FIFTH SYMPOSIUM OF AUSTRALIAN GASTRONOMY

The Pleasures of the Table

Proceedings
Adelaide, March 10 - 13, 1990

PROCEEDINGS OF

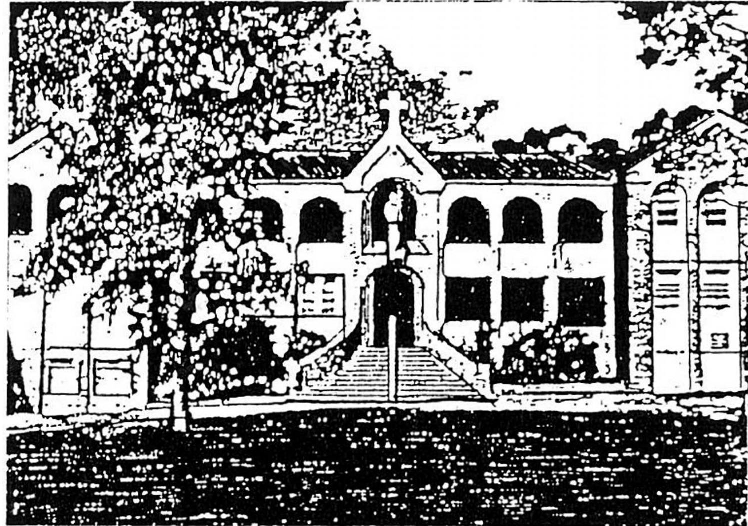
THE FIFTH SYMPOSIUM OF AUSTRALIAN GASTRONOMY

The Pleasures of the Table

Adelaide, March 10-13, 1990

Edited by Barbara Santich and Michael Symons

Adelaide, 1991



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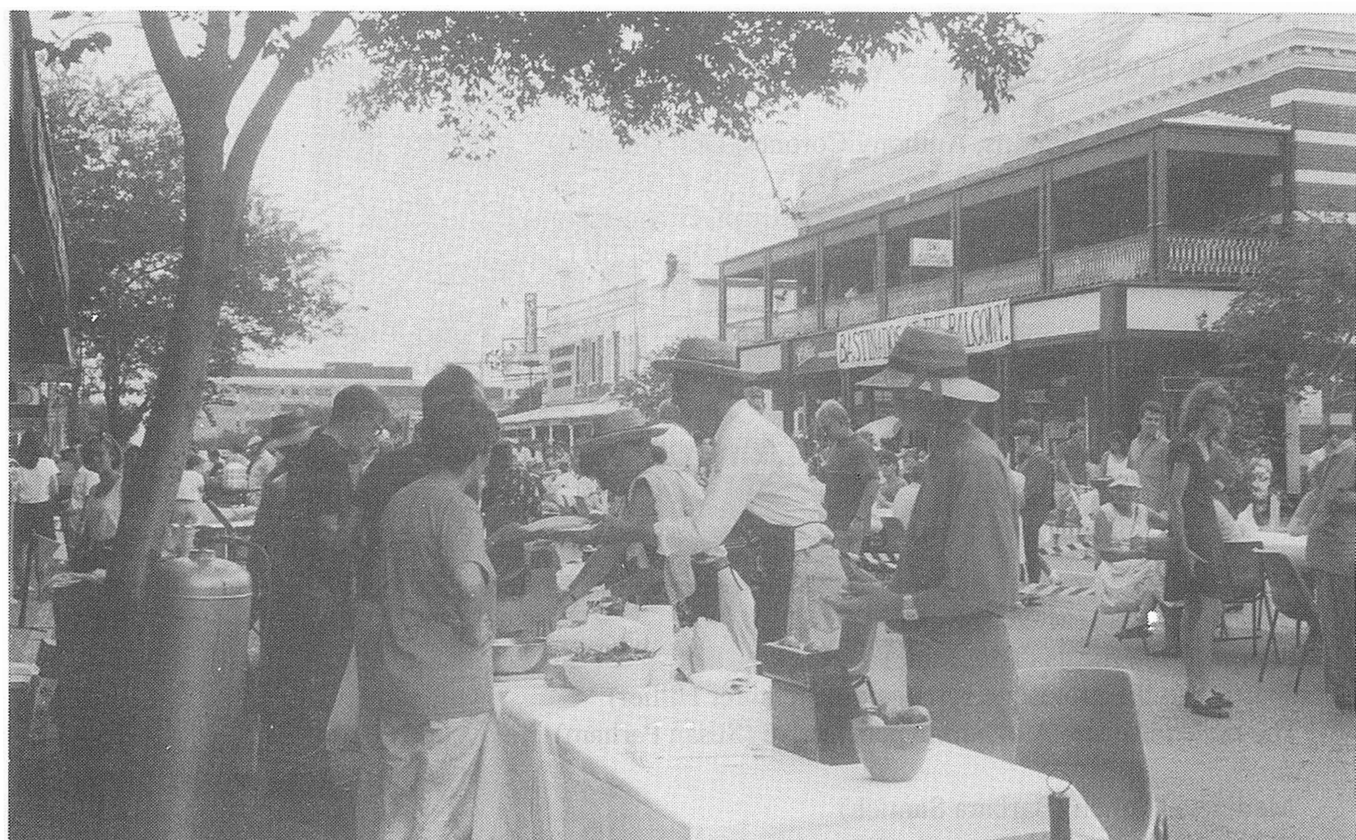


FIFTH SYMPOSIUM OF AUSTRALIAN GASTRONOMY

This a record of proceedings of the five days of the Fifth Symposium of Australian Gastronomy, held in conjunction with the 1990 Adelaide Festival of Arts.

On Saturday, March 10, the Symposium 'came out', with an estimated 15,000 people dining in Gouger Street outside Adelaide's retail food market.

The next day a public forum was held in a Festival Writers' Week tent, punctuated by a bring-your-own 'miracle' lunch.

In the late afternoon, participants met formally for the first time with a viewing of an historic menu exhibition staged in conjunction with the State Library of South Australia.

The symposium proper was a residential retreat from Sunday evening until Wednesday morning at the St Francis Xavier seminary in the Adelaide foothills.

OTHER REPORTS ON THE FIFTH SYMPOSIUM:

- Jane Adams, 'Food for thought', *The Bulletin*, March 27, 1990, p17

- Stephanie Alexander, article in 'Epicure', *The Age*, Melbourne, Tuesday, March 20, 1990

- Sheridan Rogers, 'The Harvest: The Adelaide Gastronomic Symposium', *Mode*, May/June 1990, pp168-169

- Barbara Santich, 'The Fifth Symposium of Australian Gastronomy: Adelaide, March 1990', *Petits Propos Culinaires* 35, pp39-41

- Alan Saunders, 'Talk about eating', *Meanjin*, 49, 2, 1990, pp198-202

COPIES OF SYMPOSIUM PROCEEDINGS:

Without a central secretariat, further copies of this and previous Proceedings can be been obtained through the present editors, or, failing that, through various other Symposium convenors. (Find addresses at the back of these Proceedings.) Michael Treloar Old and Rare Books (GPO Box 2289, Adelaide 5001) also usually keeps supplies of past Proceedings amongst other food and wine books.

ADELAIDE FESTIVAL
Fifth Symposium of Australian Gastronomy
The Pleasures of the Table
March 10-13, 1990

PROGRAM

SATURDAY, March 10
Gouger Street

9.30: Shopping parties (for Monday dinner) meet at Lucia's coffee-shop, Central Market

12noon-5.00: FROM MARKET TO TABLE.

SUNDAY, March 11
Writer's Week Village

11.00-4.00: TABLE TALK

11.00-12noon: 'GREED'

Anthony Corones
Don Dunstan
Chair: Michael Symons

12noon-1.30: Lunch: 'FEEDING THE MULTITUDES'

Miracle-worker: Don Dunstan
Behind-the-scenes: Maggie Beer

1.30-2.30: 'MY GASTRONOMIC EDUCATION'

Marion Halligan
Graham Pont
Chair: Barbara Santich

2.30-4.00: 'THE PROFESSIONAL PALATE: RESTAURANT REVIEWING'

Michael Dowe
Jill Dupleix
Nigel Hopkins
Tom Jaine
Chair: Gay Bilson

5.00-6.30: MENU EXHIBITION RECEPTION
State Library

Anthony Corones
Euan Miller (State Librarian)
Valmai Hankel (Rare Books Librarian)

Rostrevor

Around 9.00 onwards: SUPPER

MONDAY, March 12
Rostrevor

8.30: BREAKFAST

9.30-11.00: 'THE TABLE OF COMMUNION: CHRISTIANITY AND CUISINE'

Anthony Corones, 'Mystical dining, transcendental food and human identity'
Michael Symons, 'Bread and Wine: A gastronomic interpretation of Christianity'
5-minute statements invited from floor - then general discussion

Chair: Tom Jaine

Cath Kerry introduces evening's impromptu cooking

11.30-1.00: PAPERS

Tom Jaine, 'Banquets or meals?'
Jennifer Hillier, 'Feasting at the grotesque symposium: A literary theory of carnival'
Susan Parham, 'The table in space: A planning perspective'
General discussion

Chair: Maggie Beer

Barbara Santich introduces lunch

1.30-3.00: MEDIEVAL LUNCH

3.00-4.30: 'THE TECHNOLOGICAL TABLE'

John Possingham, 'New ways to control the ripening and storage of fruit'
Elaine Chambers, 'Gastronomy and technology: A brief history of domestic cookery in England from the Romans to present day'
Panel discussion: Max Lake and others

Chair: Anthony Corones

Evening: IMPROMPTU COOKING

5.00: Opening of boxes
8.00: First course
9.00: Main course
10.00: Desserts

TUESDAY, March 13
<u>Rostrevor</u>

8.30: BREAKFAST

9.30-11.00: 'ON THE PLEASURES OF THE TABLE - BRILLAT-SAVARIN'S MEDITATION 14'

Graham Pont, 'The pleasures of the prehistoric table: Some speculations in archaeo-gastronomy'
Barbara Santich, 'The pleasures of the table: Divine inspiration?'
Plus panel discussion: Michael Dowe, Alan Saunders and others

Chair: Michael Dowe

11.30-1.00: 'FRENCH DOMINATION: ITS CAUSES AND PROSPECTS'

1. The historical causes
2. Is French cuisine intrinsically superior?
3. The prospects
Panel discussion: Michael Symons, Barbara Santich, Marion Halligan, Cath Kerry, David Dale, Adrian Read

Chair: Marieke Brugman

Don Dunstan introduces lunch

1.30-3.00: AL FRESCO LUNCH

3.00-4.30: ROUND TABLE

1. A chance for anyone to make a 5-minute statement on any subject. Please give topics and/or names to chairperson beforehand
2. Discussion of the future of the symposium and associated activities

Chair: Gay Bilson

7.30: THE LAST SUPPER

Cheong Liew and Friends

WEDNESDAY, March 14
<u>Rostrevor</u>

9.00: BREAKFAST

A PERSONAL PROLOGUE

Michael Symons

I seemed to find the refined, spacious 'Berowra Waters Out' finale to the previous symposium in Sydney somewhat more profound than some others. We all applauded the Darling Harbour setting and the professionalism. But while I was moved to an extraordinary mood of reverence, others found it a bit flat - or at the very least 'subtle and subdued' (Prologue, Proceedings of Fourth Symposium). While for me it re-established the remarkable communality of being seated in a large rectangle, for others this arrangement curbed conversation. Such disagreements might be blamed on my incurable partisanship, but I have another theory.

We should remember that the Sydney symposium followed a more formal conference format, with keynote address, and so forth. Papers were invited from specialists and scholars, without questions and discussion from the floor. While this achieved the aim of upping intellectual standards, we lost some of the extraordinary excitement we had come to expect - 'an almost religious fervour' (Symons, Prologue, First Symposium); 'group euphoria' (Santich, Prologue, Third Symposium).

The professionalism of the lectures was complemented by meals provided by simply the best Sydney restaurants. While these were again of an excellent quality, I felt they were divorced from theoretical proceedings, both geographically and thematically. Not that this was an entirely bad thing because within that separation lay the opportunity for some of the Symposium excitement to break out, notably at Nicholas Bonham's re-enactment of his Harbour Bridge birthday-cake, Damien Pignolet's cool picnic and the exhilarating stand-up supper at Oasis Seros. However, and here I get to my point, the finale at the Wharf 13 international terminal was too contemplative for participants bottled up in the Coles lecture-theatre. Gay's reflective conception would have succeeded brilliantly as a foil to the customary effervescence, but, in this instance, it contributed to the unwelcome restraint.

Well, that's my theory, and hardly worth stating, except that it aroused my own obsession to re-affirm in Adelaide what many of us had championed as the 'recipe' of the Symposium. I resolved, in the dialectical way we have organised the symposiums, to redouble the earlier spirit, which originates in food-centredness.

I have come to extol the 'dinner-party model', since great restaurants and private meals are also invariably based on restricted numbers and generous dictators. Since the first, I have also thought of the symposium as a 'love affair'. There is nothing as both giving and excluding, both exciting and jealous- making as the love affair. It divides the world in two: the insiders and the outsiders, who believe so acutely that they are being excluded that it is often they who begin to behave irrationally. We can describe the symposiums as being both 'open' (self-selecting, participative, experimental, consensual, nurturing) and 'closed' (limited in numbers, self-contained, inward-directed, inconspicuously consuming).

Fellow convenor Anthony Corones has summed up the tendencies to both openness and closure in the notion of 'intimacy'. We somehow both make plenty of room for passion, energy and obsession and then focus it.

Anyhow, I became committed to seeking all this yet again, in the face of such potential dangers as the deadening of routine, and the arrogance of mediocrity. Rather than growing bigger and 'better', we needed again to turn inward. Rather than be bussed from venue to venue, we should remain largely in one place. In fact, I eventually recommended a stark contrast: we could 'come out' with the Adelaide Festival of Arts; and then we could withdraw to a residential retreat at Rostrevor. Anthony Corones went along with this move, and so did a keen, close-knit and informal committee which had grown up among Adelaide participants.

There was to be a third convenor. Anthony and I invited Tom Jaine to join us from England. While he was already well-known to other symposiasts, the two of us had never met him. However, we had been attracted to Tom's insights into the Australian situation, demonstrated both in his editing of a compilation (unfortunately unpublished) of joint Oxford and Australian symposium papers and more publicly in a Food Program interview. Repeating similar comments just before his arrival, he said: 'Australians are remarkably hooked on philosophical gastronomy - there is no other country as interested in the subject. This is the home of relatively intellectual restaurateurs' (*The Bulletin*, March 13, 1990: 25). While the distance proved a handicap in him helping in any large way, Tom's knowledge and sympathetic humour contributed marvellously to the event itself.

The Festival director, Clifford Hocking, and his staff welcomed us into the Festival and we responded with several ideas for gastronomic art exhibitions, theatrical performances, etc. Despite almost universal scepticism, I still like Professor Michael Morley's suggestion of a dinner-reading of Hans Magnus Enzensberger's poem, The Sinking of the Titanic. In the end, the Festival included four events:

1. Eating-Out: A menu retrospective. The State Library of SA took up our offer to help mount, as their Festival exhibition, a display of historical menus. This proved charming and, I hope, somewhat eye-opening. If you wish to consult a record of this, the Library published a careful catalogue.

2. Gouger Street Fair. With our support and that of other bodies, the Festival staged a promenade of food in Gouger Street, which runs beside the Central Market and is filling with restaurants. As well as a suppliers' fair, 33 restaurants (the majority from the street itself) and accompanying wineries provided tastes for lunch. We had originally proposed that restaurants supply entire dinners at one long table, but the Festival wanted a much more mass day-time event, and, indeed, achieved this with an attendance of something like 15,000 or 20,000.

3. Table Talk. In the parklike venue of the main Writers' Week tent, we staged a day of 'Table Talk'. We showed off some of our biggest 'name' speakers. With no idea of how many people to expect for lunch, we decided this might be like feeding the multitudes, and so planned a 'miracle of the loaves and fishes'. It proved to be relatively quiet (about one-hundredth the attendance of the Saturday), but rewarding for

those of us attended. Maggie Beer took charge of catering, Phillip Searle arriving spectacularly late with his gifts from Sydney.

4. Symposium Retreat. Finally, the symposium proper was held in a wing of the St Francis Xavier seminary at Rostrevor in the Adelaide foothills.

One of the possibilities in the back at least of my mind was that our involvement in the Festival might continue beyond this exercise. After all, the original Symposium had been held during the 1984 Festival (although we mounted it with too much haste to become officially associated). However, we all became disillusioned by this prospect for a number of reasons. For instance, several of us found working on the menu sub-committee especially thankless. The Table Talk and miracle lunch were both charming, but the crowd disappointing (perhaps through insufficient publicity or people's shyness about bringing food). Much more importantly, though, the Gouger Street event demanded too much of us, coming on top of everything else. The universal conclusion of Adelaide supporters was that so much happened at Festival time anyhow that we were already exhausted as Festival- goers and/or caterers.

Nonetheless, the retreat was widely acclaimed as the best symposium yet, although this is to ignore the enormous thrill of earlier symposiums. Anthony came up with the theme and text, Brillat-Savarin's Meditation 14, 'On the Pleasures of the Table'. We even distributed copies of this wonderful section, and yet once again participants proved that they do not necessarily do preparatory homework.

Through the venue, then the idea of the 'miracle' lunch, and me happening to be writing a chapter on the agape for my thesis, we developed a sub-theme of table-fellowship. I particularly liked this because it brought out many aspects of a good symposium, continued to take us away from the André Simon style of fancy meals, and also maintained the experiment. There's no doubt that the sub-theme aroused some prior hostility, but equally undoubtedly this widely gave way to 'pleasure' in practice.

There was less emphasis on papers this time, partly because we had spread ourselves to the Sunday and partly to permit more discussion. Yet the fact that the thinking still proceeds can be confirmed by these Proceedings, the hit of the event being Susan Parham's introduction to food and planning. Just as the written records can only point to the good food and extraordinary conviviality, they can't really preserve the above-average level of wit this time, particularly from David Dale, Alan Saunders and Tom Jaine. Nor can they really capture the outbursts of beautifully-controlled passion from people we have not heard terribly much from, and here I recall short but effective statements from Sarah Stegley and Gwenda Robb. It will be interesting to see how it reads, but Cath Kerry's short defence of French cuisine moved most people to tears.

In endeavouring to stage the symposium-to-end-all-symposiums, I reflected on many things, including the lack of memorable wines at previous events. Why legendary meals, and scarcely-noticeable wines? Admittedly, few could forget the riesling being poured with the asparagus by Philip White in the old market arcade, or the Pier 13 casks of Petaluma. My provisional conclusion, however, is that, with rare exceptions, we have left the choice to wine people, who maintain the eternal quest for the next fabulous vineyard, next fabulous vintage. So I suggested to the wine committee

(Duncan Miller, Ian Pollard, Howard Twelftree) that the aim of their preliminary tasting should be to select just one, complete wine for all meals at the 'monastery'. This proved a bit radical, and yet I must confess that, except for a very fresh wine in jugs and something good at the finale, again not quite remembering what we drank.

With respect to the overall organisation of the event, we decided that we should do as far as possible without paid labour, and rather that we should all be given chores, not just to encourage everyone to contribute but also to reflect and experiment with the monastic atmosphere. This meant organising rosters for teams to set up tables, help clear up, etc, which seemed (to blithe me) to work okay, not that we came close to eliminating plenty of paid support.

With the enormous size of the Rostrevor kitchen, we thought we should attempt some collaborative form of cooking and worked out a culinary game for the Monday supper. It was a simple idea which seemed surprisingly complicated to explain. Here goes, again: on the Saturday morning, two or three people assigned to each of five tables had shopped on a limited budget for the next table's cooks. These cooks had to open their surprise box of ingredients on Monday afternoon and devise and cook a menu which was served to the next table. Despite certain participants being notable for their disappearance and the initial complaints of a couple of professional cooks pressed into service, those who ended up in the kitchen appeared universally enraptured, fun was had dressing up the tables, and the mealtime was jolly, too, ending with a spontaneous and emotionally-charged round of questions and answers.

As to the other meals, since Barbara Santich had by now gained her doctorate with her thesis on medieval southern French cuisine, we thought it would be appropriate that she serve some examples for a somewhat medieval, even 'monastic' lunch. The meal's simplicity and earthiness was captured in the brown jugs she commissioned from nearby Bennett's pottery. Similarly, since Don Dunstan had been asked to give the keynote address in Sydney, I thought he deserved the even greater privilege (!) of doing Tuesday's outdoor lunch. He chose multiculinary, wrapped delicacies and summoned up the most beautiful of autumn days.

Among Adelaide's chefs, Cheong Liew is probably the best-loved and was the universal choice by the committee to be invited to contribute the concluding banquet. He expressed a wish to fit in with the convenors' plans, which for thematic and other reasons Anthony and I had a strong idea about, the Last Supper. It was to be a summing-up in so many ways, whether to the seminary experience or to the intimacy of circular seating-arrangements. Again, Cheong had virtually anonymously helped Phillip Searle with the first banquet and so now it was to be Phillip's turn to come across to assist. If you need proof that the Symposium has broken firmly with 'wine and food' ostentation, then please note that we had eaten virtually every meal with our fingers. Now at the 'banquet', we also even sat on the floor.

For me, the culminating meal also rounded out the afternoon's debate. This resulted from my proposal that we give up the Symposium, in favour of other activities. Should we fully become part of the Festival? Given the exhausting effort demanded of the Adelaide committee, should we finally accept a more public, more professional conference, I asked? Graham Pont had long wanted us to form an Institute of

Gastronomy. I also held out the prospect of 'Reunions', which could be less ambitious. However, the debate focussed only on one thing: an almost unanimous demand to retain the Symposium.

Not just me but several I have kept close to have always believed it unlikely that the Symposium could continue far without great change and that it would be better, so to speak, to quit while we were ahead. To return to my analogies, it would be a matter of knowing when to leave the party or to put the affair on a more regular basis. If you read back over previous Prologues, you can see that I believed, firstly, that the 'First Symposium of Australian Gastronomy will never be surpassed' and, next, that 'those of us privileged to have attended the first two are surely already grateful enough'. While I was now accused of not welcoming change, I could argue that it was others who were showing their conservatism.

There seems to me to be widespread misapprehension that the Symposiums as we have known them have come easily. Just to avoid the destructiveness of commercialisation has meant many of us donating enormous time, effort and creativity without reimbursement. Just to hold together the necessarily explosive mix of conflicting ambitions and personalities has required constant and necessarily scarcely-revealed persuasion. Even just to contain numbers to the apparently highly desirable final banquet inevitably seems to have meant offending sometimes powerful people. And all this is before we start any creative planning and, whatever you say about an idea like our Christian sub-theme, non-dreary conference agenda doesn't come easily. However, instead of recognising that the best parts of the symposiums have usually derived from obsessive energy, let's have a national committee, came the answer. Let's have a paid secretary, as if it were our admittedly hard-working secretary Di Hetzel who was complaining.

As I write, meetings in three States have discussed possible directions. The initial Adelaide meeting simply decided that symposiums ought to be based here, maybe with occasional forays. In NSW, they seem keen on founding an Institute of Gastronomy. In Melbourne, they are speaking of a sixth symposium at Geelong.

Don't get me wrong. I would be delighted to see the Symposium prosper either in its existing shape or in some grander manifestation. I shall be more than gratified if the rage is maintained. However, I would personally hate to see the symposium drift into a 'fine wine and food' ostentation, an institutional chore, or sad mediocrity. To reiterate my original, surprised reactions, the first symposiums 'will never be surpassed' and yet those of us privileged to have attended are 'surely already grateful enough'.

- Michael Symons

GREED: INTRODUCTION

Michael Symons

This morning's session is on greed. The Concise Oxford Dictionary defines greed as 'an insatiated longing, especially for wealth or food'; it is from a Germanic word for hunger. I would just like to start the discussion with a brief contribution on the classical theories of greed. Perhaps I am going to characterise them, and I won't be able to point to a particular author, but in the early Greek idea there were two ideas on greed. One I'll call the Golden Age theory. The Golden Age Theorists believed that there was a paradise existing historically, where there was plenty to eat, there was no need to work, and there was no strife, no wars, that sort of thing. Then, so the theory went, human beings committed some sort of crime and the Old Testament has it that Adam and Eve were cast out of Eden and were henceforth condemned to till the soil.

But a common idea in classical Greece is that the crime was actually of cooking. Certainly cooking was blamed by Porphyry in his argument for vegetarianism. He argued that only cooking enables people to undertake the barbaric act of eating meat. He pointed out that meat was almost always eaten when it was cooked and it was this invention that encouraged such a crude thing as to eat meat. Also, the Golden Age theorists thought that cooking was an artificial stimulant to the appetite, encouraging glutonny. This was something that Plato believed; he thought cooks were mere panderers. Indeed, this could also be termed an idealistic theory of human greed, and a solution given by these Golden Age theorists for the diseases of civilisation was strict regulation of appetite through fasting, vegetarianism and other forms of denial. Rising even above the civilisation supresses the animal within us. Much preferred by the idealists are the so-called higher things of life, achievable through such practices of such things as meditation, choral music and Writers' Week.

The second theory I would call a radical theory. It is a mirror image of the above in that, rather than human beings falling from a state of grace, they are constantly endeavouring to improve themselves. The Epicurean materialists, for example, what we would now call the theory of evolution. They could see a form of progress. In this account civilisation is generally regarded as a good thing and since again the basis of civilisation is cooking it is the refinements of cooking which lift human beings above the level of animals. This is the radical, egalitarian, liberal, enlightenment view of history, which is to be contrasted with the authoritarian view of idealists such as Plato. The radical view of greed is that it is primitive and degrading, certainly something that can be improved upon through cultivation. In other words, greed can be overcome by good cooking. If we find our society insatiably greedy for wealth or food, the authoritarian solution is other-wordliness; the radical solution is fine food.

I would now like to introduce the first of our two speakers, Anthony Corones, who is a PHD student in philosophy at the University of NSW and a tutor. He has been coming to the gastronomic symposium since the first back in 1984, and he is jointly, with me and Tom Jaine, convening this one. I would like to suggest that he is fact one of the wisest of our thinkers and a very good synthesizer of all our crazy ideas.

OVERCOMING GREED: GASTRONOMIC LESSONS FOR GLUTTONOUS TIMES

Anthony Corones

In an age of conspicuous consumption, a symposium dedicated to gastronomy might seem to be merely another sign of human appetite gone mad, of excess and selfishness. Indeed, the association of gastronomy with gluttony, with an immoderate interest in food, is often made. Not so many years ago, at an earlier symposium, the media duly arrived looking for a story. They came firstly to laugh, to concoct a comic version of events replete with gastronomic clowns; and secondly to deride, to criticise the gathering as an instance of self-indulgence and over-indulgence. During the interviews the inevitable question arose: "Why are you stuffing yourselves when millions are starving? How about feeding the poor?"

I doubt whether any of them, dressed in their designer clothes and anxious that the wind not ruin their well-groomed hair, really cared about the poor. But with pharisaic fervor, they were glad to cast the first stone. And why not? Hypocrisy aside, is it still not true that gluttony is a sin? Even as a child, I was made to feel guilty whenever I left food on my plate: paradoxically, because millions were starving, I was expected to overeat. Our moral prescriptions are so ingrained that we maintain them even to the point of absurdity.

Such absurdity, however, depends on the context. If one of the starving millions had been present at the meal, then it would have been appropriate to share the food. We might imagine that, had my mother prepared less food, the money saved could have been used to help the poor — as if throwing money at the problem will make it go away. Such a naive view is wholly inadequate. It is as feeble and narrow-minded as the assumption that gluttons are somehow taking food out of the mouths of the poor.

One of the most deluding aspects of such thinking lies in the smug self-righteousness it engenders in those who parade and preach such a mentality. This false consciousness simply tends to maintain the status quo while giving the impression that something is being done to eliminate hunger and poverty. Despite all of Bob Geldof's efforts with Live Aid, Ethiopians are still starving. And not just because of the internal politics of the country. One of the great ironies of our society is that, while mouthing moral platitudes, we have institutionalised greed and gluttony. While Geldof was raising millions, wheat worth twice as much was dumped into the ocean by Europe's farmers — we fed fish instead of people in order to maintain the market price of wheat. If this weren't a tragedy, it would be perversely funny. Maybe it's still funny, but if so the joke's on us.

Dupes of the rhetoric of economic and social progress, we fail to perceive the face of exploitation behind the mask of liberty. Free to pursue our economic advantage, we are obliged to conspicuous consumption, economic struggle and the inevitable exploitation of people and resources that follow. It is no doubt true that greed has always been with us, but it has never before been organised on such a mass social scale, nor justified by promises of progress and a better world.

In the recent film *Wall Street*, the character Gordon Gekko told us that greed is good, that greed works, that only the greedy survive and are successful. Even though in typical Hollywood style he comes to a sticky end, the moral resolution rings very hollow. It simply means that one individual has been taken out of the struggle. But the game goes on. Acting from a sense of unlimited horizons, our society practices an unlimited gluttony; and we salve our conscience by presuming a future of plenty for all. Such a future, however, is always not yet. Not until *I* have enough first. And I am guaranteed never to have enough, because the economy of such a society is based on the cultivation of the endless dissatisfaction of consumers, their endless need to desire more, to consume more, indefinitely.

In such a society, food becomes merely another commodity to be subordinated to economic ends. In the name of increased choice on supermarket shelves, agribusiness aligns itself with industrial food processors to relieve us of the need ever to cook food for ourselves. These foods, suffused as they are with artificial flavours, leave us with a palate habituated to counterfeit tastes. I still recall, for example, my disappointment the first time I tasted homemade strawberry ice-cream. The real strawberries could not live up to the intense flavour, or provide the vivid colour, of the industrial product to which I had grown addicted as a child. My palate had to be re-educated before I could appreciate the genuine article. Assuming that we lose the requisite skills to prepare and cook our own food — a result which could be justified under some form of economic rationalism — then perhaps we could also be reduced to living on synthetic foods; especially if our farming practices continue to degrade the soil.

The prospect of the land falling victim to blind stomachs, to consumption patterns which ensure that the majority of eaters have no connection with, or sensivity to, what is happening at the very root source of food, is echoed in the sinister use of food as a weapon. We bribe so-called "undeveloped" countries with promises of food if only they will convert to our way of life and buy our tractors and harvesters, fertilizers and pesticides. In the face of such propaganda, these countries, often having a long tradition of self-sufficient agriculture, abandon it for the allure of cash crops and go into massive debt. They too pay the price for gluttony, though it comes to them disguised as a horn of plenty.

Such a perversion of food carries us far from its traditional associations with hospitality and human commensality. To give food with strings attached is to respect neither the recipient, who in effect becomes a victim, nor the sacrificial event of giving food, of forsaking something for another's sake. It is to abandon nurture in favour of exploitation, even that exploitation which some mistakenly identify as charity — for it is a charity which merely prolongs suffering. How many of those who were "saved" by Live Aid have since perished of starvation? And how many among the millions of children in the Third World have been "saved" by modern medicine from high infant mortality rates only to suffer deprivation, famine and war? There is nothing more cruel than the exploitation of human hope.

Our forbears understood charity better than we when they spoke of the "milk" of charity. Seeing charity as a mother, they regarded it as nourishment, loving care and responsibility — a responsibility which continues until the child, so to speak, is capable of independence, able to go and do likewise. Such charity is food in the fullest sense,

nurture. Most importantly, they understood that such charity required a special fullness and maturity of those who would give it. Charity lay not in the things given, but in the spirit of the giving. It was to give of oneself, and thus in some metaphorical sense to become another's food. Needless to say, such an attitude to charity, derived as it was from Christian thought, drew directly from Christ's bold declaration that his flesh and blood were our true food, the heaven-sent manna. His incarnation was perceived as the great charity, his crucifixion as the ultimate sacrificial offering. It is hardly surprising, therefore, that food imagery dominated conceptions of human nurture and spiritual growth.

The miracle of the loaves and fishes, which is the inspiration for today's gathering, is another instance of the use of food as a vehicle for instruction and understanding. In the versions of the miracle presented by the evangelists Matthew (15:32-39), Mark (6:33-34) and Luke (9:11-17), the multitudes, having spent the day listening to Jesus, are then fed by a miraculous multiplication of just a few loaves and fishes. The food was so abundant that twelve full baskets remained as left-overs. The event is a vivid and dramatic illustration of a promise made in the Sermon on the Mount:

> Therefore take no thought, saying, What shall we eat? or, What shall we drink? or, Wherewithal shall we be clothed?...for your heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of all these things. But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things will be added unto you. (Matthew 6:31-33)

Those people had left their fields and shops and homes to go out into the wilderness and hear about the kingdom of God. Having fed on the Word first, having filled their souls, they also fed on bread and fish, and thus filled their bodies. Although there are reports of saints being miraculously fed in the desert, or even of requiring no food at all, this is not the import of the event. Rather, as in unfortunate Ethiopia, if there were the political will for peace, there would also be the chance to overcome starvation. More generally, where compassion prevails, sharing is possible. It's a matter, as in the Gospel story, of priorities.

The version of the miracle presented by the evangelist John (6:1-71) is quite different from the others. The multitudes come to Jesus for the sake of miracles, to have their bodies healed. Having fed them, Jesus, perceiving 'that they would come and take him by force, to make him a king' (John 6:15), departs. But the crowd tracks him down, looking for another free lunch. Jesus upbraids them for their lack of understanding. You seek me, he tells them, only for the sake of a full stomach. Then, to drive his point home, he says, 'Labour not for the meat which perishes, but for that meat which endures unto everlasting life' (John 6:27). He goes on to describe himself as food. The crowd fails to understand, and deserts him. Their failure is indicative of the ethical blindness of greed.

I still clearly remember a conversation I overheard as a child between my father and an acquaintance of his who had just sold some property he had owned for years for over one million dollars. As he bragged about his wealth, my father said to him, "Now that you have plenty of money you can retire and take it easy." The fellow looked at my father in amazement and replied, "No! The more you can get, the better." He was simply obsessed with owning more and more, purely for its own sake. In the chase for

riches, only the chase comes to matter. Greed thrives on a sense of lack, of not having. So it does not matter how much one has: it is never enough if you are possessed by greed. It is a kind of insatiable hunger, analogous to the hunger of the glutton who continues to eat beyond the requirements of the body. In the end, only those who are satisfied with what they have are rich. And only those who are satisfied within the limits of the body eat sanely.

These elaborate plays on the meaning of food are inseparable from efforts to elaborate a vision of life and human nature. And gastronomy, as envisioned by the early nineteenth-century founder of the subject, Brillat-Savarin, is an effort to do the same. Defining gastronomy as "the reasoned comprehension of everything connected with the nourishment of man", Brillat-Savarin was careful, unlike many of his enlightenment contemporaries, not to exalt science to the exclusion of all else. Thus, while promoting the scientific study of food across many disciplines, including political economy, he also stressed the great importance of the moral comprehension of food.

To this end, Brillat-Savarin insisted that gourmandism, as a refined and well-disciplined art of eating and appreciating food, was the enemy of excess, the antithesis of gluttony. Indeed, he promoted gourmandism as a virtue, one moreover that was true to human nature, rather than one which obliges us to some kind of warfare with the body. He argued that pleasure was lawful because it was natural to the body. Rather than denying pleasure and trying to punish the body in an ascetic manner, he proposed that we learn from pleasure. The glutton, on this view, suffers more pain from eating than pleasure. For pleasure is to not to be considered solely in the moment, or only in parts of the body. Curiously, in maximizing our pleasure, we eat both well and moderately.

When we combine the personal discipline of gourmandism with its social aspects, we begin to see the profound nature of Brillat-Savarin's analysis. He argued that a proper respect for food and for the shared table was the only way in which we could understand the time-honoured tradition of hospitality — for to give food was to give life, and in respecting food we also respect life, both our own and that of others. For Brillat-Savarin, therefore, gourmandism was not an unbridled voraciousness, but a true and pleasureable self-discipline, both healthy and conducive to longevity. More importantly, it was a social virtue of the highest order, one which emphasised our common humanity and the value of the pleasures of the table as a way of cultivating community and culture. To share the table was to learn, to be edified in the process of eating. It was to enjoy the well-being of both body and soul.

It comes as no surprise, in light of Brillat-Savarin's approach to the subject, to find that he had a clear grasp of the mythical dimensions of food. Personifying gastronomy as a muse, he offered her a temple and devotees. Echoing the Christian Eucharist, he makes a meal the focus of sacramental worship. The main function of the service is to offer thanksgiving to this muse who showers her blessings on us. In one brilliant stroke, he summarizes his gastronomical mythology in a sacrificial event which involves the return of the gift to the giver through our own consumption of the sacrifice — we become that charity which is the muse Gasterea by making a sacrament of our bodies, of the act of eating. This is nothing less than the celebration of life itself, and Brillat-Savarin indicates the power of Gasterea by placing her temple upon the hill of Mars, the

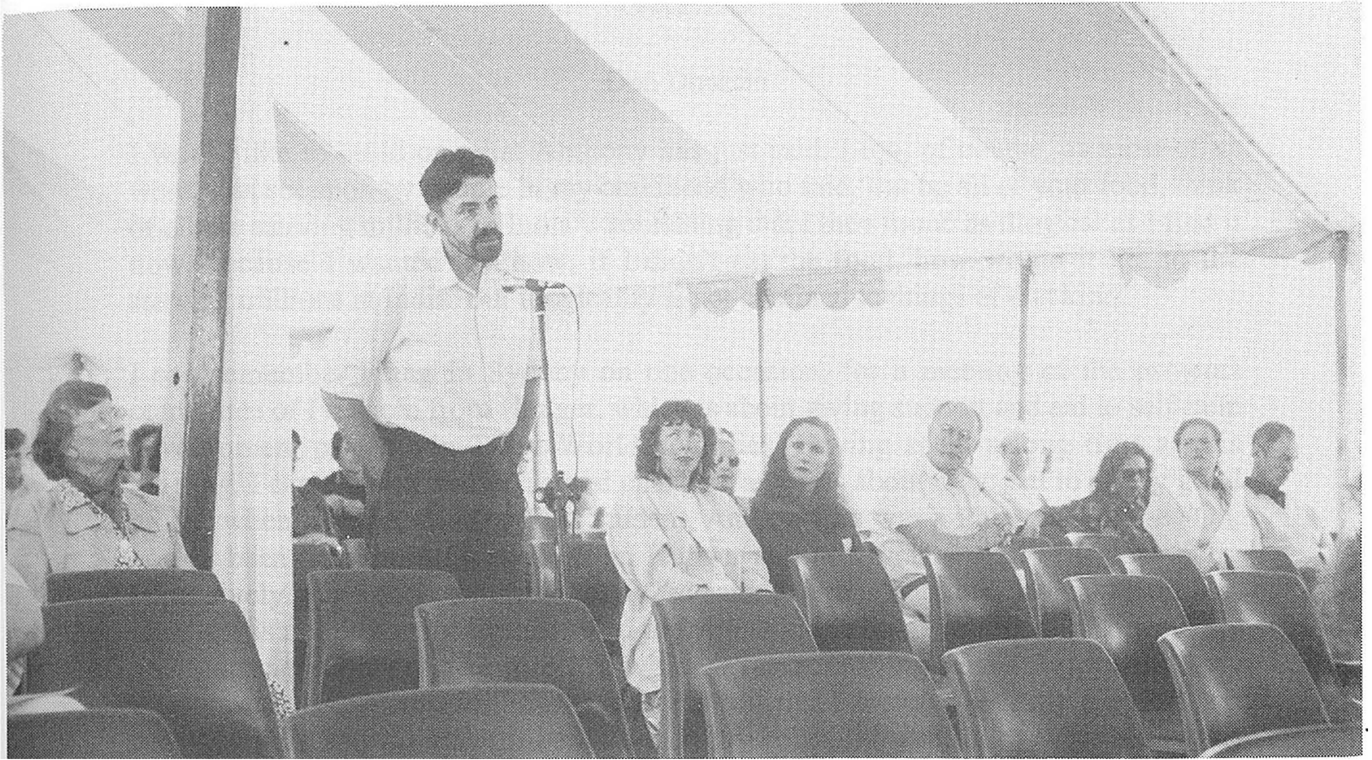
god of war. In this simple gesture, he points to a gastronomically inspired vision of peace. What an abomination it would have been to him to see food used as a weapon.

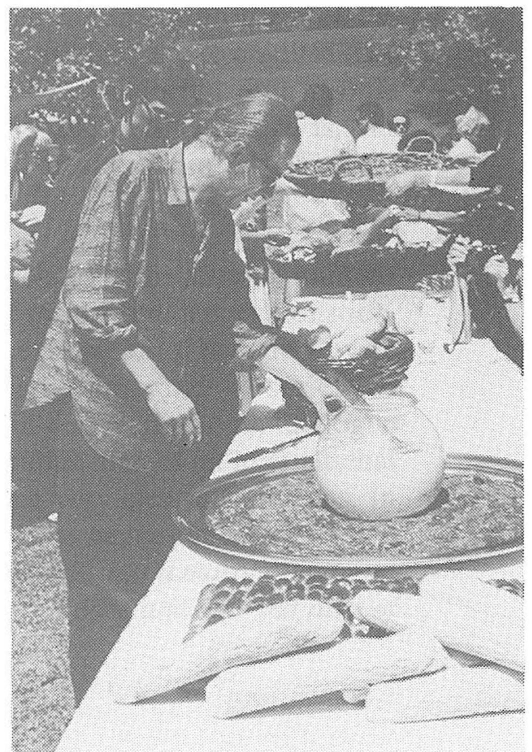
Like all visionaries, however, Brillat-Savarin remains largely misunderstood. What nonsense is all this mythology? Is he really serious? I fear that, like the gluttons who confronted Jesus, we are offended by Brillat-Savarin's more demanding insights. But we cheat ourselves when we restrict our appreciation of food only to its more obvious physical aspects. The lesson of gastronomy, as conceived by Brillat-Savarin, embraces the whole form of life. It is neither narrowly scientific, nor simply a "foodie" mentality. And if you are inclined to frown on anything that seems too serious, then Brillat-Savarin is way ahead of you. His book, *The Physiology of Taste*, is at once deep yet unpretentious, profoundly good-humoured and passionate. He appreciated life, and promoted the art and science of living it to the full.

Such fullness, however, is not to be had by greed. The point of our own loaves and fishes miracle today will lie not in any supernatural occurrence, but in the simplest of gastronomic lessons. In giving we shall receive, in sharing we eat at a common table. This was a lesson partially learnt in America when some Indians shared their food with a starving group of early settlers. Even though the settlers finally took everything from the poor Indians, they enshrined the great compassion of that shared meal in their national holiday of Thanksgiving.

There is something revealing about the historical irony of such a rapacious culture celebrating Thanksgiving. But in a society where individualism has been pushed to the level of mass narcissism, even decadence can find an apparently honourable rationale, and greed is disguised as right, a form of 'self-actualization'. The charge of hypocrisy would be scarcely intelligible. A little lip-service is all it takes the maintain the illusion of human decency.

Will we take Thanksgiving to heart and learn the lesson of nurture? I would like to think that we have sufficient goodwill and moral sense to do so. I fear, however, that the lesson will be forced on us when the results of our collective greed push us beyond the limits of what the earth can sustain.





GREED

Don Dunstan

I would like to build on what Anthony has just said. I too, of course, as most of us were, was set upon by people in my childhood who said "eat up all of your food, think of all the starving millions in India". Something that I then found as illogical as I find it now, because I wanted to know, if I didn't eat the food, how would it get to the starving millions in India. But illogicality is not confined to things of that kind.

I can remember being in Sydney on one occasion, for a meeting of the projects committee of Freedom from Hunger, which is about giving support and aid to self-help development projects in Third World countries. Having spent a long time at this meeting, I came home, showered and changed, and was about to go out to a very good dinner when (and he wasn't a PhD student, Anthony, he was a PhD) said to me "Oh, you've been here from Freedom from Hunger and now you're off to fill your belly expensively. How do you marry that up?" I said: "there is nothing illogical about it at all, there is nothing inconsistent. What are you talking about?" He said: "Oh well, it's your conscience that you have to live with, isn't it, but having been a politician I don't suppose that is difficult for you." I must confess that I found it not only illogical and rude but quite stupid. It is the case that tertiary education does not always lead to an advance in intelligence.

The fact is that we do not help the starving people of the world by failing to purchase and consume the produce of this country. By going in for process of self-denial does not mean that food gets to, or that the product is placed within, developing countries. It can contribute, of course, to the provision of food surpluses here, which will then either fall on the ground or be dumped. It will contribute to the demands upon the resources which we might spend on international aid, for that thing which the farmers of this country have so successfully sold to the people of this country, and that is that they should have a totally free-enterprise existence, in which the community should support them in capitalising their gains and socialising their losses. But it doesn't do anything about the major problem of world, greed. And the major problem of the world, greed, is not helped by failing to consume our own produce and to enjoy it. The major problem of the world, greed, will be confronted by our persuading people responsible for the spending of resources in this country and outside it, that is, our governments, that they should take part in the program already outlined: to end the problem for the world of greed.

The world has the capacity to feed itself and well. The problems of the starving millions are problems of greed, certainly, but they are problems of maldistribution, exploitation, exploitation leading to unbalanced development. Now, the problems of that greed were explained and exposed by an international investigation and a series of recommendations a decade ago. They were published in the 'North-South' dialogue (North-South: A program for survival, an international publication of an international investigation, headed by Willy Brandt). They drew some very clear conclusions. In particular, they said: "*Our report is based on what appears to be the simplest common interest, that mankind wants to survive and, one might even add, has a moral obligation to survive. This not only raises the traditional questions of peace and war but also of*

how to overcome world hunger, mass misery, alarming disparities between rich and poor." They then looked at the maldistribution of the world's assets and the idiotic spending on things which were unnecessary for the world in the face of the need to spend for development. Because they pointed out that if we spend a reasonable amount of the world's resources on development, everybody in the world could be fed, and fed well. They said: "*The relationship between armament and development is still very much in the dark. The prospects which might open up if only part of the unproductive arms spending were turned to productive expenditure on development are only slowly dawning on people. The annual military bill is now approaching 450 billion US dollars (that was a decade ago; of course it is much higher now), while the official development aid from all countries accounts for less than 5% of that figure.*"

That is, we spent a decade ago 20 billion dollars on aid to feed the world, and 450 billion dollars on armaments. And they gave four examples.

1. The military expenditure of only half a day would suffice to finance the whole malaria eradication program of the World Health Organisation, and less would be needed to conquer river blindness, which is still the scurge of millions.

2. A modern tank costs 1 million dollars. That amount could improve storage facilities for 100,000 tonnes of rice and thus save 4,000 tonnes or more annually. One person can live on just over a pound of rice a day. The same sum of money could provide 1000 classrooms for 30,000 children.

3. For the price of 1 jet fighter, 20 million dollars, one could set up about 40,000 village pharmacies.

4. One half of 1 percent of 1 year's world military expenditure would pay for all the farm equipment needed to increase food production and approach self-sufficiency in food deficient low-income countries by 1990.

And this was stated 10 years ago. Well, we didn't spend that money; we are not at self-sufficiency in food in underdeveloped countries in 1990. In fact, we are not much better off than we were a decade ago.

They went on to say: "*Recent developments have made the world more aware that the arms race has become a grave danger to the whole of mankind. The armaments of the super powers and their allowances are represented by a precarious kind of balance which, given certain conditions, contributes to preserving world peace. At the same time they represent a continuing threat of nuclear annihilation and a huge waste of resources, which should be deployed for peaceful development.*"

World military spending dwarfs any spending on development. In any case, there is a moral link between the vast spending on arms and the disgracefully low spending on measures to remove hunger and ill health in the Third World. The obstacles to reversing these trends are formidable. But those obstacles should not be allowed to get in the way of serious discussion of the dangers of the arms race and the realisation of the size of the economic burden it involves. One of the chief enemies of disarmament is the sense of resignation and traditional acceptance that accompanies large defence spending, while dangers are constantly mounting. We have been wasting the world's resources, building up enough to destroy the world many thousands of times over. Even after SALT 2 was ratified and implemented, over 10,000 United States and

USSR strategic nuclear warheads remained.That amounts to many million times the Hiroshima bomb.

Now, unfortunately the things that the North-South dialogue said about the necessity for a new world order, an effective redistribution of wealth internationally, which could be managed by the wealthy countries without difficulty, was denied by the greed of the wealthy countries, led by Britain and United States. They completely torpedoed the whole North-South dialogue initiatives. They have not taken place. But those of us who are involved in aid to developing countries, seeing to it that the citizens money is actually spent to get people the capacity to help themselves feed themselves from their own activity and production, we know that it is quite possible to proceed and now there is hope on the horizen.

With what has taken place in eastern Europe, quite clearly the need, the justification which has been used by the wealthy countries of the world for spending and wasting the world's resources on armaments is going. It will no longer be possible to persuade the citizens of the world that their tax-payers' money must be spent in this totally wasteful and destructive activity. It will be possible to reorient the use of resources. Our best way to tackle greed in the world will be to persuade our governments that the opportunity must now be seized, the opportunity now originally provided under the North-South dialogue now has a tremendous impetus. But we can only be effective in ending that greed if we persuade out governments to do it.

In this current election, both major political parties have said nothing about increasing aid. One of them has in fact said it is going to reduce monies in those areas because it is about another additional cost-cutting exercise, and the government has already reduced overseas aid by this country to the lowest part of gross national product for 20 years. Now, we have to alter that situation. We cannot allow this country as a whole to go on being greedy.

The being greedy is not symbolised by eating the food of this country. What this particular function will show today is that the understanding of other people's needs and the sharing of food is what kindness, understanding, involvement with others and caring for them is about. Consuming food together in a loving way is not an exercise in greed, it is an exercise in loving association. That is not depriving the people of the world of what they need. But in exercising love amongst ourselves, let us also remember that we have a duty to all those starving millions about whom we were talked at as children. It is possible to do something, not by depriving onself of food, but by acting as effective citizens in this country to reverse the world's greed, and that is what we should be doing.

DISCUSSION

Tom Jaine: I thought as a foreign sucker I ought at least do the honours and break the ice. I am Tom Jaine and I am actually meant to be a convenor of this symposium. As I know neither where the lavatory is, nor the glasses are, I don't think I am going to be very good at doing that, but anyway, I am very honoured to come here. (They are that way, right.) I will just get a quick question in; I have no answer to it, but maybe our

two moralists here will tell us. Having improved the material welfare of the rest of the world, how do we then cope with their greed?

DD: It is true, of course, that part of the North-South dialogue was directed to the misuse of armament spending by developing countries and that affected people within them, and the way in which people in those countries have misused resources is very real. There is always a struggle about this. Can I give you a simple example?

I was sent by Community Aid Abroad as the Australian delegate to monitor the elections in Nambibia at the end of last year. It was a tremendous experience because it was a very clear example to those people who say you can't have a sensible election from people who are illiterate and do not understand issues or have never actually tried to vote or write anything on a piece of paper. The election clearly disproved that. Under dreadfully difficult and uncomfortable conditions, sometimes having to wait eight hours in the hot sun, the Nambibians voted, and voted very clearly as to what they wanted. What is more, with a voluntary poll, they got a 98% turn-out, which is better than we do in this country with compulsory voting. But there was something that was immediately borne in on me in Nambibia. There is a class of people in Nambibia, the Bushmen, who are hunter-gatherers of the kind that our Aboriginal people were, and as numbers of indigenous peoples elsewhere in the world have been, and now are, under desperate threat. The black majority regard the Bushmen with no more enlightenment and understanding than the European settlers who came here in the 18th century did the Aborigines of this country, and had as little concern for them.

Now, of course, within developing countries there will be social tensions and injustices, and that is something that we will always have to struggle about. There is no simple solution, but that is no answer to saying to it that people everywhere must have the means of developing to the stage where they feed themselves and do so adequately. Freedom from Hunger in Australia was the major organisation in restoring the rice paddies of Cambodia after Pol Pot. We were able, with the money from citizens in this country, to get those people able to feed themselves again, because they were starving before that. That has not absolutely ended greed in Cambodia as the present continuing struggle discloses, but it has certainly allowed people to live and was a major action on this country's part against the kind of greed that had deprived those people of life.

AC: I think I would like to respond to that one, too, Tom, a most appropriate question. I suggested this in my paper, but didn't develop it, that our economic system in the West, coming out of the imperialistic expansion of the European countries, is the kind of exploitative economics you would expect. There is a sense in which we have to rethink the whole question of the way we live our lives and the quality of our lives. To pick up one of the Golden Age themes that Michael was talking about earlier, the evidence suggests that the Aborigines spent perhaps 20 hours a week collecting all the food they needed. So a 20-hour-work-week is really quite an extraordinary achievement. They managed to live within the limits of the land, although maybe they weren't concerned to erect huge monuments and build pyramids out in the desert.

That is why I bring Brillat-Savarin into the discussion. We need alternative perspectives on how to tackle any problem that confronts us, and I think the one he offers through

gastronomy, of the lessons you can learn around the shared table, the loving associations with people, the caring for them, you build up a sense of what it means to be compassionate and sympathise with other people's points of view. Through that we can slowly change our own approach to our own lives. It is a common thing to save a few dollars and think, good heavens!, what am I going to do with it. Is Paul Keating going to take the money away from me? I have to invest it, I have to do this and that. You are forced into the situation of playing with your money in ways that would make you seem as if you are greedy.

There are greedy individuals, people who are just in it for the money, but it's not so widespread a phenomenon. Most of us are almost obliged to seem as if we are greedy because the economic situation pushes us that way. We are not going to have any easy answers but gastronomy, I think, should be pushed for all its worth as an interesting perspective on the whole question.

Just to pick up on something that Don stressed most effectively, the consumption of food, the appreciation of food is a way of improving the quality of our own lives, and if we are happier in ourselves that we are living a pleasurable and fulfilling existence then we are more inclined to be nicer to other people as a result.

Michael Dowe: I find Don's optimistic framework attractive. I like the notion that the world is to be much more peaceful and spend much less on armaments. But it seems at the same time that we have this optimism, we have a society which increasingly makes poverty a sin, which allows elections slogans like 'Take from the bludgers and give to the workers', which becomes appreciably less compassionate. In this framework, what hope is there?

DD: Well, we might see after election day if there has been any hope. It's quite true, and I don't mind for a moment being blatantly political in answer to that question, Australia has done something in this particular way which I think has not been sufficiently contrasted with what has occurred in Great Britain. It is true that under Mrs Thatcher, the productivity per worker in England has increased more than in any OECD country and in fact, many times more than in Australia. That has been achieved at the price of massive unemployment and a total reduction in the number of employed in England of shocking proportions so that, in fact, England is now actually two nations: people who are in work and those who are out of it. Everything which is north of Manchester now can be called in a country of economic disaster.

That has not happened in Australia with the pursuit of what has sometimes been called similar policies on the part of the Federal Government. In fact, under the present government in Australia, the number of jobs created in proportion to population in the last 10 years is the highest of any comparable country. We have maintained a position here of far greater equality because there is not the massive umemployment which has been the cost of Thatcher policies in England. So I think that there is hope in this country. I must confess that as a politician in South Australia I never proposed to put down taxes in an election and at almost every election I went to I said I propose to put them up because we have a moral obligation to the poor and the underprivileged. The people supported that. I think that Australians have got that kind of humanitarian view, and the kind of policies which are being put to them which says, we will give you more

and take from the poor because they are always with us and they should have less than they have presently, I don't think that that is going to work in the Australian electorate. I certainly hope not.

MS: I know that everybody is having their appetites further stimulated by waiting a minute, but I did have an important telephone call last night that reassured me that we would actually get fed today. It was from Philip Searle, who rang from his restaurant where he was flat out. But he assured me that he was going to load the plane with loaves and fishes or something. I think if you can just keep talking they might arrive.

Question: Both of the panelists have been rather disparaging about the 'eating-up-your-food' syndrome. Myself as a parent would be very keen to have my children finish off their food. The alternatives strike me as being not very attractive, being brought up on the 'waste-not,-want-not' idea. I wonder what they suggest with what one should do with children like that, so a moral question: should we be getting them to leave everything on the side if they don't wish? Or what would they think philosophically would be the answer?

DD: I don't want to be philosophical about this. I can only tell you what happened to me as a child, which seemed to be successful and not a very subtle ploy on the part of those who were caring for me. They knew that I absolutely loved fruit salad, and that I would eat it all up if I got any. So they would put some on the table and say, eat the rest and then you will get that.

AC: Fortunately or unfortunately, I can't quite speak from my own experience because I don't have any children. But in young nieces and nephews that I have, I have observed that it is almost impossible to get them to do anything you want them to do, especially at the table.

But disregarding those sorts of problems, I certainly would not recommend that we sit down to seven course meals in the name of gourmandism and then leave half to the side. It is probably a result of that conditioning, but I think that it is really quite a waste, nonetheless. The question is to eat without being over-full and, hopefully, having the judgement to make just enough to get you that stage. So I don't recommend that either we try and force-feed the children, as you may have practical problems trying to get them to eat at all. But it's not the point to try and inculcate them with the sense that wastage is inherently evil in itself, but rather that it is appropriate to live within certain limits. So, rather than, as it were, producing too much and then eating too much, teach them to produce less and be satisfied with that. There is nothing worse for me than going out to a fabulous restaurant and spending all that money and then all this food comes out and you think, good heavens, I'm paying $100, I really ought to try and eat as much as I can and then I go home suffer and my stomach is full and I can't sleep. That is a hopeless way of living.

Question: I think there is an inconsistency between the picture you've painted about the competition between development and armament, on one hand, and then shifting the blame on to greed. I think what is stopping this money going to development is not so much greed but fear and anxiety that people may be losing what they have already got

and that may be more than they need, but I think that it is an important factor which keeps all the money going into the wasteful area of armaments.

DD: I think that that certainly is a valid point. On the other hand, one must say when one looks at the resources available in the north and the activities of the armaments manufacturers in trying to see to it that fear and unhappiness still exist so that they can make a profit from it, there is quite a connection. However,I think you have made a point.

MS: Any more questions? Yes, I think that is an interesting vote amongst the questions.

I would like to thank both of the speakers, Anthony Corones and Don Dunstan, for their interesting opening to our day of Table Talk today. I think we should move on to the next part of the proceedings - I would like to call on Don to return to the podium and do his thing.

DD: I have been somewhat reluctantly cast in a role today for which I am completely unsuited, and in consequence I disclaim any sort of ecclesiastical or religious similarities. It is quite essential for me to do that, because after a certain experience some four or more years ago, when appearing publicly I always look round very carefully to see that there is nobody in the ecclesiastical drag in the background to have a photograph taken. So the disciples on this occasion are hidden somewhere and are performing some sort of miracle of some kind. What we propose to do today is celebrate the sharing of food, which was symbolised in that original occasion of which Anthony has spoken in some detail, and in consequence what I will do is to produce symbolically for you ...
(rustling sound)
Now there are two more ...
I thought that they were originally little fishes, biblically, but here we have some unleavened bread and some fish, and what we would all like you to do now, as I place this on the table, is to bring forward your own contributions, which we will share.

MY GASTRONOMIC EDUCATION

INTRODUCTION: Barbara Santich

The topic, Gastronomic Education, can be interpreted in different ways. I thought first of an article I had written for Australian Gourmet magazine after I moved from France to America, when my children were about three. It was a bit of a shock arriving in America after living in France for nearly two years - for me and for the children - and I certainly didn't want them to lose any of the gastronomic habits they had picked up in France (I think my daughter now has one of the best palates I know).

But there is more to a gastronomic education that just learning how to eat. I remember that, at the end of the first symposium, one of the things that we seemed to agree on was that we would try to promote a gastronomic way of living. I think that we have done that. The benefits that have accrued from the symposia are many and varied and have had a big influence on both cooks and writers. We have seen (and eaten) the food here today and the event in Gouger Street yesterday; in both of these, we are offering a form of gastronomic education.

The theoretical aspects of gastronomy have been covered in the Symposium Proceedings, which is another aspect of 'gastronomic education'. In like vein Marion Halligan has written a series of essays, inspired by her travels, her eating experiences and the thoughts that accompanied or were inspired by them. They are to be published later this year by Angus & Robertson under the title, *Eat my Words*. Marion is going to read an extract from this book which describes part of her gastronomic education, and which she believes is really a kind of microcosm of Australia over the last fifty years: From Castor to Olive in One Generation.

FROM CASTOR TO OLIVE IN ONE GENERATION; OR A GASTRONOMIC EDUCATION

Marion Halligan

When my mother was a child, every Saturday morning she was given flowers of sulphur in treacle. They were supposed to purify the blood and clarify the skin. I imagined that something called flowers of anything would taste good, but of course they didn't; the treacle was to disguise them, and didn't work. Sulphur is brimstone, brimstone conjures the devil and hell-fire; you can smell it when he's around. It was no fun every Saturday of your life.

When I was a child the cure-all catch-all was castor oil. This was powerful stuff. It could change a deathly ill child into one capable of going to school. In fact your parents knew that if you were prepared to stay in bed and take the castor oil you were really sick. It was administered with orange juice, in the middle the layer of oil, then another of juice. Drink it fast, they said, drink it fast, then you'll only taste the orange. This was a lie; the foul taste of the castor oil overpowered everything, and anyway you

were so scared of it you couldn't drink it fast. And also too weak, you wouldn't have been in this situation otherwise.

My sisters have no memory of castor oil. I think maybe my parents realized what torture it was and stopped. Maybe they heard about Mussolini pouring it down the throats of people suspected of being anti-Fascist, when it ripped out their insides in excruciating agony and frequently they died. Maybe they read the advertisements for Laxettes and decided that harsh purgatives were not necessary, though why in the first place illness should have been equated with constipation is a mystery. But there's no doubt I had a very healthy childhood, and perhaps it was all owing to the moral dissuasion of castor oil.

There's no doubt either that I loathed anything faintly reminiscent of any kind of oil. There was olive in the house, a tiny ancient rancid bottle of it, designed for medicinal purposes, like wiping baby's bottoms or getting chewing gum out of hair. I sometimes smelt it for the pleasure of the absolute awfulness of it. My grandmother made salad dressings with oil, not a mayonnaise but somehow boiled. Thank goodness we didn't do that. We made what we called mayonnaise: condensed milk into which we stirred mustard and vinegar. I loved it. The best salads were made of lettuce shredded with cucumber and radishes and tomato slices arranged on it. If you were in a hurry you would just put the whole lettuce leaves on the plates, crisp curling pink mignonette, which my father grew. I was keen on onion, too, but we didn't often have it because it was rather smelly. I have strong memories of days before that, of big family Sunday night teas, and our plates loaded with every kind of salad vegetable grown by my grandfather, who died when I was seven. Marvellous mild onions sliced in vinegar, which still recall those days and hard boiled eggs, and perhaps slices of ham, or Empire sausage, or corned beef. And of course cakes and scones and cookies and slices.

My mother had a reputation as a good cook based on these sweet things. For meals we had lamb chops or cutlets, Sunday roasts that turned into cold meats or cottage pie or toad in the hole, stews, sausages, wonderful meat pies and steak and kidney puddings, brain patties, mighty chickens stuffed with a savoury bread and herb mixture, sometimes liver and bacon, rissoles, fish, the vegetables, three or four of them and the potatoes compulsory, always boiled except when roasted with the leg of lamb. Somehow these things did not count as cooking. Or at least they weren't what made you a good cook. That depended on baking, which got done once or twice a week, and kept the cake and biscuit tins full so there was always something to have with cups of tea. It was a kind of shame to serve shop biscuits with cups of tea. There were beautiful puddings too, suet ones, golden syrup or spotted dog, or self-saucing chocolate, or graceful lemon meringue pies with Opera House (though we didn't know it then) sails, or homelier apple, and rhubarb, and fruit crumbles, and when we'd been blackberrying, tarts, and superb plum puddings that our mother made every Christmas until the year of her death. She'd try different recipes, not necessarily sticking to old or dependable favourites, but like wine grown on a certain soil, where grape is less powerful than place, whatever the variety the puddings were hers. Her daughters could use the same recipe, follow her instructions exactly, yet ours were never quite as good as no matter what recipe made by our mother, never so dark, damp, succulent.

Of course desserts at home weren't always wonderful. Sometimes they were stewed

fruit and custard, made out of a packet with powder which I usually got lumpy, nobody knew how but my father hated it. When refrigeration came we had ice-cream, at first entirely home-made with tiny shards of ice, and then the milkman brought Velvet ice-cream mix once or even twice a week and that got beaten and frozen and beaten (in the new electric mixer) and frozen. I can't imagine what it could have been made of. Before these days ice-cream was a treat from the shop. Once I went to the Victor Ice-Cream Show, a radio programme for children, and asked the ventriloquist's dummy a riddle he couldn't answer. Spell dried grass in letters: HAY (Actually my girlfriend just caught him out on hungry horse in four letters - MTGG - had hastily whispered it to me.) I won a cardboard cube of ice cream which I took home on the bus and we ate our dinner very fast to get on to the ice cream, which was not too melted and had a quite delicious taste of cardboard.

As the years passed and the fifties prospered and the Women's Weekly created ambitions for tasty dishes we extended our repertoire. I remember as quite a young teenager helping make a meal for a family friend. I did Vichy Carrots: notice the exotic continental name. They were cooked in butter and parsley in the oven, and formed their own golden brown caramelly sauce. The main course was hamburger meat loaf with melted cheese on top. Spaghetti came, and we were proud we knew not to serve it with mashed potatoes, though I'm not sure we ever got the proportions of pasta to sauce authentic; we always piled up the meat. We made tuna mornays and chicken a la king, and my mother acquired some tall coloured glasses in which she served parfaits: layers of cream and ice cream and fruit, like strawberries or sliced peaches or blackberries, accompanied by meringues or Adora Cream Wafers. k This was glamour. My father had to have his without cream; he'd disliked all milk and cream products ever since his childhood when his mother had kept a shop and made him drink up the left-over milk each evening because they had no refrigeration to keep it, and milk for him never lost the warm beginning-to-sour flavour of that hated duty.

I bought a Mrs. Beeton cheap and folded my mother's giant damask napkins into water lilies and slippers and bishop's mitres. And once I invited a boyfriend home and made sweet and sour pork with celery and tinned pineapple, only because he was Jewish I substituted veal for the pork, just in case. The trouble was I kept forgetting and calling it sweet-and-sour-por-um-veal, which spoiled the suavity of the situation.

We never ate in restaurants when I was small. Even on holiday we took our own food, and had picnics on trains and in parks. I remember the very first time we went into a cafe and sat at a table; it was in Gosford and I was about thirteen We had ice cream with flavouring; mine was raspberry. I remember the wonderful sensuous leisure of dipping the small flat spoon into the dish, scooping up morsels of sweet cold cream runnelled with red sauce, not having to lick fast and efficiently at a cone before it melted away. I sat on a brown chair at a brown table and spooned small sips of quite familiar and even banal ice-cream with raspberry topping and decided that the pleasure of eating in cafes would always be mine. Proust's Albertine had much higher standards, wanting ices that were moulded and carved in the shape of temples, churches, obelisks, rocks, but I doubt she enjoyed herself any more than I did. And I still love going to cafes. Small dark cramped places in back streets. Marble and glass palaces on great squares where the drinks are twice as dear as why shouldn't they be, why should such opulence be free? All the modest restaurants all over the world that promise good

food; even as you suspect they lie your heart lifts when you sit and wait to be served delights.

In Newcastle the place to eat when you were going out with a man was Oliver's, upstairs in Hunter Street. Oliver presided, a fierce man who looked like a Russian opera singer and expected you to treat his food with proper care. He patrolled the aisles between his tables and kept an eye on you enjoying it. His great speciality was ice cream - ice cream with topping in fact, but nothing industrial. It was home made, rich, creamy, not too sweet, and over it was poured some kind of liqueur, a marvellous burnt orange colour and tasting of bitter-sweet almonds, and there were toffeed nuts as well. At least that is how I remember it nearly thirty years later.

I used to go to Oliver's every Saturday night with the sweet-and-sour man. This was at the end of my teetotal period. I didn't much care for wine but had drunk some Lindeman's Porphyry Sauternes at a party and thought it pretty good, so whenever I was asked what wine I wanted to take I'd say, Lindeman's Porphyry etcetera. After all, I'd read that you shouldn't be hidebound by the convention of red wines with red meats, white with white. After several weeks of sauternes with steak the young man said, suppose I choose the wine tonight, and we had claret. I remember being slightly miffed. Oliver's eyes gleamed as sardonically as ever.

Once I went there for Christmas Eve lunch. I ordered a salad. There came a plateful not a patch on the old Sunday night teas as Grandma's. Big whorls of iceberg lettuce. A dollop of potato salad. Beetroot out of a tin. As I began I suspected there was oil on it. A slight glabrous quality. Whiffs of the fearful castor. It couldn't be. Of course there wouldn't be. I ate the salad by a sheer effort of will believing that there could be no oil on it. Simply refusing to allow my palate to taste or feel it. I wonder what kind of oil it could have been? Something pretty pale, even colourless. The experience cast doubt on lunching in continental restaurants. I thought of my parents eating fish in some safe Australian cafe.

The next year I went to Canberra and lived in Bruce Hall. You could have salad for lunch there too. (Does there behind all this salad eating lurk a feeling that it was somehow immoral to have two hot meals a day?) There were big jugs, one of oil, one of vinegar. Some people would pour both on their plates, I would only have vinegar. At least it was not brown malt, but equally spiritous. I liked its sharp clean taste. I was a very vinegary person when young. Now I make salad dressings as some people make martinis: as they barely show the vermouth to the gin, so do I with the vinegar to the oil, and the greener and fruitier that is the better I like it.

The other thing about Bruce Hall was that it was supposed to have a very high class chef who every year at the Ball got to practise his art at its finest. One time he made an orchestra of lobsters all sitting about on a great platter marzipan musical instruments.

In Sydney we'd go to Cahill's quite plushy looking. Not a cafeteria; waitresses came to the table. You felt good going there. We'd eat Viennese Schnitzel, with potato salad and some rather nice red cabbage, sort of pickled. Even more exotic was Chicken Maryland, served with a banana and a slice of pineapple in batter. It cost 7/6.

And about this time, espresso machines arrived in Newcastle, and coffee stopped being made of essence and turned into a beverage you could drink.

I think that one doesn't have a gastronomic memory. I think one can remember what one thought about things at the time, but not what they were really like. It would take some frightful emergency, now, to make me eat commercial ice creams out of a bottle, yet I look back on the cafe in Gosford as an occasion of bliss. Just as well one's palate does not have the gift - no, the curse - of hindsight. Better to leave all those experiences as safely delicious as memory makes them.

Nevertheless, I think of meals like the ones at Oliver's and wonder about them. The fact that they were part of a courting ritual makes it very hard to isolate the food from the occasion. I once ate at either Prince's or Romano's in Sydney and remember nothing of it, not even which it was, and this was because I was terribly unhappy; the man I was with was about to go back home to his foreign country. I didn't quite weep into the desert (if we had one) but the tragic drama of our lives was much more significant than any gourmet considerations. What did Juliet eat at candlelit dinners with Romeo?

So I suppose it was when life stopped being tragic drama and settled into being happy ever after that I really noticed the food. critically. Evaluating it. And no longer mainly as a consumer. I'd already had my vision of a lifetime of meals, one or two a day for the rest of my life and all made by me, which caused me to realize I had to cook interestingly or perish of boredom.

Meals got serious. They involved long cook book consultations. Elizabeth David. Prudence and Patience (Gray and Boyd). *The Cordon Bleu Cook. Lover's Cookbook. 1001 Ways to Please a Husband: The Bridge's Cookbook.* Jane Grigson, one by one. Claudia Roden. Beck, Bertholle and Child in various incarnations. Pomiane. Courtine. Guerard. Verge.. Les Freres Troisgros. Stephanie, Gabriel, Jean-Jaques. Italian. Indian. English. Chinese. Glossy books. Picture books. Bad books. Silly books. Now they are measured in metres. Some acquired at my trade of book reviewing. Some presents. Some secondhand. Some are treasured, some are for contemplation, others mainly take up space. Though I don't actually want to part with any of them.

I suppose anybody not growing up in complete poverty associates food with hospitality, the giving of pleasure to friends. When I was a child people used to come to the house to sing: my father played the piano and my mother made the supper, tea in the best cups, a spread of cakes and maybe cucumber sandwiches or mock duck, the cakes orange, or gingerbread, or chocolate.

Everybody would tuck into a hearty feed, because tea would have been a bit exiguous, probably eaten in a hurry because of going out, having to catch the tram. My father would beam, and say: I had the great good sense to marry a good cook.

We three girls grew up with this idea, that our mother was a good cook, that here was a model to emulate. There were certain things I learned from her, like how to fold: flour into a batter, or egg whites; and how to make pastry. The important thing here is a *light*

hand.
And the odd thing is that now I make all my pastry in a food processor and the light-handedness still applies. People who can't do it by hand tend not to be able to do it in the machine either - its atavisitic.

As well as being a good cook, there was the practice of the housewifely arts. Partly this was a habit of mind. Home made was best, and also more complimentary. Thrift was involved. You went blackberrying, or people gave you grapefruit and you made marmalade. You grew tomatoes and made sauce, went to the orchards and bought a case of peaches for bottling. There were presents of rhubarb, or mulberries. And there was the terrible choko springing fiendishly from back fence vines all over the town.

In my childhood we didn't often have people to actual meals, only out of necessity. Then, somewhere in the fifties the idea of the dinner party began to be in the air, and the Women's Weekly caught it and pinned it down for ordinary people to admire and maybe emulate. We;ve had continental food, and ethnic, haute cuisine has been displaced by nouvelle. Now even restaurateurs are supposed to be into granny food. Bourgeois cuisine. And maybe the home dinner party, after three decades of flourishing, will die out. Much of the innocence has gone out of it, as out of the world. Hosts desire to dazzle, rather than to please. Guests have become grumpier and gloomier, they are frequently not grateful. And the young are into steamed vegetables.

If the Women's Weekly gave form to the idea of the dinner party it was Elizabeth David who gave meaning to the food. The sixties in Australia were a good place for her books because the basic ingredients were so easily available and they continued to get better. Fresh herbs, for instance; once people grew mint and parsley, maybe a rosemary bush. Herbs meant a pinch of dried: frequently fusty, musty, dusty: family heirlooms. Now all sorts of herbs are available as plants to grow, and cut in bunches. No vegetable is too exotic. The desire for plenitude and diversity and natural states is the great note of hope on the current culinary scene. Though in some cases the irony is that all we've done is get back to where we were in the fifties. Like chickens, those large and succulent birds of my youth. You killed your own, or went round to Mr Kitchen in the next street who would despatch one to order. It was sent round on a plate with a cloth over that you washed and returned. Then came the supermarkets and they went frozen, which seemed, like many industrial confidence tricks, a good thing at the time. Next came fresh chickens, even if they did taste a bit fishy. Then fresh free range. Now fresh free range corn fed. Solid meaty birds running rich yellow fat. Real chooks again.

It was the idea of realness that was so important from Elizabeth David. It was a good antidote to that turning and expanding, by fifties prosperity, or wartime makeshift into a way of life, on the grounds of speed, time-saving, effortless results. The whole supermarket syndrome. Michael Symons in *One Continuous Picnic* has a chilling chapter on it.

In my childhood I went to the shop with a billy-can for milk, a basket for fruit; the biscuits were weighed into a brown paper bag, and a broken one passed to me as a treat on the spot. I remember practising some elementary physics with a billy-can of milk. I went home past my grandmother's and some cousins were there. I suppose I was

showing off. I said I bet I can swing this billy-can over my head without spilling a drop. They scoffed, I demonstrated. I mustn't have built up enough speed, because a whole sheet of milk sloshed out. Non-packaging had its hazards. The biscuits in the brown paper bag, twirled into ears to seal it, were temptingly accessible, and a dreamy child, sent to the bakery for half a loaf of bread, could eat out the best part of the warm soft crumb without even realizing she was doing it. Nevertheless, having packaged the earth as we have know it almost out of existence by the twin evils of depletion and disposability maybe we'll get back to the old friendly habits.

After all, we've thought a lot about our health in recent years, we could consider the earth's. We try not to litter our own systems with garbage. Though it's not always easy to recognize it. My father was told to cut down on animal fats and took to margarine. His daughters were by this time ardent converts to olive oil.

We knew out father would never take to oil on salads. He liked food simple, not mucked about. But what about oil for cooking, not the grass green olive, but tasteless, odourless, colourless safflower, sunflower, one of those: much more real, more honest, more healthy, than margarine. No. He wouldn't have a bar of it, and at home he had his way. But when he visited us, he ate oil. Not on salads, we left his undressed, but in cooked dishes. There's no oil in this, is there? he'd occasionally ask, and I'd reply, Father, would I do a thing like that? Technically not telling a lie. Once he caught my youngest sister browning the casserole meat in peanut oil, and refused to eat any. You know I can't take that stuff, he said; this was the reason for his refusal, not dislike, but that it disagreed with him. And maybe it did, if he knew it was there. But mostly we got away with it, our consciences untroubled; it was good for him. I suppose we were as stubborn as he was. Though since I've wondered, was I, deep down, unconsciously, paying him back for the castor oil I had to swallow down fast because it was good for me?

Last year, in Melbourne, I went to the Enoteca Sileno. John showed us a Tuscan oil: very rare, he said, to find an oil completely ***grown*** in Tuscany. It was, of course, extra virgin, cold-pressed. He invited us into the back room for a tasting. There was a table set out with sun-dried tomatoes, preserved mushrooms, olives, and a saucer of small spoons. You held out a spoon, he poured a little in, you tasted it. For a moment I shivered, held the spoon poised, the old castor oil days swept over me. Proust's *madeleine* gone bad. But I have a strong will, I made myself do it; I drank down the oil. It was beautiful. It had a pale green taste of grass, a perfect pale green idea of grass. Some oils taste of apple, or almond, or the ripe fruit of the tree; there's a whole vocabulary to describe them. Bad as well as good.

Finally, we bought the Tuscan one. It cost a great deal of money, but we don't throw it around. John told us a way to eat it: slice a pear, put a little oil on a plate, take a piece of Parmesan cheese, dip the cheese in the oil and eat them all together. He's right, it's brilliant. And now there's a stall at the market that sells pears by name: Glou Morceau, Comice, Winter Nellis, Josephine, William, Beurre Bosc...

To end with, I have to mention garlic, no gastronomic education is complete without garlic. Not in the antipodes of my youth. Curiously enough, I don't remember the moment of its arrival in my life. I can pinpoint my first olive, at a party with people

from the French Department at university, when I was seventeen. I remember how consciously and how conscientiously I ate it; I knew that what was being offered was civilisation, a way of life which I could desire and perhaps achieve. This is not hindsight, either; I remember with what ceremony we picked up those large green globes and nibbled at them. We didn't like them, but this seemed appropriate too; it was logical that civilisation would need to be earned.

Garlic however does not offer such a significant semiotic moment. But I do remember the advent of the garlic crusher, at another party, English department this time, and I was older, twenty-one maybe. We were eating spaghetti with garlic, parsley and cheese, which was possible my first experience of any kind of pasta but the Aussified spaghetti bolognaise. My hostess produced a garlic crusher and said this has changed her life. I wondered how a kitchen implement could change your life, but with a kind of pleasure, discovering another mystery to elucidated. I put that in a story once, the girl and the garlic crusher; in fact, writing it down like this, I see how much of my life has been given to the characters I've invented in my fictions. Do I have the right to borrow it back for my own autobiography, I wonder?

BS: I am sure we can all respond to Marion's very evocative memories and I am looking forward to reading more when her book appears. I thought I might just add a word of explanation about 'Empire'. It's not called Empire in South Australia; here it's fritz, and I knew it in Sydney as Devon. But on holidays, near Newcastle, I realised the people there called it Empire "Go up to the shop and get a shilling's worth of Empire". It wondered what on earth they were talking about until I found out later that it was devon. I mentioned the story to Graham Pont, who came from Maitland, and he had the story of Empire and how it got its name - it used to be called German sausage, but changed its name during the First World War because German sausage was unpatriotic!

Indeed, Dr Graham Pont is our next speaker. Graham has had a profound influence on the development of our gastronomic thinking, and in particular he has had an enormous influence on my gastronomic career. At the time of the first symposium I had started research into medieval Mediterranean cuisine in a peripatetic and rather aimless way, but that symposium made me realise that if I adopted a gastronomic approach I could make the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries come to life. I certainly am grateful for his advice and stimulation but I also think that the symposium as a whole has benefited from his knowledge and his ideas.

MY GASTRONOMIC CAREER

Graham Pont

I have no memory of my first gastronomic experiences. After a long and difficult birth I was fed normally for about three months, and then took to the bottle. My mother followed the advice of the Baby Health Centre strictly, but now believes that I was underfed. I have never trusted nutritionists and regard them as ignorant moralists and dangerous practitioners of a pseudo-science. Like Brillat-Savarin, I am a typically `oral' person and a devotee of Nature's fairest handiwork. My mother recalls that I ate almost everything, except boiled cabbage. I liked stews, but my brother preferred drier meat

dishes. Steak and chops in those days were usually tough and invariably overcooked. They regularly featured in our country breakfast of three courses, which began with porridge in winter and cereal in summer. My first philosophical thought was inspired by the picture on the packet of `Breakfast Delite' which showed a boy and a girl kissing and each holding the same packet, with the same picture. I was mildly curious about the the apparent infinite regress but more interested in the flavour of semolina porridge. I loved `Granuma'and always envied my uncle, who owned the local dairy: he was allowed to have seconds of porridge but I never was. I was not given sweets; I held my first chocolate until it melted. But, after the War, I remember deliberately savouring the pleasure of MacRobertson's `Snack' chocolate and American chewing gum.

My earliest gustatory memories include Sao biscuits with apricot jam (it must have been IXL!) at Merewether Beach in 1942 and the strikingly different tastes of the waters I drank from the streams in the hills surrounding the Hunter Valley. My father and his mates used to go rabbitting; and I remember being left alone with the campfire at night, enjoying without fear all the sounds of the bush and looking down on the distant lights of the townships in the Valley below. I still love fires and regularly cook on them at home.

My early gastronomic formation was almost entirely natural; there was culinary art in the Hunter Valley then. The wild foods, and the agricultural produce of the Valley farms, were very good but no one could cook them properly. My father was an excellent fisherman and we usually had very fresh fish and prawns, but they were always overcooked. He also shot wild duck on the swamps near Maitland but I never tasted it. He grew delicious vegetables in our home garden - tomatoes, beans, peas, carrots, beetroot and lettuce, grapes and lots of other fruit. I enjoyed them all, except rhubarb. We had fresh butter from friends on a nearby farm: it was made from a Jersey-Guernsey herd and heavily salted. I loved it! I still like Australian butters, particularly `Allowrie'. The bread was awful and so were the commercial cakes; but my mother cooked the traditional family cakes very well. One of her variations was Lamingtons coated with `All-Bran'. I adored scones with jam and pancakes with lemon and sugar, by the fire. For my eighth birthday, I asked to be taken to the local Paragon Cafe where, predictably, I had exactly the food I could get at home, sausages and potatoes. By high school, I was into `Freddo Frogs'and strawberry milkshakes (only threepence then!). I used to save up and buy elaborate sundaes at the local cafes. The family didn't drink - respectable people like us didn't then. I remember tasting some beer left at our place. It was bitter but I liked it. One of the worst experiences of my life was drinking kerosene in my uncle's barn. But I also remember the sweet water that was hand-pumped from the sands of the nearby Hunter River.
My tastes in food were profoundly affected by coming to Sydney, to go to University. I discovered Chinese food (Maitland, where I grew up, was a purely British settlement: it had its two Greek cafes - the Paragon and the Boronia - but no Chinese restaurants until quite recently). From here on, my gastronomic development became more or less typical of my generation. I first became familiar with the popular Cantonese-Australian cuisine, always preferring sweet and sour dishes (especially Chinese roast duck, a Sydney speciality). I disliked the food of the University Union, except the popular ice-cream with caramel sauce and malt. I also changed to chocolate milkshakes, with double malt; and I discovered hamburgers. Though not encouraged, I began to cook a bit at home, usually making up imaginative hashes to satisfy night starvation.

I was very fortunate to begin my serious restaurant career at `Filthy Flo's' - the famous Florentino Restaurant in Elizabeth Street, owned and very cleanly run by Mario Faggion. As an impoverished Law student, I used to have the fixed price meal of four courses, for 3/6. As an occasional luxury, this was followed by zabaglione which also cost 3/6. During 1956, I was introduced to relatively civilised drinking by a fellow student in Philosophy and Law: we used to share a bottle at the Florentino, first Lindeman's `Cawarra' (5/-) and then Wynn's `Coonawarra Estate' (7/6). At Flo's it was B.Y.O. (before the term was invented) and no corkage. Many years later, before going to the opera in Florence, I ended up at the only restaurant open so early: it was a workers' cafe, just like the Florentino - with the same cheap, wholesome and delicious food, only the olive oil on the table was superb. I then realised that my taste for Italian food had been formed in an authentic and admirable school.

After graduation, my gastronomic education was divided mainly between Johnny Walker's original Bistro, where I discovered the marvellous world of fine Australian wine, and the original Trianon Restaurant, in Challis Avenue, which became a second home. About 1960, my idea of paradise was a six-hour lunch at the Bistro followed by dinner at the Trianon (all for well under ten pounds). The owners of the Trianon were very indulgent: they ignored our rough manners and appalling ignorance and tried to educate our palates. For special occasions they gave us fine, dry Champagne (the rare `Irroy'): but until my 30s I preferred Asti Spumante and drank all the best brands. I did, however, acquire a permanent preference for Hunter Valley and South Australian wine - especially the original Tulloch's Private Bin red, and the old Stonyfell reds. Apart from Hunter Valley Semillon and Barossa riesling, I did't really like any of the whites available then.

When I went on to the National University in Canberra to do my doctorate, I joined a truly international community at University House, which was run by a great gourmet and Italophile, Professor Dale Trendall. The food was very good, almost the best I ever encountered in an academic institution; but we all got tired of it and started cooking in our own rooms. The Indians, especially, were dying to have some of their own food; but, being all upper-class, they had never cooked for themselves. I enjoyed their culinary efforts immensely and also the occasional dinners and snacks put on by students from other countries. I started doing curries and spaghettis (both usually too hot). University House had a fine cellar and, like most people in Canberra, we drank enormous amounts of wine and spirits: aperitifs, wine with dinner and somretimes a bottle of Remy Martin between two or three afterwards. We eventually starting putting on grand and pretentious dinners and I organised some concerts and musical banquets in the Hall of University House. A group of us deliberately revolted against the squalid conventions of Australian party-going and organised elegant champagne parties, with good food, music and other entertainment. I remember waking up from one of these orgies, still in my Farmers' grey flannel suit which was covered with orange sauce from the *crepes suzette* I'd been making the previous night. We also reformed the barbecue, making a feature of yard-long shashliks of marinated meats mixed with fruit and vegetables. Barbecues in the glorious landscape of the Brindabellas are among my happiest memories.

In the early `60s I began buying cookbooks and studying recipes seriously. One that

impressed me was Maria Donovan's *Continental Cookery in Australia* - for years after my friends and I would do the Baked Pork Loin *a la Montespan* (the recipe is found only in the first edition, 1955 - I never bothered to find out if it is authentic). But Donovan's extravagant Malakoff Cake became the starting point for my special interest in alcoholic sweets. After discovering Mont Blanc in London, my ideal sweet has remained chesnuts in cognac - though I'd have to admit that the greatest I ever tasted was a French artisanal creation of wild raspberries in their own brandy. A masterpiece!

Like so my of my generation - the last of the true colonials - London was the centre of the world and the culmination of our gastronomic development. I became almost a full-time gastronomic tourist, shopping in the Soho markets, eking out the spaghetti when money was short and dining extravagantly at the three-star joints when I was flush. Old Compton Street, Soho, became my paradise: I determined to cook, eat and drink my way through all the nations and cuisines represented there - and almost succeeded. My taste soon became markedly Italian - I discovered Italian wines, especially the strong reds of the South. At the Pasticceria Amalfi, in Soho, we would start on the `Gran Caruso' red from Ravello (after a stiff Negroni or Americano) and end up on the Asti which the waiters used to spray around the restaurant and at each other, at our expense. Our delight was to improvise new dishes: the head waiter, Franco, would freely interpret our drunken conceptions and always come back with something appropriately *capriccioso*. He would also oblige us by chatting up any women who took our eye. The English ladies loved it!

With Egon Ronay and the *Good Food Guide*, we explored the British Isles from bottom to top: I uusually navigated from hotel to restauruant, via the relevant cathedrals, castles, museums, etc. This is still my preferred lifestyle. My ideal became the good English inn: at the Royal Oak, near Yattendon in Berkshire, about 1965, three of us had a five-course dinner, with a 30-year-old claret and a 20-year-old burgundy, followed by brandy, bed and breakfast - for five pounds a head! I even met Egon Ronay and thought of becoming a `gastronomic inspector'. I became a devotee of North Indian cookery, eating at London's first tandoori restaurants in Great Whitfield Street. I made many notes, bought lots of books, especially those by Elizabeth David and Florence White. I broadened my gastronomic experience by shopping and cooking with a Baconian passion and by making regular trips to the Continent. There I finally realised a truth I wouldn't admit in Australia: that Italian or Mediterrean food suits me best. French food, particularly that of the Parisian restaurants, soon gives me a crise de foi. I've never been sick in Italy, even after eating and drinking for months on end in every kind of restaurant, cafe and bar.

After three and a half years in London, I returned to Australia and an academic job in 1966. Thereafter my taste has continued to develop along much the same lines - an eclectic blend of Asian, Italian, French, English, Greek and Australian. Apart from a new enthusiasm for Thai food (when I eat out now, I eat Thai), the only major changes during the last twenty years or so have been an improved understanding of regional cuisines, especially Northern Italian, a systematic exploration of Australian and foreign wines and, finally, a serious study of gastronomic literature.

I made my first gastronomic notes while sailing to Italy in 1963 - and have never looked at them since. In London, I read cookery books and some food history

(Dorothy Hartley). I discovered Brillat-Savarin by accident, when the M.F.K. Fisher edition was remaindered in Sydney during the 70s. I missed out on the first edition of Anne Drayton's Penguin translation. I bought Reay Tannahill's *Food in History* in New York, in 1974, and introduced a General Studies elective with the same title at UNSW, in 1979. When *The Philosopher in the Kitchen* came out in its second edition, I changed the name of my course to `Gastronomy', but had to add a long and quite forgettable subtitle to pacify the critics on the Board of Studies in General Education. I made Brillat-Savarin the textbook of the world's first undergraduate course in Gastronomy, later adding the *Deipnosophists* of Athenaeus, Muskett's *Art of Living in Australia* and Michael Symons' *One Continuouus Picnic*. Michael sent me the final page-proofs of the book, with only a couple of days to read them; but I managed to persuade him to remove his bibliographical comments on *The Physiology of Taste* .

I thus became a disciple of Brillat-Savarin and the first Australian philosopher to join the grand tradition of European intellectual gastronomy - just in time to participate knowledgeably in the First Symposium of Australian Gastronomy (1984). That occasion was one of the great experiences of my life. In 1988, the last year I was able to teach Gastronomy at UNSW, I added a course on `The Culture of Wine', supported by two brilliant tutors, Tim Harding and Barbara Santich. Now there are hundreds of Kensington graduates who know Brillat-Savarin from cover-to-cover and rightly understand the founding father of the Australian school, Philip Muskett. I was indeed privileged to have Anthony Corones as my first tutor and Sara Adey as a student.

My remaining ambitions in Gastronomy lie mostly with the future of our Symposium - in the development of a national organisation, the creation of a superior Australian gastronomic journal, and the cultivation of a body of gastronomic science, informed gourmandism, enlightened criticism and ecologically sane technology - ultimately to provide guidance in Australian food policy on all aspects of national alimentation. I would like to see the creation of a Museum of Australian Wine - preferably in Sydney, where it all began. I also hope to see my country and city finally recognised among the great centres of world gastronomy and to share annually in the proper celebration of that achievement, in a new and authentic Corroboree, the Antipodean *opera gastronomica*.

THE PROFESSIONAL PALATE

Gay Bilson, Nigel Hopkins, Jill Dupleix, Michael Dowe, Tom Jaine

INTRODUCTION: Gay Bilson

Gay Bilson: Here we are in the ring. I am Gay Bilson, a restaurateur, and I am here as a kind of umpire, adjudicator, ring master. And in the ring of the contestants, we have Tom Jaine from England, Jill Dupleix from Melbourne, Michael Dowe from Sydney and Nigel Hopkins from Adelaide ... the Restaurant Reviewers, who normally make me and other restaurateurs victims even when we are praised.
[Boo]
Who are you booing? Oh them, good, keep it up. You have the most subversive chairman you have ever had here.

I would like to give a subtitle to this session, even if the restaurant reviewers don't make a point of answering it. But as this symposium, as I see it, is rather blasphemous in many of the things that we are doing, I would like to call this session the 'Indiscreet Confessional'. I mean they are people who normally have very little opportunity to stand up for why they do their job and I guess I would like to hear about their idea of their credentials.

Let me take a few minutes to tell you three very little stories which might put my position as chairman into some perspective, especially as I really do like the turning of the tables, where you have a restaurateur introducing restaurant reviewers. Some time ago at my restaurant, a Melbourne restaurant reviewer came to eat totally anonymously and unannounced. I had no idea she was coming. We were both extremely frightened of each other. I think because she arrived anonymously -which I commend her for - and she lost her way. There is a ferry at Berowra Waters which can either take you to the sticks, across the Styx and further into hell, or hopefully to a little bit of heaven at Berowra Waters Inn, and she took the ferry. There was a very unhelpful ferry driver. Someone finally guided her back on to the right side of the river and to the right place to come to the restaurant, and she arrived very flustered, slightly exhausted by the trip she didn't need to take, and I felt very, very sorry for her. I raced into the kitchen ... First of all I might say that, coming up behind her and saying 'oh, my God you're here, how wonderful, how lovely to see you!' I frightened her so much that she dropped her appetiser in her lap and felt even more embarrassed. (I like this woman very much, by the way.)

I raced into the kitchen and said 'can we do something, just some little thing to give them - it was a table for two - some little thing to give them to relax them, to make up for the ferry ride to hell'. So we sent out this little thing, the meal continued, she went home to Melbourne. Some weeks later a very long and fairly serious review of the restaurant came out and she mentioned the unasked-for plate of food that she had had at the beginning of the meal; she said that I had given her this because I knew who she was. And I just want to tell you - this is indiscreet confessional-time - that is so wrong, that is so wrong. That isn't why. I gave it out of a sense of generosity as I do, possibly indiscriminately, to quite a few people who get lost on the ferry at Berowra Waters.

Don't feel too angry at the Melbourne restaurant reviewer and don't feel too sorry for me. It's just what happens in the trade.

The next story is when I thought I still had something to say about food and I was writing about food for *Times on Sunday*, which is now defunct, as is my idea that I have anything to say about food. I wrote a piece about restaurant reviewers. It was a very angry and bitter piece but it was fairly discreet because I am not in a position

usually to say what I what I would like to say until I don't have a restaurant any more. Somehow into this piece I managed to put a restaurant review of my very own. Some friends of mine and I, every Monday night, would go and meet at an extraordinarily cheap and usually very empty, very slowly serviced Fijian Indian Restaurant in Newtown, and I just wanted to say how fantastic I thought the dishes were. I said all this without naming the restaurant or saying where it was, which I thought was my gesture to non-restaurant reviewing within a piece, which I think was really saying I don't want restaurant reviewing to exist at all. By then doing a restaurant review I was saying we have got to cop it, really, it is there and that's all about it.

I said a lot of really complimentary things to Mrs Suman because we loved going to that restaurant and I wanted to pay her a great compliment. She didn't know the piece was in the paper but another diner took her a copy of it and Mrs Suman put it in the window of her restaurant, not just cutting out the piece where the compliments were paid to her restaurant but including my whole diatribe against restaurant reviewing, which was extremely naive of her. One night, another Monday night, we were at the restaurant and someone told her that it was actually me, the person eating the curry, who had written the piece and she came to say thank you. She was extraordinarily grateful and just lovely. She suddenly said to me, 'how much you pay the paper, love, to put that in? I don't quite know what that illustrates but it is something to do with the naivety of the restaurateur and sometimes the over-sophistication of the restaurant reviewer.

The third story, and I just leave it as it is and presume the restaurant reviewers will take my point - that is a pun. An old friend of mine, a cellist, was once asked by the now-defunct, also, *National Times* to write a piece about music in restaurants. He had a point system, and he gave points from 0 to 10 or from 10 to 0 on whether restaurants had music or not and what kind of music they played. When he finally got down to giving the points there were 2 out of 10 for music in the restaurant, and 10 out of 10 for no music.

I must say I do feel a bit like - I know it is an exaggeration - but I feel like the person who is going to be hanged suddenly being in the position of asking the hanging people the people who are going to hang me not only why they are hanging me but why they chose to want to hang me in the first place. So I am now going to ask them to justify their position, as I know I seem to rather angrily say, as hangmen - but they can take that up.

I thought we would start with Nigel Hopkins who is restaurant reviewer for the *Adelaide Advertiser* and has also bought out, for the first time in Adelaide, a Good Food Guide along the lines of those in Sydney and Melbourne. I don't know much about Nigel except he obviously loves wonderful contemporary classical music, because he was at the Kronos quartet last night, like a lot of us, and anyone who loves that kind of music must have some bit of soul which presumably goes into his restaurant reviewing. But here is Nigel to stand up for himself in the ring.

Nigel Hopkins: It's nice to feel so loved, and necessary. The first thing I learnt when I started restaurant reviewing was that people who can't stand the sight of blood on their plate, love it in print. Nothing gives a reader more satisfaction than a savage restaurant review. The second thing I learnt was that people care as little for reviewers as they do for restaurateurs. The phone rings: we have just had the most ghastly dinner, my husband is still vomiting, you most go there and review it at once! They do not understand that restaurant reviewing has enough hazards without deliberately seeking more.

When I asked Michael Symons what I should raise at this forum he suggested a discussion of what, if anything, qualifies someone to review restaurants. Just as interesting might have been to ask, why bother to do it at all? Is it not unfair that we

should single out chefs and restaurateurs for such attention, when we don't similarly examine publicly the work of our accountant, our doctor, our lawyer, our architect or even our journalists. At least chefs can take heart that they are in the same criticised company as artists, film and theatre actors and directors. This may be appropriate because chefs can at time be all of these. To me restaurants are a form of theatre and I probably review them with this in mind. This is why I regard myself as a restaurant reviewer rather than purely a food critic. I think there is an important distinction and it is relevant to the question of who is qualified to pass opinions on restaurants. I once wrote a ski column. 'Had I ever skied?' asked the editor. 'Of course,' I replied, recalling an hour or two spent on my face or on my back on some icy slopes in Scotland. 'The job is yours,' he said. Eventually I did learn to ski, and after I had talked to enough people I learnt something about the ski business and, as a result, I was able to make a reasonable job of that column. I approached it as journalist, essentially as a reporter. Report what you see as accurately as you can, and never believe that you are the expert. I think these rules apply to what 90% of restaurant reviewing is all about. Where do you start and is it more important to know about food or to be able to write. Clearly it doesn't matter how much you know if you can't communicate it and if you know nothing then it is not worth writing about it. A restaurant reviewer who approaches the job as a reporter at least can describe the restaurant, say what is on the menu and wine list, and what has appeared on his plate. At the very least he should get the price right. .

Knowing about food and its preparation becomes much more important when trying to describe the merits or otherwise of what is on that plate. Some of this will be scientific fact, some of it will be opinion, but much of it will be plain common-sense. If your steak is a strange blue-green colour and smells like your son's sneakers after a game of cricket, you can tell something is not right. You do not need to be an expert to do this. If what has been described as a cream soup contains large lumps of uncooked flour you know very easily to suspect the competence of the cook. If what purports to be hot arrives cold, or vice versa, liquids arrive congealed, solids arrive as liquids, fresh arrives as stale, and so on, you do not need to be Paul Bocuse to take notice of these things and reach a few elementary conclusions.

A restaurant reviewer should never guess. Soon after I started reviewing I described some mussels, which tasted as if they had been made in some careless moment by Pacific Dunlop, as having been frozen. If they had been, they might have benefited from such an assault on their horrid rubbery tissues. They were in fact, as I noted later, fresh from New Zealand. The fact that they were inedible was much overshadowed by my mistake.

Once a restaurant reviewer has learnt to write and report accurately, how effective and useful they become would depend on how much they learn about food and its preparation. This is, as we all know to our great satisfaction, a bottomless pit of knowledge. Obviously much of what a restaurant reviewer says will be his or her opinion, not to be regarded as gospel truth. But the bloodthirsty ready rarely bothers to make this distinction. So it is important for a reviewer to tread carefully, even cautiously; reputations and livelihoods are at stake and I for one do not wish to have that sort of blood on my hands. I would rather attempt to be the sort of reviewer who is critically positive rather than negative, to nurture rather than to be destructive, thus can the expectations of diners be raised helping them to be more demanding of chefs and restaurants and lessening their fears of the unfamiliar. The risk a restaurant reviewer runs, of course, is that in being too kind, too often, he will bore his readers and to bore our customers, as every restaurateur and chef should know,is not a prudent thing to do.

GB: Even if you have questions that apply simply to what Nigel has said, I think it might be a good idea to go straight on, because I like the idea of each restaurant reviewer talking to you about what they feel about it and what their credentials are. The

credential point to me is a very important one. So I will now ask Jill Dupleix to speak. Jill wrote out a little potted biography, two pages: one factual, the other I guess slightly emotional and charmed. I am going to read you both of them because I couldn't do any better and you will see too. I will give the facts first.

She is a food writer whose work appears in the *Melbourne Herald* which has a section on Wednesday night ,something I have learnt fairly recently after I had known Jill. She has written two books, one of which she would rather forget, so I am not going to even give the title, although she gave it to me. She has also just written a book called *The Taste of Melbourne*, a guide to Melbourne's best food shops, and she is working on a SBS documentary on Melbourne's ethnic cuisines. She has been a restaurant reviewer for three years and would like me to say that that's the point from which she is speaking to you today.

But let me read you this one. I am a sucker for charmed facts. She is a complete and utter food groupie,, who differentiates only between good food and bad, and not between styles and ethnic diversity. In the last year she has completed a lot of cookery courses and she has also done a waitressing course. I must say that I have known Jill for a while now, and she is a very likable woman. I wish she wasn't a restaurant reviewer. She would be unmistakable walking into a restaurant, as you will see, so anonymity would be extremely hard for her. She is passionate about food, and she is a charming and generous dining companion.

Jill Dupleix: Thank you, Gay ... I think. I am a bit amazed at this us-and-them attitude: is it a Sydney thing or is it a national thing that we don't have so much in Melbourne? To me, 'us and them' generally means my restaurant review versus other restaurant reviewers.

I would like to talk about some of the things I have learnt and unlearnt in the past three years of reviewing restaurants. For instance, probably the most obvious, one of the initial things that we could all learn very quickly, I learnt that the 'soup of the day' is always pumpkin. That the answer to a very genuine question, 'what's special tonight?', as in 'I know you feel restricted to a printed menu, so I am giving you the opportunity of telling me what you have special tonight', the answer to that is always 'Everything is special, madam'. I have learnt that wine glasses can indeed be filled over the brim. That the menu doesn't always mean what it says, trap number one for the young player. That restaurant reviewers are often fed twice as much as the people at the next table, which is a very simple matter to ascertain. That butter should not be kept in a hot kitchen all day. That the more advance publicity one receives about a new restaurant, the worse it is going to be. That opening nights are to be avoided at all costs and that some bread rolls are simply not meant to be eaten.

That is probably slightly more than a lot of people have learnt.

There are a number of points I want to make about restaurant reviewing in Australia. I think too many of us have forgotten why we review restaurants in the first place. It is not to attract advertising revenue through sympathetic editorial, although that has been the case in the past and that is, in fact, why restaurant reviews were born. It is not to impress one's fellow food writers with one's literary prowess. It isn't to maintain a pleasant relationship with the restaurateur, no matter how pleasant a relationship that can be, or to pay off a free meal as so many seem to think. It is actually to help people to have a good night out, simple but true. In a broader sense, it is to put restaurants into context and to describe them well enough for people to know whether they are going to like them or not.

There are all sorts of ancillary aspects to any restaurant review. There is highlighting new produce, introducing new cuisines to the unfamiliar, encouraging good chefs to do

better and bad chefs to do better, highlighting the pleasures of the table, of the marriage of food and wine, and so on. But essentially people read or listen to reviews to find out which restaurant to go to, which film to go to, which concert to go to. Not that I am advocating the blow-by-blow restaurant review school with its 'then we hads' and 'next cames' and 'followed bys'. It is not just the flavour of the food people need to know about ,and the quality of the food, it's the flavour of the restaurant, of the dining experience. One of the joys of the job to me is the difficulty and the joy of being able to communicate that flavour of the restaurant, to sum up the dining experience in a readable, entertaining and genuine way. The better you write, the longer you will be read.

We restaurant reviewers are a product of our age, a necessary evil that links the dining-out public with the restaurant industry. But how well do we do out job? Is this in fact a time, as Gay suggests, to review the reviewers? What you have here, I think, is the new breed of restaurant reviewers and I think they should challenge your views, perhaps your long-held views of restaurant reviewing. They are the people who review restaurants because it is a logical extension of their own lives, their own passions, their own interest. They have eaten their way into the jobs. They haven't been the journalist who goes to the pub every Friday lunch so he gets the free meal for the week as a reward by the editor. We all have different ways of doing our job, so I can only speak for myself, with the following ground rules.

I believe the fairest and the most honest way to review a restaurant is to go unannounced, anonymous, attempting to experience the most typical evening. The reviewer should take the same risk as the normal diner, that the restaurant isn't between chefs, that the business hasn't just gone into receivership, that the owner hasn't just shot himself and that the chef is actually there and not off at some gastronomic symposium. Believe it or not, all these things have happened in Melbourne and throughout Australia in the last week. I believe a reviewer needs to know as much as possible about the cuisine he or she writes of. It is not enough to say, I don't know much about Ethiopian food, but I know what I like. In Thailand, if you are a restaurant reviewer, that would mean you must know a lot about Thai food; in Italy, Italian food. In Australia it means you need to know about Thai food and Italian food and Szechuan and Californian and Cajun and Greek and Turkish and Ethiopian and French. You do this - it may sound naive - you do this by tasting and eating and reading and eating and studying and eating and travelling and cooking and eating. I am not one of the people who insist that you have to be able to cook absolutely every single thing yourself, but I have actually found that to be the fastest and the most enjoyable way of learning about different people, different cuisines, different ingredients, and, in fact, learning what is good and what is bad. And that is terribly important, otherwise you will accept that Peking duck should be served with hot grilled toast, as one Chinatown restaurateur tried to insist to me some years ago.

In Melbourne the aged (sic) *Good Food Guide* handled this by appointing a Greek reviewer for Greek restaurants, an Indian reviewer for Indian restaurants, and so on, which I think is absolute garbage. A: it is not just Indians who go to Indian restaurants in Melbourne; B: these people were not necessarily good writers or good reviewers, although no doubt they are good Indians; and C: they are often so close to their own ethnic community, they are physically and emotionally unable to be objective and to be critical, or they may not get invited to cousin Raj's birthday ever again. I also noticed the *Good Food Guide* has not appointed any French reviewers to handle the French restaurants of Melbourne.

I believe the review isn't complete by a score of some sort, a grading of some kind. It forces the reviewer to make a stand, for a start, and not slither about in clever words and innuendo. It also forces the reviewer to put the restaurant into context with other restaurants reviewed, with other restaurants in that city. It is just too easy to be terribly

clever and impress everyone, or be vague, or to evade a possible legal problem and leave the reader not knowing where to go for dinner, or why.

I do believe we have too many restaurant reviewers, especially in Melbourne; why don't they all go home and leave me. We have the *Age*, and we have the *Herald*, and now the three new Sunday newspapers. So we have reached Rita Erlich, Claude Forell, Jill Dupleix, Terry Durack, Stephen Downes, Geoff Slattery and Geoff Page all turning up at restaurants all over town every week. I have suggested that we just make a group booking on a Saturday night and let each restaurateur get us all over and done with in one go, but no, to no avail. I do think it is a shame, we could have got a nice discount.

I do believe that new restaurants are reviewed far too early and this is endemic in Melbourne. Anyone who has been to a new restaurant in its first week and returned three months later will bear me out on this. Terry and I use three months as the minimum time after a restaurant opening or a major chef change. We will go early to a restaurant but we won't review. We may miss out on being the first with the latest, which I believe is a journalistic priority, but it also means that our reviews are a lot closer to reality. For instance, when the old and adored Florentino restaurant was completely renovated and re-opened in Melbourne recently, it had new chef, new owner, new everything. On its second night of operation it was visited and reviewed by the *Sunday Age*. Two nights later it was visited and reviewed by the *Sunday Herald*. Not surprisingly, both these impatient gentlemen found that the restaurant hadn't quite got its act together and slammed it, and a lot of people struck the Florentino restaurant off their list of possible venues and therefore did not get a fair trial at all. And my final point, I think you should stop reading any restaurant review as soon as 'she who must be obeyed' or 'she with whom I watch television' or 'she with whom I share quickease', or whatever, pronounces her entree 'tasty'.

GB: Now we have Michael Dowe from Sydney, the biggest city, a long-time friend of mine, I have to admit, even before he began his career as a restaurant reviewer and the butt of some of my most vile and bitter comments when I used to write about restaurant reviewers. But still a friend, he has called out from behind. I still eat out with him although he has a notebook on the table. A long time ago, he had one of his first professions. He named his company Mother Truckers, that was a removalist, and I think that that shows he has a certain amount of wit. He now has a firm called the Natural Floor Covering Centre, which used to be called Seagrass Trading, and I never forget the night when I was decidedly stoned and decided that Seagrass Trading was in fact the cover-up organisation for a huge dope dealing ring. I woke up the next morning and realised he dealt in matting.

My earliest memories of Michael are of someone in the extraordinarily disorganised kitchen which I presume he saw as organised, a huge amount of extraordinarily stained cookbooks, and the dirtiest apron I have ever seen hanging on a kitchen door. So this man, practically, loves cooking and what he does now is presumably something that has happened to him fairly late in life as a new profession, but something that he has obviously wanted to do for a long time, so there is a great deal of sincerity and thought and care in what he does. I also know his prejudices are long-cooked dishes and very salty, strongly-flavoured fish.

Michael Dowe: I must say that those prejudices are positive, that is what I like.
Gay has asked for credentials. I don't think I can give credentials but I can give a position statement. Those of you who attended the last symposium would have had a talk entitled 'One restaurant critic's beginnings'. In it, I spoke about the non-negotiable, talking about a child who has been eating Polish salami and other sorts of non-negotiable items while all your peers ate peanut butter sandwiches. I also spoke about a

childhood defending that sort of food. I think my position is that I am still defending food, unusual food.

So now I am down to the basics of restaurant reviewing. What do I look for? Firstly, most importantly, when one goes into a restaurant and asks a question, can we have a good time? Does the waiter who greets you and shows you to a table recognise that here is a customer, a client willing to part with money, and does the attitude displayed throughout the visit show an awareness that the restaurant industry is a service industry, an industry designed to cater to people's needs, albeit within a reasonable framework rather than dictate them. I sometimes think that the relationship between the front-of-house and the back-of-a-restaurant is a little bit like that between an anaesthetist and a surgeon. A good surgeon is going to have a very hard time with a poor anaesthetist, but vice versa, and the patient may live. When it comes to a restaurant, you can have the most wonderful food, but if you have a lousy front-of-house the customer might walk away unhappy. If you have competent food and great front-of-house, the customer will probably have a good time.

Now it comes down to food. The first question is: Has the kitchen got the shopping right? Professionals should be able to recognise good ingredients and to organise their supply lines. Are the raw materials
of an appropriate quality for that dish? It follows that if they are not, when why have that dish on the menu? In other words, if the available tomatoes are mere floury, characterless combinations of fibre and water, then why serve a tomato salad? Secondly, has the kitchen got the craft skills right? This is a professional environment. The customer is paying for cooked food and has a right to expect that the kitchen is capable of cooking it properly. And, lastly, are the processes to which the food has been subjected appropriate, and are the marriages which have been wrought in the kitchen and on the plate equally appropriate? That feuilleté with, between its layers, a confit of goose with poached blueberries and a soy sauce hoisin with lemon grass beurre blanc may display some great craft skills. The feuilleté may be the finest, the highest and the most ethereal puff-pastry that you have ever seen. The confit of goose may be wonderfully flavoured and rich. That beurre blanc, if you can call it that, may be a technical virtuosity - but do I want to spoon into my mouth that combination of flavours, do I think that butter and soy sauce belong together, and do I wish to eat wonderful and incredibly rich crisp-skinned confit between fine, flaky, buttery puff pastry? And that is the subjective territory.

The critic is a bunch of biases held loosely together by a sense of taste. Like all good criticism, restaurant criticism has to be subjective. What sort of objective statements can one make about food? Frankly, the majority of them are in the domain of the food technologist and in the laboratory report. At what temperature did the food hit the table? What was the salt level? What was the sugar level? What was the percentage of solids by volume? It is a report is as exciting and informative as the label on any packet or can. There are, however, some objective statements of fact which the restaurant critic occasionally needs to make. Unfortunately, since the famous case of Leo and a walrus-like lobster, editors would prefer that we didn't make them, merely because they are statements of fact and, if legally challenged, require expert evidence. For instance, one can talk about a bowl of mussels so odiferous that the aroma has preceded the dish from the kitchen. You can go on to establish that you found the aroma unattractive, but it is another matter to say that they were off.

Now there are some who would argue that such an unpleasant experience need not be reported. I don't. Others argue that they needn't go so far stating that the food was off, that it is enough to establish that it was unattractive. I don't. However, given the prospect of 20 days in court, I am cowardly enough to modify my language.

I believe one has a duty to seek out restaurants which may interest one's readers. I also believe one has a duty to inform, to honestly report the experience. In an era of hype

where PR frequently masquerades as information, where advertorial masquerades as editorial, the reader needs critical assessment, and so long as restaurants charge for their meals they should be assessed.

But to return to the subjective assessment: hot, cold, wet, dry, sweet, sour, bitter, salty, peppery, herbaceous, oily, unctuous, creamy and fruity are but a few of our descriptive terms, characteristics which we see in food. By themselves, they have little impact; they need a context, a field of reference, a qualification, and that can only be subjective. Did I, the restaurant critic, find this characteristic attractive or appropriate in that context? Which raises two very important issues. The critic must see more and be able to place the meal and experience in a context. Statements like 'I liked' or 'I didn't like' are insufficient. One has to see the why, one has to identify the characteristics which define that dish and, if it is a successful dish, communicate them in such a way that the reader understands the experience and is interested in trying it. There is no greater compliment that a critic can receive than to be told that that meal sounded wonderful. Critics, like all foodies, have their favourites - their favourite style of restaurants, their favourite styles of eating. The critic must see past his of her prejudices and recognise that within certain limits there is a place for forms of dining and styles of food that may not be his or her preference. And a meal must be placed in a context. A mannered meal in a hotel dining room is an example which comes to mind. It's not all that relaxed, but it is a style of dining that appeals to many, and it is often a very professional experience. It must be reviewed in those terms. I do, however, admit that I have never come across a Mexican restaurant which deserves to be reviewed as anything more than a fast food joint, and I have yet to experience a Sydney pizza parlour that displays culinary skills that deserve any column inches. Not only must the critic see more, he must be open to new ways of seeing and have a desire or missionary zeal to convey his discoveries and establish a context. Going on a trip to Europe to meet your wife's family may be an eye-opener for him, but again the community has a right to learn about more than the food of his French in-laws, and shouldn't be subjected to a limited view that only allows the critic to see, for example, shark's fin soup in terms of the French standard, like bouillabaisse.

Frankly, the subject of food is so broad, so grand, so unlimited that i suggest that once the epiphanies stop coming, once the experiences from that field fail to make an impression, arouse a curiosity, send you scurrying to the cookbooks, when it appears that one has a basis or a set of standards from which to judge all, then it is time to retire the critical pen.

I have passions, I am excited about conveying them, I have been doing it for a long time, I want readers to experience the pleasures which I have, I want to introduce them to new pleasures. If, for instance, my words can convince a reader to abandon prejudices against tripe and experience a rich and complex tripes lyonnaise, or a delicate and crunchy Cantonese tripe dish, then I would have achieved something. And the prejudices do sometimes get in the way. Gay alluded to some of them, and it is no accident that the Chinese meals that I recount are frequently devoid of any deep-fried dishes. I push my readers to discover slime, that is my bias. I trust that occasionally it accords with a few of my readers' tastes.

GB: And now to the man we read least often, and probably haven't read at all. I went to a concert in Sydney with him last week and not only did we, before the concert, both relievedly find out that I roll Drum and he smokes Gitanes, but after the concert we both found we loathed encores. Loathing an encore, I would say, could follow through to some sort of feeling about how a meal could be conducted and may lead to some idea of what he would expect of a meal he thought good.

Let me just read to you a little about what Michelle Field wrote about Tom in the *Bulletin*, the issue currently available in the news stands, and which he finds highly

embarrassing. He is an architect-historian turned breadbaker, and after a string of improbable 'and thens' which don't form a sequence, last year he became an editor of Britain's most powerful restaurant guide, the *Good Food Guide*. It is interesting; they are all called the *Good Food Guide*, and we have three of them here. Tom is here as a guest of this symposium and as such I have left him last, as the surprise of what restaurant reviewers have to say. I will let him speak for himself, the charming Tom Jaine.

Tom Jaine: Thank you very much, Gay. Surprise there will be, I am sure, and there is a very good reason why you have never read me, too, but I won't go into that. Actually, the *Bulletin* piece forgot to mention why I am a restaurant reviewer, which is that I was a restaurateur and was brought up in restaurants as a boy. We formed part of the Elizabeth David generation; my family had a restaurant in the early 50s in Somerset in the UK. We imbibed the writings of Elizabeth David and as my stepfather proceeded to cook for them for 30 years, I eventually decided that there was money only in restaurants so I'd better join him rather than push pens. I joined him for a decade or so, with a restaurant of my own on the south coast in the UK, still run by my partner and cooking up a storm.

So why did I move from restaurants to writing? I think in a way I moved from restaurants to writing because one actually wanted to tell people that living in restaurants and cooking in restaurants was a very interesting way of life, and the customers whom one often hated didn't understand what it was to live in a restaurant and work in a restaurant. One wanted to tell people not only that it was an interesting way of life, but that it was an ordinary way of life, and I have come to writing about restaurants, I am afraid, with rather a down-beaten view. I actually do think that people cook and it is not theories that they cook, and we are all very ordinary people. I always feel somewhat humble walking into a restaurant about to write about them and, you think, well the poor sods, they have had a lousy night the night before and I am there giving them a mark - which is why I can't stand marking - and then you give them a mark which is one-quarter of a percentage point more than the one you gave last week, and there is no relationship to the ordinariness of their lives. There is a tremendous inflation, as you know, in restaurant writing and restaurant living, and occasionally one would like to deflate it. So that is why I went into writing, just to show people that people who worked on stoves when the power failed and they couldn't do any deep-frying and the extraction fan didn't work and the dreadful customer comes up and said 'why doesn't the light switch work?', then we are just people who lose our tempers and occasionally cook very bad food as well as trying very hard to cook good food.

So I moved into writing about food and came to aid of the *Good Food Guide*. All of these other publications, they are not really 'Good Food Guides' at all. I would point out to the Melbourne Age *Good Food Guide* and the Sydney Morning Herald *Good Food Guide* that the *Good Food Guide* was a British publication founded in 1951, now in its 40th year, and was founded for absolutely diametrically opposite reasons to why I write about food, because a guy, Raymond Postgate, the founder, who was nothing to do with the restaurant business at all, was very conscious of the fact that the only people who thought about food, or apparently thought about food, were people who made money out of it. He wanted to stick up a hand in favour of the consumer, and the British *Good Food Guide* is the consumer food guide par excellence, I think. Unlike the Michelin Guide and other professionally-run guides which have always employed professional inspectors who go the rounds of the restaurants making assessments and putting little stars on it, the *Good Food Guide* has always been the voice of the consumer. I think I understand from my predecessors on the platform that this is what they feel their role is, too. It is trying to interpret to the person who hasn't been in through the restaurant door what the hell may happen when they do go through there, and if it's worth even pressing the doorbell in the first place. The *Good Food Guide* has stuck up, I think, for the consumer, in a trade that is very easily not mindful of the

customer as being the chief beneficiary of all the activity in restaurants. We have therefore adopted a twofold approach to restaurant reviewing from the very start, which is that food is excessively important and should always be given its due primacy, but the consumer and the consumer's rights have rather an important part to play as well. So we spend quite a lot of our time, as I am sure restaurant columns here do, belly-aching about tipping and filth and various sharp practices that may go on, and unfortunately do go on, throughout the industry. That is why I write about restaurants, and I suppose in fact I try to be as unpretentious as possible, although the British press doesn't think so, because they like their words. I feel there is a limit to how much one can load on to food criticism. There are very many fine practitioners who take food criticism and the food on the plate as the jump-off point to many an excitingly baroque speculations on life in general. We do, I guess, try to keep the food fair and square in front of our pens when we write.

The *Good Food Guide* has continued, and I hope will continue, to be published by a consumer union in the UK. It does seem to have a beneficial influence. This is the other thing. When Gay complains about food restaurant reviewers, I entirely agree, we are are dreadful, horrid people and that we do have a beneficial influence on the revenue of restaurants and this, unless they are famous, they recognise. In England, if you have a little restaurant stuck 35 miles down a track, relatively speaking, in the middle of a relatively philistine audience, if people like ourselves don't write about it, then no one will go there - or they will in five years time but they won't next year, by which time the bank man will have already insisted that his loan be repaid. So that we do have a beneficial role to play economically, and certainly in the UK, which as you know is not gastronomically the most advanced country in the old continent. We have played quite a part in pushing back the boundaries of economic viability so that people on the west coast of Wales can actually make a living out of cooking food which, I assure you, thirty years they couldn't have done.

We do, as Michael has also explained, have the educatory role or explicatory role rather, because I wouldn't dream of educating anyone explicitly about strange and foreign cooking. It is due, for example, to the work of people writing about food that in England that, where you once said, 'Do you want to go and eat in a Chinese restaurant?', you don't say that any more; you say 'Do you want to eat in a Cantonese or a Szechuan restaurant?' Had we not written at great, and very boring lengths sometimes, about the possible differences between these two cuisines, I don't think that the Chinese restaurant would have bothered even to make the effort of changing.

So I actually think we are rather a good thing. There are indeed many cases of bribery and outrage, but we in the Consumers' Assocation certainly don't have any of this. All our inspection, of course, is anonymous and none is ever paid; we sit there and receive 10,000 dreadful letters a year from dreadful people who have had dreadful meals and write at dreadful length and then expect me to write a marvellous letter back to them saying how wonderful it was to hear from them. But we get them by the thousand, and this, of course, is quite a good monitor. It is a very useful deflator of pretension, and so you do have the most wonderful restaurants that eventually get, so to speak, self satisfied. The little guy who comes up from Reading and suddenly discovers he has paid $200 for his meal and really didn't think it was any good, and has intelligent reasons for saying so, we are his mouthpiece. Without a mouthpiece like this I am afraid that an awful lot of restaurants would get away with murder.

DISCUSSION

GB: I hope you have noticed how I have been looking after the people in the ring, getting champagne for them and everything, and I just want to say that my motives are purely generous. I would like to think that there were lots of things that you could ask of this species. I think they would like to have to reply to lots of questions, so come on there.

David Dale: This won't satisfy you critically because it is a question to you, Gay. What is the reason for your attitude to restaurant reviewers and, assuming your review is accurate and interesting, what other credentials do you want? Can you specify?

GB: Thanks, David. He is a friend, too. (sarcastically)
I don't want them to exist at all, but, as I said before, I can't see a way around it. I also can't see why any of them want to do that job. There is nothing that detracts from enjoying a meal more to me than having to reflect about it seriously as something that you are going to say in the future while you are having the meal. Anyone reviewing a restaurant unfortunately has to do it. It's a bitter complaint without any foundation for doing something else. I am producing what produces the notebooks on the table while people eat - that's a wide generalisation, there are probably restaurant reviewers with great memories or hidden tape recorders ...

This lady has just said that I, in the main, have received wonderfully positive reviews, my restaurant has, but I think that that is what puts me in a unique and enviable position as someone who says I don't like restaurant reviewers. If it was someone up here who had a restaurant which was constantly being berated by the reviewers, I would have no stand. I mean I am someone who is receiving praise, who doesn't like the profession that praises me. I am sorry I don't have a logical answer until I have sold the restaurant.

David Dale: You feel there should be no theatre critics, either, or ...

GB: Yes, you see with theatre critics, with any other thing I think I can count some form of credential that is outside self-professed credentials and prejudice. Within the food industry the credentials are too gustatory and personal. It's not my floor ...

MD: Just like the theatre critic or the book reviewer, we wish to convey to someone else the pleasures that we derive from the experience we just had. Sure, there is always an effort and a little bit of pain involved in thinking about what one is going to write, there is a lot of pain in writing about it from time to time, but we do wish to communicate an experience. On the whole, I think we ought to wish to communicate satisfactory experiences. It's not a great pleasure going out and doing a bucket on a restaurant. We can later move on to the subject of why we do bucket a restaurant and why we select those that do get bucketed. I think that that is another subject. But we, like all other critics, have a passion for our subject and we want to communicate it.

Barbara Santich: I would like to raise two issues that the four panelists can comment on. The topic of this session is 'The professional palate', and I have noticed over the last couple of days there has been an awful lot of the 'us' and 'them' and it has been present today, too. I remember Cath Kerry saying that when the reviewer of the restaurant came in prepared to do battle. When we are talking about professional palates the only professional palates that have been considered so far are the palates of the reviewers, but there is also the palate of the cook-restaurateur, who is offering something which accords with the cook's or the restaurateur's understanding, his or her perceptions of taste, and then the reviewer comes in with perhaps a different set of perceptions. So the restaurant review could possibly be considered as the meeting-ground of these two sets of palates, and, from the things that have been said today and previously, it seems as though this meeting-ground just doesn't exist, that the palates of the cook and the restaurateur and of the reviewers don't ever coincide, which is why

you have this 'us' and 'them'. Now if that's the case, then how can it be rectified? Surely there is a little bit of give and take on both sides required.

The other thing I would like to ask whether any of the reviewers ever think that they have been guilty of hypocrisy, have they ever suppressed their own opinions in order to accord with perhaps what the public might want to hear. After all, they have jobs and they have to produce things every week, and this would be a lot easier. I wondered whether they do this by using a sort of ambivalent, or ambiguous, language. I remember Tom Jaine talking, and I am sure it was not confidential, about restaurants in England and how some chefs serve rather sweet sauces with their meats or their fish or whatever. And he said, you can't really say that it's wrong, even though you might think it, but you can just say something gentle about the fact that the sauces have a touch of sweetness in them, and you hope to God that somebody who is reading can understand that what we are saying is that they put bloody jam in it all. That is what I mean, a sort of a language behind the language. It can become a very subtle use of language. I think John McGrath of the Adelaide Review is one who is very subtle in his use of language. Do you have any comments on this style of writing, and is it peculiar to restaurant reviewing.

TJ: I will answer about understatement. I think it may depend on the role that your criticism plays. There is a degree to which all palates are individual. You can't say that your palate is necessarily righter than others, though you may have very good arguments maintaining your preference and you can't rehearse those arguments every time you write something. So, in fact, within the *Good Food Guide*, which is a publication that I write rather than a newspaper column, we have to attempt to reflect the sense of the meeting from the 10,000 letters that we get, the consumer input. So that one has to give, if there are two sides because you disagree with that meeting, you have to give both sides and let people perhaps discover the truth, well not the truth, but discover their preferences for themselves. After all, this is only eating food, this is not dropping H-bombs, and is not an absolute moral stance, in other words. The other thing is that if you spend your life imposing your own particular taste, I think this is intrusive of you. You are there as a reporter, you are to give a gloss which comes over because of your particular task angle, but you are certainly not there to bludgeon either the reader or the cook necessarily to death, unless this is something that you feel peculiarly strongly about. But England, unfortunately, has an excessive taste for the sweet in the savoury, which is a dreadful consequence of the sweet-and-sour and nouvelle cuisine revolution of 15 years ago, just as the English at the moment don't seem to be able to use the salt shaker, and so you spend much of your time writing this. You can't say it 800 times in a book, because it gets boring, and it is not necessarily your place to just power through everyone's preferred taste. We live in 1989, so you simply say it rather quietly.

Question: The issue I would like to raise is the link between the laws of defamation and writing a restaurant reviews. Most people here may aware of the case when Sydney reviewer Leo Schofield was sued for defamation by the proprietor of a restaurant called the Blue Angel, whom took umbrage at his view that the lobster was over-cooked. They sued him successfully and it was one of the largest verdicts that had been handed down in recent times in the NSW courts. I would like to ask the reviewers whether they think they should be free to express their opinions or whether they should perhaps be

held accountable if they write reviews which are damaging to a restaurant proprietor's business.

NH: It is my understanding that Leo Schofield lost that case not over the expression of a matter of opinion, but because he said something was fact that could be disputed. As Michael Dowe said earlier, if you say things as a matter of a fact it can be difficult to prove them one way or the other. But there has been no inhibition so far as I can see in the expression of opinion as a result of that case.

Stephanie Alexander: I wonder how the reviewers feel about personal comments in reviews, comments about the personality of the chef, as part of a review, making personal remarks about persons running the joint. That might seem to be bordering on something quite irrelevant. The other issue is to comment on what Tom said, which is to agree that there comes a point that nobody has omniscience about a particular way of preparing a particular thing. And a very trivial point, that some years ago a reviewer of my restaurant made a very scathing remark about the fact that I had not trimmed the beans, and I always felt it was extraordinary that the reviewer hadn't chosen to ask me why I had served the beans with the curl of the beans still intact, when the answer would have been that I had picked them from the garden that afternoon, the point being that the bean was so tender and beautiful that it was entirely edible. Then you have the issue of the reviewer making it an automatic thing that all beans should be truncated top and bottom and so it was a perfectly good point to make, to show how clumsy and lazy, I think was the word, I was. That becomes personal comment, which i don't think has any validity.

GB: Yes, I think the person who criticised the beans is someone who had never gone 'from castor to olive'.

MD: I think that you raise a conflict in your question. On the one hand, there is the question about personal comment, which means that the critic moves away from judging what is on his plate to actually making some sort of comments about the restaurateur or cook. Then the second point is why didn't he ask me about the beans, which is that other question, should the critic ever talk to the restaurateur. Now, I think there is a happy meeting place, and I think it is in a review, if the cook or restaurateur is an interesting person and if he has anything interesting to say about the food, and if it can help to explain the sort of food he is doing and if the food is worth explaining, then one should talk to him. I think it is also quite legitimate that, should you have enjoyed a dish and be trying to come to terms with it, you can ring up and say 'Why were your beans served with strings on them?', or something like that. But to get back to that old point that you should only go in there and just look at the food on the plate, I think that could produce some very boring copy at times.

I think sometimes the personality has something to do with what they are trying to do. By that, though, I don't mean whether one should ever describe someone as being a Hitler in the kitchen, I am not sure that one should go to that length. But if you talk about someone as being an intense, introspective person, a person of few words, who labours long, it gives you some sort of insight into the way they approach what they're doing. I think it can add to the restaurant. But, first of all, the food has to stand up. If the food is ratshit, then that is it. Don't bother going to talk to them.

GB: I think there are grades of impertinence in restaurant reviewing, and I don't know where one draws the line. To me, it's the only form of journalistic criticism where that impertinence shows to that level. It doesn't show in theatre reviews. No one goes to Neil Armfield and asked him why Tristan rolled around on the grass. That it is a very difficult area.

MD: They do, and it's covered in the feature articles.

Don Dunstan: I would like to make an additional comment. We have talked about the laws of defamation. If, in fact, Leo Schofield had simply passed the opinion that to his taste the lobster was over-cooked, nobody could have sued him for anything. But if a restaurant reviewer chooses to promote his own restaurant reviewing by language of exaggerated colour, then he may well be asking for trouble. That, I think, is what Leo did in that particular case. I think it also infringes on what Stephanie has just said. If people in restaurant reviews go in for the kind of reviewing which at times has become current with theatre reviewing, saying things which are really in an exaggerated form with the intention of getting a certain amount of attention for reviews, they may well be asking for trouble, and I don't think that that is a sensible way to go. But I think that all the people on our panel today are people who concentrate in their reviewing on getting over their enjoyment of food to other people. I think that, basically, that is what writing about restaurants is about. The only time that I have ever written about restaurants is when I have had a marvellous time there and I wanted to communicate that to other people, and I am terribly glad that a few people at this meeting, during the last couple of days, have come up and said 'we read what you wrote about that restaurant in Norcia in Italy, and we went there, and it was wonderful.

GB: One of the things that I feel in terms of criticism is that in a restaurant the restaurant reviewer is in a position of audience participation. It is the only viable and logical position of audience participation that theatre provides, that is presuming you think like I think that a restaurant is a form of theatre. The eater in a restaurant is necessarily participatory in the theatre. Now that doesn't happen in any other forms of theatre where public criticism is involved and it makes it such a hotch-potch of personalised opinion because of the audience participation element. I suppose I would like restaurant reviewers to acknowledge that a little more. It seems to me that a good lunch is dependent upon so many factors outside the restaurant itself. It depends on the mood you are in when you arrive there, or whether you have had a good sleep, or whether you have had a fight with your lover, or your shoe is hurting, or you took the wrong ferry across the river, so it is a very, very difficult position for a critic. Have we got any more questions?

MD: We are a part of the theatre, but then the theatre critic opens his eyes and listens and allows his senses to respond to the experience. The theatre critic, like Gay's imaginary luncher, may have had a bad day or had a car accident on the way there. I don't see that we are so different to any other critic. We open our mouths and we taste.

Kate Llewellyn: First of all, on behalf of the readers of restaurant reviews who have nothing to do with restaurants except that they dine there regularly, I rather resent, and I think others do, the passing of the buck by Nigel, who says that the reader wants blood

and that's why he gives bad reviews. I think that that is absolutely untrue of the people I know. It may be true that some people that are filled with ennui and lack of appetite. The people I know, and myself, are hungry and want to know about the restaurant and want to have a wonderful night, or even an okay night. I might say that it is not only in the restaurant area that people become so unbelievably cruel and knee-capping reviews. I might say that writers who have spent five years on a novel can be wiped off the face of the earth with a thing that is almost libellous. They never reply. They never go to court. They never have any redress. Their book dies and they almost die, too. So you are not alone in bad reviews.

NH: Yes, I most certainly did say that readers do like to see blood in print. I know that because of the response that I get on the very rare occasions when I do have blood on the page. It is for that very reason that I think most responsible reviewers, and I count myself as such, very rarely bucket a restaurant. As Michael said, it is a most unpleasant experience, you don't seek it out. You look for good meals, you look to praise the good, you certainly don't seek to damn the bad. In my own case, I would much prefer to see market forces deal with restaurants that are bad or fraudulent or poisonous. It gives me no pleasure at all and I certainly don't pass the buck by using that as an excuse to bucket.

Jen Hanna: I would like to mention that a very brave reviewer reviewed a restaurant this week before he ate there. And that the success of that restaurant was undoubtedly due to his bravery. That was Nigel Hopkins' review of Gouger Street, which was yesterday. The article on Wednesday undoubtedly drew that crowd. Because of the lack, for whatever reason, lack of funding for advertising of the event, Nigel got them in, and thank you.

GB: Don't misunderstand that statement. It wasn't that he reviewed it, it was support for something that was going to happen, and that is a very important distinction, I think.

OENOTYPOPHILY IN THE STATE LIBRARY OF SOUTH AUSTRALIA

Valmai Hankel, Fine Books Librarian, State Library of South Australia

As South Australia produces the most, and the best, of Australia's wine it's appropriate that the State Library of South Australia should have the country's biggest and best collection of wine literature. It is also one of the largest collections of wine literature in the world.

People are often surprised to discover that South Australia's first library was formed in London in 1934, two years before the first European settlers arrived here. Robert Gouger was the collection's first donor, and among the books, all of a practical nature, which he gave, was one described as "Busby's New South Wales". Its actual title was *Authentic information relative to New South Wales, and New Zealand*, and it was published in London in 1832. It is one of about 49 books from that first library which survived a watery baptism when the ship carrying them went aground on arriving here in December 1836. Those survivors now form the Gouger Collection in the Mortlock Library of South Australiana.

You will know that James Busby was Australia's first writer of books about wine. His two earlier books on wine-growing, *A treatise on the culture of the vine* and *A manual of plain directions for planting and cultivating vineyards* were published in 1825 and 1930 respectively in Sydney, and would have been difficult for South Australia's eager planners to obtain in London.

But *Authentic information . . .*, Busby's book which made it to South Australia in December 1836, has a one-thousand-word footnote about the author's importation to Sydney of vines from Europe, and his belief in the need for "a light unadulterated wine" for the intemperate inhabitants of New South Wales. Busby also compiled Australia's first ampelography, called *Catalogue of vines in the Botanic Garden, Sydney, introduced into the colony of New South Wales in the year 1832*, and a book describing his tour throughout some of the vineyards of Spain and France. We have first editions of all of Busby's wine books.

From 1836 on it appears that the State Library gradually, and until the late 1950s perhaps unconsciously, built up its collection of wine books. Most of the well-known Australian nineteenth-century wine books had been acquired by then, as well as many European books, mainly in English.

In 1935 we received as a bequest the private library of Sir Josiah Symon, lawyer, politician, philanthropist, and owner of the Auldana vineyards in the Adelaide foothills, adjacent to Penfold's Grange vineyards. Symon brought to Australia the French champagne maker, Edmond Mazure. I have always been surprised that the Symon Library contains only a small handful of books on wine-making, one of which is inscribed by its author, Andre Simon, to Sir Josiah, and contains a note from Simon to Symon on letterhead from the champagne house, Pommery and Greno. There must surely have been more wine books in the Symon Library, but if so, their whereabouts is a mystery.

In the 1960s, probably inspired by his visit to Australia, we began to try to acquire all of Andre Simon's books --- we still have some gaps --- and we also acquired more titles in languages other then English, particularly Portuguese.

At about that time I was in charge of the Youth Lending Service, for people from 13 to 18, and I remember creating a stir when I wanted to put a couple of wine books in that collection.

The big boost to our wine book collection can in 1968, when the Chairman of Thomas Hardy and Sons Pty. Ltd., the late Kenneth Hardy, presented the first grant for the Thomas Hardy Wine Library. Each year since then Hardy's have given a grant for additions to the Thomas Hardy Wine Library, which contains about 1,200 titles. Most of the Hardy titles are contemporary works, but there are some older books. They include a book of satirical verse, published in 1693 and from Andre Simon's library, called *Fatal friendship; or The drunkard's misery : being a satyr against hard drinking*--- that is, of spirits, a practice which exercised wine makers right down to the pioneer vignerons of Australia.

Last year we received another windfall. Cellarmaster Wines Pty. Ltd. donated about 900 wine books, valued at almost $360,000, under the Taxation Incentives for the Arts Scheme. Most of the collection had been acquired in Europe by one of the directors of the company. He had then added to it, until he decided to collect in other fields. And so the collection came to us. When I heard about the possibility of its coming here I was a bit worried that the Cellarmaster Collection would duplicate what we already had, but I was amazed and delighted to discover that we held only about 22% of the titles. the Cellarmaster Collection's great strengths are in books published before 1800, and multi-lingual European books, two areas in which our existing collection had been weak.

It contains nine books published in the sixteenth century, in Italy, France and Germany. The oldest is a book on seafaring, published in Paris in 1549. It contains a description of how wine was carried at sea, and a woodcut illustration showing how casks of wine were stored on board. There is a copy of the very scarce pamphlet of verse in German, published in Nuremberg in 1553 and describing "the four wondrous properties of wine and their effects in an easily understood language". Its author, Hans Sachs, who died in Nuremberg in 1576, was a member of the Meistersinger Guild there and the subject of Wagner's opera, *The Mastersinger of Nuremberg*. Professor Ralph Elliott, now retired from the Australian National University, has kindly translated it for us. Here is an extract from the beginning:

> "One day I asked a doctor to tell whence derives the power of wine to affect in four different ways whomever it overcomes so that his mood changes. The first he makes peaceful, benevolent, mild and kind. Others he arouses to anger, so that they storm and quarrel and rage. The third he makes crudely childish and shameless, while the fourth is led by wine to fantasies and follies.
>
> "He said, I will tell you. The wise pagans describe how after the Flood had passed, Lord Noah began to plant vines before anything else. But the soil was unfruitful, so old Noah cleverly fertilized it with manure which he took from

> different animals, namely sheep, bears, pigs, and monkeys. With this he manured his vineyard all over, and when the wine was ready it had acquired the natures of the four animals, properties which is still possesses. Now God made all men of four elements, air, fire, water, and earth, as Philosophy confirms, and according to each man's nature, so does wine affect him".

Of the 54 other books in the Cellarmaster Collection published before 1800 many deal with grape-growing, wine-making, distilling, and one book, written in French but published in The Hague in 1714, is in praise of drunkenness.

A particularly scarce and important work is Grimod de la Reynière's *Almanach des gourmands*. The Cellarmaster Collection contains eight of the almanachs published in Paris between 1810 and 1812.

There are several nineteenth-century European works used by early Australian winemakers.

There is also a rare and spectacular series of 44 works describing and illustrating the Fêtes of the Vignerons of Vevey in Switzerland, from 1791 to 1955. There are folders up to six metres long showing the Fête's pageants.

We had a printed book catalogue of the Cellarmaster Collection with entries by author only. We hope to work with the Librarian at Roseworthy College to produce a computer-based catalogue of it later this year.

In addition to the Thomas Hardy Wine Library and the Cellarmaster Collection, there are hundreds of books on wine in the general reference collection. They include an exquisite fifteenth-century illuminated manuscript prayer book from Paris which contains a miniature of "treading the grapes". Our oldest original printed book with wine-growing references is Pliny's *Natural History*. We have a superb edition printed in Venice in 1472 by the influential French printer, Nicolas Jenson. A unique item is a volume of European ephemera mainly about wine but also with some menus, dating from the eighteenth to the early twentieth centuries. It was assembled by Ellic Howe, an English connoisseur of both wine and typography.

We have a collection of about 30 volumes, mostly in German and published last century, about wine-growing. They are important to the wine historian because they came to us from Seppelts and were obviously of practical use to the staff there.

Although we have a few technical works we prefer to leave that field to the Australian Wine Research Institute and Roseworthy College, and we work with staff from those institutions.

The Mortlock Library of South Australiana has, in addition to books about winegrowing in South Australia, the papers of several South Australian wineries, including Seppelts, Kay Brothers and Auldana. Mortlock also contains our collection of several thousand wine labels mostly but not exclusively South Australian. Unfortunately none of the labels is attached to full bottles.

Back in 1977 we published a bibliography of our wine and viticulture holdings. There are still a few copies available. In the 1970s we had two major exhibitions. *Oenotypophily*, in 1972, was probably the first major exhibition in Australia of wine labels. In 1977, when the distinguished writer Hugh Johnson opened our exhibition on the life and work of Andre Simon, he was full of praise for the State Library's wine literature collection.

To conclude, our wine collections are here to be used --- and they are used --- by readers ranging from journalists and eminent researchers to people interest in the early use in Australia of generic names of wines (hock, claret etc.), to quiz contestants wanting to win a trip to Champagne, to wine makers interested in the effects of alcohol on health, to label designers, to the person who wanted to know why her bottle labelled 'Fine Champagne Cognac' didn't have bubbles in it and could she drink it with the Sunday roast?

We welcome enquiries in person, by phone, fax or letter, but we cannot lend items. We welcome your support in adding to the collections in any way (donations of $2 or more to the State Library of South Australia are tax-deductible) - and we'd like you to use our services - that's why we're here.

MYSTICAL DINING, TRANSCENDENTAL FOOD & HUMAN IDENTITY

Anthony Corones

It has often been observed that food is more than physical, that it enters the realm of signs and significance, of meaning and culture. When Brillat-Savarin offers to tell us what we are if we will tell him what we eat,[1] he is pointing not only to the banal fact that the body is constituted by food, but that our identity as human beings is also moulded by food.

Thus, we eat not only for physiological reasons, but in order to make statements about our "good taste", to reveal that we are among the "cognoscente" — or even to show spite for such pretensions. A few years ago, you might recall, "real men" refused to eat quiche. Others cling to forms of food righteousness: do not eat meat! Macrobiotics! Only raw foods! Whole food for whole people! Some use diet to build beautiful bodies. Others eat "junk" food.

At a broader cultural level, we do not generally eat cats and dogs in the West; an elderly relative consistently refused to eat in Asian restaurants for fear of being fed such meat in disguised form. Cultural identity and purity, therefore, can hinge on perceptions of what is good to eat, even to the extent of elaborate ritual sacrifice being insisted on to safeguard such purity. And we have not been innocent in these symposia of concerns to define and develop a specifically Australian cuisine — as if we have no culture without it. Cuisine works both to define social groups and emphasise the otherness of those with different food habits.

There is a strong sense, then, in which food consumers are also consumers of images and culture. We make ourselves through food. The processes by which this occurs are complex, though not beyond our understanding. The central concept we need to grasp is that of assimilation. To assimilate is to acquire something in the most radical way — to make it part of oneself. This is literally true in the physical sense. The food we eat is taken into the mouth and swollowed, internalised. It is also metaphorically true. Through some kind of analogical cognitive mechanism, we somehow assimilate the perceived properties of foods: the "strength" of red meat, the "virtue" of vegetables, the intelligence of "brain" foods, the sensuality of aphrodisiacs, the cultural refinement of haute cuisine.

When we have settled into a familiar pattern, we are not generally self-conscious about such assimilation. When we seek, however, to change our habits and create new self-images, we realise the psychological force implicit in the act of assimilation. And when we are confronted with the unknown, we verge on the paranoid. Untutored urbanites lost in the bush without food are very cautious of attempting to eat anything unfamiliar. The first settlers refused to eat foods which they saw the aboriginals eat freely. There is a strong need to know what we are eating before we will feel safe, before we will

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1 Aphorism IV of J.A. Brilllat-Savarin, *The Physiology of Taste*, translated by M.F.K. Fisher, San Francisco: North Point Press, 1986, p. 3.

assimilate it. Assimilation is a process of establishing and maintaining a recognizable order.

Our anxieties over industrialised foods provide a vivid example of these ideas. Such foods are mysterious to us. We have not seen them being produced, and we are not sure what is really in them. Even the labels are strange, referring to unknown numbers and compounds. On the one hand, it is as if, not knowing what we eat, we know not what we are. On the other hand, industrial foods do have an identity, an increasingly feared identity. Are they not full of artificial flavours and substances, concocted by shady scientists in industrial cauldrons — a kind of modern witchcraft? Even the humble chicken has been transmuted into a dangerous artifact, full of alien hormones and antibiotics, unnaturally constrained and imprisoned to grow fat before its time. To assimilate it is to partake of this meanness of spirit, to toxify the body and be susceptible to the unforseen effects of this foreign chemistry. And do we not find the same perversion of nature in the use of pesticides and artificial fertilizers to grow our crops? Organic food please! — as if "scientific" farming produces only inorganic and therefore "dead" foods. The contemporary trend away from processed foods towards so-called natural wholesome foods is a way of establishing a new order of eating and a self-image in tune with an idealised conception of Nature as the antithesis of a threatening industrial world order. To assimilate is also to be assimilated to a cosmology.

Our present situation is unique in human history, but the theme of assimilation, the interplay between food and human identity, is as old as our capacity for symbolic thinking. Food consciousness in the West in particular has been played out as a cosmic drama of epic proportions. I referred earlier to the notions of ritual sacrifice and purity. While these are universal phenomena, they have left their mark in the West mainly through the development of Christian dogma. There are some valuable lessons to be learnt in exploring this heritage, a heritage epitomised in the Eucharist.

It is worthy of note that Christian ritual is focussed on a meal. But this meal is a mystical banquet, and the food is transcendental. It is none other than the flesh and blood of Christ, the body of God. To partake of the Eucharist is to eat God, to assimilate God, and thus to become like God. This is a most audacious act. Expressing a daring which comes only with great devotion, the medieval mystic, Mechtild of Magdeburg (d. 1282?), wrote:

> Yet I, least of all souls,
> Take Him in my hand
> Eat Him and drink Him
> And do with Him what I will![2]

Such a use of food imagery will strike many of you as a little strange. But it was a highly significant and homely metaphor for association with God. It served to bring God down, as it were, to a level which people could easily understand and practice in the most concrete and intimate way. As John Tauler observed in the forteenth century,

[2] Quoted in C.W. Bynum, *Holy Feast and Holy Fast: The Religious Significance of Food to Medieval Women*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1987, p. 3.

> There is no kind of matter which is so close to a man and becomes so much a part of him as the food and drink he puts into his mouth; and so God has found this wonderful way of uniting Himself with us as closely as possible and becoming part of us.[3]

This way of looking at food is hardly a Christian invention. The eating of food sanctified and thus transformed by sacrifice to the gods is an ancient practice. More importantly, it is a practice which makes no sense without the idea of assimilation. For while we might with profit sacrifice to the gods and thus feed them for the sake of various goals, to feed ourselves with such blessed food is futile if the food is not presumed to work some kind of transformation on us — in other words, the blessing on the food becomes a blessing for us because we assimilate that blessing.

Thus, when Jesus urged us to 'labour not for the meat which perishes, but for that meat which endures' (John 6:27), he was appealing to a well established distinction between ordinary food and sanctified food. Except that he added the claim that he himself was that heavenly food which came down from heaven to give life to the world. In vivid and cannabalistic imagery, Jesus exclaimed to a shocked audience:

> ...verily, I say unto you, except you eat the flesh of the Son of man, and drink his blood, you have no life in you. Whoso eats my flesh, and drinks my blood, has eternal life; and I will raise him up at the last day. For my flesh is meat indeed, and my blood is drink indeed. He that eats my flesh, and drinks my blood, dwells in me, and I in him. (John 6:53-56)

This is still shocking. But it is deeply inspired. The mundane act of eating becomes a vehicle for conceptualising the spiritual metamorphosis of the body, a way of understanding the paradoxical demand for rebirth. To eat the Eucharist is to be transmuted, to leave off the old man and become the body of Christ. It is, quite simply, to grow into a new identity through assimilation.

For those of a devotional nature, Christ's startling offer was one that they could easily sympathise with. For lovers are familiar with such language. Do we not still speak of someone being "sweet", even delicious enough to eat? Our sexual play is overtly oral. There is a sense in which to consume someone is the essence of intimacy. And to be consumed is love's great offering. It is the other face of assimilation. Acknowledging such apprehensions, the thirteenth-century Flemish mystic Hadewijch wrote:

> As he who is Love itself showed us
> When he gave us himself to eat
>
> ...love's most intimate union
> Is through eating, tasting, seeing interiorly.[4]

[3] Quoted in Bynum, *op. cit.*, p. 4.
[4] Quoted in Bynum, *op. cit.*, p. 4.

Some Christians so loved to partake of the Eucharist that they added another dimension of eating to it — they positively hungered for it, and gloried in the idea that they could never be satisfied by this food. In a letter to a friend, a certain brother Ivo wrote:

> Oh God, to love you is to eat you. You refresh those who love you so that they hunger more, for are you not simultaneously food and hunger? He who does not taste you will not know at all how to hunger for you. For this only do you feed us, in order to make us hunger.[5]

Here again we can easily understand such sentiments, for nothing so stirs the appetite as desire for favorite foods. Through such desire the devotee's contemplation of God, far from being a dry effort to fulfil a commandment, becomes a consuming passion.

One could not, of course, eat God casually. The recipient of the Eucharist had to be fully prepared for such an extraordinary meal. And the primary form of preparation involved fasting. The exaltation of heavenly food, its association with the virtue of Christ, led to the debasement of ordinary food, to its association with sin. To fast was a way to avoid sin, to mortify vice. For to feed freely on earthly food was to assimilate an animal nature, to magnify the passions of the flesh. Fasting, then, was a form of mortification, of dying to an earthly identity. It was thus also a form of purification. By not feeding physical passions one fed God, and therefore became eligible to feed on God. Through abstinence, one's appetite for vice was disciplined and one's appetite for God was magnified.

Concommitant with a strong emphasis on fasting was an obligation to be charitable, to demonstrate love of God through love of one's neighbour. As Pope Leo the Great urged, 'Let the abstinence of the faithful become the nourishment of the poor and let the indigent receive that which others give up.'[6] The willingness to fast, to go without, manifests as a willingness to give, to share. This is why the great theme of the Last Supper is summarised by love. For as Jesus said to his disciples at that fateful meal, 'a new commandment I give unto you, that you love one another; as I have loved you, that you also love one another.'(John 13:34) The blessing of the bread and wine, their equation with his flesh and blood, was a most dramatic way of driving home this point: for 'greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends.'(John 15:13) Christ's sacrifice of his own life on the cross is the concrete fulfilment of such love, and it is the Christ of the cross which inspired some of the most striking food imagery: as one early Easter hymn intoned, we are 'looking forward to the supper of the lamb...whose sacred body is roasted on the altar of the cross. By drinking his rosy blood, we live with God'.[7]

The commensality of the Last Supper is an essential feature, made especially poignant by Judas Iscariot's betrayal of Christ. It was not simply a betrayal of a man, but a betrayal of a shared table. Brillat-Savarin echoed this in his meditation on the pleasures of the table when he observed that 'one of the strongest of human laws is that which

[5] Quoted in Bynum, *op. cit.*, pp. 66-67.
[6] Quoted in Bynum, *op. cit.*, p. 31.
[7] Quoted in Bynum, *op. cit.*, p. 49.

commands respect for the life of any man with whom one has shared bread'.[8] Why should this be so? Because to share food is to share life, to create a communal bond. It is a most primitive yet a primal political gesture. Jesus reinforced the seriousness of the offence not by complaining to his disciples about what was going to happen to him, but by telling them that the betrayal occured in order 'that the scripture may be fulfilled. He that eats bread with me has lifted up his heel against me.'(John 13:18) Judas's crime was an offence to the sancitity of the shared table, a failure of love and respect. And it is through such acts that we murder God. The murder of God lies not in the one-off act of crucifixion, but in the continued and constant denial of love.

Such love has little, if anything, to do with modern notions of romantic love. It is a love which manifests as universal service. In the course of the Last Supper, Jesus provided his followers with a graphic demonstration of what he meant: he washed their feet! After he had done so he said: 'You call me Master and Lord: and you say well; for so am I. If I then, your Lord and Master, have washed your feet; you also ought to wash one another's feet.'(John 13:13-14) By inverting the role of master and servant in such a dramatic way, he showed that true mastery lay in service. And, moreover, that such service is truly pleasurable: as he told his disciples on that night,'If you know these things, happy are you if you do them.'(John 13:17)

We tend, however, to be obsessed with the apparent failure of love, and torture ourselves and each other with the presumption that we are not loved. We refuse to give love until we see the signs that we are loved, yet believe at the same time that we are not lovable (for otherwise we would be loved already). Such presumptions are unhappiness. They reinforce separation and personal anxiety. We feel empty. We feel that we are not sustained.

Even a secular society, therefore, can learn some valuable lessons from Christian food imagery. Talk of eating the body of Christ is an elaborate metaphorical way of coming to the realisation that, to employ an old cliche, the way to a man's heart is through his stomach. This is much more than advice on how to get a husband. It is a profound insight into the nature of sustenance and love. In some rather gruesome language, Catherine of Siena (D. 1380) provides a clue:

> The immaculate lamb [Christ] is food, table, and servant....And the table is pierced with veins, which run with blood...when the [soul] has drunk, it spits up the blood on the heads of its brothers...and is thus like Christ.[9]

For the Christian, the giving of love, the food that is Christ, is a result of superfluity, of having received an abundance. In secular terms, a loving heart gives out of its own fullness; we naturally sustain and feed others when we feel sustained. But rather than seek an edible deity, to sacrifice another, we are obliged to be a sacrifice ourselves: that is, to sacrifice the demand that we be loved first. By consenting to be eaten, we discover what it is to eat.

[8] Brillat-Savarin, *op. cit.*, p. 181.
[9] Quoted in Bynum, *op. cit.*, p. 245.

Eating in this sense is not the kind of eating we share with the animals, but it is nonetheless essential to our survival. I spoke earlier of efforts to rehumanise food, to rescue it, and therefore human identity, from a feared technological perversion. We seek, in other words, to consume human images. While these are no longer religious images, they are images of human sanity and commensality. Cuisine is a matter not just of nourishing the body but of nourishing our humanity.

BREAD AND WINE

Michael Symons

(This is a transcript of the spoken address. A more formal version, with references, is published in Meanjin 2.1990, pp. 220- 232.)

Tomorrow is the sixth anniversary of Phillip's 'Clowns' banquet, which is important for the Symposium, but particularly important for me, because it inspired me to do what I've been doing for six years, that is, to study what is so fantastic about what he said.

It's meant doing a PhD and out of that also a book. I feel at some stages that I'm trying to rewrite the history of the West, but I guess that lots of authors think that, otherwise they wouldn't persevere. It's taken six years, still going. But I have left clues as to where I am headed by speaking at the the symposium on virtually chapters from my book and thesis. The last chapter to be researched for the book (on Epicureanism) was to be one on Christianity.

I started reading about Christianity for two reasons. One was because I wanted to understand the anti-Epicurean, anti-food polemic maintained by Christians since the time of St Paul. In various forms, Christianity can be other-worldly, spiritual, ascetic, the body frowned upon and eating thought to be something fairly low. This tendency in Christianity is best represented by monasticism, which is informing our stay here, to the extent, for example, of our use of bells.

As I mentioned in my paper at the last symposium, the monastery did not work on natural time, but upon the fixed periods of the liturgical year and daily 'office'. This is what we do in the modern world; we have moved away from the natural world into the rationalised world of fixed times. According to sociologists, the Rule of St Benedict is a key text; it is emblematic of the modern, rational society. Things happen 'like clock-work' in a monastery.

The second reason that Christianity needed to be studied was that, according to scholars of Epicurus, early Christianity took a lot from the Epicurean movement. There are so many obvious parallels: the radicalism, the egalitarianism, the stress on individual freedom, and obviously the importance given to meals.

The point I want to make today is that I have discovered that the original 'Jesus movement', as New Testament scholars call it, was centred on table-fellowship, both in theory and in practice. This is not just my view, it's been recognised by leading New Testament scholars over the last few years.

New Testament scholarship is probably the most travelled of any. Thousands of books are written in the area, and there are thousands of theories. And the difficulty is, of course, that the reports in the New Testament are at least second-hand, at the best. St Paul's letters are the earliest, and he converted after Christians were beginning to be persecuted, and then the actual gospels were written by unknown authors some years after the death of Jesus. So, if you want to study the original Jesus movement, what

you have to do is to use the most sophisticated language-analysis, etc, to try and work out what actually was said and done, because every account is different.

Some concepts would even have been unknown to the original people. Jesus speaks of himself as the 'son of man' and wouldn't have recognised himself as 'Christ'. A word like 'heaven' is introduced at a later stage; there is something quite different called the 'kingdom of God', which seems available in the present. When you add inventions even later than the New Testament books, like 'Christmas' (no-one has a clue when Jesus was born), you can see there is a lot of subsequent dross which has to be peeled back before you get the actual picture. Nevertheless, through analysis which is staggering in its sophistication, modern scholars can work out what might historically have happened, and this appears to have had a great deal to do with meals.

The oldest reference within modern scholarship which I have found to the centrality of meals for the Jesus movement goes back to 1925. Readers of Rawlinson's book on St Mark must have been quite puzzled, because it seems to be out of context, by his hint: 'To invite sinners to the great banquet of the Kingdom was precisely the Lord's mission'. However, Lohmeyer specifically examined the topic in 1937. He later wrote:

> 'He is the bridegroom celebrating the wedding feast, the Son of Man who eats and drinks, the father who gives the bread to the children, even his healing of those possessed of devils is described in terms of feeding the children (Mark 7:27). This meal is both metaphor and reality, both parable and event... Here we have the centre, around which all Jesus' words and work revolve and in virtue of which they have unity'.

Norman Perrin believes that 'we are justified in seeing this table-fellowship as the central feature of the ministry of Jesus; an anticipatory sitting at table in the Kingdom of God and a very real celebration of present joy and challenge.'

That theme, probably even borrowing Perrin's words is found in many subsequent studies. But just to to take a feminist ecological anti-nuclear trendy book of the moment, Sallie McFague's *Models of God*, she says that a 'shared meal is a ritual so basic to Christianity that a case could be made that it is a, if not the, central motif in Jesus' ministry and in the early Church'.

For years now theologians like Marcus Barth and Marxsen have urged Christians to centre their religious practice on actual meals. There are even now entire books devoted to Christian table-fellowship, notably, and I love the book, Arthur C. Cochrane's *Eating and Drinking with Jesus* (1974), and John Koenig's *New Testament Hospitality* (1985).

Plainly a Christianity based on meals would be very different - and so, I dare say, might meals be very different - if interpreted using this wealth of Christian theology.

One scholar has counted more than four dozen accounts of Jesus eating or talking about food in the gospels. Perhaps this proves nothing more than a traditional society's more immediate dependence upon olive oil, fish, corn, figs, etc. Perhaps it just reveals the

fundamentality of the gastronomic debate anyhow; you can't avoid the subject; people try, but it comes up.

However, modern scholarship makes table-fellowship central. Perhaps the key New Testament text is this... As reported by Luke, Jesus said: 'For John the Baptist has come eating no bread and drinking no wine; and you say, "He has a demon." The Son of man has come eating and drinking; and you say, "Behold, a glutton and a drunkard, a friend of tax collectors and sinners!". Yet wisdom is justified by all her children' (Luke 7:33-35). That is, Jesus was seen as a glutton and a drunkard. This is because eating and drinking was central, and we of all people know what happens when that is the case.

When the wine gave out at the wedding at Cana, Jesus changed changed water into wine even better than before (John 2:1-11). Then there was the miraculous catch of fish (Luke 5:1-11). Next came feeding the five thousand, the only miracle attributed to Jesus in all four gospels (Matt 14:13-21: Mark 6:30-44; Luke 9:10-17; John 6:1-13), and the four thousand (Matt 15:32-39; Mark 8:1-10). He arranged the Last Supper (1 Cor 11:17-34; Mark 14:22- 26; Matt 26:17-29; Luke 22:7-38; John 6:51-58; 13:1-38).

At the Last Supper, Jesus depicts himself as a waiter. 'For which is the greater, one who sits at table, or one who serves? Is it not the one who sits at table? But I am among you as one who serves' (Luke 22:27). In fact, the word 'service' comes from the word diakonia, which has given us the word 'deacon'; the Church's 'deacons' are really 'waiters'. The word 'service' that the Church uses is literally the word 'service' in our sense, for waiting.

I hope you can imagine a small group of radicals, meeting around meals, and they kept dining together and trying to dine with other people, until the Last Supper. But even then the meals didn't stop, because Jesus ate with many after his resurrection. Indeed, Jesus expressed a desire that the meals be maintained until his promised kingdom should provide the banquet to end all banquets.

Peter reports that: 'God raised him on the third day and made him manifest; not to all the people but to us who were chosen by God as witnesses, who ate and drank with him after he rose from the dead' (Acts 10:40-41). For instance, on the road to Emmaus, Jesus was not recognised by two disciples until 'he was at table with them, he took the bread and blessed, and broke it, and gave it to them' (Luke 24:30). He later established his identity by eating broiled fish (Luke 24:42-43). The followers saw that they must take up the table ministry and become hosts of the kingdom themselves: 'And day by day [following Pentecost], attending the temple together and breaking bread in their homes, they partook of food with glad and generous hearts, praising God and having favour with all the people' (Acts 2:46-47).

Luke's testimony makes most mentions of meals. The 'chief mark of repentance for Luke' is joy, expressed in meal scenes, writes Koenig. Thus the tax collector Levi gives Jesus a 'great feast' (Luke 5:29). When the shepherd finds his lost sheep and the woman recovers her lost coin, their first act is to rejoice with friends (Luke 15:3-10). When the jailer of Paul and Silas in Philippi is baptised, 'he brought them up to his house, and set food before them; and he rejoiced with all his household that he had

believed in God' (Acts 16:34). Certainly Luke might have had immediate tactical reasons for stressing hospitality, such as reconciling wandering charismatics and house churches, or Jews and Gentiles. He might have had special reasons to get people eating together. However, there is corroboration. For example, Pliny the Younger, who was a contemporary of the early Church, writes that the Christians, who meet on Sunday evening 'to eat their food which, whatever people may say of it, is ordinary and innocent'.

In his enthusiasm, Paul seems mixed up. He can find the meals being abused, which can make him appear anti-gastronomic. At other points he is very much in favour. I suppose you can read him as either anti-food or anti- the wrong attitudes to food among those who are making the table the centre. It's a bit like a debate within gastronomy.

Paul particularly argues against food taboos, providing arguments, by the way, to use against modern food fetishists, like vegetarians. Paul believes that all the foods created by God are good and nothing is to be rejected if it is 'received with thanksgiving'. Nonetheless, he says the Christian should tolerate the 'weak' person who eats only vegetables.

Prohibitionists use Paul on this, by the way, but precisely the wrong way around. Paul says that the 'strong' person is able to drink whatever he or she wants. This person has, in a sense, already entered the kingdom of God, and so doesn't have, shall we say, any earthly masters. It is a politically radical movement saying that people are free individuals with God to answer to. So the 'strong' believer is able to drink with drunkards, or abstain with abstainers, because there is no law telling them what to do. They can make the choice to tolerate the 'weaker' brethren.

I have mentioned that the 'deacon' is a 'waiter'. Jesus had formed his apostles into a diakonia. However, left to their own devices, these 'servers' quickly separated their physical and 'spiritual' duties. After followers had complained about the daily food distribution, the disciples responded: 'It is not right that we should give up preaching the word of God to serve tables. Therefore, brethren, pick out from among you seven men of good repute, full of the Spirit and of wisdom, whom we may appoint to this duty. But we will devote ourselves to prayer and to the ministry of the word' (Acts 6:2-4). Now, that shows the beginning of the split between the actual meal, and the joy and freedom it brought, and the power of the word, pushed by the hierarchy growing up with the Church.

We can see the increasing division between the agape, or love- feast, and the eucharist, as form. Out of the eucharist develops the liturgy and eventually the mass as we know it.

Already in the later books in the New Testament, we find antagonism to the meals. The author of Jude decries the poor types in the church: 'These are blemishes on your love feasts, as they boldly carouse together, looking after themselves; waterless clouds...' (Jude 12). He is starting to take the idealistic side against the foodies. In one of his works, the famous convert Tertullian jeers at the agape-meals (and this is obviously a nineteenth-century translation): 'Thou settest thine affection on the kitchen-pot, faith is

enkindled in the kitchen, and hope reposes on the dish.' Within very few decades, the Platonists took over, with the Hellenisation and institutionalisation of the Church.

What was the purpose of these original meals, why? I have mentioned a couple of reasons. One was the desire for universality; the sharing of meals was a breaking down of barriers, notably at that time between the Jews and Gentiles. And this probably the point of the story of the blanket let down before Peter with all kinds of animals, reptiles and birds, and a voice urging: 'Rise, Peter; kill and eat... What God has cleansed, you must not call common [unclean]' (Acts 10:13-15).

Another reason was the meal as a basis for radical activity. Jennifer's paper later will discuss how radical ideas come up from below in 'table talk'. The talk at a meal is relatively private, it's a way to keep people to people together, and to spread the message, you must stress hospitality. Meals were there probably a political tool.

But, very importantly, this was a messianic cult, and the members believed in the imminent end of the word as they knew it, when 'man's' rule, always unjust and bringing strife to the Jews, would be replaced by 'God's'. They believed that they experienced the beginning of the 'kingdom of God'. As one scholar puts it, they believed that the meals provided a 'taste' of the kingdom.

In the Old Testament, such a glorious future was depicted as a banquet. This is taken up in the New Testament, and Matthew reports the promise that on the day of judgement, 'I tell you, many will come from east and west and sit at table with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven' (8:11). At the Last Supper, Jesus is meant to have said: 'Truly, I say to you, I shall not drink again of the fruit of the vine until that day when I drink it new in the kingdom of God' (Mark 14:22-25). And then in Revelation, Jesus is reported:

> 'Behold, I stand at the door and knock; if any one hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and eat with him, and he with me '(3:20).

In his paper, Anthony has suggested the spiritual significance of a meal, the communion with other people, and the communion with creation and with God. Incidentally, I take issue with one of Anthony's points. I think that the idealist, or post-structuralist, view is that food is used as a symbol. An example often used is that a wedding-cake symbolises a wedding. You don't even need to eat it. I think that's back-to-front. The important point is not that a cake symbolises a wedding, but that a wedding symbolises the 'cake', so to speak. What I mean is that people marry to form a meal-unit, and that then becomes symbolised.

Interjection: Could you repeat that? [the above is a slightly cleaned up version!] Reply: I don't think I could.

Okay, the structuralist argument is that food is a 'language'. I argue that that is back-to-front. I argue that language derives from the way we eat. My thesis is at present called 'Eating into Thinking'. So, for me, the greater reality is that a couple come together to form a feeding unit, and that then becomes symbolised and given meaning, reinforced

by the institution of 'marriage'. Sure, marriage is then symbolised in particular food, but it is all about food in the first place.

And you see this with the Jesus movement. They are eating together, generating ideas and gradually creating meaning. And, eventually, the meaning takes over, and the symbol takes over, and seems to be the 'truth'.

So what happened then was this historical struggle within Christianity. In the early years, meals were important to keep the movement together, to facilitate the wandering of the 'wandering charismatics', to share the message, and to bear witness to this new world they were introducing. In many ways, this was the modern world, the modern, liberal world of the individual. No longer did they rely on the traditional Jewish food customs, including a long list of taboos. That was the rule of 'man' which was being thrown aside by this new rule of God, which left it to the individual in a relationship with God, mediated by Jesus. I would go so far as to say that this is modern cuisine.

Anyhow, as it expanded, the movement became institutionalised, as with Communism, as with anything, as with the Symposium itself. It becomes emptied of content and the form remains. The modern church service is a meal, almost devoid of food. It has lost the table-fellowship and has become a gathering often presided over by an 'authorised' priest. This was helped along by the Platonists, the mystics, the Thomas Aquinases, and so on. They divided the world into the high and the low, and were only concerned with the higher things. One of the great sins was no less than gluttony, etc.

You can trace a fascinating history of how the actual foods in the original meals become symbols, and then the symbols became 'materialised' again as foods. There was bread at the early meals, which was broken, then it became a symbol of Christ, and this then became represented by bread in church services, actually the merest wafer.

Transubstantiation, by the way, was a heresy early in the Church. It was a gnostic heresy to believe it. It then became 'gospel', doctrine. By the year 692, the Trullan Council excommunicated those holding love-feasts. In many ways, too, I am sure that they suppressed the evidence of early meals, as they suppressed Epicureanism. The books of Epicurus were destroyed; he was the most prolific writer in the ancient world and no whole work survives. We can read every book Plato wrote.

Yet Christianity carries its own negation, so to speak. It has a dynamism in it, because the 'word' retains evidence of the 'meal'. It is agreed to be the most materialist of the world religions, with a strong idealism as well. So you see in the contemporary Church a return to the sorts of things emerging from the actual meal. This comes from reading back into the scripture what was really happening, what Jesus was wanting. You can't wipe out the meal; I mean to say, this 'word' is 'gospel'. There are too many Bibles around for people not to read the meals back into it.

They read about the early so-called 'house churches', which has prompted a strong movement in Australia for Christians to meet for meals. Others read into the origins a 'liberation' theology, which has been important in South America particularly.

Ecumenism also borrows the idea of sharing meals as bringing people together. The Catholic Church has been strong on the claim that you have to be baptised in the one true Church to share the meal. That's what the practice of 'ex-communication' means, shutting you out from the meal. And yet even in the Catholic Church there is a move to share the meal with other Christians. Some of the Protestant churches now allow anyone to join in the 'Lord's Supper', although there is no doubt pressure to then get you baptised (even though that rite was eschewed by Jesus himself).

Conversely, I want to comment how 'Christian' the modern gourmet's table seems to me. This is something Anthony mentioned. You can't get away from it. We belong, historically at least, to a Christian society, out of the Mediterranean. When we go to a restaurant, they put the bread down and bring you a glass of wine.

Another thing we need to think about, too, is that we vastly increase the amount of gastronomic literature when we include all the theological reflections on a meal and its implications. Some of it is pretty austere, I admit, but some of it actually grapples with the reality of the table. My shelves of gastronomy proper only extended, I don't know, a few feet. What gastronomic books could you buy right now in an Adelaide bookshop? You can hardly find Brillat-Savarin anymore. Yet go to a theology bookshop right now and you can buy that many [indicates with hands]. Not that I've yet got my own copy of Cochrane's Eating and Drinking with Jesus.

The theoretical implications were, again, raised by Anthony... the idea that through this kind of thinking, one introduces the idea of love and sharing and generosity. This is really where there is a whole body of thought we can draw upon. For instance, we can explore the notion, as expressed by the Russian theologian Nicolas Berdyaev: 'My own bread is only a material question, but my neighbour's bread is a spiritual question'. This relates very much to the sociologist Simmel who points out that food is one of those rare things that you absolutely cannot sure. You eat it, that's it, it's yours. He draws all sorts of interesting conclusions, like that everyone wants the same looking plate of food.

Whatever else, this sort of thinking shows that meals are much more than what's on the plate. It's the getting together, the enjoyment.

I would like to end with the millenarianism. It was a fairly apocalyptic movement. There was a feeling that things were changing, that what existed couldn't continue. Now that environmental fears, like the greenhouse effect, have re- surfaced, it's a not unfamiliar atmosphere.

In Brillat-Savarin's Meditation 10, 'On the End of the World', he invites us to contemplate the massive physical changes - because he doesn't think it will happen instantly; it'll take some time - and the social and political changes, which the end of the world will bring. He asks to think about, for example:

> 'What about man's obedience to law, his submission to authority, his respect of other people and the property of his fellows?
> What does he do about trying to escape from the situation?

> What happens to the ties of love, of friendship and of kinship, of selfishness and devotion to others?
> What about religious sentiments, faith, resignation, hope, et cetera, et cetera?
> History can supply us with a few facts about the moral reactions; for the end of the world has already been predicted more than once, and even fixed on a certain date.
> I really feel ashamed about not telling my readers how I myself have decided all these questions; but I do not wish to deprive them of the pleasure of doing it for themselves. It can eliminate a few insomniac hours for them, and even pave the way for same daytime siestas'.

I also invite us to reflect on such matters. However, I am prepared to suggest an answer.

As gastronomers, with the end of the world nigh, we could try to eat as well as possible, eat as well as possible to the end, to celebrate existence, to commune with each other, and, most importantly, to share our table with as many others as possible.

The vision of the Jesus movement was one big table. As Graham said yesterday, the vision of Brillat-Savarin in 'Bouquet' was one big table. And it was the vision of Gouger Street.

DISCUSSION

Tom Jaine: It has been suggested that we might first ask if anyone would like to make a more extended statement before having general discussion. Is there anyone who would like to make a statement on his or her view of Christianity and the table?

Cath Kerry: I would like to say to Michael that, while I made a fairly painful, at the time, decision to become an evangelical atheist, I did find your paper very, very enlightening, something that I can really relate to. It will not make me a Christian, however, but because I did enjoy your paper so much, do you think now that you could perhaps go on and spread the word to those people who would like to become Christians, so that we could perhaps have a new set of Christians instead of the fairly boring ones that we have now.
I would like to see you now try to help the Christian movement, because I think that what you are saying is really wonderful.

MS: Well, I told you, Catherine, at the beginning the answer to that question. I am writing a book and rewriting the history of the west ...

Jill Stone: I am wondering whether Christian religion is the only religion that has these dilemmas over food is to be enjoyed. Surely we are not the only religion which has this dichotomy ...

MS: I have a simple answer to that one, too. I said at the beginning I was rewriting the history of the West.

Graham Pont: I regarded Michael's paper as outrageous, really. I regarded it as a post-modernist parody of Christianity. He says he is rewriting the history of the West. I remind you that we live in the southern hemisphere and in the East, and that the world view he is recapitulating has nothing to do with Australians.

Max Lake: If I can just add a tag to that, you presented in this temple of ambivalence the classical picture of a lapsed Essene. You have read enough history to know what they did to themselves in self-denial and so forth. You're lapsed.

[Silence] TJ: You got them there, didn't you, Max!

(Very faint female voice): ... Graham's statement that we are Asian, I think that culturally we are not.

Graham Pont: I think that, for example, Christianity doesn't belong here. It was imported here as part of the cultural baggage of invasion. What actually happens in it is not really like true Christianity anyway, because, to turn Michael's point on him, it lacks a public term a gastro-ecological foundation. The liturgy of the Church is a farce because it is all de-synchronised, because it is for the northern hemisphere. They are not sacred sites anyway, and the kind of cuisine celebrated, ironically, was totally irrelevant to our cuisine until recently, when the Mediterranean cultures arrived, that some were in some way in line with our culture. No, I object strongly to Michael's paper; I regard it as a journalistic parody of a serious religion, misapplied to a country where it doesn't belong, anyway.

MS: I don't know if I actually have to reply to that, but ... The evidence is to be seen, do we have our meal around a bowl of rice yet, no. [Interjection] Well, at most restaurants that I go to, we have it around bread and wine. I wasn't talking about Australia at any stage, I was talking fairly generally.

Barbara Santich: Bread and wine is not necessarily Christian. Bread and wine have been around a long time before Christianity, and belong to something much older than Christianity.

MS: I feel as if I am being presented as standing up saying this particular religion invented something that we have to follow. I don't really understand ... The post-modernism bit, I relate to. Of course the bread and the wine came literally out of the Jewish behaviour, which came out of the Middle East generally. The Last Supper, as depicted by the modern scholar, is a meal you recognise in Morocco, or Philip Searle tells me is an Indian meal. It is a very widespread meal. It is not as if this particular meal was invented. It has just taken on this significance for us.

Graham Pont: Do we need to study Christianity at a gastronomic symposium. No, I don't think the case has been made, and I will be arguing tomorrow that institutions in Christianity are prehistoric. I can't see what is specifically important about early Christianity, or medieval Christianity, that relates to this symposium. All I think that Christianity has meant is miserable eating, miserable people, who were wowsers.

Susan Parham: Can you explain what you meant about marriage symbolising people getting together as feeding units. That the language of food turns this on its head ... Can you explain that a bit more?

MS: Well, there hasn't been much scholarship in the social sciences about food ever, really. There is a stack of scholarship in theology, for example; I was saying that was the most developed area of food studies. But the only social science in food is a few isolated texts like that of Stephen Mennell. The greatest number are structuralist and post-structuralist discussions. They follow Levi-Strauss, and Mary Douglas is the contemporary guru. They start by saying things like the slogan 'food is good to think', and they study food as a language. Mary Douglas looks at a meal and says you have to have three elements on any plate and says it's based on a triangle. You have the culinary triangle modified. You can't understand a meal without reading the language, which simple mathematics in that case. Food is a language. Now that's idealist. In other words, it says that language or words or ideas are fundamental and the material world comes out of that. The materialist takes the opposite view and says that ideas and thoughts come out of the material world.

So the way I illustrated that was to turn on its head the usual example they give, and that's the wedding cake. The wedding cake is language. You don't even have to eat the cake, it's simply there as a symbol. It's a supreme example of what all food is, it's a language that we share. We have a Christian language, in a sense, when we have bread and wine. They are just telling us that we are Christians. It is back-to-front because Christianity came out of the Mediterranean, where there is bread and wine, it is taken up and has become symbolised, and now tells us what Christianity is. Do you understand that? See, it's the other way round. One is to say there is an idea, 'bread and wine', let's eat it; and the other way is, we are eating bread and wine, let's turn that into a language.

BANQUETS AND MEALS

Tom Jaine

That the impact of the meal as a whole transcends the worth of its individual dishes is integral to Brillat-Savarin's meditation 14. He joins the process of eating to the classical and humanist tradition of the banquet to make a sensory experience combining the twin offices of the tongue - rhetoric and taste. Although the sage himself was happy to elevate a meal of soup, bread and cheese to the status of banquet, provided it was supplied with the incidentals that distinguished the pleasures of the table from the pleasure of eating (note that neither hunger nor appetite were necessary), most people confused the trappings for the substance. To my mind, they were feast-givers, not banqueteers.

In order to achieve euphony, a feast will follow some predetermined form. A number of interdependent factors may be taken into account by the host or cook. It will need to display a range of cooking techniques, mediums, materials, colours, tastes and textures. Different cultures have their own priorities and their own ways of showing these things to their best advantage.

That a meal is more than the sum of its parts is similar to the intentions of a chef when making a complicated ragout. In other words, a classic dish from the repertoire of haute cuisine is a feast in miniature. Discrete elements come together in a new harmony, giving rise to greater ecstasy.

The inspectors of the Michelin Guide pursue the same ideals as these feast-givers. Food needs to be complicated, to have bottom. A sauce is not a sauce unless it has *fronds*; a restaurant deserves no stars unless it has silver and crystal; food is not good unless it is clever. As Brillat-Savarin knew, there lies the cause of much wrong-=headedness.

The British accepted the French view of things wholeheartedly, even when they disagreed with it. In this edition of medieval cookery texts, published in 1791, Richard Warner observed that, 'even in Richard II's time we find French cooks were in fashion and they equalled those of the present day in the variety of their condiments, and in their faculty of disguising nature and metamorphosing simple food into complex and nondescript gallimaufries.' Charles Carter, author of a courtly cookery book of 1730, was able to write along similar lines, ' good English cook of often slighted, and some of our most hospitable noblemen and ladies cannot think themselves well serv'd, till they have sent to a neighbouring kingdom for a cook, who indeed, by the poverty of his country (compar'd to ours) and the variousness of humour of its flippant inhabitants, whose gousts are perpetually changing, is push'd so much upon his invention, that he may sometimes be allow'd to surpass (on English materials especially) with his mimicking vivacity, the sounder-taught native, especially where nature is to be disguis'd and lost in are, and the palate is to be puzzled rather than pleased.' William Verrall, who wrote a book extolling the mysteries of St Cloud, French chef to the Duke of Newcastle, was moved to extol his virtuosity in producing a meal out of nothing - of turning out a banquet from the wherewithal for an English snack.

But there was a countervailing tradition in England that dealt best in commodities. The particular English form of a meal is the overriding pursuit of a single delicacy. The turtle banquets of City livery companies were one instance, as were the whitebait dinners in Greenwich. 'For people who are fond of goose (and who is not?) a greater treat could not be devised. There was no taking the edge of the appetite off with soup, or fish, or patties, or cutlets, or side dishes of any sort; but they sat down to dine off the one thing they expected.' Half a goose each for Surtees' Goose and Dumpling Hunt in *Hawbuck Grange*. Sydney Smith had caught the same spirit among the residents of Edinburgh in 1799, 'The Turbot fishery has begun, and every man is laying in his stock of Soy, Cayenne Pepper and Chili Vinegar. I never witnessed anything equal to the voracity with which this savour monster of the deep is devoured. A serious silence prevails at table - the passage of the voice is entirely shut up - people are hermetically choked. No sooner is one mouthful reduced to atoms of Turbot than another, that has been resting impatiently against the lips and panting for maceration, is admitted dripping with liquid lobster, and rushes down the common sewer of culinary filth - a profuse perspiration breaks out - the eyes stare - the garments are loosened - the labour is intense'. Something of this can also be seen in household archives of the eighteenth century. A rage for delicacies seems to course through the often mute lines of accounts. Lord Courtenay of Powderham Castle in Devon had a passion for cucumbers (or maybe his thirteen sisters suffered from penis envy). The purchases of asparagus by the Fortescues of South Molton in north Devon are so numerous that one wonders where they had room for anything else. The dinner notes of Richard Supple in Northamptonshire are also revealing. Whereas most of his formal outings saw tables laid in standard 18th century manner, replete with soup, fish, roasts, side dishes and full dessert, there were occasions when the excitement of the season caused the sort of appetites described by Sydney Smith and feasts gave way to meals, for example of salmon or turbot.

This approach to food, we all know, can give rise to culinary tedium and often a low standard of cookery. If you like a thing, why bother doing much to it? Hence the pounds of butter and tons of Yorkshire pudding. We left the high ground to the French. It is also true that simple cooking is most susceptible to rapid decline and corruption. If you look after the meals, the banquets will look after themselves. Unfortunately, we never did. We remained in the thrall of the French and judged ourselves by their standards. Hence, our horror when the first post-war Red Michelin Guide of 1974 accorded us less than a dozen stars.

If serious feast-giving was left to the French, where did that leave British restaurant culture? We were left with few choices. We could peddle a subordinate form of haute cuisine. This looks to our masters across the Channel for example. It relies on Frenchmen spending their working lives at British stoves and has proved almost impossible to support without importing French raw materials. When asked six weeks ago about the future of British cooking, Marco-Pierre White, our freshest two-star chef (himself without French experience), observed that all one had to do was keep a weather-eye on French fashions. This has pernicious consequences, not least that restaurants have less and less to do with domestic circumstance and respond slowly to shifts in taste. They feed on themselves and their hermetic tradition.

Brillat-Savarin sympathised with the Roman practice of the vomitory, even if he reckoned chefs of his time skilful enough to maintain appetite by light and tantalising creations. he should perhaps have listened to the plumbing systems of suburban England after a Saturday night in high class restaurants a century and a half later. Groans, gurgles and fluttering white hands at the window might convince him that the vomitory lives still - just as the developer of post-Revolutionary Paris understood when he built public lavatories for the burgeoning restaurant enclave of the Palais Royal - 'comfortable enough to suit people for whom everything is a matter of sensual pleasure, the *caput mortuum* of the surrounding kitchens would become, for him, a gold mine.' I feel that too little work has been done on the indigestion of Britain. Much food poisoning, for example, may rather be the consequence of over indulgence.

There is another view of France that is unrelated to Brillat-Savarin and the cause of complicated cooking that he unwittingly endorsed. This is the meal-view rather than the banquet-view, the French as guardians of the simple life. This takes its lead from the post-war writings of Elizabeth David and has burgeoned into a whole industry of rural gastro-nostalgia. A culminatory example might be Terence Conran's celebration of France in word and picture, just as his restaurant Bibendum seems to deny Michelin's values - at least, it was not listed for the first year of its existence, though gaining the plaudits of many critics and customers.

A cook who takes the meal as a starting point will be little concerned with form. A plate of *risotto milanese* has not structure beyond itself. The classic rules of sequence or, in the 18th century, of placement are out of the window. Significantly, restaurants who have espoused the meal-view have also jettisoned the external accoutrements most valued by the feast-givers: tablecloths, napkins, silver cutlery. They have also left the composition of a meal to chance - to the whims of the customer. Yet by dispensing with form, have they also sacrificed the chance of a greater harmony? by contrast, chefs who retain links with the classical tradition have sought to impose greater form on a recalcitrant clientele by the issuing of free gifts. You have not one but two little complimentary nibbles at the beginning and coffee now provokes almost a full dessert service. The day will come when there is no need to buy anything in a restaurant save the wine. The rest will come as a free display of virtuosity.

The dissonance between the two traditions shows this year in Michelin's assessment of British restaurants. Many of those thought best by the British are barely mentioned by the French. The newly laureated, and the most nobly elevated, are thought by us to be irrelevancies. My digestive tract has a hunch which is right. My regret is that when we turned once more to meal-giving, we did not revert to indigenous practice - which had vanished down the spout of mass-production and bad materials - but turned instead to a vision of Europe (mostly Mediterranean) which will one day be seen as just as irrelevant.

DISCUSSION

David Dale: I wonder if there's any way to fight back against Michelin? In Italy at one stage the chefs got together and said that if they ever discovered a Michelin inspector they would refuse to serve him, because of what they referred to as the 'snobissimo'. I entirely agree with their action. Given the importance of Michelin - possibly a

misguided importance in people's minds - is there any way to get through to Michelin that each country needs to be judged on its own terms, rather than having this French imperialism imposed upon them?

TJ: I think it it will come in line or it will die, it's as simple as that. The guide does still have great utility for the tourist because it is a wonderful list of addresses. English cooking isn't very good, so the list of addresses is extremely shaky; you know you then have to rely on places that are given awards, because that shows some sort of extra quality, but if it doesn't deliver the cookies people are not going to buy it in the end. The prestige of Michelin is particularly concentrated within the trade, and I think that if the trade says this just isn't acceptable, either they will turn round and say yes, you're right, or people will stop extolling its virtues.

Michael Symons: Are you suggesting that you are sympathetic towards a post-modern meal ...

TJ: ... Absolutely ...

Michael Symons: ... because I have made the observation that, without trying, at this symposium we are eating virtually every meal with our fingers.

TJ: It does seem to me that the great trouble with restaurants or with eating is trappings, and although we all love trappings - indeed that's the fun - it is irritating when the trappings get in the way of whatever the goodies are that you are really there for, and so people who decide that they do not want to have trappings should be supportive, as long as what they deliver is worth supporting. Then it becomes deeply offensive when people say 'I don't like his cooking because he hasn't got any tablecloths'. It isn't that the one or other position is necessarily the correct one, but just that you shouldn't condemn one thing for other reasons.

Alan Saunders: Michael Symons, at 12.15 on Monday, is already finding threads and aspects of unity in the symposium, so perhaps it might be opportune to ask at this stage some of our food theorists to give me the definition of post-modernism before the term is used any further. I thought I knew what it was. I thought it was not post to the modern, since the modern is presumably the contemporary, but that which came after modernism, and that it was based on the confusing awareness that we now have of alternative and historical modes of being and modes of architecture, I thought it was based on some sort of approach to the embarrassing heritage of the past, an approach which tends to be witty and rather ironic. Now I can quite see in this context what a post-modern meal might look like, and I am sure I am having them all the time;I don't quite see that it necessarily has much to do with eating with your hands, though I can see that if you were eating, say, just with a knife, rather without a fork, in the manner of the meal eaten in The Draftsman's Contract, that would be an incredibly post-modern meal. Perhaps Tom, who used the phrase, Michael and Graham could tell me what they mean by post-modernism.

Graham Pont: I have been very interested in the concept of post-modernism, because to my awareness it arose in recent architectural criticism, as a euphemism or as an apology for the fact that architects are returning to the classical styles, that is, to the study of

architecture proper as opposed to merely industrial machinery, which has dominated our century. In a broader sense it is a convenient, though I think awful, term for a profound change that has overtaken our society, our philosophy and our lifestyle, our world view in general. We have moved out of the scientific era, the mechanist determinist era which was created in a Benedictine monastery, and we are into a green, ecological, vitalistic era. This change is affecting politics; it is also affecting philosophy, clothing styles, etiquette, manners and so on. It is very nice to see that theme suddenly pop up in the gastronomy symposium, but I warn you against grabbing yet another fashionable term out of the air, from architects who are intellectually bankrupt, generally speaking. Look for signs of the change; Tom's paper was very good and made me realize how much Gay Bilson's unpretentious banquet of the last symposium had already met Tom's criticism. I was talking to Margaret Brown about the changing etiquette and we agreed that we don't do dinner parties now, we do other things - we open the fridge and feed people. It seems to me that part of the enterprise of getting rid of the European garbage, including Christianity, is to reform a new lifestyle appropriate to this society and there are really some very substantial guidelines here. My point of view and my position, philosophically, is that we should get rid of the rubbish, the cultural baggage; we don't have to deny our western origins, but we should try to find what is real for our society.

Jennifer Hillier: I would like to say that I don't think that post-modernism means formlessness, it means consciousness of form and genre, and awareness, and without that awareness you can't have post-modernism.

Marion Halligan: It's essentially self-reflexive, in fact, that's the whole notion.

FEASTING AT THE GROTESQUE SYMPOSIUM

Jennifer Hillier

In the realms of cultural theory, Mikhail Bakhtin stands out as a materialist who emphasizes that language is embedded in physical reality. Bakhtin can be seen as a `kind of Left alternative to deconstruction, who provides a socio-historical basis for the latter's formal practice' [1]. He renounces neither empirical analysis nor the ethico-political purposes of moral philosophy. As Ken Hirschkop puts it:

'Bakhtin will speak of syntactic forms, lexical choices and stylistic patterns, making use of the battery of formal linguistics, but without reducing language to a `given', governed by natural-scientific lawfulness. Language appears not as an indifferent medium of social exchange but as a form of social exchange, susceptible to political and moral evaluation like any other'. [2]

In a field blighted with obfuscation, Bakhtin's writings are refreshingly clear; but then Bakhtin is a keen critic of semiotic abstraction. It seems proper that a theorist who stresses the importance of dialogue and human intention in utterance should speak plainly and concretely. While Bakhtin employs structuralist techniques, he never loses sight of actual human beings. Terry Eagleton has noted that, for Bakhtin:

'Words are `multiaccentual' rather than frozen in meaning: they are always the words of one particular human subject for another, and his practical context would shape their meaning. Moreover, since all signs were material - quite as material as bodies... - and since there could be no human consciousness without them, Bakhtin's theory of language laid the foundation for a material theory of consciousness itself'. [3]

In the context of his theory of carnival, it can be said that Bakhtin is concerned very much with the need to return the word to the flesh.

Mikhail Mikhailovich Bakhtin (1895-1975) is characterized as a Russian post-formalist literary critic. Even while he was in internal exile under Stalin, his ear was cocked for the competing voices of the marketplace. In the noisy hustle and bustle of the town square he saw a model for `heteroglossia', `polyphony' and `dialogics', his terms for a pluralist and democratic linguistic culture. Listening from the cold isolation of one `monologic' authoritarian oppression, Bakhtin heard a liberated voice from another authoritarian age. This was the French humanist, François Rabelais (c1494-1553), author of the encyclopedic satire, *Gargantua and Pantagruel*. Bakhtin empathized with Rabelais's *jouissance*, and in his *Rabelais and His World* [4] he devoted his profoundly materialist sensibility to disclosing the force of folk culture, as taken up by writers like Rabelais, in opposition to the mind-dominated stasis of medieval ideology.

The contrast between Rabelais and Bakhtin, taking them as men in real settings, can seem poignant. As Clark and Holquist note, Rabelais `is an epic poet of sheer physicality, whose name conjures up mountains of sausages and oceans of wine. Rabelais sings the joys of endless food and the delights of tireless sex.' Bakhtin, on the other hand, appears as an ascetic scholar sipping tea at his desk, citizen of a dark time of `socialist realist canonization, an era best metaphorized not in its carnivals and public

squares but in its purges and prison camps' [5]. Folk happenings, which were profoundly collective by nature, had a nostalgic appeal to Bakhtin. His own busy intellectual life in Moscow had been characterized by collaboration. Many scholars refer to the `disputed texts' and the `Bakhtin circle' rather than to Bakhtin himself because his group shared authorship, admittedly partly to protect each other but also attesting to a belief in the possibility of collective enterprise.

In his study, Bakhtin expresses admiration for the adroit way in which Rabelais used the

'popular-festive system of images with its charter of freedoms consecrated by many centuries... to inflict a severe punishment upon his foe, the gothic age. It is a merry play and therefore immune... In this setting of consecrated rights Rabelais attacks the fundamental dogmas and sacraments, the holy of holies of medieval ideology'.

Despite the `frankness of his writings, he not only avoided the stake but suffered no serious persecution or vexation', though his books were condemned by the Sorbonne and he was attacked by Calvin on the Protestant side. All the same, it was a close shave, for, as Bakhtin notes, Rabelais's friend Etienne Dolet `perished at the stake because of his statements, which although less damning, had been seriously made. He did not use Rabelais's methods.' (pp268-9)

While several of Bakhtin's own circle perished at the hands of Soviet fundamentalism, Bakhtin survived and was eventually rehabilitated. Rabelais and his World was finally published in Moscow in 1965, and Bakhtin died of natural causes in 1975. Under the guise of writing about Rabelais, he should be seen as composing in the 1930s a covert, materialist criticism of Stalinism. Indeed, he can be regarded as developing an unlikely subversive theory, based on his analysis of carnival. It is a time-honoured technique:

'For thousands of years the people have used these festive comic images to express their criticism, their deep distrust of official truth, and their highest hopes and aspirations. Freedom was not so much an exterior right as it was the inner content of these images. It was the thousands-year-old language of fearlessness, a language with no reservations and omissions, about the world and about power.' (p269)

In elaboration of his theory of carnival Bakhtin argues that there has always been a tradition that is not one of the canonical forms (like epic or tragedy), but a mixed form that is seen in the Indian wonders, the satyr plays of ancient Greece, the Celtic sea miracles and the carnival. The last includes commedia dell'arte, charivari and medieval mysteries; it can encompass continuing carnivals such as Halloween and Mardi Gras, be it in Rio, New Orleans or Sydney. The burlesques, travesties, masks and comic reversals that we have seen in street demonstrations from the Moratorium to the Green movement embody the festive spirit of the ancient carnival. The carnivalesque is anti-authoritarian, satirizing the canonized genres and the hierarchies of power in society. Basically a folk tradition, it erupted and became absorbed into high literature in Cervantes and Rabelais.

Gargantua and Pantagruel parades folk exuberance, parodying medieval learning and literature, mocking classical and ecclesiastical authority and affirming humanist values.

Describing as `carnival' the social institution and as `grotesque realism' its corresponding literary mode, Bakhtin provides a theoretical case for such a comic mode, which is not just entertaining but performs a healthy social function: it makes sure that institutions are subject to ridicule and criticism. Bakhtin associates this genre with the assertion of the body, particularly in the processes of eating, excretion and copulation. His book becomes a study of the semantics of the body, the different meanings of the limbs, apertures and functions. He speaks of what is reasserted in the medieval carnival as the `grotesque body'. He is fascinated by the Roman terracotta figurines found at Keuch depicting ancient hags, their faces contorted by laughter, their stomachs swollen in pregnancy - `It is a pregnant death, a death that gives birth... Life is shown in its twofold contradictory process: it is the epitome of incompleteness.' This grotesque state of becoming is in contrast to the static ideal represented in the smooth surface of classical Greek marble. (p25) The `grotesque' here is affirmative and certainly does not denigrate the body, as it does in the metaphysical satires of, say, Huxley and Waugh. `Pure negation is alien to folk culture,' Bakhtin observes. (11)

Bakhtin makes the crucial point that it is the collectiveness of the body, rather than ideologies, or even consciousness generally, that unites humankind. The collective body of the people is not individualistic but profoundly aware of itself as a unity that renews itself through ceaseless death and procreation. The grotesque body, with its protuberances and openings, convexities and orifices, represents the profoundly historical nature of the social being, its perpetual state of becoming. Bakhtin examines in great detail Rabelais's scatological `swab sequence' (an experiment with every conceivable object for wiping the bum, from a hen to a basket), demonstrating how such a device `conquers the world':

The popular conquest of the world, as symbolized in the episode, destroyed and suspended all alienation; it drew the world closer to man, to his body, permitted him to touch and test every object, examine it from all sides, enter into it, turn it inside out, compare it to every phenomenon, however exalted and holy, analyse, weigh, measure, try it on. (p381)

Carnival encapsulates in a festive manner all the manifestations of the grotesque body, a festive affirmation with a plurality of positive carnal significances. According to Bakhtin, the creative principle is profoundly connected to the gaiety of the collective body.

Bakhtin argues that, in the medieval world, `Laughter was eliminated from religious cult, from feudal and state ceremonials, etiquette, and from all the genres of high speculation. An intolerant, one-sided tone of seriousness is characteristic of official medieval culture.' This icy seriousness was a product of medieval ideology - asceticism, sombre providentialism, sin, atonement, suffering - as well as feudal oppression and intimidation. `It was supposedly the only tone fit to express the true, the good, and all that was essential and meaningful. Fear, religious awe, humility, these were the overtones of this seriousness.' (p73) By contrast, Bakhtin says, folk humour developed outside the official spheres of high ideology, and, being officially non-existent, enjoyed `exceptional privileges of licence and lawlessness outside these spheres: in the marketplace, on feast days, in recreational literature'. (71) With Rabelais, the Renaissance saw the flowering of this laughter in `its most radical,

universal, and at the same time gay form which emerged from the depths of folk culture'. (72)

Feasting is essential to carnival, which celebrates the last chance before the fasting of Lent. But for Bakhtin even more significant than its connections to the feasts of the church is its `genetic link... with ancient pagan festivities, agrarian in nature, which included the comic element in their rituals'. (p8) Carnival frees the people from the dominant categories of the eternal, immovable, absolute and unchangeable and transfers time into the living sphere of flesh and matter. Bakhtin sees the carnival as another link to time, both past and future, through the agricultural seasons:

In this succession all that is new or renews, all that is about to draw nearer is emphasized as a positive element. And this element acquires a wider and deeper meaning: it expresses the people's hopes of a happier future, of a more just social and economic order, of a new truth. The gay aspect of the feast presented this happier future of a general material affluence, equality, and freedom, just as the Roman Saturnalia announced the return of the Golden Age. Thus, the medieval feast had, as it were, the two faces of Janus. Its official, ecclesiastical face was turned to the past and sanctioned the existing order, but the face of the people of the marketplace looked into the future and laughed, attending the funeral of the past and present. (p81)

While the carnival feast was ostensibly sanctioned, its excess and licence went far beyond the church's jurisdiction. Bakhtin describes carnival in the Russian manner as a `banquet for all the people' and he stresses Goethe's observation of the Roman carnevale as a `festival offered not by some exterior source but by the people to themselves'. On feast days the doors of the home are open, not only to guests but to `all the world'. (p276) Bakhtin says that the `carnival and similar marketplace festivals were the second life of the people, who for a time entered the utopian realm of community, freedom, equality, and abundance'. (9)

The luxurious feast was a radical protest against the medieval denial of the flesh, a doctrine that extended beyond spiritual matters to the very denial of sustenance, social justice and freedom to the collective body. The basis for a good life was a full belly and freedom of speech. Travesty and parody of the church was rampant. Bakhtin points to a rich heritage of debasing religious authority with the grotesque body, beginning with the remarkable Coena Cypriani (`Cyprian's Supper'), written some time between the fifth and eighth centuries. Here, innumerable banquet scenes and festive images from the Bible are melded into a grandiose picture of a banquet, full of life and movement, presented with extraordinary freedom. (p287) The fifteenth- century `Cambridge song manuscript' is a travesty of the Last Supper, with the Apostle Peter as the cook and John the Baptist as the cellarer. (289-90) One of the most delicious sixteenth- century Protestant attacks on Catholic pretensions is `The Satires of the Pope's Kitchen', which represent the Catholic church as a `gigantic kitchen spread all over the earth: chimneys form the belfry, the bells are cooking pans, the altars dining tables'. The prayers and rituals are pictured as foods, an `extremely rich culinary nomenclature being used for this purpose'. (183-4) Indeed, it could be argued that the grotesque travesties of the eucharist were merely the people's reappropriation of the truth of bread and wine. In the gay riot, the whole medieval hierarchy and vertical worldview was reduced to a horizontal, historical, material plane - a table, in fact - a plane where Rabelais

discovered the veritable divinity of people through their material interaction with the natural universe. Bakhtin notes that `Banquet images play an important role in Rabelais's novel. There is scarcely a single page in his book where food and drink do not figure, if only as metaphors and epithets, such that Rabelais was proclaimed by Victor Hugo as the greatest poet of the "flesh and the belly"' (18)

Gargantua begins with a cattle-slaughtering feast and images of eating and drinking play a substantial part in Gargantua's education. The wide-open mouth is a theme in Pantagruel; Tappecove is dismembered while the diablerie players are feasting in the inn, and the roast on the spit is the main image in Panurge's Turkish episode. There is a carnivalesque war of sausages, another war between Lenten and non-Lenten foods, and, according to Bakhtin, the longest list of foods in all world literature, not to mention the famous praise of Master Gaster and his inventions and the Gastrolaters who `adore the belly as god'. (p300) Food and swallowing are vividly presented in the description of the giant Bringuenarilles and their negation in the episode of Windy Island, where the winds are the only nourishment. There is a chapter devoted to `why monks love kitchens'. (280)

Bakhtin traces a `peculiar parody' of the Passion and the sacrament of communion throughout the novel. `Its main features can be defined as an inverted transubstantiation: the transformation of blood into wine, of the dismembered body into bread, of the passion into a banquet.' (p379) This is made explicit when Pantagruel and his two companions defeat 660 knights of King Anarchus. They burn their enemies by an ingenious use of gunpowder; the pyre is then transformed into a gay hearth, and, Carpalim having brought back from his hunt an enormous amount of venison, they sit down to a rollicking feast. Thus Rabelais not only pacifies violence with images of food, but satirizes the threat of the heretics' stake (the fact that he did not sizzle himself is ample proof of the pacifying form of his satire). Bakhtin also understands the power of this section, observing that blood is transformed into wine; ruthless slaughter and the martyr's death are transformed into a merry banquet. (210-11)

Central to Bakhtin's theory is his belief that every carnival `feast had always an essential, meaningful philosophical content'. (p8) His reading of Rabelais is akin to actually joining with him at the festive table, where he responds to the `substantial traditional link of wise and free speech with food and wine, the specific "truth" of table talk'. (p117) Bakhtin says: `The author boldly states in the Prologues that he writes only while eating and drinking, and adds: "Is that not the proper time to commit to the page such sublime themes and such profound wisdom?"' (171) In the prologue of the Third Book, Rabelais invites the reader to

'drink glassfuls of wine from his barrel, which is as inexhaustible as a cornucopia. But he invites only good men, lovers of wine and merriment who know how to drink. As to the others, the pompous and haughty hypocrites, he chases them away.' (171-2)

Indeed, the book concludes with an invitation to drink, which in Rabelaisian imagery means to be in communion with truth.

Bakhtin describes the prologues of Gargantua as `debasing the "hidden meaning", the "secret", the "terrifying mysteries"' of religion, politics and economics, by

transforming them into festive scenes of eating and drinking. The extraordinary charm of Rabelais's language, its liberated, candid and conversational tone, are in keeping with the badinage of the banquet table. Food contributes also to the concreteness of the images, making the book recognizably tangible and related to actual life, despite its exuberant, grotesque excess. Furthermore, the shared banquet, with all its freedoms and licence, is the overall frame of Rabelais's book. Certainly he invokes the age-old immunities of festive licence. It is as though he asks us to take his writings in the spirit of the material bodily principle, which engages with the world in an empirical, sensual way, not mystified by idealized abstractions but made concrete and tangible. Against the disembodied, disincarnated medieval truth, he offers a truth fit to be made part of the body.

Bakhtin argues that the abundance of eating images and the invitations and toasts in the prologues suggest Rabelais's debt to the ancient symposium.

'The banquet is even more important as the occasion for wise discourse, for the gay truth. There is an ancient tie between the feast and the spoken word. The antique symposium presents this relation in its clearest and most classic form. But medieval grotesque realism had its own original symposium, that is, the tradition of festive speech... Even for the authors of the antique symposium, for Plato, Xenophon, Plutarch, Athenaeus, Macrobius, Lucian, and others, the link between eating and speaking was not an obsolete remnant of this past but had a living meaning. Such was also the form of the grotesque symposium and the work of Rabelais was the link to represent and to complete this heritage.' (283-4)

Bakhtin asserts that the feast is life itself, thus giving it an ontological status from which he builds up his normative framework. Accounting for the truthfulness of the grotesque symposium in terms of a materialist cosmology, Bakhtin argues that:

'Bread and wine (the world defeated through work and struggle) disperse fear and liberate the word. The merry triumphant encounter with the world in the act of eating and drinking, in which man partakes of the world instead of being devoured by it, was profoundly congenial to Rabelais's outlook. This victory over the world in the act of eating was concrete, tangible, bodily... In this image there was no trace of mysticism, no abstract idealistic sublimation.' (285)

These statements articulate something I have long felt about the sharing of a meal. Bakhtin elaborates the connection between language and food, the link between eating and speaking, tracing culture back to its roots. He goes so far as to hypothesize that the origins of language itself may lie in the sharing of food as a primal expression of culture over nature, establishing a connection between digestion and dialogue. [6] He recognizes the possible historical materialism (or, we might even find, the gastronomy) embodied in Rabelais's character, Master Gaster, who not only invents agriculture, the conservation of grain, military weapons to defend it, the means for its transportation, the building of cities and fortresses and the art of destroying them, but also establishes such sciences as mathematics, astronomy and medicine. Gaster is the `incarnation of the material needs of the organized human collectivity'. (300-1)

I find Bakhtin's theory attractive because of his abiding interest in the material basis of culture, his view that culture is, as it were, created from the bottom up - or that the top is not able to keep the bottom down. As a cook, I know that cookery would be nothing without a peasantry or a good agrarian economy. While I certainly recognize that high culture contributes to refinement, I share with Bakhtin the knowledge that the richness of folk culture offers abundant evidence for the fundamental creativity of humanity; I too detect bodily assertion in culture.

Bakhtin recognizes that Rabelais's realism relied on his observations of life around him, and devotes a chapter to the influence of the language of the marketplace. Again, from a gastronomic viewpoint, good markets are celebrated not just for good ingredients but also as lively cultural precincts. For instance, Bakhtin notes Rabelais's rendering of the cries of the Paris street sellers.

'Under Rabelais's pen the names of dishes, venison, vegetables, wines, household objects, and kitchen utensils have an intrinsic value... But this is the very world which was daily offered in all its richness and variety in the cries of the street vendors. We also find food, drink, and houseware in the paintings of the Flemish masters, as well as in the minute descriptions of banquets so often presented in sixteenth-century literature. All that was related to the table and kitchen suited the taste and spirit of the times. But the cries of Paris represented in themselves a noisy kitchen and a loud, abundantly-served banquet; every food and dish had its own rhyme and melody. Together, they made a never-ending symphony of feasting, a symphony that obviously influenced literary images, and those of Rabelais in particular.' (183)

This engaging portrayal of the `symphony' of feasting evokes very clearly Bakhtin's notion of language as living utterance, as a `polyphony' of competing voices. The carnival and the market square are the models for his theory of `dialogics', a notion of the plurality of competing meanings oppressed by `monologic' discourse. The rich vernacular of the grotesque is presented by Bakhtin as being, as it were, in competitive dialogue with the utterances of orthodoxy.

Bakhtin explains the bodily aspect of human utterance. Reinforcing the fundamental relations between eating and speaking, he emphasizes the volitional nature of human utterance, the speaker's ability to control meaning in relation to competing discourses. The speaker, by giving utterance to language, makes meaning concrete, moves it into the sphere of the material body. As Bakhtin asserts, the banquet form of speech `liberated from fear and piousness' has played an important role in literary history, and in the history of materialist thought. (297)

Carnival does not just represent a sanctioned, periodic outlet for pent-up protest. It is, Bakhtin argues, ever-present and irrepressible. Change is an ontological fact. The utopian carnival is not a point of culmination, of happy stasis; rather, utopia would be a state of carnival, immersed in the becomingness of human history, the hubbub of `heteroglossia' in a truly democratic community.

We have not reached that utopia. Monologic discourse still prevails, whether it takes the form of Shi'ite fundamentalism, the ideological orthodoxy of Western supply-side economics, or the innumerable varieties of totalitarianism that have flourished in the last

fifty years. Yet the carnivalesque response remains open. Consider, for example, Peter Greenaway's recent film, The Cook, The Thief, His Wife and Her Lover, which Greenaway accepts is a grotesque of everything vile about consumerism in general and Thatcher's England in particular: `Where what is known is the price of everything and the value of nothing... When we've finally eaten everything in the world, we'll end up eating one another. That's the metaphor.' [7]

In literature, too, the carnivalesque has been deployed to considerable effect - by Gabriel Garcia Marquez for example, in The Autumn of the Patriarch, by Carlos Fuentes in his recent *Christopher Unborn* and, with spectacular consequences, by Salman Rushdie in *The Satanic Verses*. In a perceptive commentary on *The Satanic Verses*, Fuentes noted that:

Rushdie's work perfectly fits the Bakhtinian contention that ours is an age of competitive language. The novel is the privileged arena... bringing together, in tension and dialogue, not only opposing characters, but also different historical ages, social levels, civilizations and other daunting realities of human life. In the novel, realities that are normally separated can meet, establishing a dialogic encounter, a meeting with the other. [8]

Following Bakhtin, Fuentes argues that there is no absolute truth, only an imposed `unitary language'; there is no final solution, no last word.

Rushdie launched *The Satanic Verses* into the very current and flux of living history. The book is deliberately devilish and prankish. Rushdie himself has described his work as embodying the `ancient tradition of making as big a fuss, as noisy a complaint about the world as is humanly possible'. [9] With a wealth of scholarship behind him, Rushdie sets out into the quotidian world, the hubbub of the street. His novel does not hide, even if he has been forced to do so. In this novel, as in Bakhtin's writings, we hear the voice of the exile, forced out of an easy acceptance of the given by the repressiveness of a dogmatic system, and so embracing plurality.

Rushdie's satire is truly carnivalesque in its methods. Using masks, clowns and grotesques, Rushdie takes his own licence to ridicule the forces that seek to maintain the ascendancy of the privileged word, be they the mass media, creationists, Christian fundamentalists, Thatcherite economists or closed-minded Muslims, to name but a few of his targets. Though conventionally described as `magical realism', his style might more accurately be termed `grotesque realism'. The grotesque body appears in a multitude of forms, from the demonic goat with sulphurous halitosis to the woman terrorist with bombs for breasts, who murmurs in her `faint oceanic voice':

'When a great idea comes into the world, a great cause,... History asks us: what manner of cause are we? Are we uncompromising, absolute, strong, or will we show ourselves to be time-servers, who compromise, trim and yield?' Her body had provided her answer.

Similarly, Rushdie often employs images of the eating body to debase zealotry. In exile, the Imam survives on a deprived diet of water and takeaways, consoled by the knowledge that `when the future comes... water will have its day and blood will flow

like wine'. (209) The loss of faith has a material manifestation when Gibreel Farishta stuffs his face with forbidden pork. At the Taj Hotel, he gorges himself on the `gammon steaks of unbelief and the pigs' trotters of secularism'. (29) On a different note, Chamcha's determination to master the kipper and the greasy takeaway chicken demonstrates his childish desire to reject his father's heritage in order to ape the English.

The whole of The Satanic Verses can be seen as a rowdy carnivalization. The Mahound chapters, which lampoon the unholy alliance between business and the sacred, have all the hallmarks of the medieval satires, with their curative laughter, their reversals from high to low through scatology and the assertion of the body. So the humourless Mahound accuses the aged satirist, Baal, of bringing `out the worst in people by inducing them to laughter'; and Baal, in his turn, says: `whores and writers, Mahound, we are the people you can't forgive'. (392)

In `Outside the Whale', a pithy, prescient essay published in 1984, Rushdie argued that writers of today cannot hide inside the whale, insulated from history and politics. `Outside the whale', Rushdie claims, `the writer is obliged to accept that he (or she) is part of the crowd, part of the ocean, part of the storm.' He also points out that `it can be as false to create a politics- free fictional universe as to create one in which nobody needs to work or eat or hate or love or sleep'. In a modern world that `lacks not only hiding places, but certainties', the novelist takes part in the struggle of discourses, `the continual quarrel, the dialectic of history'.

Rushdie has explicitly conjured up the age-old immunity of carnival grotesque, only to be punished. So we might say his book is a tribute to the now-recognized power of laughing protest. At the same time, the Rushdie affair has thrown into sharp focus a necessary choice facing both writers and critics. The novel has shown the ability of literature to intersect with history. The subsequent controversy could signal a new retreat inside the whale - or, in the case of criticism, into the academy - but equally it could assist in the rebirth of a literature that draws on the popular traditions of carnival to express a new moral commitment. In terms of Camus's popular slogan, which is quoted approvingly by Rushdie, `The passage from speech to moral action has a name, to become human.' (415)

NOTES

[1] Ken Hirschkop, `Introduction: Bakhtin and cultural theory', in Ken Hirschkop and David Shepherd (eds), *Bakhtin and Cultural Theory* (Manchester University Press, Manchester, 1989), p2

[2] Ibid, p5
[3] Terry Eagleton, *Literary Theory: An introduction* (Basil Blackwell, Oxford, 1983), p117
[4] Trans. Helene Iswolsky (Indiana University Press, Bloomington, 1984)
[5] Katerina Clark and Michael Holquist, *Mikhail Bakhtin* (Harvard University Press, Cambridge, Mass., 1984), p295
[6] Ibid, p302.

[7] Quoted by Ginny Dougary, `Prince of darkness', *GH Magazine*, March 1990, pp.34-7
[8] *Guardian Weekly*, 5 March 1989, pp8-9
[9] Salman Rushdie, `Outside the Whale', *Granta*, 1984

DISCUSSION

Alan Saunders: Do you think that what you are describing is necessarily a pre-bourgeois phenomenon? I was thinking specifically of the sort of festive occasions that you were talking about beforehand, which depend upon a world of fairly established polarities. You mentioned the recent events in Peking - well, there of course you do need an entrenched gerontocratic hierarchy against which these people were rebelling. You did also mention the gay Mardi Gras which of course does exist in a bourgeois society, though one could argue that it is an isolated example (and where would the Mardi Gras be without Fred Nile - they need somebody to oppose them). I was actually thinking about seventeenth century masks, which depend upon having two aspects. There is the mask itself, formal and aristocratic and performed by aristocratic amateurs, and there is the anti mask, which is anarchic and grotesque. Towards the middle of the seventeenth century you get works like Comus, and Cupid and Death, by Shirley, in which the anti-mask takes over, and the world starts looking a rather more complicated place. I have wondered whether this is accidental that it happens when the middle class are rising, at the portal to a bourgeois age, and I wonder if the sort of thing you are describing has any relevance to the age after Rabelais, the age after the mid-seventeenth century, except in isolated examples.

JH: Bakhtin does spend a lot of time justifying the special qualities of the medieval carnival and I think it is up to us to extend his theory. He says that those elements of carnival behaviour in a romantic period didn't have the laughing satire. It was much more nihilistic, because with romanticism it is much more individual so that the body isn't the body collective. It is a much lesser sort of celebration of the mass of the people, but certainly the notion is that it can't be kept down; it's fundamental, like eating.

Alan Saunders: But there has to be a keeping down ...

JH: Yes.

THE TABLE IN SPACE A PLANNING PERSPECTIVE

Susan Parham

I began thinking about this paper because I noticed more and more how crabbed and constrained are our own pleasures of the table by virtue of the design of our cities.

I'm not talking here just about the physical nature of the city although that's crucial but about the attitudes that shape our perceptions of what's appropriate in urban life - limiting the location and manner of dining.It seems trite but, if it's true that destruction of language can teach us to unknow or unsay - so too can the constraints of city design lessen our chances of a variety of experiences, conversations, thoughts and ideas most excited by the process of sharing food.

What I wanted to find out was why we don't habitually take over the streets for meals together - and I'd like to talk about Gouger Street in relation to this later - why for example planners have designed corner-shops and cafes "out" of residential areas, why we allow our best productive viticultural and horticultural land to be subsumed by housing development, why we've never had much of a culture of outdoor cafes, arcaded streets, the promenade ... things which seem to be adjuncts to a rich intellectual and gastronomic life.

The short answer I was told by a number of people is very simple - flies.

But I don't think this is a good enough explanation. I want to argue that while public dining is good - a socialising and sociable act - we have a long tradition of dualist conceptions of the city where dining has been firmly situated and central to the private domestic sphere. Our construction of the physical city has reflected and symbolic, dichotomy or doubleness in urban life.We have divided and understood the city as a series of opposites; public/private, urban/suburban, work/home, production/consumption, labour/reproduction of labour, market/domestic and assigned roles to men and women which reflect and perpetrate this duality.

Women have represented the domestic sphere - kitchens their natural home, love and comfort through food preparation their expression of self-abnegation but also fulfilment. Kitchens and cooking occupy a somewhat contradictory position in many women's lives - on the one hand this is the centre of never ending consumption mystified as love rather than labour - on the other this very private space is one they control.

Kitchens have very often been badly designed, ill lit, cramped and poorly oriented while cooking remains one of the more pleasant creative parts of the domestic routine. Eminent and well meaning architect and planner Raymond Unwin expressly designed kitchens to be too small, to allow the worryingly " working class" tendency of dining and receiving visitors in the kitchen to be possible. Of course Unwin was utterly wrong but people still have to live in his houses and many others like them.

Around the same time other European social theorists, mostly Utopian socialists, were arguing that domestic labour was unnecessarily duplicated in private houses and should be socialised to cut down needless work which sapped women's time and energy. To this end schemes were produced for housing arranged around communal facilities for dining and laundry. the prescient planner Ebenezer Howard had earlier suggested similarly innovative schemes - the reality fell well short.

In any case ideas about communal dining were taken up in broad way during WWII with the stolidly patriotic "British Restaurants" established to provide wholesome food for war workers. These were closed down against some resistance post was as a threat to domesticity. Private dining was recognised as a mainstay of traditional family values and roles.

Many urban designers and architects have understood the centrality of kitchens for family life however this notion of family is conceived. The authors of one design manual A Pattern Language boldly suggest that "without communal eating, no human group can hold together". They go on to say that "there are almost no important human events or institutions which are not given their power to bind, their sacral character, by food and drink".

The meaning of communal eating is summarised as follows:

"A feast is of such a nature that it draws people to itself, and makes them leave everything else in order to participate in its joys. the mere act of eating together, quite apart from a banquet or some other festival occasion is by its very nature a sign of friendship and of "communion"... the table is in a certain sense the centre of family life, the expression of family life".

It follows that kitchens must allow physical space for this sharing to occur.

"The isolated kitchen, separate from the family and considered as an efficient but unpleasant factory for food is a hangover from the days of servants; and from more recent days where women willingly took over the servants' role". As long as we maintain the hidden supposition that cooking is a chore and eating a pleasure each woman is a kind of servant.

If you look at most modern house plans you'll see they still half separate the kitchen from social areas.

What's needed - and if it seems to be stating the obvious think of all those house plans - is to make the kitchen bigger, big enough to include the family room space, near the centre of the house, with a big table in the middle and lots of chairs, soft and hard, stove, counters, sink round the edge.

The eating atmosphere is also important. It's obvious that some rooms invite people to eat leisurely and comfortably while others force people to eat as quickly as possible so they can go somewhere else to relax. This is partly to do with light. If there's the same level of light over the whole space the light doesn't hold people together - intensity of feeling is dissolved and the sense of gathering is dissipated. The basic thing needed is

a heavy table in the centre of the eating space - large enough for the people using it - with a light which creates a pool over the people - the space is enclosed with surrounding walls and darkness..

This issue of enclosure of space is in its way, as crucial and is related to, the dualist conceptions of the city where dining is so privatised. We have understood inside/outside, private/public somewhat inflexibly; using solid walls to demarcate the private and public worlds. In some other cultures space isn't so clearly defined by walls but is a scene of "fluid change an constant transformation like that of the human relationship to nature". There is a picture in one design book I have of a temporary restaurant built on wooden platforms over a Japanese river in summer, that I think expresses this fluidity or transformation very clearly. Here physical design relates to the seasons, the natural world closely and flexibly.

Our restaurants tend to replicate the conditions of private houses - to be enclosed from the surrounding natural or urban world or provide some alienated fantasy that denies the real conditions of the city as these are often rightly viewed as alienating and unpleasant. Of course there are some notable exceptions - some of which are run by people here.

When we do sit outside to eat however we tend to do so only in our own backyards and gardens which we have developed as lavishly detailed private worlds. This outside dining can be curiously discomforting - often there is no central table but a collection of disparate chairs without a focus - plates on laps, plastic cups all over the grass, all inducing in me anyway a kind of conversational inertia and dislocation utterly at odds with the eating place atmosphere I described earlier.

One of the main reasons for this privatisation of open space - and this has a lot to do with why we don't dine in the streets - is the physical design and purpose of modern roads.

An Italian designer called Camillo Sitte wrote a lot in the late 19th Century about positive outdoor space - which is also sometimes described as the outdoor room. In this conception the road is the floor and the trees and the buildings as the walls. You can (as Sitte did) work out a mathematical relationship between the two - a ratio of height to width which defines the space - within a certain ratio the space feels good to be in - outside this ratio the space feels bad either too closed or too open. Getting the ratio right is absolutely fundamental to good street and square design. In Australia our roads and squares tend to be much too big and too wide and they just don't work as comfortable, usable, positive space for pedestrians. This has immense ramifications for dining.

One key problem is - cars. Streets really went wrong - got too wide when their basic use changed from pedestrian space to vehicular carriageway. When vehicles became motorised and their relative power and volume grew to such huge proportions the streets as a place for people was on the way out.

It's been suggested that cars have god like status in Australia. Urban form is predicated on their pre-eminence as a transport form but it's most unlikely that people will stop

using cars unless forced to do so. You can see why - our density of people and houses is so low that people really do need cars to get around. The suburbs were built on the (false) assumption that everyone would have cars - so who needs a corner shop? You don't grow your own veggies anymore - you buy them at one of a hierarchy of centre zones - they've been packaged, stored and shipped there regardless of season or distance for purchase on a weekly basis and separate consumption in private houses. Meanwhile those suburbs at low densities move ever outwards, encroaching on land once used for agricultural production of fresh local, seasonally available produce - or so the romantics would have it.

Not only do our streets suffer from their primary role as paths for cars and trucks but they offer little in the way of pedestrian pleasure and comfort. Urban designers suggest that in one sense "the edge of the space is the space" - detailed attention to the edges is crucial to good pedestrian space.

You have to treat the edge of a building as a thing, a place, a zone with volume to it not a line which has no thickness. "There should be places that have depth and a covering, places to sit, lean and walk; particularly at points along the building perimeter which look onto interesting outdoor life". The argument is that people prefer being at the edges of open spaces - people will usually place themselves near something - a facade, pillar, furniture if these are provided.

This is why arcades, galleries, porches and terraces are good structures for the edge of the street space. The example of Bologna springs to mind with its miles of porticoed streets but there are many other cities too where canopied space has helped support street life. It seems an obvious idea for our climate as well. This kind of environmental and psychological protection for the pedestrian is a useful physical support to the presence of outdoor cafes. I wondered why we have so few good cafes of the Al Fresco or Flash variety. Is it because we are as has been said of Americans in the 50's by temperament and upbringing, indifferent if not hostile to everything the cafe stands for - scorning the state of mind it induces - the mixture of contemplativeness and introspection or is it because our streets are so poorly designed?

An important point is the need for a fairly high density or concentration of people to provide a cafe with enough clientele.It's imperative that there be a lot of customers. People like the physical closeness to others the cafe allows - and the chance to listen to interesting conversations as well as the dangerous and exciting opportunity to meet someone unknown. Various designers have discussed this risky aspect of cafes with a fair amount of approval - they feel especially pleased to think they are counteracting the alienating and lonely quality of urban life.

The design conditions which are required for a good cafe are that it be within easy walking distance of home, open to the street, serve simple food and drink (some of it alcoholic). With these in place, talk, lectures, debate and controversy are all possible. This opportunity to sit at a table, eat, drink and converse is very limited in our cities. For one thing public space, where cafe's are situated, has been in the past very much a male domain.

Although this is changing in Australia, traditionally lacking a well developed culture of local cafe's the effect has been very pronounced. Some men may have a local pub, just about everyone else has nowhere local to go to meet, eat, drink and talk to people.

In addition, almost the only place where we get a high enough density of people to make cafes work is in and around the centre of the city. Our City of Adelaide Plan and its urban design guidelines stress the need for lots of this kind of cafe with outdoor sitting places but with unsympathetic building and road design and too low a density of people it just won't happen despite the best of intentions.

I was intrigued by reading accounts of whole streets taken over in various places - the examples I saw were Italian, Spanish and Greek - of local restaurants and communities who just rope off the road and set up tables for their patrons or themselves. Tables and chairs are set up in front of the premises under a canopy of plane trees or palms, or in a miniature park across the street, or sometimes on a traffic island... One picture I saw showed a group of working class families who'd taken over the space in front of a cathedral in Trastavere for a feast of mussels and of suckling pig - they looked as if they were having a really good time.

Rudofsky points out that some people find eating in public akin to indecent exposure eating in front of non-eaters is somewhat offensive. He suggests that eating should be table-bound - a dining table makes the sight of masticating bearable.

This business of expanding a restaurant onto the greater part of the street is apparently organised at the owner's discretion and with the authorities' connivance. I was sceptical about how keen Adelaide's authorities would be about such a suggestion and asked Michael how the Symposium had arranged the Gouger Street event. It turned out that the charisma of the festival had something to do with it. I suppose the positive point is that special occasions allow such blurring of public/private space to occur. Once seen the example can e repeated with greater frequency.

The Gouger Street experience on Saturday is anyway a useful illustration of much of what I've been saying in this paper.Given the opportunity, there seems to be lots of evidence that people really like eating together in the street. On the other hand the space itself doesn't always work all that well in a physical design sense. In Gouger Street the ratio of building height to road width is too big to get a sense of enclosure. There is too little shelter in the heat and glare of the sun - and the impetus for the project came from without.

What I'd like to see is this repeated at a smaller scale, much more often, with less officialdom and sense of external control and more spontaneity and local impetus. What I've tried to show is how the arrangement of private space and of street space in terms of scale, treatment of edges, density of people, presence or absence of cars affects the chances of increasing the number and diversity of dining experiences - and how this is linked to our ideas about the public and private domain.

Stemming from all this my final point is quite a simple one and this is that good gastronomers need to be good urban designers too.

DISCUSSION

Gay Bilson: What always strikes me about Adelaide at festival time is that you do have the promenade, and it is due to the density and the like-mindedness of the people, which comes about because of the festival, the reason people come here.

SP: I do think that you need to have that density of people. One of the things, in my view, which is wrong with Australian cities is our density of housing and our policies of exclusion - shopping centres here and houses there, factories over there, and never the twain shall meet. It has been a real problem for everything; we have never had a sense of local speciality. There are cafes developed around particular interests, where people know they can go to meet others of like mind in a large city; otherwise they could be very lonely. We could do that, even outside of festival time, but the physical shape of the city actually stops us from doing it.

Gay Bilson: It seems to me the promenade comes from lack of space. People have to move out of their very small domestic space into larger space which means that the line between private and public is then lost. Planners have to condone people living in small places in order to use more public space and more public private space.

SP: Yes, I think that that would be a good thing.

Gay Bilson: So do I, but I wouldn't think that most Australian town planners would agree.

SP: No, that's right; in fact, it is not even in the town planning debate. It is just people like me who keep arguing in this way. The point that I was trying to make is that it is the edge of public space on the street, the transition space between public and private, that needs to be much more sensitively designed. I think that canopied streets protecting people from the elements is, in our kind of climate, just such an obvious thing to do. It makes people feel good and allows them a place where such interactions can occur, and we should really be pushing for this.

Cath Kerry: I think you mentioned this, that we just don't have people living in the city, which I think that that is a real shame. At night the whole city dies. You can look up and know that there are buildings in Rundle Street, every floor of which is absolutely empty. I think a lot of people would like to live there, but won't because they can't park their car. People in Europe are forced outside because the houses are too small. If we were living well in those spaces, and were able to park our car, I think we would still go out to a cafe to eat.
The other thing I wanted to raise is the terrible problem with the Health Department. While we certainly do not want food to be prepared in bad conditions, the Health Department has absolutely nothing to do with 'health'. We all know the silly problem with restaurants when you have got to put the little sink somewhere, even though no one washes their hands in it. So you will find that all those things that might bring people together and make them feel less lonely, like trying to have restaurants or cafes allowed to use the park opposite, will probably run into opposition from the Health Department.

SP: In my reading I found that usually there were regulations that forbade such things happening, but because everyone wanted it to happen they just did it anyway. It was quite anarchic.

Graham Pont: Looking at Gouger Street, it struck me that to adapt it to a public gastronomic mall you need a central row of splendid shade trees and then a double row of tables.

SP: That would solve the problem of enclosure to get the ratio right, because you can use trees to do that; the boulevards of Paris are actually a series of enclosed spaces.

Michael Symons: Just to reinforce what was said about the Health Department - one of the health surveyors who was coming around to check up said I will be bringing this wonderful new legislation based on the Queensland model; all that is required that this be no more than two inches from the wall and the other no further than four, and all that nonsense. I asked does this mean that we have to rebuild our kitchen? It is not too bad, he replied; it is just what Kentucky Fried do now.
But to reinforce the anarchic theme: Steve Brown, who is the outdoor manager for the Federal and does lots of activities, spending his life organising huge public functions, told us, when we worried about all the regulations, just to tell them that it is happening, the Festival is taking over Gouger Street, and it is a fait accompli, everyone will just have to go along with it. In a small way that is is also happening elsewhere, as a genuine popular movement - last November I saw these people taking over all the parklands and city squares in Adelaide for barbecues at about nine in the morning - it was the Melbourne Cup.

Max Lake: I have never heard so many first principles in a paper at this sort of symposium before. Could I respectfully suggest to you that you write a book and we all will buy a copy. That was fantastic.

Michael Dowe: It all does seem to be able to happen in Canberra. The restaurants in Canberra seem to be able to move over the community space into shopping squares without any real problems.

Marion Halligan: Oh no, they fought for that for a very long time and it was not easy. It took one person persisting and getting into trouble to cause any change. We also got a note in the Bicentennial year saying 'Why don't you have a street party; this is all you have to do'; and you had to apply here and go there and complete this and that formality, but they said, please have a street party ...

'MEDIAEVAL' LUNCH, MONDAY MARCH 12, 1990

Barbara Santich

Fave

Platina's green herb salad

Escabeche

Confetti di melle apio

Primo Estate 1990 Rhine Riesling and Cabernet Sauvignon

This is not an attempt to recreate an authentic mediaeval meal, least of all a monastic mediaeval meal, but simply a selection of dishes which take their inspiration from mediaeval recipes from Italy and Catalonia.

Nevertheless, it would have been approved by St. Benedict, whose word was law as far as early monasteries were concerned - three dishes only, of which two cooked and one uncooked; and it is a 'fasting' meal - that is, it contains no animal products - and therefore appropriate to this season of Lent, and to anyone who affects to follow the Christian regime.

But it is in no way a typical mediaeval meal, in that it combines dishes which would probably never have appeared on the same table in the fourteenth century. Mediaeval society, and hence mediaeval food, was highly hierarchical, and food was one of the means by which the aristocrats distinguished themselves from the bourgeois, and the bourgeois from the peasants. A simple puree of broad beans, garnished with one of the most common of vegetables, the onion, was a very ordinary dish, very inexpensive (broad beans were generally the cheapest of all the legumes, cheaper than peas, chick peas and lentils), very easy to prepare (with one pot and water), and almost foolproof (although mediaeval recipes do give hints on how to get rid of a burnt taste, if perchance the beans do boil dry and burn). It might well have found a place among the silent monks of Cluny, but it might also have been eaten in the towns, by the tradesman and the butcher - though in these circles it would have been eaten more from choice than from necessity, and rarely as the sole component of the meal. Echoes of this dish can be found even today in Mediterranean countries - the Sicilian maccu, Egyptian ful medames.

The green herb salad is included partly because Jill Stone has supplied us with such wonderful herbs, but also because it was in the monasteries that the ancient herbal (and medicinal) traditions were kept alive. Most monasteries had two herb gardens - one for culinary purposes, the other for medicinal. I'm not sure that mediaeval monks would have been offered salads, since salads were typically an elite dish, but there is some poetic justice in imagining Platina's herb salad on their tables. Platina's salad recipe is the only one I know for the mediaeval period, although there are recipes for vegetables, such as leeks, cooked then served with oil and vinegar. The salad recipe is probably one of Platina's own - almost every other recipe was taken from the book of his contemporary, Maestro Martino, albeit with acknowledgment. I have mentioned Platina at previous symposia, as the fifteenth-

century counterpart to Brillat-Savarin; it was he who proclaimed that the enjoyment of food (and sex) is honest and lawful, and although he eventually became the librarian to one of the popes, and wrote histories of the popes, he had earlier endured prison because of his criticism of the church. This salad, then, is a tribute to a free spirit.

Escabeche is a typical Mediterranean fish dish, still common today. Anthony Corones and Maria Kelly assure me that it is standard in their (Greek) families, but they cannot tell me its name. On the Adriatic coast of Yugoslavia, a Santich cousin, explaining to me the traditional ways of treating fish, added: "And when we catch too many, we fry them and pour vinegar over them." That, essentially, is an escabeche. It was originally an Arab dish, made with either fish or meat - although, centuries earlier, a simple recipe for preserving fish (previously fried) in vinegar is included in the collection attributed to Apicius. The first European recipes appear early in the fourteenth century in a Catalan text known as the *Sent Sovi*; from Catalonia the dish spread to Italy and other parts of the Mediterranean. The recipe which has been followed for this escabeche borrows from all three *Sent Sovi* recipes (it would have been almost impossible to follow, to the letter, a single one); the sauce is thickened with bread and pinenuts and spiced with saffron, ginger, cinnamon and pepper.

The final sweetmeat, Confetti di melle apio, is made according to a recipe from a Venetian collection of the early fifteenth century. The use of honey marks it as a typical home preserve; sugar confections belonged to the professional. Similar sweetmeats were made from quinces (the modern 'membrillo') and vegetable marrow (the Sicilian 'zuccata'). Bay leaves in this recipe serve not only to separate the layers of fruit paste but also to impart a distinctive flavour to the sweets.

The two wines - served in pottery jugs from Bennett's Magill Potteries - are even more nouveau than the first Beaujolais, having finished fermenting only last week. They might not be mediaeval, nor monastic - but they are different!

I'd like to acknowledge the help of all those who helped prepare this meal, especially Rob Kolencik, and the vital role played by the microwave - it reheated the bean puree!

NEW WAYS TO CONTROL THE RIPENING AND STORAGE OF FRUIT

John Possingham

The aim of post-harvest horticulture is to allow fruits and vegetables to be stored longer without deterioration. Australians travelling overseas often claim that fruits and vegetables have a better flavour in France, or in Greece; often this is because the market is closer to the source of supply, which means that the fruits or vegetables can be picked very ripe. In Australia we tend to grow too much in north Queensland, then worry about how to keep those fruits or vegetables alive.

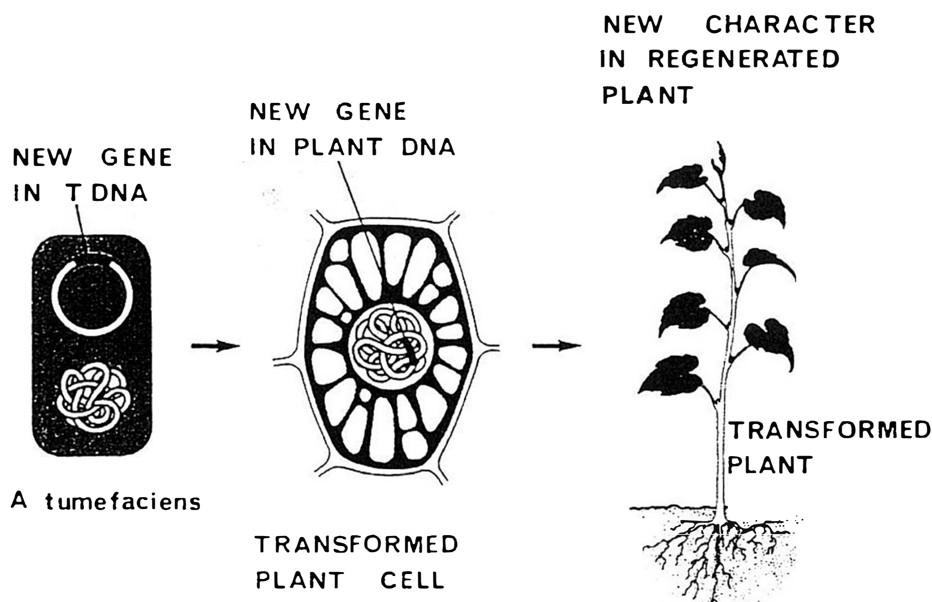
Actually, the techniques are very simple. They can be chilled, which makes them last longer; or they can be placed in an atmosphere reduced in oxygen and with a high concentration of carbon dioxide,which inhibits their breathing; or the ripening factor can be removed. The simple act of harvesting tends to release ethylene, which is thought of as a ripening hormone, and an alternative technique is to have the ethylene absorbed, in nothing more complex than a solution of Condy's crystals (potassium permanganate).

Experiments to determine the best treatment for storing apples or other fruits take a long time. We all dream of eventually taking fruit and placing it in conditions where we can monitor the fruits' reaction to those conditions. Currently, a lot of research is being done to determine the best temperature and best gaseous environment for storage. An important criterion is that the fruit should not start to desiccate, a process which begins as soon as the fruit is picked. To prevent the fruit from losing water, one of the simplest techniques is simply to wrap it in plastic, although this has the disadvantage that the fruit can go mouldy. Mould can be prevented by irradiation or by heat treatment which stops the fruit being damaged by surface microorganisms and has the added advantage of doing away with chemicals, which keeps the greenies happy.

A quite different approach is to change the ripening character of the fruits, so that they last longer - in other words, to slow down the way they ripen. I believe genetic engineering offers a means to achieve this. Genetic engineering means deliberately changing the information of the plant, stored in the nucleus of the plant cell in the form of DNA. Think of it in terms of the tricycle of life - DNA makes RNA makes protein. In genetic engineering a new piece of information taken out of bacteria is inserted into the existing information carried by the plants, and from a single cell the whole plant is reconstructed (see diagram). One of the problems associated with genetic engineering is that it is very simple to insert new information but difficult to turn it on, make it express itself.

The delayed ripening process involves giving the plant information which enables it to switch off a message from the nucleus which says 'Produce an enzyme which makes the cells of the fruit soft'. The technique has been applied, in particular, to tomatoes and peaches; three groups, in Sydney, Nottingham and California are experimenting with these fruits. The result is that the tomato, or the peach, is apparently slow to ripen - it is only slow to soften - which means it can be picked with a high sugar and flavour

content. One of the problems with a lot of tomatoes today is that they are picked green, when the sugar content is very low. This controlled ripening, or slower softening, technology will be current in ten years, or perhaps even in five years.



These approaches address the worries of those concerned by the use of chemicals in agriculture. In the past we have used many chemicals on fruits and vegetables to make to last longer. Now we are developing two simple alternatives. The first is heat treatment, using temperatures of 45-46ºC, which kills most surface microorganisms; this is a very new development to produce cleaner fruits. The second involves this new technique of slowing down the softening process, so that fruits can be picked at a riper stage.

DISCUSSION

Michael Dowe: Can you reverse the process, making the fruit ripen faster?

JP: Yes, you can make yourself another new plant. In making a new plant you start with a single cell that you can isolate from a leaf or stem. You modify it to give it this new message, and then you have to have the capability to turn that cell back into a whole plant. That plant is then equipped with these new characteristics. If you wanted the tomato to soften more quickly you could amplify the softening genes, you could put in more copies of the PG enzyme in so that there should be a faster ripening.
Actually, it is interesting, scientists always have to be thankful for what they get. We set out to stop softening altogether and then to give the plants a softening system which is stimulated in a completely different way to the one they had. It is driven by a new stimulus. What we have tried to do is take a softening system that is stimulated by a lack of oxygen, and in that way that you make this tomato get ripe by putting it in an environment totally lacking in oxygen. This turns on a softening system that is driven by lack of oxygen instead of by ethylene, or any other normal way. That proved very difficult to do as we couldn't find a way to get absolutely zero softening. We had to

turn it around to our advantage, so now we have slow ripening tomatoes merely by antagonising the normal ripening process.

Jane Adams: How do you modify the cell?

JP: You have an enzyme, which is a specific protein which has the characteristics to break down the carbohydrate molecules that normally hold cells together and make them rigid and tough. The process of ripening is for this enzyme to be activated and chop up the long chains of carbohydrates in the cell wall. The way we slow down ripening is to make a reverse copy of the computer code for the softening enzyme.The reverse copy which binds to the message for making the softening enzyme covers it up, so it can't make that enzyme. You can't stop it entirely but you can stop most of the enzyme being made. You actually cover up the message. So you insert what we call anti-sense into the cell.

David Dale: Do you inject it or spray it on?

JP: You use an Agrobacteria. These are bacteria which will invade a plant's cell and which carry a piece of DNA that has got the ability to be integrated into the plant nucleus. It is what we do in genetic engineering. The Agrobacteria normally produces a gall on a plant, but you can chop off the part of DNA that produces a gall and they still go into plant cells, and donate part of DNA to the plant nucleus. It gets irrevocably built into it. This is all done in a test tube. The enzyme is made up of amino acids, each amino acid is coded for by a particular RNA molecule. One can make a reverse messages so that when you put the two together one covers up the other.

David Dale: So what happens after that?

JP: The cell is turned back into the plant. A single plant cell can be turned back into a whole plant so that whole plant then has that new characteristic modified by the new piece of DNA put in the Agrobacteria.

Graham Pont: I think we are very fortunate to have the kind of input John has provided, and not only in the practical demonstration of food but also in science and technology. I'd just like to comment the revival of pasteurisation is also effecting wine people, like Gil Wahlquist,who are now producing table wine just using heating to try to keep the bugs out. I think it is a very important step away from the excessive use of chemicals.

Tom Jaine: When the cells are so tampered with, will they then they produce seeds and breed true?

JP: Yes, they're perfectly normal, you've just modified a particular tiny bit of the cell.

Sarah Stegley: How do you suppose that this process, if used at large in the world, would contribute to the climate change?

JP: Climate change is simply the heating of the oceans, the oceans are getting so hot and so the land is getting hotter. This doesn't contribute to it, but we may have to breed

plants that grow at higher temperatures. Much more of the world will be a warmer place than it was before so we would get much more of our food from cultivars that like warm climates.

Sarah Stegley: Surely this would change the seasonal pattern. You won't change everything with one species of peaches, but if this was taken up at large surely it would mean that spring would be more like early summer?

JP: Well, the climate change will make the world more like spring. The belief is that we can't get enough plants to grow on the earth to reverse it; there's too much carbon dioxide now, and it has already resulted in the oceans heating up. No matter how many plants that we grow we won't be able to drop that carbon dioxide level down very much. I am not an expert on this, but that is a general conclusion. We just have to live with this climate change which wil give us warmer climates rather than the previous cooler climates.

Michael Dowe: Can you put your research into perspective - just how important is it, how long has it taken you to get there and how well recognised is it?

JP: I suppose that most of the understanding of the softening process of tomatoes has occurred in about the last ten years. Three groups have been working on it, and we know quite a lot about the tomato system - what causes softening, whether we can prevent it. One group already has a processing tomato that takes a lot longer to ripen, and ICI have a glasshouse tomato at the moment that takes a lot longer to soften. There has been a lot of battling about releasing a deliberately modified plant, like this; the Americans have legislation that absolutely forbids it. There is a counter culture trying to change that attitude. There is nothing terribly sinister about this plant, it is just slightly modified in one respect, but in fact they haven't been able to get permission in the US to release a modified plant. The expectation is that it will happen very much quicker in Britain. We have actually released a modified organism in Australia in the state of NSW, which was the only state that has permitted it. We did it at the University of Adelaide in a single modified crown gall organism which protects plants against the disease called crown gall. It's a modified bacteria that has been released, and it works very very well. You dip your plant in and it does not get infected again. General acceptance of being able to release a man-modified plant, deliberately modified, is very slow.

Jane Adams: What is the difference in taste and flavour between what I might call the conventional tomato and the one that's been tampered with?

JP: I can't say personally, I haven't tasted it. The main issue is that the quality factor in tomatoes is very tied up with sugar content. A lot of those things that you all hate about tomatoes when you buy them in the shop are related to the fact that they are picked too green, before they have a high enough level of total soluble sugars. The trick is to let it stay on the vine longer to let it accumulate more total solubles. As a general rule it will taste better because it has more development of flavour characteristics from these reserves; this is the reason for the research.

Adrian Read: It just seems to me that this is along the same line as, and really no different from, what farmers have done throughout the ages. They have picked the bigger plant, or the plant that is more productive in some way, and they have kept the seeds from that plant to grow the following year.

JP: There is a difference between what a genetic engineer does and what people have done for centuries. When you go to the sleepy little village in north Italy and find their tomatoes are nicer, it's probably because the farmer there has been - ever since Vasco da Gama brought it across the Atlantic - breeding and rebreeding tomatoes in that environment until he bred one that really suits in that place. It gets ripe at the right time and it accumulates a nice level of sugar and quietly they do a selection process. They just save seeds and grow them, or you can have two lines and you can deliberately pollinate one or the other, but it is all a lottery. You cross two plants, one has these characteristics, one has those, and try to combine them. You don't even need to do anything as deliberate as that; you just keep on looking until you find a really good plant and then you inbreed it and interbreed it until you can say 'that's the plant that suits my district'. A genetic engineer doesn't do that at all. He takes a piece of information from one system - for example, resistance to weed killers. We take that piece of information out of a bacteria, chop it out and transfer it to a plant. That was done about fifteen years ago, but in fact they haven't quite been fully successful in getting the plant's resistance to a high enough level. It makes it resistant, but it still is a fairly low level of resistance to the weed killer. They haven't found the right promoter; one of the research areas is to find the right promoter to switch on the gene. It is probable that that plant never had it in itself, never had that particular piece of information that resided in a bacteria and it doesn't quite know how to make enough information out of that gene. The genetic engineer isn't tampering any differently to the hybridiser; he is just being much more selective. He is taking a bit from here, and a bit from there, and he will put in a very small piece, deliberately. Then he reconstitutes the plant. To do it he has to come down to a single cell, insert the information, and then the cells divide to produce a whole plant.

Anthony Corones: Thank you, John. I know that this could go on for quite a while - in the school I work in they spend whole sessions talking about just this. To finish that off on a philosophical note and to bring Brillat-Savarin - when and if we manage to wipe ourselves off the face of the earth (it might not be much consolation to us) the bacteria will start the whole saga all over again. This is not really different to what the whole evolutionary process does itself. Nature is continually being tampered with and modified; there's no such thing as a pure environment a species which remains unchanged.

GASTRONOMY AND TECHNOLOGY:A BRIEF HISTORY OF DOMESTIC COOKERY IN ENGLAND FROM THE ROMANS TO PRESENT DAY

Elaine Chambers

In this paper I hope to defend two propositions:-

1) that a level of good cooking cannot be maintained without suitable technology, and

2) that changes in eating habits occur with the introduction of new cooking implements as well as new foodstuffs, food storage and processing.

You may be surprised that I am confining myself to the history of cooking in England - not always renowned for the culinary arts - but let me start with a brief description of a Roman kitchen, which by the time the Romans left Britain in 404 AD had attained a level that was not to be regained for nearly 1000 years.

We know a great deal about kitchens in Roman Britain. Many villas have been excavated, complete with central heating systems, and reconstructions exist in many museums. We have a cookbook, "The Careful Housekeeper of Apicius" and there is a hint of industrial, as opposed to domestic cookery in that pie shops, bakeries and cooked meat shops were available in towns. (1) (2) In Roman Britain, the kitchen stove was a brick hearth raised to waist height, topped by a bed of charcoal on which small casseroles simmered or, when bellows were applied, meat and fish could be grilled on tripods. The beehive oven, unchanged for baked cakes, pastries and custards. Water, if not always piped, was at least available from a well in the kitchen, complete with a pump made with leather washers, and cooking utensils were of a size and pattern that we could use today.

Similarly, menus would have been vastly more to our taste than anything prior to the late seventeenth century. Vegetables, cheese, eggs and quantities of fruit were the everyday menu, with stoneground bread; and they were eaten from pottery plates with, in the richer homes, glassware as well.

With the fall of the Roman Empire (410 AD) all this was changed. The new wave of Norse invaders had no use for such fancy foods. Grilled or stewed meat, bread similar to damper and home brewed ale was the staple fare, and indeed nothing more complicated could have been cooked on their almost prehistoric camp fires. For nearly 500 years cooking consisted of crouching over an open pit in the middle of a large, barn-like structure. Over this pit, huge cauldrons simmered, huge joints were charred, while the smoke from the fire found its way out through the thatched roof.

Nor were the newcomers concerned with table manners. A knife was drawn with which to hack off a gobbet of meat and a horn cup was a treasured possession. After meals the trestle table tops were laid flat, amongst the filthy rushes on the floor, as beds. It was all most uncomfortable. (3) (4) The Anglo-Saxons were obliged to adapt the word for cook (coc) and Kitchen (cycene) from the Latin, having none of their own.

From the time of the Norman Conquest in 1066 the language underwent other changes. Norman-French was the language of the court, the castle and the law. At table, swine became

porc=pork; sheep=mouton=mutton; fowl or hen became poule or poulet=pullet, to give a few examples.

The words connected with cookery in the Middle Ages were all violent, short and expressive. Smite, seethe, hew, chop; "smite him to pecys" says a 12th century collection of royal recipes, and a great deal of food was pounded on mortars for easier eating with fingers or knife - forks were not known in England until the early 17th century.

The first improvement came from an unknown genius who decided it was not necessary to live in a permanent fog of eye-stinging smoke. It is impossible to date this advance, but Langland's Piers Plowman, writing around 1370, thought `a chambre with a chimney' worthy of mention. By building a flue on an outer wall and placing roasting spits in front of the heat instead of on top of it, a new method of cooking was devised, and one could almost say that deep-fat frying was invented. The topmost bar supported the fattest meat. This fat dripped onto a lower spit, holding birds for roasting, and from them it fell into a long, narrow trough known as a drippings pan in which small batter dumplings could be fried. To protect the boys who turned the spits by hand in the searing heat, old archery targets made of plaited straw, which were soaked in water, were supplied.

Utensils, however, remained large and heavy, which is why, prior to the 16th century, women are pictured in only the smallest of domestic kitchens. However, so ingenious was the use made of the vast cauldrons that it deserves description. So vital a piece of equipment was it that it was itemised, together with household beasts, in the Domesday Book. Across the bottom inside, was placed a perforated board to provide a flat base. Under this, in the curve of the vessel, a small joint such as a gammon of bacon was placed, enclosed in a flour-and-water paste known as a 'huff-crust' - today we would use foil. Tall pottery jars, not unlike agricultural drain pipes, stood upright on the board. One would hold chickens, weighted down by eggs, another the toughest trimmings and bones from joints, to make broth. The jars were then sealed with 'huff-crust', occasionally with disastrous results, as a vacuum was not understood. Minor explosions would be attributed to witchcraft, and so on such occasions the parish priest was summoned to exorcise the hearth.

In addition, linen bags containing dried peas and lentils were suspended from the handle of the cauldron, so that not only were these pulses cooked but at the same time they softened the water, for necessary washing of hands at table. (5)

The huge step forward in technology represented by the chimney, together with strange foreign notions brought back from Syria by the Crusaders, - such as baths, glass - led to a far more elaborate cuisine. To our taste, heavy use of the rare and expensive spices brought back from the East, the use of honey and dried fruits to disguise meat of dubious quality during the long winter months, would not have appealed; but by the early 14th century cookbooks for royal households were beginning to appear. (6) (The first recorded recipe in English is said to be "Take swine, and hew in gobbets"). By 1373 an ivnentory of the household goods of a rich London fishmonger included not only such refinements as curtains, a fireplace of iron - with tongs - but also, in the kitchen, an object described as a 'hersive' (hairsieve). Glass had become if not commonplace, at least no longer rare. (7)

Some of these returned warriors, to whom so much is due, also decided that it would be agreeable occasionally to withdraw from the hurly-burly of the Great Hall to his own chamber.

A small recess was hollowed out in the thick wall - there is a rare example at Norwich - a few shelves inserted, and this miniature cave was to become, of all things, the ancestor of the refrigerator, holding as it did, a few roast birds, a flagon of wine and some sweetmeats for the lord's delectation.

This was to be the cause of a social revolution. Little by little, it became customary for the lord and his family to eat apart instead of in the Great Hall with the other inhabitants of the castle and its dependencies. He no longer knew each and every serf by name, nor could judge if the claim brought before him in the manor court was true or not. It was his steward who presided at meals, who informed him about his tenants.

We know a great deal about domestic economy in the early 14th century thanks to a perfectly charming man known as the Menagier (or householder) of Paris. He was sixty when he married a little orphan girl of excellent family; she was fifteen. For her, he wrote no less than three volumes of household hints, recipes, instruction on deportment, the cherishing of husbands and the treatment of disease in man and beast, all with the intent, as he explains, that she shall do him credit with her second husband. An essay on him appears in Medieval People by Eileen Power (Pelican) which also includes a most fascinating account of the day to day life of peasants at the time of Charlemagne.

By the reign of Elizabeth 1 (mid 16th century) the livery cupboard had expanded into the larder more or less as we knew it until 1860, and the coming of the icebox. (Very large establishments sometimes built icehouses, as they did in France) (8) Huge slate shelves kept the food cool, a lattice over the unglazed window kept out birds and marauding cats - though not flies. Kitchen tools had become so much smaller that women could lift them and thread the spits, but, just as today, all larger kitchens were ruled by men. To add to this change of status by the end of the century many new foods were arriving from the Americas. (9)

This was a period of conspicuous consumption, pewter and even silver plates replacing the platters of bread (trenchers) or wood. Additional luxuries were added to the kitchen. A bake oven, although still of the beehive pattern, was sometimes included as part of the kitchen, and lead sinks, supplied with piped cold water, were additional amenities.

The new foods were naturally treated with reserve - tomatoes were for many years considered unwholesome, and potatoes were to have a most unfortunate debut. Brought back by Raleigh, they were planted at Greenwich with every care, but unhappily it was the cooked leaves, rather than the tubers, that were presented to the Court. Although accepted as 'cottage food' the potato had to wait for rehabilitation by the great chef Parmentier in the 19th century. (10)

Throughout the Middle Ages, and until the invention of the icebox, food preservation was of the utmost importance, especially in a climate in which villages might be cut off for weeks by snow, salting, smoking, drying, pickling, preserving cooked chickens in lard were all practised. It is hard to realise that it was not until late in the 18th century, with the introduction of winter feed for cattle, that it was no longer necessary to slaughter all but the breeding stock each autumn.

It is hard for us to imagine a world without tea, coffee, or chocolate, but they were unknown until late in the 17th century. Tea arrived in 1650 but was not popularised for another seven years, when the claim that it cured not only migraine but also drowsiness, apoplexy, lethargy,

paralysis, vertigo, epilepsy, catarrh, colic, gallstones and consumption made it irresistible. (11) Moreover, the opening of coffee houses, where gentlemen could enjoy the new delicacy, read the newspapers and discuss affairs of the day led to the formation not only of men's Clubs, but of such prestigious institutions as Lloyds of London.

An important new tool invented at about this time was The New Digester, devised by a Monsieur Papin. It was in fact a pressure cooker so successful in design that it was taken as part of the equipment of Scott's expedition to the South Pole in 1900 - 1904. (12) It may even have led to the beginnings of concentrated foods, as a hundred years later the soups of Messrs Donkin & Gamble were already famous, and carried by early settlers to Australia. (13)

The basis of all cooking, the hearth, did not really alter until the beginning of the 19th century. The fireplace was smaller, but pots hung suspended from hangars and pulleys, and meat was roasted on turnspits of varying patterns. In 1802, a Mr. Bodley, of Exeter, invented the first cast iron cooking stove at which the cook could stand, as in the days of the Romans. With great ingenuity these ranges were fitted into existing fireplaces, often leaving a space at the back later to be wrongly described as 'priest's holes'. (14) As the century progressed these were improved by the addition of an oven, and even a large cylinder for heating water, many of these improvements coming from the USA, where shortage of servants stimulated the invention of domestic appliances.

One of the earliest cookbooks, by Mrs Hannah Glasse (1747) was the source of a famous printers error. Wrongly attributed to Mrs Beeton, Mrs Glasse wrote "First case your hare ..." i.e. skin and prepare it for cooking, only to have it rendered "First catch your hare..." At the same time, gastronomy was influenced by Britain's association with India. Eliza Acton's excellent cookery book (15) includes curries, chutneys, and a variety of "pilafs, pillaus, and pellews". By the middle of the century Mrs. Beeton was writing not only for the mistresses of households but also for a growing number of literate professional cooks. American novelties such as a machine for making icecream at home, the *vacuum cleaner, and above all, the icebox had enlarged the possibilities of haute cuisine, which reached its zenith in the days before World War 1. Edwardian full scale dinner parties were in their way as exotic as Trimalchio's feast hundreds of years earlier. The type of kitchen and equipment used is admirably illustrated in the TV serial Upstairs Downstairs.

An aspect of eating habits often overlooked is the change of time at which meals took place down the centuries, in my view due to simple technology. We know that as late as Henry VII, the main meal of the day was at 11 a.m.; by Elizabeth I it had shifted to noon, by Charles II to one o'clock, and by the early 1700's two and even three was the normal hour for dinner. Throughout the nineteenth century the meal became even later, reaching its climax in the reign of Edward VII, when 8 or even 8.30 was the fashionable hour. (16)

I submit that these changes are closely related to the available artificial light. In a country in which, in winter, it is dark by 4 p.m. a society with nothing more powerful than a flaring torch or a rushlight had to be able to cook and to clear up afterwards before night fell. Gradually wax candles came in, to augment guttering tallow lights until by the eighteenth century oil lamps were beginning to be common. By mid-nineteenth century, gas had taken over and a huge rise in population made for an abundance of servants, while by the early 1900's electricity made it possible to keep maids washing up until the small hours of the morning. (17)

Industrial food technology is outside the scope of this brief paper, since it is to all intents a new development. Pie shops, chop houses and restaurants existed in England, but the Fast Food Revolution could not be born until the advent of deep freezing, of huge technological advances in bakery techniques, in packaging, in distribution. Who can forget the impact in the 1950 of the Sunbeam Mixmaster,followed by the vitamiser and blender. And now we are experiencing a new cooking revolutionary with the microwave.

Today, this vast international industry affects the eating habits of the entire world, and I maintain that this sustains my contention that cooking and eating habits are dependent more on the development of new equipment than on new foodstuffs.

Notes

1. Food and Cooking in Roman Britain. Jane Redford. English Heritage 1985
2. Food and Cooking in Roman Britain. Marian Woodman. Corinium Museum 1976
3. Food in England. Dorothy Hartley. Macdonald 1954
4. To the Kings Taste. Lorna J. Sass. Metropolitan Museum of Art 1975
5. Food in England. Dorothy Hartley. Macdonald 1954
6. To the Kings Taste. Lorna J. Sass. Metropolitan Museum of Art 1975
7. London Corportation Calendar of Plea and Memoranda Rolls 1364-1381.
8. Life in Elizabethan England. A.H. Dodd. Batsford 1961
9. Food History. Reay Tannahill. London 1975
10. Food History. Reay Tannahill. London 1975
11. The Jacobeans at Home. Elizabeth Burton. Secker and Warburg 1962
12. The Jacobeans at Home. Eizabeth Burton. Secker and Warburg 1962
13. The Tanner letters 1831 -45. Pamela Statham. University of W.A. 1981
14. Life at Sea in the Age of Sail. W.R. Thrower. Phillimore 1972
15. The kitchen in History. Molly Harrison. Osprey 1972 1968
16. The Best of Eliza Acton. Ed. Elizabeth Ray. Longman Green 1968
17. The English Medieval Feast. W.E. Mead. Allen & Unwin 1981
18. Movable Feasts. Arnold Palmer. OUP 1952

DISCUSSION

David Dale: Your paper seems to confirm what I have long suspected, that the Italians are the master race in terms of food or any of the civilised elements of life. You made the point that when the Romans left the English went back to barbarity, and then Normans arrived; it would seem to me that the Normans were only representing a repetitition of that Italian style. The Normans were conquered by the Romans and maintained the Roman style, where the British rejected it. Is it a fair summary, to say that when the Normans came they were only bringing back what the Romans had already introduced, and that there was nothing French about it?

EC: No, nothing French about it.

Barbara Santich: I'd like to make a few comments. I don't know much about what happened in England in the medieval period, but I know a bit about what happened in southern Mediterranean countries. I think you said deep-frying didn't take place until the fourteenth century; that is not quite true. In the Roman period, the Romans used to

make lots of lovely little fritters and dip them in honey, so they certainly knew the skills and the art of deep frying, and that practice persisted in the Mediterranean region. The sorts of fritters the Romans made were still made in the medieval era; fritters were one of the very few dishes that really did continue from the Roman to the medieval period.
Another thing you said was that they used honey to disguise the quality of the meat. I think this is a piece of nonsense that has been purveyed for far too long. I think that in the medieval period people knew enough about food quality and about how to keep their meat, and the market regulations that were applied by the Councils in each town show that they were quite well aware that meat doesn't keep. Honey, or any sweetener, as far as I know, was never used to disguise the quality of the meat. Honey was used in Roman cuisine; other sweeteners were also used, and again they were used by the Arabs and the Persians. That practice persisted in the Mediterranean region much more than in Northern France and more than in England.
The third thing I would like to comment on was your statement that a lot of the culinary advances were due to the crusading armies. I maintain that it wasn't the armies that brought back any advance in culinary techniques or ingredients, but the merchants that went with them. The crusading armies were nearly always accompanied by freeloading merchants who thought they could do a little bit of business on the side; I believe it was they, rather than the armies, who brought back the new tastes. The use of spices was not necessarily new; t the use of spice, as an exotic ingredient ,was present in Roman cuisine and continued, but the kinds of spices changed.
And if I can just go back to your comment about refrigeration and to our mentor Brillat-Savarin - in his house, his 'gentilhommiere', in a little tiny hamlet called Vieu, he had an underground ice cave at the bottom of his garden. He diverted a little stream running through the garden, so that when it rained in winter all the water ran into his ice cave and froze, after which it was all sealed up and he had a ready-made icebox for summer.

Diana Hetzel: I would just like to throw in a red herring about honey. The ancient Egyptians used honey as a preservative when they were embalming bodies.

Marion Halligan: Brillat-Savarin actually suggests that people use sugar to embalm bodies and in Barthes' introduction to Brillat-Savarin he makes a wonderful thing about them being 'candi', 'confit'. etc.

Alan Saunders: I have a sort of English nationalist question. I can't recall how, in your paper, you got from the Romans to medieval England but my understanding has always been that the England of Edward the Confessor and King Harold was actually civilised, if not over-civilized and possibly slightly decadent. Then along came these Norman barbarians who were basically Scandinavians - they were Scandinavians a hundred years before - and so what ever else they were bringing it was not Gallic civilisation, it was only such Gallic civilisation that they had acquired during the brief time in which time they lived in Normandy. What then is the origin of whatever they might have brought with them? Was it something that they picked up during their brief stay in France and then brought over to England, which is what David was suggesting, or is there some other Roman heritage they had up there, in the frozen north?

EC: My research showed me that the little they had picked up is indeed what they brought, but they had regressed from what the Romans had established.

Alan Saunders: And what the English had, given that the Norman invasion was about six hundred years after the Roman exodus, was just a regression to earlier forms?

EC: Yes, that's what I believe.

Ross Kelly: To add a little bit of logic - the Normans represented a nomadic kind of lifestyle, and therefore what they brought was the portable corpus. You said that amongst the items the Romans brought to Britain was the beehive oven, which is clearly non-portable, whereas when the Normans came they were coming as an invading mass and clearly couldn't bring chimneys and beehive ovens with them. They brought tripods and the open fire.

HI-TECH IMPACTS GASTRONOMY

Max Lake

"The food was so bad, the chairman said he would bring it up at the next meeting.".

Humans are omnivorous, and in good health have preferences for natural textures and flavours. To 'taste good' infers the food is likely to support nutrition and reproduction. And yet Jack Shipton showed me that urban children in the US, preferred round (tinned) to square (home grown and cooked) peas. So palates can be quickly influenced, by cionvenience, and by experience. What chance does a gropwing child have if the baby food is laced with 'natural' but added salt, sugar or MSG? It is a crime to habituate tiny babies to excesses of these, to cause later vascular and hormonal disfunction. What are the boundaries?

1. Convenience Foods
The average US family member spends about 25% less time at table time at the table, compared to 1975. Much more food is being eaten alone ('the first and last pleasure of man': solitary food would be a good gastronomic subject) and is arguably less tasty. Last year, 33 billion dollars was spent on diets and related food products.

2. Fake Foods
I shall just list some of these, as each could form part of the symposium on its own.Added sweeteners, muco-polysaccharides (salad dressings, bakery goods, cooked meats), TVP and other soybean derivatives all contribute to the growth industry of fake foods.Non-fat and non-cholesterol foods now include the latest craze, various mirage desserts. Any new idea in this area is worth a minimum of five million dollars in the first year!

Flavour Enhancers (the problem is EXCESS): salt (blood pressure) and sugar (diabetes, obesity) are time proved, but the UN-naturals include: MSG and analogues.(at higher than natural levels in natural foods), synthetic musks.

3. Preservatives
It may not be desirable to avoid those preservative processes we have inherited from before recorded history, like lactic fermentation (pickling), smoking and salting, although the flavours of the first two are frequently imitated today without the processes that produce them. Sulphur dioxide and its analogues are also probably indispensable, but we are learning to make do with far smaller quantities. So it is in food and beverage preparation, as in other areas of living, that avoidance beats correction. The preservative use of irradiation, and subsequent changes in nucleic acids, may become a hazard. (For further information, see *Additive Code Breaker* by Hansen, Marsden & Norris.)

4. Cooking methods, and vessels
If I just mention clay pots, the fork (appearing in the last millenium; it really does seem to have been Italian, despite what the French say, came late to England, and was even prohibited in the British Navy for a while), and move quickly along past bain-marie, pressure cooker, fan-forced convection to microwave ovens (I use mine a lot, it

enhances flavour in, for example, vegetables), you may see life, of cookery at least, pass before your eyes, perhaps with a flash of flavour to give the conceit a direction. Microwave foods worth $2 billion were sold in the US last year to be used efficiently, for example by very young children, probably the same ones who can record TV programs and do fast work with a QWERTY keyboard in Hypercard.

5. Hi-tech
Again just a list for the present, to focus your thoughts. Cooling; Freezing; Artificial ripening; Cloning plants for shelf life, or presentation, virtually fixed in time like the jumper astride the hurdle on the sports page. And other 'goodies' like contaminants, aluminium and other metals, plastics of the new vacuum pre-cooked convenience foods, etc. (NB: use PVDC, not unstable PVC, wraps); pesticides; food 'poisoning', bacteria, viruses; aflatoxin, benzanthracenes and other carcinogens; chemical breakdown products during cooking; colourings; allergens and immune suppressors; and much more. A potential market for family-size cocoons? Or large blankets to pull over their heads? Head for the hills!

6. Flavour generation, bioengineering, cell cultures
Fancy chipping out part of a bowel bug's body, and inserting a flavour-generating component, indistinguishable from 'natural' flavour. Be not afraid of HITECH, but surely ponder it.

Conclusions
Chemistry now writes the signature of western food. It remains for the East to sustain natural foods and flavours, even as they are pressured by the seductions of the West, as I show in the paperback edition of *Scents and Sensuality* (February 1991).I have a tremendous admiration for Phillip Searle and his buddies who in ten years have an answer to the challenge, a grand melange of East and West. the rest of the world has followed.

The drive to improve the technology and convenience of eating is historic, perhaps genetic. It is not going to be possible to grow enough natural food for the population increase that will occur within our children's lifetime. If that rate is to be sustained, then we have to move to synthetics and technology on an increasing scale. OR to sustain our present lifestyle, let alone improve it, we have to limit population.

THERE IS STILL A CHOICE.

DISCUSSION

Barbara Santich: Recently I visited the Hanson Road area of Adelaide (Mansfield Park) and went into many of the Vietnamese grocery shops that also sell meat and fruit and vegetables, they sell everything. And I was absolutely amazed at the number and variety of packaged, canned, processed foods, with instructions and writing in both an Asian language and English. I could read what was in them and I was absolutely horrified at the things that were there. Now who eats those things? If the food supply in the East is more natural, then why do they need these other things as well?

ML: If you are interested in buying any of those things, don't read the back label. I don't know how they get into the country. They use rancid cotton seed oil, rape seed oil, which may damage your liver. They talk about allowed colours, and I've checked on one or two of those and they are highly carcinogenic. The only really vigilant health department in the country - I mean supervigilant - is Victoria. I hope that the colleagues I used to work with in other states don't get too upset about this but you can get a 'Reg NSW', or a 'Reg wherever', so easily it's pitiful, and it's terrifying what is coming into the country at that level. I suggest you stick to the natural things and also avoid the MSG ones. I prefer my soya brewed in Japan rather than Singapore. If you like that heavy treacle soy, there is one with a red-bordered label, Chinese soy corporation, that's very good. You've got to look around very carefully because there are some terrible things that we buy now. I'm with the organic people.

Alan Saunders: I have a question for Michael Dowe.My parents came to Australia from the UK in January and I was giving them the alternative tour of Sydney which ignores the Opera House and ignores the Harbour Bridge. But I took them to Cabramatta which for people out of Sydney is way to the west. And I was staggered by the BKK supermarket in Cabramatta which had the best supply of fresh fish that I had seen outside the fish markets. Whole fish, in some cases live fish, and very good butcher shops. This is all catering for a Veitnamese community and it struck me that this was a market that was catering for people who knew how to shop. Whereas in Oxford Street in Sydney where I live, the butcher shops, for instance, are not catering for people who know what a joint of meat is, know what a cut of meat is, but for customers who don't know how to order, they have to have things that are already sliced up and already in many cases marinated. So was I actually looking at , good though it seemed to me, I was actually looking at the down market of the food spectrum.

Michael Dowe: It's interesting I read a piece last week about the availability of fresh eels in Sydney and the fact that there is a very trendy fish supplier, called the Flying Squid brothers, they tried flogging fresh eels to restaurants and found that restaurants wouldn't buy them. Yet there a couple of chinese restaurants buy them, not very many, some actually buy deep frozen eel from Hong Kong. And after that piece, I knew that it existed but I had two telephone calls one man who exports 800 kilos of live, fresh eels a week to Hong Kong. Another one who does 600. But we can't find a local market for them. Yet chinese restaurants are buying but someone else is looking after them.

Alan Saunders: Well, somebody is supplying fresh eels to the BKK supermarket at Cabramatta, I certainly saw them there.

Adrian Read: My comment bears on, perhaps tends to cut across what has already been said. And it's simply this: that I think there was a belief some years ago that every Italian woman or mother in Leichhardt was necessarily a wonderful pasta cook and this of course is nonsense. And it should be presumably also be nonsense concerning the large number of Vietnamese and other Asian people living in Sydney and no doubt everywhere else, that they are not all domestically preparing the sort of food that many have come to enjoy in Thai restaurants.

Anthony Corones: I find also that on my campus where we have high numbers of Asian students that, more than any other cultural group, they are the ones who go to buy the fried food, the chips, the fried chicken and they seem to eat worse than anyone else. I can't understand it.

ML: I take people to Cabramatta, there are 27 ethnic restaurants within a literal stone's throw of the centre of Cabramatta. The banks have Commonwealth Bank of Australia in English and in Vietnamese and you cannot see very many round eyes, not in Cabramatta And the footnote of that is they make the best bread outside of provincial France. Because they have Vietnamese bakers who were trained by Frenchmen, they steam the ovens before they finish and they use high gluten wheat, and you need a sledge hammer to crack the crust.

ML: Another question ... You ask why is aluminium still allowed in this country? Because there is a major shareholding in aluminium by........ Do I want to go to jail, see me later....

Adrian Read: Various authorities in various parts of the world determine safety levels for various things that are in food. If I find that 100 millisquiggles is an allowed rate here and I go to the US and find that 10 millisquiggles is a safe rate - it is not a question of who is right, but I'd\like to know whether that safety level information really useful.

ML: The millisquiggle levels that are put out by the FDA are less inaccurate than any other in the world. And the Australian Department of Health follows them extremely slavishly. I doubt that there is a single level that the FDA says is okay or the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms (would you believe), if they say it's okay to use they are usually very good. They've been reversed about once or twice in the last 20 years. Even FAO, sets its levels on the FDA. So if you see that, by the time it gets out ... in fact the big problem in America is the research that takes place, the FDA and their ancillaries take so long to prove it that their patents nearly run out by the time they get it on the market. There is a bit howl going on right now about that.

Ross Kelly: Is it true that there is a correlation between aluminium and the onset of Alzheimer's disease?

ML: There is no positive evidence that aluminium causes Alzheimer's, not to my knowledge at the moment. What they have found in the tangles that are in the mid brain around the red nucleus, they have found aluminium. And that's sort a bit of a yellow flag and maybe a red flag. If there's anything in it, don't use aluminium. You'd want really to be reassured wouldn't you?? Big question mark.

THREE TASMANIAN PLANTS WITH POTENTIAL FOR COMMERCIAL DEVELOPMENT AS SOURCES OF BUSH FOODS

Stephen Harris (Department of Parks, Wildlife and Heritage, Tasmania)

Our food is a cultural isolate of Europe. Until the last 5 years or so, there has been almost no commercial development of native plant food. There are isolated exceptions. For example, some genetic work has been carried out by C.S.I.R.O. in isolating genes for drought resistance and other characters from the native *Glycine latrobeana* and attempting to insert them into the commercial soya bean (*Glycine maxima*). In 1974, Cribb and Cribb had to report that the macadamia nut (*Macadamia integrifolia*) was the only endemic Australian plant grown commercially as a food plant at that time.

After 200 years on this continent the awakening interest in native foods is symptomatic of "an idea whose time has come". Europeans though have not always been completely blind to the usefulness of some native plant foods. In the early period of settlement, recourse to bush tucker was sometimes necessary to supplement meagre allowances from the Commissariat store. There have always been those willing to experiment with the culinary potential of local plants in a small way. Native plant foods were given some attention by Betty Meehan and Vic Cherikoff at the previous symposium on Australian gastronomy.

The information on Tasmanian native plant foods is mainly to be found in the anthropological and archaeological literature. This is based mainly on ethnographic sources and suffers from the paucity and vagueness of the observations on the Aboriginal diet made by early settlers and travellers.

The time seems right for a serious examination of the commercial possibilities of Tasmanian plant foods. This paper deals with three plants which I believe have potential for commercial development as a food source. These species were selected from a list of nearly sixty Tasmanian native plants which have known edible components. The criteria for selection were:

a. the species must have some reliable documented use as a human food source,
b. the edible component should be available in reasonable quantities without being completely dependent on genetic or horticultural improvement, and
c. harvest of the food in the wild will not have any negative conservation impact, or if there were a threat to wild populations, the species must have potential for plantation growth.

The three species discussed in this paper are cider gum (*Eucalyptus gunnii*), native pepper (*Tasmannia lanceolata*) and sassafras (*Atherosperma moschatum*). The aim of this paper is to describe the potential of these species as modern food sources. The known biology and distribution, descriptions of the edible component and the resource requirements, and the horticultural potential, is described.

EUCALYPTUS GUNNII

1. Description and distribution

This endemic Tasmanian tree can grow to 25m tall and attain a diameter at breast height of 1m. The tree has a very close relative called *E. archeri* which is also a Tasmanian endemic. It is locally common and abundant from Guilford in the northwest to Bothwell in the south. An outlying occurrence is found at Snug Tiers. The tree is particularly common on the plains and hills of the Central Plateau between about 600 and 1100 metres above sea level.The species commonly occurs on dolerite soils, frequently in poorly drained sites, especially around the margins of frost hollows. Soils are usually rocky but fertile and frequently subject to snow lie during winter months. The species is one of the most frost tolerant of any of the eucalypts.

2. Historical

Some of the ethnological references to the sap being collected are given by Cosgrove (1984). A vivid description of the importance of the sap to Aborigines is given by G.A. Robinson (in Plomley 1966:534);

> ".... numerous cider trees which skirted this extensive plain .... Most of the trees had been tapped by the natives .... In some of those holes I observed upwards of a quart of this juice and which my people greedily partook of. It is exceedingly sweet and well flavoured."

And again (p 539):

> "The melliferous property of this tree subjects it not only to the attack of natives who have made incisions in the tree and dug holes at the bottom for the liquid to drain into, but likewise to the cockatoo and other animals who have attacked it and tore holes in the bark. Ants are also seen in swarms feeding on the honey."

Bunce (1857, cited in Roth 1899) states that:

> "The natives obtained from the cider trees of the lakes .... [E. gunnii] .... a slightly saccharine liquor, resembling treacle. At the proper season they ground holes in the tree from which the sweet juice flowed plentifully. It was collected in a hole at the bottom near the root of the tree. These holes were kept covered over with a flat stone, apparently for the purpose of preventing birds and animals coming to drink it .... When allowed to remain any length of time, it ferments and settles into a coarse kind of wine or cider, rather intoxicating if drunk to excess."

The colonial botanist R.C. Gunn sent "two bottles of cider from the Eucalyptus" to the eminent British botanist Robert Brown in 1844. Gunn's accompanying letter states:

> "Case marked R B contains ....Two bottles of Cider being the sap of a species of Eucalyptus which grows abundantly on the table land of the western mountains. The cider in the bottles is just as it comes from the tree. It varies a good deal in consistency and sweetness. I wish you to spare a portion to my friend Sir Wm. Hooker as I did not wish to send liquid in any more than one case."

3. The sap

Cosgrove (1984) gave his observations on sap development:
"From field observations there are four different stages of sap development characterised by gradual taste and structural changes. The first is very sweet and viscous, with taste not unlike Cointreau. In the second, the liquid undergoes fermentation, its taste being slightly bitter like apple cider. After a period of time the sap congeals into a white jelly-like substance around the exit holes in the tree. The liquid eventually evaporates entirely leaving a dried white crystalline precipitate streaked down the trunk of the tree. This tastes like sweet apple."

4. Resource requirements

The amount of sap requried to sustain an industry will depend on the type of end use. If the product becomes a flavouring essence then it can have a high unit value whereas, if the end use is as a maple syrup alternative then more volume will be required.

The sap seems to flow prolifically in January and February at least. In mid January one small wound at the base of one tree produced 30mls/hour. Trees will vary in production rate and length of productive season. It is not yet known for example whether the production of the cider is environmentally controlled (i.e, only produced in slow growth conditions in the cold uplands, or genetically controlled and therefore subject to selection for high yield or other characteristics). No studies have been undertaken to determine whether young trees (either fast of slow-grown) are capable of producing the same quantity of sap as old trees. Research into optimum conditions for maximising sap yield would be needed in the long term, ie, what is the productive life of sap yielding tree? how is it best to wound the tree for sap yield?; what are the optimum conditions for plantation trees?; what is the earliest age at which a tree can be tapped without injuring its longer term productive potential?

Given the indicative yield of 30mls/hour and assuming one tree produced at this rate for 3 hours each day over 1 season (90 days), then each tree would produce 8.1 litres. In a plantation of 2,000 trees, 16,200 litres might be produced in one year. Bear in mind that the retail price of a 250ml bottle of maple syrup in Australia is more than $5.00, the gross retail value therefore of 16,200 litres of *maple syrup* is $324,000. Some technical issues need resolution. The main one is to develop a continuous collection apparatus into which sap can flow while excluding insects and animals.

The development of an industry should assist in conservation of remaining stands of the tree because the largest possible gene pool is required to enable selection for all characteristics desirable in sap yielding plantation trees. A geographical study is required in the first instance to map the detailed distribution of the species.

ATHEROSPERMA MOSCHATUM

1. Description and distribution

This tree is a common dominant of rainforest in western Tasmania and is scattered throughout the rest of the State as well as occurring in eastern Victoria and eastern New South Wales. The tree can attain a height of 25m and 0.75cm in diameter. The species occurs on a wide range of soils up to about 800m altitude.

2. Historical

Cribb and Cribb (1974) report that an infusion of the bark was used as a tonic by early settlers who also used to make a tea substitute out of dried or fresh bark.

3. The leaves

The leaves are opposite and petiolate, 0.2-0.5cm long, shining, toothed, dark green above and white below. There is a strong aroma like nutmeg when the leaves are crushed. This is due to an essential oil which is of potential value as a food flavouring essence.

4. Resource requirements

The resource is plentiful and wild populations could supply any presently forseeable requirements. Harvest of course is not seasonally dependant. Both mixed forests and rainforests provide an ample resource. There is sufficient such forest on private land, Crown land and in State forest. In the longer term, orchards might provide the crop. The species might lend itself to mechanical harvesting.

TASMANNIA LANCEOLATA

1. Description and distribution

A tree or shrub common in alpine shruberies and in subalpine forests and woodlands. The shrub is a primary coloniser on old fields in many subalpine areas such as Waratah, Parrawe and Weldborough. The species is in the Winteraceae family which is in the same order (Magnoliales) as the tropical trees which yield the spice nutmeg (*Myristica fragrans*: Myristicaceae).

The flowers are unisexual and generally dioecious. The fruit which forms is a small berry. Most parts of the plant are hot to the taste.

2. Historical

There is a folk lore that early settlers used the ground berries as a substitute for pepper.

3. The berries

These are the part most appropriate to harvest. They occur in profusion on some trees and ripen in late February. The berries are soft and gradually harden and shrivel. They remain on the shrub in terminal umbels of 3-8 berries, but gradually drop to the ground.

4. Resource requirements

The potent taste of these berries mean that the plant could only be used in small quantities as a condiment in ground form. The berries would be harvested around March or April and then dried and ground. A 2m high tree which was 25 years old was calculated to bear 788 fruits. If the average weight of fruits is 0.5g, then an old field with say 80 trees of similar size, would produce 31.5kg.

There are many orchard -like stands in parts of Tasmania which would ideally provide all requirements. These areas occupy high altitude grasslands (mostly on private land) which are very slowly succeeding to rainforest. There is some competition for such land by forest companies wishing to convert these areas into plantations of *Eucalyptus nitens* and *Pinus radiata*. Nevertheless, there is no problem with supply as native pepper is widespread in western and north eastern Tasmania. Wild populations would therefore easily support an industry but requirements should be kept under review. The species would be ideally suited to orchard harvesting.

SUMMARY

Three species are described which would yield a sugary syrup, a culinary essence, and a spice. All are tree species which are abundant in some of Tasmania's forests. The species yielding the sugary syrup grows naturally only in Tasmania but the other two species have a scattered distribution in eastern Victoria and eastern New South Wales. All species have an historical record of use as yielding human food.

Provided markets can be found, harvest of the culinary essence and the spice could commence imediately. It is considered that wild populations can support a reasonably large harvest but the situation should be kept monitored. The harvest of the pepper could be done on private land while that of the essence could be carried out largely on State forest and unallocated Crown land. Licences for harvesting forest products on the public land would have to be secured, and royalties paid. It is desirable that plantations of *Eucalyptus gunnii* be investigated as a means of producing the syrup. The tree could easily be grown in plantations. The syrup may provide a distinctive alternative to maple syrup, the production of which is declining drastically in the northern hemisphere due to the death of trees from the effects of acid rain.

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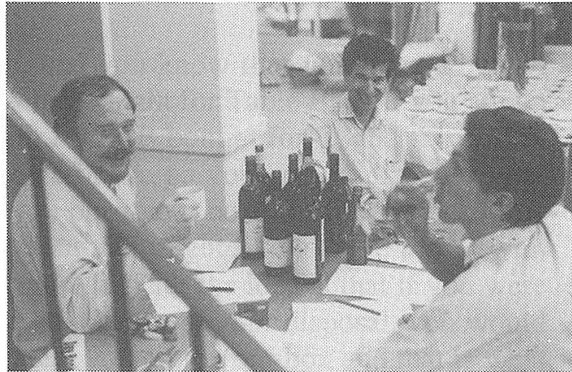

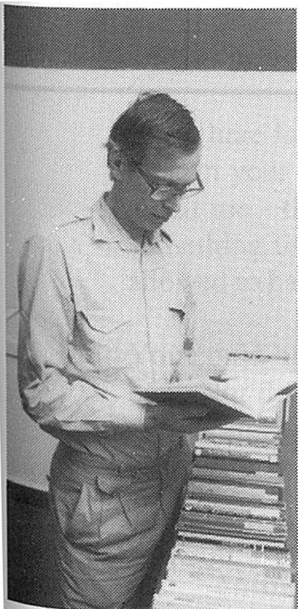

IMPROMPTU COOKING: DINNER AT EIGHT

Catherine Kerry

I want to tell you a little bit about the roster system. This year, instead of having someone looking after us behind the scenes, we are all going to participate in the 'housekeeping'.

First of all, anybody who has brought biscuits or fruit, things like that, you can hand them over to Julie Tolley. She will make the decision on what we will have for morning tea. Apparently there are some fantastic grapes (courtesy John Possingham) and I am really looking forward to those. Hand all your things over to Julie; Julie, if we run out of jam, let me know, and we will go and get some from the supermarket.

Now, Barbara's lunch: there are people rostered to help with Barbara's lunch, at about 11.15 a.m. The lunch is a medieval lunch so we need no cloth; Barbara will tell you what is necessary. For the rest of the proceedings we will have this roster pinned up.

Now, this dinner tonight - it is really quite simple and I think it is going to be fun. We have five tables and we have five groups A, B, C, D and E. On Saturday five groups went out shopping, so we have boxes of provisions that you can inspect, labelled A, B, C, D and E. There is also a general store and if there is something you need that is not in the general store I am sure sister Elizabeth will let you have something from their pantry. Just before lunch we will let you know what table you are sitting at, whether you are at a table A, B, C, D or E.

So you will know which table you are with, and you know that you have a box of goodies. Now listen carefully to this. Table A has bought for Table B, so if you are on Table B you go and look at Box A. A bought for B, B bought for C, and so on. Say you are table B, you have been bought for by table A, so you go and discover your storehouse. On your programme it says that you open your boxes at five o'clock. You can look at your boxes before then, because then you might like to have a chat with each other about what you could do. It is all quite logical; the idea is that if you were trapped in a seminary somewhere you would have herbs at your disposal, you would have sheep in the field or quail or whatever. Here you go to your box and that is what you have. You think between yourselves about what you are going to cook. Someone in the group has already shopped so two or three others can decide to cook, the others will set the table.

Now, here is the third thing. Having looked in your larder (you have a short time to look in your larder and quickly look at the general store; the general store says a lot about me - there is no rice but there is chocolate), if you think that you would like something that your shoppers haven't bought for you, and if it is under $5, you are allowed to have it and I will go and get it for you.

You could barter from other people's boxes, but what you can't do is say 'here is my box'. Nor do I want anyone to say 'I can whip up a lovely dinner as long as I get four rabbits and a tin of truffles' - that is not on. If you think, this is all very well but if only we had some rice or something quite minor, let me know at the end of lunch and I will

get it for you. Then you are going to cook a meal, but you will be cooking for someone else. Table B cooks for Table C.

That's where the idea of generosity and caring for others comes in. We don't have time to be competitive, and we don't want to be, but we do have time to do something nice and think about feeding that other table well. I would like from shoppers a list of what they bought and how much they spent because it is very interesting, some people had a lot of change; and I would like the eaters the meal to give a sympathetic and generous account of what they ate. I would also like those setting the table - you are setting the table for the group you are cooking for - to remember that is also part of caring.The other thing is that we must try to stick to the timing. First course is at 8.00 p.m., main course is at 9.00 p.m., pudding is at 10.00 p.m. As for the dishes - the washing up is being done for us, but you do have to do setting of table and clearing away.

(Editor's note: The shoppers forgot to provide lists, the cooks forgot to provide menus, and the eaters forgot to provide reviews. But we do know who was where -)

TABLE A

Shoppers	Cooks	Servers
Rick Burford	Adrian Read	Michael Symons
Sue Parham	Gwenda Robb	Tom Jaine
Lois Daish	Marieke Brugman	Jane Adams
Ann Creber		Elaine Chambers
Diana Marsland		

TABLE B

Shoppers	Cooks	Servers
Sheridan Rogers	Michael Dowe	Barbara Santich
Stephanie Alexander	Maria Kelly	Di Hetzel
	Greg Hodge	Sallie Ball
		Maggie Beer
		Anthony Corones
		Duncan Miller
		Marion Halligan

TABLE C

Shoppers	Cooks	Servers
Kim Dixon	Sara Adey	Gayl Jenkins
Julie Tolley	Gay Bilson	Jennifer Hillier
Kathy Booth	Ross Kelly	Diane Coffey
		David Dale
		Michael Treloar
		Howard Twelftree

TABLE D

Shoppers	Cooks	Servers
Nola Kenny	Phillip Searle	Margaret Brown
John Possingham	Lois Butt	Don Dunstan
	Sarah Stegley	Max Lake
		Graham Pont
		Jen Hanna

TABLE E

Shoppers:	Cooks:	Servers:
Mary Brander	Cath Kerry	Helen Hughes
Sue Jenkins	Scott Minervini	Dur-é Dara
		Ian Pollard
		Liz Packer
		Alan Saunders
		Jill Stone
		Robert McBryde

Too many chefs

THE ADELAIDE GASTRONOMIC Symposium is a packed programme and one event, billed as "From Market to Monastery", sounds like it could be an *It's a Knockout* event for foodies.

On Saturday morning, we meet at Lucia's in the Central Markets — a dozen or so of us divide into five groups to shop for the meal on Monday night. Kathy Booth, in charge of this part of the symposium, gives each group $84 to spend on an entrée, main course and dessert for 12 people. The shopping will be put into boxes, marked A to E, and placed in the cool room of the seminary where we're staying. On Monday night, the people on table A will cook for those on table B, who will serve those on table C. The cooks are not allowed to look in their boxes until 5pm Monday.

I'm shopping with Stephanie Alexander, of Stephanie's (Melbourne). She has just been announced winner of yet another culinary award — the Hyatt Gastronomic Grand Prix, for her "Feast of Pheasants" banquet.

As the meal is three days hence, it's been agreed there'll be no seafood. We head for the butcher's, where we spot some lamb fillets and straps. But then we spot one of the other groups — they've just purchased the straps. Stephanie suggests shanks — they're versatile, delicious and cheap. We buy 24, with the bone trimmed off the end.

We wander off to the fruit and vegetable section. We have agreed that, if we were cooking, we'd do the shanks in a tomato sauce, with orange rind, cumin seeds, eggplant, zucchini and red peppers, then serve them with couscous. Because the meal is a heavy one, the entrée and dessert will need to be light and fresh. We purchase green beans, avocados, baby cos lettuces and Lebanese cucumbers for a green salad to begin with; then tiny red strawberries and balsamic vinegar for dessert, with mascarpone on the side.

By this stage, our shopping is very heavy and we return to Lucia's, with only 85 cents change.

At 5pm on Monday, I'm standing outside the huge kitchen of the St Francis Xavier Seminary Retreat, listening to a raucous uproar — the appointed cooks have opened their boxes. Phillip Searle is laughing: "It sounds like a lunatic asylum in there."

Gay Bilson is horrified. This is not what she expected. "I didn't come here for this. For me, it's just more work. And there's an element of competitiveness running through it which I don't like." Admittedly, her box of food is rather a puzzle — rabbit, prunes, Brussels sprouts, corn, pineapple, white chocolate truffles. David Dale, then editor of *The Bulletin* and a member of her cooking group, suggests melting the white chocolate truffles for a dip for the Brussels sprouts.

Elsewhere in the kitchen, Max Lake is turfed out by Sarah Stegley (Howqua Dale, Victoria) over some disagreement or other.

Other groups are busy chopping, peeling, frying, poaching, measuring, roasting. It's a huge kitchen and the activity and hubbub is infectious. I'm keen to see what's been done with the shopping that Stephanie and I did. They're roasting the shanks, and making an antipasto platter of the vegetables. It's not quite what we had in mind, but it looks good.

In the dining-room, tables are being set. There are some lovely ideas: Bark and olive branches with mottled baby squashes, statues of Mary and Jesus surrounded by pebbles and bread. . . In the centre of the room stands a statue of St Francis with a red gladioli in his hand, surrounded by bunches of luscious grapes.

At 8pm, the bells are rung for dinner and everyone assembles. There are gasps of delight at most tables, surprise at one or two. The highlight of the evening is a dessert of saffron pears, which glisten like jewels on a platter, from Marieke Brugman and Gwenda Robb.

Back in the kitchen, the nuns are a-twitter over the mess (and the sacreligious attitude to their statutes, no doubt!). After the meal, everyone rallies to help with cleaning up, though not without a few grumbles.

(Extracted from the report by Sheridan Rogers published in *Mode*, May/June 1990)

THE PLEASURES OF THE TABLE: DIVINE INSPIRATION?

Barbara Santich

The theme of this symposium is the pleasures of the table in general, and Brillat-Savarin's Meditation 14 in particular.(1) It is this chapter of *Physiologie du Goût* which is the subject of my presentation, in which I will examine and comment on some of Brillat-Savarin's ideas, and speculate on his sources of inspiration.

Brillat-Savarin was not only an eclectic who picked up and mentally pigeon-holed ideas from far and wide - perhaps in a similar way to Gustave Flaubert who, some fifty years later, gently ridiculed books entitled '*La Physiologie de* ...'. In his own way, he was also a revolutionary. He may have sympathised with some of the ideas of the Revolution, but not with its actions; and for this he was obliged to leave France and seek refuge in America. I believe he was, however, interested in a fairer, more just society, as were many intellectuals in post-Revolutionary France, and in Meditation 30 (Bouquet) he offers his description of a society in which gastronomy would be the guiding principle.

Meditation 14 (The Pleasures of the Table) is very close to Bouquet. The same underlying theme is evident - the role of the shared meal, the common table, as agent of harmony, both domestic and national - and in both, Gasterea appears as inspiration. Brillat-Savarin was careful to stress that the pleasures of the table are more than the simple enjoyment of food and drink, which is essentially the satisfaction of a need. (Had he lived longer, he might have learnt from Dr Max Lake that some foods, and some drinks, do much more than satisfy appetite or thirst; they actively produce 'pleasure', but of a different genre to Brillat-Savarin's 'meditated response'; the very act of eating, and the foods eaten, can stimulate the release of endorphins and enkephalins, such as beta endorphins, which Max Lake calls the 'happy hormones'.(2)) In the words of Brillat-Savarin, the pleasures of the table are the meditated responses to the total environment and circumstances surrounding the meal, including the setting, its ornamentation and the guests.

Further, he remarked, the pleasures of the table are unique to man (though I'm sure my dog would experience a very similar pleasure were he allowed to eat his lamb chop at the table with the rest of us), in that they presuppose the thought and care which has gone into the preparation of the meal, the choice of the setting and the selection of the guests. Thus Brillat-Savarin necessarily associates cooking (and cuisine) with the pleasures of the table, since both are particular to human societies. Indeed, cooking is the prime feature which differentiates man from animals; refuting Aristotle's argument that man is the rational animal, Brillat-Savarin proposes that man is the cooking animal. Whether he was the first to point out the cultural relevance of cooking I do not know, but the idea that cooking distinguishes man from earlier hominids on the evolutionary scale is now widely accepted. According to Levi-Strauss' culinary triangle, cooking represents the cultural transformation of raw food and distinguishes nature from culture. Indeed, in many mythologies, the domestication of fire, and specifically, the cooking fire, is seen as the act which separates man from other animals. Prometheus, in Greek mythology, was an inventor who created the first man from a lump of clay mixed with water; he then

stole a spark from the sun, hid it in a stalk of fennel, and returned to earth to give this source of divine fire to the race of men.

Fire, cooking, socialisation, civilisation - and, even before the invention of tables, commensality, sharing the table. From the word for fire came words for hearth and household (in French, 'foyer'), the place where the group or the family came together to eat. Cooking effectively put an end to the system of self-sufficiency in which each individual collected his own food and ate only what he himself collected; when man began to cook food, he also began to share food, to share tasks, and eating became a social event. Rituals were instituted, such as eating at fixed times at fixed places, and in turn this led to communication. Brillat-Savarin was well aware of this development; the sharing of meals, he wrote, gave rise to hospitality, and meals themselves provided the environment in which language could be created or perfected, not only because every meal represented a new opportunity for people to come together, but also because the leisure which accompanies and follows the meal is naturally conducive to confidences and volubility.

So the pleasures of the table naturally include the material offerings, the food and drink, but also the nourishment for the soul provided by the company, conversation and communication. As Charles Fourier wrote in the early nineteenth century:

> "La bonne chère n'est que moitié du plaisir de la table; elle a besoin d'être aiguisée par un choix judicieux des convives."(3)

'Convives': we usually translate the word as 'guest', but in the sense that 'guests' might be distinguished from 'hosts', this is not totally accurate. A 'convive' is someone who enjoys festive society, eating and drinking and conversing and even, perhaps, flirting (Brillat-Savarin would have approved of that!). There is a difference between conviviality and commensality - a concept dear to anthropologists: who eats with whom is as important as who sleeps with whom. Commensality refers merely to eating at the same table; it says nothing of enjoyment, of the pleasures of the table. Conviviality, on the other hand, is a social virtue, since it relates to the enjoyment of festive society, to a fondness for pleasurable meals shared with pleasurable company.

Roland Barthes, among others, has pointed out how talking and eating share the same organs, and how the shared table offers pleasure to both mind and body. Cooking and communication are both attributes of civilisation, and to deny them is to deny humanity. Such was the behaviour of Diogenes the cynic, who preferred to eat raw meat, like the wild animals, and who shunned the company of other men. His contemporaries, however, saw no virtue in his actions - unlike later societies who canonised asceticism. Monastic orders whose members turned their backs on culture and humanity, also deprived themselves of the pleasures of the table. Under the rules of Saint Benedict - the two Saint Benedicts, one of the sixth, and one of the ninth century - which most monasteries subsequently adopted, talking during meals was expressly forbidden (the monks listened to readings instead) and their rations were intended to satisfy body needs without "arousing their sense of taste and sexuality".(4) Monastic regulations stipulated what sort of food the inmates should eat, how much, and how varied. In the ninth century, St. Benedict allowed two meals per day, made up of two cooked dishes and one raw, plus bread and wine. It is interesting to note, in passing, that while pleasure

can be proscribed, it cannot be prescribed. Even a food that might normally be delectable might become odious if one is obliged to eat it - a technique that seems to be successfully used by psychologists.

It should be clear by now that what Brillat-Savarin was talking about was not simple commensality but rather, conviviality - which has much more to commend it. At the Third Symposium of Australian Gastronomy, Mark Wahlquist spoke of the beneficial effects on health which might ensue from 'social eating' - as opposed to solitary eating - with its implicit social conventions.(5) And health is not the only aspect to benefit - advertised in the weekend newspapers recently was the 'Dinner for Six' scheme, "an exciting new concept for singles 'of all ages' to meet. A group of 3 men and 3 women, matched according to age, interests, etc., and introduced by our hostess at a restaurant."(6) As gastronomers, we should be opposed to the current trend of 'grazing', of microwave-fast food for one person; for if the convivial aspect disappears from eating, food and drink become the sole sources of pleasure and this, from any angle, is unhealthy. Ironically, medical research has discovered that when the same combination of nutrients is eaten in six or more 'snack-meals' rather than as the three usual meals, then fasting blood cholesterol levels are lower; though if monitoring blood cholesterol means that much to anyone, he or she is obviously not a gastronomer!

As Max Lake said, we could have a whole symposium on solitary eating, but the present one is concerned with the pleasures of well-chosen food, wine and conversation around a table. What topics of conversation? The question has been discussed by many writers, from Plutarch and Athenaeus to modern etiquette guides - and one of the most convivial topics is food and wine itself. This lesson was brought home to me during a recent visit to France, where I often stayed in 'chambres d'hôte' and ate 'table d'hôte' with my hosts; if ever I wanted to introduce some life to the dinner table, all I had to do was introduce a food or wine topic - and everyone was only too happy to talk. It hasn't always been that way - but in Victorian times it was hardly permitted to partake in the pleasures of the table, either.

Plutarch devotes a good proportion of his 'Moralia' to 'quaestionum convivalium', or Table Talk, in which he spends most of his time discussing the subjects which are, or are not, appropriate for dinner party conversations. Food certainly ranks high among his preferences - along with philosophy; he quotes Crato as saying: "It is silly and foolish, I think, to deprive ourselves of the best conversations at a time when talk abounds, to debate in our schools about what is appropriate for drinking parties, what makes a good drinking companion, and how wine ought to be used, but to remove philosophy from the parties themselves, as though it were unable to make good in practice what it teaches in theory."(7)

What and how people should eat and drink, and the ways in which they communicate, the way in which society should be structured - these are issues which fascinate utopians. Even Plato - though he favoured asceticism - offered his thoughts on food and eating and drinking. The sixteenth-century utopian Tommaso Campanella, in his *City of the Sun*, saw society organised in what he termed circles, each circle to have a public or common kitchen and larder/storeroom. He envisaged a diet commensurate with each person's work, supervised by doctors, who would differentiate between 'useful' and

'useless' (junk?) food; by alternating periods of meat, or fish, or vegetables, the population would live to 100 years or more.(8)

In Revolutionary and post-Revolutionary France, a great deal of thought and discussion was devoted to the forms of social organisation and social structure. Even the Marquis de Sade looked at ways to improve society. One of his - and Brillat-Savarin's - contemporaries was Charles Fourier, another utopian, cited previously. Charles Fourier had some very advanced ideas about society. In his opinion - and anticipating Freud - man was driven by Passions, of which the two most important were l'Amour and la Gourmandise. Of these two, he devoted more attention to la Gourmandise, a Major Primary Passion (Fourier was very fond of numbers and classifications), as being more socially acceptable. (His ideas on l'Amour were no less intriguing - one being that in his ideal of Harmony, monogamy would not exist, and there would be one woman for every three or four men.) Gourmandise, said Fourier, in his work *Le Nouveau Monde Amoureux*, is "le plaisir le plus général - la première et la dernière jouissance de l'homme, celle qui le rejouit depuis sa naissance jusqu'à sa dernière heure".(9) Does this not sound remarkably like Brillat-Savarin's dictum - "Le plaisir de la table est de tous les âges, de toutes les conditions, de tous les pays et de tous les jours; il peut s'associer à tous les autres plaisirs, et reste le dernier pour nous consoler de leur perte." (10)

A good many of Fourier's ideas on gourmandise and gastronomy and their benefits to society were set down in this same work. Although it was not published until 1966, in an edition of his collected works, it would almost certainly have been known to Brillat-Savarin, since Charles Fourier was a relation of his, by marriage - one of Fourier's sisters seems to have married a cousin of Brillat-Savarin. Further, *Le Nouveau Monde Amoureux* was written at Belley, about 1819, while Fourier was living in a house owned by his relations-in-law. Fourier and Brillat-Savarin travelled together, no doubt sharing many meals, many pleasures of the table, and it is almost inevitable that Brillat-Savarin would have absorbed at least a few of his eccentric relation's ideas. Fourier, for example, appears to have borrowed Bacon's concept of the 'useful sciences', which reappears in *Physiologie du Goût*, and his 1808 definition of 'gastrosophie' as "the alliance of wisdom and of the useful sciences, such as hygiene and agronomy, with the material of refined gourmandise" is not too far distant from Brillat-Savarin's own conception of gastronomy. Fourier's remarks on Gourmandise lead directly to Brillat-Savarin's Aphorism V: "Le Créateur, en obligeant l'homme à manger pour vivre, l'y invite par l'appétit, et l'en recompense par le plaisir." (11) Further, Fourier's 'tests' for 'sainthood' in his Harmonic society - which tests required a thorough understanding of cuisine, of digestion, and of the best combinations of these for each of the 810 temperaments which made up that society - probably served as the model for Brillat-Savarin's own 'Gastronomical Tests' (Meditation 13).

I have absolutely no doubt that Brillat-Savarin was profoundly influenced by Fourier's novel ideas, which he absorbed, refined, and later paraphrased (plagiarised?) in the work for which he has been remembered. Fourier must therefore be acknowledged as one of the principal sources of inspiration for *Physiologie du Goût*, and for Meditation 14 in particular.

But Charles Fourier was not the sole inspiration for this chapter. I imagine Brillat-Savarin looking heavenward and seeing there, through a space between the clouds

surrounding Mount Olympus, the twelve Gods, feasting on nectar and ambrosia, attended and entertained by the Muses.

Now, even before man obtained fire and set in train the sequence of events which culminated in commensality and conviviality, the Gods on Olympus had established their own convivial ceremony, the banquet of the Gods, where they would dine together while being entertained by the nine muses. So powerful was the symbolism of the communal meal that the Greeks adopted it as a means of communicating with their Gods. Their animal sacrifices to the Gods were a form of conviviality, as all ate from the same altar or table; the appetising smells from the roasting ox ascended to heaven to feed the Gods - the Gods, being immortal, could not eat the same food as mortals - while on earth, men and women feasted on the roast meat.

Classical mythology was naturally a part of Brillat-Savarin's education, and runs through his work as a leitmotiv. At the start of Meditation 14, he notes that in pagan times the Gods were patrons of all the pleasures, and it is not surprising that subsequently he metaphorically translates the banquet of the Gods for his own purposes. It is Gasterea, his newly-ordained tenth muse, who inspires him to adopt the voice of an oracle and set forth his precepts concerning the ideal, the most pleasurable dinner - that is, the dinner which will elevate the pleasures of the table to their summit. His first rule, naturally, concerns the number of 'convives'; as at the banquet of the Gods, his table is to be surrounded by no more than twelve persons. Again, like the banquet of the Gods, his nineteenth-century table has its nine muses: Love, Friendship, Business, Speculation, Influence, Solicitation, Patronage, Ambition, Intrigue; surrounding the table, these muses promote conviviality.

This, then - the banquet of the Gods - was the divine inspiration for Meditation 14, and indirectly for Meditation 30 (Bouquet), in which Brillat-Savarin installs gastronomy as the new religion. The kindling of his ideas may well have been furnished by closer sources, but mythology provided the spark.

NOTES

1. Jean-Anthelme Brillat-Savarin, *Physiologie du Goût* (1st ed.1825), A.Sautelet, Paris, 1865.
2. Max Lake, *Scents and Sensuality: The Essence of Excitement*, John Murray, London, 1989, p 179-180.
3. Charles Fourier, *Oeuvres Complètes*, Editions Anthropos, Paris, 1966. Volume I: Théorie des Quatre Mouvements et des Destinées Générales (1st ed. 1808), p. 160.
4. Maria Dembinska, "Fasting and working monks: regulations of the fifth to eleventh centuries", in *Food in Change: Eating Habits from the Middle Ages to the Present Day*, ed. Alexander Fenton & Eszter Kisban, John Donald Publishers in association with the National Museums of Scotland, Edinburgh, 1986, p. 154.
5. Mark Wahlquist, "Social Activity and Food", in *A Multiculinary Society: Proceedings of the Third Symposium of Australian Gastronomy*, ed. Barbara Santich and Michael Symons, Adelaide, 1988, p. 132.
6. Sydney Morning Herald, January 20, 1990
7. Plutarch, *Moralia*, trs. Paul A.Clement & Herbert B. Hoffleit, Loeb Classical Library, Heinemann, London, 1969, Table Talk I, i, 613.

8. Tommaso Campanella, *La Cité du Soleil* (1st ed. 1602), Librairie Droz, Geneva, 1972.
9. Charles Fourier, *Oeuvres Complètes*, op.cit., vol. VII: Le Nouveau Monde Amoureux, p. 126.
10. J-A Brillat-Savarin, *Physiologie du Goût*, op. cit., Meditation XIV.
11. J-A Brillat-Savarin, *Physiologie du Goût*, op. cit., Aphorismes.

FOODWAYS AND SEX DIFFERENCES: SOME SPECULATIONS IN ARCHEOGASTRONOMY

Graham Pont

The session devoted to 'The Pleasures of the Table' took its title and theme from Brillat-Savarin's Meditation XIV; it was the immortal *Physiology of Taste* that also inspired the following meditations - tentative rather than transcendental - on the pleasures of the *prehistoric table*. In the spirit of the Professor's own imaginative essays in speculative gastronomy, I have tried to explain two seemingly unrelated differences between men and women, in terms of prehistoric eating habits. Since my introductory remarks on these differences caused one member of the audience to walk out in protest, I should say that my belief in the existence of observable differences between men and women remains unshaken. If and when these differences appear to be gastronomic, in nature, origin or effect, they constitute a proper subject for discussion at a Symposium like ours, which is dedicated to the study of human foodways. I thank the organisers of the Fifth Symposium for the opportunity to air some gastronomic hypotheses which, like the Professor's own, are the product of long reflection and presented in good faith.

The first of these human differences is the apparent fact that men are more likely to reserve their eating for a substantial meal - often, but not necessarily a dinner at the end of the working day - whereas women tend to refresh themselves with smaller quantities of food taken more frequently. Generally speaking, it is men who feast and women who snack.1 History shows that feasts, banquets, drinking bouts, etc. have been predominantly male institutions, from which women were often excluded altogether. The modern dinner party, with its careful balance of the sexes and more or less equal sharing of the food and drink, is a polite innovation which goes back no more than a few hundred years. But even in the most enlightened and egalitarian societies, it has usually been considered proper for women to eat and drink less on these occasions - or at least appear to be doing so. There may be sound biological reasons for this custom: some medical researchers are now arguing that men have a different alcohol metabolism from women, whose blood alcohol levels are comparably raised by half as many drinks.

The second sex-difference is one well known to psychologists: experiments have repeatedly shown that men and women differ in their sense of space and that, generally speaking, men are more competent in spatial tasks.(1) *A fortiori*, this difference of spatial perception extends to the sense of direction. As a non-driver who has enjoyed the pleasure of been driven about for many years by competent and intelligent women, I have observed that their sense of direction often varies markedly with the area being traversed. Close to their own home, town or suburb - their normal living or working environment - women are more confident as drivers; but, as soon as they leave their familiar territory, they frequently become less confident, more apprehensive and sometimes hopelessly lost. This sudden change of spatial competence or loss of orientation does not appear to be dependent on intelligence, or even directly on experience of the area. The critical factor seems to be *territoriality*: women's spatial sense is somehow bound up with proximity to their living/working area - the camp, the cave, the castle, the cottage or the home.

These striking sex-differences, of eating habits and spatial skills, might both be explained by a common cause in prehistory, as revealed by the speculations of archeogastronomy. For untold millennia, human beings lived in a hunter-gatherer economy like that which can still be observed in a few tribal societies not yet dependent on agriculture. Traditionally, it was the men who did the hunting and the women and children who did the gathering. The hunting, a more precarious and less reliable source of food, often involved the men in distant and strenuous journeys away from the camp, unpredictable meal-times, and the duty of bringing home at least some of the catch at the end of the hunt. The game was free-range and highly nutritious but sometimes not really worth all the spectacular effort. Catching it often led the men into remote or unfamiliar territory from which they had to find, perhaps fight, their way home. For a hundred, perhaps two hundred thousand years - as long as human beings have been around - the male life-style depended critically on having a good sense of direction, as well as related skills in estimating the size, shape, numbers and whereabouts of the game and competing predators. In the struggle for survival, spatially and numerically incompetent males would be obvious losers. So archeogastronomy might also explain why most mathematicians are males.(2)

Meanwhile, back at the camp, the women looked after the children, devoting much of their free time and energy to collecting edibles nearby - not just fruits, nuts, roots and grains for bread, but also grubs, insects, seafood and sometimes smaller game too. Unlike the men, the women were able to gather these staple foods without needing exceptional spatial skills or long-range direction-finding. They habitually kept in close touch with the camp, with the children and with each other - a habit or instinct which might help to explain the distinctive character of female sociability as well as the rarity of female hermits and mystics communing alone with nature. The solitary hours of the hunter and the fisherman were always conducive to thought and contemplation; fasting was an unavoidable part of the business and the rarer catches a justifiable reason for the long-awaited feast or celebration. As Bo Lawergren has insightfully suggested, the first speculative musician was probably a bored hunter, leaning on his bow, hungrily chewing the end and accidentally plucking the string.

For women, however, the quiet and regular gathering of the less prestigious but more accessible foods encouraged other virtues and values - easy social contact, intermittent gossip, the gentle art of gardening (traditionally a female invention) and the impromptu sharing of titbits with each other and with the children (who also prefer to snack). Here, surely, we also find an ancient prototype of the full-time housewife and mother, welcoming home her tired husband for whom the dinner at the end (or, formerly, in the middle) of the working day is much more a necessary restorative than just a sharing of social and domestic pleasures. In more old-fashioned, unequal societies, such as parts of Italy and the Near East, the women still stand and serve the food while the men sit and eat.

The gathering and preparation of food by the women usually occurs in a closed or more closely defined territory. The more intimate scale of the feminine landscape might ultimately explain why the great architects are all men, whereas women (and effeminate men) dominate the arts of interior design, soft furnishing and small-scale decoration. Landscape art is an interesting grey area, more often entered by women from the enclave of the garden, and by men from the larger domains of architecture, engineering,

surveying and town-planning. Thus one might go on to distinguish between characteristically male and female styles of landscape: the landscape paintings of women are generally much more domestic or home-centred than those of their male counterparts, whose artistic locus and focus lie further afield. The wider, wilder landscape has always been the male preserve; hence, in music, painting and the constructive arts, the Sublime seems to be almost an exclusively male genre.(3)

Gender-specialisation and instinctual foodways might even explain one of the most fundamental sex differences of all: the mobile, wide-ranging hunters could hardly avoid being exploratory, invasive, inquisitive, spontaneous, aggressive and bellicose in competing with other tribes and animals for food; but the peaceable, regular (but frequently immobilised) women at home could bring in their sure and steady contributions to the larder without deadly strife. They had their own internal squabbles, of course; but they were mostly conducted within the boundaries defined and defended by the men. Nonetheless, prehistory probably knew many other Helens who caused unrecorded Trojan wars.

In spatial as well as gastronomic terms, the orientation of the male is *extra-territorial*: he goes *out* to hunt, to fight, to kill - or to review restaurants. The orientation of the more peaceful female is predominantly *intra-territorial*: she stays *within* and gathers *around* the camp - caring, nurturing, holding, storing, waiting. In religions, recipes or restaurants, it is more often men who venture, discover - and forget - and women who protect, conserve and remember.(4) Very few females have achieved fame as inventors or explorers: more often they are identified with the invented and explored. For example, the temple of Gasterea, in The Physiology of Taste, is a Solomon's House devoted to the investigation and transformation of Mother Nature.

Is it possible, then, that human spatial abilities and gastronomic inclinations could both have been biologically determined and sexually differentiated by the archaic organisation of the hunter-gather economy? If so, we can roughly date the emergence of that specialisation from the time when our remote, tree-dwelling ancestors abandoned their common arboreal space and vegetarian life-style to become upright, omnivorous predators in the open countryside. If it is true that `the fundamental morphological organization is female' and that `the male gender in primates is a specialization of the basic female paradigm'.(5), there remains the interesting question of whether the hunter's spatial skill was something acquired by men *and/or* lost by women, in the course of evolution. Nevertheless, considering that the institution of agriculture and the urban civilisation it made possible occupy only a few minutes in the vast year of human evolution, it is not at all unlikely that the lifestyle and traditional foodways of our pre-urban ancestors have left their deep imprint on the predilections and propensities of modern human beings.(6)

Brillat-Savarin rightly declared: `Tell me what you eat and I will tell you what you are'. But are we, then, sexist - and spatialist - by nature as well as nurture?

Shortly after the Symposium, my colleague and co-panelist Dr Barbara Santich sent me this quotation:

"It is unlikely that there has been major biological change in man since the Neolithic revolution... The selection pressures associated with hunter-gathering have been predominant in determining man's genetic constitution."

John Powles, 'On the Limitations of Modern Medicine', *Science, Medicine and Man*, vol 1, 1973/4, p.4.

Acknowledgements

I wish to thank my old friends Dr Lester Hiatt and Professor Bo Lawergren, who indirectly contributed their thoughts to this argument, and Professors Barbara Gillam and Wayne Hall, who provided essential advice and guidance to the psychological literature. Tim Harding advised me on possible gender differences in art and Barbara Santich also made helpful comments, pointing out that my theory explains the female preference for vegetables as contrasted with the male preference for meat. Having heard my paper, the erudite Dr Max Lake immediately drew our attention to *BrainSex*, a book which treats human gender differences in spatial and other skills with admirably scientific candour, acumen and imagination.

Notes

1. P. Flor-Henry, `Gender, Hemispheric Specialization and Psychopathology', *Social Science and Medicine* Vol. 128 (1978), pp.155-162.
Lauren Julius Harris, `Sex differences in spatial ability: possible environmental, genetic, and neurological factors', in Marcel Kinsbourne (ed.), *Asymmetrical Function of the Brain* (Cambridge, 1978), Chapter 13.
Helmut Nyborg, `Spatial Ability in Men and Women: Review and New Theory', *Advances in Behaviour Research and Therapy* Vol. 5 (1983), pp.89-140.
Anne Moir & David Jessel, BrainSex (London, 1989): `The area where the biggest differences have been found lies in what scientists call "spatial ability"... It is confirmed by literally hundreds of different scientific studies' (Mandarin edition, 1991, p.15).

2. Scientists have `discovered a startling sex ratio of mathematical brilliance: for every exceptional girl there were more than thirteen exceptional boys'. *BrainSex* (Mandarin, 1991), p.16.

3. In *Women Painters of the World*, edited by Walter Shaw Sparrow (London, 1905; New York, 1976), there are many landscapes illustrated but only two or three bordering on the Sublime. " It is at first sight a curious thing that more women painters have not ... been attracted by pure landscape".(Ibid, p. 69) In Germaine Greer, *The Obstacle Race* (London, 1979), the Sublime is not indexed and no sublime landscapes appear among the 358 works illustrated. The only borderline cases, perhaps, are two or three battle scenes.

4. It is easy to see why the well-endowed Gasterea should be female; but the femininity of her sister Muses and Mnemosyne, the Mother of all memory, has similarly deep roots in the evolutionary specialisation of the sexes. Cf. *BrainSex*, p. 19.

5. P. Flor-Henry, *op. cit.*, p.155

6. 'Hearing tests reveal an intriguing qualification to this general rule of feminine superiority [in auditory skills]. Boys are actually better than girls at identifying animal noises - possibly the evolutionary result of those millennia of hunting'. *BrainSex*, p.62.

DISCUSSION

Max Lake: I'd like to make three brief points. First of all, I feel quite sad that modern neurology and physiology was unknown to Brillat-Savarin. I wrote my first scientific paper nearly 50 years ago on the hypothalamus, and in that 50 years neurological knowledge has progressed enormously, including the present stuff on neuro-transmitters. One wonders where Brillat-Savarin would be if he'd had that foundation.
Two, to take some of the heat off Professor Pont, I recommend you look at a book called *Brain Sex* which gives a clear explanation of the female failings in direction, and their superiority in so many other ways. It's written by a woman, incidentally, and it's available in a Penguin paperback for about $15.
And finally, I commend to you those of you who are interested in our origins, to read the books of Jean Auel, *Mammoth Hunters*, *Clan of the Cave Bear* and *Valley of the Horses*. She has done the most extraordinary amount of research and produced some interesting fiction with it, on the origins of our cooking habits and food and smell. The reason I mentioned it is Graham talked about the ceramic pot being an intrinsic part of our development, and what I was interested to learn from her books - and I presume it's true, because the amount of research in those three books is mind-boggling, she must have had some 15,000 or 25,000 years ago, you could cook on hot stones with skins, provided you had liquid in them, you didn't need a ceramic pot. But for goodness sake get *Brain Sex* before you start any arguments.

Sarah Stegley: I'd just like to make an observation. I'm quite a noted pilot and navigator and ride around the mountains for days at a time. I also involve myself in search and rescue missions in the mountains, usually for men who are lost. I'd like to make the observation that, even with those qualifications, if you were to put me in a car with Dr. Pont for more than 10 minutes, in which time I would probably be away from what I usually regard as my territory, then I too, sir, after ten minutes in the car with you, would become disoriented.

Cath Kerry: You're not terribly feminine, are you?

Jill Stone: Could I just ask one question of Graham. You were talking about the squares and circles and you went on to something to do with church and religion. Were you saying that the square was more the form that was used more in religious services and therefore was somehow unnatural.?

GP: The circle is the oldest cultural form, based on the national dance, and it is pre-agriculture. The oldest houses are circular, the Egyptian hieroglyph for a town is a circle enclosing a cross and that more or less sums up the story. Our churches are essentially a circle - the choir is the circle and there is a cross laid across it. If you are going to divide the pre- history of table manners into two eras there would be the

circular era, immensely long, which the Aboriginals still preserve, followed by the square era and somewhere in between the oval era.

Adrian Read: Just one very brief comment: it really struck me when I read that meditation that for the pleasures of the table to occur, the food need only be passable. What you said was really wonderful, in the context of gastronomy which you might think demands excellence, excellence, excellence all the time, that the conviviality that you talked about, Graham, is really more important than the quality of the food.

Tom Jaine: John was saying that Brillat-Savarin forgot the wines - I often forget the wine, I get rather drunk on food actually.... Obviously food doesn't have an intoxicating effect chemically, but it produces exactly the same biological response in me as a bottle of whiskey. I wonder if everyone else is like that.

Jill Stone: I know of plenty of societies where wine is not part of the culture with meals, yet where they experience exactly the same pleasures at table.

Tom Jaine:Yes, I think alcohol is a very unimportant aspect of conviviality.

BS: I think the reason that Brillat-Savarin doesn't mention wine very much is that it was just a natural part of the table. He had vineyards and grew his own grapes and made his own wine, or had somebody make it for him. It was always there, as a part of food.

Tom Jaine: At what stage did the wine drinkers became more important than the food producers in the subject of gastronomy? I mean classical British gastronomy is almost a bibulous activity; it is not an eating activity.This I find quite regrettable. In Australia the balance is rather more sensible.

John Possingham: It has to do with when the British stopped growing grapes. They were growing grapes about three centuries ago.

Michael Dowe: ... and started importing decent wines.

GP: I think Tom's observation is an important one. On the back of the proceedings of the Fourth Symposium we added an acknowledgement to Dr. Phillip Muskett, our Australian Brillat-Savarin. He was a wineman, writing during the wowser-temperance era, and his whole his approach to dietetics, to medicine, to health, to hygiene is wine-based. To that extent I think Muskett is superior to Brillat-Savarin. He really saw wine, good wine, as the basis of a sound Mediterranean style of living which he recommended for Australia. He doesn't denigrate food, but I think that the wine comes first. Hence the wine and food societies.

Comment: ...which are always male ...

GP: That's a very interesting question, when were women admitted to the feast. When I went to Italy the first time, the women stood behind the men, while the men sat, and I was very embarrassed. They refused to sit down. The equal feast was a highly civilized artifact. But the equal feast that we want, where men and women eat and drink the same

amount and are equal numbers at the table, I think this is implicit in Alan Saunders' article. There is certainly no sign of that before the Renaissance.

Michael Symons: The Epicureans were famous for having women at their banquets.

GP: Which is a bit unusual, because they were semi-egalitarian.

Marion Halligan: The interesting thing is that even when women were admitted to the feasts as equals - and it comes out in popular fiction like *Gone With the Wind.* Scarlett O'Hara would eat a lot before she went out - she had to behave in a feminine fashion and eat very delicately and not be seen to have any appetite. Women have to be ethereal creatures, even if this is constructed by artificial means, like stuffing them before they go out.

BS: Can I just pose a question - why is it that women are the ones who are more interested in food, whether it is shopping for food, cooking food, having food-related disorders. Women always seem to have the food side and I'd like to know whether it is culturally conditioned, socially conditioned or whether there is some sort of biological determinism at work, that women have evolved in a different way or have different mechanisms that mean that they have this greater interest in food.

Gay Bilson: Women are breast-feeders and that make us great restaurateurs. We are the natural providers.

Max Lake: Women are nurturers, men are macho chauvinists and, it pains me to repeat it, but men are evanescent, they're only sperm donors. Biologically, if women lived in a closed society they would be able to protect themselves and be mothers as well, in the primitive sense. But in heir fundamental role, they are virtually incapacitated for most months of their pregnancy and then they have got to be protected, to nurture, that's probably the only role of men. But in the long term the race goes on ... I think it's their nature, too, because women nurture, they are providers of food at every level from the breast on. Men accept a role as food providers and nurturers, too, because they realize they are part of the human race, it takes a while.

Lois Butt: You don't think it's that men get in first and say 'I'll do the wine', which is much easier.

GP: Why is it that men remember wine labels and women don't?

Cath Kerry: I think men remember wine labels, because remembering wine labels is part of what is seen as power. Because men find their position in this world through power. A man with high cholesterol has two options, he can give up butter or he can give up his job, he can give up stress. Now you tell this to a man who gets up in the morning at 4:00 and flies to New York and does this, flies here, goes there, has a car phone. This is what gives him his place in the world. Easier to give up butter. So learning a wine label is another part of power. Now perhaps women haven't yet got so interested in power. We've got power dressing, we've got cute little suits, we've got the attache case. Women learning wine labels is next. It will come.

THE MEDITATIONS OF BRILLAT-SAVARIN: DISCUSSION

Sara Adey, Alan Saunders, John Possingham

Sara Adey: My introduction to Brillat-Savarin took place about five years ago, when I was enrolled at the University of NSW and studying gastronomy under Graham Pont and Anthony Corones. It's a great shame actually that the course is no longer offered, because it was a really rewarding and stimulating year.

I only had very short notice, so my comments are necessarily short and sweet. Brillat-Savarin, along with Grimod de la Reynière, is considered a founding father of gastronomic writing. His *Physiologie du Goût* has been in print ever since its publication and is considered the most famous of gastronomic essays. He set the pattern for gastronomic writing in both France and England for the rest of the century. He spent 25 years writing the book, speaking of it to nobody,and when it finally appeared a few months before his death, anonymously and at his own expense, his friends were astounded that he had written it. He had never flashed before them, in its full colour, the richness of his mind, but instead had woven it quietly and secretly. His writings emphasised the need for a discriminating palate and scorned as vulgar any merely quantitative display. The theme of moderation became clearly linked to the question of health as well as discrimination. Obesity was considered a worry and affliction among gourmets. As Max Lake said, he didn't have as much fun as Athenaeus, but I disagree, his restrained discretion, his really stylish mind, his lusty delight in hunting, his basic humility make him the most interesting of writers. His prose is so straight forward, so clear and simple on the page, without ever boring or offending the reader. Admittedly though, lots of people I have spoken to feel that a lot of what Brillat-Savarin says is self-evident or too obvious, but I think they are just reading it far too superficially. For example, Reay Tannahill, who wrote a book on food in history, didn't think there was much to Brillat-Savarin's statement, 'Tell me what you eat and I'll tell you what you are', believing that it ought be qualified. Anyway, his book is meant to last much longer than a century or so. I think it will be highly regarded and relevant for many years to come, and I think we will continue to learn much from it.

Alan Saunders: I told somebody in the Science Unit that I was going to be talking about Brillat-Savarin's meditation 14 and she said 'Is that an aftershave?' Good name for an aftershave!

As a journalist and broadcaster I naturally think it is my duty to trivialise the subject, and perhaps I can give my triviality a certain intellectual respectability by quoting two great men. A couple of years ago, shortly after I had started the Food Program, I published an article, which you won't have seen because it was in an ABC magazine, 24 hours. In it I contrasted two classic statements about food. On the one hand we have Ludwig Feuerbach, the nineteenth-century German materialist whose thought considerably influenced Karl Marx. Feuerbach said "We are what we eat". To this I contrasted Brillat-Savarin who said, as we have just heard, 'Tell me what you eat and I will tell you what you are'. And my view was, and is, that Feuerbach got it wrong and Brillat-Savarin got it right.

Yes, we are what we eat in that we are proteins, carbohydrates and so on but that doesn't seem to me a particularly interesting or revealing fact, certainly not at the level in which Feuerbach uses it. On the other hand you are not a risotto and however many Italian meals you eat ,you will not become a risotto, nor will you ever become a bouillabaisse, a wiener schnitzel, a nasi goreng or a Peking duck. And this is why I suggest that what I am talking about is trivial. It's trivial because I want to confine myself to this level, the level of the dish, the finished article, the product of human culture, rather than to move beyond it to the more metaphysical questions that we have heard canvassed at this symposium. I'm not religious, I'm Church of England and I'm not a materialist, either, Marxist or Epicurean.

But I do think that we need sometimes to start at a point a good deal later than the starting point of any of these other people. We need to ask what social circumstances make possible the pleasures of the table. And also what social circumstances sustain this possibility. And here Brillat-Savarin is somewhat more optimistic than I am. Now I agree with him as to what the pleasures of the table are. And he writes in Meditation 14 'There are neither raptures nor ecstasies nor transports of bliss in the pleasures of the table but they make up in duration what they loose in intensity and are distinguished above all by the merit of inclining us towards all the other pleasures of life or at least for consoling us for the loss of them'. Now I entirely commend Brillat-Savarin's emphasis on the pleasures of the table as moderate pleasures. They are not ecstatic. He goes on, of course, to describe a meal in which he has been involved. A private, informal, spontaneous occasion. But how does such privacy, such informality, such spontaneity become possible?

Here I find his account very inadequate. He does what he can with the materials to hand. An eighteenth-century psychology of sensation, and an account of the growth of human society that likewise seems to owe something to French thought in the eighteenth century. And here I might add to something that Graham said, if Brillat-Savarin doesn't mention agricultures, or the development of agricultures, as an important stage in human society that must be for a reason, it's not just because he has overlooked it. Because there are plenty of eighteenth-century thinkers who would have told him that the development of agriculture marked a new and important stage in human society, so if he leaves it out he must have some reason for leaving it out. But anyway, with these materials that he has to hand he concludes - arguing, as far as I can see, from first principles rather than historical evidence - that the pleasures of the table became available as soon as humanity became carnivorous. And this is French whimsy, I think, the pleasures of the table such as he describes, as opposed to the pleasures of the banquet, the feast or the orgy are, I'd suggest, pretty late phenomena in human life, and I do stress that I'm talking about the pleasures such as he describes.

Now I don't know enough about French social history to presume to put him right on the matter but I'd certainly suggest that in, for example, English social life these pleasures, assuming that they are available now, these pleasures don't become available till the late seventeenth century. Now look at the old society, the old structure of European society which died first, probably in England and Holland. It was predominantly rural, its principle unit of economic organization was the family and the relations in which its members stand to each other were personal and affective. They were not bureaucratic, loyalties were personal loyalties to individuals, kings, or

dynasties rather than to parties or abstract ideals. Now this is not the world that Brillat-Savarin seems to presuppose when laying down his rules for securing the pleasures of the table. Look at what he says: 'Let the number of guests be not more than 12 so that the talk may be constantly general'; 'Let them be chosen with different occupations but similar tastes and with such points of contact that the odious formalities of introduction can be dispensed with'. I think that he is presupposing not a small closed rural society but an urban society, a society in which a variety of company is available and a society in which you can actually introduce people to strangers. If you were living in the old society, you wouldn't meet strangers all that often, the odd traveller would come through, but on the whole you wouldn't expect to go out in the morning and meet and have to deal with, as we do now, people who are completely strange to you. He also goes on to describe how he cooked a fondue, a Swiss dish, which he had to travel to find out about. And again, although of course there were travellers in the old society, that sort of mobility is a relatively modern matter. So, for these reasons, I think he is talking about a recent phenomenon. He is talking about something that happens fairly late in the development of civility and table manners, and if Graham doesn't like Levi-Strauss, I should say there is quite a good book on the origin of table manners, namely volume 1 of Norbert Elias's book *The Civilising Process.*

So I'm gesturing vaguely there in the direction of the circumstances which make the pleasures of the table available to us: what sort of social circumstances secure them, once you've got them; how do we keep them. Here again I think Brillat-Savarin is a little too optimistic, and he is surprisingly optimistic for someone who was in exile during the French revolution. His contemporary, Grimod de la Reynière, writes 'the table has become, in our time, the pivot of all political, literary, financial and commercial dealings, there are no promotions, no academic laurels, no business and no markets which are not awarded at table'. Now the table that he is describing there, it is certainly not the sort of table that Brillat-Savarin describes when he describes the innocent pleasures of the meal in Meditation 14. This is a table which is being used for, you might even say prostituted to, ends other than the enjoyment of those sitting around it.

Furthermore, moving out from the private meal to something rather more public, I think one of the coldest, most chilling things in Brillat-Savarin is the way in which he describes the table d'hôte, the sort of restaurant that you had before the Revolution, like the English ordinary, you'd go in you'd sit down on a table, you didn't know who you'd be sitting next to but you'd sit down and you'd be served a common meal, a table d'hôte meal. He writes, 'the Revolution completely altered that system. From its first stages all meeting places became veritable arenas where it was difficult to express an opinion on anything because it would immediately be interpreted politically. As all honest people were adversely affected by the Revolution the complaints which naturally emanated from their lips were metamorphosed into crimes against the new social order and the object of patriotic denunciations which the thousand and one research committees received with avidity. It was therefore necessary, if you did not wish to be denounced, to dine in silence. Those patriots who had worked their way into every public place, dominating conversation with their imperious manners, forcing all those people who sis not think as they did to drink of the same cup of outrage. From that day on the most respectable hotels became base taverns, polite conversation no longer reigned at the table d'hôte. Every service was pillaged as no honest man could show

his face there. As the appetites of the others could not be adapted to the system formerly in vigour it was necessary to close down the table d'hôte. From the end of 1790 there were hardly any left in Paris.'

Now that seems to me to be an Orwellian picture that Grimod de la Reynière painted - of people dining in silence because they are afraid that the thought police are going to shop them to one of the committees. That is always a danger in human society, it reminds I think of the fragility of the social circumstances which secure those pleasures, of which Grimod de la Reynière writes. It is not a reason for being less optimistic than he is, but it is possibly a reason, especially in an age less innocent than his, for us to be aware of the dangers to which our pleasures are always subject.

John Possingham: As a civil scientist, I can't expound on the philosophies of gastronomy so I am going to make just a few comments about what Brillat-Savarin has written. I guess my main argument with him is the sort of claim that animals have never been cursed like man. I think animals do very badly actually, I mean they have an awfully hard time getting their food, the male of the species is always fighting the other males of the species. I really don't think his beginning assumptions are very well based, that animals have it good and man is the one who suffers.

I think man for a long, long time has never actually suffered. Maybe that's why we've got such a drug problem. Man has always been able to escape his suffering very well, with a series of drugs, and I think Brillat-Savarin has made a basic wrong assumption. I believe the reverse, that man is really a pleasure-seeking animal. He has lots and lots of pleasures. (That's my interpretation of it anyway.) He has touch, taste, smell, sound - without getting into all the other things that we've manufactured lately, such as jogging, sun and sex and so on. So I think it is a wrong assumption that man is doing it badly, so the only thing he has really got left is food.I think he really does seek pleasure, and seeks a lot of it, and one of the things he's seeking in food is a great deal of pleasure.

Now the other thing that I have a little trouble with is with all of his early descriptions. I don't deny that there is a big difference between eating and having pleasure at the table, there is a big difference. I am amazed by his paragraphs which say that during the first course and at the beginning of the feast, everyone eats hungrily without talking, without paying any attention to what might be going on about him, and no matter what his position or rank might be he ignores everything in order to devote himself to the great task at hand. But as these deeds are satisfied the intellect rouses itself, conversation begins, a new order of behaviour asserts itself, and a man who is no more than an eater until then becomes a more-or-less pleasant companion, according to his natural ability. I think what he is actually trying to say there, and he alludes to this later, the diner has had a few drinks by then. He really underestimates the role of alcohol in this process of the pleasures of the table. He returns to it on page 185, saying on the other hand, no matter how studied a dinner plan or how sumptuous this adjunct, there can be no true pleasures at the table if the wine be bad, the guests assembled without discretion, the faces gloomy and the meal consumed with haste. But he really does overdo, I think, the joys of food without alcohol. I think they're terribly intermeshed and interlinked, and he does lead one to believe, in some of his early writings, that it is

the food that does all this for you, but I think the partaking of good wine contributes an enormous amount.

One of the other tissues I have to criticise, as a horticulturalist, is that he regards culture as the moment when man ceased to nourish himself on fruit alone. If you go to Japan, as is a pretty common activity now for us in Australia, because it's only one flight, you really have to witness the Japanese buying a fruit basket that might cost them $250; they will sit around with a melon or an enormous apple and subdivide it into portions around the table. In fact one of their ceremonies that is taking on almost the same importance as the tea ceremony is the fruit ceremony, and you only have to look at what sell - a melon for a $150 or a little package of grapes, great big berries done up like a cadavre in a box with a little bit of velvet behind it. Everyone sits down and this is a ceremony; the eating of fruit is a ceremony. So here, perhaps, we've come full circle.

I guess all of this could be seen as slight nitpicking. As a relative philistine in the philosophy of food, I'm absolutely astounded that 165 years, someone ago could write what's written on page 186, about the rules for assuring the pleasures of the table. If's that's a pretty reasonable translation, then literally everything set down there about how to have a decent dinner party, written 165 years ago, is still appropriate (although most people who read it would probably do better than have people go home at eleven o'clock). Apart from that, everything there is really good.

FRENCH DOMINATION

PART 1: THE HISTORICAL CAUSES

Marieke Brugman, Michael Symons, Barbara Santich, Tom Jaine

INTRODUCTION : Marieke Brugman

Marieke Brugman: I have a confession to make. Personally, I have never made the pilgrimage to the gastronomic temples of haute cuisine in France, and not to have done so in the late 70s and early 80s was cause of considerable anxiety, as though somehow one's education as a cook could not possibly be complete without the French experience. I still haven't made that pilgrimage and I don't think I care much any more. Somehow that anxiety has evaporated in the current climate in Australia, where cooks now seem to cook with incredible assurance, freedom and craftmanship. I want to comment,too, that Adelaide still seems to be city for *beurre blanc* and that one of its establishments was the second in Australia to joint the Relais et Châteaux chain.

I'm sure Michael and Barbara need no introduction. Adrian Reid has been to all but one symposium, missing the first. Currently he is a PR consultant; between 1978 and 1982 he was editor of Gourmet magazine. Cath Kerry needs no introduction, either. Marion Halligan is a well known author whose new book was launched last week at Writers' Week. Marion has been to all our symposiums. David Dale is yet to appear; Michael Dowe called him the patron of humour and I think that's been in strong evidence in the last couple of days. He is also the author of a book called *An Australian in America.* He is a journalist, editor of the *Bulletin* , who calls himself a lapsed food restaurant writer - lapsing because he ran out of adjectives.

This session falls into three very clear areas. The first will be an historical perspective. The second will be a chance for our panelists to make some very personal statements about how they feel about French food and its intrinsic merits. And the third session really opens it up to sort of future options. We'd like to have a discussion around each section rather than three sections get muddled. Let's start with Michael.

Michael Symons: I'm here, in a way, to replace Stephen Mennell, who I was hoping would be able to attend. I presume many of you have seen Stephen's book, *All Manners of Food,* which is an excellent and very detailed comparison through history of the 'eating and taste in England and France from the Middle Ages to the present'. He is a sociologist and there aren't very many sociologists who share our eccentric pursuits. One of the reasons for this topic, in my mind, was that we'd ask Stephen to explain why he didn't really answer the question in his detailed study.

I don't really class myself as a great expert on French cuisine. I have been trying to defend over the years the position that a great cuisine in the traditional sense requires a traditional society. It requires an agrarian base. This marks out Australia which has not had that base, it's had an industrial base and, preceding that, a hunter-gatherer pre-scene.

I think that one reason why there has been domination of French cuisine is that there has been domination in the world of the British - or British imperialism, at least. British imperialism took French cuisine around the world, as it took the English language around the world. If there is anything close to a world language it's probably English, and the English-French cuisine certainly became the style of the international hotel. I bet that even raises hundreds of questions, but let's assume that we can agree that British imperialism had something to do with it.

Why was there not British cuisine to take around the world? One of the things I would like to point to is that British industrialisation was simultaneously destroying any remnants of a cuisine in that traditional sense.The working class weren't meant to be cooks or gardeners, they were meant to work in factories, according to the clock. So any chance for a British cuisine was suppressed by the industrialisation of any farming, any gardening there, for example. But more important, probably, is the positive side, why was the French cuisine seemingly so good. I argue that it is because there was a strong agrarian base to French society. There is an interesting paper in the English translation of the *Annales* food history papers by Georges Lefebvre, 'The place of the Revolution in the agrarian history of France' (in *Rural Society in France*, eds. Robert Forster and Orest Ranum, Baltimore, Johns Hopkins University, 1977). He shows how there was a strong move at the time of the French Revolution to let the small holder stay on the land, in contrast to England where there were the enclosures and the suppression of villages, the removal of people from the land, and so on. The opposite happened in the French revolution; there was a strong push from the peasantry to stay there and, as I remember it, it is claimed that following the French revolution there was the highest ever proportion of land owned by the user of that land, in other words there was an extremely strong agrarian base to the French society at this crucial point when the British were taking their cuisine to the world.

But why this difference? As I say, every question asks several others and one of the theses Stephen Mennell looks at is what he calls the Pullar thesis, the idea that the English are puritan and therefore ignorant and in fact not wishing even to enjoy the pleasures of a cuisine. He tends to dismiss it but on the other hand, I suspect that Max Weber the sociologist has a point in his protestant ethic and the spirit of capitalism, when he points out the importance of protestantism to the development of capitalism, because either England was more capitalist and therefore more protestant, or vice versa, but somehow they are associated because England led the move into a capitalist economy. Therefore the food was suppressed, any chance of a cuisine was suppressed. Meanwhile in France, for egalitarian reasons, the idea of the strength of the individual worth allowed their small holders to stay there, much to the dismay of economic rationalists. Anyhow, that's my suggestion.

Barbara Santich: This presumed notion of French domination makes me uneasy - what exactly is meant by domination? If it means acceptance of French cuisine as role model by other western cultures, then it is relatively recent and short-lived - France took over from Italy as the trend-leader in Europe only after the sixteenth century, after the printing press had enabled widespread distribution of Platina's *De Honesta Voluptate*. This work, which drew heavily on the recipes of master chef Maestro Martino, took the Italian influence to France and England. Rather than domination, perhaps we should think more in terms of a fashion for things French, a craze.

First, however, I must take issue with Michael Symons and his thesis that all great cuisines derive from peasant cuisines, or peasant cultures. I agree that the development of a cuisine requires an agrarian base, though I am not convinced that this is a necessary prerequisite; I can imagine a style of cuisine known as Antarctic base cuisine, for which none of the ingredients are home-grown. Ingredients alone do nor constitute a cuisine, and never will; a cuisine is what people make of the available ingredients, both indigenous and exotic. And although agriculture might be **A** base, cuisine needs markets to distribute the products of agriculture, and congregations of people to consume them, and communication among the people to promote progress (in the culinary art, at least). It's no accident that the revival of an art of cuisine in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries was associated with the revival of town life, with its markets and urban ambience, nor that French cuisine reached new heights among court society of the seventeenth century.

Certainly, if one looks at the various European cuisines, great and minor, from the thirteenth to the seventeenth century, one finds little trace of 'peasant cuisine'. In this half-millennium, 'peasant cuisine' was typified by one-pot stews, bourgeois and aristocratic cuisine by roasts and their elaborate sauces, sophisticated 'made dishes', tarts and jellies which all demanded skill, time and money. Further, this style of cuisine was explicitly differentiated from 'peasant cuisine' by its use of exotic spices and other imported ingredients. It is only in the last century that 'peasant cuisines' have begun to be recognised and acknowledged - but not always in their entirety. What are borrowed from them, and then represented as typical of the 'traditional cuisine' are more often the festive dishes, the more elaborate special-occasion dishes.

Michael Symons' thesis should be easily verifiable by looking at the dishes which represent French cuisine today - no, not today; look at the dishes which represented French cuisine before the 'nouvelle revolution' - and then determining how many of these have peasant origins. Take Fernand Point's *Ma Gastronomie* - apart from a few very simple recipes, for Omelette or Oeufs sur le plat or Aubergines aux tomates or Tripes à la mode de Caen, it is very difficult to discern purely 'peasant' origins. Or take Elizabeth David's influential tome, *French Provincial Cooking*: the origins of these recipes are more likely bourgeois than peasant.

But to return to the issue of French 'domination'. What, and where, is the evidence for such an idea? In menus? In the domain of culinary language, French certainly triumphed - the current exhibition of menus at the State Library of South Australia provides enough evidence of that - but does it necessarily mean that foods were prepared and cooked in the French way? We all know that the 'soupe à l'oignon - pâté maison - steak au poivre' menus of the archetypal Australian-French restaurant of the 60s had very little resemblance to French cuisine as it exists in France.

What dominated, if anything, was the idea that French cuisine represented something better, more sophisticated, more fashionable (perhaps like Italian or Thai cuisine now) - and this idea, as we learnt from Tom Jaine's presentation yesterday, was prevalent in England from the eighteenth century. What's more, it travelled to Australia in the cultural baggage of the unassisted immigrants, and was just as readily accepted here.

I personally believe that the culinary tradition(s) of France is superior to British culinary tradition(s), especially to that tradition which fell to Australia's lot (although this may simply be a reflection on my own tastes). On the other hand, I do not think that French cuisine has 'dominated', in an active sense. In a global sense, it may possibly have become more widespread than any other style of cuisine, and been more frequently revered as an ideal. It may also have been more highly respected than British cuisine (and this issue of French 'domination' only seems to arise in the English-speaking world), but as Stephen Mennell points out, this was partly due to the 'decapitation of English cookery' in the nineteenth century, through the fashion for French chefs by those in the upper social circles.

So should we not be talking about fads and fashions instead of domination?

Tom Jaine: This is a simplicist view of history. Actually what we are really talking about is the domination of northern Europe, not really France, in international cooking up to about now, certainly up to 30 years ago, and within northern Europe, then the domination of France. I think that haute cuisine in the form in which we recognise it and such as has lasted for the last 200 years, did come about, as Barbara said, at the beginning of the modern era, about the seventeenth century. It just happens to be an accident that France was politically totally dominant at that period in Europe, so that you say, Michael, that English is the world language, well it would have been French, certainly, in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. I mean French was, and is, and there are still signs of it being, the international language, and so in that sense it was an international cooking as well which was adopted by all those states and political systems in northern Europe that borrowed the French model of court and country, of sophistication. Britain was one, the German princelings were others, the Scandinavians, etc. And so, when we then had the accident of the political expansion in the nineteenth century, it was northern European- and therefore French-influenced cooking that followed us and gave rise to international haute cuisine. Now, of course, the political system is completely changing and we're about to see its dissolution.

DISCUSSION

Alan Saunders: I'd had a question that I was going to ask Michael, except that Tom answered half of it, which was about the domination of French haute cuisine. What I was wondering is, we talk about French domination - and I ask this genuinely for information because I don't know what I'm talking about - but where is French cuisine dominant? If it has been taken around the world by British Imperialism you would expect to find it dominant in India and Africa and Malaysia, the places where British Imperialism went. Now you certainly find it dominant in the English-speaking world, those parts of the British empire which were genuine colonies, that is to say where you shipped people out. But you don't find it dominant in these other places, do you?

MS: Well, this is the New World argument, the other part of my argument is that you find it dominant in Australia, because there was no indigenous agrarian society as a basis of a cuisine. You find it some indigenous cuisine in America because there was in fact agrarian society there, but you have a very strong cuisine in the other parts of the Empire, so we have taken on the French to a large extent because of the same reasons

that we're an industrial society, and the strength of the indigenous cuisine has kept the English/French domination out of India and so on I think.

BS: We could talk about what's domination and what's not? If we talk about what people actually ate in the nineteenth century, did they in England or Australia, eat food that was basically English, or food that was cooked in the French way? So it's a question of domination over what, I don't think that it was domination of the diet, perhaps French terms predominated in menus, but was the style of cooking French, and what did most people eat, did they eat French food or not?

MS: One of the many cliches which I tried to dispose of in my book was the Englishness of Australian eating. I think that it's somewhat English and Eliza Acton's book became translated into all of these *Commonsense* and *Green and Gold* books, the *Presbyterian* book in NSW. I think something like 90% of the recipes are derived from Acton, but probably circuitously, not necessarily directly copied out of the book. So it seems English, but that to my mind is not so much English cuisine, but modern industrial cuisine. If you look at the menu exhibition, when you are starting to go to a higher level, you see very clearly that most of the menus are in French and mostly French styles, French wines and so on.

BS: Yes, they are French names, but it still doesn't say whether they were really French dishes. You can translate an English dish of, say, stewed cabbage into 'choux étuvés', give it a French name, but it might still be an English dish.

MS: There are a lot of French chefs here too, so I think at an haute level it was French and at the everyday level it was industrial, rather than English.

BS: So you're saying that industrial and English are synonymous?

MS: Yes.

Max Lake: In this country at least we have got a sudden explosion of another flavour-dominant cuisine and that's South East Asian, particularly Thai, which is spreading around the world like a bush fire. What you're looking at are lemon grass, galangal, mint, basil, chilli, coriander. Yes, well the use of sugar has a flavour, which has been sadly neglected in most cuisines, except those of South East Asia, particularly Indonesia. One could almost now have a succeeding section on the dominance of Thai flavours, the imperialist domination of Thai flavours in Australian cuisine. And the reason, to me, is quite simple, they taste better.

Jennifer Hillier: I would like to hear about the structural reasons for those dominations, I would like to hear some really thoughtful discussion in this area.

BS: We've talked about flavour and about France being a very generous country agriculturally. In the sixteenth century when the book of Platina was dominant, the cuisine was still exotic, in that a lot of the flavourings - such as the spices - came from other countries. It was not until the book of La Varenne, another century later, that the French turned away from the exotic ingredients and adopted their own indigenous ingredients, flavouring their dishes with their own herbs, salted anchovies,

mushrooms, truffles and their own wine. So they started building on their own production then, on the products of their land, which coincided with the period, as Tom said, of the sort of cultural dominance by France.

Graham Pont: The issues can be structured, sorted out, but at the top there is the courtly ideal, more or less imitated, often imperfectly, by foreign countries. But the Italo-French courtly ideal is the haute cuisine; at the bottom, the flavours and so on, that is the cuisine du pays. Now, there are complex relationships and we, being a bourgeois society, are right in the middle.

PART 2: IS FRENCH CUISINE INTRINSICALLY SUPERIOR?

Marion Halligan, Catherine Kerry, Adrian Read, David Dale

Marion Halligan: I suppose the most atavistic reason for preferring one cuisine to another is the kind of carbohydrate you like to eat with it, and I think that if you like to eat bread with meals then you like French cuisine. It is interesting that we have to use the word cuisine, too, while we are having all these discussions - that's a whole implication that we are all taking for granted. This works for me in Canberra because we get the most wonderful bread that's cooked in a wood oven by some Italians, an Italian family, in Queanbeyan, at an address which is something or other, Wickerslack Lane. And this bread makes it very easy to have these French sort of meals.

I think the thing I like about a French meal is it's shape. It has its own momentum, its own dynamism, and I was thinking that the comparison for this is a line by a calligrapher. You start off very fine, and then you build up this rich, curving vitality as you move through the meal, and you finish with a sort of elegant flourish. For me this can work if you start off with a glass of wine and a couple of olives while you are doing the next bit, which might be a little piece of steak, grilled, or a trout and a bit of salad. And you finish up with a piece of fruit. And what you can obviously do with this is endlessly complicate it. I mean you can go to Stephanie's restaurant and you can start off with champagne and the little nibblies, have an entree, a main course, a salad, a cheese course and a dessert course, and you can go even further than that, you can stick in a fish course between the entree and the main course. You could even be English and put a savoury in somewhere, towards the end, if you wanted to.You can add a soup as well, if you've got this kind of amazing gargantuan appetite. So that that line is something that I see as eminently adaptable. You can do whatever you want with it provided that you start off in that thin, narrow way and develop your curve and then come to an end.

You can also include anything in it, and it's interesting that we have talked about Asian flavours that people are interested in. We mentioned Phillip Searle and his interest in Asian flavours, but he still does it within the form of that line, which is the French curve if you like. He still starts off with his entree, his main course, his desserts, basically those three things. I was thinking that in fact Tom's point about banquets and meals yesterday made a very good distinction. But I think a good meal can still have that kind of shape. I should say here that I speak entirely as an amateur person. I mean what I have to do is feed myself and and a small number of other people. I'm not

speaking here as a person who does it for a profession. I like to eat in restaurants, too, but basically I'm thinking of the kind of housekeeping - especially these days, if I have to choose between standing in front of a food processor and sitting in front of a word processor, then it's mostly the word processor that wins.

I think that a good person to talk about in this context is Edouard de Pomiane, because he starts off with the assumption of the busy person who likes to eat well. And thus in cooking is just one small part of a busy day, and it's very interesting that in the 30s with his radio program he was very supportive of women having professions, having jobs, and his recipes are designed to work within this context. And of course the thing about him was that he was a Pole, he was an ardent Frenchman, but he was Polish by birth, even though he had grown up in France. And I think that's the other thing about French food: its totally omnivorous, it can take in anything it wants and make it part of anything that it wants, make it part of that line which, I think, is the basic thing to do with a meal.

Cath Kerry: Obviously I am going to be very biassed here, and not very learned, because I'm not here with my books, because it was only yesterday that it was suggested that we talk about this. But I think that we can see that its the time for very brash and outrageous statements at this symposium. I feel very uncomfortable at the moment because I think there is a really strong anti-French feeling. And of course a strong anti-French feeling towards the food as well. We find ourselves in Australia now coming to terms with the fact that we are surrounded by Asian countries. We are so used now to French food that all of these new flavours that we are getting from Asian countries come as something really exciting and interesting to us. And so obviously we are playing with those. While we do that, we are running down this wonderful cuisine that has stood by us for so long.

We have talked about the anger that we feel toward Michelin, for example, we've also got to realize that the French themselves dislike Michelin and in fact those two young boys came along, Gault and Millau - of course they are now old blokes. But they were young and revolutionary when they started their new way of reviewing. Something like Michelin is I think a world-wide institution now, and it still doesn't have any effect on a simple sliced tomato salad or an egg mayonnaise dish. Just because Michelin is annoying to us because it will only give stars to restaurants with table cloths, it still doesn't affect the basic fact that the French have got very good ways of eating.

We also use such strong words such as French domination and imperialism. Well I've always thought that domination and imperialism was to do with war and oppression, so we can talk about that in terms of Vietnam,, or Cambodia or Algeria. But I think it's a bit strong when we talk about it in Australia. To talk about whether or not it's superior, well of course its very unfashionable to say that you do think that French food is superior. I think Max sums it up beautifully when he says it just tastes good. Are we going to give up this search for bread? When we talk about bread we are not hunting for Japanese bread, we are not searching for the perfect English loaf. We are trying to reproduce French bread. Things like the wonderful mustards, the oils, the butters, the way of making pastry: all of these things, are we going to really give them up? And what about all of you people who have become Asian freaks who say we are living in

Australia and we have to get into Asian food, are you prepared to give up wine with your meals? I doubt that you are.

I think French food is, I'm not going to say superior, I think French food is very, very good because it has this wonderful way of using everything that grows and moves. Now the Japanese will eat absolutely anything, but the French have this extra thing of being able to use anything in lots of different ways. I also think that there is a stereotype around about French people. We have this idea that they are arrogant, and of course because they are arrogant we'd like to cut them down. When I was in New York it struck me why certain whites hate blacks. I was seeing all these incredible black men walking along the street, and I thought if you're fat, ugly, pudgy, brainless and white, of course you hate blacks. And I think there is this thing against the French. In New York I felt incredibly well dressed. In France I feel vulgar and coarse-pored.I'm sorry, but I think they've got a lot of style, and I think that we do want to cut them down as a result. And just as Sue suggested that possibly the reason we don't have a lot of outdoor eating places in Australia is the flies, then I'd like to suggest that if we really look at it, we are worried about French domination of food simply because of the nuclear tests. We don't like the French at the moment, so therefore we are trying not to like their food.

But French cuisine has brought us lots of things that we can't easily discard and I am sure that you people aren't going to want to give up the things that it has taught us. There are still lots of things that it could teach us if we would only take the lesson. Like the way in which they eat, the unfussy way in which they eat, the unfussy way in which they set their tables. The idea of only having, even in the most elegantly set table, only one knife and fork, and you keep using that same knife and fork all through the meal. So that at least saves money, if you are trying to get a set of Christofle going at home. The fact of having no bread and butter plate - now I make a lot of jokes about bread and butter plates, but I choose to adopt this French affectation because then I don't have to buy or wash up that plate. But, you know, there are all sorts of little of things like this where they have a simplicity in their way of eating that lets the food come through, which and I think we should adopt.

Just like to finish, since we are talking a lot about sex and women and that sort of thing, it reminds me a little of a book by Colette which is called *Cherie* and there is a sequel, *The Last of Cherie*. I think that French food is like a beautiful mistress, who has got old, and I think we should just let her just sit there with dignity while some other floozie comes along and takes her place for a while. But let her still be there with us.

Adrian Read: This is a small person odyssey. My serious interest in food dates from about the mid to late 1970s. I was a journalist and in 1978 I became, as Marieke said, editor of Gourmet, which in an earlier incarnation was quite different from today's magazine. I got that job because I was good at magazines, not especially because I knew a lot about food and wine. But the tail is still wagging the dog. Bocuse was absolutely king at the time and I remember what I see in retrospect as a classic piece of cultural or culinary cringing when he came to Australia. I can remember thinking: 'My God, why would he want to come here, I mean he will be absolutely horrified. What could he possibly find here that would interest him.' As an aside, I met him later and I

found him exactly as he is in those photographs, imperious and arrogant. But he was clearly not troubled by self-doubt.

Now the star or the next god who came around that time was Guérard, and it was said that his cuisine minceur was a sort of reworking, reinterpretation of classic French food. The idea seemed to be that French cuisine had become altogether too haute, and that very soon after that people were starting to talk about this thing called Nouvelle Cuisine. But I found that the force with which cuisine minceur and Guérard was promoted here, at least in Sydney, made me think that nouvelle cuisine was part of cuisine minceur rather than the other way around, and no one really contradicted me.

In 1981 I went to France for the first time. I went alone and my itinerary was marked out by three-star Michelin restaurants. My anticipations? I remember saying to people that I was going to have one meal a day, but what a meal. On returning I had gone up one complete clothing size, and on one day I drove from one side of France in Tours to just about the other side, to Roanne for lunch. And in anticipation, as I say, I really of this as like visiting cathedrals, and I suppose its not an uncommon simile to use. But like visiting cathedrals, worshipping at the feet of these high priests and the religious imagery, just to continue that, I mean the article I wrote on my return was titled 'French revelations'.

Now what happened to me in France really was a sort of revelation. It was that the places that I had gone to worship at weren't cathedrals or even churches, they were restaurants. Their operators were men and not gods, they were all men. It took a little while to sink in, but it was the start of what I think of as a maturing view of the place of France, and what is French, in food and cooking. The rather dramatic, but rather good example, is what I would call the great French cheese con. I remember seeking out French cheeses constantly in the firm belief that they were absolutely superior. That France somehow owned cheese. Now its quite clear that cheese-making skill is not entirely confined to France, and that obviously neither is good milk. I think I interpreted the fact that no one was doing and no one was making good cheese in Australia is proof that it couldn't be done, and just another culinary cringe.

I now see food and cooking as almost completely internationalized. I recall James Halliday described this to great effect in his paper at the Melbourne symposium: what grows or feeds on the slopes or swims in the rivers and seas of Greece or California or wherever is available in our shops and markets within days or weeks or whatever. You only have to look at the range of food styles that we can try , either by buying a cookbook and going to the market and just doing it, or by going to the incredible variety and range of restaurants in our all of our major cities.

My own inclination now, and I hope its a mature inclination, is towards the Mediterranean in general and Italy in particular, so I'm not leaving France entirely out of it, there is a bit of France in there. And I have that rather than any inclination towards Asia, I'm not quite sure why that is - perhaps because I'm British by birth, or it may just be a cultural thing. In this context - and I don't think I'm saying anything new here - I personally identify a move away from complexity and towards simplicity. Concepts like the integrity of the ingredient, and perhaps food that can be prepared quickly and usually without elements that have previously been made, such as stocks. And yet this

is still food without compromise and I would say - again, this is very personal - that I think of pasta with sauce, or meat and fish barbecued, having previously been coated with oil and fresh herbs, as being quite fundamental ways of eating in my life and in many people I know. I rarely use my oven, I have to apologise to Cath again, I still don't know whether I can reliably make a white butter sauce. Does that sound very different from *beurre blanc*?

To summarize it, I think of the French way as having been dominant, and being still an important influence, perhaps even an inspiration, and ultimately in Australia a background factor rather than a dominant thing. Putting it another way, France seemed to have the high ground, it was once the first, if not the first and only, perhaps then it became the first among a number, and perhaps the ultimate maturity is that it is one of a number.

David Dale: This isn't so much a favour as a notion, possibly a frivolous notion. But before I make the notion I thought we might just talk about these two dishes which I ate in a restaurant in Los Angeles. I wonder if you would like to suggest to me what those dishes are? Let's start with number one - would anyone like to suggest to me what the first one is?

Salmon wrapped inside tamales with prickly pear and with coriander? Essentially, yes. What about the second one? Anybody else want to have a go at the second one?

Okay, well I'll tell you. This is what the chef said to me it was, in English. Now first of all I should explain to you that this restaurant describes itself as doing modern south-western cuisine, south-western being American south-west not the south-west of France. He says his major influence is the food of the Navaho Indians of a thousand years ago. The restaurant is called Saint Estephe, which is an interesting name for a restaurant serving an American Indian thousand-year-old cooking style. The chef is a guy called John Sedler who grew up in Santa Fe and did some training in France and in America in the French style. Now, he describes the first one as a salmon mince in a corn meal and chilli pancake steamed in a corn husk with coriander cream sauce, and the second one is grilled pigeon with wild rice, pinto bean sauce and saffron arrows; the saffron arrows are actually pastry cut into the shape of an arrow, it's like a taco kind pastry using some saffron.

One might well wonder was it necessary to say that in French. Is it snobbery? I like to think in his case it is a great joke on the French. He is doing this tongue in cheek, he has called his restaurant Satin Estephe - actually he took over a restaurant called Saint Estephe and decided not to change the name - and he is doing this style of food. But one could equally say it is a classic example of the absurd dominance of French in restaurants when its cuisine - although many of the cooking styles have elements in common with the French - has nothing to do with France.

We heard in Michael's paper, and in Susan's paper as well, to some extent, how much language conditions our thinking. If we don't have a word we cannot deal with the concept. If we have a word we are forced by it to think in a certain way. About 15 years or so ago Dale Spender and others undertook a feminist critique of the English language, arguing that the way we speak conditions us into allocating roles to men and

women. Consider the phrases we use. I'm just reading in the paper 'When the voter goes into the ballot box he will finally decide between one party and the other'. This conventional usage of 'man', 'he', and so on was what Dale Spender was attacking - the great man view of history, God the Father, God the Son,. man and beast, all those kind of phrases. You are saying, okay, that is a way we talk, but it is also a way we have conditioned ourselves into thinking about roles. She argues that you have to change the language forcibly, always using 'she' when referring to a person, and of course this is easy to parody. People were talking about the Norperson invasion of Britain and so on. And Dale Spender herself talked about herstory rather than history. She doesn't mind that it can be parodied because she says when children learn language they also learn attitudes, so we need to change the way that children learn the language.

So I am now suggesting that we must now do the same with the language of food. We must forcibly liberate it from the domination of French, as the French do when they purge their language of foreign elements, as the Académie does.The first task is this word cuisine, what is wrong with *cucina*. Fillet mignon, tournedos rossini, duck à la orange, is seen on menus all the time: why not duck with orange sauce? Terrine, pâté, sauté - there must be synonyms. But I'm not pushing English because English is a language totally unsuited to food. The language gives eating no priority. Elaine talked about that - hew swine into gobbets - that's the kind of thing we would be reduced to if we were going to change all this to English.

I am suggesting we can draw from Italian which is as rich a culinary culture, and there I have to use the word culinary - okay, that's of Latin origin so we are still with Italian. Elaine explained to us yesterday how it was the Italians who attempted to civilize Britain and France, relatively unsuccessfully I think in the case of Britain. Now the Italians have gone about their wonderful work modestly. They don't promote superstar cooks, they don't make arrogant claims about being the originators of international food, although they are. And I'm arguing that whenever we think about cooking and eating we make the effort to use Italian. It is going to be an effort, just as it has been an effort with trying to change the language from male domination to equal male and female or female-oriented language. There will be jokes, there will be absurdities, people will make fun. I think we have an obligation to do it. I think we have to liberate our own means of thinking about eating and more importantly we have to give the Italians their rightful place, so unlike Alan I say 'I am a risotto', 'I am a vitello tonnato', 'I am pappardelle con la lepre'. Let's not discard French food, but let's speak about it in the language of the best food.

AL FRESCO LUNCH, TUESDAY MARCH 13, 1990

Don Dunstan

The lunch today is achieved under a slight degree of difficulty, because while we all thought that we had coordinated ourselves very well with the management, what we had not managed to do was to coordinate with one another particularly well. There is an absolutely splendid banquet being produced for tonight but it was going on at the time we were preparing lunch and requiring some of the materials which I had earmarked for lunch. So there is a slight makeshift nature about the presentation today. But after all, what are cooks for if they can't adapt to particular situations, and we hope that you can adapt to them, too.

The lunch today is called a wrapped lunch, because you are going to have to wrap it yourselves. There are four wrappers. First, Chinese pancakes which have been made by our good friend Ming from Regency Park - and they are not the traditional pancakes used for Peking Duck, they are a slightly different kind so you don't brush them with sesame and put them together and fry them and tear them apart and do that sort of thing, but I think that you will find them very pleasant to use. There is some Szechuan filling which he has made and some lamb filling which I was making, and which he finished for me at the last moment. And said I think you need a bit more of this and a bit more of that and it was very nice. Then there are some lettuce cups in which there is minced pigeon. I had the help of Stephanie's apprentices yesterday to bone all those, after a special little dash because the pigeons hadn't been delivered. There is some rice paper which you will have to dip in hot water to make it pliable and then you wrap up your lunch from there. Rob Kolincek who is cooking with me today will be there preparing some beef, which has been shredded and will be very lightly cooked so get there before its overcooked, please. And you put that in with mint and other things. The ingredients for your wrapped lunch are laid out there. You can mix and match or do what you like in all of that. The final offering is some Indian roti, which were not made by me but by the lady who makes them for all the Indian restaurants of Adelaide. They rely on her to do their roti and I think it should be very pleasant. I have made a traditional Punjabi goat curry, on which I was brought up, and also - because I found that once we had removed the gristle from the goat meat that instead of having six kilos I had three - a red chicken curry to go in the roti as well.

So that's your lunch. I hope you all enjoy it, we will be ready in about quarter of an hour, I hope. The appointed time, however, is half past one so we should be there on the dot. In the meantime we suggest that you prime yourselves with a little pre-prandial imbibing.

John Possingham: I have contributed some melons. Our laboratories are working on a research project in which the aim is to breed a melon with unique characteristics, well-suited to growing in the hot inland parts of Australia. They are attempting to combine the long-keeping qualities of the Japanese musk melons with the more attractive flavours of the conventional Cantaloupe/Rockmelon types. A wide range of seeds from Japan, the USA, Iran and the Middle East are being tested for their suitability for growing in Australia and are being genetically combined to produce a unique Australian melon.

Fifth Symposium of Australian Gastronomy
Adelaide 1990

THE LAST SUPPER

BITTER SALAD
FRIED OCTOPUS
GIBLETS WITH CUMIN, PARSLEY, GARLIC
CRISP MULLET
ROASTED EGGS
FLAT BREAD
HUMMUS

BEDOUIN STYLE ROAST LAMB
STEAMED EGGPLANT
MOUNTAIN BREAD
VEGETABLE PICKLE
ZHUG
HARISSA
GARLIC PUREE

SAFFRON, GREEN PAPAYA, YOGHURT, CHICKEN AND RICE

FROZEN YOGHURT, MILK, CARDAMOM, ALMONDS, RAISINS, DATES, HONEY, PALM SUGAR, COUSCOUS & CANDIED FRUIT

FRUIT AND TEA

Philip Searle, Cheong Liew & friends

1990

THE SUPPER OF THE LAMB: Meditations aroused by the Tuesday night banquet

Michael Symons

'You must sit down,' sayes Love, 'and taste My meat.'
So I did sit and eat

- George Herbert, 'Love III'

As is so bound to happen, immediately after the symposium, an appropriate book arrived in the post. It is Robert Farrar Capon's *The Supper of the Lamb: A culinary reflection* (Garden City, New York: Doubleday, 1969). Incidentally, the book provides a perfect little example of the compromises of commercialism: 'A culinary reflection' on the title-page is boosted to 'A culinary entertainment' on the dustjacket. Some of you may know Capon's later book, Food for Thought: Resurrecting the art of eating (I suspect it was widely remaindered). On the face of it a similar mixture of essays and recipes, the latter is as disappointing as the former exciting. There is some 'energy' or creative force evident in the *Supper of the Lamb*, which seems to fail Capon when he attempts to repeat the trick. Furthermore, his 'culinary reflection' actually talks about that energy.

Father Capon wrote as an Episcopal minister and professor of theology, and yet we recognise his attitudes as very gastronomic.For starters, Father Capon lampoons vegetarians, teetotalers and other food fetishists. He admittedly urges fasting, but only so that it will bring back feasts (p115). He extols the gas-stove for its responsiveness and for its 'saving grace of tongues of fire' - 'Fire is too old a friend to be forsaken for glowing rods', he writes (p138).

As well as entire chapters on such topics as slicing an onion, he includes a long poem on slaughtering. He explains: 'Man not only dines; he also kills and sacrifices', and goes on to say:

> 'Most cookbooks are content to sit in the kitchen and sing songs...
> But no book which tries to see the whole picture - to speak not only about cooking, but to say what cooking is about - can afford to let it [butchery] slide by out of mind... Our home ground remains what it always has been: bloody ground and holy ground at once.' (p45).

In between recipes, poems, anecdotes, aphorisms ('It is only a short step from pastry to parties', p167; 'Paradox is the only basket large enough to hold truth', p155), the book also breaks into unrepentantly gastronomic prayers. To give a snippet... 'O, Lord, refresh our sensibilities. Give us this day our daily taste... deliver us from the fear of calories and the bondage of nutrition...' (pp27-28).

Philosophically, Capon is a materialist. Indeed, he decries the actual 'antimaterialism' of this allegedly 'materialist' age and interrupts his essay on noodles with a fantasy about the Devil's daring plot to replace things with symbols. His imaginary tempter proposes: 'Man must be taught to see things as symbols - must be trained to use them

for effect and never for themselves. Above all the door of delight must remain firmly closed' (p111). Of course, Capon desires the opposite, a sensuous appreciation of the material world. 'The world exists', he declares, 'not for what it means but for what it is' (p86).

He joins in my present theme as soon as we permit him to 'wipe my hands and introduce myself'. He declares himself 'an amateur'. He means 'amateur' literally and positively 'The world may or may not need another cookbook, but it needs all the lovers - amateurs - it can get', he says (p3).

He counterposes amateurism to the ethos of economic rationalism. In his round of toasts, he announces: 'Cheers! We are free: nothing is needful, everything is for joy. Let the bookkeepers struggle with their balance sheets; it is the tippler who sees the untipped Hand. God is eccentric; He has loves, not reasons. Salute!' (p86).

So this is a materialist-Christian cookbook about amateurism, from peeling an orange lovingly to the loving approach to dinner- parties. He argues that the object of the lover - beauty - is both within the world and in the eye of the beholder. Some things are intrinsically beautiful but this beauty does not exist without the perceiver. This is the way he puts it: 'The real world... is indeed the mother of loveliness, the womb and the matrix in which it is conceived and nurtured; but the loving eye... is the father of it.' Indeed, he almost argues that not noticing turns things bad: the 'whole distinction between art and trash, between food and garbage, depends on the presence or absence of the loving eye'.

This then is the role of the amateur, 'to look the world back into grace'. The amateur cannot remain silent, but is 'bound, by his love, to speak' (p4). 'We were given appetites, not to consume the world and forget it, but to taste its goodness and hunger to make it great' (p189).

As well as good cooking being a love of creation, it is also a love of people. The reason for inviting a person to the dinner table 'looks chiefly outward at your guest and not inward at yourself. To ask a man to break bread with you is to extend friendship' (p172). So much is familiar, but then he demands that we ask only participants who can be expected to approach the meal positively:

> 'Since people are the ultimate reason for having a dinner at all, try your best to summon guests who will enhance each other as persons. A courtly host invites, as much as he can, courtly people. His table is no mere feed trough; it is one of the heights of the world and only those who can breathe freely and graciously at such altitudes should be there... You have called them. to become a company, a convivium.' (p172).

And, finally (and I cannot resist this barb), he asserts that 'playing it safe is not Divine' (p190). Love may be gentle but it is also reckless.

So there you have it: Father Capon's version of the 'Supper of the Lamb'.

'Commensality' means sharing a table (mensa) but implies something more, the formation of some sort of social unit. 'Companionship' derives from sharing bread (panis) and brings a sense of 'accompanying', just as 'breaking bread' gains a similarly broad sense of sharing and generosity. 'Conviviality' means to live (vivere) together and yet brings a festive implication. 'Fellowship' in 'table-fellowship' derives from the idea of shared ownership of assets (fe) and seems also to imply more general togetherness. 'Communion' comes from the word communis (as does 'communism'), meaning 'common', and this 'commoning' suggests an almost mystical intermingling.

Even in the origins of these words, out of the crude sharing of a table, bread or assets something else seems to emerge. It is not the mere action of breaking bread, but the act of thereby acknowledging, empathising with and even committing oneself to the meal and, particularly, to the other diners. This emergent quality or thing becomes important - gaining a life of its own. The giving of the participants seems to be multiplied.

If gastronomy is to be a comprehensive discourse, then it must offer an account of such 'higher' things as love, and I think that the explanation lies somewhere here. Wherever it ultimately comes from, we find love in meals. And even if we already knew this, we must accept how much this account differs from the conventional. Other theories have generally been associated with or generalised from sexual love.

If you grab at love, it disappears. Of course, as Plato found, this need only encourage further pursuit. The paradigm is The Symposium, where Plato abstracts the more elevated forms from physical lust, through various steps in the appreciation of beauty until the most ineffable. He regards beauty as wholly in the beloved, and, among other difficulties, he comes close to abolishing love itself by transfiguring it. Actually, he sees it the idealistic way around, so that sexual love becomes an abasement of the 'real' thing, which is scarcely attainable even by the best Platonists.

A materialist theory, looking to the here-and-now, would dismiss Plato's ideal as a 'mere' rationalisation. Finding love part of this world, a sexual theory, for instance, would find the other loves originating out of the physical reality. But sexual desire and romantic yearning are terribly weak when compared to thirst and hunger. And so, much more productively, a gastronomic theory would find love immanent in meals. Why, as gastronomers, we could even develop a theory of sexual love as growing out of eating together and wanting to continue eating together and to produce more eaters.

A gastronomic conception offers definite theoretical advantages, not the least the broadening of the object of sexual love from (customarily) a solitary person (which is, of course, one advantage of Plato's graduated scale). The gastronomic lover can find beauty in things within nature, cultural creations and persons, and potentially not just one partner but all humanity. Furthermore, and this is an improvement over sexual theories generally, both idealistic and materialistic, love can be shown to have a large element of generosity.

And the generosity of the giver is rewarded. Throw yourself into cooking or writing about food, and the food, cookbook or whatever leaps onto another plane. Share a table with the right attitude, contribute positively and creatively to both the food and your companions, and the magic occurs. The giver become increased by the very giving

(and, conversely, persons who are negative, carping, envious or otherwise destructive diminish both the meal and themselves). Good cooks and good diners understand this emergent quality, when the sum becomes greater than the parts, when their own contribution is returned to them multiplied. The foodie's characteristic and absurd optimism about the next meal is actually reward, in a funny sort of way.

But to get back to the Fifth Symposium of Australian Gastronomy, where the talk about ingredients, dishes and the respective merits of copper and aluminium almost completely vanished. Instead, we talked about positiveness, conviviality and amateurism.

We all recognised that there was this time an extraordinary common thread running through the papers - whether about greed, restaurant reviews, Christian communion, carnivale or town planning - and we all recognised that the extraordinary quality of the symposium itself incorporated this thread. The secret is 'conviviality' or, as Capon would also call it, 'love'. We must recognise that where poets and New Agers only yearn, good gardeners, cheese-makers, cooks, diners and symposiasts actually know love.

Just recall that when speaking about greed, Don and Anthony suggested that sending aid was not as fundamental as a generous attitude. Cath made her plea that French cuisine be regarded as a former mistress who, when some new floozie appeared, should be left to grow old with dignity. It is not too unfair to interpret Susan as finding love missing in our streets.

And if Gay had to have restaurant reviews at all, she demanded that they be supportive. From some gastronomic theory of love, it is possible to argue that destructive or even over-analytical reviews take rather than give and thereby deny the gastronomic sensibility. This should not be regarded as a blanket argument against negative criticism, but that the grounds for destructive comments are, for instance, that a restaurant is overly- commercial and thus itself a denial of gastronomy. Another enemy of love is bureaucracy.

It wasn't just talk either. Instead of the conspicuously elegant consumption of complicated cooking and pretentious wine-labels, we plumped for informal meals. Even as Tom was bemoaning the Michelin demand for crystal and silver, we had terracotta jugs and sat on the floor and were so intimate with our food that we ate six out of seven meals without even knives and forks. We came as lovers of food and through this of people, and we were rewarded by the full pleasures of the table... which finally brings me to the Last Supper, the original and ours.

Cheong chose to follow fairly literally what scholars presume was the food at the biblical supper. This consisted of a series of four cups of wine, then a preliminary course of greens, bitter herbs and haroseth sauce (mixture of fruits and sauces in vinegar). The main course was roasted lamb, which participants should strictly-speaking have witnessed being slaughtered earlier, served with bitter herbs and fruit purée. The normal meal would then have included a dessert, although apparently omitted in the Passover meal.

You can read the accompanying menu, an interpretation of mezze, lamb cooked through the afternoon on the spit, and icecream. In addition, the wine committee rewarded us with four already-poured Last Supper glasses.

As the location of the meal, Cheong picked the extraordinary raised, covered walkway at the retreat, open to that long view towards Adelaide. It meant roasting the lambs down in the grounds and then carrying them up, which prompted the fabulous procession. It also meant carrying the food some distance from the kitchen before taking it upstairs, which prompted the idea of using the children as servers. They could then pour water over our hands to wash them as we mounted the stairs to squat around the low tables.

New Testament reports make it seem that even the disciples found the message bewildering. The book of John has Jesus carrying on about 'true vines', 'pruning' and 'bearing fruit', with the vague enticement: 'These things I have spoken to you, that my joy may be in you, and that your joy may be full'. Yet through the hints and parables, the message of the meal can also sometimes seem very simple, as when Jesus then declares that his only commandment is to love one another 'as I have loved you' (John 15:12).

We can see people gathered at table in general, the symposium in particular, and, even more specifically, the dinner of Cheong Liew, Phillip Searle and Friends as a source of love. Why else would Cheong get the order wrong on the bottom of the menu, putting Phillip's name before his own? Why else would Phillip have helped anyway, staying up all night to airlift his loaves and fishes, and then returning Cheong's compliment at the first banquet by assisting at the 'last'? Why else be so convinced of the possibilities of such a, let us say, primitive meal, such an ancient and widespread 'banquet' as lamb? Why else plan the triumphant procession of bells, lambs, grinning cooks and faithful? Why else that brigade of family and old mates? Why else service by the chefs' children, so brilliantly directed by Phillip ('whatever you do, don't laugh', he instructed)? And why else the Mount Torrens and Bedford Family Ringers?

We had hired them particularly because they played so-called table-bells. They lead the procession and later provided a short entertainment, singing for their supper. But we couldn't have known how beautifully they would fit in, how they would amplify the tenderness of the night, nor what a true amateur Philip Bedford would prove, leaping around the bell-table to show us simultaneously the beauty and the silliness of life. But then none of us knew, until we read the notes on one of their cassettes, that 'Sylvia and Philip Bedford first met as teenagers on top of a church tower in England, and bells have played an important part in their lives ever since.'

5th Symposium of Australian Gastronomy - 10-13 March 1990

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