

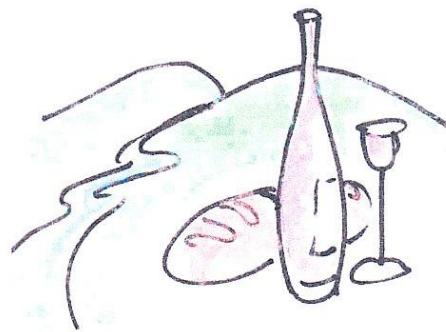
# *Cry the Beloved River*

*A loaf of bread, a glass of wine, a piece of  
coal.*

*Living well and in a sustainable manner in  
the 21st Century*

*16<sup>th</sup> Symposium of  
Australian Gastronomy*

*Hunter*



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26 - 29 October 2008, Hunter Valley, NSW

The 16th Symposium of Australian Gastronomy aims to draw attention to the Hunter as a valley with a river running through it and examine its past, present and future with reference to the sometimes competing industries which impact that river.

Cry the Beloved River - A loaf of bread, a glass of wine, a piece of coal – living well and in a sustainable manner in the 21st Century.  
Proceedings of the 16<sup>th</sup> Symposium of Australian Gastronomy.  
26 - 29 October 2008, Hunter Valley, NSW.

### **ISBN – in process**

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### **Our thanks to:**

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James Carter - *River Roast*

Chris Pillidge - *Producer Asparagus*

Nulkaba Hatchery - *Producer Quail*

Grant Radford & PJ - *Brokenwood Wines*

Merralea Scarborough - *Scarborough Wine*

Stewart Hodges - *Margan Wines*

And ...

Les Saxby - *Indidgellenium*

Phil Ashley-Brown

John Clarke

Chris Robson – *Maitland Gaol*

Rover Coaches - *Transport*

Dan Grey - *Carry bags*

Dorothee Heibel - *Artist*

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TAFE Staff and Students - *Hunter Institute*

And ...

Our wonderful Hunter Chefs

and ALL our cheerful volunteers

Rod Kempe - *Lakes Folly Wines*

*Peppertree Wines*

Judy & Colin Peterson - *Peterson House*

Darren & Tracey Scott - *Ridgeview Wines*

Ross McDonald - *Macquariedale Estate*

Michael Partridge - *Pear Tree Wines*

Sharon & Damian Burke - *Leaves & Fishes*

Jan & Jorg Gartelmann - *Gartelmann Wines*

Steve Langham & Michael Partridge - *Pigg's Peake Wines*

David Hook - *David Hook Wines*

Editor: Liz Love.

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## **Foreword, Liz Love**

The committee's decision to present the proceedings in an electronic format is in line with time honoured precedents set by former symposia – a desire to minimise paper use, in keeping with the theme of this symposium, an eye to budget (a disc is cheaper to produce than a paper journal) and a desire to include as many colour photographs as possible. This has also enabled us to make a substantial donation to projects aimed at promoting sustainable food.

The committee was strongly of the opinion that the 16th Symposium should explore issues relating to the very current debate on global warming and sustainability against the backdrop of the historical use of the Hunter River and its extended valley. We wished to draw attention to the Hunter as a valley with a river running through it and examine its past, present and future with reference to the sometimes incongruous industries which have grown up. In the beginning the River provided sustenance to the indigenous population; with European settlement it became a transport system for the logging industry, leading to the development of river ports. In the 20th Century industrial emphasis shifted to mining, agriculture, market gardening and viticulture. Now, in the new millennium, tourism and regional specialty foods have become a focus.

How does this historical perspective of the Hunter River valley inform our approaches to living well and sustainably in the 21st Century? How central to these considerations is gastronomy?

The main venue for the symposium was Potters Hotel and Brewery at Nulkaba at the gateway to the wine country and close to Cessnock, which although a commercial venue, proved to be a sympathetic site providing a wide range of accommodation styles close to most of the various offsite venues. The committee was anxious to find a site which would provide opportunities for informal socializing outside the structured sessions. At breakfast we were able to continue the tradition of making use of gifts of jams and spreads as well as showcase some of the local produce.

Spring in the Hunter lived up to its reputation, offering a fresh, green landscape. The vines were leafy, the weather varied from pleasant to quite hot, then finally rainy. However, it was fine at the times that mattered and we were able to hold critical events outdoors.

### *A few notes on the meals*

Our meals were provided by local chefs who are passionate about local produce and enthusiastic about the aims of the symposium. They were able to source seasonal ingredients from the region—local venison, seafood from Port Stephens, Angus Beef, quail, ducks and chickens, and fruit and vegetables from the market gardens around Maitland. The generosity of local wine producers meant that each meal was accompanied by wines, chosen with skill by our resident wine master, Michael Partridge.

The symposium opened on Sunday evening with a welcome to country by local aborigines, an audio-visual introduction to the region by Phil Ashley-Brown and a market set up to offer snails, asparagus, wines, cheeses and coffee from local producers and wine makers. Moroccan spiced quail with citrus sauce and macadamias using Nulkaba quail was prepared by Jamie Ball, a young chef chosen from a number of applicants to attend the symposium.

The next day's lunch at 'Leaves and Fishes' prepared symposiacs' taste buds for culinary delights to come and set the scene for the theme of the symposium.

Local legend Max Lake was remembered as we were treated to a tour of Lake's Folly winery with Rod Kempe, and a taste of Max's iconic Cabernet sauvignon, accompanied by Hunter cheeses.

Maitland Gaol's notorious past was recalled by the curator Chris Robson and provided the mystery venue for Monday's dinner. Ghosts from the past, both recalcitrant prisoners and truncheon wielding gaolers (thanks to TAFE students) added their own touch of authenticity to the colonial inspired dinner prepared with flare by Julz van den Berg from Cracked Pepper at de Iulius winery.

Brokenwood Winery barrel room provided the venue for a memorable lunch prepared by Lesley Taylor and her competent team of chefs and waiters, followed by a 'Hypotheticals' with a panel comprising Ian Hemphill, Ben Sales (Majors Lane), Joanna Savill, Rosemary Stanton and Paul van Reyk and moderated by former local ABC radio personality/bon vivant, John Clarke.

Bistro Molinès and its dress circle position above Mount View provided a suitable backdrop and venue for our final dinner. We were cosseted by Sally Molinès and her front of house staff at Bistro Molinès while Robbie Molinès and Lesley Taylor presented a well crafted menu aimed at showcasing as much local produce as possible matched by superb Hunter wines.

And in between, we were well nourished mentally by our learned presenters.

### *Acknowledgements*

I can't close this foreword without acknowledging the extremely hard work performed by a very small team in creating such a success. And what would we have done without Norma Burri, our one woman, multi-tasking dynamo who put her considerable talents into pulling in so many favours from her extensive network among the wine makers and restaurateurs of the Hunter Valley? I'm sure some are still shaking their heads in wonder.

## The Talking, Food and Wine

### Symposium Program

Sunday 26 October 2008

Potter's Hotel & Brewery, Nulkaba

6pm Registration, Small Producers Fair & Tastings.

*Food: Local producers and young chef, Jamie Ball, snails, quail, asparagus, cheese*

*Wine: Macquariedale, Pigg's Peake.*

7.20	Welcome & Thanks	Ian Hemphill
7.30	Welcome to Country & Performance	Les Saxby
8.30	Hunter River Stories	Phil Ashley-Brown

Monday 27 October 2008

Potter's Hotel & Brewery, Nulkaba

8.45	Moderator	Kay Richardson
9.00	<b>Birth of a Wine Industry</b>	<b>Julie McIntyre</b>
10.45	<b>Foodways in Early Colonial Hunter Region</b>	<b>Jacqui Newling</b>
11.35	<b>Useful Native Plants &amp; Weeds</b>	<b>Pat Collins</b>
12.30	<b>Lunch at Leaves &amp; Fishes Restaurant, Lovedale</b>	
	<i>Food: Jamie Hartcher and Tony Budden</i>	
	<i>Wine: Gartelmann's Wines</i>	
2.30	<b>A jug of wine, a loaf of bread ...</b>	<b>Michael Symons</b>

Lakes Folly Winery, Pokolbin

3.30 Tour, talk and taste Lakes Folly Cabernet Sauvignon & local cheeses with Rod Kempe.

Maitland Gaol

6.30 Pre-dinner activities & drinks, welcome to the gaol Chris Robson

6.30 **Dinner in the gaol**

*Food: Julz Van Den Berg: Colonial Feast.*

Tuesday 28 October 2008

Potter's Hotel & Brewery, Nulkaba

8.45 Moderator Kay Richardson

9.00 **Living well on the left** Marion Maddox

9.35 **Culinary Muscle in Muswellbrook** Heather Hunwick

10.10 **Hunter Cuisine** Kelie Kenzler

11.20 **Food in Fiction** Karen Crofts

Brokenwood Winery

12.30 **Lunch in the barrel room.**

*Food: Lesley Taylor, Tony Budden and TAFE students.*

2.30 **Hypothetical with Ian Hemphill, Ben Sales (Majors Lane), Joanna Savill, Rosemary Stanton, Paul van Reyk; Moderator John Clarke.**

Tallavera Grove – Bistro Molinès

7.00 **Dinner** Robert Molinès

Wednesday 29 October 2008

Potter's Hotel & Brewery, Nulkaba

8.30 **Breakfast with Morpeth Sourdough bread, symposiacs' jams and preserves.**

9.45-11am Plenary Session Kay Richardson (Chair)

The next symposium, Adelaide, November, 2009

11.30 Close

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**Welcome, Small Producer's Fair**



Welcome to Country

Les Saxby - Indidgellenium

James Carter – River Roast

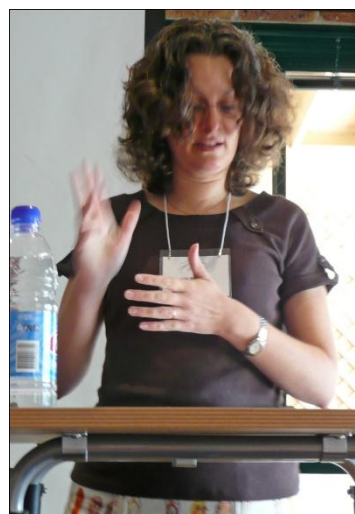


Helen and Robert Dyball, Snails Bon Appetite

## **Julie McIntyre - Historic Hunter wine growing**

### **Edited Abstract:**

Current experiments in sustainable viticulture in response to dramatic changes in agricultural conditions echo the challenges of the first experiments to establish wine growing in the Hunter Valley. Wine grapes were first planted as part of estate-style farming by pastoralists combining semi-subsistence practices on river-bank stations with the hope of finding crops that would bring the British colony of New South Wales wealth and prestige. Early efforts at vine growing and wine making were bitterly discouraging. But, once growers such as George Wyndham made a drinkable drop from convict-planted vines, continued initiative and persistence in the latter-half of the colonial century transformed the region's physical and cultural landscape in ways early wine writer James Busby would have welcomed.



### **Paper:**

Many of you will have heard of the nineteenth century wine writer James Busby, a young Scotsman who came to the colony of New South Wales in 1824 with some understanding of wine growing and a lively determination to contribute to the proliferation of wine growing in New South Wales. He had presumably learned that the convict colony was still a 'wild' place, not so much where life was cheap among British Australians (compared with other colonial frontiers) but where many former convicts and free settlers were often drunk. Some farming had succeeded but efforts to grow wine grapes had so far largely failed. Busby perceived, however, the connected benefits to be had from growing wine grapes in the new colony: commerce and 'civilization'; the creation of profit and a taming and refining influence. Busby was one who - as Henry Lindeman would later phrase it - hoped to see the landscape of 'dreary eucalyptus' ...smile with the vine'.<sup>1</sup>

Busby reprimanded colonists in his 1830 book - *A Manual of Plain Directions for Planting and Cultivating Vineyards and for Making Wine in New South Wales* – that for all of what had been achieved in New South Wales in the first few decades of colonisation since the arrival of the First Fleet in 1788, the colony lacked a viable wine industry and that much should be done to correct this. 'Let an Englishman travel into any of the wine countries of Europe,' he wrote, 'and tell any of the inhabitants of the country; of the superior wealth, and freedom enjoyed by Englishmen over his countrymen- of their superior advancement in

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<sup>1</sup> *Sydney Morning Herald*, 25 December 1867.

science, and the arts of life, and good government, and their consequently superior happiness: he will probably, very coolly acknowledge the truth of all this; but he will turn towards his vineyard, with a look of exultation, and reply “But you have not the vine.” The possession of this, he considers as equivalent to all other advantages, which the inhabitants of Great Britain enjoy over his own countrymen’.<sup>2</sup>

Several of the British men and women with some capital who arrived in the colony to build their fortunes had a similar view: that New South Wales could benefit from wine growing, certainly for profit, but also for its cultural distinction, that quality Busby perceived existed in France among a people the British might otherwise consider less fortunate.

British settlers in New South Wales created gardens with small vineyards in the Sydney district. Then, as new migrants took up land along the Hunter river to run sheep and cattle and grow cash crops such as wheat, corn and tobacco, a few vines were planted, first in gardens but increasingly up to an acre or several acres in size, usually just to make wine for the estates or station properties, but in some cases with commercial production in mind but nothing as sophisticated as current ideas about wine and food matching.

Gastronomy is, of course, about production as it relates to consumption: ‘the art and science of delicate eating’, and drinking.<sup>3</sup> Colonists in early New South Wales were not yet thinking this way; they were yet to begin to master the ‘art and science’ of growing the grapes to make wine. Determining how to grow wine grapes took many decades to succeed due to lack of knowledge about methods, lack of reliable plant stock and lack of skilled vineyard labour. Which grape varieties to plant and where to plant them did, however, present challenges similar to those faced by twenty-first century wine growers adapting their practices to meet the need for sustainable agriculture in a changing climate. There were not, any more than there are now, any simple, ‘natural’ choices about grape varieties or vineyard locations.

Site selection seems to have related to a rudimentary recognition of suitable soil types and terrain. Irish settler William Buchanan observed in 1826 that land he obtained on the banks of the Hunter River, about 80 miles from Newcastle, was too far from the sea or a market town to be fit for an ‘agricultural farm, but [he said] it is well calculated for grazing or for

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<sup>2</sup> James Busby, *A Manual of Plain Directions for Planting and Cultivating a Vineyard and for Making Wine in New South Wales* (Sydney: Printed by R. Mansfield, 1830), 12.

<sup>3</sup> Definition cited in Maguelonne Toussaint-Samat, *A History of Food*, trans. Anthea Bell (Oxford: Blackwell, 1992), 5.

vineyards'.<sup>4</sup> How he determined this would be instructive; possible he had read Busby's *Treatise on the Cultivation of the Vine* or visited European vineyards prior to migrating to New South Wales.<sup>5</sup> Whether Buchanan followed through with vines or stayed with the greater gains then to be made from grazing is not known. Those who did trial vines were listed by Hely (first name unknown), the colony's superintendent of convicts, in 1832. This suggests Hely sought to create a register of convicts experienced in vineyard labour to assist in allocating skilled workers to settler/investors.

Hely's list tells us that Hunter colonists growing grapes were large property owners such as William Ogilvie at Merton and James Phillips Webber at Tocal, each with three acres under vines; George Wyndham at Dalwood and George Townshend at Trevallyn, with two acres. The five one acre plantings known to Hely were William and Catherine Kelman's Kirkton – that is before Busby's famous vine collection from France and Spain arrived in the early 1830s; Henry Dumaresq – Governor Darling's brother-in-law and private secretary - at St Heliers, J. Pike at Pickering; Mr Pilcher at Maitland and Little at Invermien. Alexander Warren, near Wighton had a vineyard of half-an-acre.<sup>6</sup>

By the 1840s, the vineyard and winemaking at Merton - near present-day Denman in the Upper Hunter – appears to have been under the care of husband and wife as well as a non-British skilled labourer. Women 'often made the gardens which were so central to the settling enterprise'<sup>7</sup> and the Ogilvies' daughter, Ellen, wrote that:

Our energetic and clever mother was always busy, and educated all of us, our father assisting in some of the branches, but her great recreation was in attending to her garden. We soon had a beautiful garden, orchard, and vineyard, a great deal of which she planted with her own hands. From the vineyard our father made wine which is still remembered for its excellence. A German named Luther who was highly educated and a descendant of Martin Luther, on tasting the wine could not believe it was not Hock. As he appeared skilled in the art of

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<sup>4</sup> William Buchanan to his mother, 28 March 1826 cited in W. Allan Wood, *Dawn in the Valley, the Story of Settlement in the Hunter River Valley to 1833* (Sydney: Wentworth Books, 1972), 98.

<sup>5</sup> The first part of Busby's first work on wine growing detailed soil and climate effects. See James Busby, *A Treatise on the Culture of the Vine, and the Art of Making Wine* (Sydney: R.Howe, 1825), chapter one.

<sup>6</sup> Frederick Augustus Hely, Superintendent of convicts, 1832 cited in W. P. Driscoll, *The Beginnings of the Wine Industry* (Newcastle: Newcastle Public Library, 1969), 11-12.

<sup>7</sup> Katie Holmes, Susan K. Martin, and Kylie Mirmohamadi, *Reading the Garden, the Settlement of Australia* (Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 2008). 31.



winemaking our father kept Luther to assist him. The soil was considered very peculiar, and turned out various wines, all excellent.<sup>8</sup>

Merton wine benefitted from family interest, the investment in skilled labour and colonial networking. For example, Richard Sadlier, Busby's successor as viticulturist at the Male Orphan School at Liverpool, frequently visited Merton.<sup>9</sup> The Ogilvies continued their 'hobby' and their wine appeared alongside that of Kelman and James King or Irrawang at a Hunter River Society dinner in the early 1840s.<sup>10</sup>

Webber at Tocal had already earned a reputation as a pioneer in wine growing in the early 1830s. The *New South Wales Magazine* named him as a key contributor to early viticultural experiments, along with James Jamison, Thomas Shepherd and William Macarthur.<sup>11</sup> *The Australian* reported in 1834 that:

Mr Webbers [sic] Grapery at the Hunter, the finest in that part of the Colony has produced an unusual crop of fine grapes this season of the Oporto description; this gentleman expects next season to produce no insignificant quantity of wine from his vineyard.<sup>12</sup>

Webber used convict labour in his vineyard and followed a traditional calendar of cultivation based on a February harvest, wine making until April, pruning and weeding in the winter months.<sup>13</sup>

Which brings us to George Wyndham, whose early efforts in wine growing can be traced in more detail to others, thanks to the survival of his day book from the 1830 to 1840 and later success of wines from Dalwood and Wyndham's Bukkulla at Inverell. Wyndham came from British gentry in England where his family owned extensive lands. His father William's obituary in *The Gentleman's Magazine* mentioned that men such as Wyndham senior put lie to the accusation that country squires were 'useless'. William was judged 'a perfect country gentleman, a man of ancient family' as generous to the poor as to his associates in horse-

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<sup>8</sup> Letter from Ellen Ogilvie cited in Wood, *Dawn in the Valley*, 188.

<sup>9</sup> Wood, *Dawn in the Valley*, 188-189.

<sup>10</sup> *Maitland Mercury*, 18 March 1843.

<sup>11</sup> Cited in Driscoll, *The Beginnings of the Wine Industry*, 19.

<sup>12</sup> Brian Walsh, 'Heartbreak and Hope, Deference and Defiance and Yimmang: Tocal's convicts, 1822-1840' (PhD thesis, History, University of Newcastle, 2007), 114.

<sup>13</sup> Brian Walsh, 'Heartbreak and Hope', 114 and 136.

racing and fox-hunting. He served as a magistrate, a role his son would later take up alongside of his rural pursuits in New South Wales.<sup>14</sup> George was educated at Harrow and Cambridge ‘with a view to entering the Church of England’ but he travelled instead to Canada and Europe, including the requisite Grand Tour. He met and married his wife, Margaret, in the Belgian capital, Brussels, in 1827 and, after passing up a British Government posting due to his disapproval of contemporary politics, migrated to New South Wales with part of his inheritance and a small flock of sheep.<sup>15</sup> Wyndham’s income would come from pastoralism but his imagination was ignited by viticulture and viniculture. As a family historian later observed ‘the only subject on whom he becomes truly expansive in his diary is that of his first attempts at making wine’.<sup>16</sup>

Vines were not immediately planted at Dalwood, however, and Wyndham’s interest may have come from his wide network of friends, many of whom were experimenting with wine growing as well as other crops. First, as with other estate properties, a small number of grape vines were planted in Dalwood’s garden then Wyndham set about planning a vineyard. Wyndham exercised a prudent approach to his estate, combining mixed farming that extended from the sowing of up to fifty to seventy acres of wheat in various years and the planting of hundreds of fruit trees. He had ‘Blacks helping’ pull his maize crop in mid-1833, perhaps for payment in produce, but there is no evidence of Aboriginal labour among the vines; the main labour until the 1840s were convicts instructed and supervised by Wyndham. In addition to growing wheat and maize, Wyndham ran sheep and cattle, bred horses to work the farm (and later for racing), raised pigs, experimented with tobacco and hops and used his own timber - sawn on site - for buildings and fences. Dalwood and the later purchases of Fernhill and Bukkulla at Inverell were shaped to be partly self-supporting as well as profitable.<sup>17</sup> A variety of grapes were planted, for example, for wine, eating at table, and for drying. Both Fernhill and Bukkulla were planted with vines in addition to their development as pastoral runs.<sup>18</sup>

Wyndham’s daybook shows constant eye to the weather and the migration of native birds and flying foxes. Frustrations at Dalwood included rust in the wheat (which one year resulted in

<sup>14</sup> *The Gentleman’s Magazine*, vol. 16, 1841, 657.

<sup>15</sup> Judith Wright McKinney, ‘Wyndham, George (1801-1870)’ in Douglas Pike, ed, *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, vol. 2 (Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 1967), 630-631.

<sup>16</sup> H. L. Wyndham, Bukkulla Station, Unpublished manuscript, 1957, Mitchell Library (ML) B1505, 3.

<sup>17</sup> Wyndham weathered the economic downturn of the 1840s by diversifying his investment in land. He established other pastoral properties including Bukkulla in the New England district, at Inverell. See McKinney, ‘Wyndham, George’, 630.

<sup>18</sup> Donald G.S. Wilkinson, ‘Dalwood House: Its Importance and its Associations’, (Sydney: The Author, 1986), n.p.

the loss of sixty acres of a seventy acre crop) along with pests in the cabbages, heat waves, drought and the threat of bushrangers. Pioneer agriculture presented enormous challenges and in mid-1832 he railed against the ‘foul state of the land’.<sup>19</sup> In these years, Wyndham recorded that he had ‘began to clear the river bank for vines purchased from the Busby collection, on this side of the fence’. The first vines from among those imported by Busby were planted in September 1830. In mid-December he dug potatoes in the vineyard; an interesting choice of companion plant. Wyndham’s brief notes at the end of the 1830 entries lamented ‘very few of my vines took, put out above 600. They were dead before I got them’.<sup>20</sup> The official Busby collection from France and Spain was not imported to New South Wales until after this, so Wyndham must have used vines from Busby’s experiments while working as an agricultural instructor and viticulturist at the Male Orphan School at Liverpool.<sup>21</sup>

Either way, after the loss of that first planting, Wyndham travelled to Sydney in late Autumn, 1831. A visit to Shepherd’s nursery resulted in the purchase of the fruit trees such as nectarine, cherry, plum and peach to add to the collection already at Dalwood. He called at Gregory Blaxland’s vineyard at Brush Farm to collect grape vine cuttings that had been advertised both in Busby’s *Manual* and the *Sydney Gazette*. This may not have been a good choice as Blaxland’s vines were almost certainly still not identified as recognisable varieties suitable for wine growing as opposed to eating or drying. Wyndham was not to know that.

The varieties he planted in August that year included one called Oporto, which shows the confusion about grape varieties. By January 1832, however, Wyndham’s vines numbered fourteen hundred. He and his convict labourers worked to protect the growing vines while also preparing more land and a fence around a ‘future vineyard’. Friends, Captain Wright and Captain Pike delivered vine cuttings in early August, presumably recently pruned from their own vines. The cuttings from Wright were described as: two Muscatels, Black Hamburg (which Wyndham noted as ‘very good’), Red Portugal, Green Malaga, Constantia, Black Cluster, Black Damascus, Alexandra Frontignac and Black Sweetwater; an ampelographic hotch-potch but the vines had at least been trialled in the colony for several years at this

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<sup>19</sup> The wheat crop loss of sixty of the seventy acres planted occurred in 1830, the first year of Wyndham’s diary keeping; in October 1831 ‘grubs’ had eaten all of Wyndham’s garden seedlings for the second year running; in July 1834 bushrangers were still in the area after robbing Henry Dumaresq and a home at Patrick’s Plains (Singleton). Quotes from here are from Wyndham’s diary unless stated otherwise.

<sup>20</sup> The figure of ‘600’ was not written clearly and may be misleading. No other document is available to resolve what the exact figure could have been.

<sup>21</sup> Busby did not begin his tour until 1831; James Busby, *Journal of a Tour Through Some of the Vineyards of Spain and France* (Sydney: Printed by Stephens and Stokes, King Street, 1833), 1.

stage. The first grapes were gathered from the garden the following January along with a few other fruits just coming into bearing.

By June 1833 there were four acres of vineyard, and planting continued in July, likely of varieties listed in the diary under 'Captain Wright'. These were Muscat of Alexandria, Red Portugal, Green Portugal, Black Hamburgh, Alexandria Frontignac, Black Sweetwater, White Frontignac, White Syrian, Green Malaga, White Muscatel, Black Hamburgh, Black Damascus, Red Muscatel, Black Spanish. Some may have been from the Busby collection despite the earlier failures at Dalwood though most must have come from stocks imported earlier. Vines obtained from George Townshend of Trevallyn, in August, were 'White Muscat, Black Damascus (large fleshy), White Gouais, White Muscatel (good eating), Shepherd's white, Captain Anley's Red Muscatel, Large Purple, Corinth, Wantage, Black Frontignac, Madina, Tinto'. Those from Captain Pike included a 'good eating white grape [and] large oval purple raisin'. The array of vines and doubling up on some varieties shows how Wyndham trialled whatever he could to determine what would succeed at Dalwood.

In early February 1835 Wyndham began his vintage and 'filled the pipe with must of Black Cluster.' The process clearly fascinated him. A day later, on the tenth of February, he recorded '[n]o appearance of fermentation' but on the eleventh a froth was rising and in the afternoon a 'head [was] forming thick, and a vinous smell'. A day later the must was 'fermenting strongly' with Wyndham constantly monitoring the fermentation temperature. When the atmospheric temperature rose he removed blankets used to keep the must warm in the fermentation barrel but replaced them the following day. Soon 'a more violent fermentation commenced, the froth broke through the head and filled up to running over the 4 or 5 inches to spare. [T]ook off the blankets but kept head covered'. Within days 'the head had sunk and sweet taste gone, [a]nd instead a harsh vinous taste. Drew it off and filled a hogshead [and another container] with it'. The fermentation continued, violently: 'tried to stop it with sulphuring but too late. It is sharp and promises to make good vinegar'.

Wyndham persisted nonetheless. Black Cluster grapes were fermented next with sugar and skins added. This time Wyndham 'over sulphured' to stop the fermentation and declared the result tasted of sulphur and 'a little sweet'. The experimentation continued with Muscatels, Gouais and the 'thick skinned white grape in the Garden'. There might have been some success with one of the blends: 'discharged vat & chalked it [perhaps as a fining agent], sweet taste being nearly gone. [v]at had a splendid bouquet'.



The following year's vintage began only a few days later than the year before. A combination of grape varieties including Black Cluster, Gouais and Oporto was made into wine totalling 1650 gallons. The wines were drawn off the sediment and racked in late June. The 1837 vintage started a few days ahead of the previous two, suggesting Wyndham, like Webber, worked to a strict calendar rather than conditions such as the ripeness of the grapes. This would have reduced the number of variables in early experimentation but could also have compromised wine quality.

On the twenty-fifth of July 1838, Wyndham 'bottled 12 doz. white wine - which was finished Nov. 15', suggesting experimentation with blending varieties. Christmas heat damaged the vines that year, mainly the Oporto and Shiraz. No vintage for 1839 was recorded in the diary. Wyndham expressed more concern at this point about treating scab in his sheep. Then came the economic downturn of the 1840s. Labour shortages and higher costs drove Wyndham to concentrate on his inland property near Inverell.<sup>22</sup> With wool growing his main source of income and wine growing a subsidiary, non-profit enterprise, the wine had to wait.

Wyndham's diary also demonstrates his membership of an informal but well-informed network of fellow wine growers from whom he certainly received vine cuttings, advice and an opportunity to discuss methods of planting, dressing and harvesting his vines and making wine. This informal network preceded the Hunter River Vineyard Association by nearly two decades. Regular visitors to Dalwood and associates of Wyndham who were involved in wine growing as well as the establishment of the large Hunter region estates included Dumaresq, Pike, Cory, Townshend, Ogilvie, Webber, Glennie, Wright and Caswell. Wyndham's diary shows he received many visitors whose names are attached to experiments in wine growing: the Reverend Samuel Marsden, who is credited with introducing wine grape cuttings to New Zealand; the Australian Agricultural Company head, Edward Parry; and Port Macquarie commandant Archibald Innes. Wyndham visited Kirkton after vintage in 1836 and accompanied Dumaresq to James King's Irrawang which boasted a four year-old vineyard as well as King's pottery.

The Wyndham enterprise had survived the 1840s depression due to a retreat to the family's inland properties. Once finances were stable again part of the family returned to the Hunter. Sons John and Alexander replanted Dalwood and extended the vineyard considerably. In 1867 the Wyndhams were cultivating 35 acres of vines at Dalwood, twelve acres at Fernhill

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<sup>22</sup> McKinney, 'Wyndham, George', 631.

and eighteen acres at Bukkulla, the Inverell purchase. John Wyndham began managing the wine business in the late 1850s. George's business practices likely informed John's for the Wyndham wine enterprise to succeed, though John also attributed his wine growing success to knowledge gained from Lindeman.<sup>23</sup>

By 1870, Bukkulla produced 11,000 gallons of wine per vintage. 'In the early days the grapes were taken to Bukkulla Homestead to be processed', wrote a family historian of the Wyndhams. 'The old yellow jacket tree North of the Homestead has a hole into which the lever of the [wine] press fitted. Later, the whole of the processing was done at the Vineyard itself'.<sup>24</sup> By the late 1880s the Wyndhams had earned a reputation for excellent wine from their almost eighty acres of vineyard.<sup>25</sup> His experience provides a portal into the experimental past of successful wine growing, clues about early trials in the Hunter Valley and enlightenment for contemporary growers facing change now the Australian landscape does 'smile with the vine', as Busby and Lindeman desired.

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<sup>23</sup> McKinney, 'Wyndham, George', 631.

<sup>24</sup> H.L. Wyndham, 'Bukkulla Station', ML B1505, 5.

<sup>25</sup> Lake, *Hunter Wine*, 21-22.

## **Jacqui Newling - Foodways In Early Settlement In The Hunter Region 1801-1850**

Interest in the Newcastle area began in 1801 when high quality coal, cedar and oyster shells that could be processed for lime were discovered there. David Collins commented on the first commercial transaction of coal in June 1801, after exploration vessels returned with 45 tons coal from Hunter river “which were exchanged with the master of the Cornwallis, for a quantity of nails and iron, articles that were much wanted; thus, for the first time, making the natural produce of the country contribute to its wants.”<sup>1</sup> (Equivalent to >670kg per miner per day)

It was also reported that the area’s alluvial soils might deliver "a very fit situation for forming a settlement for the cultivation of grain or grazing".<sup>2</sup> (This ratio was reduced to 1 man per 160 acres after the first 1920 acres held.)

Up until the 1820s, the Hunter Region was commonly known as “The Cedar Grounds”, and Newcastle “Coal River”, indicating the prime interest in the area was for resources rather than community settlement. After some private industry to extract the area’s natural resources a penal settlement was successfully established in 1804 at the mouth of Coal River (Newcastle), under the supervision of Royal Marine, Lt Charles Menzies. This proved to be a convenient and fortuitous place to send many of the troublesome Irish convicts who had been involved in the uprising and infamous Vinegar Hill conflict, finding that “the Coal River settlement was "An eligible place for the most turbulent and refractory characters to be kept at the coal works".<sup>3</sup> A wharf was built and access to the River was restricted to licensed vessels. A regular supply of cedar, coal, lime, and salt, another vital commodity, which was manufactured from seawater using coal fuelled pyres, were shipped to Sydney.<sup>4</sup> Convict labour would continue to service Newcastle industries until 1855.<sup>5</sup> According to the government commissioned 1822 Bigge report on the State of the Colony of New South Wales, “The hours of labour for the [Hunter River] convicts in summer are from five o’clock till eight, from nine till twelve, and from two to sunset, except on Saturdays, when they have from ten till four to themselves, and resume work from four till sunset...” “Twenty seven men are employed in the working of the mine... twenty tons of coals can be raised in one day by [that] number...(Equivalent to >670kg per miner per day). Punishment for offences committed by Coal River convicts consists of work in the chain gang and flogging inflicted with more severity than at other settlements.”<sup>6</sup>

845 people were being “victualled” (corporately provisioned) in the region in 1820. “The allowance of food to the convicts at Newcastle consists of eight pounds of wheat [just over 5 of today’s 700g loaves] and four pounds of salt pork, or seven pounds of salt beef or mutton per week.” Constables, overseers and civil servants were entitled to 1.5 times the convicts’ allowance. Much of the salt meat was of poor quality due to “bad packaging and curing” in Van Dieman’s Land and Otaheite [Tahiti], where the salt provisions were processed, and flour coarse from poor milling techniques. Bigge reported “The want of a mill to grind flour (the occasion of loss to government and real privation to the convicts) was at last supplied by the establishment of a windmill...”

Convicts were to produce their own vegetables, from garden space provided. According to Hunter Valley Pastoralist Robert Dawson, “he [the convict] has always sufficient leisure and means to make his hut comfortable and keep it in good order as well as to cultivate a garden, where these are not done it is generally his own fault.”<sup>7</sup> Whether “he” had the energy, the will or the skill is a matter of consternation, and many pursued other means of procurement – trading or stealing.

Food rationing provided the authorities with a form of social control. Rations were generally issued twice a week, to minimise the ability of convicts to abscond with any quantity of supply, and to prevent “gambling and plunder of each other’s rations” or eating “their whole [weeks] ration at one meal”. Major Morisset (commanding officer in the early 1820s) implemented the system of “messing” the convicts, providing “an allowance of the meal of maize at breakfast” gruel or porridge style, which came to be known as ‘hominy’. Whilst maize meal was more nutritious than wheat flour, this practice relegated maize to being a lower-class food for generations! Maize remained a convicts’ staple, but many landowners grew maize grown as feed for their pigs.<sup>8</sup>

It must be remembered that rationing was not part of the penal sentence, but an obligation of the administration for all transported individuals - convict, military and civil servants. Food was a necessary instrument in the development of the colony and in its enterprises that used convicts as the principal labour force. Ex-convicts were among the very earliest settlers in the Region. Emancipated convicts or those rewarded for good service were allocated 30 acre lots to farm but not ‘own’; most were given formal claims of ownership later on. There were no ploughs, drays or assigned convict labour in these early times. People cleared and cultivated their land using hand worked hoes. There were no regular supplies of foodstuffs - maize, wheat and potatoes were grown and taken down the River to trade in Newcastle for whatever

was available - tea, sugar, calico and other basic needs. The River was the main access, the only other option was walk through bushland.

Being assigned to a free settler would have been greatly favoured. From 1835, landowners could be assigned one convict labourer per 80 acres of landholding.<sup>2</sup> These convict workers were to be fully provisioned in accordance with the government-set clothing, bedding, soap and victualling allowance. Wheat meal and flour were luxuries, graded in quality – the finest was “first flour”, the next, “seconds”, and market lists indicate a poorer “ration” grade.<sup>9</sup> Convict labourers were entitled to 12lbs wheat or its equivalent in flour or maize, with most landholders being able to supply this themselves, with the assistance of convict labour that worked to receive their portion.

Early Statesman Dunmore Lang noted, “The condition of a convict depends on the most part on his master. He is better clothed, better fed and better lodged than three-quarters of the labouring agricultural population of Great Britain and Ireland”. William Dumaesq’s convicts were housed in purpose built split-timber and thatch huts each accommodating eight men, with “A large fireplace where the men cook their provisions and around which they assemble on winter evenings with a much greater appearance of comfort than the sentimentalist would imagine.”<sup>10</sup>

George Wyndham was regarded to have been a decent employer, although recalcitrant convict staff required some disciplinary measures, which he diarised; January 20, 1830 “Cannon caught stealing melons. Had him flogged.” This was despite having a guard stationed at the melon patch. Cannon was in further trouble when he was found to be “selling slops” (clothing issue) on October 15, 1830. Others such as O’Neil were sent to Correction” [sic] for stealing flour, and females were “sent to the Factory” for various misdemeanours. Many thefts were of food – usually to sell or trade (for rum?) rather than being crimes of hunger.

And so to relate the convicts’ situation to our Symposium theme, “ – loaf of bread, glass of wine, piece of coal: living well in a sustainable manner” we should see how our convicts fared.

A loaf of bread – Rations supplied half kilo wheat or its bread equivalent, so not quite the equivalent of a standard modern loaf.

A glass of wine - Wine unlikely, but Rum if you were willing to trade some of your food allowance (or food acquisitions) on black market!

A piece of coal – well more than a piece - 670kg coal mined per miner, per day, for the benefit of the State. Living well in a sustainable manner - Despite their harsh conditions, many convicts found opportunities they might never have had back in Britain – basic education provided for their children, modest land grants or paid employment for the well-behaved, opportunities to start their own businesses. The number of runaways and escape attempts suggests that many were not “living well” nor in a sustainable manner, as many were returned to Sydney barracks or the Female Factory. Those who managed to settle however, could sustain themselves with a combination of hard work and resourcefulness.

### SUBDIVISION AND FREE SETTLEMENT

In the 1820s, once the bulk of the cedar had been extracted, the Hunter Region was opened up for subdivision and settlement. Land was granted for purchase, with certain provisions on usage and tenancy, to the well-connected, men of means, ex-army officers, and with the expectation that convict labourers would be assigned to help farm the land.<sup>11</sup> One such gentleman was George Wyndham, educated at Harrow and Cambridge, emigrated to become a farmer from Dinton in England, in 1827.

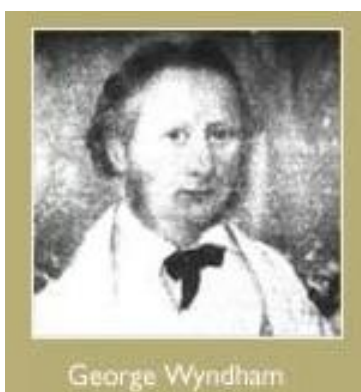


image source: [www.wyndhamestate.com.au](http://www.wyndhamestate.com.au)

Wyndham settled near Branxton and built Dalwood House (now being restored as part of Wyndham Estate). The Wyndhams and their [then] two children lived in a slab hut while main stone (quarried locally) house was being built. A brick kiln was built to fire bricks on site; cedar for joinery brought by dray from nearby Paterson River property.

Wyndham kept diaries which recorded weather, climate, wildlife, building Dalwood, district “perambulations”, his neighbours, family tid-bits including the births, and sadly the losses, of some of his 13 children, even descriptions of what clothing he wore some days, and accounts of his agricultural and eventually highly successful viticultural endeavours, to create Dalwood wines.<sup>12</sup> One can’t help become quite endeared to this gentleman, with entries such as “Alward [then 2] swallowed a bullet.” Three days later “The bullet appeared”.<sup>13</sup> And after

their 6 month old baby William had dysentery, Wyndham's melancholy is expressed "Little sufferer died at 8am. Buried him at 12. Then two hours rain."<sup>14</sup>

Other enterprising settlers including native-born New South Welshman W.C. Wentworth, who as part time settlers, farmed and ran cattle in the district. Wentworth's financial ledgers have been a useful source of information about the era. Another source of historical events are the journals of Reverend Alfred Glennie, which record his travails around the Valley to bless, bury and most often, dine with his flock, from 1855 –1863. They reveal a great sense of community, helping each other build, harvest, plant seed stock, share tips, gossip and even shape government. As travel was mainly by foot (wading or swimming the River), or horseback, overnight stays were a common necessity. Many larger houses included "Strangers Rooms," purpose built to accommodate visitors and travellers. Longer sojourns can be mapped from diary entries, by notations of where one called, and with whom one would dine with, or "stop overnight".

Although there was a regular steamer from Sydney to Newcastle, food supplies were inconsistent and unreliable.<sup>15</sup> Wyndham's great-granddaughter, Charlotte May Wright reminds us "The difficulties that the early colonists met with and surmounted when they left Sydney and made their homes in the "bush" cannot be realised by us in this luxurious twentieth century. The providing of food alone must have been an anxious problem."<sup>16</sup>

Landowners had themselves, their labourers and their stock to feed. As well as supporting convict workers (Wyndham inherited twenty workers when he purchased Dalwood), non-convict employees such as blacksmiths, carpenters, gardeners, were paid a combination of wages and food. Wyndham's ploughman Tom received 5/- (5 shillings) + 1/4lb tobacco, 2oz tea, 2lb sugar, 10lb flour and 10lb beef per week; a good shearer, 4 pounds [cash] per week, and his food.<sup>17</sup> A sizable property could be providing food for over 40 people.

Despite their relatively superior social positioning, self-sufficiency and DIY was the mainstay of survival for early colonists. Settlers made their own soap using potash for lye, starch from wheat bran for stiffening shirts and collars, candles from tallow (tallow production became a sizable industry in the Valley), and their own hemp to make twine to support stakes and vines. They grew tobacco to sell and use as payment for workers. Early settlers had to rely heavily on local sources for food and survival. Large river fish could be caught, water birds in lagoons and swamps could be captured, and meat hunted in the bush. Kangaroo, wild duck and emu were welcome fare, equivalent to game enjoyed by landed aristocracy in England. People kept 'kangaroo dogs' (greyhound X smooth-coated staghound) but these were



discouraged as they offered an easy way for runaway convicts to survive in the bush. George Wyndhams' granddaughter Charlotte May Wright recalled, "lagoons on the Hunter River were full of black duck and teal, and bronzewing and wonga pigeons could always be found in the scrubs..." Writing her memoirs in the early twentieth century she lamented, "Now there seem to be no lagoons and very few ducks."<sup>18</sup> Until home-grown crops were productive, locally grown wheat could be purchased; "Bought 50 bushels wheat of Bowen for 7 [pounds]. I am to thresh it."<sup>19</sup> Anything that could not be grown or produced on site came via the River (often calamitous - "Dray upset on the wharf with load of flour"...(GW Sept 29, 1830) as rafts, barges and later steamers, plied their way between Morpeth, Newcastle and Sydney. Dairy boats made regular stops along the river to collect cream from farmers for butter making through to early 1900s. Bullock drawn drays traversed crude road-tracks delivering looking glasses, turkeys, flour, tea, pepper and ginger, rose trees, 'slops' or finer clothing for the family, and mail or packages from Europe. Sugar and salt were delivered to Dalwood by the half ton, tea by the half chest.

The colonial kitchen was an extensive, industrious, and productive entity. Typical fare would include soups, stews, open-roasted haunches of meat, spiced beef, pickled pork, hams, bacon, tongue, batter puddings (boiled and baked), pies and perhaps even the odd curry or two, favoured by ex military-men who had served in India. Families were large - Margaret Wyndham's notebook advised that "17 pounds of first flour makes 23 pounds of bread", and included what was required for fifteen suet pastry dumplings, and quantified instructions to make "twenty pancakes the size of a pudding plate".<sup>20</sup> Many of these remain as our "comfort" foods - pea and ham soup, corned beef, roast beef with Yorkshire puddings, perhaps for some, cabbage and bacon "bubble and squeak", and bread and butter pudding. This was the era when dinner was lunch, meats were salted, leftovers potted, vegetables were pickled, fruits preserved. The flavours of clove, nutmeg and mace were universal; pepper and perhaps a dash of cayenne in savoury foods (although one poor Hunter resident was said to have died choking on cayenne pepper!)<sup>21</sup>; ginger, caraway and currants for sweet dishes. Salt and vinegar were the principal preservatives; saltpetre, used in meat preservation and Liverpool salt were permanent fixtures on local market lists. Salted meat was eaten by all classes, and was a colonial staple. Wyndham's diary reports "Packing Pork in tierces" (Tierce = 42gallons/<160 litres) and "Packing Beef (2 days)".<sup>22</sup> The commercial scale of Wentworth's Gammon-Gammon Plains (in the far western Hunter) venture can be appreciated, purchasing 2 tons Liverpool Salt .11.0.0 in November 1844, to "process" their cattle.



The domestic kitchens were not initially the main priority in building Dalwood – the family moved in once two rooms and the cellars were completed, in February 1830. A duck shed and a milking shed were also built by then. Work on the kitchen-wing would be an eight-month project, from June 1830 to the following March. Kitchens at that time were not just a place to cooking room, but were typically a series of apartments separated from the house, including scullery, larder and dairy, and maids' accommodation, laid with flagstones and shingled roof. (Wentworth's kitchen wing at Vaucluse House still survives from 1829).

Dalwood's "buff-stained" dining room was not completed until August 1832. Despite the feeling of security a fine house might achieve, Dalwood dinners cannot have been too relaxed: Charlotte May Wright wrote of her grandfather, "When he sat at meals, he had [his pistols, loaded] in a box, fitted under the edge of the table, ready to hand."<sup>23</sup>

George Wyndham was, at heart, an agriculturalist and horticulturalist. He became famous for his achievements with cattle and livestock, but rarely mentioned them in his diaries.<sup>24</sup> His diaries are filled with entries of the trials and tribulations of acquiring and growing an extensive array of "garden stuff" - fruits, vegetables, grape vines, tobacco and roses, an "olive from seed". Seeds were sent from England, canes and cuttings from local friends and associates in Sydney; Wyndham's degree of satisfaction can be sensed in his denotation, "[I] have the Tomata" (Dec 1830). New Zealand spinach ('tetragonia' popularly now referred to as Warragul greens) and "that Lilly" (the "gigantic" Gynea lily 'doryanthis excelsa', regarded as incredibly exotic and sought after in Europe) seem to be the only natives, yet Wyndham was clearly happy to have them. He found success with figs, quinces, pomegranates, peaches, lemons, pears, plums, melons, loquats, mulberries; peas, cauliflower, carrots, cabbages, potatoes, Brussels' sprouts, parsnips, beets, rhubarb, mustard.

Natural forces thwarted the settlers' efforts and tested their resolve; storms, frosts even snow, heat (up to 133F in Feb 1831), drought, bushfires, pests, and even the River itself as it flooded almost to the house, filled the cellars with water and left the land an unploughable bog. You can imagine Wyndham disconsolate state when at the close of March 1835 he wrote "No vegetables to eat this month." Drought and intense summer temperatures played havoc – bushfires and hot winds ravaged the countryside throughout December 1831. In the midst of it all a hail storm hit on December 13 at 3pm, "Knocked in pieces maize, tobacco, melon, all the garden a spectacle of woe... the hailstones went clean thru' the leaves of the prickly pear." December 27 "...more hot winds than I ever knew...the ground gapes." And there were native pests too. Magpies raided corn seeds as they were planted. "Grubs have eaten off

everything that rose. Not a cabbage plant left.”<sup>25</sup> It didn’t help when it was discovered that Aborigines had raided the maize crops, undetected by leaving the outer rows undisturbed.<sup>26</sup> Wyndham diarised, “Pulling maize. Some of it very fine but a good deal knocked down and destroyed by wet and pigs and blacks. Must wage war with pigs.”<sup>27</sup>

For all their efforts at self-sufficiency and enterprise, many early settlers were unable to see themselves through the 1840s, suffering severe drought and then the Depression of 1843/1844 when stock and commodity prices crashed; “Bankruptcy is almost universal...the whole community seems horror struck and nothing that can now be foreseen can avert bankruptcy...many proprietors are salting [their beef] and the establishment is now going, boiling sheep for the fat...sheep are sold at 6d and 7d each, stations given with them...”<sup>28</sup> W.C. Wentworth’s extensive boiling-down works at Windermere and salting enterprise on the Gammon Plains helped him ride out the depression, and the discovery of gold on his Bathurst property saw him prosper in 1850s. George Wyndham abandoned agriculture, and turned his attentions to dairying, then salting and the manufacturing of soup.<sup>29</sup> In 1845 he took to the road with his family, sheep and cattle and managed to survive the depression on properties in New England and Kyogle. They returned to Dalwood in 1847.<sup>30</sup>

To return again to our Symposium theme:- Despite wheat’s demise due to ‘rust’, a loaf of bread was manageable for most of our early settlers, even if you’d had to thresh the wheat yourself! The Hunter’s humidity resulted in wheat rust, a fungal “Puccinia Graminis” attack, putting an end to wheat as a staple industry in the Valley.

A glass of wine was becoming more than a viable option (and will be expanded upon by Julie McIntyre).

“Living well in a sustainable manner” was indeed, achievable for many in the region in the early C19th. The concept of sustainability was as tricky 150 years ago as it is today – climatic and economic impact, the cessation of convict transportation in 1840 and the lure of the goldfields in 1850s saw labourers for farming and small industry harder and harder to find.

## IN CONCLUSION

While we popularly accuse our colonial settlers of clinging to British ways and “reproducing” England, we must recognise and commend our early colonists for their ability to adapt to their new environs and experiment with the new and exotic. Indeed, the early settlers enjoyed a much wider variety of produce that we might think today. Market lists support our

perception of 19thC food as being stodgy, dull and monotonous -meat heavy, bland flavours, with a dearth of onions, cabbage and dried peas (being relatively robust, transportable foodstuffs) but Wyndham's diaries demonstrate the broad range of produce those on the land may have enjoyed. Further, European settlers are continually criticised for not utilising native food resources. Documentary evidence dispels this myth, albeit with the qualification that colonists would stick to familiar food types and imported procurement and cooking techniques, rather than adopt Aboriginal methods for capture, preparation and consumption. But the nature of the land changed as it was cleared of its forests and cultivated; the River systems altered as wetlands and marshes were drained and redeveloped. The advent of the railway through the Hunter in 1854 changed the nature of commerce in the Valley with easier access to Sydney and increasingly commercialised global trading. Urban townships grew and large pastoral landholdings no longer accommodated the numbers they once had. The admirable self-sufficiency displayed by the early colonists in the Hunter Valley diminished with technology, commercial and social change, and changes in the nature of the region itself.

Whilst we herald the achievements of George Wyndham and other pioneers of the Hunter Region and its wine industry though, it must be remembered that the wealthier landowning class held great advantage in that "the socio-economic structure of a property like Dalwood was built upon the convict and indentured labour of so many for the benefit of so few".<sup>31</sup>

Jacqueline Newling 2008.

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<http://www.adb.online.anu.edu.au/biogs/A020576b.htm>
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## **Pat Collins - Uses of Native plants and Weeds**

Since I was a child living on a dairy farm in the Upper Hunter I have enjoyed the bush. For hours I'd climb the rocky hills with the farm dogs. I would climb amongst the wild wattle and its fragrance still remains with me today. There I would see all the other wild flowers like the delicate bluebells, which I'd pick and chew not knowing that one day I would discover that this was a useful native plant.

I also had a vegetable patch where I grew my corn and beans and noticed that the plants that grew the easiest were the weeds. Some I enjoyed such as the Mallow plant and I would pick the fruits from it and make morning tea for my dolls and myself.

Now in my later years after many years of study as a herbalist, teacher and writer I am learning more and more about the uses of the native plants and the local weeds. I teach courses and workshops on the use of these plants as I have a passion to share any knowledge that I acquire.

I have learnt to respect what nature has provided for us. She has grown the weeds to replenish the soil and to try and fix the damage that humans have created with cultivation and habitation. Many of these plants were brought out by the early settlers who often appreciated their uses. Horehound was brought out to help relieve coughs; chickweed as a salad vegetable and to help itchy skin; blackberries to make tasty jam and even cathead had a use and was picked up in South Africa as a tasty pot herb. The birds brought many more seeds from South America as well as South Africa and the seeds travelled over the seas in food and produce. Today we are surrounded by an array of weeds. In a spare block you may find as many as twenty weeds in a small area all with a myriad of uses. Many of these uses are edible and the greens make an excellent spinach substitute. As these plants grow were nature intended they are usually high in vitamins, minerals and enzymes.

Then we have all the natives that grow in the bush around us. These may not be as prolific although some species have thrived. Much of the information on the uses of these plants has been lost as the aborigines diminished in number. Some early settlers did glean some knowledge from these people and yet others discovered uses of their own. Native plants are often specific to your area and many farmers and bush folk have learnt the uses of the plants in their own area. I have been discovering the plants in my area in the Upper Hunter, which is surrounded by Wollemi National Park. Whenever I go for a walk I usually grab a few snacks

on the way. These foods are usually not very sweet and some would say not very edible but I enjoy them. I cut off some sap from the wattle or Kurrajong trees to suck on; grab a handful of berries off the white sour bush and chew on a few stalks out of the grass tree.

Today bush foods have had a revival and many people enjoy lemon myrtle, native tomatoes, Warrigal greens, wattle seed and even a few witchetty grubs. These may not grow in your area but you can easily purchase most of these plants and establish them on your block. I grow a lot of lemon myrtle trees and enjoy their leaves in teas and in cooking as they have a delicious lime flavour. Dry and grind the leaves and put them in biscuits or a cheesecake and you'll be growing the tree as well! I am also establishing wattles that I know have tasty seeds that can be ground up and have a chocolate/coffee flavour. Try that in ice cream it is delicious.

I have listed some useful weeds along with their uses. I have also typed up the uses of the native plants that are shown on the slides. Try these new flavours and textures and I know you will enjoy the taste as well as the experience of using your local plants.

### Useful Weeds

Common Name	Botanical Name	Part/s Used	Main Uses	How to use
Amaranth-Redroot & Green	<i>Amaranthus retroflexus &amp; viridia</i>	Leaves, seeds	Edible	Leaves alternative to spinach and seeds in bread and biscuits
Bathurst Burr	<i>Xanthium spinosum</i>	Herb	Medicinal	Ointment, poultice, tea
Blackberry	<i>Rubus fruticosus</i>	Fruit, leaves, roots	Edible and medicinal	Cordial, syrup, tea, ointment, decoction
Blackberry Nightshade	<i>Solanum nigrum</i>	Herb, edible black berries	Edible and medicinal	Raw, jam, throat gargle, ointment
Boxthorn-African	<i>Lycium ferocissimum</i>	Berries	Edible when cooked	Jam and filling for pies
Briar Rose	<i>Rosa rubiginosa</i>	Rose hips	Edible	Syrup (high in vitamin C)
Broome - Scotch	<i>Sarothamnus scopariusq</i>	Seeds, dried flowering herb	Edible and medicinal	Tea, tincture Seeds - coffee substitute

Common Name	Botanical Name	Part/s Used	Main Uses	How to use
Caltrop	<i>Tribulus terrestris</i>	Dried herb including fruit	Medicinal	Tea, tincture or ground
Castor oil	<i>Ricinus communis</i>	Leaves <b>Seeds are poisonous</b>	Medicinal	Poultice for lactation
Catsears	<i>Hypochaeris radicata</i>	Herb, roots	Edible	Salads, pies, quiche Roots – coffee substitute
Cathead	<i>Emex australis</i>	Leaves	Edible	Alternative to spinach
Celery-slender	<i>Ciclospermum leptophyllum</i>	Herb	Edible	Salad garnish
Centuary	<i>Centaureum erythraea</i>	Herb	Medicinal	Tea, tincture
Chickweed	<i>Stellaria media</i>	Herb	Edible and medicinal	Salads, soup, ointment, cream, poultice, baths
Chicory	<i>Cichorium intybus</i>	Leaves, roots	Edible	Salads, soup Roots – coffee substitute
Clivers	<i>Gallium aparine</i>	Herb	Edible and medicinal	Quiches and pies, tea, tincture, cream, ground
Clover	<i>Trifolium repens</i>	Flowers, leaves	Edible and medicinal	Teas, salads
Cobblers Pegs	<i>Bidens pilosa</i>	Leaves, flowering plants	Edible and medicinal	Alternative to spinach, tea, tincture
Couch grass	<i>Agopyron repens</i>	Underground rhizomes	Medicinal	Tea, tincture, bath
Cotton-wild	<i>Gomphocarpus fruticosus</i>	Leaves, sap, stems	Medicinal and weaving	Sap for warts, stems for weaving
Cresses	<i>Rorippa spp.</i>	Herb	Edible	Salad green
Dandelion	<i>Taraxacum officinale</i>	Herb, roots	Medicinal and edible	Tea, tincture, ground, Roots-coffee substitute, Leaves-salad or cooked

Common Name	Botanical Name	Part/s Used	Main Uses	How to use
Dock	<i>Rumex crispus</i>	Herb, roots and seeds	Edible and medicinal	Leaves alternative to spinach, stems alternative to rhubarb, roots-syrup or tincture, seeds-tincture or ground
Fat Hen	<i>Chenopodium album</i>	Leaves and seeds	Edible	Alternative to spinach and seeds in bread and biscuits
Fennel	<i>Foeniculum vulgare</i>	Herb and seeds	Edible and medicinal	Seeds-condiment, decoction, tincture
Fleabane	<i>Conyza albida</i>	Herb	Repellent	Tincture, baths, sprays
Fumitory	<i>Fumaria muralis</i>	Herb	Medicinal	Ointments
Golden rod	<i>Solidago canadensis</i>	Flowers and leaves	Medicinal	Poultice, ointments, tea, tincture, baths
Henbit (dead nettle)	<i>Lamium amplexicaule</i>	Herb	Edible and medicinal	Alternative to spinach, tea, tincture
Horehound	<i>Marrumium vulgare</i>	Herb	Medicinal	Syrup, tea, tincture, lozenge
Hyacinth-water	<i>Eichhornia crassipes</i>	Young leaves, flower spikes	Edible	Cook as a vegetable
Inkweed	<i>Phytolacca octandra</i>	Dried roots	Medicinal	Ointment, decoction, compress
Knotweed	<i>Polygonum aviculare</i>	Herb	Medicinal	Tea, tincture, ointment
Lantana	<i>Lantana camara</i>	Dried root	Fresh leaves, flowers	Root-tea, bath Leaves-ointment
Lemon-bush	<i>Citrus limon</i>	Fruit	Edible	Anything requiring lemon
Lucerne (alfalfa)	<i>Medicago sativa</i>	Leaf, seeds	Edible, medicinal	Sprout seeds, ground, tincture, tea
Mallows-small flowering & red flowering	<i>Malva parviflora</i> & <i>Modiola carolinima</i> .	Herb	Medicinal	Tea, syrup, tincture, ointment,
Mullein-twiggy & greater	<i>Verbascum virgatum</i> & <i>thapsus</i>	Flowers of both species & leaves only of <i>thapsus</i>	Medicinal	Flowers-infused oil Leaves-poultice, tea, tincture



Common Name	Botanical Name	Part/s Used	Main Uses	How to use
Mustard-field & hedge	<i>Brassica campestris</i> & <i>Sisymbrium officinale</i>	Leaves, flowering heads	Edible	Salad green or cook as a vegetable
Nagoora burr	<i>Xanthium strumarium</i>	Only use dried brown seeds	Medicinal	External use only - ointment or infusion
Nettle-small	<i>Urtica urens</i>	Herb	Medicinal	Tea, soup, quiche, tincture, ground
Nutgrass	<i>Cyperus rotundus</i>	Tubers	Edible, medicinal	Dried and ground Fresh or tincture
Paddys lucerne	<i>Cida rhombifolia</i>	Fruit, leaves, small stems	Medicinal	Syrup, tea, tincture, ointment
Peppercorn tree	<i>Schinus molle</i>	Berries, leaves	Edible, medicinal	Berries-pepper alternative Leaves-chew or tea
Peppercreesses	<i>Lepidium africanum</i>	Herb	Edible	Condiment for salad
Petty spurge	<i>Euphorbia peplus</i>	Whole plant, sap	Medicinal	External use only -sap applied direct, ointment
Plantain-ribwort & greater	<i>Plantago lanceolata</i> & <i>major</i>	Herb	Medicinal	Poultice, tea, tincture, syrup, juice, ground, ointment, cream, bath
Prickly lettuce	<i>Lactuca serriola</i>	Leaves, sap	Edible, medicinal	Cooked as a vegetable, tea, raw
Prickly pear	<i>Opuntia stricta</i>	Fruit, pads	Edible, medicinal	Raw, jam, syrup, tincture, ointment, open pads-apply direct
Salsify	<i>Tragopogon porrifolrus</i>	Root, leaves	Edible	Roots-coffee/chocolate substitute, alternative to parsnip, leaves-cook as vegetable
Scarlet pimpernel	<i>Anagallis arvensis</i>	Herb-just flowering	Medicinal	Tea, tincture, cream
Self heal	<i>Prunella vulgaris</i>	Herb	Medicinal	Poultice, tea, tincture
Shepherds purse	<i>Capsella bursapastoris</i>	Herb	Edible, medicinal	Salad green, tea, tincture, ground or fresh

Common Name	Botanical Name	Part/s Used	Main Uses	How to use
Sow thistle- common & prickly	<i>Sonchus oleraceus &amp; asper</i>	Herb-fresh	Edible	Salad or cooked as a vegetable
St Johns wart	<i>Hypericum perforatum</i>	Herb-just flowering	Medicinal	Infused oil (flowers), tincture, tea, bath, cream and ointment
Stinking roger	<i>Tagetes minuta</i>	Leaves, flowering tops	Repellent	Infused oil, cream, rub on direct
Soursop	<i>Oxalis pescaprae</i>	Herb	Edible	Salad condiment – use sparingly
Thickhead	<i>Crassocaphalum crepidioides</i>	Leaves	Edible	Salad condiment – good in tomato salad
Thistle-scotch & saffron & star	<i>Onopordum acanthium &amp; carthamus lanatus &amp; centaurea calcitrapa</i>	Herb, stems, root	Medicinal, edible	Root-decoction  Leaves-tea  Scotch & Saffron - stems-cook as vegetable  Star – whole herb - tea
Thistle-variegated	<i>Silybum marianum</i>	Seeds, stems, flowering top, young plant	Medicinal, edible	Seeds-ground, tincture, decoction  Stems and young plants-cook as vegetable, Flowering tops- alternative to global artichoke
Thornapple	<i>Datura stramonium</i>	Dried leaves only	Medicinal	External use only, ointment
Vervain	<i>Verbena officinalis</i>	Herb	Medicinal	Tea, tincture
Wandering Jew	<i>Tradescantia albiflora</i>	Herb	Edible	Salads, quiches, soup, meatballs, stew
Watercress	<i>Rorippa microphylla</i>	Herb	Edible	Salads (high in vitamin C), best grown domestically
Wood sorrel	<i>Oxalis corniculata</i>	Herb	Edible, medicinal	Salad condiment, tea

## USEFUL NATIVE PLANTS

### **Bluebell** (*Wahlenbergia* sp.)

Parts used: Flowers

Uses: Pick and eat fresh or use as a garnish on a vegetable or fruit salad

### **Bottlebrush** (*Callistemon* sp.)

Parts used: Flowers

Uses: Fresh or dried in teas, suck off the sweet nectar when fresh

### **Bracken** (*Pteridium esculeritum*)

Parts used: Roots, rhizomes, shoots

Uses: Eat shoots steamed, roots roasted, whole plant for bites and stings

### **Bunya nuts** (*Araucaria bidwilli*)

Parts used: Nuts

Uses: Boil and extract inner nut and use in dishes just like chestnuts

### **Cherry native – dwarf** (*Exocarpus stricta*)

Parts used: Fruit

Uses: Take seed off the outside and eat tiny morsel of fruit

### **Geebung** (*Persoonia linearis*)

Parts used: Fruit

Uses: Eat when ripe and soft, usually falls to ground, sticky seed inside

### **Grasstree** (*Xanthorrhoea* sp.) – protected

Parts used: leaf base, flower spikes, trunk

Uses: Flower spike for nectar, sweet drink, fishing spear, fire making; chew leaf base; trunk has resin and used for water pipes

### **Kurrajong** (*Brachychiton populneus*)

Parts used: seeds, roots of young trees, inner bark

Uses: Seeds ground to make flour (burn off hairs first); root eaten like a yam; bark for fishing lines and dilly bags

### **Lemon myrtle** (*Backhousia citrodorus*)

Parts used: Leaf

Uses: Dry or fresh make tea, ground or chopped as a flavouring; essential oil and medicinally for chest infections and fungal problems

### **Lily native** (many varieties)

Parts used: Tubers

Uses: Dig up and eat the small tuber

**Long Wild Yam** (*Dioscorea transversa*)

Parts used: Tubers

Uses: Roast or boil the tubers

**Maidenhair fern** (*Adiantum aethiopicum*)

Parts used: Leaf and stem

Uses: Australian Chinese tea substitute

**Nettles** (*Urtica incisa*)

Parts used: Whole plant

Uses: Fresh or dried tops in soups, stews, quiches; make into hair tonic and use medicinally for skin problems, as a diuretic and tonic

**Pennyroyal native** (*Mentha satereioides*)

Parts used: Leaf and stem

Uses: Fresh or dried for a tea, mint taste in a salad and essential oil

**Pepper native** (*Tasmania insipida*)

Parts used: Leaf and fruit

Uses: Use fresh or dried in cooking as a spice. Often ground like pepper -

**Raspberry native** (*Rubus parvifolius*)

Parts used: Fruit

Uses: Eat fresh or make into jams and pies

**Sandpaper fig** (*Ficus coronata*)

Parts used: Fruit, leaf and latex

Uses: Fruit eaten fresh (tasty in a good season); Leaf used like sandpaper; Latex used to heal wounds.

**Sticky Hop bush** (*Dodonaea viscosa* ssp. *angustifolia*)

Parts used: Leaf and fruit

Uses: Fresh or dried in teas, capsules, tinctures, creams for medicinal purposes. Anti-inflammatory and pain relief

**Warrigal greens** (*Tetragonia tetragonioides*)

Parts uses: Leaf

Uses: As a substitute for spinach cooked or in salads

**Wattle** (*Acacia longifolia*)

Parts used: Sap, flowers, seeds and bark

Uses: Sap good to suck on to sustain energy and appease appetite: Flowers cooked in pikelets; Seeds roasted and eaten; Bark good for tanning



## Lunch at Leaves and Fishes



## Michael Symons - A Jug of Wine, a Loaf of Bread... - how wise?

The best-known lines in Edward Fitzgerald's translation of the *Rubaiyat of Omar Khayyam* are:

A Book of Verses underneath the Bough,  
A Jug of Wine, a Loaf of Bread—and Thou (Quatrain XII, fifth edition).

Having read that line into the symposium's sub-title ('a loaf of bread, a glass of wine, a piece of coal'), which also refers to 'living well and in a sustainable manner', I am examining what might be called the gastronomic fatalism of Omar Khayyam. To put it starkly, should we: 'Eat, drink and be merry, for tomorrow we die'?

While the viewpoint might initially seem self-indulgent, irresponsible and defeatist; it is also venerable (thousands of years old) and found in many cultures. It has had noticeable appeal among poets adopting a mature, quietist stance. It has also been associated with successful political philosophies. Given the global crisis of growth, its implicit celebration of limits sounds relatively sustainable.

### One journey

Barbara Santich has asserted that the Oxford Symposiums of Food and Cookery 'served as model for the Australian series' (2004: 7). Her contact with Oxford co-founder Alan Davidson might have encouraged her own participation in the original Adelaide event, and she, in turn, enticed him to join us, but she otherwise over-estimates that other symposium's direct influence.

The 'Prologue' for our first *Proceedings* acknowledges that: 'The event was partly inspired by symposia held in Oxford, but covered the broad field of gastronomy' (Symons, 1984: iii). This distinction that ours covered 'gastronomy' was meant to draw attention to two fundamental differences—the emphases on actual dining and on theorising.

My paper at that first symposium, a 'potted' history of Australian gastronomy, specifically contrasted our event to the 'Fourth Oxford *Cookery* symposium' (Symons, 1984: 57, original italics). The paper also picked out 'two things of significance' that led to ours. One was Graham Pont's undergraduate course in Gastronomy at the University of NSW the previous year (1983), based on a close reading of Brillat-Savarin's *Physiology of Taste*, and the other was publication of my gastronomic history of Australia, *One Continuous Picnic* (1982), which opens and closes with an aphorism of Brillat-Savarin.



The style and content of the First Symposium of Australian Gastronomy was essentially set during an excited exchange of letters between Graham Pont and me over the summer break 1983-1984, with occasional, wise inputs from the third convenor, Gay Bilson. None of us paid much attention to Oxford, not that I recall, at any rate.

As a professional philosopher, Graham Pont brought not just a serious appreciation of Brillat-Savarin but also classical learning, so that he pushed the ‘symposium’ label. As well as both having discovered gastronomy as an intellectual viewpoint, Graham and I shared somewhat libertarian attitudes, which led to such DIY policies as every participant being expected to make some kind of contribution—giving a paper, helping with a meal or bringing biscuits for morning coffee (a tradition that persists).

If there were any particular ‘model’, it was probably Brillat-Savarin’s proposal for launching a formal gastronomic discipline. Towards the end of Meditation 3 of the *Physiology of Taste*, he writes: ‘First of all a rich and zealous enthusiast must organise in his own home a series of periodical gatherings, where the best-trained theoreticians will meet with the finest practitioners’ (§22).

By way of circumstantial confirmation of the *Physiology of Taste* as ‘model’, Alan Davidson would later write that he banned Brillat-Savarin from an anthology of food writings, ‘being given a surfeit of him by fanatical Australians at Adelaide in 1984’ (Davidson, 1988: 9).

### **The environment**

Something like the symposium arises from a combination of factors, and I can further retrace my own chain of causality. Why had I wanted a conference? I have only half-jokingly said the symposium was dreamt up as a way of meeting Marion Halligan. Researching *One Continuous Picnic*, I had come across two excellent articles by her for *Quadrant* (e.g., Halligan, 1977), but the magazine could not provide her address. When she then wrote one of the more perceptive reviews of my book for the *Canberra Times*, that newspaper passed on my letter.

It wasn’t only to meet Marion, of course; I wanted to discuss Australian cuisine with other like-minded people, of whom there weren’t many in those days. Upon the book’s publication, I approached Graham Pont and Gay Bilson about becoming co-convenors, representing theoreticians and practitioners respectively. Gay took a year to agree, and away we went. Sending out media releases and notifying numerous university departments, Barbara and I attracted around four dozen participants. The number might be modest, but what quality,

including Gay and Marion, but also Stephanie, Maggie, Gabriel, Max and Don, to list some recognisable by their first names.

Digging further back, I'd taken up researching Australian cuisine partly out of observing its stark contrast with Italian eating during Jennifer Hillier's and my sojourn in Tuscany (July 1977-November 1979). An even earlier stimulus had been a copy of John and Karen Hess's *Taste of America* (1977), which sat on my desk on my last day working for ABC radio. I borrowed the book from a colleague who interviewed the Hesses, and although I never opened it, it planted a seed.

I was already fascinated with meals, hence the Italian sojourn, and a near-disastrous, recent radio interview over lunch at D'Arcy's restaurant in Paddington with critic Leo Schofield. Even although I took along a technical operator to ensure sound quality among the restaurant clatter, he had such a good time that the interview was barely usable, so that Matt Peacock did short 'crosses' to the interview during that night's Broadband program.

Digging even further, the root of my commitment had been environmental worries. Working for the *Sydney Morning Herald* from 1967-1973, I specialised in environmental matters from around 1969, when I wrote 'Top scientist campaigns on pollution' (5 November) until showing how demolished sandstone buildings were dumped on the Parramatta River's mangroves to produce playing fields ('Doing the Concord creep', 16 February 1972, pp. 1 and 7). Most influentially, I contributed an investigative series named, and naming, 'The Polluters' (April-May 1970). Everyone thought it should have won a Walkley Award, although high among reasons not to enter was that the journalism prize had been endowed by an oil company (William Gaston Walkley was the founder of Ampol Petroleum).

This had been a distressing experience: boating along some of Sydney's black, factory-lined creeks; being photographed under-water showing the discarded self-styled 'throw-away' cans off a lonely Middle Head beach; reporting visits by Paul Ehrlich, whose *The Population Bomb* (1968) stimulated the Zero Population Growth movement.

Dozens of scientists, technologists and economists published a full-page advertisement in *The Australian* (Friday, 21 May 1971), warning that: '1. The resources of planet earth are finite. 2. The capacity of the environment to renew resources that are used up and to repair the damage caused by the exploitation of those resources is limited and decreasing.' This stimulated ABC-TV debates about the threats to human survival (Anon, 1974).

Sydney University ecologist and activist Professor Charles Birch flew home clutching an article in the July 1971 *Playboy*, entitled, 'An end to all this: We have handed our heirs an



ecological time bomb that birth control alone cannot defuse' (Koff, 1971). It reported Jay W. Forrester's dire predictions for a concerned group called the Club of Rome. The article stated: 'The first thing we learn is that the enemy is our love of growth' (Koff, 1971: 206). My short feature based on Koff's article does not show up in the *Herald's* archives, so it must have been done for the *National Times*, which was launched in February 1971. I have a copy somewhere.

Forrester's work was taken up by systems analysts at MIT and published as the widely-selling *Limits to Growth* (Meadows et al, 1972). By way of a summary, computer modeling estimated environmental collapse before the middle of the twenty-first century. Relaxing various assumptions only put catastrophe off by a few years. The answer was urgent and dramatic action. Big hope! A scientist at CSIRO Sustainable Ecosystems in Canberra, Graham Turner, recently checked out the *Limits to Growth* predictions and found an 'instructive' match with actuality (Turner, 2008).

As Turner notes, the well-funded proponents of growth quickly muddied the reputation of the Club of Rome and its project. As a young reporter meeting them face-to-face, I did not cope well with the dedication of industry leaders, their lobbies and PR operatives to do whatever it took—spin, lie and even occasionally do the right thing—in pursuit of profits.

The communication machine scoffed in those days that the anti-car movement wanted to bury the roads in horse manure; that reducing aircraft noise would mean they fell out of the sky. I discovered that the Keep Australian Beautiful Council was a front for packaging interests whose 'throw-away' containers created massive litter. Against this onslaught, little seemingly could be done.

I fell into depression, lost my philosophical bearings, and scarcely wrote any newspaper article for a year. It put me out for the summer of 1971-1972, and I remember an executive, David Bowman, sending a memo welcoming me out of my 'aestivation'.

The clouds eventually parted for a few hours one night. This was towards the end of a dinner at my friend and fellow journalist Camille Guy and Alan Preston's house in Balmain. Gazing across the room at three people still at the dining table, after some wonderful lamb, I felt strangely reconnected with the universe. From that moment in early 1972, meals took centre-stage, although that recognition took a while to sink in.

So, here we are more than 36 years later. Some health has returned to the Parramatta River. Jets are surprisingly quieter (thanks to high-bypass turbofan engines). But we still confront catastrophe with a now much closer horizon. Global warming, loss of biodiversity, shrinking

resources, commodified water, overpopulation and worsening inequalities are among the immediate hazards. The problems seem near-insurmountable, with capitalist ‘rationality’ still driving all before it.

What is the most appropriate response? Should a person work within the Labor Party? Join the Greens? Investigate, and expose, the lobbyists? Re-generate a few acres of private bush? Arm as a survivalist? Change the light-bulbs?

My books have been suffused with environmental concern. Complaining in *The Shared Table* (1993) about the ‘insufficient vocabulary for the hums, rumbles and roars of the modern city of transport and refrigeration’, I observed air conditioning’s perversity - ‘Ostensibly cooling and cleaning the air, this actually adds to city heat and pollution’ (p. 23). And so on. Undoubtedly, all such actions help. But fuller answers have taken me in gastronomic directions, and thus ‘eat, drink and be merry’.

### **Blaming “greed” and “materialism”**

The common explanation for unrealistic economic growth is ‘greed’. Here, we are already caught up in gastronomic analyses. Greed was a negative concept for Brillat-Savarin, who sought to distinguish intelligent gourmandise from gluttony. The conflation, he explained in 1825,

has been instigated by intolerant moralists who, led astray by their extravagant zeal, have pleased themselves to find excess where there was but an intelligent enjoyment of the earth’s treasures, which were not given to us to be trampled underfoot (1949: 363-4).

Blaming undue “consumerism” is also close to the mark, although we again have to be careful, because we are either keen consumers or we die. It’s just that consumption is out of kilter with natural possibilities. People need to improve their consumption, in ways that we might suggest.

The cause of the crisis, according to another piece of conventional wisdom, is undue ‘materialism’. The implied corrective is something like spirituality. Alas, this one is deluded. The problem is insufficient materialism. We are insufficiently appreciative of, and too detached from, the material world. Rather than grapple with gastronomic realities, especially the requirement to optimise food sharing, people are in thrall of fantasies: too many ads, too many logos, too many economic ‘numbers’, too many false gods.

The gastronomic impulse can be, let’s face it, greedy. It can set people off on a limitless quest for experiences— the next wine, the next restaurant, the next three-star worthy of a special trip. El Bulli must offer some pleasant and interesting dining, but absurdly. Its industrial style

of food is anti-gastronomic, narrowed food to a technical and taste exercise. If that were not bad enough, many of their lottery winners burn a half-planet of aviation fuel for one booking!

However, generally, we need greater gastronomic understanding. Fears of industrial-capitalist destruction have remained a theme of these symposiums since the first, when philosopher Anthony Corones said:

The rape of the land and the people by the exploitive industrial mind seems a strange course for a culture which prides itself on its rationality, but the rationality of efficiency and increased production is the rationality of the machine, and sits ill on human shoulders (1984: 103).

Against the present ‘car cuisine’ of supermarkets reached by fossil fuels, the traditional methods, so often delivering greater taste and conviviality, tend to leave a softer footprint. Not to deny the gastro-jetting, our side’s usual preference is for the fresh, local and seasonal: ‘It means a move towards what is patronisingly labelled the ‘simple’ life, and which is more richly-rewarding’ (Symons, 1982: 261).

The Slow Movement most famously represents this more backward-facing favouring of tradition and old foods, having emerged in opposition to McDonald’s. But Slow represents some contradictions, being a centrally-controlled mass movement, trying to turn marketing methods against capitalism, and promoting an insatiable quest for novel places and products.

Desiring a more sustainable harvest, and caring for fellow diners and food species, might not be enough, however. Needing near impossible change, should we take to the streets, or resign ourselves, gastronomically?

No less an authority than Brillat-Savarin made working out the best attitude to environmental calamity a legitimate topic for gastronomy. His Meditation 10 is a reflection on ‘The end of the world’. Admittedly, he imagines the catastrophe as some act of God, such as a giant comet, rather than as a consequence of human hubris, which he potentially could do more about. Yet he has worked out how to prepare himself. He leaves readers dangling, however, inviting them to find the solution.

### **‘Eat, drink, and be merry’**

‘Life’s too short for bad wine/coffee/whatever...’ Such slogans are associated with the class of gastronomic fatalism most often formulated as ‘eat, drink and be merry, for tomorrow we die’. Among the best-known versions, the author of Ecclesiastes in the Hebrew Scriptures (the Old Testament) states over and over that:

Behold, what I have seen to be good and to be fitting is to eat and drink and find enjoyment in all the toil with which one toils under the sun the few days of his life which God given him (Ecclesiastes 5:18; c.w. 2:24; 3:13; 8:15 and 9:7).

In the New Testament, Luke uses variations of 'eat, drink and be merry' (Luke 12:19; 15:23; 17:27).

The idea goes back at least to the Gilgamesh epic, which originated more than four thousand years ago, with the so-called standard version recorded around 1300-1000 BCE. Observing that the gods kept immortality for themselves, the ale-wife's advice to Gilgamesh is to stay well fed and make merry. The same notion of keeping a full belly and enjoying this world, because we are soon enough dead, was found in Egyptian harp songs around 1360 BCE.

The concept comes down from classical antiquity as *carpe diem*, or 'seize the day' - from Horace's ode to Leuconoe. This general idea also relates to the *memento mori* (reminders of mortality), which were common in ancient Rome in such forms as mosaics of skulls in dining rooms. Against dangling skeletons, the 'Jug of Wine, a Loaf of Bread' sounds gentler and more reconciled.

Omar Khayyam (born 1048) was an important Iranian mathematician, astronomer, philosopher and poet. He is credited with the *rubaiyat*, although he may not have written any of them.

The rather free translations by Edward Fitzgerald (1809-1883) took a life of their own. First published in 1859, they were soon embraced by the Pre-Raphaelites, and numbers of attractively illustrated *Rubaiyats* came out. In late Victorian times, literary figures and free-thinkers formed Omar Khayyam clubs, and American temperance groups campaigned against the 'Bible for drunkards' (Aminrazavi, 2007).

The verses harp that we are here for a short span, then nothing. 'Snatch your share before you are snatched away,' Omar Khayyam urges (No. 45), to quote the more literal translation by Peter Avery and John Heath-Stubbs. Everything emerges from and returns to dust (the 'dust to dust' declaration of Genesis 3:19):

- the days of this world of dust
- Are a wind which quickly passes, fetch the wine (No. 195).

Omar Khayyam's potter turns pots out of the dust that might even once have been a king or a lover, and are then broken and pulverised, implying a oneness or flux of existence, as in the lines:

- Tread roughly on no plant,

- For it has sprung out of the dust of the tulip-cheeked (No. 63).

The author's happiness derives from the company of the 'tulip-cheeked' woman, along with wine and simple food - the basics.

- Drink wine, you will lie long enough under the ground,
- Without companion, friend or comrade (No. 47).

Note that this remains a materialist approach:

- Religion provides little solace and even less truth.
- My rule of life is to drink and be merry,
- To be free from belief and unbelief is my religion (No. 75).

In a more literal translation, the famous quatrain praises:

- If chance supplied a loaf of white bread,
- Two casks of wine and a leg of mutton,
- In the corner of a garden with a tulip-cheeked girl
- There'd be enjoyment no Sultan could outdo (No. 234).

The advice is not frivolous. At least in Fitzgerald's version, the lines advocate self-knowledge supported by learning (the 'Book of Verses'), and yet do not neglect the open air of rusticity and innocence ('the Bough'). We do not live by bread alone (the 'Loaf'), because the author demands company ('Thou').

The verses have extra appeal for us in that they are plainly set in the simpler, pre-industrial era. It's not just vain nostalgia to pine after traditional ways of life that are gentler on the environment. An example is wood fires, which turn out to be relatively sustainable (since the growing trees soak up carbon dioxide).

Lead a quiet life of learning and essential pleasures. This poetry is politics for the individual. However, environmental collapse means not just individual death, but that of the human race, along with other species.

We can lean back and admire the folly. We can accept that any social revolution is now too late. Yet, it might alternatively be objected that the tragedy has to be resisted, even if unsuccessfully, which requires united action, getting out from under the 'Bough'.

The juggernaut of capitalism pays fabulous sums for lobbying, marketing, spin and profit evangelism. With so many vested interests, society must reorganise massively and quickly.

Given the magnitude of the task, can we afford to sit back? Can we read our book under the gumtrees? Sip some chardonnay? Admire the sourdough?

### **Epicureanism**

While the ‘eat, drink, be merry...’ position might not be spelled out in the way that academic philosophers prefer, it is aligned to one that is. This is the materialism developed by the ancient Greek philosopher, Epicurus (c.341- c.270 BCE), who established his school in Athens in the generation after Plato and Aristotle.

Epicurus can be characterised as an empiricist, hedonist, atomist and deist, who derives some practical advice for everyday living. Most of his writings are lost, and much of the surviving tracts read as dry physics. Nonetheless, he can be viewed as a foodie setting out to comprehend a metabolic universe. For example, someone who wonders about the sense of smell might work out that invisible particles reach the nose, and so suppose some kind of atomic physics.

Academic philosophers deny Epicurus’s links with our Epicureanism, even although he declared the basis of knowledge to be the ‘pleasure of the stomach’; his school was named the Garden after its productive plots; his entire corpus resonates with gastronomic views, with an aim in life that might be described as ‘simple’. At the very least, his system provides the appropriate starting-point for foodie philosophy (Symons 2004 and 2007).

Pertinently, Epicurus stressed not mindless self-indulgence and excess, but limits. Suffering can be borne, because it comes to an end. When we die, we die. Etc. So, while Epicurus recommended a simple life, even moderation has its limits. ‘Frugality too has a limit, and the man who disregards it is in like case with him who errs through excess’. He also left such other morsels as: ‘those have the sweetest pleasure in luxury who least need it’ (Bailey, 1926: 117 & 89). The limits of the material world are pervasive, although hardly recognised by the presently dominant growth model.

In his stress on individual happiness, Epicurus warned against getting caught up in political machines. As he put it, some people wanted to become famous and conspicuous, expecting to win safety from others. Instead, trapped by their own celebrity and power, they lost their freedom. Epicurus saw greater rewards in seclusion, extolling the ‘immunity which results from a quiet life and the retirement from the world’. With advice to escape the ‘prison of affairs and politics’, he offered the simple injunction: ‘Live unknown’ (Bailey, 1926: 99 & 115).

Yet this did not stop him founding a highly successful movement that eventually extended throughout the ancient world, and influenced other writers, not least the author of Ecclesiastes, certainly Horace of ‘*carpe diem*’ and presumably the writer or writers of the *Rubaiyat of Omar Khayyam*.

Philosophically, Epicureanism was appreciated by founding liberal thinkers. Not the laissez-faire liberalism that licenses greed, competitive individualism, endless expansion and short-term benefits that soon bring us down. Forget the Liberal Party’s espousals, or most of them. Rather, Epicureanism influenced a variety of political activists leaning to the left, not least the arch foodie, Thomas Jefferson. That is, while preferring a quiet, private life, Epicurus has proved socially effective. Through careful means, his successors have worked slowly but surely.

His ideas about limits, among others, seem relevant and helpful in this global crisis. But time is running out. Civilisation has already put too much carbon in the atmosphere. Too many species are already lost. With the government promoting further coal expansion, we need to move **quickly**.

### **A relevant politics**

Frankly, I am tempted to abandon hope. No-one can say they weren’t warned. As shown above, the Australian media were carrying stark scientific predictions by 1971. As press secretary briefly for Tom Uren, Minister for Urban Development, I had him photographed cycling down Canberra’s new bike paths in early 1974, and even rode to work myself. The numbers commuting by bike, especially to CBDs, might be creeping back to earlier levels, but cars still dominate.

For three or four years, I believed it wrong to gastro-jet. But no urgent action seemed evident, and after my friends had flitted overseas a few times, I decided to join them. Airlines have only become busier.

Trying to be positive, I have long decided that we can ‘eat, drink and be merry’ and do our bit to save the world, too. Based on the ‘pleasure of the stomach’, a thoughtful Epicureanism favours a less damaging economy. It is a natural philosophy, too, in the sense that it is learned not from texts but from an attentive appreciation of meals – of the simple pleasure of bread, wine (or equivalents) and company. Enjoyment as if every meal might be the last.

Epicureanism also employs a highly relevant politics, naturally exercised around the table, again almost without trying. Epicurus was more socially concerned than his hedonism might



suggest. It's just that he worked privately through conversations and epistles to friends. He stressed friendship, which was based around the table.

While Epicurus and his offshoots wrote many books and letters, their main method of communication would seem to have been at dinner. The power of networking through meals is how I interpret one of his so-called Vatican Sayings: 'Friendship goes dancing round the world proclaiming to us all to awake to the praises of a happy life' (Bailey, 1926: 99, 115 and 139). Dinner parties provided the powerful 'viral' communication that marketers work so incessantly to exploit. Through person-to-person communication, Epicurus converted cities upon cities, attempting a social revolution that remains under-appreciated.

The internet seems surprisingly clever and honest, although perhaps where I travel, resorting frequently to Google and Wikipedia. Fancy receiving the *New York Times* at virtually no cost! With ad blocker, the information-sharing is even relatively untrammelled by commercial interests.

True, we are not joined at a recognisable meal. Yet food sharing these days extends countless food miles. We welcome one another to a single global table. Linked through the internet, ordinary conversations have already achieved much, not least promoting the victory of Barack Obama. Millions of schoolchildren have gobbled up Annie Leonard's campaigning video (<http://www.storyofstuff.com>).

So, I've re-phrased the poem:

A Laptop beneath the Bough,  
A Jug of Wine, a Loaf of Bread—and Thou

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## Dinner in the Cells – Maitland Gaol

### *Food*

Roast beef & Yorkshire puddings with horseradish cream  
Hunter River oysters  
Dried tomato with basil & fresh cheese



Jugged wood duck with cabbage & potatoes  
Damper & butter



Warm pumpkin pie with double cream & cinnamon sugar

### *Wines*

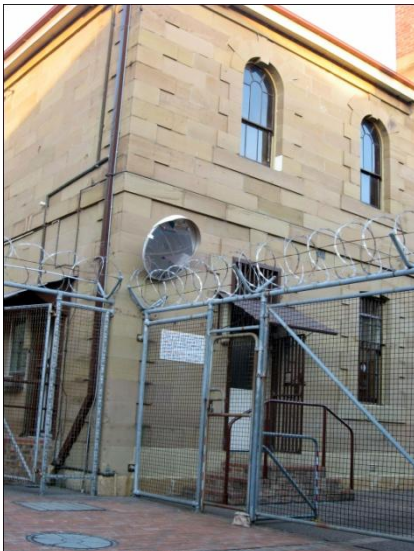
#### **Pigg's Peake**

2008 Sows Ear Semillon  
2007 Super Tusker sangiovese  
2006 Iswine

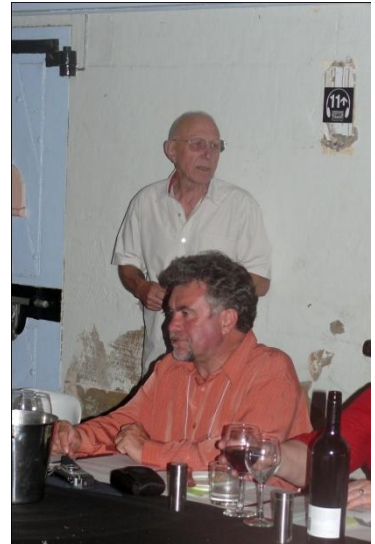


#### **David Hook Wines**

2004 Pothana Semillon  
2006 David Hook Barbera  
2008 David Hook mosto







## Marion Maddox – What Can Political Philosophers Learn from Foodies?

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I first started learning about food and politics when I was in primary school, and Frances Moore Lappé's *Diet for a Small Planet* (1971) pointed out food inequalities between rich and poor nations. Though I did wish the solution didn't always involve boiled lentils.

These days, food politics has expanded from questions of international inequality in access to food, to encompass such matters as:

- Food distribution within cities—why are inner suburbs generally well-supplied with affordable, fresh and varied produce, while the further out you go, the harder it is to find freshness and variety? In fact, the pattern applies not only to cities—hinterlands suffer more, until you find yourself in remote Indigenous communities, where fresh fruit and vegetables are frequently priced out of most people's reach altogether.
- The relationship between food production and climate, and thus the politics of climate change mitigation efforts.
- Genetic modification and patenting of genetic material, which raises myriad political questions, from the ethics of fiddling with nature to economic inequality and who has access to the new varieties.
- The erosion of traditional food cultures and production methods by monoculture farming and industrialized mass-production of fast food.
- 

Numerous authors, including such household names as Michael Pollan and Marion Nestle, have addressed these and many other food politics topics. Politics is, of course, a very broad area (Pollan is a professor of journalism and Nestle a professor of nutrition), but it is essentially concerned with the mechanisms by which governments and communities make decisions and with the forces and processes of distribution of material and social goods.

Political philosophy, by contrast, looks at the ideas that lie behind those mechanisms, forces and processes. For example, before you can decide to distribute goods fairly, we need an idea of what fairness is. To take another instance, many people agree that democracy is the best political system (or, if you prefer Winston Churchill's formulation, the worst except for all

the others); but views differ on what a real democracy would look like. Strictly going by the majority will can lead to repression of minorities. Polling everyone on every issue would (apart from the practical challenges) mean that important decisions were decided by many people who, on any particular issue, know little, care little, or both. Political philosophers are concerned with questions like what is a just society, what does it mean to treat others fairly, and so on.

A couple of decades after reading Frances Moore Lappé, encountering Adelaide's gastronomic demi-monde, I finally realized what a wonderful thing a respectfully-treated lentil can be. Philip Searle's lentil stew that he served at Michael's and my wedding is one of the more memorable dishes of my life. At the same time, I was completing a PhD in political philosophy, and realized that, just as food was vital to an understanding of how political systems work, it was no less vital to understanding political ideas.

While the table can only be a metaphor for political philosophy on a global scale, metaphors are often useful for seeing old problems from a new angle. Here are some areas where classic arguments among political philosophers can gain a fresh angle by looking at them from the point of view of foodies.

### **The nature of equity**

Most people agree that fairness is a good idea, but not necessarily on what it means. It might mean that everyone has the same amount of important goods (equality of distribution), or that everyone has the same opportunity to acquire them (equality of opportunity) or that everyone has access to what they need, which for some people may be more than for others (equality of outcomes).

What happens if we ask this question while sitting around a table, sharing a meal? We might notice that some diners are hungrier than others, suggesting that not everyone's needs are identical. We might also notice that not everyone has the same tastes, so some prefer more bread while others ask for seconds on the Brussels sprouts. Those two observations might point away from strict equality of distribution (everyone gets exactly the same) to one of the more differentiated interpretations.

But something else is also particularly apparent from a foodie point of view: my enjoyment of the meal rests on everyone, not just me, enjoying their share. If some get the best cuts and others get only the burnt bits, or if some get full serves while others get scraps, everyone's

enjoyment is likely to be impaired. My enjoyment might be least if I am the person with a small plate of burnt off-cuts; but even if I am the person with a full serve of the juicy variety, I am unlikely to enjoy it properly if the diner next to me is obviously less-satisfied. At the table, sharing is not just an altruistic virtue, but essential to our own comfort.

Thinking about the table helps political philosophers past some classic dilemmas. Some theories of justice are often criticized for being too individualistic, paying attention only to comparing how people fare when viewed as isolated units. Seeing ourselves as fellow-diners reminds us that the welfare of individuals is closely related to the welfare of the whole. To avoid the criticism of excessive individualism, some political philosophers adopt a communitarian model, which puts the collective welfare of the whole community first. The problem for communitarians, though, is that they can find themselves overlooking individual rights. If the interests of the whole community are said to be served by some members (say, women, or children, or Indigenous peoples) enjoying fewer rights than others, then maybe that is a regrettable necessity for the common good. The table reminds us that, although the wellbeing of individuals relies on the wellbeing of the group, the opposite is also true: the group only thrives when all the individuals are well-served. Diners around the table are both a community and a collection of individual appetites. The meal will only be enjoyable if both dimensions are respected.

### **Limits**

Conventional wisdom, repeated endlessly in the business columns, economics textbooks and in general conversation, tells us that economies are meant to grow. If they don't, citizens go hungry and governments fall.

An ever-expanding economy relies on our needs never being satisfied. Just when you had the top-of-the-line computer, out comes a newer model with still more indispensable features. Suddenly, I can't imagine how I got by without it. Even if I could, I'm competing professionally with others who have the latest technology at their fingertips and I feel disadvantaged if I'm trying to do the same work with fewer resources. Meanwhile, my employer's expectations have increased to take account of the new technologies available to help me. The old computer likely ends up as potentially toxic landfill. But I know it is only a matter of time until the new one, too, is superseded. The possible expansion has no endpoint—there will never be 'enough'.



Yet the ecological crisis is daily making clearer that the kind of growth we have at the moment is unsustainable. If we try to continue growing as if there were no limits, people will also go hungry—indeed, many in the most immediately climate-change affected areas such as Bangladesh, parts of Africa and, increasingly, small Pacific islands, are already going hungry. If humanitarian concerns are not enough to make us rethink the ideology of unlimited growth, then surely self-preservation must, since climate affects us all. Even if we are not personally affected by shortages in the medium term, the global instability that comes from increasing scarcity of food and, especially, water, will surely be harder to avoid.

You might say that the world is now experiencing a similar fate to the over-indulgent diner in Monty Python's *Meaning of Life*, who allows himself to be cajoled into having just one more mint—'it is only wafer thin'—before his body gives way under the strain of too much consumption. The skit works because viewers know that no one would ever really eat until they explode: the diner would have stopped enjoying the food, and would therefore have stopped eating, well short of any such point.

The table reminds us that we are natural beings with natural limits to what we can consume; and that we are part of a system that also has natural limits. Foodies, too, can be seduced into the unending quest for the latest rare ingredient—imported at vast expense of energy to fill a momentary gap in the menu only to be superseded almost immediately by something else. But serious diners, thinking more about taste than status and about ensuring tomorrow's dinner rather than simply making today's conform to a current fad, have been instrumental in alerting their fellow-citizens to the idea of limits. Limits apply not only to the quantities we can consume but also the ways we acquire our food. Foods taste best in season—trying to stretch the season artificially only leads to hard tomatoes and flavourless peas. Foods taste best nearest their point of origin—transporting them too far might deliver an exotic ingredient, but it is likely to taste like a pale imitation.

Learning to live was a concern of some of the most ancient political philosophers in recorded history, and is now a matter of life and death. Foodies have a powerful role in demonstrating both the necessity and the pleasure of doing so.

### **Hospitality: expanding the conversation**

Hospitality is surely the cardinal foodie virtue. Where charity is one-way, hospitality is an exchange. We invite others into our space, and benefit from their conversation, different view

of the world, new ways of doing things. Sydney journalist David Dale is among those who thank the wave of post-war migration for lunches suddenly becoming much more interesting: few Australians previously thought of eating pasta, much less octopus. The Italians, and subsequent waves of migrants, came to a new country but also shared the knowledge and techniques they brought with them.

Hospitality is a different kind of exchange from the commercial form, where specified goods are sold for a specified price. Such transactions, because of their very prescribed nature, are soon over and leave little difference in those who took part other than the fact that I come away with something I didn't have before and without something I previously had.

Hospitality is where I share what I can, and benefit from the fact that you are sharing it with me. Both less prescribed and more personal than a commercial transaction, it opens the possibility of much further-reaching connections.

In 2008 I was invited to give the Freilich Foundation annual lecture on bigotry and tolerance. I decided to talk about religious tolerance, and particularly about how different religions could fit into an Australian republic. The Canberra train left at some ungodly hour, so I booked a taxi, and sadly forewent a home breakfast in an effort to avoid waking my sleeping family. My taxi driver apologized that he was just having his breakfast, which, he explained, was an unadorned, warm, sourdough, whole-meal roll, which he'd picked up from the bakery which was just opening as he passed en route to my house. We discussed the superiority of sourdough crusts over others. We agreed that really good bread doesn't require any condiments. The aroma of the roll filled the taxi. The thought of those doughnut things they have on the train became, if possible, even less attractive.

'Here, I have a spare one', said the driver. I wrestled with myself. Maybe that was going to be part of his breakfast, too. On the other hand, he was genuinely enthusiastic about the qualities of the bread and seemed pleased to have found a fellow-enthusiast. I broke off half of his second roll and handed the rest back. He beamed. 'I live in Australia for twenty years; I cannot get used to eating in front of someone else. Back home, in Iraq, if you have food and you are out, you share with others. I feel very uncomfortable if I eat alone'. With scarcely a pause for breath, he continued: 'We all need to share. Christian people, Muslim people, atheist people, doesn't matter. We are all people. Why you are better than me? Why I am better than you? If you do good things you are better, if I do good things I am better. It is not because of who I am or who you are, it is what we do.' It is not very far from my house to the station, and his discourse took us right to the gate.

‘Where are you off to today?’ he asked, as I counted out the fare.

‘Canberra,’ I said, ‘I’m giving a talk there this afternoon’.

‘And what is your talk about?’

‘Well, pretty much what you were just saying.’

## **Heather Hunwick - Culinary Muscle for Muswellbrook**

Few would doubt that Australia offers many destinations for pursuing food and drink adventures. These are increasingly away from the major cities, and there is growing awareness by overseas visitors and domestic travellers alike, that regional areas allow people to indulge their interest in not just in what they are eating, but also where it comes from and how sustainable it was to produce. Those striving for the sustainability and diversification of regional areas increasingly see that regional cuisines are important in marking regional identity. The sociologist Bessiere in writing about French rural areas asserted that “as an identity marker of a region, gastronomy meets the specific needs of consumers, local producers and other actors in rural tourism.”<sup>26</sup> But rural Australia is not France, with its centuries-long love affair with all things food and drink. Nevertheless, as another sociologist Haukeland asserts for other parts of the world, “the awareness of food as a heritage component in tourism has been steadily growing over the past decades as a need for authentic experience increases.”<sup>27</sup>

For most regional areas, incorporating food into their portfolios of destination attractions faces many barriers, not least a lack of awareness of the benefits from achieving this.

This paper examines a semi-rural shire located a few hours’ drive north of Sydney that neither has, nor claims to have anything like a developed food tourism industry. It borders on the Lower Hunter, a region well known for hosting one of Australia’s leading wine and food tourism industries, which begged the question of whether a similar level of success could be achieved by the Upper Hunter. As part of a Culinary Tourism course requirement this region was selected for a case study on regional food tourism industry development. This involved researching and visiting the area and conducting a number of interviews with key players.

The region enjoys a number of attributes that could underpin such an industry. It furthermore, presents a most interesting case study, as its current attributes and industrial setting throw into particularly stark relief, the cultural and other barriers to the development of a viable food tourism industry faced by regions more generally. But before describing this region, Muswellbrook Shire, its rather unique local economy and its attributes, the term food tourism needs to be defined.

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<sup>26</sup> Jacinthe, Bessiere. “Local development and heritage: traditional food and cuisine as tourist attractions in rural areas.” *Sociologica* 38, No1 (1998):21.

<sup>27</sup> Jan Vidar Haukeland and Jens Sr. Steen. Jacobsen. “Gastronomy in the Periphery: food and cuisine as tourism attractions on the top of Europe.” (paper presented at the 10<sup>th</sup> Nordic Tourism Research Conference, Vassa, Finland 18-20 October 2001) 4.

## Food tourism defined

Two of the academic pioneers in this growing field, Michael Hall of the University of Otago in New Zealand and Liz Sharples of Sheffield Hallam University in the UK, refer to food tourism as “visitation to primary and secondary food/drink producers, food festivals, restaurants, and specific locations for which food tasting and/or experiencing the attributes of a specialist food production region are the primary motivation for travel.”<sup>28</sup> They define three levels of food tourism.

Their broadest, *rural/urban tourism* is where food is subsidiary to other interests and, at its extreme, suggests the golden arches and similar ‘fuel’ stops.<sup>29</sup> A subset of this is *culinary tourism*, where there is moderate to high interest in having or making food experiences as parts of other wider activities, and a subset of this is in turn, *gastronomic tourism*, where the primary motivation is to experience a place via consumption of food and drink. So while all regions offer their tourists food of necessity, this paper emphasises the higher levels: culinary tourism and its highest form, gastronomic tourism, i.e. those appealing and distinct enough to serve as tourist magnets.

## Muswellbrook Shire

The Shire of Muswellbrook covers 3,400 square kilometres of a region commonly referred to as the Upper Hunter. The spectacular east-west running sandstone escarpment that forms the southern boundary of the Hunter Valley divides the Shire into distinct halves; to its south is remote sandstone country mostly set aside within the Wollemi National Park, to its north are the rolling hills and rich alluvial flats of the Hunter River itself, which bisects this northern, populated half. But significantly, this quintessentially rural landscape with its green fields, horse pastures, vineyards and woodlands is now, as much defined by vast open-cut coal mines and two of Australia’s largest power stations.

The Shire’s current population is around 15,500, mostly in Muswellbrook, a town set on the Hunter River and the New England Highway some 130 kilometres northwest of Newcastle and 285 kilometres north from Sydney. The other significant town is Denman, 20 kilometres to the southwest where the Goulburn River, a major tributary, joins the Hunter. Based on

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<sup>28</sup> Michael C Hall and L. Sharples. “The consumption of experiences or the experience of consumption? An introduction to the tourism of taste.” In *Food and Tourism Around the World*, edited by Michael Hall et al, (Oxford;Boston: Butterworth-Heinemann, 2003),10.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid, 11

these rural attributes and its strategic location, Muswellbrook established itself as a substantial regional centre in New South Wales, and it still sees itself as a river town, now with a vision '*To do what is best for our community through leadership, excellent service and encouragement of sustainable development.*'<sup>30</sup>

It is worth discussing 'sustainable' for a moment since this word is emphasised in Muswellbrook Council's vision. The word is indeed inescapable, yet it eludes concise definition, making it amenable to manipulation by any vested interest. The geographer Holloway sees it in practical terms: "a crucial part of sustainable development is sustainable value creation or what we might regard as 'value capture'.... The search for the right policies for an area's sustainable future should be less concerned with the application of externally derived criteria than looking at 'internal' principles embedded in the particular land-use management practices or economic or business imperatives in a localized ecology, community and cultural context"<sup>31</sup>. Sustainable tourism is not isolated from wider development issues. In its broadest sense as Scarpato argues, it must have "ecological limits, preserve basic resources and allow for equitable access to these resources."<sup>32</sup> Muswellbrook Shire's search for such a sustainable future may seem to face particular challenges in light of the industries that currently dominate the region: coal mining and power generation.

Currently, mining as defined by the Australian Bureau of Statistics employs twice as many workers (15.9%) as the next ABS-defined industry category Agriculture, forestry and fishing (8.9%), and this has left its mark on the culture and feel of the town. Coal miners have long been highly paid and economically the picture is one of prosperity, but to many locals the mines present a Faustian bargain: on the one hand are their wealth and employment opportunities, while on the other are their competing for water, prime agricultural land and for skilled workers, their truck movements, their noise and dust, and their impact on visual amenity.

The modern Muswellbrook has the feel of a working man's town, of the frontier even. Yet there are indications, albeit minor and tentative, of a cultural shift, brought about by an emerging awareness of the benefits of tourism, drawing upon the region's striking place attributes and many local attractions, all within a few hours' drive of Newcastle and Sydney.

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<sup>30</sup> Web site [www.muswellbrook.nsw.gov.au](http://www.muswellbrook.nsw.gov.au)

Lewis Holloway et al."Managing sustainable farmed landscape through 'alternative' food networks: a case study from Italy." *The Geographical Journal* 172, No.3 (2006): 220

<sup>31</sup> Ibid 222

<sup>32</sup> Rosario Scarpato. "Sustainable gastronomy as a tourist product." In *Tourism and Gastronomy*, edited by Anne-Marie Hjalager and Greg Richards, London:Routledge,( 2002),138.



Logically, the region will tend to appeal more to domestic rather than international tourists where, by definition domestic tourism is “overnight travel within Australia that involves a stay away from home for at least one night at a place at least 40 kilometres from home.”<sup>33</sup>

People travel for many reasons. In Muswellbrook Shire’s case these include a diverse range of business and commercial trips related to coal mining and power generation and the service industries that depend on these. Holiday and leisure travellers include the ‘grey nomads’, weekenders, and relatives and friends visiting local residents. Few of these travellers, it is fair to say, would approach their visits to the Shire anticipating significant food experiences.

### **Why develop food tourism?**

Why, I hear the good burghers of Muswellbrook cry, should the Shire and its broader region seek to climb the food tourism ladder, to invest the time and resources necessary to the point where food experiences in the Shire start to become an attraction for tourists?

There are in fact, many reasons why they should at least consider conducting an honest assessment of the potential of food tourism. At a tangible level, food tourism and its emphasis on use of local produce should reduce economic leakages and recycle financial resources within the Shire, and add value to such produce before it is either absorbed into the industrial food chain or exported. Other benefits are less tangible but no less worthwhile. Work directed towards creating a local food image by emphasising and promoting local identity and authenticity should encourage the development of distinctive local branding, and increase linkages between local stakeholders (people and institutions) that should in turn, create trust and new relationships between consumers and producers leading ultimately, to the setting of new goals and a far stronger sense of community.

Via the miners, globalization has come to Muswellbrook more intensely and forcefully than just about anywhere else. The forces at work are so powerful that Muswellbrook’s only sensible option is to tap into the substantial resources available from the miners and direct these towards the goal of regional intensification. As urban dwellers and baby boomers, and of course the employees and other dependents of the mines and power stations, seek the ‘rural idyll’, the processes of meeting their wants offer a myriad of opportunities.

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<sup>33</sup> Bureau of Tourism Research, 2001:61 quoted in Leiper Neil, pg 22

It is essential when a region's wealth creation is largely in the hands of externally driven business that local food producers demonstrate a capacity for entering into a constructive dialogue with their powerful neighbours. The mines are the major wealth generators in the region. They are also owned and operated for the most part by the world's major mining corporations. The contrast with the local food producers could not be more stark. It is all too easy for the manifestations by these corporations of 'corporate social responsibility' such as funding new schools, community projects and the like, to be greeted with cynicism by locals. The situation calls for establishing a constructive dialogue between the miners and local food producers amongst others, an objective of which should be future growth, may, just may have positive unintended consequences such as reducing existing tensions, manifest for example in the many roadside protest signs throughout the Shire.

### **Food tourism's current status in the Shire**

Although the Council has appointed a Tourism Officer and established a new tourism office, the Tourism section of the Shire's Strategic Plan for 2008-09 as presented in the Muswellbrook web-site makes no reference to food tourism.

Research for this student project included interviewing the Shire Council's Economic Development Manager and its Tourism Officer; visits to two wineries, Arrowfield and Two Rivers; and to two food producers, Hunter Belle Cheese and Pukara Olives.

The Council officers initially suggested I interview just two locally focussed food producers offering branded products and four wineries. Yet as our discussions progressed, they recalled a few more local food producers: a sausage maker, a honey producer and a bakery producing sourdough specialties. They also drew my attention to the area's export-oriented and industrial-scale food producers: pecan and other nut growers, and of beef products. Interestingly, these more substantial enterprises did not offer value-added products into local markets.

The food tourism literature emphasises the importance of branding, and the value of protecting brands via intellectual property safeguards. Both of the wine producers interviewed strongly concurred, with both of them supporting the broader Hunter Valley wine industry's drive to re-focus on the two grape varieties the region does best: Shiraz and Semillon. They recognise their future requires having their broader region seen and defined as one *terroir*, and want to work towards strengthening this attribute. But while they may

benefit from any broader branding of the Hunter, they also recognise that in terms of cellar-door visits they are at a disadvantage relative to their Lower Hunter peers. To compensate, they place greater reliance on internet sales and wine clubs, and these have contributed more to volume growth, particularly in the case of the smaller, more recently established Two Rivers brand. Both wineries had displays of the two locally produced branded food products described below and both expressed their wish to have more products to support.

The Shire's food producers have started to develop comparable place characteristics. At Hunter Belle Cheese, a young but talented artisan is turning Brown Swiss Cows' milk into a range of distinctive cheeses and, more recently, yoghurts, of which the local community is extremely proud. At Pukara Olives, a larger concern targeting both industrial and local markets, there is a tasting room aimed at tourists, and crushing facilities that are made available to other olive growers. All of the wine and food producers interviewed anticipated good growth in their businesses over the next five years in line with their own strategies.

### **Strategy formulation: where to start**

It is as good a time as any for the Shire to recognize publicly, in its strategic plans for example, its awareness of the benefits of stronger links between local food and tourism. While it has barely begun to develop either food products or culinary experiences, the few that do exist clearly demonstrate the region's capacity for quality and best practice.

For guidance, it can look to the lower Hunter: it also has hosted a coal industry for far longer, one with a rich and colourful history, but now in decline as the centre of gravity of the State's coal mining industry has shifted into the upper Hunter--including into Muswellbrook Shire. As well, the Shire can draw on the experiences of many other regions within the State and beyond. However, while such guidance may be of some value, no matter how anxious a community is to do this or how large the pot of money, as Rahn sees it, "there is no model and no precedent for different constituencies to speak to each other in a community."<sup>34</sup>

Cambourne and Macionis encountered similar circumstances when researching the Australian Capital Territory, where they asked "what are the culinary tourism options for a region that

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<sup>34</sup> Millie Rahn, "Laying a place at the table: creating public foodways models from scratch." *Journal of American Folklore* 119, No. 471 (2006): 33.

does not have a long gastronomic history?”<sup>35</sup> While there are instances of a well-developed wine industry (an attribute the ACT shares with Muswellbrook Shire) catalysing the development of a culinary identity, they found in the course of their research that there was little if any real linkage between food and wine, thus weakening culinary destination development and opportunities. This prompted the ACT Government to develop and support an integrated wine and food tourism strategy as part of a broad tourist master plan. Many other regions throughout Australia have also demonstrated that a successful wine industry can be used to leverage food tourism development.

There are many more examples overseas. The Niagara Peninsula is a region further down the path of developing a gastronomic tourism industry than the Upper Hunter. There, agricultural producers forged relationships not just with chefs in local hotels and wineries, but in regional cities and towns. They also took expert advice, entering into a dialogue that encouraged them to grow a wider range of crops and adopt new agricultural methods. Anyone who has visited this area can readily observe how tradition is intensifying in the face of commercial success.

Marsden and Smith refer to ‘ecological entrepreneurs’: “highly motivated and innovative individuals who engage in the enrolment of other actors into networks which invest in the environmental, economic, social and cultural specificities of particular rural areas in the search for ‘sustainable’, environmentally sensitive forms of rural development. These individuals create spaces for innovative and locally appropriate means of engendering rural development using knowledge and practices from within and without their localities.”<sup>36</sup> Hall similarly refers to the “tourism entrepreneur, the winery owner, restaurant manager, chef, service provider or regional tourism office that will determine the quality of the experience.”<sup>37</sup>

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<sup>35</sup> Brock Cambourne and Niki Macionis. “Linking food, wine and tourism: the case of the Australian Capital Region.” In *Food and Tourism Around the World*, edited by Michael Hall et al, (Oxford;Boston: Butterworth-Heinemann, 2003),268.

<sup>36</sup> Marsden and Smith as quoted in Holloway, Lewis et al. “Managing sustainable farmed landscape through ‘alternative’ food networks: a case study from Italy.” *The Geographical Journal* 172, No. 3 (2006): 220

<sup>37</sup> C Michael Hall, and Richard Mitchell and Liz Sharples. “Consuming Places: the role of food, wine and tourism in regional development.” In *Food and Tourism Around the World*, edited by Michael Hall et al, (Oxford;Boston: Butterworth-Heinemann, 2003) 34.

To achieve this, in Cambourn and Macionis' words, "engaging stakeholders at an early stage of project planning is likely to have a significant degree of importance in terms of a project's longer term continuity."<sup>38</sup>

Muswellbrook Shire must first gain an understanding of the cultural changes required to meet what tourists want; the significance of these changes for tourism; and, the effects of these on the region.

This calls for a research project, to gather and analyse the data necessary for achieving such an understanding, starting with the determinants of a quality image including attitudes of locals and tourists, food and agricultural policies and even historical characteristics of the region's cuisine and food traditions. Research is also required to obtain an objective picture of the current offering including food and product, place, people and market, and the most appropriate promotion strategies. It can reasonably hope to tap into external sources of funding to assist, but this will require it to develop specific objectives with unambiguous and measurable outcomes.

### **Some possible directions**

Muswellbrook Shire may well decide from this research that the rewards may not justify the efforts required to achieve the necessary cultural realignments. If it does, so decide, here are some examples of the type of initiatives it might take. Firstly, it could nurture festivals and market opportunities that celebrate various ethnic and cultural foci. Bushranger history is alive with myths and symbols that celebrate a wild colonial past in which Muswellbrook Shire participated. It could also explore historical links with local indigenous groups to develop, through various active groups in the area, opportunities for products based on indigenous foods. 'Out of old Muswellbrook kitchens' is surely a great story yet to be told.

Secondly, Denman holds an annual wine and food affair in early May. This has been successful, and could be developed further. While there seems to be a regional view that a weekly market is not feasible, there are perhaps other options such as a monthly or even quarterly market that could draw on the resources of the region's many smaller communities.

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<sup>38</sup>Brock Cambourne and Niki Macionis. "Linking food, wine and tourism: the case of the Australian Capital Region." In *Food and Tourism Around the World*, edited by Michael Hall et al, (Oxford;Boston: Butterworth-Heinemann, 2003),287

Thirdly, the Council and business community could support the creation of food-tourism products with local distinction and high-end value. The culinary version of the traditional business incubator could access investment from corporate community funds and grants. By way of a specific example, the miners and power generators might be prevailed upon to finance and otherwise support a venue that provides a shared workspace, equipment and business advice for small start-ups has been established in many countries, resulting in the successful establishment in the host region of 'food entrepreneurs'. Of the output from such a venue, the wineries would welcome new food products to promote, and the food producers now in operation should see many opportunities for wider product range. This also can be tied into growing new training options and developing intellectual capital. And additionally offers a venue for local eating establishments and chefs to work with professionals in developing regional dishes of excellence and promoting back-linkages to food growers.

But first, Muswellbrook must decide whether food tourism is for them. If they do so decide, to start climbing the ladder of food tourism, they must strive to achieve a community-wide cultural shift.

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## **Kelie Kenzler - Creating an “Only in The Hunter Way”**

Tourism means big money and this in turn pushes regionalism. Regions in an attempt to attract tourists must offer something unique and special which can be enhanced through similar gastronomic experiences (Santich, 1996). Developing local gastronomy and incorporating this into a range of tourist food experiences from the local fish and chips shop to the best restaurants, is a way of achieving this distinction (Beer et al, 2002).

Unfortunately, in their attempt to be unique regional areas all appear to be utilising the same strategies. The emphasis on the use of local products is the most common and leads me to ponder how then, in Australia, with little to no culinary tradition can we create unique regional products and cuisines? The Hunter appears to have very few endemic products hence local products incur the problem of being local everywhere.

I will attempt to answer this question, but first a quick look at how the Hunter presently markets its local products to tourists. The Hunter has numerous promotional groups, farmers markets, local food guides and maps. The latter, entitled “The Hunter Harvest” unfortunately, recently lost their funding due to a lack of local producer support. There are well established and well promoted wine routes, touristic terroir, gastronomy events, such as the Lovedale Long Lunch, and various promotional and annual food festivals. These coupled with the 16th gastronomy Symposium held this year in the Hunter, have enhanced the areas ‘foodie credentials’. This year The Hunter, Newcastle and Port Stephens inaugural dessert and signature dish competitions commenced and are destined to become annual events. The Hunters gastronomic potential is enormous, but how do we get tourists to seek out the Hunter experience over any other?

The strategy of certification similar to those available in Europe such as the protected geographical indication “PGI’s” “PDO” and “IGP’s”(Beer et al., 2002; Bell et al, 1997; Hall et al., 2003; Santich, 1996) is one that if adopted by the Hunter would help. Examples such as Redgate Farm (Pokolbin) with their 27-year selective breeding history have produced an unheard of 500g Jurassic Quail. These birds are unique to the area and Australia. Their certification would allow producers greater marketing potential and have a wonderful flow on effect due to their use in local restaurants and sale at farmers markets. They in themselves would become a valuable tourism marketing tool. As we already have numerous government regulated organic and biodynamic certification bodies it is hoped that we will readily develop these new certification bodies for intellectual property and Terroir protection.

A recently launched campaign in the UK called “Eat the View” aimed to create improved market conditions for the products that originate from systems of land management which enhanced or protected the countryside’s landscape and character (Beer et al., 2002; Hall et al., 2003) emphasising the use of ‘best practice methods’ with a “strong and sustainable focus” ensuring ‘food traceability’ (Hall et al., 2003). This would be ideal for the Hunter and together with Certification would ensure consumer confidence for these highly marketable productions applications.

The key however appears to be one suggested by Beer et al. (2002) in that ‘the secret to building on established successes is to improve quality, maintain authenticity, communicate and innovate’. In other words I would suggest that this area needs to ensure a Unique Selling Product (USP) or an “Only in the Hunter Way” and this can be achieved by promoting sustainable innovation and originality in every area of the regions gastronomy from the raw producers to the corner store, the local pub to every high-end restaurant.

The strategy of creating specialist producers that will re-vitalize traditional breeds, promote heirloom species and selectively breed new ones, assist ‘added value’ products such as high quality smoked meats and cheeses and tap into the increasing market for traditional (Artesian) production methods is just beginning in the hunter. This also could be coupled with a conscious effort for environmentally sustainable production. Examples such as Chef Ben Sales newly built smoke house, Caparis award winning goats cheeses, Cornucopia biodynamic farm and numerous organic and sourdough artesian bread houses display how these producers are pushing for sustainable, unique individual, in their own way, cutting edge products.

The incorporation of these innovative products along with a collaboration of chefs, TAFE and universities (via government assistance and funding) will push culinary innovation in the area and ensure the Hunter has the ability to become a Gastronomic leader and trendsetter.

In summary the use of these cutting edge innovative local, sustainable products along with their incorporation into original cuisine styles and the proliferation of communications will ensure the Hunter has a tourism marketing advantage - they would finally really have an “Only in The Hunter Way”.

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## **Karen Crofts – Food in Fiction.**

My paper examines the role of food in fiction. Food is the theme of my collection of short stories, *A Taste of Dreams*.

Stories centring on food have traditionally appeared as non-fiction creative works, such as Elizabeth David's books and M.F.K. Fisher's 'Gastronomical Me', and in various food magazines and gastronomic journals. At the other end of the publishing spectrum, scientific studies of food and eating patterns are provided by sociologists, anthropologists and nutritionists.

However, I propose that it is through fiction that we may be able to fully explore the meaning of food in our lives, the essence of what it means to cook for others, to dine with them and the consumption of meals in their social entirety. This paper is not intended to pit fiction against other food writing genres, but to promote fiction as an excellent and equal form for revealing the meaning of food in our lives.

Good storytelling should reveal inner motivations, explore our depth of spirit and the soul of who we are. Through the use of food in fictional stories, writers can explore the meaning of it in the context of entire lives, to capture what food reveals about characters personally, familiarly and culturally. Literary fiction can also use food as a language for relationships—between those serving and being served and about those we dine with and those we exclude. And food is a metaphor for writing itself as Dianne McGee says in *Writing the Meal*: “the process of preparing and serving the meal corresponds to literary or artistic treatment.”<sup>39</sup> The meal within the text conveys layers of context and meaning.

From childhood, long before we are allowed to cook in the kitchen, before our taste buds and table manners have matured, we read stories that introduce us to the culture of food: consider the Mad Hatter's tea party, *The Magic Pudding*, *Paddington Bear's* marmalade sandwiches and that other bear that constantly battles with his elevenses:

Pooh always liked a little something at eleven o'clock in the morning, and he was very glad to see Rabbit getting out the plates and mugs; and when Rabbit said, 'Honey or condensed milk

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<sup>39</sup> McGee, D., 'Hors d'Oeuvres: Food, Culture and Language', from *Writing the Meal: Dinner in the Fiction of Early Twentieth-Century Women Writers*, Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2002, p. 23.

with your bread?' he was so excited that he said, 'Both' and then, so as not to seem greedy, he added, 'But don't bother about the bread, please.'<sup>40</sup>

My short story collection does not feature incessantly hungry, overweight bears, or magic puddings that keep on giving. All my characters are, in fact, humans—regular, suburban families who are, however, at significant points in their domestic lives: marital discord, truth and lies in love, chronic family dynamics, ageing, personal loss and failure. Food is the narrative link across these various dilemmas. Food scenes are throughout the stories underscoring character, plot, setting and action. Food acts mainly as a signifier of relationships. At times it is a replacement language between characters and it is always a tangible expression of the inner workings of the characters' lives.

The majority of scenes take place in domestic or intimate locations associated with food: around the meal table or stove, in the dining room, at the BBQ or in near-empty cafes or restaurants. These settings allow issues to be explored because, as Nora Seton states in *Kitchen Congregation*, “the kitchen table is where the contours of a family are reckoned.”<sup>41</sup>

What characters eat, how they share food and drink, which serves who and how food is accepted or refused is the sort of detail a writer needs to portray characters, especially when writing a short story because every sentence counts.

The short story is a literary genre that has been popular at various times in history. The short story is not a short novel; in fact, it is closer to poetry. Chekhov, who is admired by many short story writers, developed the slice-of-life short story: a small number of characters undergoing an event that changes one or all of them.

Raymond Carver was an American short story writer of the 20th century who wrote ‘A Small, Good Thing’, a short story about a baker and the parents of an eight-year-old boy who is killed when hit by a car. When the parents do not come to collect the birthday cake they had ordered (because of the accident), the baker rings with anonymous, nasty messages. The parents eventually identify him and visit the bakery full of anger. He is, of course, shocked by the death of their son and begs their forgiveness.

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<sup>40</sup> Milne, A.A., ‘In Which Pooh Goes Visiting and Gets Into a Tight Place’, from *The Complete Tales of Winnie-the-Pooh*

<sup>41</sup> Seton, N., ‘Too Many in the Kitchen’, from *Kitchen Congregation*, London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 2000, p.148.

‘Let me say how sorry I am,’ the baker said . . . ‘God alone knows how sorry . . . I’m just a baker. I don’t claim to be anything else. Maybe once, maybe years ago, I was a different kind of human being. I’ve forgotten, I don’t know for sure . . . I’m deeply sorry . . . Forgive me, if you can . . . I don’t know how to act anymore, it would seem. Please . . . let me ask you if you can find it in your hearts to forgive me?’

‘You probably need to eat something,’ the baker said. ‘I hope you’ll eat some of my hot rolls. You have to eat and keep going. Eating is a small, good thing in a time like this’, he said.

He served them warm cinnamon rolls just out of the oven, the icing still runny. He put butter on the table and knives to spread the butter. Then the baker sat down at the table with them . . . They ate rolls and drank coffee . . . Then he began to talk. They listened carefully. Although they were tired and in anguish, they listened to what the baker had to say . . .

‘Smell this,’ the baker said, breaking open a dark loaf. ‘It’s a heavy bread, but rich.’ They smelled it, then he had them taste it . . . They listened to him. They ate what they could. They swallowed the dark bread. It was like daylight under the fluorescent trays of light. They talked on into the early morning, the high, pale cast of light in the windows, and they did not think of leaving.<sup>42</sup>

Food in this story is a small, good thing that performs a great task—bringing these people together, providing comfort symbolically and tangibly, creating a shared experience and enabling characters to reach out to each other deeply but simply.

I aim to achieve a similar effect in my short story ‘Mezzaluna’ where teenager, Vaughn, takes over as cook after his father is admitted to hospital. He discovers Mezzaluna Deli and meets the owner who is of Mediterranean origin but goes by an Australian name, Bob. Bob does not ask after the boy’s situation but guesses the family crisis correctly. Bob and Vaughn talk about food. Bob introduces the teenager to fresh, quality produce: good cheeses, breads, correct cooking with herbs and spices and Mediterranean recipes from Morocco, Lebanon, Egypt.

The conversations about food are not a way of avoiding the crisis in the boy’s life; they are an alternative dialogue and a practical anchor for the boy. Bob teaches the boy to enjoy food and to respect it, to know its origins and the culture behind a cuisine. Yet, behind this, I hope the

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<sup>42</sup> Carver, R., ‘A Small, Good Thing,’ from *The Stories of Raymond Carver*, London: Pan Books Ltd., 1985, pp.351-352



reader gets a sense that the man is also communicating matters of the soul to the boy, the importance of rituals in our lives, the role of the meal as social discourse and its potential to define, confirm and validate family ties.

When his father is near death, Vaughn turns up, as usual, at the deli.

The deli man stopped when he caught Vaughn's silent, strained expression. They looked at each other—dark brown eyes staring into the blue-green of agony and wild pain.

“Soup for you and your mum tonight,” he commanded. Vaughn did not move while Bob ladled the kangaroo tail soup. He came from behind his counter to hand the package over and put a strong hand on the boy's shoulder. “Original Aussie soup. Take it.”

‘Mezzaluna Deli’ from *A Taste of Dreams*

The reader is also taken into Bob and wife Lina's home, to their grand outdoor room, complete with kitchen, where dishes are prepared for the delicatessen and the extended family has been fed over the years. Interacting with the teenager evokes a change within Bob which is sparked with the making of a chervil tart by Bob and Lina.

“My Lina, my Lina. Would you bring chervil tart to me in hospital?” He put his arm around her hips and buried his head in her stomach.

She nudged him away. “I'd be too busy running the damn shop to cook for you. You'd get chaos antipasto—crazy leftovers from the day.”

He helped her strain the cream, onion and chervil stems and later, when they blended it with the leaves, he draped his arm across her shoulders and together they admired the delicate green. He looked out across the yard and sighed.

“Just talk to him,” Madeleine said.

Vaughn never returned for a piece of chervil tart. Bob served all the unsold pieces to his staff at the end of the day, knowing the boy would not be back. Spring was over and the deli started gearing up for Christmas—ordering good hams and panettone. The regulars came with Christmas gifts and he ran the usual raffle for the hospital charity.

But at night Bob sat for longer after dinner in the great outdoor room while Madeleine cooked in the kitchen around him. He chopped or whipped or kneaded for her while he sat at the great table, occasionally staring out at the waterfall, the fountains and the statues. In silence they both knew this was the last Christmas with the business. They prepared quietly for the end of their working lives.

‘Mezzaluna Deli’ from *A Taste of Dreams*

So, food and its activities—the way it is prepared and provided—offer many possibilities for characters to express themselves, to reach out to others and communicate about life or reflect on it alone. Food unites the characters and becomes a language between people when dialogue is not possible. By placing a teenage boy at the centre of this story, with the typical minimalist communication of his age group, food can step into the scene and replace words, indeed, be a symbol for that which it cannot tangibly do. Food placed strategically in a fictional story can be both a tactile activity for characters and, at the same time, as Scholefield says, articulate “in concrete terms what is oftentimes vague, internal, abstract.”<sup>43</sup>

Another male who plays the main cook in one of my stories is Paul Green, the protagonist of the story, ‘Friday Night, Party Night’. We, in fact, do not see Paul cook, as the story centres on a night he drives his daughter and her girlfriend to a city nightclub. But we do see him eat after attempting to discuss ideas for dinner with his wife, which ends in a bitter argument between them, clearly a regular marital pattern.

Food is a source of conflict in this family, a power struggle, an opportunity for the wife to argue and be verbally aggressive. I was interested to read in Rhian Ellis’ essay ‘Food in the Violent Home’ that “the purchase, preparation and consumption of food form a significant . . . factor in many violent marriages.”<sup>44</sup> In my story, there is no physical violence between the husband and wife but I explore the notion of cooking and meal preparation as a stage for people to play out their anger and angst.

“Do we have any more penne than this?” Paul holds up a large container to his wife.

“Why?”

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<sup>43</sup> Scholefield, M., *Cooking By The Book, Food in Literature and Culture*, Ohio : Bowling Green State University Popular Press, 1989 p.1.

<sup>44</sup> Ellis, R. ‘The way to a man’s heart: food in the violent home’, from Murcott, A., (ed) *The Sociology of food and eating: essays on the sociological significance of food*, Aldershot, England: Gower Publishing, 1983. p.164.

“I need more than this for the Mornay.”

“Mornay?”

“For dinner tonight.”

“Mornay? This morning you said you were going to do stir-fry.”

“You don’t want Mornay then?”

“You don’t remember?”

“Remember what?”

“This morning...stir-fry you said.”

“This morning, did I?”

“You were standing over there, you announced we’d be having stir-fry and I suggested you wash the bok choy so we don’t have a dish full of grit from the unwashed leaves this time.”

“Yes, yes. Now I remember. OK. So, what would you prefer?”

“Are you going to use the tuna in the vacuum pack?”

“For the Mornay? Probably. Yes. I think so.”

“The tuna you hate?”

“What do you mean I hate it?”

“I used the same brand of tuna in the salad when Rosalie came and you turned up your nose saying it was poison.”

“I don’t think I said it was poison.”

“You pulled this dramatic face and carried on.”

“Right. So you want stir-fry?”

“I don’t want anything. I’m going to bed. Cook what you want. Just try to turn the exhaust fan on this time. It’d be nice to get up in the morning for once without being hit with last night’s cooking smells.”

‘Friday Night, Party Night’ from A Taste of Dreams

In the end, Paul eats a takeaway meal, alone, in an Indian diner on the corner of a busy, polluted city intersection. His table is beside the droning soft drink fridge, the TV screeching Bollywood music hits interspersed by spits and zaps from the bug zapper on the wall. This commercial food landscape mirrors the soulless marriage and recent faltering relationship between father and teenage daughter.

The beef vindaloo has good chilli-heat but is tough and grisly. After gnawing through a few pieces, Paul just mops the grainy, greasy sauce with naan bread. The lifeless bread in his hand reflects green, orange, blue as the city lights flash their rhythms around the diner. The pedestrian button [outside] continually beeps for the blind and the occasional right hand turning car receives a horn blast from behind. The shop fills with exhaust each time a bus takes off on the green light.

‘Friday Night, Party Night’ from A Taste of Dreams

Food evokes this man’s vacant life, his loneliness and sense of rejection as cook in the home. The physicality of food is intimately connected to the emotionless, spiritless state of this marriage. This marriage has an adequate suburban home to prepare food but the cook is driven from it.

This is the most negative food story in my collection and I recently discovered a John Updike short story from 1962 titled ‘Wife-Wooing’ where another man reflects on his marriage via the takeaway food environment. The members of this family are isolated from each other, not knowing what the other is thinking as they sit before a fire at home eating takeaway hamburgers.

We eat meat, meat I wrested warm from the raw hands of the hamburger girl in the diner a mile away, a ferocious place, slick with savagery, wild with chrome; young predators

snarling dirty jokes menaced me, old men reached for me with coffee-warmed paws; I wielded my wallet, and won my way back.<sup>45</sup>

Dianne McGee discusses the isolated diner in her book *Writing the Meal* suggesting the alienated, solitary diner is a modern reaction to the highly ritualized dinner party, that dining out alone offers freedom but perhaps a freedom without direction or content.<sup>46</sup>

The other famous lone diner in fiction, absorbed in his situation, is the narrator of Proust's *In Search of Lost Time* who takes one bite of a petite madeleine, sips his tea and is instantly transported back in time:

. . . mechanically, weary after a dull day with the prospect of a depressing morrow, I raised to my lips a spoonful of the tea in which I had soaked a morsel of the cake. No sooner had the warm liquid, and the crumbs with it, touched my palate, a shudder ran through my whole body, and I stopped, intent upon the extraordinary changes that were taking place . . . It is plain that the object of my quest, the truth, lies not in the cup but in myself . . . .<sup>47</sup>

So ensues descriptive reminiscence of Sunday mornings in Combray as a little boy with Aunt Léonie who gave him a little bite of madeleine soaked in her lime-flower tea.

Another beautiful passage capturing the memory of food, beyond the content of the meal, is from Toni Morrison's *The Bluest Eye*

“ . . . and every Saturday we'd get a case of beer and fry up some fish. We'd fry it in meal and egg batter, you know, and when it was all brown and crisp — not hard, though — we'd break open that cold beer . . . ” Marie's eyes went soft as the memory of just such a meal sometime, somewhere transfixed her.<sup>48</sup>

Food can be a tactile experience that transports us back to a place or people we once knew. But, most importantly, food memories are pathways back to ourselves. A whole slice of our past can be revealed to us in one bite.

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<sup>45</sup> Updike, J., 'Wife-Wooing' from *Pigeon Feathers and Other Stories*, Knopf, 1962, p.110

<sup>46</sup> McGee, D., Introduction, *Writing the Meal: Dinner in the Fiction of Early Twentieth-Century Women Writers*, Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2002, p. 7

<sup>47</sup> Proust, M., 'Overture' from *Remembrance of Things Past: Swann's Way*, Trans. C.K. Scott Moncrieff, New York: The Modern Library Publishers, 1928, pp54-55.

<sup>48</sup> Morrison, Tony, *The Bluest Eye*, Random House, 1970

Non-fiction works centred on food may be autobiographical or feature a collection of personal stories or anecdotes along with recipes. *Endless Feasts*, edited by Ruth Reichl, features sixty years of *Gourmet Magazine* writings. The anthology is dominated by non-fiction stories—gourmet travel stories, famous restaurant stories and childhood food reminiscences. But there are two short stories which show all the hallmarks of fiction in the literary devices used and the way they are constructed. They also happen to be written by two fiction writers: ‘The Garlic War’ by Annie Proulx includes arguments about food and a sweet cycle of plot resolution and a story by Ray Bradbury that later grew into his novel *Dandelion Wine* is highly stylised and poetic. These two very different stories use food to tell of family rituals, love, the cycle of life and the seasons and within the entire collection, I believe, best demonstrate the wholeness and depth of meaning that food has our lives.

A work of good fiction can take the reader on a journey where food is a true expression of the good and bad of life and include more than a kitchen, a food adventure or recipes. In fiction, the reader can witness events before and after the meals are cooked, the character in whole week, season or year, their failures, the ugly parts, the transitions and the crises. And what better to accompany, at times even lead this whole journey, than food.

Paradoxically, I am proposing that it is in fiction that the whole truth of an entire, imperfect life can be presented to the reader, with all the sorrow and pains, triumphs and achievements. Michael Symons’ writes “Eating well is not simply a matter of nutritional guidelines, more sensible food advertising or . . . cooking lessons” it involves “our whole senses, our knowledge and relations with other people and the rest of nature.”<sup>49</sup>

I will end this paper with one more story from my collection written during the Hunter’s most recent drought when I was living on a property further up this valley watching the paddocks turn from yellow to white to black.

In this story, ‘The Dry Storm’, a farmer and his wife live on an isolated farm during a drought where the black, earth-cracked valley is as much a character as the people. The vast and inhospitable setting underscores the emotionally bereft marriage. There is minimal dialogue in this story and the characters are often alone with their thoughts or dreams:

The woman slept and dreamt. She dreamt of her husband returning from the sales with the cattle carcasses hung along hooks inside the truck. They ate like kings for days, laughing

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<sup>49</sup> Symons, M., ‘Free the market’, from *One Continuous Picnic*, Melbourne University Press, 2007, p. 333.



between sips of warm beer that rushed over rotting teeth. The priest came, the doctor came. All was peaceable and light. The debts were paid and the cat grew fat from the leftovers.

When she woke, even the crickets had left. The sky was harsh outside the window. From her nakedness, she watched the blind scratch the sill and the light enter and exit the room with each inward sway. She heard the ute on the drive long before she smelt the dust and rubber.

Her lover entered with his strong boots. She smelt the hay and the age of his neck as he lay his bony brownness beside her.

‘The Dry Storm’ from A Taste of Dreams

This woman regularly receives postcards from an old school friend who now lives in the Philippines. The cards describe the beauty of the land, the people and their foods: from sour Sinigang soup to steamed ube cakes made from purple yams. The food of the Philippines represents the rich, fulfilled life the friend lives in contrast to the conservative, hard life the farmer’s wife has chosen by marrying a local boy and never leaving the country town, despite the promise the girls made to each other to travel the world together.

The climax comes when the farmer’s wife decides to cook Chicken Adobo and serve it in place of the regular roast on Sunday. She does not warn the invited guests and there are various reactions around the table but the main reaction is that of the husband’s:

From the stillness at the other end of the table, she knew only the vegetables would be selected from the platter and, later, before bed, in the hour of stillness when even the cicadas slept, more than his usual amount of bread and jam would be eaten.

Contrasting attitudes towards food give us insight into the inner core of this married couple. He sees food as an institution with rules and boundaries and patterns and routine. His wife longs for the ebb and flow of life, variety, experiment and a search for connection and recovery of spirit. Her search for the soul and spirit of life is done through food as she tries to cook the national dish of the Philippines and celebrate food that matches her spiritual desires through letters and postcards.

In her preface to *Cooking by the Book*, editor Mary Ann Scholefield writes: “Food cooked, eaten and thought about provides a metaphoric matrix, a language that allows us a way to get

at the uncertainty, the ineffable qualities of life”.<sup>50</sup> It is my hope that food into fiction achieves this.

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<sup>50</sup> Scholefield, M., *Cooking By The Book, Food in Literature and Culture*, Ohio: Bowling Green State University Popular Press, 1989, p. 1.

## Lunch at Brokenwood Barrel Room with Lesley Taylor



### Brokenwood Menu

Goat's buttermilk, milk and rosemary panna cotta with a vine ripened tomato consommé jelly, olive and pancetta dust and baby rocket leaves



Assiette of milk fed goat with beetroot confit, cauliflower puree and garlic petits pois.



## Dinner at Bistro Molinès with Robert & Sal Molinès & Lesley Taylor

Petite bouchée aux champignons sauvages et truffe du pays



Les huîtres farcies au corail d'oursin

Foie de canard sur petit toast de brioche

Le petit paquet de saumon en feuille de chou avec sa sauce safranée et queue d'écrevisse

Cocotte d'escargots provençale en tomate du pays avec cerfeuil

Le carré d'agneau, aubergine, petites légumes de la verge

Crème brûlée au chocolat et noisette avec sa surprise framboisée



## Plenary Session

The following is a summary of suggestions received from those who were able to stay for the plenary session.

### Feedback

Visitors book for each symposium from beginning to end.

Helen Hughes - Greater use of web-site in the future

As receptacle for knowledge and history

Or register database and contact database.

Jeanette – everyone send one postcard to one other person – and people who weren't there.

List of everyone here with contact details to be available. This might need a privacy agreement from everyone to sign?

Passing on the 'folder' – possibly electronic – someone to be responsible. Roger Haden could pass this over.

Proceedings to go to the National Library.

Evaluation sheets.

Easy access to photos - on Facebook or our own website?

Some tangible symbol to pass down from one symposium to the next. eg. a case of wine from previous symposium to be used at the next one.

But – each symposium has to be autonomous and up to the discretion of committee. Each takes on the characteristics of the convenors.

Ian Hemphill suggested some structural things that need to be passed on:-

Written instructions? – only guidelines as each state is different.

Where next?:

Barbara Santich – Adelaide 2009 12 to 15 November

ACT

Noosa - Bob McClellan – Karen Hunter has been talking to people in Noosa – Leonie Palmer

Paul van Reyk thanked the convenors of this symposium.

Helen Hughes reiterated our sincere thanks to Norma Burri for her numerous connections and networking skills!