 1'. For my part, I think Bert Sachse and the Esplanade Hotel's combined public relations coup was in running with the singular definite article and the proper noun. 'The Pavlova' epitomises cultural cachet and marketing savvy.

By contrast, Leach could have made more of the linguistic and cultural significance of naming two related recipes, 'Pavlovas No 1' and 'Pavlovas No 2'. As she notes, the recipes appeared in a book compiled in 1934 from listeners' and readers' recipes, and I suggest the generic nature of the titles is characteristic of this community genre¹⁵. In an

¹² Ibid., p. 152.

¹³ Ibid., pp. 150-151.

¹⁴ Leach, p. 220.

¹⁵ In the same period *The Australian Women's Weekly* sported pages of readers' recipes, which were to be replaced later with product recipes and more expert input. See various studies by Sue Sheridan.

edited book titled *Recipes for Reading: Community Cookbooks, Stories, Histories*, linguist Colleen Cotter demonstrates how community collections show ‘linguistic aspects that reflect an oral tradition rather than linguistic structures that derive from printed, mass-media forms’.¹⁶ Leach’s 1934 recipes may represent such a transitional phase of community interaction and recipe transmission. But they do not necessarily reflect any process of slow evolution. Think about ‘imam bayildi Nos 1 and 2’. There is an expectation of quite rapid change tied up in the generic ‘pavlova’ labels used here.

Leach’s own paradigm blinds her to these things. It depends on opposition between two ‘sides’, but the trouble with Leach’s argument is that neither of the ‘sides’ stands up to close analysis. For instance, apart from describing its opposite as the idea of a single act of creation, nowhere in her piece does she properly define what she means by ‘cultural evolution’. And she gives no explicit examples of how her New Zealand recipes ‘culturally evolved’, apart from some slight linguistic evidence of changing semantics in recipe progression. Leach refers to ‘stage [s] of evolution’ in the successive editions of recipe books by Miss Finlay a couple of years apart in the mid-1930s.

However, in taking issue with Symons, Leach stumbles into a contest with a ‘straw man’. Regrettably, a rather easy straw man, given that *One Continuous Picnic* can be regarded as a rare book, having been out of print for nearly 20 years. Only as recently as February this year, Alan Saunders made an Australian Federation plea for its republication.¹⁷

The basis for Leach’s misreading of *One Continuous Picnic* seems to rely on a rather narrow construction of Symons’ term ‘like the crystallising of genius’. Leaving aside any possible irony suggested by ‘like’ (a modifier that Leach drops), his use of ‘crystallis[ing]’ might suggest process, rather than a single act of creation. It is poetic and, of course, refers to sugar crystals, which we all know have many light reflecting facets. I take my cue from Alexander Pope in reading ‘genius’ as spirit or zeitgeist. In fact, *One Continuous Picnic* presents a broad social history of food and the pavlova vignette represents one ‘crystallising’ moment, along with Vegemite, granny smiths and Quong Tart. The parallel between the pavlova story and the Vegemite story is particularly clear; both appear in the broader narrative as ‘by-products’ of more general industrial processes in the history of Australian food: sugar in the pavlova case, ‘brewery waste’ in the case of Vegemite.

The paradox is that, while Leach implies that Symons argues single creation history while she presents cultural convergence, his pavlova story goes back fifty years (quoting Ada Cambridge on rural Victorians ‘stuffing the poor children with unlimited cream-cakes and meringues. Yes, actually meringues, on my word of honour’), whereas her story of ‘cultural evolution’ zeroes in on the photo finish race to the line for the ‘invention’ of the pavlova in the mid 1930’s. Symons also describes amplitudes of synchronic events – boom and bust, development of food exports, industrial disputes, tales of a Melbourne society hostess’s claim, ‘chains of passed on recipes’, the rise and fall of one of Perth’s grand hotels. Symons’ history brings it all together. The moments coalesce and are crystallised in the pavlova.

¹⁶ C. Cotter, ‘Claiming a Piece of the Pie: How the Language of Recipes Defines Community’ in *Recipes for Reading: Community Cookbooks, Stories, Histories*, Ed., A. L. Bower, University of Massachusetts Press, Amherst 1997, p. 55.

¹⁷ ‘Tucker a l’Australienne’, *Good Weekend*, 3 February 2001, p. 39

Academic paradigms and the legitimization of knowledge

As I suggested earlier, I'm not that interested in the job of hunting down 'empirical' gap in the pavlova debate; I'm more concerned with how the debate relates to academic paradigms and the legitimization of knowledge.

By constructing a false reading of Symons' pavlova story in *One Continuous Picnic*, Leach prejudices alternative readings. Within the broader context of gastronomic legitimacies, her work comes after Symons (remember that *One Continuous Picnic* is long out of print). Her 'refutation' stands. Her paper was first delivered at the Oxford Symposium, which has semi-academic status with published proceedings. And as we have seen, her representation is awarded the gong in the *Oxford Companion to Food*. Actually, the *Companion* simplifies her story for its purposes just as she simplifies Symons' for hers. Of course, this happens across all disciplines; however, in the case of an emerging discipline like gastronomy there are fewer checks and balances.

Following on from this, I suggest gastronomy is still a paradigm in the process of being formed. And I suggest Leach's problem with filtering her material through the prism of 'cultural evolution' is shared by the discipline in general. Food historians and gastronomy focus on cultural difference. People are fascinated by detail and cultural difference is clearly of deep interest to food history. The *Oxford Companion to Food* and especially *Petits Propos Culinaires* demonstrates this structural bias. There is a sort of naturalness to a model that concerns itself with recipes and ingredients. This translates into a central concern with when dishes emerge and where did they diffuse to, etc

In regard to pre-industrial environments, with characteristics of *longue durée* patterns of slow change, strong environmental constraints, limited transport links and local food, etc, this interest is often compatible with a deep practical interest in environmental and material factors. For example, the food historian Reay Tannahill successfully combines these two emphases. However, these interests diverge when dealing with modern food economies, with industrialised transport and fast transmission of knowledge. In the emerging 'discipline' of gastronomy there is an important division between people who are still preoccupied with when dishes emerged, etc, and the people who look at the bigger structural determinants.

Here, then, we have a deeper story about the relationship between two paradigmatic approaches to gastronomy. For convenience, I represent them by the terms of 'cultural difference' and 'social history' - both frameworks can stand for the earlier period but they separate in the modern period.

With rapid change and industrial determinants, the modern conditions that produced the pavlova, the two types of analysis must diverge. If Leach had pursued her notion of 'convergence' she may have confronted the larger structural issues, but possibly for her own marketing reasons she stuck with the 'cultural difference' framework. And the result is that she can accuse Symons of pushing a hero chef/cultural difference story when what he's really doing is pavlova and Vegemite as crystallisations of large structural organisation. This is what *One Continuous Picnic* is about, not the false story about a hero chef.

The theoretical framework is hard to miss:

[The pavlova] illustrates how history and cookery intermingle. Its arrival is a tale of boom versus bust, the luxury life versus backbreaking poverty, and

Australia versus New Zealand. It involves two converging stories: that of a grand hotel and that of a small settler who turned into a cook.¹⁸

Now returning to Leach's term of 'cultural evolution', which we can already see dissolving, a recipe changing over just one year cannot be described as evolving, certainly not in any traditional domestic sense. Here we are talking months and single years not generations. Perhaps the recipe just 'crystallised'?

The hair splitting of 'cultural differentiation' does not grab the imagination. The interesting thing about the pavlova is that this same dish could and did appear more or less at the same time in very distant places. It's revealing (and not just in terms of gender relations) that a male chef found a readers' recipe from New Zealand in a women's magazine. It's surprising that the modes of transmission are so similar. It's remarkable that across a whole range of places - from New Zealand to the west coast of Australia - the same conditions are present. In this kind of world, what are the ingredients of crystallisation? Industrial commodities (refined sugar and corn flour), agricultural surplus (which is an offshoot of the global market), high income societies, a tradition of dainty eating, new stove technology, abundant fuel, well established female literacy, superstructure of womens' magazines, etc. From my reading of New Zealand culinary history, Australia and New Zealand share these conditions and more.

Cultural nationalism, long distance nationalism and globalisation

The themes of nationalism are certainly well rehearsed across the social sciences. The useful concept of 'long distance nationalism' comes from Benedict Anderson. The pundits have a lot to say on the subject. Alan Saunders seems to be endlessly bemused as to why ideas of a national cuisine are so pervasive. I think it's good that nationalism has been thoroughly deconstructed but I also think it's good that we've decided to elevate a plate of food to a symbol of our identity.

The pavlova reflects historic forces which pretty much run counter to traditional claims of national identity. In global economies, identity is a plastic commodity of market segmentation. In fact the globalising economy wants difference, it commodifies difference and identity. It's a case of who markets loudest wins.

The questions we need to ask in this context are: What is it that determines the pavlova's reputation? When is it 'invented' as a 'world famous dish'? It may be useful to think of this as a series of stages. This approach links both transmissions across generations with changes in Australian and New Zealand society, together with the relationship of both societies to the rest of the world.

The initial 'crystallising' stage of the thirties has already been discussed. By this stage 'Australia' and 'New Zealand' had moved a fair way down their separate 'national' paths. However, the pavlova's identity was relatively localised, with recipes circulating orally through communities as well as textually via rare recipe publication, which still manifested residual echoes of oral transmission. The Australian Woman's Mirror, where Bert Sachse may have seen the New Zealand 'reader's recipe' for meringue cake in 1935, was first published in 1924. The 'homeliest' of the genre, it outsold its manly stable mate the *Bulletin* (which makes sense of Berte Sachse as a reader too). However, it was to be totally eclipsed by the extraordinary popularity of the Australian Women's Weekly, first published in 1933, whose tradition of 'readers recipes' dwindled over

¹⁸ Symons, p. 148.

time. The paper was federal in character and by 1946 it's circulation was well on the way to 700,000. It was estimated to have sold more copies per head of population than any other publication in the world.¹⁹ Leading into the fifties and beyond Australia was to see its face reflected in its comfortably homogeneous pages.

The fifties represent the first major stage of generational transmission, when the baby boomers encountered the pavlova as a special childhood treat. In this period, the groundwork is laid for the pavlova's later nostalgic mythology as a national dish, and as a symbol of family warmth and unstinting hospitality - as portrayed by the New Zealand satirist John Clarke:

And resting on a Formica altar, waiting for Ron, the biggest Pav in the world;
a magic Pav, a cut-and-come-again Pav for all the children in all the towns
across the wide brown bee-humming trout-fit sheep-rich two-horse country.
And the Aunts. Always the aunts ...²⁰

Clarke calls his Dylan Thomaseque prose poem 'A Child's Christmas in Warmambool', after 'A child's Christmas in Wales', but is probably drawing upon his Kiwi childhood. The respective national experiences would have been so similar, but also so local in practice that it really doesn't matter.

Indeed, in the social history of both countries, the fifties was arguably more localised and inwardly turned than in the thirties. (In Australia, the twenty years before 1947 were the longest period without significant immigration in the whole of the 20th century). This might account for Symons' inability to 'discover how the pavlova spread beyond the Esplanade'. It seemed to appear spontaneously both in the SA Gas Company's *Calling All Cooks* of 1941 and in tales emanating from Victoria where a 'Melbourne society hostess' was said to have invented it. While this hypothesis certainly needs following up, in country NSW where I grew up, it seems that people like my Mother and her friends had little sense of the pavlova's specific origin. Yet, history proves they took it to their hearts. The pav was Nan's, Mum's, Auntie's, and unproblematically 'ours' - and to this degree 'Australian' but not, so far as I can make out, specifically West Australian.

In the seventies and eighties, the pavlova truly asserted its Australian/New Zealand 'nationalised' identity through overseas travel and the long distance nationalism already mentioned. By the nineties, however, it reached its full global potential; and given Australia's regional cultural dominance vis a vis New Zealand, its reputation as an Australian dish is consolidated. Paradoxically, by now the global configuration of the pavlova's 'nationalised' identity does not correspond with the pavlova's status at home in Australia. Cosmopolitan Australians might complacently think of the pavlova as 'ours', but are wary of its sentimental 1950's taint. On the one hand, the cultural mythology is complacently acknowledged, while the dish itself is a bit infra dig. This ambivalence surrounding the pavlova's identity is further complicated by the fact that political conservatives have nostalgically appropriated the fifties as an ideal time. As I've said, the 1950's in Australia are associated with unprecedented cultural insularity.

New Zealand's relationship with the pavlova was not complicated by the migrant phenomenon, which like a wedge separated the immediate post-war years from the present in Australia. Indeed, from my understanding, there seems to have been a much

¹⁹ K. S. Inglis, 'Press, Radio and Television' in *Australia From 1939*, eds., A. Curthoys, A. W. Martin, Tim Rowse, 1987, Fairfax, Syme & Weldon Associates, Broadway, p. 218.

²⁰ J. Clarke, *The Complete Book of Australian Verse*, Allen & Unwin Australia, Sydney 1989, p.49.

stronger historic continuity of food culture in the post-war years in New Zealand. The un-ambivalent acceptance of the pavlova as a national icon might in part be due to this strong continuity.²¹ In the light of papers delivered to this Symposium, I feel that New Zealanders can display a more healthy appreciation of the virtues of the fifties and the sixties without the concerns their Australian counterparts now have about playing into the hands of xenophobic, Hansonite/Howardite forces.

However, continuity of New Zealand foodways does not contain the whole picture. Just as longer distance travel might contribute to constructions of national identity, shorter distance trans-Tasman perceptions might now appear to be more significant. In this sphere the pavlova consolidates its national and cultural potency as a symbol of trans-Tasman rivalry. In this frame, Australia's claim to the dish is yet another crime of cultural expropriation. A dish which so richly represents Australian and New Zealand synergy has come to signify the increasing inequalities of a global system which perpetuates colonial disparities.

Following what turned out to be a very useful lead from the Symposium, I visited the Te Papa Museum before leaving Wellington. The library has kept a record of the museum's first anniversary extravaganza in 1999, which featured a giant pavlova dubbed Pavzilla. And whether deliberate or not, this huge birthday meringue, cut up and distributed to the people by the then prime minister, Jenny Shipley, reflected the pavlova's generosity, its a-slice-for-everyone democratic abundance, ideas also present in John Clarke's 'biggest Pav in the world'. According to one of the museum's curators, the event was considered a marketers' coup rather than a serious cultural display. Superficially, the archive seemed to bear him out, consisting of media cuttings showing the museums' public relations success at beating-up the rivalry between Australia and New Zealand about origins. But for me it also demonstrated once more the power of a dish as a symbol of cultural identity in this day and age. Amongst the pile I noticed that Helen Leach had lent her academic spark to the media incendiary.

I'd like to end with a little anecdote about the pavlova's current status. I hope it illustrates how often history runs counter to the some of the Oxbridge pettifoggery you've been hearing. By contrast, it's a global celebration of antipodean food

In Hong Kong late last year I was lucky to dine at Michelle Garnaut's restaurant 'M's At The Fringe'. Pavlova is a signature dish that never leaves her menu. As a mark of her Australian identity, it comes with a little story of its transmission to her via her aunt in Melbourne and it is called 'M's Famous Pavlova'. I find this fascinating because it has many of the ingredients of my story so far, long distance nationalism, modern savvy about marketing identity, recipe adaptation to local conditions, with a nostalgic salute to the days of word of mouth transmission. While Michele's restaurant in Hong Kong is state of the art, I believe, her new restaurant absolutely revolutionises the Shanghai food scene, which has never tasted serious western food outside international hotels. Shanghai is a hub for all of China and has visitors from everywhere else. What a showcase for our wonderful pav! I hope to visit Shanghai in the future and also taste this pavlova with passionfruit ice cream at 'M's On The Bund'.

²¹ I discovered many literary allusions to the pavlova in Wellington libraries, which might suggest its more emphatic status as a national culinary icon in New Zealand – to the extent that the label 'Pavlova Paradise' has been adopted as a parallel to the Australian 'lucky country' motif.

Lost Food, Lost Connections – Barbara Keen

I want to look at modern attitudes to traditional New Zealand food - by which I mean the food brought here and adapted by early British settlers. As a descendant of some of these pioneers I am concerned that we have developed something approaching shame about the food of our grandparents. Under an onslaught of mass production, marketing and fashion we have practically given up our own food traditions. I think this is unhealthy, unwarranted and, ironically, in sharp contrast to attitudes to traditional food in regions whose cuisines we now so greatly admire, such as Tuscany and Provence.

About 160 years ago a food culture began to arrive in New Zealand, was adapted to local conditions, flourished for a few generations, but is now only visible in isolated pockets of the country. What happened to take us so quickly from home-made brawn to pâté and the Big Mac, from gooseberry fool to panna cotta and the pop tart, from the bacon and egg pie to the baked bean and oven chip pizza?

The profound social and economic changes that swept New Zealand in the 1970s and 1980s kicked away the props of our food culture. At the same time, we were persuaded that our old food was difficult and time consuming to prepare, fat-laden, dull, heavy and unhealthy to eat. The persuaders were mainly people who wanted to sell us new, industrial food. The traditional Anglo-Kiwi food culture was a domestic one and relied almost exclusively on women to prepare it and pass on their skills to the next generation. As women moved into the paid work force, through economic necessity or a desire for independence, they had less time for domestic work - so more food came from the store, less from the garden and the hen house.

The grocery shop, where each customer had the full attention of the grocer, one at a time, was displaced by the supermarket, where shopping could be done without any consultation, by many people at once. Discussion with and advice from the grocer, or for that matter the butcher, was replaced by marketing; media and in-store advertising, bright packaging and product demonstrations. Processed, 'instant' foods were marketed as time savers and passports to freedom for women who found that they were now doing two jobs.

At the same time, the number of New Zealanders travelling abroad increased and the middle class began its enduring love affair with the food of selected bits of the Mediterranean and later with an enthusiasm for other cuisines, such as Thai and Mexican. The trend was intensified by the vivid pictures of Italian and French cooking by writers like Elizabeth David. The more we travelled and the more we read, the more we repudiated the cooking of our mothers and grandmothers - Kiwi cooking became an object of derision and contempt and that attitude persists. By the time we understood the idea of 'terroir', we had lost touch with our own.

Here's Rebecca Lancashire in a piece called '1901 A Cake Odyssey' in the *Melbourne Age* of February 15, 2001 (she's talking about Australia, but I think you'll recognise the tone)

One hundred years ago eating was a grim affair for white Australians, their dining tables heavy with British tradition light on local ingredients. It would be decades

before migrants from Europe and Asia would stir some life into the local cuisine.'

And Peter Sinclair's 'Thanks for the memory' in *Cuisine*, September 1999:

When I was asked to write a New Zealand food retrospective in a chatty style, taking a light, fond approach, I thought whoa! Light yes, chatty by all means, but fond?

Sinclair goes on to sneer at Aunt Daisy:

Her ingenious substitutions were the inspiration for generations of New Zealand cooks: how to make lamb taste like goose (a vivid imagination was the essential ingredient); how to scramble dehydrated egg (don't try this at home) and her unlikely triumph - mock whitebait, which I seem to recall was made of turnip (whitebait apparently stop running during world wars).

It's not that I think Aunt Daisy is above criticism (her radio programmes were a forerunner of the extended advertisements masquerading as cooking programmes that infest modern New Zealand television) it's the assumption that Anglo-Kiwi food between the wars and into 50s was universally terrible and inherently comic. One could take issue with every one of Sinclair's examples of bad food too - Colonial Goose may have developed as a substitute for the traditional English Michaelmas goose, but I doubt that anyone thought that it would or should taste like goose, and by the 1940s its festive origins would have been largely forgotten anyway. As for dehydrated egg, my mother recalls its use during WW2, but only by commercial bakers, not by domestic cooks. Nobody, it seems, did 'try this at home'. And it's hard to believe that a New Zealander of Peter Sinclair's generation doesn't know that whitebait run in spring, in peace, as in war.

(Notwithstanding all this, I think there is some interesting work to be done on the vogue for substitute foods in this period.)

My own memories of food in the fifties are much happier - the food we ate was fresh, high quality, varied and mostly home or locally grown. We enjoyed seasonal treats like asparagus and peaches, and my mother, grandmother and great aunts preserved the summer abundance of fruit and some vegetables for winter. Ironically, these are some of the features we now admire so much in the food of Provence, Tuscany, Sicily, etc, but we don't look at our own traditional food in these terms.

Needled by the slurs made by Peter Sinclair, I made a quick and by no means complete list of the food-related events I remember from childhood. These are some of the things I ate, watched or did:

Cutting asparagus with my grandmother in her garden, picking little black figs and grapes, preserving fruit and making jam, digging new potatoes, cutting silverbeet, picking tomatoes, mushrooming, collecting eggs from the hen house and Dad frying me a bantam's egg in butter, helping Granny milk the housecow (always a Jersey - never a Fresian, Fresian milk was only for pigs), working the separator, making butter, watching my father fish for trout, picking raspberries and gooseberries at my great aunts, who grew soft fruit in a bird-proof cage. They also made sausages, brawn, mushroom ketchup and kept a variety of poultry. There was a baking morning in the three households at least once a week. Granny and the Aunts had a big repertoire of baked goods and were all enthusiastic recipe clippers, part of a lively exchange of readers' recipes in local magazines and newspapers.

In the same issue as Peter Sinclair's dismissal of traditional food, Auckland chef Tony Astle 'reminisces, with necessary variations, on quintessential Kiwi dishes'. He starts with a fish pie recipe which is fairly orthodox, except that he can't bring himself to bind it with a traditional white sauce, so makes a flourless one, presumably as a necessary variation. Why? He doesn't say. Among the other Kiwi dishes he deems quintessential are the old favourites paua risotto, and oysters and seaweed tempura.

The message is clear - our old food is acceptable only if it's modernised, and modernised usually means injected with popular foreign ingredients and/or techniques. All cultures take up new foods and incorporate them into their own traditions - Provence took on the olive and later the tomato with such enthusiasm that the modern food of that area would be unrecognisable without them, but they were grafted onto a firm base of local produce and cooking styles.

By contrast, we have practically lost our culinary base, and industrial food production makes it doubtful that we can ever significantly recover it. The synthetic and 'natural' (whatever that means in this context) compounds used to replace real flavours lost in food processing only crudely approximate the original taste. Think of 'minted' frozen peas. These compounds are powerful formers of taste, and when processed food forms the bulk of the diet, the taste of natural food, that is to say food that was actually grown, will seem alien and probably unpleasant.

If tastes, skills and traditions are not being passed on at home, can we rely on schools to fill the gap? It doesn't seem likely. Cooking has disappeared into the Technology curriculum, where it has given rise to a disturbing development - sponsored learning programmes. One of these is Technofood, produced in late 1996 by the New Zealand Nutrition Foundation, in association with Kelloggs, the NZ Beef and Lamb Marketing Bureau, United Fresh NZ Inc, New Zealand Dairy Foods Ltd, Buttermark (NZ) Ltd, NZ Cheese Promotions Ltd and the Dairy Advisory Bureau. It's a resource kit full of glossy task sheets, fact sheets and a full colour poster, aimed at Forms 1-4. It is in fact the classroom equivalent of the ready meal, no preparation, no mess and no doubt very attractive to busy, under-resourced teachers in cash-strapped schools.

The units of work are divided into the food areas of the sponsors and each one is stamped with the relevant corporate logo. The tasks involve next to no cooking, but a great deal of market research, graphic design, promotion - the students practise the techniques of modern marketing, presumably so that they will become more enthusiastic consumers of ready-made food. More recent commercial incursions into the classroom have included interactive programmes on CD-ROM, such as the Dairy Advisory Bureau's Mission Dairy Energy designed to halt the falling consumption of milk by exposing schoolchildren to 'an exciting interactive multimedia kit that helps students learn about the importance of good nutrition and healthy lifestyle and how dairy products contribute to these.'

As far as I know there has been no outcry by teachers, parents or politicians about the intrusion of food industry propaganda into classrooms under the guise of providing 'food and nutrition education'.

This consumer brainwashing is continued for adults in television 'cooking' programmes whose prime purpose is to show us how quick and easy it is to make a meal with the sponsor's products. Processed foods are presented as easy, empowering, fun. Our traditional food, by implication, is difficult and drab - an attitude echoed in more up-market media, as in the examples quoted earlier.

So, our old foodways, based mainly on home-grown and locally produced ingredients, are not good, not good for industrial food giants who require compliant consumers with gastronomic amnesia, minimal cooking and production skills or confidence, who want what the market wants to sell them, however it's raised, wherever it comes from, in or out of season. A well trained consumer is a person disconnected from both food production and preparation, except of the most rudimentary kind.

The erosion of our food traditions to mass produced, heavily marketed food and to fad and fashion is more than just the loss of some fine dishes, it is the loss of connection to both food production and to our past, to what should be the food of our hearts and memories. Our food locates us, it is a major part of who we are. So who are we?

Biscuits - Various

Jewish Butter Biscuits (from Nancy Maclean)

The traditional recipe is for biscuits that have always been made in the family but Cherry has no idea where the recipe comes from. However, everyone on her Mother's side of the family make Jewish Butter biscuits at Christmas time and put a small piece of candied orange peel on the top of this. This is also the same recipe that her mother used to cook.

- 315 gms butter
- 500 gms flour
- 280 gms brown sugar
- 2 tbsps mixed spice
- 2 tbsps cinnamon
- 1 egg
- 1 tbspn milk

Method

Rub butter into dry ingredients. Add milk and egg. Roll out and cut out cookie shapes. Onto each cookie, place a piece of orange peel (recipe below). Cook at 180 °C for 10 to 12 mins.

Orange Sticks

- ½ cups of sugar
- ¼ cup of water
- Peel from 4 medium sized oranges

Method

Remove the peel from the oranges in quarters, taking of some of the white portion. Cut into strips, about ½ to 1 cm wide. Scissors are good for this purpose. Cover the peel with water and boil gently until tender. Make a syrup of the sugar and water. The water in which the peel has been cooked may be used if a stronger flavour is desired. Add the orange strips and cook until nearly all the syrup has boiled away. Take care to avoid burning. Take out the strips of orange and roll in sugar. When cold, store in airtight jars.

Roz Dibley

Coconut Biscuits (from the late 1940's – early 1950's)

125 grams butter
1 cup flour
½ cup sugar
1 tsp. Baking powder

¼ tsp. Vanilla essence
1 ¼ cups desiccated coconut

1. The stiffly beaten white of 1 egg
2. Cream butter and sugar until light and fluffy.
3. Sift flour and baking powder and add to creamed mixture with the vanilla.
4. Stir in desiccated coconut.
5. Add stiffly beaten egg white and mix in.
6. Place in teaspoon lots on greased baking trays.
7. Bake at 170 C 10-15 minutes till golden brown.
8. Cool on rack. Store when cold.
9. Makes about 36 biscuits.

Annette Desmond

Anzac Biscuits

Recipe Source: *Cookery, The Australian Way*

1 cup rolled oats (not 1 minute)
 1 cup plain flour
 1 cup sugar
 $\frac{3}{4}$ cup coconut

125 grams unsalted butter
 1 large tablespoon golden syrup
 1 large tablespoon boiling water
 1 teaspoon bicarbonate of soda

1. Combine dry ingredients
2. Dissolve bicarbonate of soda in hot water
3. Melt butter and golden syrup.
4. Pour wet ingredients into dry and mix well.
5. Form 1-teaspoon mixture into a ball and place on trays well apart to allow for spreading.
6. Bake at 150 C until flat and golden brown – about 12 minutes.
7. Allow to cool slightly.
8. Remove from trays to a rack.
9. Pack into tins when cold.

Jeanette Fry

Raisin and Chocolate Chip Biscuits

125g butter
 $\frac{1}{2}$ cup castor sugar
 $\frac{1}{3}$ cup brown sugar
 1 egg
 1 $\frac{3}{4}$ cups self-raising flour
 $\frac{3}{4}$ cup raisins
 $\frac{1}{2}$ cup dark chocolate pieces

Cream butter and sugars. Beat in egg. Stir in sifted flour, raisins and chocolate. Roll mixture into balls, place on greased oven tray and flatten slightly. Bake at 180°C for about 10 minutes until lightly browned. Cool on trays.

Makes about 40

Margaret Brooker

Walnut and Ginger Biscuits

125gr unsalted butter

100 gr sugar

75 gr brown sugar

½ teasp vanilla

1 egg

250 gr self-raising flour

125n gr giner (preferably glazed, otherwise crystallized)

60 gr walnut pieces, roasted, cooled and roughly chopped

¼ teasp salt

Cream softened butter, sugars and vanilla. Add lightly beaten egg gradually, beating well after each addition. Mix in sifted flour and salt. Add chopped ginger and walnuts, mixing well. Shape the mixture with a teaspoon into small balls, flatten slightly with a fork and place on greased oven trays allowing room for spreading. Bake in a moderate oven for 10 to 12 minutes. They should take on some colour. Makes about 40.

Mary Brander

Coffee at the Symposium – Angela Burford

With the round, full, rich taste of a good coffee dying on my palate, the best I've had since returning to Adelaide, it's an ideal time to think back to the Symposium and the luscious coffee served by Coffee Supreme. I now know that I've just had the best coffee I've tasted since being in New Zealand, but more than that I can take a stab at understanding and describing why.

This state of relative enlightenment has seen me evolve, in the space of a weekend, from an indiscriminate coffee-swilling dilettante to an evangelist. This C-change came about because of my delegated task of 'writing up the coffee.' Knowing my limitations in this area of connoisseurship I approached my task by: mainlining coffee all weekend; talking coffee to anyone who strayed into my orbit; watching people lick the crema off their spoon, like contented cats; interrogating the baristas of Coffee Supreme who worked tirelessly to provide us with "the best coffee you've ever tasted. Coffee that tastes as good as freshly ground beans smell."

Coffee Supreme is a small roasting company, employing a dozen people, who work together to produce excellent espresso coffee. To Chris Dillon, the owner of Coffee Supreme, and Craig Walden, who handles quality control and training, everything about the production, preparation and serving of coffee is important, from the selection and roasting of beans, the choice of cup - imported from Italy because New Zealand manufacturers don't make them fine and strong enough - to knowing the customers likes and dislikes and the ambience of the environment.

At the Symposium Coffee Supreme provided a standard espresso blend of three types of unwashed Brazilian beans, roasted in New Zealand and ground on the spot – because the quality deteriorates after five minutes. Filtered water, at just the right temperature, was passed through the coffee to produce on demand intense Ristretto through to fluffy Cappuccino.

From talking to people about what style of coffee they drank and when, it seemed that most choose different styles at different times depending on their mood and needs. If they wanted a quick boost then it was shorter and stronger and at other times a long, creamy, comforting drink was the choice.

Bitterness stood out as the feature that people most disliked in coffee. It was harder for people to describe the qualities they liked. Chris confirmed that the language for describing coffee is fairly underdeveloped. In his recently published *Coffee Supreme 2001* he features a glossary that includes descriptions of the taste of espresso coffee:

Aroma - intoxicating

Acidity - not acid but how 'bright' a quenching coffee tastes

Body - viscosity, good fresh espresso has a 'thick mouth feel'

Complexity - subtle flavours 'fruity' 'nutty' 'bready malt' 'winey' and cocoa and chocolate nuances – these determine balance of flavour.

Sweetness - roasting develops caramelised sugars in coffee beans. A correctly made espresso with espresso with no bitter over extraction flavour – 'don't need to add sugar.'

Flavour - sum of all taste components. Persistence of pleasant flavour known as aftertaste – essential for an espresso to be good. Should leave delightful lingering flavours in your mouth for at least 5 minutes with hints of malty sweetness and cocoa or chocolate.

Freshness - paramount. Beans should be used no longer than 10 days after roasting. Stale coffee doesn't extract well or taste good.

Green Bean Quality - 2 main species of plant that produce coffee beans. Coffee Arabica and Coffee Robusta. Different countries produce different flavour qualities.

Roasting - skillful roaster manages time, temperature and airflow to achieve consistent flavour profile.

Blending - most espressos are a blend of several coffees from different countries, the point is to make it greater than the sum of its parts.

From: *Coffee Supreme 2001*. Produced by Mission Hall DGL. Copies have initially been produced for Coffee Supreme customers and will be more widely available later in the year. For further information contact Chris Dillon at PO Box 10 510 Wellington, New Zealand or at www.coffeesupreme.co.nz.

The Revolution in Wellington's Coffee Culture - Chris Dillon

Introduction

I want to examine with you this morning the way that Wellington's coffee culture emerged out of the 'coffee wasteland' that was New Zealand in the 1980's, to become the coffee scene that we enjoy today.

My perspective is inevitably that of an industry insider. I run a coffee roasting company, and I have been actively participating in the change in our coffee scene over the last decade or so.

I feel there is a good story behind what we have experienced here, but more than that, there is a case to be made for these changes being unusual and the product of circumstances which were particular to Wellington.

What you notice in Wellington is not just the large number of cafés and espresso kiosks, or just the quality of the coffee – it's the high level of awareness of which coffee brand is in which café, and the strongly held opinions about how they compare. Coffee matters here.

But it was not always like this. The change in quality, and in our communal awareness of coffee, has been extraordinary and quite recent.

If we go back just fifteen years to the mid 80's, where was it worth going specifically to have a coffee? Some restaurants had espresso machines but there was minimal understanding of how to use the machinery or of what constituted a good drink.

We didn't have the European influence in our hospitality industry that Australia enjoyed. We had not exactly thrown open our arms to migrants after WW2 - so although we had a few Italian restaurants, we lacked the infrastructure of provedores, importers and coffee roasters that you had for example, in Melbourne.

Most of the people running our coffee industry in the mid 1980's had come from a tea background, and had no real understanding of espresso or what a café could be. Nor were they interested. They were happily doing business as though the country was still locked up in the protection of the Muldoon era.

Even well worn 80's concepts like customer service, continuous improvement, or the pursuit of excellence were simply not on their map. This was to make the climate ripe for revolutionary change.

Who were our coffee companies in the 80's

The biggest roaster at that time was Faggs, a local business that had started out from a little shop in Cuba Street, in I think the 1940's... They had a big factory in Kilbirnie on the way to the airport, and they pretty well dominated the local market.

There was Robert Harris, a big Auckland roaster, had heavily branded "Robert Harris Coffee Shops" in good locations in all the main cities. They had a little shop in the Willis Street Village, they supplied some restaurants and were building a big presence in supermarkets.

There was Tea and Coffee World - as the name suggests it was a tea importing business that moved into coffee – they had the second best share of the local market.

In 1986, a fourth roaster set up in town. Right in the centre of the CBD, alongside the Buttery in Woodward Street, Graham Colgate set up a little roasting and bean retailing shop as an offshoot of Belaroma from Sydney, and positioned himself, naturally as a Tea and Coffee specialist.

Four established businesses, but none of them seemed able to see what was coming. Their idea of a wholesale coffee market was food service and restaurants. They didn't seem to notice the social changes that stemmed from the economic liberalisation of 1984.

They seemed unaware that these changes might impact on how people relaxed, and where they might want to drink coffee!

I think it was a great example of failing to understand how the market could change, right under your nose.

Within a couple of years the existing business model of what a coffee company was, and how a coffee company operated, would become redundant. Three new coffee companies were about to take over and run the old guard out of town.

The intense competition between these three new roasters drove up quality standards, and spawned the development of a new wave of cafés, unlike anything Wellington had seen before.

All three were new entrants to the coffee industry. They were individualistic, often idiosyncratic, and all had a passion for coffee.

Each of the “revolutionaries” had in their own way, become fascinated by espresso, and besotted with espresso machines – we thought they promised to be the holy grail of coffee.

But to fulfil that promise was tricky – our early attempts at getting wonderful coffee from espresso machines were disappointing. There was rather more to it than we realised.

The freeing up of the business climate after the Muldoon years had made big changes possible. But this was true in many areas of business. What we experienced in the coffee industry went beyond a “freeing up”. It was a new way of doing business, that focused on the appeal of espresso, and it was eagerly embraced by our customers.

It was our little revolution.

How did this happen – and why in Wellington?

Special Factors

I think we can identify four special factors that made Wellington ripe for change:

Geography, Class, Insecurity, Fashion.

Firstly, Wellington is a small confined market. In many ways it is a bit like a walled city of old. Geography dictates that there are only a limited number of ways in and out of the city, and the hills wrap around the inner city to form a form a visual barrier.

The wealthier citizens of Wellington, the more widely travelled, and the more liberal, live in the inner suburbs and in the heart of the city itself, while the rest of the populace

lives in remote suburbs - out of sight and more often than not, out of mind. We focus on Wellington, even more than Aucklanders focus on Auckland, and we are quite parochial.

This has meant that in our coffee market, no out of town company has been able to sustain a significant presence here in the last decade, and it's a climate that fosters intense competition.

Secondly, the clientele for most of this city's hospitality industry are very definitely not a cross section of ordinary New Zealanders. Our so-called café society is in socio-economic terms, at the very least a top quartile group, and I suspect mainly top decile. Very tuned in to politics and gossip, always on the look out for who is going where, who knows who, what's smart and what's not. The very top end of our market is a little pool of just a few thousand people who crave quality and vote with their feet when they find it.

It's a demanding, but very responsive clientele.

The third factor is the one that I personally find the most interesting.

It is the evolution of our Kiwi cringe into what I'd like to call "positive insecurity". Our well-known national anxiety afflicts the good and privileged citizens of Wellington no less than other New Zealanders. We always suspect things are being done better somewhere else, and we are permanently very hungry to find something better locally.

Evidence of this sense of insecurity, can be found on any quick stroll around the streets. Why else would so many otherwise level headed, sensible Anglo-Saxon people, feel the need to give their cafes, restaurants and even coffee roasting businesses an Italian name. If it sounds like it's from Europe it must be better. It's ridiculous - but we still do it. It lurks in our mentality, even when we think we're quite sophisticated.

However, really good things can happen we respond assertively to our nagging anxiety. When we apply ingenuity and innovation, and determine that no matter how others are doing things, there must be a better way, and we will bloody well find it ourselves.

This defiant self-reliance as a reaction against conformity and widespread timidity has been a big driver in what's happened here.

It's very much a new world way of thinking, and when applied to coffee it has enabled New Zealanders to leapfrog over well entrenched truisms, and establish a distinctive espresso cuisine.

The fourth factor is fashion. In the 1980's, coffee was not cool. Most coffee shops were hopelessly old fashioned and there was nothing alluring about the coffee business or about working behind an espresso machine, that would attract smart young men and women about town who wanted to do something groovy.

Yet within a couple of years a handful of entrepreneurs were able to reposition coffee in the popular consciousness. Cafés became cool places to hang out in, and working in coffee and cafes became an attractive thing to do.

As our urban streetscape became dotted with espresso outlets, brand loyalty developed - customers became followers of and advocates for their favourite brand of coffee. By the late nineties coffee would become a fashion item...

All these factors came together in a brief period of upheaval and tremendous opportunity between 1989 and 1996.

Fuelled by the politics of class and style, a handful of people, who could see what coffee might be, applied their rebellious and ambitious natures to the task of introducing real espresso to Wellington. Out of insecurity, grew ingenuity.

The Action

We can pinpoint the day when the coffee revolution started in Wellington. It was March 14th, 1989, when Tim Rose and Geoff Marsland opened Midnight Espresso in Cuba Street.

But the revolution didn't start there, it started the previous year in Canada. Tim and Geoff had driven up from LA to Vancouver, where they stumbled upon a café called "Joes". It was full of interesting alternative people – artists, designers, students, and filmmakers – drinking cappuccinos! It had a visceral energy, it was a great place to hang out... They loved it, they kept going back and they knew there was nothing like it at home... So they bought a second-hand espresso machine and shipped it back to Wellington.

Midnight was grungy and feral and dark and seductive. It was a great scene, and it rapidly became the centre of an emerging Cuba Street youth culture.

Four months later on July 9th, Tim and Geoff opened their second café, the Deluxe right next to the Embassy theatre, right at the beginning of the Film Festival.

In late '89 the old Mandarin café in Willis Street came up for sale, and Geoff's brother Mike Marsland set up Espressoholic.

The café race was on but no one had bothered to tell the coffee roasters.

When Midnight Espresso opened, they bought coffee from Faggs for the first six months. Now this was not without complications because Faggs would only deliver coffee twice a week in town - if you ran out you had to go out to the Kilbirnie factory to get more beans. A hassle but you could live with it. However, in late '89 Faggs was sold to Unilever and they decided to close the Wellington coffee roasting factory. They owned Quality Packers in Auckland – and they could roast up there - why duplicate the plant...

So right at the beginning of the espresso revolution, they moved out of the market.

But it gets worse...

Faggs had a beautiful old Probat GG90 roaster, the Rolls Royce of roasting machines, and arrangements were made to sell this machine to a roaster in Singapore called Sarika. The machine was shipped to Auckland, but then they changed their minds.

They had an attack of nerves... and decided to gas axe the machinery into small pieces and sell it for scrap. The equipment was worth several hundred thousand dollars, but they were so worried about the possibility competition that they destroyed the plant, rather than sell it anywhere in the south pacific, even as far afield as Singapore.

Amazing...

In the end, this resistance was futile - when Unilever got out the coffee business in the mid nineties, they sold their brands, Faggs and Robert Timms, and their whole coffee operation to Fresh Foods, a Singapore owned company.

Anyway this left things wide open in Wellington. The Midnight guys used Lavazza for a few months, and they tried Tea and Coffee World, but they were not too happy with their options... Soon they would have another alternative.

Phase two, and what would prove to be the biggest upheaval of all, was brewing just a couple of blocks away. An established restaurateur and food importer, Jeff Kennedy, was preparing to open “L’Affare Imports”, right across the road from here [Moore Wilson’s]. It was a big store selling masses of imported kitchenware and equipment, with a little coffee roasting machine in one corner and an espresso machine on the counter.

It took just a few months after opening in 1990 for Jeff to realise that the post-crash market was not going to buy all this imported kitchen equipment. Desperate measures were called for and Jeff “bet the farm” on focussing on coffee. Caffè L’Affare [the coffee business] was born.

Although it was a bit off the beaten track, the café began to attract a regular clientele. Jeff climbed out of a serious financial hole and launched head on into wholesaling coffee to the trade.

In less than a year, the hold that the old players had on the market was broken. Caffè L’Affare applied energy and fresh thinking to ripping into the wholesale market with coffee that was cheaper priced, fresher roasted, and faster delivered. The colourful style of the owner was stamped all over the business – personality based branding had arrived in coffee land. The rules of the coffee business in Wellington had changed forever.

Even the Midnight guys used Jeff’s coffee for a while, before building their own five-kilo hot air roaster and starting to roast their own, in the best kiwi “we can do it and we’ll do it our way” fashion. Havana coffee roasters were on the scene.

At the same time, the idea of “the café” entered the popular consciousness, not just as a place to go, but as a business opportunity.

Dave George, a solicitor, and his partner Lee had been persuaded by Tim Rose and Geoff Marsland to manage their second café, the Deluxe, for a few months. And they’d had their eyes on a space with a beautiful curved frontage, the old Model-crafts and Hobbies shop underneath the Racing Conference building. Dave managed to secure a lease where others had tried before him.

In early ’91 the Lido opened in what is still today the best café location in the city. It had a huge impact, and Wellington “got it”.

Suddenly a café wasn’t just a grunge place for youngsters – suddenly a café wasn’t just Jeff Kennedy’s latest good idea. A café was a scene, and the people wanted more.

Yet there were still few cafés with really great coffee. Before we’d opened Reds in 1992, Maggie and I talked to all the Wellington roasters and tried their coffee, and even tried several from Auckland. We decided that there were only three worth considering, and we chose to go with Tony Gibbs, who’d bought the little Belaroma shop in Woodward Street and who, we thought, roasted the nicest coffee in town.

Reds was an immediate success. Maggie was a marvellous front person, our customers loved the coffee, and the place became fashionable –

The only real problem was our coffee supplier - his business was in ever deepening financial strife and it looked like our favourite coffee might be about to disappear. So in

August '93 we stepped in, took over the assets of the business, hired our old supplier and established Coffee Supreme.

Supreme was faced with an immediate challenge. Caffè L'Affare had the market on a plate - they had swept all before them for the last three years, and were very much the dominant roaster in town.

We were tiny. We lacked the capital to compete with L'Affare on price, or on marketing spend. We had confidence in our coffee, but we knew that quality alone wouldn't be enough. So we plumped for what to us as, café owners seemed to be the most important point of difference. Client service.

Maybe if we could help make our customers more successful, we could compete against the L'Affare juggernaut.

Before it became clear whether or not we would survive, we discovered that very few people had any idea how to make good espresso.

No matter how carefully we roasted the coffee, how the drinks tasted was determined as much by the person behind the machine as by the coffee itself. Our fragile reputation was in the hands of a bunch of enthusiastic amateurs.

So, although we still had a lot to learn we taught them the skills as best we could at the time.

It just seemed like the obvious thing to do, and it took us several years to realise that this would become a crucial point of difference. Unwittingly, we had started something that would evolve into a huge focus on the skills of the barista. But back in 1993 no one even used that word.

Gradually our clients got a reputation for good coffee, and their cafes built up a following of loyal regulars. It began to happen for us.

We didn't know at the time, but by about the end of 1994 the first phase of the revolution had played itself out. Wellington's sleepy old coffee industry had been turned into a high-energy three horse race, and each of the three roasters was evolving a clearly differentiated position in the market.

Yet out on the street there was still little awareness of how important the coffee maker was to drink quality. If it tasted bad, "oh the roaster must have burnt the coffee today" was the usual assumption. It was a rare and sophisticated consumer who appreciated that it was more likely the new coffee maker had just over extracted their coffee base.

It was time for the next phase of the revolution. Takeaway was about to become a fashion item, and working as a barista would become a cool thing to do.

In late 1996, Fuel opened their first espresso cart on the Terrace outside Aurora House. Coffee on the Kerbside had arrived in Wellington.

Fuel was the brainchild of Sanjay Ponnappa. He had seen the potential of espresso carts in the US, and had worked both for Allpress Coffee in Auckland and for Supreme in Wellington, while developing his ideas.

On the face of it, doing takeaway coffee in a city with Wellington's inclement climate looked to be high risk. Surely customers would much rather go into a nice warm café than stand out in a nor-west gale to get their coffee. But Sanjay had thought his concept through very well...

The Fuel cart was beautifully designed, it made Seattle's carts look dowdy, and it rapidly became a very attractive focal point for the Terrace office workers. It was intelligently sited to minimise the impact of weather, and crucially, the coffee was impeccably made.

The two companies that Sanjay had worked for, Allpress and Supreme, were at the forefront of developing espresso training systems in New Zealand, and his time working with them had not been wasted.

Fuel built more carts, opened some kiosks, and became one of our largest customers. It has been a great success - the coffee's good, the sites are stylish, and it has helped make coffee visible - part of our urban landscape

I think there is a crucial insight at the heart of Fuel's success. Sanjay and his wife, Alex, not only saw the potential to turn a commodity into a cuisine, they also figured out how to make the whole experience part of street fashion.

Fuel repositioned takeaway coffee, from being just a hot drink in a polystyrene cup, into a carefully crafted piece of handmade cuisine in an elegantly branded paper cup. You went to a stylish site, where you listened to good jazz, while your coffee was made by smartly presented young people. And they achieved consistency by focussing on the preparation skills of their espresso makers, so their product commanded a premium. Very astute.

From '96 through to '99 the city's coffee culture continued to grow and began to mature. Lots more cafes opened, and most did well - espresso preparation standards improved noticeably as all the main players began to offer some form of coffee training.

Caffe L'Affare consolidated its position as the biggest and best-known roasting company, and moved a huge amount of coffee through the supermarkets, while still retaining most of their hospitality clients.

Supreme picked up a lot of the new cafes that opened, and more than doubled in size, while continuing to enjoy a great street level reputation for its coffee.

Havana enjoyed growth too - They began importing Cuban coffee and built yet another new hot air roaster... things were going well.

Yet it was surprising that no other roaster had set up in Wellington for almost a decade. The market was still growing - everyone looked like they were doing well. When would the hungry young pups start snapping at our heels?

The inevitable happened at the very end of '99. Fuel began roasting for themselves, a logical bit of vertical integration given the large amount of coffee their seven sites now consumed, and another café in Woodward Street – Revive - started roasting too. A third new roaster, Emporio, opened last year, and there are new operators in the takeaway market too, with Zoom and Coffee Stop, but these don't really extend the successful business model that Fuel created.

So where is Wellington's coffee culture today?

A disgruntled friend of mine complained recently that you can't go out to buy a newspaper without tripping over another bloody espresso machine. There are certainly a lot of coffee outlets in the city and I suspect the market is pretty well saturated.

Wellington is small and the size of the customer base is limited - it can't expand forever to support more and more new cafes.

The key thing is that our coffee culture has developed on the back of a growing understanding of espresso within the industry, and a growing appreciation of better quality from our street level customers.

We've come a huge way from our early 90's attempts at espresso extraction - setting the flow rate to run off a 25 second long black for example. We used to have the coffee gushing out of the machine so fast it had no body at all.

The spoils of the Wellington coffee revolution have mainly gone to those who embraced continuous learning about espresso, the ones who got left behind were the ones who got stuck on the delusion that they knew it all.

Most importantly, there is PASSION for coffee here. At street level what's hot is not just about the which is the latest smart looking place, its about "what is their coffee like?"

The contrast with ten years ago is amazing – we have a lot less reason to feel that nagging sense of kiwi insecurity now. What was unthinkable in the 1980s is now the norm. People return after travelling overseas and say, "Mate – it's good to be back and to be able to get a decent cup of coffee."

I guess we can take heart too, from the fact that not all the new entrants into the coffee business, the new café owners and roasters, have felt the need to give their business an Italian name. Maybe we are finally growing up!

Where will it go from here?

Somewhere in Wellington right now, there are some young people sitting around talking about espresso. People who have a passion for coffee, and who desperately want to get into the industry and stir things up and show us how they can do it better.

Hopefully they will have the fresh vision and the drive, to bring a new approach into the market, to disprove what we - now the old guard - think are the truisms of the coffee business.

What ever happens though, I think there are some fundamental changes that we will not see being rolled back.

Coffee is at the forefront of the popular consciousness now, not just as treasured sensory experience, and a vital kick start to the day, but as part of our Wellington "streetscape" and our mental map of what rates, our sense of what is smart and hip and fashionable. We get a lot of approaches from young people who really want to work in the coffee industry, not just while they are studying, but for a "real job".

There's a small but steady stream of excellent young espresso makers being created too. We have a client, Perry Sue, who has a gift for training people. He can take raw recruits and turn them into wonderful espresso makers. His café is called Galleria Barista, up at Victoria University, and in my opinion he produces the best coffee in Wellington - it's a direct result of his focus on espresso technique.

The coffee drinkers of Wellington are getting smarter. They can recognise quality, and they are becoming more and more discerning. This bodes well for the future.

Coffee drinkers are now very brand aware and they have firm favourites. We constantly hear people say they will only drink this brand, or that one. Or, they will drink this brand at home, but when they go into a café they will only go to ones that use that brand.

I don't think its going too far to suggest that in this city, for many serious coffee drinkers, the brand on the takeaway cup you carry to the office, or on the porcelain in the cafes you patronise, has become as much a part of the bundle of preferences and loyalties that make up your personal style, as the clothing you wear, the music you listen to and the car you drive.

When those very switched on consumers check out a new café, the first thing they want to know is “whose coffee do you use?”.

I suspect it won't be too long before they are also asking: “where were your ‘baristas’ trained?”

Because espresso is ultimately about the hand of the maker, even more than the quality of the ingredients.

Market Forces From Paddock to Plate: The Growth of Farmers' Markets in Australia & New Zealand - Jane Adams

It took visiting New York food writer Jeffrey Steingarten, the man who eats almost everything, to prod a group of self-confessed foodies at a Melbourne MasterClass about the incredible absence of farmers' markets in Australia – in a country that increasingly marches on its stomach and love of good quality fresh food.

He'd been taken to Melbourne's vibrant Victoria Market and loved it, but the Vic Market isn't a farmers' market. Not as the Americans understand the concept.

And while they can hardly claim to have invented the notion, food markets having thrived since the Greek's agora, they should know. There are over 3500 regular seasonal and all-year markets across America, patches of rural commerce that thrive on supermarket carparks, in closed-off suburban streets, along river banks and in purpose-built pole-frame barns.

The day I arrived in Santa Monica, California the Pacific Boulevard bustled with rollerbladers, joggers and would-be starlets. Next morning, it was congested with farm trucks and vans unloading their country cargo – orange crates, fresh dates, miniature vegies, glorious ripe juicy peaches, giant artichokes, chilli peppers and exquisite dew fresh strawberries. And the joggers had shopping baskets.

Chefs in their whites pushed trolleys, stopping to load trays of organic tomatoes, herbs and exotic lettuces. *Spago's* procurer loaded passionfruit and baby purple eggplants into his truck. He'd got there early and would send a colleague back for more farm fresh supplies.

Santa Monica's farmers' market is one of Los Angeles' largest, boasting 90-odd vendors, and is administered by the non-profit Southland Farmers' Market Association. It reflects a purist but very successful approach to the direct marketing of farm produce. Every stall-holder is a farmer or family member, the produce they sell they grow, it's all 100% Californian and much is organic.

The farmers' market movement has its contemporary origins in California in the early 1970s, one of its staunchest advocates the feisty good food fairy, Alice Waters of *Chez Panisse* fame. Historians however chart its true beginnings back to the very first US growers market – the Lancaster Central Market, established in 1730 in Pennsylvania.

It wasn't till I spent a Saturday morning with Alice Waters at San Francisco's Ferry Plaza Market that the seduction of direct food marketing took complete hold.

'Look for vegetables that look right back at you,' challenged the diminutive Waters, as she skipped from stall to stall admiring the morning-fresh harvest as if she were seeing it all for the very first time.

Duly instructed I found blushing pink radishes, sweet velvety-skin summer peaches, deep magenta basil, buxom yellow Taxi tomatoes, delicate finger-thick leeks and garnet red raspberries, all harvested just hours before our encounter.

There is nothing more seductive than a perfectly formed peach, nothing more sensual than to sink your teeth into its succulent flesh, dribbling sticky juice and rekindling childhood memories.

Which in part is why America's farmers' markets have been so successful. They are festive, friendly places where people can reconnect to real food.

The US market movement holds salutary lessons for those who subscribe to such significant notions as sustainable agriculture, bio-diversity, urban renewal, food security, community, and most importantly, fresh natural food with flavour. And the message is spreading.

Across Britain, farmers' markets are springing up like daisies. Venues include Bath, Gloucester, Bristol and Frome and there are over a dozen operating regularly in London.

Remarkably, the simple economics and healthy benefits of a direct farm to table food chain mentality have very stunted roots in Australia, negligence that dates back to Governor Macquarie's time.

In his book *One Continuous Picnic*, Michael Symons charts a disappointing history. Sydney's first market opened in 1806 on Market Street, a cluster of sheds open twice weekly from sunrise to noon. Later came the 'Hay Market' on Hay Street, the forerunner to today's wholesaler led operation at Flemington, and the sad remnant that still trades on Saturdays as 'Paddy's. Michael notes:

Markets were a city's secret heart of colour, smell and movement, attracting shoppers, ownerless dogs, courting couples and poets, but they tended to be beneath the attention of mainstream observers from Governor Macquarie onwards, and so their history is submerged by neglect.

Melbourne's market culture evolved differently, spurred by grass roots community involvement. The Western market (1841) was controlled by householder elected commissioners, a precursor to today's thriving metropolitan council administered markets. But these still do not constitute the successful American simple and socially responsible approach, which has no place for 'middle men'.

I am not advocating slavish mimicry of the American model but I fervently believe there is a place and a need for farmers' markets in Australia and New Zealand.

The starter kit is relatively straightforward.

Take a handful of small farmers, an empty parking lot in a highly visible, demographically varied urban area. Add trucks, tents and trestles and piles of radishes, beans, eggplants, heirloom tomatoes and unscrubbed spuds. Augment with a dash of protein – hormone-free meat and eggs, fish and farmhouse cheeses. Then stir in some friendly farmer logic and several vital ingredients – professional market management and promotion, authenticity checks and close community liaison. Nurture at least two summers and watch the market grow.

Symons shares my belief in the need to reconnect with our agrarian roots, but lacks my optimism.

This enormous task at which we have been failing for 200 years, would require the faith of monks, the tenacity of peasants, the solidarity of unions and the nimble-mindedness of cafe society. To overcome the cost-price squeeze would require the joint action of both consumers and producers, of both town and country, of the wielders of both the mallet and the scythe.

He would surely be inspired by the start-up markets that are popping up across Australia and New Zealand. Sydney has three regulars – Pyrmont Growers' Market (1st Saturday), Fox Studios Farmers' Market (Wednesday afternoons) and the Northside Produce Market (3rd Saturday) with more on the planning board. Brisbane boasts one in Fortitude Valley and the Gold Coast market starts in March 2001; Gippsland in Victoria has a monthly market near Leongatha, and Hawkes Bay (NZ) boasts the model, a thriving weekly market that serves the twin towns of Napier and Hastings.

Other communities have elected to operate 'event' style markets such as the annual Avenel Farmers' Market, which showcases the produce of the growers of Victoria's Strathbogie Shire. The feast includes organically grown almonds, Dobson potatoes, live yabbies, cold-pressed linseed oil, pickles and preserves, and local wines.

The issue for all these markets is authenticity. Their sustainability and success depends on it.

Sydney's Growers' Market, operating under the auspices of the *Sydney Morning Herald*, attracts a decidedly foodie crowd keen to fill their straw baskets with fresh flowers, just-dug Robertson potatoes, delicious mini pork roasts, Pope's free range eggs, Darling Mills Farm herbs and Round Hill Farm's exotic greens. Its waterfront setting and the high-price gourmet pitch mirrors San Francisco's Ferry Plaza Market, but not its authenticity.

Several of the vendors are not producers, but provedores or opportunistic chefs, the very middlemen that the farmers' market concept seeks to remove from the food supply chain, an impurity that would never be permitted under the Californian model.

Perhaps they should heed the Symons' market credo:

The real market is not a mere meeting-place in terms of price, but a place where actual, socially produced food is distributed, where we keep ourselves alive. As such, it becomes a showcase of quality, a gathering point for the building of trust, the sharing of knowledge, the generation of amusement... a place of real people, real goods and real charm.

It's time we all grabbed those scythes, mallets and shopping baskets.

- Jane Adams farmers' market research trip was part-funded by the 1997 Geoffrey Roberts Award.

SIX OF THE BEST

Travelling to America? Test your tastebuds on these recommended markets.

UNION SQUARE GREENMARKET, New York

Union Square, East 17th & Broadway

Open 8am - 3pm Monday, Wednesday, Friday & Saturday, all year

The granddaddy greenmarket, established in 1976 representing 220-plus farmers that's become a Manhattan foodie institution. Seventh generation orchardists explain all about apples (100 varieties per season), lettuce growers about the wonders of lolla rossa, one of 60 varieties, while serious shoppers ponder 'food miles' – how far from farm to plate, and buy bundles of field-fresh flowers. Rare garlics, hot peppers, preserves, maple

syrup, organic meats, and farmhouse cheeses supplied to top restaurants and New Yorkers who still cook.

The Greenmarket group runs a total of 25 weekly markets at selected locations in New York City. Details PH (212) 477 3220.

FRESHFARM MARKET, Washington DC

20th St NW (Between Q St & Massachusetts Ave), Dupont Circle

Open 9am - 1pm, Sundays May - December

The American Farmland Trust practices what it preaches by sponsoring this cosmopolitan Sunday market in the heart of diplomatic DC. Farmers flock from Virginia and Pennsylvania to ply plutocrats and the poor with copious fresh greens, flowers, even plumcots (an engineered plum apricot cross).

SANTA MONICA FARMERS' MARKET, Los Angeles

Arizona Ave & 2nd Street

Open 9am - 2pm Wednesdays, 8.30am - 1pm Saturdays, all year.

Spot Hollywood stars and celeb chefs shopping for giant artichokes, calico corn, Japanese herbs, and porcini from forest glades in northern California. The biggest of LA's 18 regular farmers' markets, bursting with fresh produce and friendly farming folk, smack bang by the sea in Tinsel Town.

FERRY PLAZA FARMERS' MARKET, San Francisco

Embarcadero & Green St

Open 8am - 1.30pm Sat, 9am - 1pm Sunday (smaller), also Tuesday.

The glam gourmet high-performance model (and inspiration for many other markets) down by the Ferry Terminal. Fostered by Alice Waters, it's guaranteed to get those gastric juices flowing. Big juicy Cal Red peaches, saltbush lamb, gamebirds and aged goats cheese, Miss Stripey tomatoes, live crays, fresh-roasted chillis. Go early for prime pickings.

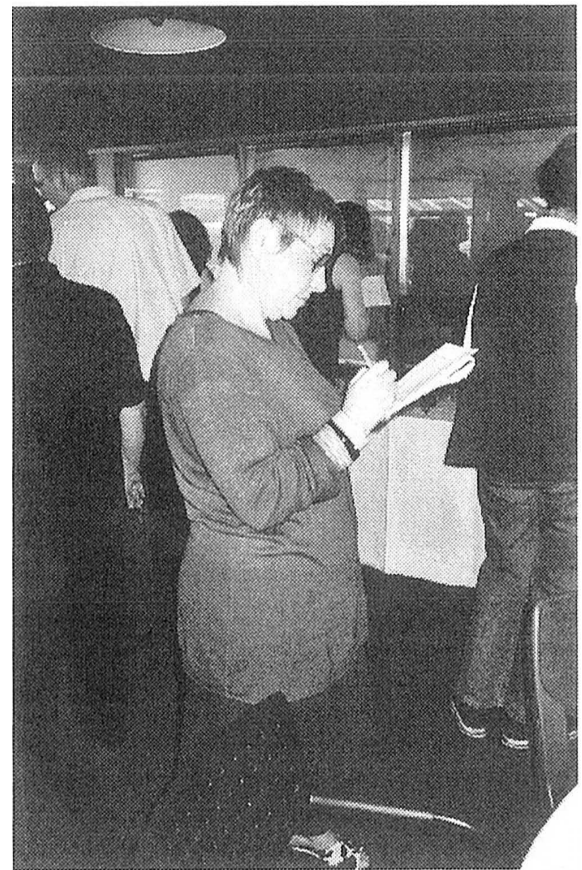
UNIVERSITY DISTRICT MARKET, Seattle

NE 50th & University Way NE

Open 9am - 2pm Saturdays June - October

Over 40 local growers gather on the campus fringe. In the height of summer look for sweet Charentais and musk melons, red globe peaches, elephant garlic, Yukon Gold spuds, Chiago beets, shiny brown eggs, sheep cheese and cider. Weekly chef demonstrations. A model for many 'me-too markets'.

A comprehensive list of farmers' markets is available from the US Department of Agriculture, Transportation & Marketing Division, Room 2642 South, PO Box 96456, Washington DC 20090-6456. Internet access: <http://ams.usda.gov/farmersmarkets> or www.openair.org



From Butter to Olive Oil in One Generation – Zannie Flanagan

Some of my most vivid memories of a feeling of contentment in the company of my mother revolve around the gathering and preparation of food in New Zealand.

As a district nurse it was sometimes necessary for her to take me with her on her rounds, a highly illegal activity and one which often necessitated me having to duck beneath the dashboard of her Morris Minor at the sight of someone who might report that a passenger had been seen in a Hospital Board car.

Although this was often tiresome, visits to the convalescing were often interrupted by the opportunity to don the gumboots and grab baskets stashed in the boot and head for an already identified blackberry crop or a paddock with enough cow dung to promise a fine harvest of field mushrooms. In the absence of any mushrooms the cow dung was considered almost equal in value.

Memories of returning home at sunset with dried blackberry juice covering my sunburnt skin, in anticipation of a blackberry pie for dinner still brings back a feeling of great contentment.

My mother was an early form of super mum, though I didn't realise that at that time. She was the only woman I knew in our street who had a career, and who went to work every morning before we left for school. I was a latch key kid before the term was invented and quite often I resented it.

I was one of those children who ate meticulously and slowly, eating first the least favourite item on the plate and saving the best till last, savouring the individual flavours one at a time. A dangerous tactic as it turned out, as by then, both my father and brother would have finished eating and would try various distraction tactics in order to steal what I had saved till last.

I had a very free upbringing and I was able to wander and roam without fear, over back fences and into neighbour's gardens and therefore knew where the best food was to be harvested in any given season. The most memorable crop was Mrs Stringer's Golden Delicious apples. I would begin by asking if I could have a couple, but then under cover of darkness and too embarrassed to admit how many I actually ate, I would creep into her garden and steal a supply that would last at least a couple of days. These apples were different from the ones bought in the shop. I liked them green, when they were really crisp and I liked them freshly plucked. The fact that they were stolen probably added to the flavour!

Our local shops had a home bakery and a fish and chip shop and both provided me with sensory and culinary delights on a daily basis. Mrs Moore's meat pies made with lard pastry and her light as a feather butterfly cakes made with real cream, were a staple, but I liked to vary the diet occasionally with deep fried mussels from the fish and chip shop a few doors down.

I don't remember discussing my food habits with anyone, and I suppose I never thought we were very different to anyone else much except that my mother's cooking always seemed more adventurous and delicious than other families' fare. This was the fifties when the *Edmonds Sure to Rise Cookbook* ruled, everyone had a roast on Sunday, and polite conversation often revolved around the perfect sponge or Pavlova recipe.

But then Graham Kerr came to town, and brought garlic and ginger via TV into Anglo-saxon suburban homes and like his cooking show, his sweet and sour pork fillet became a weekly favourite.

My mother often came home at 5 p.m. to cook the evening meal but she would also often have a pan of tomato sauce simmering away, or would be preparing the citrus for a batch of marmalade. And on Saturday afternoon, after what seemed like hours at the twin-tub, she would bake the classic biscuits and cakes to keep the tins full for the coming week.

On a recent trip home I bumped into a childhood friend I hadn't seen since school days. She almost began to drool as she recollected a strong sensory experience she had had walking past our house one Sunday morning in the company of her mother. It must have been Lent, as they had been fasting and were on their way to church without having eaten anything. She recalled how on passing our house, the smell of bacon and eggs cooking made her beg her mother to call in. Her mother's spiritual desires however took precedence over her sensory desires and they continued on to church.

In retrospect, it is now obvious that my life was a sensory paradise, the sights, smells and flavours giving rhythm to my life, developing strong memory tags which still signal the pleasure domes of my past.

I was drawn to the world of olive oil by what seemed like chance at the time, but with the wisdom of age and hindsight this attraction to things sensory and to olive oil in particular seems almost preordained. The interest has since turned into something of a passion. It was at a time when it had become obvious that I needed more balance in my life and olive oil became the metaphor and means to finding this balance.

In tasting olive oils, the overwhelming priority is the search for balance and harmony. As the oil's aroma and taste is examined, the fresh olive fruit must be balanced with the pungency and bitterness of the oil, leaving the mouth clean and satisfied by the experience. In other words, the taste receptor cells triggered by the oil have indicated a balance between sugars and acids in the mouth. The triggered facial response is either a grimace (usually in response to an unpleasant taste) or an expression of satisfaction. A chef friend of mine refers to this visible expression of culinary delight as the "ooh ahh factor".

Around this time I was organising a series of wine tastings for medical conferences and I often wandered around the various promotional stands at these events. One company I came across supplied medical laboratories with cell media used to promote the growth of cell cultures. Fascinated, I inquired as to what constituted the ideal medium for the promotion of healthy cell tissue. The answer was very simple really, a balance of sugars and acids in a glycerine gel. However because each cell or group of cells has different needs, the balance was defined by the particular cell group in question.

Even at the cellular level, maximum growth potential is only possible in an environment that encourages and supports survival. If we extrapolate on this, the implications for complex organisms are obvious.

● One of the paths I have taken in my personal quest for balance in recent years is the practice of meditation.

In Deepak Chopra's book, *The Seven Spiritual Laws of Success*, he begins the last chapter with a quote from Albert Einstein - "I want to know God's thoughts - the rest are details". Chopra goes on to discuss God's thoughts using the cell as an analogy:

The internal dialogue of every cell in the human body is, “How can I help?”. The heart cells want to help the immune cells, the immune cells want to help the stomach and lung cells, and the brain cells are listening to and helping every other cell. Every cell in the human body has only one function: to help every other cell. By looking at the behaviour of the cells of our own body, we can observe the most extraordinary and efficient expression of nature’s intelligence. These are the thoughts of God - the rest are details.”

David Suzuki in his book, *The Sacred Balance*, puts it this way:

Almost all the 60 trillion cells that make up our bodies carry the entire genetic blueprint that specifies the development of a complete person. In principle, then, each cell has the potential, if triggered to read from the beginning of the instructions, to the demands of the tissue or organ of which it is a part, just as every person may work according to the demands of his or her occupation. But each of us, like every cell, carries out many activities that we people do regardless of the job we have. As individuals, we cannot escape being part of families, communities or nations, which have their own characteristics and behaviour.

While being part of a system, it is not always possible to see just what the individual roles might contribute to the overall scheme of things unless the system is thoroughly understood. The constant assessment of an incessant flow of information the cell or organism is constantly exposed to results in a continuous search for equilibrium.

This question of balance has some interesting parallels on the global food scene.

The growth and success of the Farmer’s Markets’ movement in cities across North America is another example of this search for balance. This movement not only provides inner-city dwellers with direct access to fresh farm produce, but the rapid proliferation of the markets is also a strong indication of the demand and need for consumers to be more closely involved in the food chain.

In response to the growth of global agribusiness and the international proliferation of fast food chains, the evolution of the Slow Food Movement is another response to global food production practices and the decline in traditional food culture worldwide.

Last year I was privileged to be invited as a jurist to the inaugural Slow Food Awards in Bologna, Italy. Prior to this invitation, I had little knowledge of the Slow Movement and was under the impression that it was a middle-class food and wine group. However, food for Slow does not mean elitism, food mafia or high cost ingredients. It is in fact, a global political movement dedicated to the preservation of the planet’s biodiversity with the culture of the “table” representing the heart of the organisation.

Our sensory receptors have evolved to assist us in determining whether our immediate environment will produce sensations of pleasure or pain, indicating safety or danger and triggering the fight or flee response. These are our primary sensory experiences.

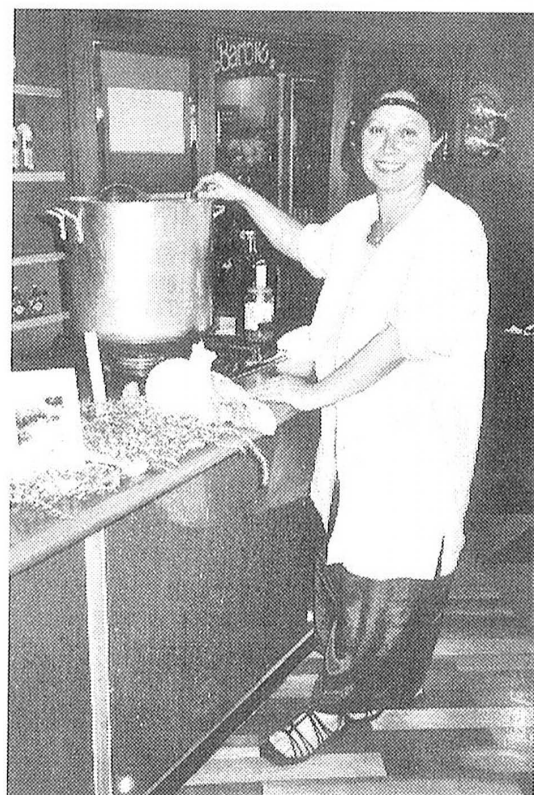
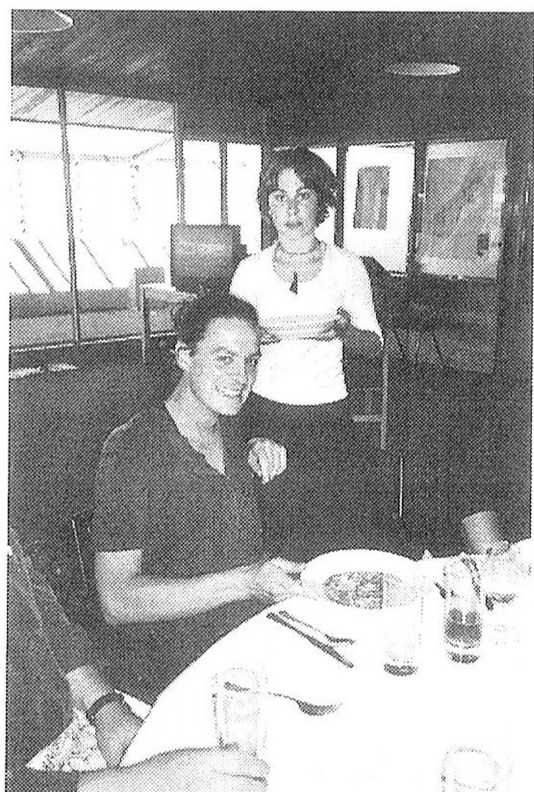
Marketers have long recognised the sensory pleasure and sense of contentment the experience of the natural world generally gives us. Hence cleaning fluids, medications, and other toxic chemicals are perfumed and flavoured with aromas and tastes of the natural world. Lavender and lemon cleaning products, air-fresheners, etc., are all

chemically disguised, designed to trick our senses and thus encourage their use by implying they are “natural”.

In comparison these experiences could be called secondary sensory experiences and for urban dwellers in the industrialised world they make up an ever-increasing proportion of our daily sensory experiences.

In response, Slow Food has designed a curriculum for school children, similar in purpose to the French system, which provides primary sensory experience training. This response is yet another example of an attempt to balance the effects of the global food industry and all that it represents.

So, olive oil tasting, rather than being an elitist or pretentious exercise is a way of training and maintaining the senses to do the job they have evolved to do – to discern flavour and aroma and to assist in determining what is organoleptically safe and beneficial for us to consume.



Has ‘Slow Food’ Moved to Fast? - Panel Discussion

We invited two of the panellists - a Slow-sceptic and a devotee – to summarise their thoughts.

Response by Scott Minervini:

There is a pleasure in the trackless woods
There is a rapture on the lonely shore.
Open my heart and you shall see
Graven inside of it – Italy

George Gordon, Lord Byron
Childe Harold's Pilgrimage

The olive oil tasting concluded, the panellists were approached by the chair to ask them if they had anything to express regarding “Slow Food moving too fast”- the chair thought that there would be no debate, we all thought things would move benignly.

The question was put to the panel “What did they think of Slow Food?” Initially there was general consent that Slow Food was an important force globally, that it was doing well according to its tenets. Slow awards were granted to people preserving traditional food ways, including a recent award to a New Zealander; the journal SLOW was appreciated and effective; the enormous Salone del Gusto in Turin spread the Slow word far and wide and the vast network of convivia worked by combining enjoyment with knowledge and supposedly a denial of “the universal folly of fast life”. In New Zealand convivia were either nascent or had recently formed, obviously with some ardour.

Another outlook was proffered that a gulf had developed between The International Slow Food organization’s (then the International Movement for the Defence of and Right to Pleasure) beautifully written Paris manifesto of November 1989 and some of the practices that it was seen to be adopting as it gained momentum and size. Is sponsorship from multi-national companies desirable? Are the marketing practices of say a McDonald’s appropriate to an organization that has been declared the Greenpeace of global food conservation? It was noted that Greenpeace accepts no corporate or government money. Is too much money flowing from convivia to Italy, when to Slow Food the local is of such special significance? Is it possible to keep a convivium from becoming an exclusive dining club, with members that pay lip service to the Slow way of life. If Slow Food is indeed using very “fast” practices of multi-national corporations can it be done without losing its original intent in the process or is this necessarily a Faustian bargain? Is Slow Food itself “enslaved by speed”? Some of these questions remained unanswered, if indeed they were reasonable questions at all.

The asking of these questions certainly aroused the fervour of a guest of the Symposium and a Slow Food member. The guest stood and furiously challenged some of the panel. There was an accusation of anti-Italian prejudice and that if the origins of Slow Food had been in, say, England or Australia they would not have ventured upon the raising of these issues. The guest also declared angrily that Belgian chocolate was not to be

purchased outside of Belgium under any circumstances. (A panellist had earlier told the Symposium that they had provided Belgian chocolate to her Slow Food convivium in Australia to enjoy after a screening of the film *Chocolat*.) An elder of the Symposium eventually placated the perhaps justifiably angry guest and suggested the discussion become more polite and return to the philosophy of the Slow Food Movement and “avoid mentioning money”. Another elder of the Symposium referred to the prior prompting of the panel to discuss both the mechanics and philosophy of Slow Food.

The panel then moved briefly to the idea of, ‘if not Slow Food, then what?’

The idea of “symposiettes”, ongoing themed meetings of the Symposium, but on a small and local scale, was mentioned as being something that the Wellington Symposium might like to consider. Perhaps they might fill the void of gastronomic isolation that some of the participants felt; it was a sentiment that we agreed we’d all shared at some time.

The panel discussion finished, but a conversation amongst some of the panel and interested Symposiasts continued.

- One Convivium leader mentioned what an enormous cost in personal time and money it was to keep the “chapter” going, but they were prepared to do so because of the future benefits they could see for their region.
- Several people held the view that the Symposium and Slow Food are virtually one and the same thing and are working towards the same end.
- Another opinion was that the Symposium is a democratic and open forum that thrived on the angry and passionate debate that we’d just witnessed. Indeed, it would be quite possible and desirable for an appreciation of the Pizza Hut to be presented at a Symposium. Professor Richard Johnstone was at one stage to present a paper on the merits of fast food at the Wellington Symposium.
- Amity was made with the disgruntled guest, who informed us that the founder of Slow Food was actually a green activist (surely of the Petra Kelly persuasion?) and not a communist, which was news to most.
- The discussion continued at the Te Papa party in the evening. It seemed that the involved of New Zealand symposiasts wanted to give Slow Food a chance.

Response by Richard Klein:

Writing after an event provides the luxury of hindsight. Consequently, my reply to the Wellington Symposium will attempt to fulfil a debate which, owing to a lack of time (!) and also to a surprisingly vociferous “floor”, was not permitted to run its course.

A first point of reflection is begged by the provocative title given to the debate itself. Too fast for what or whom?

On the one hand, as expressed by Scott Minervini, the implicit concern is that the Slow Food movement has “sold its soul” to big business (read sponsors such as Fiat and Lavazza) and the almighty dollar. Slow Food therefore employs the marketing techniques of multinationals and has somehow lost its “pure” original emphasis on local issues. Mention was also made of the “undemocratic”, “Faustian” and “iron fisted rule” of the Movement’s leadership, which, it was argued, does not tolerate questions or dissension.

On the other hand, it seemed to me that the Chair was more preoccupied with the significance of Slow Food in the New Zealand context.

Consensus (of a sort) was reached only in the form of a tacit recognition that the Slow Food manifesto is “a wonderful document”, the philosophy of which cannot be faulted. Small consolation; the same could be said for the *Communist Manifesto*!

The tenor of our discussion was well summed up by Gay Bilson, who commented that the emphasis seemed to be on the organization; not the philosophy. I would therefore like to address the ends which the organization poses itself and then analyze the means through which these ends are achieved.

Slow Food defines itself as “an international movement of food and wine culture . . . , (which) stands as a bastion against the global village of flavors, opposing the homologation of tastes throughout the world and the molding of consumers”. Moreover, “Slow Food is the avant garde answer to the Fast Life... (it is) an amulet against speed, the new obsession of the modern world, against the exasperation and distraction of people who are too impatient to smell and taste, too greedy to remember what they have just devoured”.¹

The means for achieving these ends are indeed tangible: International Publications of world class journalism thanks to the movement’s editorial arm; the Hall of Taste – the World’s largest Food & Wine event; The Ark of Taste and Praesidia; whose aim is to discover, catalogue, review and promote forgotten flavors of small food purveyors threatened by extinction and standardization; The Slow Food Awards, which focus on biodiversity by identifying individuals whose work is helping to save endangered traditions and providing grants to fund further research.

Activities of this nature, scope and breadth would be impossible to finance solely on the basis on membership fees or subscriptions.

So is the “problem” sponsorship per se or the choice of sponsors? From my understanding, the Symposium has a clear stance concerning its self-funded, self-perpetuating history, which, incidentally, predates that of the Slow Food Movement. Fair enough.

As for the choice of sponsors, I believe that it is entirely misleading to emphasize FIAT (and its gratuitous stretch limousines) or Lavazza Coffee. What about the Regional Governments of Piedmont and Emilia Romagna, whose enogastronomic traditions are defended by Slow Food? What about the Italian Ministry of Education, which has adopted the taste education program of the Slow Food movement as a course textbook for teachers. Is there any “problem” in the Movement soliciting and receiving funding from these bodies?

Philosophy alone will not enable an organization to stage an event in one of Europe’s most prestigious convention centres (The Lingotto of Turin, designed by Le Corbusier for FIAT), nor will it gain one access to the debating chambers of the European Union where policies on food hygiene are drafted and ratified.

But by far the most misleading and potentially damaging point of view in my personal opinion is that which would question if the membership subscription fees (of which 70% go to the International Slow Food office, with the remaining 30% destined for local chapter management costs) are put to honest use.

¹ excerpt from “Slow Food: History and Activities of the International Slow Food Movement” (2001)

I would invite anyone who harbors these doubts to line up the annual Slow Food publications which each member receives, consider the research grants provided to the Slow Food award finalists and semi finalists and then decide if their NZ\$130.00 is well spent. And that is without counting the eventual activities organized by their local chapter!

Lastly, regarding the “undemocratic”, “iron fisted” and “dictatorial” behavior of the movement’s leadership I can only suspect that a degree of conflicting sociolinguistic expectations are at play. Most of Italian discourse will seem argumentative and dogmatic to an English speaker’s ears. Just try asking two Italians to discuss their opinions on politics!

By way of conclusion, the provocative title of this debate raised some interesting points for reflection. I have argued that the preoccupation on sponsorship is more to do with the Symposia’s own history and values than with the Slow Food Movement. An honest analysis of *what* the movement does with its money will help one comprehend the need for external funding.

On the local front, Slow Food has moved anything but quickly in Aotearoa New Zealand! Between us (i.e. the chapters of Christchurch, Wellington and Auckland), we have yet to reach the threshold of one hundred paying members.

For that reason and above all I am grateful to the Symposium for creating the opportunity for me to meet Bill Bryce, who heads the country’s first Slow Food chapter in Christchurch. The Symposium – and this debate – gave us the chance to collectively ponder our direction for the future in helping to create a truly New Zealand Slow Food Movement. The outcome: the decision to publish a single Slow Food New Zealand newsletter uniting all the current and future chapters.

A particular thanks to Michael Symons, Laura Kroetsch, Lois Daish and David Burton for their splendid organizational work and for creating the forum for discussing Slow Food in New Zealand.

Some Thoughts after the Wellington Symposium - Gay Bilson

Although I made a half-hearted pretence at weighing the decision to travel to the Wellington Symposium, a more honest approach would have been to accept the going and cope with the financial consequences later - at worst, a month of frugal living in order to balance the budget, less Stilton, more home-grown Cheddar, although globalization has near made worthless any saving in buying locally. There was never any doubt that I would be there.

And so I made the journey, and the journey proved once again that these gatherings provide an incomparable respite from the commercial world of food and its slippery media offshoots. They provide sustenance. For some reason, some infinitely uncatchable but fiercely felt reason, this Wellington Symposium, this petite holiday symposium, moved me to better understand how precious they are.

#

There is no formal charter, code or definition which acts as an idealist minder of the Australian Symposia. They have multiplied organically yet kept, by a kind of unspoken agenda, a careful litany of concerns. This has been possible, I think, because of what might be compared, fancifully perhaps, to seed saving. Lineage, like a sour dough starter or a vinegar mother, like the ground bass of a set of variations, conserves the imprint of the original plant.

Foremost among these unspoken rules is that the Symposium eschews promotion. Conversion and variations on the missionary position are irrelevant to symposiasts. Being non-promotional, we have no interest in advertising. Having no interest in advertisement, we have no interest in making profit and no interest in marketing. We do not have commercial sponsors hoping for subliminal connection to their product. Academics who give papers do so in order to share their interests with an interested audience, not in order to swell their publishing record and so their CV. Cooks who find themselves wanting to 'move the stars to pity' do so because the imaginative energy required extends their skills and stretches their boundaries. Although the Australian Broadcasting Commission has recorded most of the sessions this has been because of commitment by individuals from Radio National who have personally elected to do so. The energy to organize yet another (there have been eleven in sixteen years, eleven and a half - which is not to belittle it but a sweet technicality - if we welcome and include, which of course we should, the Wellington Symposium) is an offer made by a group of at most two or three people at the close of the last Symposium. Although hands and passions are raised over various issues and in favour of this or that, there is really no formal election. If no one offered to raise another, the Symposium would expire. And so, that would be that, but it hasn't happened, and this, for me anyway, is the productive and maternal purpose of benign lineage.

Not attending one of the Gastronomy Symposia then would be to risk bad parenting. It has surprised me over and over again that I feel so strongly about these gatherings of thinking cooks and gastronomic thinkers. Now that this one has rid me for ever of that sense of aporia which had always niggled at my taste buds before the prospect of another, surprise will only be that sense of renewed delight in the periodic enjoyment that each one offers. The risk of contagious infection from capitalist forces which Michael Symons feared (and which lead him to stand aside for a time) has in fact not happened. The Symposium has not been weakened or compromised and Michael, by

moving to Wellington and sharing his ideas (ideas are themselves active) with a small group of people made this Wellington Symposium happen.

#

Of all the Symposia, this Wellington meeting caused me to reach a better understanding of what gastronomy really is. Someone new to the Symposium and its lineage later suggested, with delight, that it didn't feel like a conference at all, rather more like an indulgent and convivial long lunch. This paradox speaks volumes about the ways in which we differently define work and play. Our insistence on the legitimacy, indeed the central part played by the convivial table at the Symposia (in all of life) is, I think, one of the most revolutionary principles of gastronomy. Gastronomers understand that to ensure that our material life is pleasurable is as important as, and inextricably connected to, our intellectual and spiritual well-being. This central, convivial table has nothing to do with the expense of fine dining in restaurants (although it does not exclude it) - its boundaries are infinite and inclusive. I, for one, am not an easily sociable person, and align myself with Groucho Marx in his attitude towards clubs, yet the convivial table of the Symposium nourishes me.

#

Michael Symons' paper at this Symposium was a variation on his ever-convincing seductions to the Symposium itself. He argues that 'word of mouth' needs safeguarding, cultivating, nurturing; that to exchange ideas face to face, convivially, is central to our well-being. Indeed, in my view, to place this at the centre of our lives is to go some way towards taming the excesses and promises of rhetoric. Symons has been sharing this argument in variation for many years. He has talked before about the (mis-)use of the word 'market' and even of 'economics' (originally defining household expenses) in commercial, corporate matters, as in the share-'market'. Recipes, for instance, originally handed on by word of mouth, have shifted into the province of profit making in being printed by the thousand and losing context, by becoming, as Jennifer Hillier has characterized them, mere 'rational texts'. John Fitzpatrick has also suggested that word of mouth, be it the handing (literally the best word here) on of recipes or the telling of different stories is central to narrative, to truth. In *The Pudding That Took a Thousand Cooks*, published in 1998, Symons had proposed the original thesis that put cooks at the centre of civilized life. The accretion of his persuasions serves as the profound philosophical *raison d'être* of these modest meetings. If this is not apparent to all who listen and eat then no matter. For myself, it is central.

#

The best definition of gastronomy (despite the fact that it does not exactly define the noun) I know of, and as far as I know the words of Barbara Santich, is that it lies at the confluence of the intellect and the senses. The American poet, Wallace Stevens, has written that the greatest poverty is not to live in the physical world. These are marvellous words. They bear witness to the central and essential dependence of vitality on the senses, to the connection between imagination and the material.

Thoughtful eating, suggested Marion Maddox, might be as fine a penance as fasting in the face of the suffering of others (I wonder if it is a heresy to suggest that Simone Weil did the wrong thing?). Marion addressed, by looking at the practice of fasting and mortification of the flesh by mediaeval women, the connections inherent in feasting and fasting. Fasting for these 'saints' was not an assault on the flesh but a way of testing the will. In opposition, dieting in our society uses the will to change the body. The

mediaeval notion of 'delicious suffering' then is not oxymoronic (and think too of the ways in which we use 'sweet' adjectivally). The long lunch and the long fast are soul-mates. Holy days are marked by abstinence, holidays by feasting. Holidays, as taken up by this symposium symbolically and literally, trip us into taking stock, into using the slow lunch to think as well as eat.

#

Not long after the Wellington Symposium, I saw a film by the Iranian director Kiarostami, *The Taste of Cherry*. A man who is determined to suicide, that is give up hope in a country which is politically and religiously oppressive, offers a lift to an old man in order to ask if he will bury him if he finds him dead the next morning at a particular place. He had asked others if they would do this but no one had agreed to. The old man says that he will but asks for time to tell the man a story. Take the longer way back to the place I am going, he says, because it is easier and prettier.

When the old man was young his life was full of hardships and he had decided to suicide. He slung a rope in a mulberry tree but it would not hold so he climbed the tree and as the mulberries were ripe he ate one and then another. He suddenly noticed the sky and the sun and green fields and heard children's voices. The children asked him to shake the tree so that they could have mulberries too and he ate more and took some home to his wife. 'Things didn't change but I felt differently ... no one has no problems ... the mulberry is insignificant but it changed my life ... do you want to give up the taste of cherry?'

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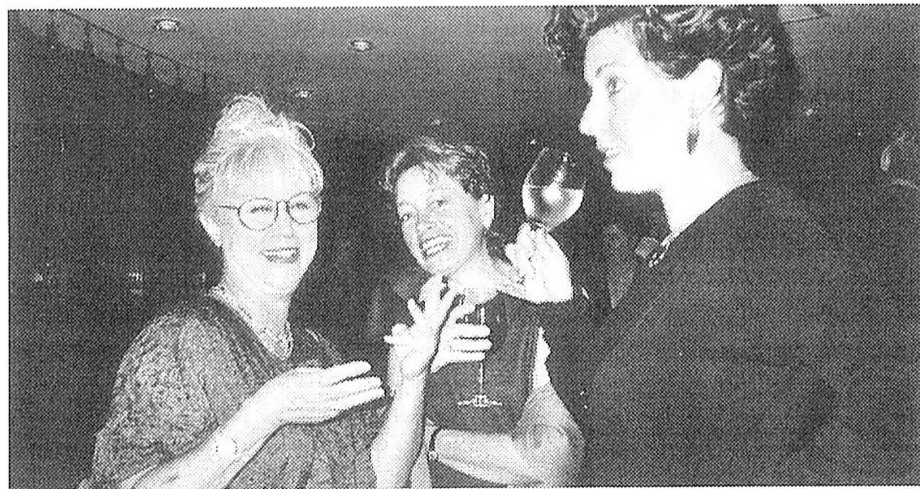
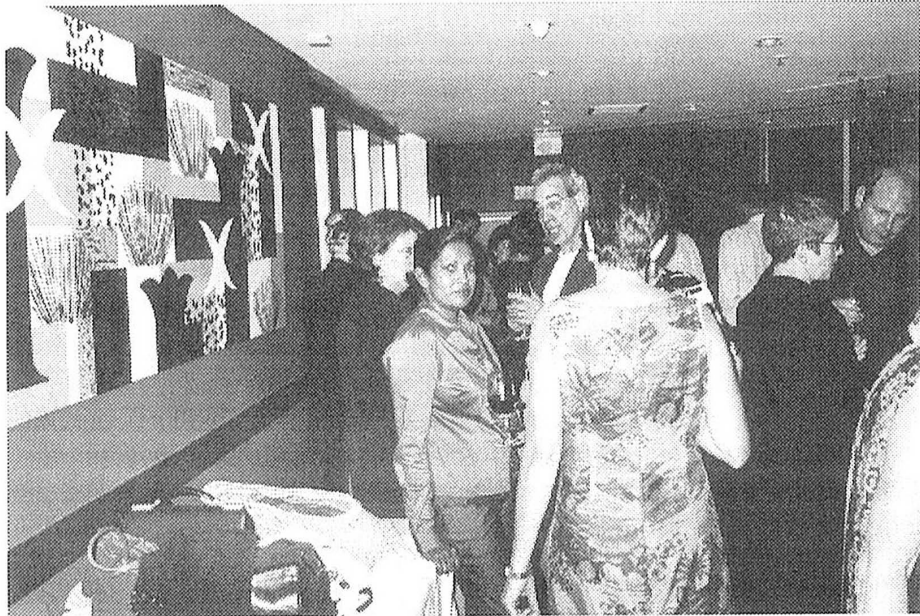
A gastronomical life is democratic, an art of living which is not confined to a certain class, not exclusive. And to eat well, that is, to eat thoughtfully, is not exclusive to those who know they do so, by which I mean that the table in a coherent culture includes truthful, coherent narrative. Christopher Hitchens characterized the novelist Anthony Powell's autobiography as democratic because 'it shows a great and omnivorous curiosity about the lives and motives of others.' As well as being inclusive, Symposiasts find difference life-enhancing. Ecological and cultural diversity are paramount to that world which Wallace Stevens celebrates when he says that we are enriched by the physical world.

To call gastronomy an 'art of living' is to comprehend its breadth as a philosophical stance, as a way of making sense of being here. When listing suggestions for discussion at the next Australian Symposium which will look at The Gastronomic City, I was taken to task by someone for stretching the subject to include more than food, to include discussion on governance, on welfare, on architecture, on town planning. I have thought about this and am confident that in the democracy of gastronomy we must include everything which affects the convivial table.

#

None of the above convergent thoughts are so much a prescription for all as a cumulative, brief description of the position that I find myself in after a mere thirty years of cooking and eating, reading and thinking. The Wellington Symposium, a small gathering in a small city, caused this personal stock-taking. These local sizes seem, in retrospect, pivotal: how large might a table be before it is still genuinely convivial?

Gay Bilson, who has attended all Symposiums of Australian Gastronomy, convenes the next in Adelaide in March 2002



From *Petits Propos Culinaires* - Michael Symons

The now twelve Symposiums of Australian Gastronomy have similarities not only with the Oxford symposiums in being interested in culinary history but also with the Slow Food movement in having meals that 'make a statement' and papers that engage with contemporary issues. But, unlike Slow, the Australian symposiums have followed a 'dinner party model', which has meant deliberately no formal institution, no sponsors, no public pronouncements, no prizes and no fleeting TV cameras. Rather than Slow's more narrowly hedonic 'taste', the emphasis has generally been on informed practice, bringing in Brillat-Savarin's 'reasoned comprehension'. Accordingly, while Slow boasts 65,000 members in 45 countries after fifteen years, the tiny Australian symposiums have finally after seventeen years made it across one relatively open national boundary to New Zealand.

Yet the symposiums have had considerable impact. The intense talking, experimenting and morale-boosting have fostered creativity and intellectualism among Australia's gastronomic leadership, whose work has improved growing, cooking and appreciation throughout a much wider community. Against the common enemy of the globalising food industry, the need in the New World has often been less to preserve traditions than to invent them. A further contribution has again been made by the 11ath Symposium of Australian Gastronomy, which was held in Wellington (New Zealand) on 16-18 March 2001.

Slow Food also recently gaining pace across the Tasman, having reached Australia about a decade ago, the movement was discussed by a panel at the largely sympathetic Wellington forum. While one or two speakers raised doubts about Slow Food's centralised structure, marketing methods and appeal to some members more interested in cachet than the cause, everyone applauded the movement's manifesto and endorsed its challenges to conformity and legislated destruction.

The strange numbering of the '11ath Symposium' comes from Wellington filling an unusually long gap between the Hobart symposium in 1999 and another in Adelaide in February-March 2002. Finding himself in New Zealand, the founder of the symposiums, Michael Symons, got together with venerated cookery writer, Lois Daish, one of a small number of New Zealand symposiasts over the years. Along with writer David Burton and bookshop manager Laura Kroetsch, they gave themselves less than two months to organise a relatively spontaneous, intimate event, with an eventual 41 participants slipping into, according to the sub-title, 'holiday mood'.

The New Zealand capital is a big city with a small population. It has a strong culinary scene (even without a history of symposiums), and the well-fed conference was held in a spacious demonstration kitchen above a local institution, a culinary department store called Moore Wilson's. An espresso machine was installed to show off another local strength, the exceptional café culture, whose decade or so of history was analysed in an important paper by Chris Dillon, the principal of one of the local roasters.

Thirteen papers covered such other topics as 'our word of mouth/their marketing' (Michael Symons), religious fasting (Marion Maddox), the fine cooking of rural mothers and aunts (Barbara Keen), urban growers' markets (Jane Adams), the two fledgling olive oil industries (Zannie Flanagan) and recent biographies of culinary change (Roz Dibley). Having written books on cookery under the Raj and now in

French colonies, David Burton re-examined the clichés of French arrogance and British blundering. Completing a Ph.D. on cookery books, Jennifer Hillier was cross enough at the entry in Alan Davidson's *Companion* to re-open the debate on the origins of the 'national dish' of both countries, the pavlova. Participants had been invited to bring a bottle of their local wine (often demonstrating not strict geography but that home is where the heart is) and these were sampled during a discussion led by Margaret Brooker on the regionalism of New Zealand food.

As to the meals, the cuisines of their grandmothers were recaptured on Friday evening by Vim Rao (Malaysia) and Sunday for the 'Slow Lunch' by Maria Pia Klein (Italy). Young New Zealand-born chef Jacob Brown was flown from Sydney to contribute Saturday's landmark 'Lazy Lunch' of six courses alternating with papers from 9 a.m. until 9 p.m. Beginning memorably with scampi Newburg and including possum stew, the chef's marathon labours developed a distinct 'holiday mood'. The weekend climaxed with a stand-up party at the smart Icon restaurant for which chef Peter Thornley devised an extraordinary formal menu for the fingers – a succession of mini-dishes starting with avocado soup in shot glasses and including a tiny cone of fish and chips, a black pudding tart tatin, and fruit tarts that almost needed tweezers to pick up. It was like a dolls' banquet for grown-ups.

- Originally published in *Petits Propos Culinaires* 67, June 2001, pp. 124-126

The Longest Lunch – From the *NZ Listener* – Lois Daish

Not many people have scampi Newburg for breakfast, at least not on a regular basis. Actually, scampi Newburg is a pretty rare dish at any time of day. Those of us with long memories might remember having crayfish Newburg or crab Newburg, years before we knew that there were any scampi out there in the Tasman Sea. In case you've forgotten, a dish with the word 'Newburg' in the title indicates that the seafood will have been flamed in brandy or sherry, then enveloped in a cream sauce thickened with egg yolks and seasoned with a dash of cayenne and nutmeg. The recipe dates back to around 1900 when it was prepared by a French chef working at Delmonico's restaurant in New York.

SCAMPI NEWBURG

3-400g scampi tails, crayfish or crabmeat, raw or cooked
3 egg yolks
1 cup cream
pinch cayenne and nutmeg
salt and pepper
4 tablespoons butter
splash brandy
splash medium sherry

Remove the scampi from their shells, or cut the crayfish into chunks. Whisk together in a bowl the egg yolks, cream, cayenne, nutmeg, salt and pepper and set aside. Heat the butter in a pan and add the seafood. Turn and toss until cooked or heated through. Pour on a little brandy and sherry (or just one of these) and flame. Remove the seafood to a heated dish and keep warm. Take the pan off the heat, let cool until comfortable to touch with your hand and pour in the cream mixture. Put over very low heat and stir constantly until the sauce starts to thicken. Remove from the heat and put the seafood back in the pan to be coated with the sauce. Serve on hot toast or in baked bread or pastry cases.

Serves 4

The forty people attending the Australian Symposium of Gastronomy, being held in Wellington, sat down around tables, which were formally set with white cloths, at nine o'clock one Saturday morning in the middle of March. If they were expecting muesli they were in for a surprise. What turned up was scampi Newburg accompanied by a demitasse of scampi, tomato and saffron broth. It had been prepared by Jacob Brown, a young New Zealander now working in Australia, who had come over to be the symposium's guest chef. His assistant was local cook, Belinda Lodge.

While scampi Newburg would be an unusual breakfast dish, this particular meal was not called breakfast, it was called the first course of lunch, a lunch that was to continue for 12 hours and comprise a total of six courses. One course was served every two hours, alternating with papers and discussions on gastronomic subjects. One of the symposium's themes was holiday food and the twelve-hour lunch reflected the idea that when people are on holiday their usual meal patterns start to break down. Not constrained by having to catch the bus, or pick up the kids or get out to a meeting, holiday-makers allow more natural rhythms to take over. You can linger over bacon and eggs until midday, and dinner can be eaten at five or at ten. No one cares.

All six courses were called lunch, because while we have preconceived ideas about what is appropriate to serve at breakfast and dinner, lunch is an open book. It can be a three course meal in the boardroom of a bank, or a marmite sandwich at the kitchen table. Lunch is a time to meet a friend who doesn't get on with your spouse so can't be invited for dinner. It is a time to be taken to a fancy restaurant by your boss and just when you're enjoying your dessert, you are told that you're fired – an occasion known as “being lunched”. Or you can “do lunch” to test the waters with a new acquaintance.

Jacob Brown was given a free hand to plan his menu. Returning to his homeland after seven years working in Australia, he wanted to serve food that represented our rich resource of wild flesh; oysters, whitebait, venison, wild pig - those huntin' shootin' fishin' foods which he associated with holidays at bach, beach or bush. To strengthen his storyline even further, the foods chosen made subtle references to the subject matter of the papers being presented between the courses.

The first paper to be presented after the scampi course was “Word of Mouth” by Michael Symons, who founded the symposiums in 1984. In response to that title, Jacob prepared his second course of ox tongue, beef cheek and pigs' ears. Salivary glands were trimmed from the cheeks, and bristles shaved from the ears. Then they were cooked long and slow until perfectly tender. The tongue and cheek were chilled and sliced and the ears cut into strips and fried until crisp. Bunches of baby salad greens were dressed with a mustard vinaigrette and all was ready. Star-shaped bread from Le Moulin was on the table.

Jacob's plans for the third course nearly came a cropper. The mutton birds he had set his heart on for a pie, were out of season and there was not the time nor the money to import Tasmanian birds which he had seen in the Sydney markets. Duck would have to do in his b'stilla, a Moroccan style pie which also contained toasted almonds and eggs and was wrapped in handmade filo pastry. It was served with a salad of finely sliced pear, fennel and orange.

In the fourth course, Jacob made up for the mutton bird disappointment by making possum stew, a reference to the colonial cuisine which had been the subject of several papers. There is only one area in Northland, where possums can be guaranteed free of TB and sold for human consumption. They arrived complete with heads and tails, courtesy of Esk Valley Meats in Hawkes Bay. The possum meat was delicious, sweet, tender and with a hint of the aroma of the tender foliage that they had browsed on.

The fifth course, which accompanied a glass of wine sipped at the Para Matchitt bridge on the waterfront, was a petit pain filled with leftover tongue and Whitestone sheep milk cheese. Also in each cellophane bag was a Pacific Beauty apple and a piece of fig panforte brought as a gift to the symposium by Hobart restaurateur Scott Minervini.

The sixth and final course of homemade hoky poky icecream was served at Masi café as an integral part of the fringe festival show, “Native Chef” starring Erolia Ifopo and her long lost brother from Dunedin, Jacob Brown.

- Originally published in 'Food' section, *Listener*, 28 April 2001, pp. 42-43

Conference Call – From *The Evening Post* – David Burton

A regular Australian symposium for foodies crossed the Tasman last month for a ‘holiday’ event in Wellington. Food and wine editor David Burton was there.

Every 18 months or so for the past 16 years, food writer Michael Symons has been among a band of scholar-cooks gathering together for the Symposium of Australian Gastronomy, at which learned papers are delivered between a series of often quite whacky meals.

A symposium in Sydney, for example, featured a meal of the future, where waiters dressed in surgical gowns delivered a first course consisting of a pill, while another, held in a deserted Catholic seminary, recreated the lam, bread and bitter herbs of Christ’s last supper. The symposiums have been influential too: the kangaroo and quandong fruit served at the 1985 symposium, for example, spurred two participants to launch the Australian bush tucker movement.

Two weekend ago, the event cross the Tasman for the first time, thanks to Symons having recently settled in Wellington to write more books (he is author of *One Continuous Picnic: A History of Eating in Australia*, *The Shared Table*, and, most recently, the *Pudding that Took a Thousand Cooks*). His wife, Marion Maddox, has taken up a position as lecturer in religious studies at Victoria University.

Forty of us met at Moore Wilson’s Cuisine Centre for the Wellington Symposium (Symposium of Australian Gastronomy in Holiday Mood).

In holiday mood, because nearly half the participants had come across from Australia, mainly from Adelaide and Tasmania, bringing some very smart bottles of pinot noir to our ‘bach’, decorated with national park maps, tattered paperbacks and table decorations of paua shells and driftwood.

Since mealtimes tend to become blurred on holiday, we organisers struck upon the idea of The Lazy Lunch, beginning with scampi newburg at 9.30 am, interspersing courses between papers and ending 12 hours later at a special fringe festival performance of The Native Chef at Masi Café, when Erolia Ifopo’s hilarious spoof on Barbara Cartland and her ‘romance of food’ was followed by a guest appearance of our chef Jacob Brown, handing out home-made hokey-pokey icecreams. (Dunedin born, Brown has been working in Sydney under Gay Bilson at the Bennelong Restaurant and most recently as chef at Fuel.)

Earlier in the day, food writer Margaret Brooker had delivered a paper asking whether regionalism in New Zealand food exists (answer: in terms of foodstuffs and ingredients, yes; in terms of dishes and recipes, no). During the general discussion which followed, a member of the audience mentioned possum stew. ‘Worst thing I’ve ever eaten!’ somebody chipped in.

‘Possum stew?’ said Symons with a grin, ‘Did I hear possum stew?’

For while we organisers had omitted (quite innocently) to announce it, that was the next course of the Lazy Lunch.

‘Mmmmm, this really tastes so mild it could be beef,’ I said as we ate.

‘But I thought it *was* beef,’ piped up a student food writer (which only goes to show, there surely must be a market in China for these fruit-eating tree bears – or at least as ‘green meat’ for Europe’s reformed vegetarian environmentalists).

In a paper entitled ‘Word of Mouth’, Symons stressed the need to cultivate, safeguard and celebrate word of mouth, where traditional cooking skills are passed on from generation to generation, where shoppers chat to stall holders in street markets, and where people hold conversations at the table.

Symons sees ‘word of mouth’ under threat, as supermarkets and corporations replace the personal contact of small retailers with marketing and advertising, and the evening TV news supplants meal-time conversation.

Both Tony Simpson and Barbara Keen expounded similar views in their papers, bemoaning the recent, sudden loss of traditional cooking in New Zealand. In her paper about the ‘lost food’ of the British settlers in New Zealand, Keen pointed out that despite the sneering attitude which now prevails towards this fare, rural people such as her family actually ate very well and based decisions on what crops or animals to raise on the basis of flavour, not shelf-life or marketability.

On the positive side, Jane Adams had come in straight from Sunday market in Victoria Street, carrying a fresh cabbage and daikon, and outlined the growth of farmer’s markets in the United States, where farmers take their produce to the city and sell direct to the public at some 3500 open air markets nationwide.

She said the US market movement held salutary lessons for those who subscribe to such significant notions as sustainable agriculture, urban renewal (the markets are often held on vacant lots in the central city), food security (much of the produce is organic), community and, most importantly, fresh natural food with flavour. And the message is spreading – a farmer’s market has recently been set up in Hawke’s Bay.

An insider’s view of Wellington’s coffee revolution was provided by Chris Dillon of Coffee Supreme, who told us that most of the people running the coffee industry in the mid-1980s – Faggs, Robert Harris, Tea and Coffee World, Belaroma – had come from a tea background, and seemed unaware of how the economic liberalisation of that era would impact on how or where people might want to drink coffee.

In 1989, Tim Rose and Geoff Marsland opened Midnight Espresso in Cuba St, spurring a café race which no one bothered to tell the coffee roasters about. Indeed, Faggs moved to Auckland at this time, leaving things wide open for Jeff Kennedy and his Caffè L’Affare, who in less than a year broke the old players’ hold on the market.

Then the Midnight guys built their own 5kg hot-air roaster and Havana was on the scene, followed by Coffee Supreme in 1993. Supreme thrived by focusing on the skills of the barista, a word not even used back then, since it was a rare and sophisticated consumer who appreciated that bad coffee was not so much down to the roaster as the coffee maker who had over-extracted their coffee base.

The next and final phase of the revolution was the takeaway espresso, pioneered by Fuel in late 1996.

Supreme provided the coffee for our symposium, and, breaking the wine-with-food tradition, beer expert Adrian Harrison matched Mac’s Blonde and Emerson’s Maris Gold with an Italian lunch cooked by Maria Pia Ltd. We also served Steinlager with a Malaysian meal cooked by Vim Rao, owner of Kopi and Bouquet Garni.

The wind-up function was held at Icon at Te Papa, with Peter Thornley and his sous-chef, Charles Noville, providing finger food for what amounted to a 10-course banquet in miniature: we began with shot glasses of avocado soup and caviar; had 'entrees' such as crisp balsamic-rubbed duck in bean curd purses, an amazing 'main' of boudin noir on spiced cherry tarte tatin, and ended with a cheese course, and raspberry and Grand Marnier orange tarts.

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