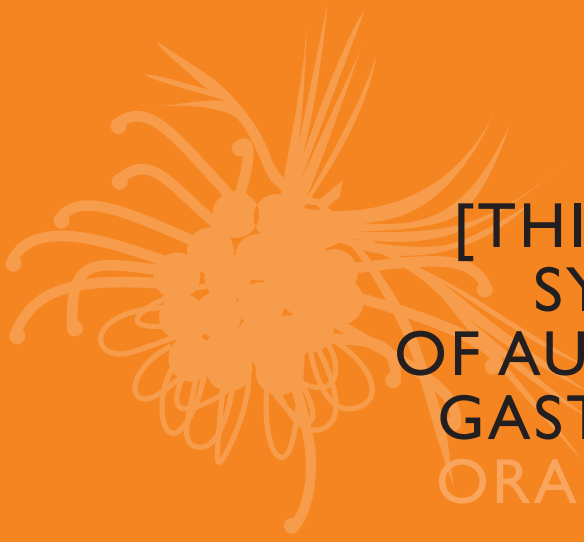
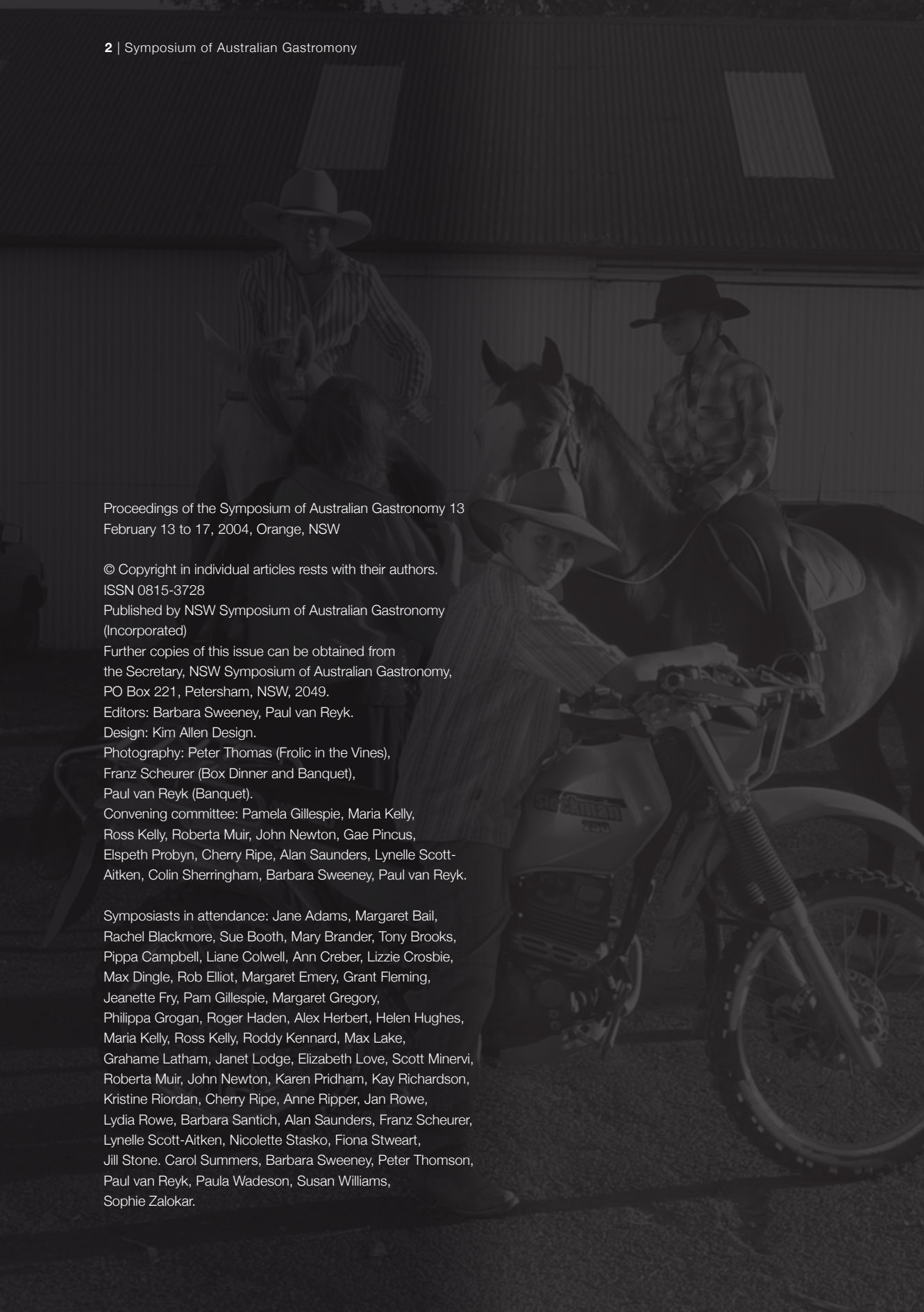


2004
[THIRTEENTH]
SYMPOSIUM
OF AUSTRALIAN
GASTRONOMY
ORANGE, NSW

PROCEEDINGS

FOOD FEARS FADS AND FANTASIES



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Jill Stone. Carol Summers, Barbara Sweeney, Peter Thomson,
Paul van Reyk, Paula Wadeson, Susan Williams,
Sophie Zalokar.

CONTENTS

Snail dolmades made by Simonn Hawke of Lolli Redini were served on arrival at the banquet.

Introduction

Alan Saunders

There's an old Irish joke (or, at least, an old joke that is allegedly Irish) which goes somewhat as follows. A traveller stops to seek directions from an ancient rustic sitting on a fence. What, he inquires, is the way to Dublin? The rustic mulls over the issue for a long time and eventually he says: 'Ah, well, you know, if I were going there, I wouldn't be starting from here.'

This, more or less, is the way of thinking that gave us the concept of the antinomy. In philosophy, an antinomy is reason's way of telling you that, wherever you're going, you shouldn't have started from here. The idea first turned up more than two centuries ago in the work of the great German philosopher Immanuel Kant, who observed that it was possible to find pairs of propositions that completely contradicted each other though both seemed equally valid. You could, for example, prove both that the universe must have had a beginning in time and that it couldn't possibly have had one. You could prove that space was infinitely divisible and, with equal logical validity, that it wasn't. The problem, Kant thought, is not that we are using our reason wrongly — it is precisely from the correct use of reason that these antinomies arise — but that we have proceeded from the wrong assumptions about what reason is and what it can tell us. In other words, if you want to arrive at the truth, you shouldn't have started from here.

In the world of gastronomy, whatever antinomies arise are, perhaps, a little less compelling: escape from a logical antimony requires a major revision of the very fundamentals of your thinking, whereas a gastronomic antinomy can often be avoided with a just a bit of tinkering. Nonetheless, Alan Warde, in his book *Consumption, Food and Taste*, arrives at a set of antinomies that provide a useful way of looking at the world of food. "These oppositions — novelty and tradition, health and indulgence, economy and extravagance, care and convenience — are values which can legitimise choice between foodstuffs," writes Warde, and he concludes that his antinomies "comprise the structural anxieties of our epoch: they are parameters of uncertainty, apt to induce feelings of guilt and unease."

You'll have gathered that the driving considerations behind these antinomies, though not as implacable as logic, are still pretty compelling. We're talking politics and emotion here. We crave novelty — we always want to experience something that we haven't eaten before — but we want the stability that only tradition can provide. We want to be healthy, but we want to indulge ourselves as well.

In drawing up the programme for the symposium, we probably used these ideas much as a drunk uses a lamp post (for support rather than illumination) but, if nothing else, it made for a good box dinner.

Some people, it turned out, don't like box dinners — professional cooks think of the Symposium as time off and they'd rather not be encouraged to cook for fellow Symposiasts — but they've been an integral part of these gatherings for some years now. The idea is that all involved are divided into tables: each table has a box of ingredients from which it prepares food for another table and so, it might be, the healthy serve the traditionalists or the economical the indulgent.

The box dinner was a good way of getting the themes of the Symposium, the antinomies, under our belt, which meant that we didn't have to agonise about them too much over the next couple of days in the dry heat of a February in Orange. They appeared as underlying thoughts rather than as strict oppositions, surfacing from time to time in what we ate and what we said. You'll easily detect them in these proceedings; we leave it to you to decide where we ended and whether we should have tried to go there from here.

Vale Alan Davidson (1924–2003)

Barbara Santich

Just four weeks after receiving the prestigious Erasmus Prize, presented by HRH Prince Bernhard of the Netherlands at a formal ceremony in Amsterdam, Alan Davidson died suddenly at his home in London. The award recognised his contribution to the study of food history and culture and acknowledged his status as 'the founding father of food studies' in the English-speaking world.

Alan Davidson had several careers: the first as a diplomat; the second as a food writer, scholar, author and publisher; and the third, barely begun, as a devotee of early Hollywood films. His first books were written while he was still in the diplomatic service — *Seafish of Tunisia and the Central Mediterranean* when stationed in Tunisia, *Fish and Fish Dishes of Laos* when serving as ambassador to Laos. During this appointment *Mediterranean Seafood* (1972), a much expanded version of *Seafood of Tunisia*, was published; the earlier pamphlet had come to the attention of Elizabeth David, who prompted Penguin to commission a more comprehensive text.

It was probably the rewards of being published that enticed Alan away from the diplomatic service and led to his decision to follow a writing career, though perhaps the diplomatic service had become too stale and stifling for someone of his lively intellect (he refers to it as a 'carapace'). In any event, he was soon commissioned to write *North Atlantic Seafood* (published in 1979) and to do a translation, with his wife Jane, of Alexandre Dumas' *Grand Dictionnaire de cuisine.* (This appeared in 1978 as *Dumas on Food.*)

The bizarre requirements of the Time-Life editors that only published recipes be sourced for the series *Foods of the World* led Davidson, in collaboration with Richard Olney, to publish the first issue of *Petits Propos Culinaires* (PPC) in 1979. Initially intended as a one-off publication, demand was such that numbers two, then three appeared, and a new publishing venture had begun. Soon afterwards, following a couple of small seminars, the first *Oxford Symposium on Food and Cookery*, under the co-chairmanship of Alan Davidson and historian Dr Theodore Zeldin, was held in 1981. (Alan had been commissioned in 1976 to write the *Oxford Companion to Food*, and been awarded a fellowship at St Antony's College, Oxford.) A second Symposium took place in 1983, and since that date Symposia have been held annually. It was through PPC that I came into contact with Alan; having seen one copy I was so enthralled that I offered to become its honorary agent in Australia. And it was the Oxford Symposium that served as a model for the Australian series which began in 1984.

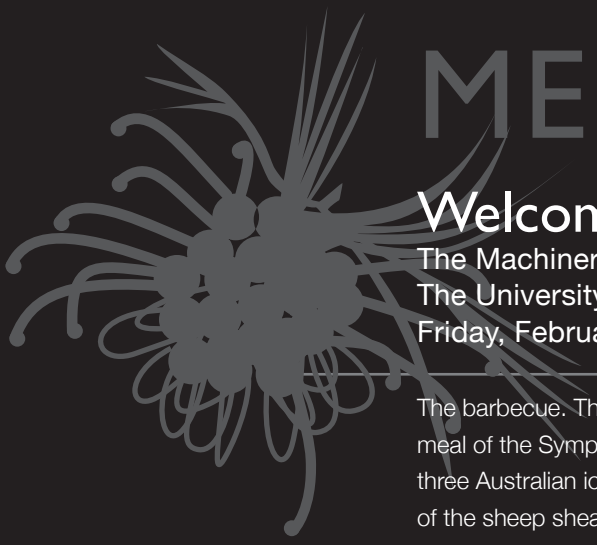
The *Oxford Companion to Food* was eventually published in 1999, to worldwide critical acclaim; for this book Alan received the André Simon Millennium Award in 2000. In the meantime he had written several books, including *A Kipper with My Tea: Selected Food*

Essays (1988) and published a very respectable catalogue of significant books; meticulous facsimiles of early English cookbooks (such as Hannah Glasse's *The Art of Cookery made Plain and Easy*) and cookbooks dealing with little-known cuisines, such as *Food in Tibetan Life* and *Noshe Djan Afghan Food and Cookery*. Rarely did anything from Prospect Books become a best-seller; the exception was Patience Gray's *Honey from a Weed* (1986).

I owe a particular debt to Alan Davidson acknowledged in the dedication of my book, *Looking for Flavour* since it was through him that I became, in the early 1980s, part of the small community of scholars scattered all over the world, from Sweden to Spain to the Philippines, who were all involved in the study of food and cuisine. It was Alan's suggestion, for example, that I offer a contribution to the (then) new publication, the *Journal of Gastronomy*; I did, it was accepted; an account of the banquet by Phillip Searle and Cheong Liew that concluded the first Symposium of Australian Gastronomy, and I wrote several more articles for the journal before it folded, benefiting greatly from the experience. It was also through Alan's mediation that I was able to meet and talk food with Elizabeth David.

In those early days, when our enthusiasm often exceeded expertise, the support of a network was invaluable, either through correspondence (online chat groups were still to be invented) or the Notes & Queries pages of PPC. Alan was the centre of it, and many of its members I met at informal gatherings at Alan and Jane's Chelsea home which had been re-modeled so that the whole basement could be used for the publishing activities of PPC and Prospect Books. Later, when the *Companion* was absorbing most of his time, Alan moved his office a few blocks away to a small flat in the Porticos, where I and many other friends and colleagues could often find a temporary bed, though by the time the *Companion* was ready to go to the publishers it had become almost impossible to find a path through the stacks of books and papers to the bedroom.

Alan Davidson was an extraordinarily generous man of his time, his knowledge, his friends, his books. He was also, as Paul Levy noted in his obituary in *The Independent*, the "last absolutely genuine, unselfconscious English eccentric". Although I never saw the photo, I can imagine him as he described himself, in one of his early letters, posing for a publicity shot: standing in front of a Rolls Royce in Paris, dressed in a kilt and holding aloft a chocolate sardine.



MENU

Welcome Barbecue

The Machinery Shed
The University of Sydney, Orange
Friday, February 13, 2004

The barbecue. The shed. Sheep. The first meal of the Symposium celebrated these three Australian icons. Playing on the idea of the sheep shearers' evening meal, the barbecue was held in the machinery shed of the University. Set among the vineyards, this farm shed is archetypal — a concrete slab floor, corrugated tin and fibro walls and a corrugated-tin roof. Like all farm sheds it serves many purposes. It's used to store feed and machinery and provides refuge from the elements. And, in this case, it also functions as a lecture theatre.

With thanks to the suppliers

Templer's Mill wine is made by the University of Sydney at Orange. First-cross merino is the most commonly bred lamb for meat in Australia. Supplied by David Hughes Butchery, Orange. Corriedale is bred in Australia specifically for its meat. Supplied by Tony Manchester of Rosville Stud. Aged lamb is a style of lamb prepared for the export market. Supplied by Southern Meats, Harden. The peach and hazelnut tart was made by Yolanda Torrisi and Elisabeth Edwards. Barcelona hazelnuts supplied by Colin and Lyn McCrae of Anynco Hazelnut Farm. Scarlet Princess peaches supplied by Max and Grahame Davidson of Hillside Orchard.

Winetasting

Templer's Mill wines

Presented by Peter Hedberg,
Manager, University of Sydney,
Orange Campus winery,

served with
Jannei Dairy fresh goat's curd and cheddar

Menu

Presented by Del Rees
Manager, Banjo's Bistro
University of Sydney, Orange Campus

Barbecue: first-cross merino, Corriedale and aged lamb

Home-style coleslaw

Green salad

Potato salad

Peach and hazelnut tart

Orange Region Farmer Market Breakfast

Orange Region Farmer Market
Saturday, February 14, 2004

Menu

Spelt roll with venison chipolata, rocket, plum and date chutney

Fresh berries with goat's milk ricotta, roasted hazelnuts and honey

Coffee

Apple juice

With thanks to the suppliers

Spelt rolls and rocket from Waru Organic Farm. Venison chipolates from Mandagery Creek. Plum and date chutney from Dark Corner Delicacies. Strawberries, blueberries and blackberries from Borenore Berry Farm. Goat's milk ricotta from Jannei Dairy. Honey from Cabonne Country Honey. Hazelnuts from Anynco Farm, Toby's Estate coffee by The Coffee Stop. Appledale apple juice. Many thanks to manager Jane Arnott and all the stall holders of the Orange Region Farmer Market.

Box Dinner

Kitchen and dining room of
TAFE Western Institute,
Orange Campus
Saturday, February 14, 2004

Extravagance

Four serenades
from le Pigeonier

Sherry squab soup
Cargo Road
Gewurztraminer 2003

Bergamot-smoked breast of squab with merlot plum reduction
Bush Piper Cabernet Sauvignon 1999

Deep-fried legs and wings of squab with spice mix, deep fried turnip and speck
Belgravia Shiraz 2004

Squab custard Japonaise
Word of Mouth
Pinot Gris 2003

Chevre cinnamon toast
Monument Marsanne 2003 (mulled)

Economy

Boiled broccoli

Fried potatoes

Duck salad

Braised duck

Fruit crumble

Health

Fresh figs and goat's cheese
Brangayne Sauvignon Blanc 2002

Warm salad of pork
Monument SanGiovese 2002

Rhubarb and apple ices

Word of Mouth
Late Harvest Riesling 2002

MENU

Indulgence

Orange beans with red onion vinaigrette
Brangayne Sauvignon Blanc 2002

Pink rib-eye of beef with honey brown mushrooms, golden roasted potatoes and red wine jus
Bush Piper Cabernet Sauvignon 1999

Grilled green figs with vanilla bean icecream
Caleula Sauvignon Blanc 2002

Red chilli truffles

Novelty

Cauliflower cappuccino

Farmyard folly
Roasted free-range chicken with tarragon

Flower ice

Berry delicious

Convenience

Woodfired oven bread with chunky pesto

Zucchini flowers stuffed with goat's cheese

Tortilla Espanól

Chickpea salad

Beans vinaigrette

Grilled Cointreau-infused peaches with local raspberries

Monument San Giovese 2002

Monument Verdelho 2003

Word of Mouth
Late Harvest Riesling 2003

Tradition

and

Care

menus were consumed,

and forgotten.

For the Box Dinner, thanks go to…

the food suppliers

Squab from Cypress Valley Gourmet Kitchen. Chicken, pork, beef, rabbits, speck and bacon from David Hughes Butchery. Fresh herbs and vegetables from Waru Organic Farm. Garlic from Pariva Organic Produce. Basil from SallyDale Orchard. Goat's cheese from Jannei Dairy. Eggs from Produce Junction. Plums from Hillside Orchard. Berries from Borenore Berry Farm. Potatoes from John Streatfield, The Potato Man. Figs from Norland Orchard. Coffee from Toby's Estate. Goat's milk yoghurt and ricotta from Jannei Dairy. Smoked trout from Cowra Smokehouse.

the wineries who supplied:

Red: Belgravia Shiraz 2004. Bush Piper Cabernet Sauvignon 1999. Canobolas Smith Pinot Noir 2002. Habitat Pinot Noir 2002. Ross Hill Merlot 2001. Monument SanGiovese 2002.
White: Belgravia Viognier 2003. Bloodwood Schubert Chardonnay 2001. Brangayne Sauvignon Blanc 2002. Burke & Hills Chardonnay 2003. Caleula Sauvignon Blanc 2002 and 2003. Cargo Road Gewurztraminer 2003. Jarrets Marsanne 2003. Monument Marsanne 2003 and Verdelho 2003. Sharpe The Rose 2002. Word of Mouth Late Harvest Riesling 2003, Pinot Gris 2003.

our wonderful helpers and facilitators

Lesley Smith, Senior Head Teacher and Greg Robbins, Head Teacher, Tourism and Hospitality and their helpers John Olewciz, Michael Laroche, Jim Smith and Narelle Clark, TAFE Western Institute, Orange Campus for their generosity and help with staging the Box Dinner, welcoming the Symposiasts into their kitchen, providing access to the facilities and for their help with the washing up. Also Ray Ellice, TAFE Campus Manager. Justin Byrne, President, Orange Region Vignerons Association (ORVA), Rhonda Doyle, Bloodwood Wines and Michael Manners, Selkirks Restaurant for helping to source and deliver the wine.









Symposiasts busied themselves in the kitchen in preparation for the Box Dinner. The menus and table settings reflected followed antinomies under discussion: novelty and tradition, care and convenience, economy and extravagance, and health and indulgence.




Care and Convenience
FEEDING THE FORGOTTEN

The theme of this Symposium assumes that people can make choices about what they eat. But is that always the case? There are groups of people in our society who, for one reason or another, are subject either to someone else's choices or to such limited choices as to question whether they can be said to have choice at all. Prisoners are one such group. Refugees are another. The opening session of the Symposium was intended to ground subsequent discussions in the power and politics of the right to choose — food equity. The first paper looked at radical changes in food practices in a large-scale institutional setting for people with intellectual disabilities. The second reported on research into the food habits of young homeless people in an urban setting.

Institutionalising the deinstitutionalisation of food

Margaret Bail

I am not a food professional. I am an amateur cook, particularly of Indian food. Obviously, I enjoy my food and I love cooking for others. I love the pleasure we get from eating good food. I think and talk about food a lot. And most of the people I know and work with talk a lot about it too.

Since 1997, I have been the CEO responsible for the care of more than 500 people with an intellectual disability living in some large government institutions in western Sydney. The majority of our residents have been in care since they were children. The oldest resident is in his early nineties. The youngest resident is in her late teens. We no longer admit new residents.

It is government policy that these institutions are closed and our residents move into more normal accommodation in the community. This is usually in small group homes. It will go a long way towards improving the lives of our residents. Unfortunately, it is going to take some years before these institutions close. So how do we enhance these people's lives in the meantime?

The baby boomers among us do not need to be reminded that the populations of

nursing homes and hostels for older people are burgeoning. Although these places are presented as havens, gardens or oases of care, they are, at bottom, institutions too.

I have an abiding memory of my dearest friend who died in a very posh nursing home a couple of years ago. She was a large, gregarious, beautiful, loud and fascinating woman who lived for partying, good times, entertaining and lots of food and lots of drinks. From presiding over her very social and hedonistic world, a stroke took her to the nursing home. She could not read. She could not walk. She had to wear nappies. She could not chew. But she could spoon feed herself, although with dribbles. Her meals were always pureed. I am not sure exactly what it was; we used to search among the colours for clues. She could also talk a little. She sure let me know how much she hated all of it. But things were out of her control. Thankfully, this did not last too long. She contracted pneumonia and died in her sleep.

We often hear about pneumonia being the cause of death of people in institutions. This is often what is called aspiration pneumonia, caused by food that goes down the wrong way, or is not texture modified to suit the person, or which is fed to a person with insufficient care.

I recall, at the Adelaide Festival one year, that a group of people prepared some food and delivered it to patients in one of the Adelaide hospitals. This caught my imagination. On reflection, I realised that the people who received those generous offerings were probably sick people on short stays in hospital. People who live in different forms of residential care institutions are generally quite well. And they are living there for a very long time. Sometimes, for the rest of their lives.

They might be a bit bewildered. They may have physical and other disabilities. They might just be very old. Their lives are probably regimented. They are usually dependent on others for assistance. Lots of them need personal assistance to have their meals and in most other aspects of daily living. Some people cannot chew or swallow properly. Some cannot always clearly express their wishes or reactions.

But it is important to remember that they are usually pretty healthy for their ages and stages of life. And you can bet that meal times are something most take a significant interest in. If nothing else, a meal can break up an otherwise pretty dull day.

Imagine, then, the disappointment for the thousands of people living in institutions when meal times come around. The smell of the food is probably the same as yesterday. The look of the food is the same as last time: a serve of something white, something orange, something green, and something brown. Whatever it is, it is often served up as a khaki mush stirred up by a carer focussed on seeing that the food is consumed as efficiently, neatly and as quickly as possible.

People probably receive their basic need for calories. The likelihood of choking is minimised by food being reduced to a common puree. But enjoyment? Interest? A desire for more?

All of this is probably something most of us do not want to think about too much. But if we don't, the same fate will await many of us.

Where have we come from?

Let me tell you what it was like when I took up my position back in 1997.

People who live in the large institutions range from those with profound levels of intellectual disability, often combined with

severe physical disabilities, to those who may have fairly mild levels of intellectual disability but who have some form of challenging behaviour, sometimes associated with a psychiatric disability of some kind. So some people can walk and talk and can be old and a bit dotty — just like us and our family members and friends. They need a variety of support services to maximise their enjoyment of life and to keep them safe. They really do not need to live in institutions (even though some people have been in institutions for 50 years or more).

Others are totally dependent on staff for everything that happens to them. Helping these people enjoy their lives is much more complex. Some people do need nursing care for their medical conditions or epilepsy. Others need skilled intervention to manage destructive or aggressive behaviours. They certainly need total support of people who understand them and care about them to ensure their safety and wellbeing. These people do not need to live in institutions either: with the right supports, they live very happily and safely in group homes in the community.

The institutions had been set up on a medical model. This means that they were, essentially, hospitals. They looked like hospitals. They smelt like hospitals. They acted like hospitals. They were usually headed by doctors and staffed by nurses. Residents were treated as though they were patients, or sick people, and could be somehow rehabilitated. Some were part of large psychiatric hospitals. One had been set up in the late-sixties as a hospital for children with developmental disabilities; it was awarded the Sulman Prize for Architecture in 1969. They still are staffed by nurses. So there is, generally, some tension between nurses striving to be nurses in the old sense, focussing on giving medications, and more recent expectations that they concentrate on enhancing the lives of our residents.

Many large dormitory-style rooms remained, and in others, four people shared a bedroom. Most people did not have their own cupboards or dressing tables. Day rooms and dining rooms were large spaces shared by 24 people. Privacy was very limited. The environment was pretty grim. Two of the institutions were nine kilometres apart.

Whatever the food is, it is often served up as a khaki mush stirred up by a carer focussed on efficiently seeing that the food is consumed as neatly and as quickly as possible.

Each unit had a large pantry to which food was delivered by truck in foam 'dixies' from a 30-year old central kitchen. The equipment was old and outdated. Tiles were cracked. There was not much to inspire creativity or customer satisfaction in the environment. People with experience in cooking for the army would have felt right at home.

In the pantries, domestic services assistants dished food out on servery benches where it waited to be served to residents. Sometimes, it was a pretty long wait, depending on the support needs of other residents.

The menu was pretty boring; lots of stew and steamed vegetables (things that would transport easily and keep) or sometimes, for breakfast, just large quantities of baked beans from very large tins, heated up. I do not know how long these menus had been in place; they

were 'traditional' and only changed from summer to winter.

Although there were written menus, they were often changed on the day according to the meat that was available. To my horror, I learned that we got meat very cheaply from a technical college — after the apprentice butchers had been practicing on it. For some time. Even though a visit to the tech was organised, it did nothing to allay my concerns. (I also took the opportunity to ban the purchase of some very bright pink devon from the same tech. The devon fight went on for many months, but I believe I've won that battle.)

Having lots of soft stewy things meant that most people could swallow the food without too much trouble and staff did not have to help people cut up their food. There were also several people who had their meals pureed. I never saw a pureed meal served in any other way than stirred together into a khaki mush. Desserts — lots of custards and jellies — were served out from large tin trays. Sometimes the jellies had pieces of tinned fruit set in them. They were always in very bright colours.

I have a fond memory of getting a call one evening just as I was about to go home. One of the domestic services assistants was putting on a turn and refusing to serve the dessert. I rushed over to the unit and I found her swaying over a very large tin tray of lime-green jelly. She had obviously overindulged in pre-dinner drinks. I faced a major dilemma. I hated that jelly so much that I was tempted to stand by and just watch her fall into it. How deprived would our residents be? Would they enjoy the show more than the jelly? It was a tempting moment. But, my better behaviour took over and I walked her outside (she was not grateful) and organised for her to be driven home. I never went back to watch the jelly being consumed. I am sure it was, as it had been many times before and sometimes since.

As often as they could (and probably encouraged by staff) many of our clients — those who could speak up for themselves, anyway — often self-determined to order in takeaway food. Others went out in small groups to fast-food restaurants. Because we have a lot of staff from Chinese or Malaysian backgrounds, the takeaway food was often Chinese, rather than fatty Aussie-style takeaway (probably a bit of a bonus in nutrition terms). Some families, often those from cultures other than traditional Australian, also brought in favourite dishes from home for their family members.

The dieticians highly disapproved of so much takeaway food, generally high in salts and fats, and often in textures hard for our residents to swallow safely. And health regulations and new legislation militate against food being brought from home, mainly because of storage times and conditions.

What have we done?

In times of pretty scarce resources and in an era of fiscal frugality, we have had to be pretty opportunistic. Obviously, new funds have had to be directed to improving community resources, rather than propping up old institutions.

But when some windfalls have provided money to fix roofs and repair ageing buildings or ventilation, we have been able to remodel most accommodation units into suites of six-bedroom apartments, each with its own living/dining room. So, instead of 24 people crowded together, we have smaller groups of six sharing each apartment. Residents have their own private rooms. So the environment is radically improved. There is more privacy and dignity for the individual.

In partnership with our parents and friends group, The Western Sydney Intellectual Disability Support Group, a nutrition report was commissioned. The group was ahead of us in their concern and interest about the nutritional wellbeing of their family members and were keen to work with our staff. In addition to the educational value derived locally from such an exercise, the report had a broader impact on policy and practice. It put nutrition high on a to-do list, not only in institutions, but also in group homes, both government and non-government.

We hired dietitians and speech pathologists and interested other therapy and nursing staff in improving nutrition and food services. Within budget, we had to create new positions for dietitians as well as recruiting other dietitians on a sessional basis — an easier way to target the expertise you need. We also found a speech pathologist, one of the acknowledged experts on swallowing difficulties, or dysphagia.

These experts were not universally welcomed. They were seen as threatening the status quo and somehow critical of the professionalism of the nursing and other staff. There was a great deal of resistance and mistrust and undermining. Sometimes it was subtle. At other times, it was more like trench warfare. The existing nurses and food services staff saw the dietitians and speech pathologists as people with fancy ideas who did not appreciate the way things had always been. (And they saw me as the Wicked Witch of the West.)

But there were endless discussions and lots of meetings. We learned to be more persistent, more tenacious and more persuasive. I did get puzzled looks when I told the staff that meal times were more important than neatly made beds and even cleanliness.

We were still operating from the antiquated 1960s kitchen and new food services legislation was being introduced when we saw another opportunity. We contracted a report from a food services consultant. While it was most helpful, the report unfortunately

These experts were not universally welcomed. They were seen as threatening the status quo and somehow critical of the professionalism of the nursing and other staff.

recommended we use cook-chill food, either bought-in or produced in-house. There was a lot of support from the hard-headed accountants and economists in central office for cook-chill food, it made good economic sense. But we looked around and did not like what we saw. It was okay for short-stay sick people, perhaps, but not the well, long-term stay people we were concerned about.

Then we were allocated some limited funds to fix up the old kitchen so we had to start renovations while fighting a rear-guard action against the cook-chill approach. Through some devious negotiation and another report, we finally managed to get agreement that cooking fresh food would be better for the needs of our residents and should not cost more.

After more than a year, we ended up with a fantastic kitchen; it cost about ten times the original estimate. We also got a new system of trolleys that can deliver food hot and fresh or cold and fresh safely. That kitchen produces more than 1200 fresh meals each day.

We engaged and challenged our hospitality staff, especially our kitchen staff, in preparing food rather than producing meals. Despite

initial scepticism, they have a new level of interest in cooking. We also encouraged their interest in food by getting them to cook special menus such as an Arabian Nights' menu for our annual balls and other special occasions. It is terrific to see the pride of all the hospitality staff on these occasions.

We hired a hospitality services manager to support the food and domestic services and transport managers and to create a hospitality services team. This person has experience in international hotels and is making a real difference.

We trained all of our staff in using new equipment, new recipes, and food safety procedures. And we continue to train them. Because of new legislation, we have had to ensure that we are fully compliant with all standards and procedures. And while training in safe food handling and introducing systems and record keeping, we have also had to maintain a focus on presenting meals our residents want to eat. With a multicultural workforce, we have faced several challenges in communication and reporting.

We have made food and meal times one of the most important things we discuss, think about, meet about, argue about.

Food safety, legislative requirements and safe food handling brings other constraints, or other challenges, in trying to provide fresh-tasting food that also minimises risks. This is particularly important when you have a group of residents who are at higher risk than many people living in the community. Listeriosis is always lurking. This means that we have to accept, sometimes, that a fresh fruit salad might carry greater risk than tinned fruit salad. Or a fresh green salad must be impeccably handled. We cannot usually leave bowls of fresh fruit around for residents to help themselves. Unfortunately, some residents help themselves to the lot. We have to remember to offer a variety of drinks frequently because most residents cannot help themselves, nor ask for one. Staff have had to be reminded to do this often and not just at meal and tea breaks, which is the practice in most institutions.

When people are institutionalised in the ways things have always been done, it has been harder than you might imagine to institutionalise them into operating differently.

In addition to training, we have produced manuals and checklists — an institutional approach. We have bought new equipment — and then had to issue guides for its use. We have drawings of spoons and their capacities — "use this one for a serve of potatoes" — to ensure residents receive the right size servings. We have photographs of different food textures and ways of serving them. The focus is always to keep it attractive.

I am currently exploring a form of Indian thali or divided plate as an extra deterrent against mushing up the colours, or at least helping the colours and flavours of food stay separate, especially when pureed. Most divided plates look too institutional, or, at best, like cheap airline meals. We struggle for the normal in a not very normal environment.

We have introduced individual menus for each resident; all computerised to assist production and, more importantly, to ensure each resident gets food tailored to his/her individual need and preference. This can also ensure residents do not eat food to which they are allergic, or is inappropriate for religious reasons. Each resident has his or her own eating and drinking plan. These plans include

the addition of food supplements or additional serves of nutritious snacks.

We have made food and meal times one of the most important things we discuss, think about, meet about, argue about. We have about three different monthly meetings around food. We have monthly tastings of food; new dishes as well as tried and true favourites.

It is interesting to see the different perspectives that different professionals bring to these discussions and tastings. Dietitians are excellent on the content but not always on the form the food takes. There have been a few times when the other staff and the clients have objected to new dishes placed on the menu by the dietitians. One was when the meat was removed from the minestrone; the other was the introduction of a particularly wobbly egg slice, which did not travel well and went down less well. I think there was a lot of self-determining to eat out by the residents that night, that is, there was a mad rush down the road to maccas, KFC and the Chinese takeaway.

We have provided emergency packages of noodles, tuna, pasta, soups and baked beans, for example, to each residence in case they don't like the meal or the wrong one arrives. The choice is limited as most nursing staff do not see it as their duty to cook.

At the last tasting I attended we were served a very good lentil soup with a mild curry flavour (I forgot to mention that our hospitality services manager was born in Sri Lanka). The dietitian was not happy, she wanted to add more bulk to it by mixing rice into it. We had a lively discussion about nutrition and authenticity. I think we agreed that, for those who needed something extra, they could have rice on the side.

The level of interest and commitment has blossomed, and for those who are not really interested it has, at least, assumed a high level of nuisance value. So we have integrated good food, good nutrition and health eating into our daily routines. We have essentially institutionalised improved food services and nutrition. And we do not take any excuses and we never let up.

Take eating out, for example. Access to the community and maximising opportunities to do things everyone else in the community does is also high on our agenda. Some staff said it was too hard or too dangerous to take our residents out for a meal, which could be an excuse for doing nothing. So our cunning and committed group of dietitians and speech pathologists got together and prepared a guide to eating out. Not only did they write the booklet and take the photographs, they sampled the texture-modified food themselves. They assure me that a pureed hamburger tastes delicious, and a minced Chinese meal suffers little in the translation. Now, while I am a dedicated CEO with almost missionary-like zeal where food is concerned, I have not brought myself to verify this through a taste test. I have, however, looked closely at the pictures.

I am proud of what we have achieved so far and there is still a long way to go. There is still a little too much Hawaiian casserole about — the addition of pineapple is a scourge, although it is a great favourite among the older residents.

We are introducing more choice of dishes in our menu as our systems settle in. Along with our expectations we are changing the job titles from cooks to chefs. We are planning to introduce 'Chef on the Move', where one of our best chefs will go to a pantry in a residential unit and cook on the spot. Not only will residents enjoy the anticipation, sounds and smells of cooking, they will be able to enjoy foods such as grills and stirfries, which

because they travel less well are not often on the menu.

I want to retire soon. I tell my staff that I will not retire until we have achieved perfection. Their eyes widen in horror. Perhaps I am expecting too much?

I know that, through the work we have done together and with the fundamental changes we have introduced, we have established new ways of doing things which will last. We've set standards that have become second nature and 'institutionalised' a new system that will bring lasting improvements and new levels of enjoyment to our residents. Their families are pleased to see the changes too.

Our residents are among the least visible in the community. If we can bring these improvements to them, it sets examples of what can also be done in other institutions.

You can be assured that when I'm selecting my nursing home, I will have some pretty high expectations.

Eating rough – food justice for homeless young people in Adelaide

Sue Booth

On census night in 2001, there were 99,900 homeless Australians and more than half of them were under 25 years of age. Homeless people are one of the most marginalised groups in our society, their numbers are increasing and the profile of the population is changing. No longer are they characterised by the skid row, single, adult, male or the itinerant alcoholic swaggie of the Depression years. Homeless people in the 21st century are women, toddlers, teenagers, and families.

None of us here has any idea of what it's really like to be homeless, day in, day out, for months, or even years. Homeless people live their lives against a backdrop of violence, fear, uncertainty, stress and chaos. For many, the daily grind centres around trying to secure basic needs for human survival such as shelter and food. Poor nutrition through limited food intake has been cited as one of the many health consequences of homelessness, yet little evidence exists about the food intake patterns of this increasingly large sub-population. Food insecurity is one of the risks of living without stable shelter.

Food security can be defined as:

> "Access by all people at all times to sufficient food for an active and healthy life.
> It includes at a minimum the ready availability of nutritionally adequate and safe food and, assured ability to acquire food in socially acceptable ways."[1]

Australia with its abundant and varied food supply has been described as a food secure country. Paradoxically, there are some groups of the population who are food insecure, such as people living on low incomes, Indigenous Australians, disabled or aged people and the homeless.

I had to go without payments for two weeks and I lived without food for a week or so.

Given the limited time available here, I won't go into details about the research design or methodology involved in recruiting 150 homeless young people. (I'll happily bore you over a glass of red or two if you want to know more.) Suffice to say, given the complex nature of homelessness, a mixture of quantitative and qualitative methods were used to answer the research questions.

I'll cut straight to the chase and talk about the data. The data I will present today looks at food intake patterns and food sources of 150 homeless youth. It comes from my PhD research on the experience of food insecurity of homeless young people aged 15 to 24 years in Adelaide, South Australia. I'd like to acknowledge the support of my supervisors at this point, and the Adelaide City Council Scholarship in Public Health.

Individual food intake patterns of homeless youth in Adelaide

So what do homeless people eat? The food intake patterns of homeless youth in this study were characterised by the following three main points.

1. Homeless youth eat little per se and when they do eat, variety is limited.

> Nine per cent (n=14) had not eaten anything in the 24 hours prior to interview.
> Less than 10 per cent of respondents (n=14) had eaten foods from all five food groups in the previous 24 hours.
> Fifty-five per cent omitted at least two of the five food groups.

Three quarters of respondents failed to eat any fruit and half ate no vegetables in the last 24 hour. This is of concern because fruit and vegetables are valuable sources of anti-oxidants, vitamins A and C, fibre and folate and are widely agreed to be protective agents against a variety of health problems.

The data on limited food intake and variety is consistent with other studies of homeless young people in the UK, US and Canada and work on disadvantaged youth in Sydney. Limited variety is of concern because a mixture of foods across a range of food types in required to obtain all the nutrients essential to good health.

So how does this compare with domiciled young people? Using data from the 1995 National Nutrition Survey I was able to compare the food group data of homeless young people to that of an age-matched domiciled population.

> Not surprisingly, neither homeless nor domiciled youth were meeting the healthy eating guidelines.
> Homeless young people ate fewer serves of each food group than domiciled youth. There were significant differences between

the median serves of foods from the breads and cereals, fruit, and meat, meat alternative, fish, poultry groups.

2. Eating three meals per day is not usual and a reduced frequency of eating is commonplace.

- Less than one in five (n=27) said they ate three main meals per day.
- Rather, 60 per cent (n=90) said they ate three main meals per day, once a week or less often.
- Most homeless youth in this study — 42 per cent — reported eating one meal per day.

3. Despite the existence of welfare food services, hunger was a prominent issue for many respondents.

- Seventy-three per cent (n=83) said they went to sleep hungry once a week or more frequently.
- Fifty-three per cent (n=80) reported not eating for two or more consecutive days at some time.
- Those who had been homeless for more than 12 months were more likely not to have eaten for two or more days (p=0.003).

For example, Leo, one of the respondents, says: "Centrelink was supposed to send out a couple of forms to me so I got an interview for something, but they never made it to my postal address so they cancelled my payments. I had to go without payments for two weeks and I lived without food for a week or so".

Food Sources

I'd now like to shift focus to the food sources used by homeless youth in this study.

Homeless youth did not tend to rely on a single food source — usually they used a combination of welfare and other sources. In many cases these other sources involved unorthodox food acquisition practices such as theft or begging.

- Theft of food, 65 per cent (n=98).
- Welfare agencies, 63 per cent (n=94).
- Begging money for food, 61 per cent (n=88). Those who had been homeless before were more likely to have begged for food (p=0.019).
- Begging for food items per se, 44 per cent (n=63).

There was a significant relationship between those who had been homeless on a previous occasion and food theft and/or theft of money to buy food.

Males were more likely than females to have stolen money for food.

Four of the interviewees used jail or overnight alcohol detoxification facilities as a food source. This appears to be used as respite from life on the streets and an accepted strategy for some to access a high quality and varied diet.

Such is the attraction of detox or jail that some may deliberately engage in behaviours that increase the likelihood of temporary incarceration. Although reported by small numbers, this is of interest and had not been reported elsewhere in the literature to date as a means of food acquisition.

As Dimitri, another respondent, explains: "At least you get stews, lasagna, fish and chips, all that. People think it's hard in there [jail], it's not. You get like decent meals and that, it's a free roof over your head. It's just like a laugh, 'cos half the time it's [the food] better in jail."

So what? Limited food justice?

In commenting on the food provided by a particular church-based agency, a homeless young person told me: "I'm used to eating crap, but not that crap. Even God wouldn't eat that crap". This begs the question, why should he have to eat crap? Don't we care enough about our homeless young people

to help and support them with the best food possible? Why should they have to eat donated dayold cakes, pies and pasties that are barely warm, or a stew that was described as "roadkill on a plate"? You and I wouldn't eat that food by choice, so why should homeless people have to? The fact that they don't have a choice doesn't make it acceptable, nor should they have to be grateful. I find it disturbing that so-called civil society is willing to tolerate the fact that a proportion of people do not have access to adequate food, so long as it doesn't threaten all of us.

Homelessness is a complex social problem. However, we do have a responsibility to ensure that marginalised groups such as the homeless can access a flexible supply of fresh, acceptable contemporary food, while they seek support to make the transition off the streets. Access to a nutritious food supply is pivotal for adequate growth and development and wellbeing.

People think it's hard in there [jail], it's not. You get like decent meals and that, it's a free roof over your head.

Food poverty has grown in the rich world as a result of neoconservative policies and neglect by states of their international obligations. Food is a basic human right and the right to food constitutes a claim against the state, civil society and the private sector to protect, respect and fulfil it. The declining role of the state and the increasing role of welfare responses such as foodbanks and emergency food provision services are both symptomatic and symbolic of the failure of the welfare state to adequate address the needs of its citizens.

The term food justice asserts the human right to adequate food, especially for marginalised populations. This is a fundamental right of citizenship. Food needs to be shifted from a welfare discourse to a human rights discourse, politicians need civic urging to adopt a rights-based approach to food rather than seeing food as an economic commodity only. The right to food challenges food and agriculture polices and free-trade agreements. Until food is seen as a matter for justice not charity, there's little hope for progress on this issue. Our homeless young people deserve and are entitled to food justice in the 21st century.

[1] A Kendall, E Kennedy (1998). Domestic food and nutrition security – Position paper of the American Dietetic Association. Journal of the American Dietetic Association 98; (337).

Care and Convenience
FAST & SLOW

Recent years have seen the emergence of the Slow Food movement throughout the world as a counter to a food industry that appears every day to find more ways to pre-package food for people becoming increasingly time-poor. But Slow Food is not just about taking time to prepare and eat meals. It has become synonymous with the environmental, health and social politics of agriculture and with a new rural and artisanal utopianism. These papers consider aspects of slow and fast food, and the Slow Food movement.

Can Fast Food be Slow Food?

Roberta Muir

In his book, *The Pleasures of Slow Food*, Corby Kummer quotes Carlo Petrini, founder of the Slow Food movement, as saying: "To be slow just to be slow is stupid". Kummer explains: "The secret is to learn, to enjoy, and to savor."[1]

Many people when they first become acquainted with the Slow Food movement have the impression that slow food must, by definition, be food that has been cooked for a long time, like pot au feu and other long braised casseroles of Europe, or food that is intricate and time consuming to prepare, like a Thai curry requiring the squeezing of coconut milk and the pounding of a curry paste. While both of these examples could indeed qualify as slow food, I would like to suggest that not all slow food takes a long time to prepare or cook, and that food which is fast (in some senses) can indeed still be slow.

The words 'fast' and 'slow' have a long history: 'fast' originally meaning 'firm' and 'slow' meaning 'dull' or 'sluggish'. The word 'food' of course goes back to very ancient roots in our Indo-European past and interestingly relates also to the nurturing word 'foster'. Fast food entered the English language post WWII, in the 1950s, when mass-produced food started to become widely

available as an efficient and inexpensive way for busy workers to feed themselves and their families. Slow Food began in the 1980s as a protest against McDonald's and the homogenisation of flavours and cultures that it represents. This movement, the antithesis of fast food, places a strong focus on the leisurely and communal enjoyment of food.

It is this leisurely enjoyment that is the focal point of the argument that some food, quickly prepared or quickly brought to the table, can still be in the spirit of slow food. Some foods, such as fresh fruit or vegetables, require little preparation. Others with protected designation of origin under EU legislation, and those like them which the Slow Food movement is sworn to defend, have been prepared using time-honoured (and often time consuming) methods, by artisanal producers, and are preserved for future consumption. Such foods can be assembled quickly and enjoyed leisurely: true Slow Fast Foods!

At the first meeting of the Berkeley Slow Food chapter in the USA, Petrini described Alice Waters, owner of Chez Panisse restaurant and one of the founding members of the Berkeley Slow Food chapter, as "a whirlwind of activity, but in her heart she is slow, very slow".[2] Waters is an example of how someone can at once be fast and slow; how we can be productive in this modern, fast-paced world, and still subscribe to and embody Slow Food values. A little slow living, in fact, may make us even more productive in the long run.

Definitions

Fast and slow are generally viewed as antonyms. In order to consider whether these two apparently opposite words can be related (other than through their antinomy) it may be useful to consider their origins and meanings, along with those of other key words in this debate.

Food

A word used to designate something as basic to human survival as food must have very ancient origins. The Indo European root *pā-*, or *pī-*, led to the Germanic *fōth-*, from which Modern English derives two branches of words:

- *fostrom*, which in Old English became *fōstor*, meaning food, and led to *fōstrian*, meaning 'to feed or nourish', which became the Modern English word foster. The original meaning of 'foster' was simply 'to give food to' and it wasn't until the 13th century that it took on a more metaphorical meaning of 'encourage or cultivate' or 'to rear a child'. The Collins English Dictionary defines it as: 'to promote the growth or development of'.
- *fodder*, which gives us: *forage* (via Old French), and *foray* (most likely originally a search for food). The Old English *fōda* is related to Old Frisian *fōdia* meaning nourish or feed (as in 'foster' above), which brings the two strands of fodder and foster back together. [3, 4, 5, 6]

The Collins English Dictionary defines food as: "any substance containing nutrients, such as carbohydrates, proteins, and fats, that can be ingested by a living organism and metabolised into energy and body tissue."[7]

Fast

Fast meaning 'quick' and fast meaning 'to abstain from food' come from the same root: a Germanic word, *fastuz*, meaning 'firm'. From this ancient Germanic root, *festi*, meaning 'firm', entered Old High German, this became *fæst* in Old English, meaning 'strong' or 'tight', which eventually became 'fast' in Modern English. The sense of 'abstaining from food' derived from the concept of holding firm to a

particular observance (in this case abstinence from food). The sense of 'quick' is a later development (circa 13th Century) from the connotations of firm being extreme or severe.[8, 9]

Collins English Dictionary gives a meaning of 'fast' as: "accomplished in or lasting a short time".[10] 'Fast', used in the sense of fast food establishments refers to food that is truly fast in all senses: both accomplished in a short time and lasting a short time. But what of food that is assembled or prepared in a short time but lasts on the table and is enjoyed over a long period of time? Such food may have originally taken a long time to prepare and have been preserved (to last a long time) for later use. This more forgiving definition applies to the Slow Fast Food that is the subject of this paper.

Fast Food

According to lexicographer John Ayto, the term fast food originated in the USA in the 1950s to refer to food that could be "served quickly at a catering outlet or prepared quickly at home". As an adjective it referred to a place where food was prepared and kept hot, ready for immediate service, or partially prepared in advance so that it could be finished and served quickly.[11] Fast food has become synonymous with takeaway, a term coined in the 1960s as an adjective to describe "cooked food sold to be eaten away from the premises of sale". In the 1970s it became a noun indicating a shop selling this type of food (takeaways) and by the 1980s also referred to the meals themselves (eating takeaway).[12] In the 1970s, English gained another term often synonymous with fast food and takeaway: junk food, which also originated in the USA and which Ayto defines as "food that appeals to popular (especially juvenile) taste but has little nutritional value."[13] This lack of nutritional value brings it close to not being food at all by the Collins English Dictionary definition given earlier.[14]

Slow

The word slow also comes from a Germanic root: *slæwaz*, with an original meaning of 'dullness' or 'sluggishness'. It entered Old High German as *slēo* meaning 'dull', and then Old English as *slāw*, meaning 'sluggish'. The meaning 'without speed' was a later development from its sluggish origins.[15,16]

Collins English Dictionary gives, among others, the following definitions of 'slow': "Performed or occurring during a comparatively long interval of time"; "Lasting a comparatively long time"; "Characterised by lack of speed."

All of these are relevant to slow fast food, where it may be the consumption rather than the preparation, of the food that is characterised by lack of speed. Then again, something that takes little time to prepare is not necessarily done with speed (in the sense of rushing). A simple platter of fruit and cheese can be prepared quickly, but leisurely, and not necessarily with speed or haste.

Slow Food

Slow Food, The International Movement for the Defence of, and the Right to, Pleasure officially came into being in 1989.[17] Its origins however, were in 1980, when a political activist, broadcaster, writer and lover of good food and wine, Carlo Petrini, opened a modest *osteria* in his hometown of Bra. His aim was to serve good, local food and wine at low prices to all who wished to patronise his establishment. And in doing so, to reawaken an interest in, and therefore preserve, the regional foods and wines at risk of disappearing as local people gave up their farms in the surrounding countryside to work

in factories. This was to be achieved through encouraging the local people to enjoy, and therefore learn about, such produce. From this simple beginning, Petrini and his friends formed Arcigola in 1986, an organisation which fast attracted national support for its cause of supporting and promoting local wine, food and those who produced and served it. The now famous *Il Gambero Rosso* wine guide was Arcigola's first publication, followed by guides to Italian *osterie* serving traditional, local fare.

The decisive moment for this national movement came in 1986 when there was public outrage against the opening of a McDonald's in the Piazza di Spagna in Rome. Petrini soon realised that the effect of any localised demonstrations would be short-lived and that a more considered and far-reaching response was called for. McDonald's globalisation of taste represented the antithesis of all that Arcigola represented, and the threat it posed was not just to Italy, but also to all countries where it established its mass-produced, cheaply available alternatives to the local fare that Arcigola was dedicated to saving. So in late 1989, representatives of Arcigola met in Paris with like-minded delegates from 14 other countries, to form a new movement whose name, Slow Food, reflected its values and its genesis in an intention to defeat fast food.[18]

The Slow Food Movement

Petrini has been quoted as saying "those who suffer for others do more damage to humanity than those who enjoy themselves. Pleasure is a way of being at one with yourself and others".[19] His philosophy, and that of the Slow Food Movement, is therefore one of education through pleasure. As journalist Michael Pollen writes, Slow Food's approach is to simply "celebrate all those qualities that McDonald's inexorable drive toward the homogenization of world taste threatens: the staunchly local, the irreplaceably unique, the leisurely and communal".[20]

This philosophy is summarised in the official Slow Food Manifesto:

"Our century [the 20th century], which began and has developed under the insignia of industrial civilization, first invented the machine and then took it as its life model.

We are enslaved by speed and have all succumbed to the same insidious virus: Fast Life, which disrupts our habits, pervades the privacy of our homes and forces us to eat Fast Foods.

To be worthy of the name, Homo Sapiens should rid himself of speed before it reduces him to a species in danger of extinction.

A firm defence of quiet material pleasure is the only way to oppose the universal folly of Fast Life.

May suitable doses of guaranteed sensual pleasure and slow, long-lasting enjoyment preserve us from the contagion of the multitude who mistake frenzy for efficiency.

Our defence should begin at the table with Slow Food. Let us rediscover the flavours and savours of regional cooking and banish the degrading effects of Fast Food.

In the name of productivity, Fast Life has changed our way of being and threatens our environment and our landscapes. So Slow Food is now the only truly progressive answer.

That is what real culture is all about: developing taste rather than demeaning it. And what better way to set about this than an international exchange of experiences, knowledge, projects?

Slow Food guarantees a better future.

Slow Food is an idea that needs plenty of qualified supporters who can help turn

this (slow) motion into an international movement, with the little snail as its symbol."[21]

From the relatively small band of protesters who stood against a global giant years ago, Slow Food has become a force to be reckoned with.

Slow Food now has more members than McDonald's has stores — Slow Food has 77,000 members in more than 50 countries,[22, 23] and McDonald's has around 30,000 restaurants in 119 countries.[24]

Protected Designation of Origin (PDO)

More and more foods of regional origin are being protected under EU legislation. Many of these are exported from their places of origin to Australia and around the world. It is such foods that Slow Food is dedicated to preserving. Whether it is fresh Mozzarella di Bufala Campana air-freighted from Italy or a can of Piquillo peppers shipped from Spain, these foods are indeed slow foods, and in placing them on a platter with some suitable accompaniments and enjoying them at a table with friends and family (and a glass of appropriate wine perhaps) one is indeed indulging in slow food, although it has been very fast to prepare.

If you feel like lighting the stove and going a step further, tinned San Marzano tomatoes can be cooked with some onions and olive oil for a quick tomato sauce to accompany artisanal, bronze-extruded pasta. These tomatoes are another PDO product and in order to be so labelled must be of the San Marzano type, grown in the designated towns around Mount Vesuvius where the variety was developed and where the climate, soil and local agricultural practices produce these tomatoes at their best.[25] This meal can be on the table quicker than it would take for a pizza to be delivered: it's fast to prepare, but still very much in the slow spirit.

The Art of Shopping

I've heard it said that French women pride themselves, not only on their cooking skills, but also on their skill in the art of shopping. They don't worry about producing the perfect *tarte au citron*; they're far more concerned with knowing the best *pâtissier* from which to purchase it. Why go to the trouble of making a terrine or pâté when the *charcutier* just down the road does it as well (perhaps better) than they ever could. This is a philosophy that those after fast Slow food should take to heart.

Increasingly, we have access to artisanal producers creating foods that we may not have the time or inclination to prepare ourselves. We can benefit from their dedication, skill and labour, to put quality food, in the Slow spirit, on our tables in no time at all. Bread is one of the most obvious examples. Very few families actually bake their own bread, and so, for too long, many have had to put up with second-rate, mass-produced breads. Now, increasingly there are bakers using quality produce and time-honoured methods to produce a vast range of artisanal breads.

Farmers' markets are another great source for those wishing to live slowly in a fast-paced world. Here organic, local, rare breed, seasonal foods can be purchased for a quick assembly or preparation, so that we can eat well, even when we don't have a lot of time to spend in preparation. And for those who want to eat well but would prefer to spend their time in the kitchen or at the table rather than shopping, services offering boxes of organic produce, home delivered weekly, are yet another example of Slow Food philosophy that is compatible with a fast-paced lifestyle.

The Art of Assembly

Every cuisine offers food that can be put on the table quickly, but which is still true to the Slow Food philosophy of rejecting fast food that is homogenised and bland. It is possible to prepare food in a minimum of time and still support unique, quality produce enjoyed in a leisurely and communal environment.

Many preserved foods take on attributes very different from those of their fresh state. Neither is inferior to the other; they become very different products. The preserved ones however can often be brought to the table quickly to be enjoyed leisurely. It's not that these foods haven't taken a long time to prepare; rather that someone else (often with more skill in that field than most of us) has done the preparation for us. Spanish canned products such as Cantabrian anchovies (Ortiz is one brand available in Australia), Piquillo peppers, Tudela artichokes, and jars of tiny baby broad beans or white asparagus, are all good examples of such products.[26]

In Australia we have been denied the joys of true Iberian jamon and Prosciutto di Parma, but we do have specialist producers such as Angel Cardoso with his jamon, and producers of good chorizo, salami, bündnerfleish and other quality meat products made in traditional ways using excellent local produce. A platter of such meats served with some good olives and cheese (local or imported) form the basis of a meal that is at once very fast and very slow.

Chinese barbecue shops are a source of Peking ducks, barbecue pork and other meats that can be taken home and served with some simple accompaniments to form a delicious fast-slow meal. Most Chinese restaurants are happy to sell the duck pre-sliced along with the pancakes, hoi sin sauce and even cucumber and green onions for a do-it-yourself Peking duck feast (though I find the vegetables can sometimes be a bit tired and it's worth the 10 minutes it takes to slice some fresh). More and more fishmongers are selling sashimi-grade fish pre-sliced with the necessary accompaniments of pickled ginger, wasabi and soy sauce — though it's worth sourcing fresh wasabi root to grate at the table when it's available. Handmade sushi can also be purchased from many good Japanese restaurants for home consumption. It may be fun to try making your own if you have time, but chances are the sushi chef who spent years studying his art in Japan will have the edge over you. So why not enjoy the benefit of his skill? Some sushi dishes were in fact developed as fast food long before the expression entered the English language. Inari-sushi, tofu pouches filled with seasoned rice, is a popular takeaway food in Japan, carried by people hiking or travelling. Nori-maki, the thin rolls wrapped in toasted nori seaweed with a strip of seasoned gourd (kampyo), tuna or cucumber in the centre, was developed as food for gamblers (similar to Western sandwiches), so that players could

French women don't worry about producing the perfect *tarte au citron*; they're far more concerned with knowing the best *pâtissier* from which to purchase it. This is a philosophy that those after fast Slow food should take to heart.

get necessary nourishment without having to leave the gaming table.[27]

Australia's abundant array of quality fresh seafood offers another possibility for fast slow meals. Platters of freshly shucked oysters; hot smoked fish; boiled prawns, lobsters, crabs or bugs; gravlax and cold smoked salmon require very few accompaniments (lemon slices, a good mayonnaise, some great bread and finger bowls) to form a delicious meal. Fresh fruit and vegetables can also form the basis of a fast slow meal: perfectly ripe figs wrapped in wafer-thin prosciutto, fresh ripe tomatoes interleaved with slices of Mozzarella di Bufala and some fresh basil leaves, avocado chopped and dressed with some lemon juice and olive oil piled on fresh sourdough toast with some slices of sweet Kununurra onion and fresh herbs.

Many simple dishes taste just as good, in their own way, as those that require hours of preparation. A simple risotto can be prepared quickly from fresh green vegetables, dried mushrooms or — one of my favourites — preserved lemons and chicken stock that's been conveniently stored in the freezer. Spaghetti *alio e olio*, with good olive oil, garlic, chilli and parsley, is one of the best ways to eat good dried pasta.

Gourmet Traditional Fast Food

Slow Food is about quality produce prepared with integrity and enjoyed in a leisurely and convivial atmosphere. Some of the most typical fast foods can become slow foods when prepared with the best ingredients and enjoyed in the right spirit. The humble hamburger has been remade in its most gourmet form at db Bistro Moderne in New York, where for $US29 Daniel Boulud (of New York fine-dining restaurant Daniel) prepares a burger made from the finest sirloin, hand-chopped and moulded around a centre of shredded short ribs, studded with fresh foie gras, flavoured with shaved black truffles, and served with confit tomato and horseradish on a bun flecked with parmesan cheese.

Hotdogs can be made using undyed, quality frankfurts or other gourmet sausages, on sourdough rolls with homemade tomato sauce, good mustard and slowly caramelised onions, taking them far beyond the realms of the sad examples served outside football stands and night clubs. Pies can be 'mystery bags' or a flaky sensual feast of quality produce encased in a crisp pastry shell. Sandwiches can be sad, soggy assemblies of white tasteless bread, margarine and processed meat or a textural and savoury indulgence of sourdough bread, quality mayonnaise and delicious fresh fillings.

As food writer Terry Durack wrote of the db Burger: "junk food isn't junk when the ingredients aren't."[28]

The defining features of slow food are that it is made from quality produce and that we take time out to enjoy it, preferably in good company.

To return to Kummer's quote of Petrini: "To be slow just to be slow is stupid".[29] There are times for lengthy preparation and for long, slow cooking. But meals put together from well selected, artisanal, and fresh produce, which come to the table quickly with a minimum of fuss and is then enjoyed slowly, with good company and hospitality are indeed, just as much, in the spirit of Slow Food.

Such meals may include products with PDO status under EU legislation, or other similar products made by traditional methods in a specific area: the products Slow Food is dedicated to preserving. Knowing where to buy the best prepared foods (*patisseries*, *charcuteries* and other provedores that make life easy for the busy person), as well as farmers' markets and other sources of fresh, quality

produce is an essential skill for those in search of fast slow food.

Once quality produce has been procured, the art of assembly comes into play. Good produce is often best served simply, with the right accompaniments and very little preparation. Preserved foods (vegetables, seafood, sausages and cheeses), produce from Chinese barbecue stores, well made sushi, fresh seafood (raw and cooked), and fresh seasonal fruits and vegetables, can all form the basis of meals that can be on the table quicker than a home-delivery pizza. And for those who have the occasional craving for the more traditional fast foods, such as hamburgers, hot dogs, meat pies and sandwiches — they can all be prepared with fresh quality produce and enjoyed at leisure in the Slow Food spirit.

The difference between fast food and slow food isn't necessarily the time it takes to prepare the food; it is the quality of the food, the thought that has gone into selecting it and the leisurely and communal spirit in which it is enjoyed.

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[3] Bloomsbury Dictionary of Word Origins. J Ayto (ed.). s.v. food.

[4] Bloomsbury Dictionary of Word Origins. J Ayto (ed.). s.v. foster.

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[12] J Ayto (ed.). 20th Century Words, 444.

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[19] Corby Kummer, 18.

[20] Michael Pollan. Cruising on the Ark of Taste. Mother Jones: San Francisco, May/Jun 2003.

[21] *Slow Food.* <http://www.slowfood.com/eng/sf_cose/sf_cose_statuto.lasso>

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[23] Slow Food, History and Philosophy brochure. Slow Food press office.

[24] *McDonald's* <http://www.McDonald's.com/corp.html>

[25] *The Food Maven Diary*. Italian Food Labels <http://www.thefoodmaven.com/diary/archives/00000334.html>

[26] Spanish Gourmet, vol 59, Sept/Dec 2003, 12–25.

[27] Mas Watanabe, managing director Kikkoman Australia, in a conversation with the author, December 3, 2003.

[28] Terry Durack. Food for Thought, The Lite Fantastic. Sydney Morning Herald, December 6, 2003; Good Living (supplement).

[29] Corby Kummer, 26.

Fear, fantasy, and anxiety: welcome to microwave world

Roger Haden

Culinary Makeover: The Arrival of the Microwave Oven

> *The microwave oven: it sits there, in the kitchen, in the advertisements, white, rectilinear, trimly styled, somewhat enigmatic, banal.*
>
> Cynthia Cockburn and Susan Ormrod, *Gender and Technology In The Making*

The microwave oven was born out of research aimed at improving a device that employed radio waves for detecting objects beyond the field of vision: the radar. In 1939, a British invention, a vacuum electron tube called the magnetron, improved the radar's performance decisively. The magnetron's high-voltage system enabled 'micro-waves' to be produced.[1] After the war, in association with the Raytheon company of Waltham, Massachusetts, Dr. Percy L. Spencer carried out further experiments on the efficiency of the magnetron.

Towards the end of 1945, and having often stood near the antenna of the magnetron, Spencer sent out for a chocolate bar, it was said, and put it in front of the radar tube. The chocolate immediately melted, reports one of the early microwave cookbooks.[2] In doing so Spencer identified the culinary potential of the magnetron's by-production of heat and so began the process of turning a military waste product into a tool for cooking. "Radar technicians were sometimes known to pass idle moments using microwave beams to make eggs explode or to toast marshmallows," reported American journalist, Paul Brodeur, in his 1977 exposé warning of the supposed dangers of any unchecked proliferation of microwave technology.[3]

The microwave oven would begin its technical evolution as a cumbersome beast. Raytheon filed for a patent in 1945. In a sense acknowledging that, unbeknown to cooks, a different sort of culinary revolution was about to take place, the patent application was simply entitled, Treating Foodstuffs. A prototype cooker, the water-cooled Radarange, weighing-in at more than 340 kilograms and looking somewhat like a large refrigerator was designed and built in association with the Tappan Stove Company in 1946.[4] Prohibitively expensive, the Radarange was used commercially in hospitals and military canteens.

What actually happened to food inside this form of (electronic[5]) oven still appears as somewhat unnerving. "The microwave oven is entirely innovatory," write Cynthia Cockburn and Susan Ormrod, in the most comprehensive study to date of microwave oven design, production and use:
"[The microwave oven] cooks food by bombarding it with radio waves so that it in effect it cooks itself. The radiation causes absorptive particles in the food, particularly ions of salt and water molecules, to reverse their polarity about 5000 million times a second. So energetic is their movement that the friction generates intense heat, so bringing about the changes in food we call 'cooking'."[6]

One of the first considerations in relation to the design of a microwave oven suitable for home use was to create a sufficiently insulated box so as to protect users from this potentially harmful kind of electromagnetic radiation. Other dangers also became apparent. Spencer made culinary experiments using microwaves. He popped popcorn and cooked eggs, the latter on one occasion exploding in the face of a colleague due to the pressure which can so easily build up within microwaved eggs (and other microwave-heated foods). Many a cook has since found the splattered remains of nuked eggs on the inside of a microwave oven, having left them cooking for only seconds too long.

The super-heating capacity of the microwave oven also needed to be carefully controlled. Burns sustained from easily overheated foods continue to be a problem that can beset the inexperienced microwave oven user and which can result in anything from a scalded mouth or tongue to permanent eye damage and blinding.[7] Subsequent to zapping, such super-heated foods can also explode, usually in all directions, and even some seconds after being retrieved from the oven.

Unseen and undetected, the danger of microwaves themselves was that, technically speaking, they could cook without an enclosure, as Spencer had surmised. In this sense the microwave oven is not an oven at all. The term is a misnomer since the oven is actually a casement to allow for the confinement and circulation of the waves and to protect users, and not one designed to seal in heat as with conventional ovens. The microwave oven is not so much a container as a restrainer.

In more ways than one, the microwave oven appears to reverse the logic of conventional cookery. Without any flames or elements, or even the sounds or smells of conventional cooking, microwaving appeared as a strange new realm of culinary possibility. Cookery writer John Thorne describes the nature of the culinary experience of microwave cookery as being "heatless".

Microwave energy offers no equivalent experience to replace our intuitive understanding of heat. Indeed, one's inability to respond to protect oneself means the cooking food must be locked away out of reach.[8]

The absence of the haptic sensation of heat (except of course in the food itself) seemed to extend to the other senses as well: the smells, sounds, and even sights of conventional cookery were also missing, with foods being confined to the insulated box.

As the thermal logic of conventional ovens was supposedly adopted in relation to the new technology, the sprouting of urban myths testified to the dangerous 'illogicality' of 'the nuker,' as it became known:

> *"December 25, 1998, Canada*
> *Telephone relay company night watchman Edward Baker, 31, was killed early Christmas morning by excessive microwave radiation exposure. He was apparently attempting to keep warm next to a telecommunications feedhorn… Baker's body was discovered by the daytime watchman, John Burns, who was greeted by an odor he mistook for a Christmas roast he thought Baker must have prepared as a surprise. Burns also reported to NMSR company officials that Baker's unfinished beers had exploded."*[9]

The second example is more a description of a generic style of microwave oven mythology:

> *"A couple leaves their infant in the charge of a teenage, hippie-type girl while they go out on the town for the evening. When the mother phones home a few hours later to check up*

on things, the babysitter informs her that everything is fine and that she has put the turkey in the oven. A few moments later the couple recalls that they left no turkey at home; they rush home and find that the babysitter, high on LSD, has cooked their baby in the oven."[10]

Such horrifying, yet humorous, stories could be generated because of the strange new technology, one too easily misunderstood by an ill-informed public. This negative feedback, to use the terminology of radar technology, was countered by 'scientific' assurances in the microwave cookbooks: "Microwave ovens are as safe as any other kitchen heating appliance. Microwaves are non-ionising radiant energy, the same as radio waves. Very different though, from ionising X-rays, microwaves do not cause any chemical change. No harmful radiation is produced."[11]

This quantum leap in culinary technology was typically lauded as "the greatest cooking discovery since fire" by more than one microwave manufacturer.[12] Amana praised the microwave oven which it "considered an essential part of nearly two million American kitchens in 1975", the same year in which microwave oven sales surpassed those of gas ranges.[13] As Amana expressed it: "Every year hundreds of thousands of homemakers are adding the fastest, most modern device to their kitchens — the microwave oven. They like the convenience, its speed of operation, its energy saving economy, and its compact beauty."[14]

Without mention of cookery as such, Amana had hit the nail on the head. The emphasis on convenience, economy, and speed, combined to enforce a triumvirate of post-WWII cultural values which now appeared inscribed in the promise of a new mode of cookery, a word which under the influence of commerce would (in the US, at least) become synonymous with little more than the reheating of industrial foods.

'Magical' Microwave Cookery[15]

No one, of course, has been much fooled by microwaved meals themselves. The 'second culinary revolution' did not live up to even the most standard of gustatory expectations. A grilled chop is a grilled chop, one might say. Philosopher Jacques Ellul well represents the resentment felt toward microwave cookery: Another fine invention for nothing! ...the microwave... as if there were the slightest need to invent a gadget of this kind except out of curiosity to see if it would sell! Are our meals better? Are our roasts better cooked? Is our gratin better? Obviously not! The end result, then, is nothing.[16]

The myriad gustatory effects caused by the application of differently mediated forms of heat, varying cooking times, and a whole repertoire of methods (like frying, braising, steaming, blanching, searing, and stewing) were utterly compromised by microwave oven cookery. In spite of this kind of technical tweaking, which did indeed improve the performance of the microwave oven, the devices just did not produce anything like the conventional look or taste of convectionally-cooked food. Microwaved meats did not take on the colour of traditional roasts (or bakes, the modern equivalent); neither did breads appear to brown or produce a proper crust. The baking effects created in regular ovens were noticeably absent.[17]

In fact, microwaved foods appeared flaccid and uncooked; technically speaking microwaves did cook but failed to brown or give the flavours produced by the caramelisation process associated with browning.[18] Microwaves cannot brown because, as Harold McGee puts it: "the surface

[of food] gets no warmer than the interior".[19] The supposed culinary advantages of the microwave oven were therefore identified, if not indeed stressed, to shore up the apparent merits of the device in relation to this radical gustatory-visual disadvantage. By placing importance on aspects such as economy, efficiency, ease, convenience, hygiene, and nutrition, the poor flavour of some microwaved foods appeared as a small price to pay, especially for those disinclined to cook, or otherwise disinterested in taste for taste's sake. Predictably, culinary-gustatory advantages were underscored which further offset the microwave oven's shortcomings. Because of its rapid agitation of water molecules the microwave oven could cook high-moisture content foods like vegetables and fish, for example, very quickly, and literally in their own juice. Apparently serving to better preserve vitamins, minerals and colour, this steaming feature was heavily emphasised in the promotional material under the rubric of healthy cooking.

However, like the use of the term oven, steaming was also a misnomer, one used to describe — by way of familiar terminology — an entirely new culinary phenomenon: rapid vaporisation caused by superheated high-moisture content molecules agitated by friction.[20] Paradoxically, connoting traditional culinary processes like roasting, baking and steaming proved to be central to the discourse associated with microwave cookery, precisely because, as McGee points out, microwave cookery at times actually reverses the effects of traditional cookery. Particularly in the case of meat cookery, the "speedy heating... can cause greater fluid loss and so a drier texture", making "it more difficult to control the doneness of a roast".[21] With respect, the term 'roast' is here too misapplied, its use stressing how everyday culinary terminology must be invoked to make the strange effects of microwaving familiar. Fear and suspicion are never far from the daily choices we make about food.

In more ways than one the microwave oven appears to reverse the logic of conventional cookery. Microwave energy offers no equivalent experience to replace our intuitive understanding of heat. Indeed, one's inability to respond to protect oneself means the cooking food must be locked away out of reach.

Apart from ongoing technical tweaking, semi-successful culinary ways of solving the dissatisfactory texture, flavour and visual appeal of microwaved foods was to choose from a raft of marinades and coloured, edible paints, like Gravy Master, dehydrated sauce mixes, and textured coatings like Shake 'n' Bake, or "toppings of toasted bread crumbs or cracker crumbs [that] add colour and crispness to casseroles".[22] Kitchen Bouquet, bottled browning sauce, was recommended by Ginger Scribner, for example.[23] While browning sauce was predominantly a concoction of artificial flavour and colour, such products would supposedly add the colours and textures of roasts, crusts and caramelisation, while also simulating the tastes associated with such effects.

These barely successful simulations of Maillard reaction effects (convectional

caramelisation) only addressed part of the problem since, as it turned out, undesirable (non-convectional) Maillard reactions were also produced by the microwave oven.82 Authenticity was thereby also faked by the microwave cookbooks. They erroneously included recipes for gratin, for example, sometimes specifying the use of a conventional grill 'to finish' after the initial microwave cooking of foods was complete. Naturally, the taste of the dish would still be quite different. But what did that matter when cleanliness, convenience, and speed were being delivered? 'Roasts' and 'grills' could be reproduced as images to sell a device incapable of such culinary wonders. When Sylvere Lotringer (in conversation with Paul Virilio) affirms that "technology takes history by speed", one might add that the microwave oven took taste and culinary lore by speed.25 Also by stealth: images (of food, microwaves, and culinary settings) were produced as necessary accompaniments, a garnish needed to advance the cultural consolidation of microwave cookery practice. As Cockburn and Ormrod explain: "Ahead of the microwave oven comes its promotional image, the way we are invited to see it. In addition, with it comes instructional materials, carefully written and illustrated to ease the changes in cooking practice the user must adopt. Only by such accompaniments will large numbers of people consent in the microwave cooking project as customers who in turn become users (cooks and eaters), so establishing this innovatory cooking practice as popular culture."84

The microwave oven does not directly challenge old ways of cooking. It can easily be added to existing kitchens without the need for extra space, or for gas supply fittings or exhaust fans. As Cockburn and Ormrod state: "The great marketing advantage of the microwave is that it is an addition to our domestic equipment. It does not imply, as many new technologies, the scrapping of the preceding one."[27]

The microwave oven also appears to cater for all times and places and to the immediate needs of consumers. If those consumers also want to cook in the old-fashioned way they can. Voicing concern, Margaret Visser and Ellen Stark describe microwave oven use as typifying a broader trend: "The peculiar impersonality of microwave technology is important. The future, as seen by microwave and microwaveable food-producers, contains refrigerators but no stoves, plenty of shelves and more than one microwave per family. The warm stove, our last connection to the sustaining hearth fire, would disappear, as would the slow, sweet smells of cooking that we associate with it. Those qualities of the family meal, the ones that imparted feelings of security and well-being, might be lost forever in a world where food is 'zapped' or 'nuked' instead of cooked."[28]

Indeed, produced within a culture of growing technological immediacy, of telematics, 'instant' foods, and artificial flavour and colour, microwave oven use signalled a reconfiguring of the social and culinary order within which taste itself was experienced differently. Arguably, taste in the 21st century may well become increasingly associated with effects, sensation itself being regarded as a distinct product (and therefore marketable), and separate in kind from such old-fashioned added values as health, nutrition, or the cultural symbolic. Simply put, significance, as such, will no longer play much of a role when taste sensation is measured as effects.[29]

A hypertrophy of sensation is now represented as the raison d'être of taste.

KFC's Zinger chicken burger, for example, is described as "the tastebud thumper", while its deep-fried popcorn chicken are "mouth poppin' fun for ya tongue".[30] The microwave oven and its use has facilitated and still supports this reconfigured taste, one increasingly inured to the thrill of pure effects, the momentary and instantaneous thrills which the portable, easy-to-use microwave oven seems to encourage. At the same time taste appears less connected to the potential organic and semantic links of which, historically, it has been the register. Effects, as it were, stand in for (culinary) causes. This phenomenon is reflected by the contemporary philosophical divide between fast and slow food.

In the West, during the course of the 20th century, the needs and desires of individuals tended to take precedence over familial regimes of order and control. This was reflected in patterns of eating and cooking. The ordering of such events in the home typically belongs to that great age of domestic regulation, the 19th century.[31] Today, more people than ever before are living alone. In the 21st century, family life and the home will no longer anchor or mediate the eating experience of individual consumers. As the age of the nation state passes into that of global technocracy the satisfying of individuated needs and desires rather than those defining group value systems like the family will appear as one sign of a globalised citizenry.[32]

In this context, the microwave oven is a decentred point of command within a network of diverse consumer appetites.[33] No longer the hearth and home centrality of the warming range, or the oven as familial 'focus' (the Latin word for hearth), but a mobile heating unit designed for the individual's needs. Microwave ovens function within everyday patterns of life, involving human actors who (feel they) must quickly choose and eat their food, or who are constrained to dine at certain times, in certain places. The needs of the temporally harried, or of the culinarily challenged, are thereby catered for by the convenient microwave oven. It has proved useful to "all classes, age groups, and lifestyles", Cockburn and Ormrod confirm.

Moreover, convenient microwaveable foods appear to keep pace with the public's perception of accelerating change and its demands on the individual to perform efficiently, whatever that is supposed to mean. Tailored to psychological as much as spatio-temporal spaces, the speedy microwave oven provides a near absolute flexibility. Homes can behave more like service centres or drive-ins, where microwave oven use in the bedroom, garage, caravan, or car (battery-operated microwaves are available) need not interfere with others' personal activities. Eminently multicultural and tolerant, the microwave oven does not discriminate; it separates. Its ease of operation and portability, in particular, accommodate those whose interest in food might be vicarious, or hormonally-driven. Inscribed in part by a global taste for similar foods, music, and fashions, teen tastes, for example, are contingent upon a variety of impulses and unpredictable desires, well served by the microwave oven. Teenagers can indulge (in bedrooms, or dormitories) in individual acts of consumption, of typically adolescent foods: cool mixtures of fast-acting fixes, fat-bombs, and sugar-hits.[34]

The microwave oven serves the same global citizenry that academics write of in terms of cyber-identity, "transnational sensibilities", and "global metropolitanism".[35] Yet such a postmodern world-on-a-plate theoretical approach only works well — that

is, in positive terms — as a reimagined identity in a supposed electronic extension. However, the empowerment implied by such approaches seems less relevant in the context of microwave world, where the technology is embraced more as the necessary means to negotiate banal, everyday worlds of activity; a negatively-charged device that helps those who hate to cook. A retreat from culinary engagement to a form of gastro-anomie.[36] Microwave cookbook writer Jenny M. Webb inadvertently got it right in 1977 when ,with reference to microwave oven use, she wrote of a new concept of cooking food, one that will "introduce a new thought pattern to the preparation and cooking of food today and in the years to come".[37]

Indeed, beneath the veneer of marketing promises that promoted the microwave oven as futuristic, revolutionary, and fabulous for those who loved food it was, arguably, deeply entrenched cultural anxieties and personalised phobias concerning food and eating that actually sold the microwave oven, a device that suited those who did not want to cook more than those who did. Along with a dissembling disinterest in cookery, food, and taste (something the gastronome Brillat-Savarin would have associated with barbarity, misery, and miserliness), I suggest people who know nothing about food also tend to fear it at a deeper level. Because we ingest food, take it into our bodies, this simple process can be a worrying act for those who lack real knowledge or understanding about what it is they are eating. Open to suggestion from a media which paradoxically raises anxieties in order to sell 'safe' products, the fear generated by attack-of-the-microbes-type advertising rhetoric, for example, maintains a heightened level of culinary xenophobia. It is the industrially processed, untouched-by-human-hands, branded safe foodstuffs that appeal to a consumer taste shaped by a formidable ignorance about food and its origins. With its clean, safe, and quick image, the microwave oven was sold on the basis of such food-negative, value-adding, to the culinary slob or ignoramus, who, at the same time, were people horrified by food — just what the urban myths so accurately picked up on.

Yet the microwave oven and its sanitary and fast fodder was, and is, also very convenient for the fussiest of diners. John Thorne cites high-profile food columnist, Corby Kummer, whose declared love of the microwave oven in the early 1980s, and of microwaved fish in particular, was predicated on the fact that, according to Thorne, "the microwave owner can buy, cook, and eat fresh fish without ever having to touch it".[38] Mexican poet and theorist Octavio Paz, describes the pervasive cultural dimension of this ethic of hygiene in terms of food: "The separation of one food from another is analogous to the reserve that characterises the relations between the sexes, races, and classes. In our countries [Middle and Latin America] food is communion... Yankee food, impregnated with Puritanism, is based on exclusions."[39]

The microwave oven appears as weapons in the fight to achieve autonomy from others; and from the worrisome dangers of 'real' food.

An expression of such a gustatory sensibility can also be discerned in Cockburn and Ormrod's account of the microwave oven. They write that one of the benefits of microwave cookery is that it cooks food so as to keep foods (and tastes) separate: "there is no transfer of flavour when several things are cooked together".[40] Is this also evidence of a deeper (puritanical?) contempt for culinary complexity and mixture, and moreover, of the germs and miasmic odours they might harbour or emit? If so, it provides an additional explanation for the microwave oven's popularity in both Britain and the US.

Culinary history, lore and practice — as well as food — become un-familiar, as the microwave oven provides a means of general avoidance: food, culinary history and techniques, the social forms of engagement implied by food and eating, and the time required by culinary effort itself are the casualties of this kind of cooking.

Microwave World

During the 20th century many theorists referred to a modern world, which created in its image a divided modern subject, to which the microwave oven seems suited.[41]

Oddly apposite in this context is a comment by phenomenological psychologist Jan Hendrik van den Berg, who found the microwave oven's forebear, the radar, to be the very technological embodiment of such divided existence. He traces certain literary figurations of this in the form of the doppelganger and of the monster in Frankenstein. In the 1950s this double would re-emerge as the cyborg, or replicant.[42] That product of the Enlightenment, the idealised, rational, autonomous individual rising above the superstition and collective mentality of the premodern era paradoxically produced real anxieties and fears. In the early 21st century individual autonomy still has a powerful mythical force in the social consciousness. At the same time however, social avoidance is also a reality.

> Microwave heat is arguably analogous to the information science of which it is the by-product. The food itself is cooked but fails to deliver the signs of the cooked. The whole semantic context in which cooking has traditionally played its part is voided.

For van den Berg, the radar was more than a symbol; it was the material realisation of a divided social technology. As a community of consumers we have our microwaves, but also need our personal radars. Following sociologist David Reisman's earlier argument, in *The Lonely Crowd*,[43] van den Berg described the post-WWII period having reached a stable destiny of the population: "...the third era began, only if because the sheer number of people made it impossible for the person to set his own course. The possibility to disperse, to try one's luck somewhere else, soon belonged to the past; every desirable spot appeared and appears... to be occupied... the world which had appeared large in the second era [of world exploration and colonisation] becomes small... He who wants to be active in whatever sphere of life has to provide himself with a kind of warning organ, so that he avoids being a nuisance to others. Radar is the symbol of our time. A device which prevents us from

interfering with other peoples' business. In this way everybody avoids everybody else with the object (and the solace) of a universal coexistence. In regard to other people everybody is provided with reserve, with a certain alertness, a certain watchfulness— a diffuse anxiety...[44]

Van den Berg paints a scene of the end of individual autonomy, if not of agency. The radar figures here as the technological echo of diffuse anxiety.[45] It embodies and reflects the social logic of separateness, avoidance, and modern individualism. Everybody avoids everybody else with the object (and the solace) of a universal coexistence. The microwave oven, the progeny of radar technology, also arguably accommodates the need to be separate, but in control. It serves to assuage a diffuse anxiety that, for Reisman, was "other-directed... like a radar". [46] "The traffic between metaphors and machines and… the transformative effects of this traffic", in the words of Evelyn Fox Keller, applies perfectly in the case of the microwave oven and the radar: machine-metaphors that inscribe as they facilitate socio-cultural separation.[47] They appear as weapons in the fight to achieve autonomy from others and, in the case of the microwave, from the worrisome dangers of real food.

In this context, separateness figures as one of the literal attractions of commercially-produced microwaveable foods. Margaret Visser and Ellen Stark write: "[We] don't like food that looks raw, so many best-selling microwave foods are coated in pre-yellowed crumbs. Coatings are very big in the microwave business — they provide protection and cover a multitude of sins. They emphasise the self-sufficiency of each little object. Microwaves happen to prefer food in smallish pieces, but that 'clear clean, separate' appearance potently symbolises the image we entertain of ourselves. We are individuals, if all comfortingly alike: We do not cling, stick or mingle. We do not need to share, to talk, to interrelate."[48]

Beyond what they call the "infantile desire for self-gratification", which microwave convenience supposedly satisfies, Visser and Stark also suggest that we also seek the equally childlike wish to buy food that looks good before we heat and eat it. "Above all, fast foods embody cleanliness, a modern Western version of the ancient concept of ritual purity. Most frozen microwaveable meals for the home look hygienic, carrying the message that what is inside is protected, controlled, clean and safe."[49]

This logic underscores that a deeper and insidious psychology of fear and avoidance is being supported by microwave oven use. Diffusely anxious and suspicious of food, as if it were an alien other, self-catering microwave cooks place their faith in the technology of industrial food production, with its guarantee of purity. In doing so they avoid, or at least, minimise, contact with food — and others.

In so far as the microwave oven required images to sell it, it was a prototypical post-modern device (a term used as early as the 1950s by sociologist C Wright Mills)[50].

It represented the absolute latest in new technology, while it was also the product of a culture whose nostalgia for the past was becoming endemic. A nascent information technology would eventually dominate in terms of reinventing the past. It also proved indispensable in reproducing the historicised culinary aesthetic that helped sell the microwave oven. Secondly, microwaved food retained little in terms of gustatory depth, of taste linked to the traditional culinary transformation of food. Thirdly, microwave

cookery culture, reliant on a surface aesthetic of signs, functioned as a separate realm to that of the actual substances they denoted: a façade of images disguising blandness and conformity. In postmodern terms, sign and referent had parted company.

An early by-product of the information age one could say the microwave oven cooked via a manipulation of the interaction between context and content. Truth and meaning (in cookery) were suddenly under fire from a new order of rational intervention, that of cybernetics (the science of informatics control). Cybernetics dealt explicitly with the variables implied by energy and environment. Cybernetics was not concerned with truth, or meaning, and certainly not with cookery. Thus, strangely, microwave cookery appeared to strip food of any sign of its traditional culinary effects. Microwaved food is, technically-speaking, cooked but shows none of the many changes that the thermal contact of searing surfaces, hot air, and intense heat sources produce. Microwave heat is arguably analogous to the information science of which it is the by-product. The food itself is cooked but fails to deliver the signs of the cooked. The whole semantic context in which cooking has traditionally played its part is voided.

The culinary shift marked by the microwave oven is emblematic of both the cultural and technological shifts recognised as characteristic of both post-modernity and the information age.[51] So when Paul Virilio writes that "the simultaneous inventions of the bomb and the computer would ... perfectly illustrate the marriage of inconvenience between energy and information" in the post-war world, we might say that the microwave oven — a lesser known invention in that year of the bomb — was in its own way, as revolutionary as atomic devices or computers.[52] Yet given that the microwave oven was an invention of information science, it more embodied a marriage of convenience between energy and information.

The cultural shift from actual cooking to food processing also accurately reflects the degree to which this instrumentalised, informational cookery replaced the kind of corporealised knowledge associated with conventional heat, traditional cookery, and its associated patterns of tasting. Quite literally, microwave cooking (processing) is also more pervasive than most may realise. Four-hundred kilowatt microwave cookers now temper almost two billion kilograms of frozen foods a year in the United States.[53] The microwave irradiation of foods used since the 1950s for preservation and sterilisation purposes alone, including the pasteurisation of milk, is a widespread form of industrial cookery.[54]

In an age of convenience, the microwave oven exemplifies the convenience delivered by microwave technology on a much broader scale. Mobile phone and television networks, not to mention health-related technologies like those used for cauterising and to treat ailments like bursitis, all use microwaves, as do radar, telecommunications technology, military guidance systems — and now bombs.[55] Even more than 25 years ago, Paul Brodeur could catalogue how microwave technology had already been used: "... to dry potato chips and pasta; to roast soy beans, coffee beans, sunflower seeds, and peanuts; to proof and fry doughnuts; to precook bacon; to temper various meats; and even to facilitate the shucking of oysters. Elsewhere in industry, microwave ovens and furnaces are used to dry yarn, paints, ceramics, paper, leather, wood, tobacco, cellulose and pulp, textiles, pencils, match heads, and wet books,

and also to cure chemicals, rubber, resins, nylon, rayon, and urethane."[56]

Borrowing Cockburn and Ormrod's expression, we undoubtedly live in a microwave world. The microwave oven is not only invested with the knowledge of its age but provides a recipe for how the cultural ingredients of the new form of knowledge (information) is (re)combined in a wider context.

An analogy between an oven type and the age in which it functions can be used to foreground a particular cultural climate along with its specific orientation of knowledge; and following this, reconfigured taste relations.

As ovens go, the microwave oven might be regarded as an abjectly functional object, but for all that it remains emblematic. While mainstream Western culture has surely passed the point of believing in the isomorphies which were once thought to exist between the oven and the cosmos in premodern times, such isomorphy is nonetheless present in our own era and can be read in terms of the microwave oven's figuration of post-modernity and of information science.

The next generation may not recognise the oven as we yet know it, even the microwave is being usurped by infrared and magnetically-powered heat generation systems. Yet, it remains exemplary. It can, as Brillat-Savarin suggested of food, tell us both who, and what, we are. Information age technologies of taste combine the material experience of taste and eating with sophisticated representations of food; actions seamlessly merged within the equally consumable world of the mediascape.

Worthy also of consideration are the corporeal effects of the sign-mediated substances that now appear to dominate Western diets. The microwave oven is a culinary icon of the global community which feeds within this world. A silent and infiltrating technology, against which culinary culture has proved somewhat defenceless, the now networked microwave oven is our virtual hearth: a radioactive facilitator of global taste relations.[57] Taste within microwave world has been thoroughly deconstructed, as it has been chemically reconstituted, synthesised, multiplied, and reproduced. Like the radar's rebounding signals such tastes are jointly manufactured in chemistry labs and in advertising agencies, only to be turned back upon consumers themselves. They are tested on us. (The Latin, tastare, means to taste, test, and touch.)

Thus, our environment has become hostile in ways we have not yet fully comprehended. Moreover, any overt correspondence between present day taste relations and the ubiquitous culinary culture of the microwave oven has so far remained as invisible as the waves themselves, and consequently, unremarked on. Including many authorless cookbooks, microwave oven culture has also inscribed an anonymous history, and remains a little recognised icon of our age; one we scarcely deign to even notice.

[1] Microwaves fall between radio waves and infrared radiation in the electromagnetic spectrum. Beyond microwaves, infrared light, visible light, ultraviolet radiation, X-rays and gamma rays are characterised by successively higher wave frequencies. At the other end of the spectrum, radio waves can have a frequency measured in single hertz, while microwaves are measured in thousands of millions of hertz, and gamma rays, in millions of trillions of hertz.

[2] No author cited, The Amana Guide to Great Cooking with a Microwave Oven. New York: Popular Library, 1975: 8.

[3] Paul Brodeur. The Zapping of America: Microwaves, Their Deadly Risk, and the Cover-Up. New York: Norton, 1977: 25.

[4] The microwave oven is, quite literally, a radiating machine, as are conventional stoves. The difference between the heat of a radiant source, like a fire, and the non-ionising radiation of the microwave's molecular disturbance and the much deadlier variety of ionised

radioactivity. whereby tiny particles are produced, for example, as gamma rays is, by degree, self-explanatory.

[5] The microwave is, technically speaking, electronic since it utilises vacuum-tube technology — in this case, the magnetron — common to many earlier forms of electronic device such as radar, radio, television, and computers.

[6] Cynthia Cockburn and Susan Ormrod. Gender and Technology In The Making. London: Sage, 1993: 17.

[7] See, Yoo, Rivera, Campbell, and Butrus. Corneal Injury From Explosion of Microwaved Eggs. American Journal of Ophthalmology, March 1998 v125, n3: 390-3.

[8] John Thorne. Cuisine Mécanique. Journal of Gastronomy, Summer, 1990: 74.

[9] *Darwin Awards*. Accessed 30/01/04. <http://www.darwinawards.com/legends/legends1998-11.html>. My thanks to Barbara Kirschenblatt-Gimblett for directing my attention to this site.

[10] *Snopes*. Accessed 30/01/04. <http://www.snopes.com/horrors/drugs/babysit.htm>

[11] Sunset Microwave Cook Book. Judith A. Gaulke (ed.) Menlo Park: California: Lane Publishing Co., 1976:7.

[12] The Amana Guide to Great Cooking with a Microwave Oven, 9.

[13] The first home-size electronic (microwave) range was marketed in 1955; the first bench-top model in 1967, both by one of the innovative leaders in present-day microwave oven production, the then Idaho-based company, Amana Refrigeration, which became a subsidiary of Raytheon in 1965. However, according to Harold McGee, the Western home market for microwave ovens opened up "rather suddenly" in the 1970s. Harold McGee. On Food and Cooking: The Science and Lore of the Kitchen. London: Unwin, 1986: 619.

[14] The Amana Guide to Great Cooking with a Microwave Oven, 7.

[15] Many of the microwave cookbooks, inspired by the radically different technology, played on the notion of magic. The Magic of Microwave Cookbook, for example, was produced by the Microwave Division of the Magic Chef kitchen appliance company of Alabama (New York: Golden Press, 1981).

[16] Jacques Ellul. The Technological Bluff. Bromiley (trans.) Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1990: 263.

[17] This problem has to some extent been overcome by so-called combi-ovens, which combine microwave and convection heating systems. It should be noted that the two systems are by nature incongruous; by speeding up the cooking process by microwaving the gustatory range of effects produced by convectional heating, such as grilling, is still ultimately compromised.

[18] Such caramelisation, known by its scientific name as the Maillard reaction, was regarded by Brillat-Savarin as a primary culinary virtue. The Maillard reaction was named after the French scientist, Louis-Camille Maillard who, in 1912, discovered that single sugars, heated with amino acids, turned brown and produced aromas. See, in particular, Harold McGee. Osmazome, the Maillard Reaction and the Triumph of the Cooked. Taste: Proceedings of the Oxford Symposium on Food, 1987: 133-135; also see, idem, From Raw to Cooked: The Transformation of Flavour. The Journal of Gastronomy, Vol 6, No. 2, Autumn 1990: 24-30. Writing of foods in particular, reporter Julie Johnson remarks: "The key to much of the flavour of conventionally cooked food is a sequence of chemical events called the Maillard reaction. This is a complex reaction between sugar molecules and the amino (-NH.sub.2) groups of proteins. It results in the browning or 'caramelisation' of the sugars, and is what gives bread a brown crust, for example." Julie Johnson. Why Microwaved Foods Fail the Taste Test. New Scientist, Jan 18, 1992, v. 133, n. 1804: 20.

[19] Harold McGee. On Food and Cooking, 618-619.

[20] Restaurants today take particular advantage of the microwave oven for this purpose because it allows for a side order of say, broccoli, to be heated quickly on the plate on which it will be served. The tell-tale sign of such microwaved food is to witness over steamy dishes. The downside of such a system is that microwaved food can not only be overheated —hence the tell-tale steam — but once uncovered, in releasing copious amounts of steam, such foods also cool almost as rapidly as they were heated.

[21] Harold McGee. On Food and Cooking, 618.

[22] The Amana Guide to Great Cooking with a Microwave Oven, 19-20.

[23] Ginger Scribner. The Quick and Easy Microwave Cookbook. New York: Weathervane, 1978: 7.

[24] See the cover of Sunset's Microwave Cook Book (Second Printing: March, 1976), for an excellent illustration of a 'roast' chicken after being coated in soy sauce (according to the recipe). Note also the pre-carousel microwave oven in the background, which made the even cooking of large pieces of food difficult at best. On undesirable Maillard reactions see, Trends in Food Science and Technology, December 1991, 329, and, Julie Johnson. Why Microwaved Foods Fail the Taste Test. New Scientist, Jan 18, 1992, v. 133, n. 1804: 20.

[25] Paul Virilio (with Sylvere Lotringer). Pure War. New York: Semiotext(e), 1989: 31.

[26] Cynthia Cockburn and Susan Ormrod. Gender and Technology In The Making, 17.

[27] Cynthia Cockburn and Susan Ormrod. Gender and Technology In The Making, 17.

[28] Margaret Visser and Ellen Stark. A Meditation on the Microwave. Psychology Today, Dec 1989, vol. 23 n12: 39.

[29] Sensates are merely the latest scientific innovation that bring us ever closer to the total manipulation of taste. They simulate the coolness of menthol, or the heat of ginger, and can be added like the artificial

flavours and colours of old. “Confectionery that pops in the mouth is a different phenomenon because it is a physical effect,” suggests International Flavours and Fragrance director (Asia Pacific), Jesse Wolff: “Particularly with the younger market, people are looking for sensations and new things to try.” The Australian, August 20, 2003: 6.

[30] Not knowing the constituents of this ‘popcorn’, the fact that corn is mentioned certainly gives something away. Corn is one the most interconverted foods on the planet. In this instance we might only wonder at what form this particular food substrate takes in KFC’s ‘chicken’ product. On corn’s myriad uses and abuses, see, Margaret Visser. Corn: Our Mother, Our Life. Much Depends on Dinner, London: Penguin, 1989: 22-55.

[31] On the changing roles, demands, and powers of young American people in the early 20th century, see, Robert S. Lynd and Helen Merrel Lynd. Middletown: A Study of Modern American Culture. New York: Harvest Books, 1959 [1929].

[32] On globalism, food and identity see, Elspeth Probyn. McIdentities: Food and the Familial Citizen. Theory, Culture and Society, vol. 15, No 2, 1998: 155-174.

[33] In March, 2003, the LG company marketed its Internet Refrigerator, “the central appliance in LG’s Digital Home Network… allows you to control a microwave oven, a washing machine and air conditioner. You can do this using a touch screen built into the fridge’s door”. It can play music which it downloads from the internet and can take pictures and short videos of the kitchen scene. On its LCD screen you can watch cable and free-to-air TV, keep a diary, or surf the internet for the perfect pavlova recipe. Recipe books come loaded for the microwave. The fridge costs AU$17,000. Richard Jinman. Ice Dream. Sydney Morning Herald, 27 March, 2003; Domain (supplement): 11.

[34] The microwaveable doughnut attracted significant research interest in the US during the 1980s. It promised a potentially similar windfall to those of the mega-profitable microwave pizza and popcorn industries, but not without experiencing teething problems. Design hurdles like the microwave reheating of sugar, for example, provoked chemist, food consultant and microwave maven, Robert Schiffmann to design what he called a “low-sugar... microwave-thawable, three-phase jelly doughnut”. He thus overcame the literally explosive problem that typified the superheated sugar-rich jelly centre of the regular doughnut. See, Robert Schiffman, microwave maven, fights to save the world from exploding doughnuts. People Weekly, July 25, 1988, v30, n4: 64.

[35] Paul Knox. World cities and the organisation of global space. R. Johnson, P. Taylor and M. Watts (eds.) Geographies of Global Change: remapping the world in the late Twentieth Century. Oxford: Blackwell, 1995: 243.

[36] Gastro-anomie refers to the destructuration of eating habits in postmodern times. See, Claude Fischler. Food habits, social change and the nature/culture dilemma. Social Science Information, 1980, 19(6): 937-953.

[37] Jenny M. Webb. Microwave: The Cooking Revolution. London: Forbes, 1977: vii.

[38] John Thorne. Cuisine Mécanique, 78.

[39] Octavio Paz. At Table and in Bed. Convergences. London Bloomsbury, 1992: 74 and 78; see also, idem, Hygiene and Repression. Ourselves Among Others. Carol J. Verburg. (ed.) New York: St. Martins Press, 1988.

[40] Cynthia Cockburn and Susan Ormrod. Gender and Technology In The Making, 18.

[41] Alexander Kohré, for example, writes: “There is something for which… modern science in general… can still be made responsible: it is the splitting of our world in two… by substituting for our world of quality and sense perception, the world in which we live, and love, and die, another world — the world of quantity, of reified geometry, a world in which, though is a place for everything, there is no place for man.’ Newtonian Studies. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1972: 23; On the theme of separation, see, for example, Max Weber, Michel Foucault, or Guy Debord: Capitalism’s restructuring of society without community. Society of the Spectacle, Donald Nicholson-Smith (trans.) New York: Zone Books, 1994 [1967]: 137; or more recently, the food-related sociology of Claude Fischler, whose gastro-anomie takes its cue from Weber’s concept of the modern inner isolation of the individual (anomie). See note 24.

[42] In the science-fiction novels of Philip K. Dick, for example.

[43] David Reisman. The Lonely Crowd: A Study of Changing American Character. New York: Double Day, 1953.

[44] Jan Hendrik van den Berg. Divided Existence and Complex Society. Pittsburgh: Duquesne University Press, 1974: 199-200.

[45] A phrase he borrows from Reisman. The Lonely Crowd, 42.

[46] David Reisman. The Lonely Crowd, 42.

[47] Evelyn Fox Keller. Refiguring Life: Metaphors of Twentieth Century Biology. New York: Columbia University Press, 1995: xvii.

[48] Margaret Visser and Ellen Stark. A Meditation on the Microwave, 40.

[49] Margaret Visser and Ellen Stark. A Meditation on the Microwave, 39.

[50] C. Wright Mills. The Modern Age is being succeeded by a post-modern period. The Sociological Imagination. Harmondsworth Penguin, 1980 [1959]: 184.

[51] Allen S. Weiss has written of nouvelle cuisine (a shift in the style of cuisine that began in France in the 1950s) as figuring typical traits of postmodernity, like pastiche and intertexuality. Allen S. Weiss, Unnatural Horizons. Paradox and Contradiction in Landscape Architecture. Princeton Architectural Press, 1998: 127ff. Parody, in particular, was regarded as a sign of the postmodern in architecture, literature, and art. ‘Parodic’ nouvelle cuisine included designating

desserts as 'soupes,' for example, as in Soupe aux Fruits Tropique (see, Roger Vergé. Cuisine of the Sun. London: Macmillan, 1979); or of using the traditional term, *fricassée*, usually reserved for meat, in *fricassée* of crayfish and asparagus, for example; or, of salad to designate an arrangement of previously incongruous items, as in *salade de queue de boeuf*: oxtail salad. (For the latter two recipes, see, Alain Senderens. The Cuisine of Alain Senderens. London: Macmillan, 1986 [1981]).

[52] Paul Virilio. The Art of the Motor. Julie Rose (trans.) Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1995: 140-141.

[53] Evenly thaw frozen foods in order for them to undergo further processing, like slicing, or portioning. For statistics on microwave processing, see, Neil H. Mermelstein. Microwave Processing of Food. Food Technology, July 1999, vol. 53, No. 7: 114.

[54] For a brief survey of food 'preservation by radiation,' carried out since the 1950s, see, W. C. Frazier. Food Microbiology. New York: McGraw-Hill, 1959: 146ff.

[55] Raytheon, pioneer developer of the radar and the microwave oven, is one of the world's largest military hardware manufacturers. Microwave 'bombs' were also deployed in the 2003 war in Iraq. "Claims that smart device wipes out circuitry of tanks and missile systems without harming troops," reports *The Guardian*. More explicitly: a "so-called high powered microwave (HPM) weapon... has been developed that, launched in a cruise missile... will fire a massive pulse of microwave energy... against Saddam Hussein's forces." Stuart Millar. US microwave bomb to make debut in most hi-tech battlefield campaign ever. The Guardian, 19 march, 2003.

[56] Paul Brodeur. The Zapping of America, 9.

[57] On radioactivity as a metaphor for globalisation, see Barbara Adam. Radiated Identities: In Pursuit of the Temporal Complexity of Conceptual Cultural Practices. Spaces of Culture: City, Nation, World. Featherstone and Lash (eds.) London: Sage, 1999.

The Slow Food movement: an evaluation

Barbara Santich

The beginnings of the Slow Food movement, from its cradle in the Italian organisation Associazione Ricreative Culturale Italiana (ARCI) to the 1986 protest against the establishment of a McDonald's outlet in Rome, are well known. Arcigola (which can perhaps be seen as the 'foodie' subset of ARCI) was renamed Arcigola Slow Food in 1989, and in that same year the Slow Food Manifesto, drafted two years previously, was endorsed and signed at the founding Congress of the International Slow Food Movement in Paris. In the subsequent 15 years the movement has attracted more than 80,000 members in 100 or more different countries and has initiated many significant projects, ranging from taste education in schools to agricultural reform in developing countries. This paper discusses the aims of the Slow Food movement, its activities and its achievements, and applies a critical eye to its rhetoric.

The Slow Food movement now promotes itself as an eco-gastronomic movement, but it started as an International Movement for the Defence of and the Right to Pleasure (abbreviated to International Movement for Pleasure). When established as the logical heir

to Arcigola (also founded by Carlo Petrini, the founder of Slow Food), the Slow Food movement was not necessarily concerned with biodiversity, nor with taste education, nor with the preservation of food traditions. Accounts of its inception stress the "light-hearted" and "playful" aspects of this new movement: a "serious but playful approach to enogastronomy'" according to a 1996 Slow Food brochure.[1]

Its first activities were completely consistent with the basic philosophy of the organisation, its name referring not only to eating slowly but also the appreciation of the pleasures of good food and drink. This extended to encouraging others to savour and appreciate good food and drink. Arcigola, the precursor to Slow, had a media presence as early as 1986 with *Il Gambero Rosso*, now a magazine but initially a special food and wine supplement produced for the left-wing daily *Il Manifesto*; and in 1988 it published a guide to Italian wines. Arcigola was also concerned to promote quality and authenticity, and in 1987 organised a competition to recognise the best restaurateurs taking part in the Feste dell'Unita. Slow Food Editore was established in 1990 and its first publication was *Osterie d'Italia*, a guide to the traditional inns and restaurants of Italy. Slow Food Editore now has a catalogue of some 60 different titles, including comprehensive and thoroughly researched guides to the wines, cheeses and breads of Italy and the annual guide *Osterie d'Italia*. In 1996 the magazine, *Slow*, was born, and is now published in five languages.

Even if its publications were the only measure of success, the Slow Food movement would be acknowledged as extremely successful. Yet the momentum that was generated from a "simple, playful idea", an "idea that started in a playful way [and] didn't intentionally set out to attack the fast food system per se", led very quickly to a range of activities beyond publications.[2] In 1993, Slow Food began its collaboration with schools and schoolteachers to encourage children to develop their senses and awareness of taste. Three years later Slow Food opened its first Salone del Gusto and, in an attempt to combine ecology and gastronomy, launched the slogan Ark of Taste. In his book, *Slow Food: The Case for Taste*, Carlo Petrini describes the four main areas of Slow Food activities: education (classes in schools, university); publishing (*Slow* magazine plus a range of food and wine guides and other books); Slow awards, Ark of Taste and Presidia, and protection of biodiversity; and exhibitions such as the Salone del Gusto and the Cheese Fair at Bra every two years.[3]

To have achieved all this in less than fifteen years is an absolutely outstanding achievement, and a credit to the dedication, passion and single-mindedness of Carlo Petrini and the Slow Food team. To have created an award-winning magazine (awarded Best Food Magazine in the Jacob's Creek World Food Media Awards, 2003) that successfully blends popular and scholarly writing, with a little didacticism and opinion-making thrown in, is no mean feat. Similarly, the establishment of the Slow Food Awards in 2000, required enormous efforts of organisation and coordination, not least of which was the securing of sponsors for the event. The number of awards given, and their value, seems to be diminishing (there were no awards made in 2004), but there is no doubt that the individuals and organisations honoured are thoroughly deserving, as the following examples illustrate. These three individuals were among the five finalists who received a Special Jury Prize in the first year of the awards. I have singled out these

three examples because they illustrate what I believe are the most significant aspects of the Slow Food Awards: each of them has taken a centuries-old tradition and modified it so that it can continue to exist, in modified form, in today's world, and each is concerned to maintain social and cultural traditions, including language.

Jesus Garzón has revived the tradition of transhumance — moving sheep from lowlands to uplands in late spring, and back to the lowlands before winter — in Spain and has trained shepherds to look after the sheep. More particularly, he has translated an old tradition into a modern context: shepherds' huts today are not the primitive, bare, stone shelters of earlier times but proper cottages with electric power; the shepherds have mobile phones so that they can contact one another. Transhumance contributes to the maintenance of biodiversity because the sheep carry in their wool the seeds of small plants which develop in the underbrush; it also contributes to social life by promoting the maintenance of contact between isolated communities and individuals.

In Mexico, Raül Antonio Manuel revived the cultivation of vanilla, once a traditional crop, in his native village after fluctuations in the price of coffee, which had been adopted as a cash crop, stimulated the search for an additional source of income. His emphasis on the production of top-quality vanilla, which would command a premium on the world market encouraged a high degree of community cooperation and helped maintain a village that was slowly losing its young people, and thereby, to preserve the local language and local traditions.

Nancy Jones established a camel milk dairy in Mauritania, which produces a camel milk camembert, to supply fresh, hygienic, pasteurised milk to the people living in the town who, although accustomed to and preferring camel milk, were generally drinking powdered milk which was more easily available and safer than that supplied by nomadic herdsmen. The dairy also provides a source of income to the camel shepherds, allowing them to maintain their traditional way of life. This, and the previous two examples, demonstrate an emphasis as much on culture and community as on the preservation of biodiversity.

Biodiversity, however, is the central concern of the Ark of Taste, which was founded to "discover, catalogue and safeguard small quality food productions and defend biodiversity" and which "aims to rediscover, catalogue, describe and publicise forgotten flavors".[4] The Ark now includes more than 450 products, in 22 categories, from 26 countries (although about 90 per cent are from Italy). Many of these products are supported by Presidia, which have been set up to promote the product and increase production levels.

The recent interest in the environment and in biodiversity, while up-to-the-minute, is certainly not to be disparaged. Yet, curiously, the Slow website fails to mention any allies, organisations with similar aims and interests, or any predecessors.

While not yet officially accepted into the Ark, the American turkey, with its potential to reintroduce forgotten flavours, is a prime candidate for inclusion. The turkey is native to north and central America, but today's breeds are not the same as the birds discovered by Columbus and other explorers. These original turkeys were taken to Europe where

they were immediately accepted on the tables of trendsetting royalty, subsequently domesticated and eventually returned to America where they were crossed with native wild birds to develop breeds such as Narragansett. Along with other heirloom turkeys — the chestnut- and crimson-plumed Bourbon Red and the Jersey Buff — it is now considered a rare breed, preserved by just a few dedicated American farmers.

In 2002, the American Slow Food group launched a Thanksgiving Turkey project aimed at increasing awareness of the heirloom turkeys and putting more of the Narragansett and its mates on Thanksgiving tables. The project was launched in early August, some 15 weeks before Thanksgiving, with more than 30 farmers across the nation participating. The price was set at $US3.50 per pound, delivered — considerably higher than for the supermarket turkey — and consumers were invited to order online, paying a deposit of $US50. Enough Americans embraced the idea to make the project a success — farmers are repeating the experiment in 2003 — and although some consumers were initially disappointed by the small size of their turkeys, in relation to the outsized Broad Breasted Whites, they were rewarded by their eating qualities and the rich, gamy meat.

These undeniably commendable and praiseworthy achievements — along with the Slow Food Foundation for Biodiversity, which will support and finance selected projects in both developed and less developed countries, and the joint project in association with the Brazilian government to promote small-scale traditional agriculture in that country — demonstrate the breadth of vision and ambition of the Slow Food movement. They also demonstrate the extent to which the movement has distanced itself from its initial light-heartedness and playfulness, which can also be seen in the subtle changes to its Manifesto.

The current version of the manifesto is reproduced below:

"Our century, which began and has developed under the insignia of industrial civilization, first invented the machine and then took it as its life model.

We are enslaved by speed and have all succumbed to the same insidious virus:

Fast Life, which disrupts our habits, pervades the privacy of our homes and forces us to eat Fast Foods.

To be worthy of the name, Homo Sapiens should rid himself of speed before it reduces him to a species in danger of extinction.

A firm defense of quiet material pleasure is the only way to oppose the universal folly of Fast Life.

May suitable doses of guaranteed sensual pleasure and slow, long-lasting enjoyment preserve us from the contagion of the multitude who mistake frenzy for efficiency.

Our defense should begin at the table with Slow Food. Let us rediscover the flavors and savors of regional cooking and banish the degrading effects of Fast Food.

In the name of productivity, Fast Life has changed our way of being and threatens our environment and our landscapes. So Slow Food is now the only truly progressive answer.

That is what real culture is all about: developing taste rather than demeaning it. And what better way to set about this than an international exchange of experiences, knowledge, projects?

Slow Food guarantees a better future.

Slow Food is an idea that needs plenty of qualified supporters who can help turn this (slow) motion into an international movement, with the little snail as its symbol."[5]

This version is much less hostile, less militant and less aggressive than an earlier (circa 1996) version reproduced below, though the similarities between the two versions suggest that both are translations of the same original. Where the earlier Manifesto talks of the fast life "assaulting us" in the later version it merely "pervades the privacy of our homes"; "speed became our shackles" becomes "enslaved by speed". The later version is also more explanatory of the purpose of Slow Food, as illustrated in the penultimate paragraph.

> *"Born and nurtured under the sign of industrialisation, this century first invented the machine and then modelled its lifestyle after it. Speed became our shackles. We fell prey to the same virus, the fast life that fractures our customs and assaults us even in our own homes, forcing us to ingest 'fast-food'.*
>
> *Homo sapiens must regain wisdom and liberate itself from the velocity that is propelling it along the road to extinction. Let us defend ourselves against the universal madness of the fast life with tranquil material pleasure.*
>
> *Against those — or rather, the vast majority — who confuse efficiency with frenzy we propose the vaccine of an adequate portion of sensual gourmandise pleasure to be taken with slow and prolonged enjoyment.*
>
> *Appropriately, we will start in the kitchen, with Slow Food. To escape the tediousness of 'fast food' let us rediscover the rich varieties and aromas of local cuisines.*
>
> *In the name of productivity, the fast life has changed our lifestyle and now threatens our environment and our land (and city) scapes. Slow Food is the alternative, the avant-garde riposte.*
>
> *Real culture is here to be found. First of all, we can begin by cultivating taste rather than impoverishing it by stimulating progress, by encouraging international exchange programs, by endorsing worthwhile projects, by advocating historical food culture and by defending old-fashioned food traditions.*
>
> *Slow Food assures us of a better quality lifestyle. With a snail purposely chosen as its patron and symbol it is an idea and a way of life that needs much sure but steady support."*[6]

The Manifesto expresses the kind of ideas many of us instinctively endorse and immediately embrace. It is not difficult to empathise with the sentiments; probably all of us at this Symposium, in our own ways, practise the Slow philosophy. Nevertheless, the Manifesto demonstrates a tendency to reduce complex issues to simple, antithetical extremes — fast versus slow, traditional versus modern. Such reductionism extends to equating fast food and globalisation with homogenisation and standardisation. In my opinion, this is a gross over-simplification; while standardisation might be one of the consequences of globalisation it is not an inevitable nor necessary one. A document summarising the history and activities of the Slow Food movement, issued by the Slow Food Press Office in 2002, states: "Slow Food counters the tide of standardization of taste and the manipulation of consumers around the world."[7] It counters this tide by promoting local traditions; as Carlo Petrini writes, "Local cultures are the answers to the drive to standardise inherent in the fast-food model".[8] This 'fast-food model' to which Slow Food objects is not so much the tiny street stall selling panini or baguettes stuffed with a slice of ham as the globalised McDonald's and similar, even though the ingredients for both might all be products of industrialisation. As

Raymond Sokolov has commented, the anti-fast food sentiments of Slow Food can be seen as equivalent to anti-Americanism; in his view, Slow Food seems to think "that fast food is a plague brought from America in the 20th century just as Columbus's sailors brought syphilis in the 15th".[9]

In this simplified worldview there is also a tendency for tradition — typically represented by customs and practices current at the end of the 19th century — to be positioned as tried and tested and therefore good, in opposition to the new practices developed by science, which are often seen as undesirable and bad. Traditions, according to this simplistic perspective, are, almost by definition, natural; it seems to be assumed that breeds and varieties particular to a certain region developed naturally in accordance with climate, soil and vegetation. Yet many of the traditional English breeds of cattle, for example, were the result of deliberate selective breeding in the 18th century.

In this same worldview, science is often portrayed as the monster which gave birth to GMOs, which rapes the environment, which dehumanises us all. Yet just as there is good and bad science, there are good and bad traditions, and many of the best farming and food production practices and results occur when science and tradition collaborate, each sympathetic to the other. The dichotomised vision offered by Slow Food's ideology does not admit this possibility. Its rhetoric seems to posit the ideal of a kind of pre-industrial ur-tradition which represents authenticity — and yet, in practice it endorses the modification of traditions to allow them to persist in the modern world (for example, Ark products, Slow Food Award winners).

The subtle modifications gradually introduced to the Manifesto seem to indicate, however, a change in direction for Slow since its inception. These changes, which are echoed in other aspects of its activities, point to a distancing from the original aim of protecting "the right to pleasure" and moving towards the more politically correct or socially acceptable one of protecting the environment. For example, the Slow Food Awards were, when first offered in 2000, simply Slow Food Awards; they became Slow Awards for the Defence of Biodiversity in 2001, with slightly different criteria. Information accompanying the nomination forms for the first year announced:

> *"The Slow Food Award has been created to spotlight and support people anywhere in the world who defend, promote or enhance our heritage of animal and vegetable species, products, knowledge or flavours. Every year it will be awarded to people who distinguish themselves for the work they do and whom Slow Food recognises as guardians and leaders of taste and promulgators of its own values. More specifically, the Slow*

The current version of the Slow Food Manifesto is less aggressive than the earlier version. Where the earlier Manifesto talks of the fast life 'assaulting us' in the later version it merely 'pervades the privacy of our homes'; 'speed became our shackles' becomes 'enslaved by speed'.

> *Food Award will seek to discover and select projects designed to conserve the food culture of the past for the future. … possible winners will be those who perform or have performed in production, catering, intellectual or commercial activities in their sector."*[10]

The criteria changed when the awards became the Slow Food Awards for the Defence of Biodiversity, which were intended "for all those who contribute to curb the impoverishment of the agricultural and food heritage, and in so doing safeguard the planet's ecological equilibrium". According to the 2003 nomination information, the awards were established "to identify and support people all over the world who operate in defense [sic], promotion and enhancement of the world's heritage of animal and vegetable species, food, agriculture produce, and related skills." It recognises individuals who are "defenders and leaders of taste, and interpreters of the Slow Food philosophy. In particular, the Slow Food Award seeks to promote projects that constitute the foundations for safeguarding food culture and for future innovation. The aim of the Award is to protect biodiversity in the food and agriculture sphere, in all its possible forms."[11] The emphasis thus shifted from the broader area of food culture to the more specific one of biodiversity.

This interest in the environment and in biodiversity, while up-to-the-minute, is certainly not to be disparaged. Yet, curiously, the Slow website fails to mention any allies, organisations with similar aims and interests, or any predecessors. (Slow Food might be the only organisation with an interest in both the environment and the pleasures of the table, but there are many organisations concerned with environmental protection.) In other of its spheres of activity, acknowledgment of prior models is similarly lacking; for example, there is no acknowledgment on the website, the primary source of information about Slow Food, of the efforts of Jacques Puisais and the National Culinary Arts Council (CNAC) in France in the initiation of taste education classes in French schools in the late 1970s (it should be noted, however, that in his book, *Slow Food: The Case for Taste*, Carlo Petrini specifically refers to Puisais's role in taste education). Nor is it acknowledged that the plan to develop a gastronomic register of important sites, a kind of counterpart to the UNESCO register of cultural heritage, is actually very similar to the French promotion of 100 Sites Remarquables du Goût, nor that the criteria for the Ark of Taste, which serves to recognise regional specialities, is very similar to those developed for the Euroterroirs project in Europe in 1992, some four years earlier (in fact, some of the same products are in both registers). While acknowledgment of precursors is really a matter of courtesy and academic correctness, the lack of recognition on the website could give the mistaken impression that Slow Food alone is aware of the issues and problems, and that only the Slow Food movement is concerned to act.

The merit and significance of Slow Food's achievements might suggest that there is a gap between rhetoric and reality, between the way the movement promotes itself and what it does. Yet, as Alison Leitch points out, Slow Food is not simply "a consumer organization devoted to a new politics of food and pleasure", but a group that is "attempting to construct a cultural politics of the future" in a context where "the consumption of food … has become a new metaphorical reference for the reappraisal of individual, local and national identities".[12] Its origins in Italy were not serendipitous but a response to post-war political and cultural circumstances that

were unique to Italy. Slowness, she suggests, "becomes a metaphor for politics of place: a philosophy complexly concerned with the defense of local cultural heritage, regional landscapes and idiosyncratic material cultures of production, as well as international biodiversity and cosmopolitanism".[13]

It is this philosophy that motivates initiatives such as the Slow Food Awards, the Ark of Taste, the Foundation for Biodiversity while the simplistic rhetoric, like political slogans, attracts individuals to the cause and ensures the financial stability of the organisation.

[1] Slow Food brochure, 1996

[2] Slow Food brochure, 1996

[3] Carlo Petrini. Slow Food: The Case for Taste. William McCuaig (Trans.). New York: Columbia University Press, 2003.

[4] *Slow Food.* The Slow Food Foundation for Biodiversity. <http://www.slowfoodfoundation.com/eng/arca/lista.lasso>

[5] *Slow Food.* Manifesto <http://www.slowfood.com/eng/sf_cose/sf_cose_statuto.lasso>

[6] Slow Food brochure, 1996

[7] Slow Food: a brief introduction to the history and activities of the International Slow Food Movement. Bra, 2002. Slow Food Press Office.

[8] Carlo Petrini. Slow Food: The Case for Taste, 37.

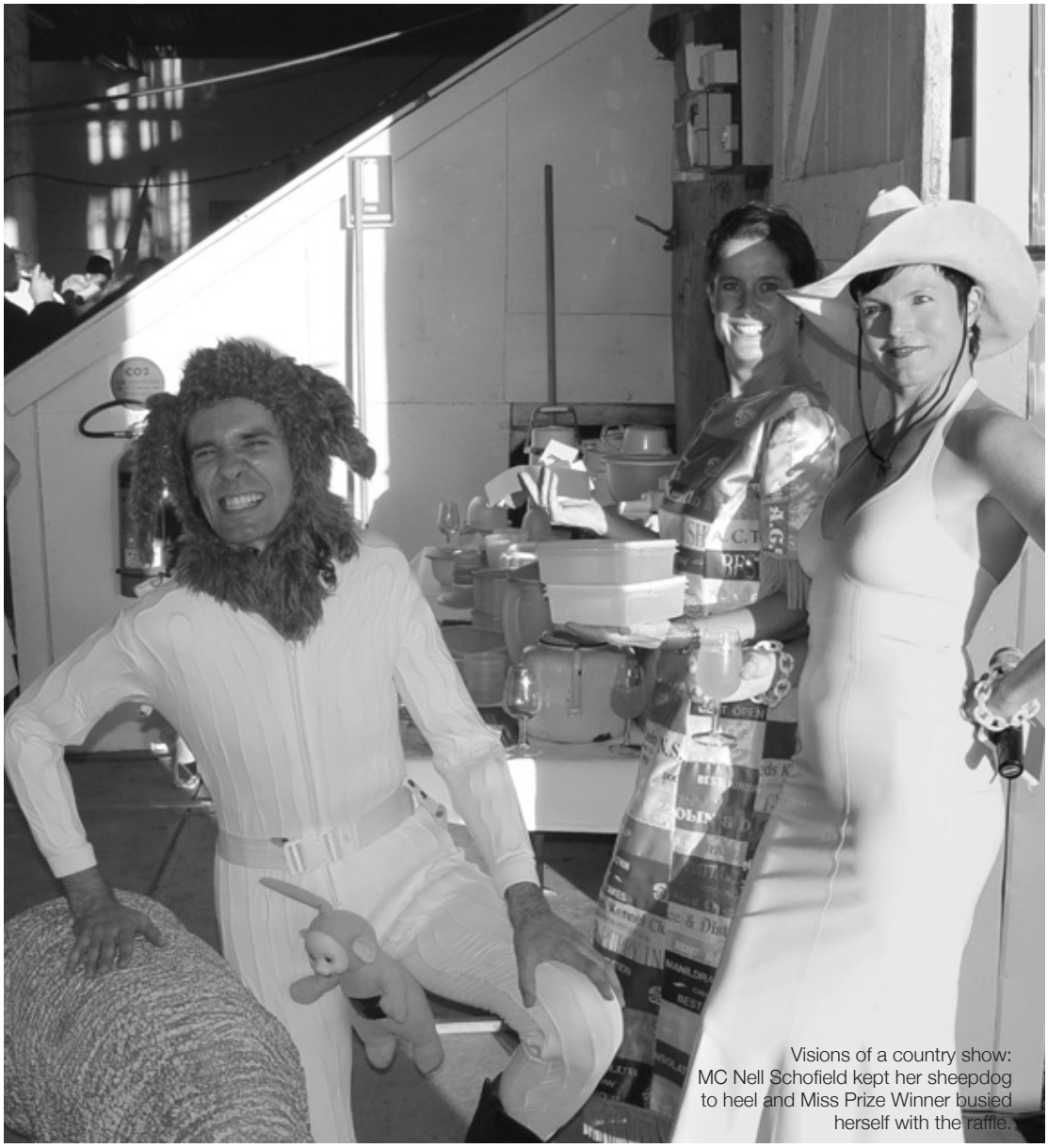
[9] Raymond Sokolov. Wall Street Journal, 15 August 2003.

[10] Slow Food Awards. Information, 2000.

[11] Slow Food Awards. Information, 2003.

[12] Alison Leitch. Slow Food and the Politics of Pork Fat: Italian Food and European Identity. Ethnos 68, no. 4 (2003): 437-462.

[13] Leitch, 454.



Visions of a country show: MC Nell Schofield kept her sheepdog to heel and Miss Prize Winner busied herself with the raffle.

MENU

Brown Bag Lunch

Banjo's Bistro,
University of Sydney, Orange
Sunday, February 15, 2004

Menu

Presented by Del Rees
Banjo's Bistro, University of Sydney,
Orange campus

Bread
White or brown bread
Torpedo or round roll
(limit of 2 sandwiches or rolls per person)

Fillings
Devon
Ham
Chicken
Egg
Tasty cheese/plastic cheese
Salad – lettuce, tomato, carrot, beetroot, pineapple

Spreads
Vegemite
Peanut butter
Honey
Tomato sauce

Flavoured milks
Chocolate
Caramel
Strawberry
Coffee

Juice
Apple
Orange
Tomato
Orange
Mango

Novelty and Tradition
MORPHING FANTASIES

The foregoing discussion about the broader issues being taken up under the umbrella of the Slow Food movement is continued in this session. There is an increasing desire to develop agricultural practices that are environmentally safe, sustaining and sustainable. There is a desire to break the power of large-scale food distributors of agricultural products and return to a more direct relationship between grower (here used loosely to include growers of plant foods and also livestock and poultry farmers) and consumer, and, to support growers in broadening the variety within product lines, including the revival of heritage strains. The papers in this session looked at projects working with these themes.

Belgravia: Sustainable winegrape production and marketing

Neil Southorn and Kevin A Parton

The landscape of NSW is dominated by agricultural production. The failure of farming systems to maintain ecosystem function has contributed to widespread environmental degradation. This has created significant impact on catchment health, rural water supplies and rural infrastructure across much of the state. In addition, the long-term productivity and profitability of the agricultural sector is at risk, and the viability of rural communities is under threat.

To achieve environmental targets, conservation and restoration action is required within agricultural systems, not just in dedicated conservation zones. However, strategies are required in three overlapping areas of need that define sustainability: improvement of ecosystem function; integration of environmental values into the plans of farmers; community empowerment to create change.

This requires more than a technical investigation of the individual components of sustainability. Unless landholders and rural communities internalise the meaning of sustainability, and have the capacity

to implement change, then conservation initiatives will remain restricted to conservation zones, and policy initiatives are likely to fail.

In addition to the specific environmental issues of dryland salinity, conservation of biodiversity and threatened ecosystems, water quality in streams, and soil health, the Belgravia Project will develop and test strategies that will assist landholders integrate the multiple domains of sustainability at the landscape scale.

Objectives

The aim of this project is to assess the costs and benefits in implementing key environmental targets, and to determine the underlying barriers to the wider adoption of sustainable farming practices.

The Belgravia Project is located on three adjoining properties with a total area of 1832 hectares, within the Bell River catchment in Central West NSW, an important but stressed sub-catchment of the Macquarie River system.

On-ground works include:

- The restoration of 300 hectares of Grassy White Box Woodland, a threatened ecosystem.
- Restoration of riparian land adjoining the Bell River and tributaries.
- Planting of native species woodlots and shelterbelts.
- Water conservation measures.

The project will oversee the implementation of the Belgravia Environmental Management System (EMS). The EMS process has identified Best Management Practice (BMP) for each enterprise and for environment protection relevant to Belgravia. A number of planning instruments have been consulted in this process. These initiatives will be formalised through the development of a strategic Property Management Plan.

Over time, the combined effects of revegetation works and implementation of enterprise BMPs are expected to restore ecosystem function. The project will establish and monitor key environmental indicators, measure change in ecosystem function (using a methodology based on Landscape Functional Analysis developed by CSIRO), and verify the relevance of this approach in this landscape. Substantial private investment in baseline studies of soil, water, geology, flora and fauna has already been made, but additional studies are required to support the monitoring program. This process will enable the planning assumptions to be validated and a farm-friendly monitoring system to be developed.

The costs and benefits of implementing on-ground works will be assessed to determine the trade-offs that need to be made between agriculture and the environment, and to design commercial outcomes that will enable on-going development at Belgravia, and elsewhere, to be self-funded. Research will identify the key indicators of ecological sustainability, the thresholds that help define the boundary between ecological sustainability and non-sustainability, and the elements within the production-conservation landscape that contribute to landscape resilience. The project will also determine the financial and social resources needed to achieve the Belgravia business goals associated with profitability, ethical investment, risk management and capital growth. Links to emerging market based instruments for environmental protection will be investigated.

The Belgravia Project will enable collaboration between NSW state agencies, universities, and landholders in the implementation of strategic planning

instruments at an operational level. The project partners will participate in and document the process of defining and implementing targets based on current recommendations and, in an action learning approach, provide input into the improvement and refinement of agency policies.

The project will identify the critical elements necessary to enable landholders to adopt conservation strategies as part of their farm business, not just as a duty of care to the landscape.

The Belgravia Project will also provide an extension role within the rural community. The results of the study will be converted into extension materials for all stakeholders: landholders, community and industry groups, education institutions, government, and Catchment Management Authorities (CMA). These products will include extension and scientific publications, field days, and briefings of community groups. But the project will deliver more than these traditional extension products. Through focus groups and interviews, the usefulness of these materials will be evaluated. Reasons for and against adoption of their recommendations will be explored, providing a deeper understanding of landholder approaches to conservation measures on farms.

Why this is important?

Catchment blueprints have been developed, with community consultation, as the pathway for sustainable agriculture, but they have been developed in the absence of full information about ecosystem function and the trade-offs between agricultural production and nature conservation necessary to restore the landscape. The Belgravia Project will quantify those trade-offs, and instil greater community confidence in Catchment Action Plans and the means to achieve them.

The project will identify the critical elements necessary to enable landholders to adopt conservation strategies as part of their farm business, not just as a duty of care to the landscape. It will determine the minimum data set required for monitoring environmental performance of farms, and establish standards and procedures for environmental performance. This will facilitate the wider adoption of EMSs for farm businesses.

At a time when rural communities are asked to accept the emerging role of CMAs, this project provides a tangible means to help rural communities adopt change. The outcomes of the project will help shape natural resource management policy at the catchment scale, and provide some guidance to CMAs efforts.

The Belgravia Project will enable researchers, educators and policy makers to engage with landholders and rural communities in a collaborative network approach, rather than the traditional expert–practitioner model. This is more likely to achieve positive outcomes for the benefit of all stakeholders, and will be achieved by collaboration between the project partners in an action learning approach. This should be seen as part of a continuous improvement process.

Outcomes to be achieved

At the farm and catchment scale, direct environmental benefits of the Belgravia Project will include:

- Reduced salinisation of the local landscape and watercourses.
- Improved water quality in streams.

- Protection and enhancement of a threatened ecosystem.
- Habitat protection for some threatened species.
- Improvement of soil quality.

Indirect benefits will occur from improved farm management practices, for example, reduced chemical use. Improved farm business performance, as a result of increased product quality and market access, will increase funds available to invest in environmental management.

There are several commercial aspects of Belgravia's interest in developing good ecological practices:

- Premium prices for wine/grape outputs.
- Cost savings from sustainable input practices.
- Funding opportunities from outside agencies to develop good ecological practices.
- An ecologically-based sale of allotments.
- Future benefits from offering consulting services to others on best practices.

Each of these five areas has a series of interested stakeholders. What Belgravia wants to present to them is a forward-looking prospectus, to enlist their continuing involvement. Such a prospectus might present a year-by-year description of the manner in which the landscape, flora, fauna, etc. might be expected to develop.

It is at the State level that the greatest benefits will accrue, by developing and testing strategies that will become available to all landholders, and assisting landholders and rural communities to manage change. It will provide a platform for implementation of Catchment Action Plans statewide, and help CMAs establish their role in rural communities. These outcomes will also encourage reform of agricultural and environmental education programs.

The Belgravia Project will provide leadership in the implementation of the NSW Natural Resource Management Reform, by demonstrating sustainable coexistence of agricultural production and conservation of natural resources, and through the design and implementation of an integrated Property Management Plan. The project is entirely consistent with vegetation, salinity and water-sharing strategic plans. The project will develop in parallel to the establishment of CMAs, a key strategy in the reform process. The Belgravia Project is aligned with the Policy for Sustainable Agriculture in NSW, NSW Agriculture's commitment to sustainable environmental management, and the recommendations of the Landcare review. The extension and community collaboration aspects of the Belgravia Project are consistent with the capacity-building objectives for Sustainable Rural Communities

Market Daze: Farmers' Market Fantasies Morph to More than a Fad

Jane Adams

If you drive down the freeway from Melbourne to the Mornington Peninsula you will pass a giant barn-like structure emblazoned with signage that proclaims a Farmers' Market.

To the uninitiated that may spell an opportunity to buy farm fresh produce: brown free-range eggs with golden yolks, freshly laid; healthy, dense heads of unsprayed cos lettuce; fresh-pick strawberries — food that emanates straight from the farm to be sold by its producer direct to the consumer. But it's not.

The initiated farmers' market shopper, those who take canvas bags, wicker baskets and insulated 'keep-the goodies-cool' shopping trolleys for regular outings to the local farm-to-plate food market know instantly that the grandeur of this retail food hall looks suss. It is.

But the advent of Melbourne's latest fruit and vegetable retail chain (there are other stores in Brighton and Dandenong) marks a critical and disturbing milestone in the evolution of Australia's farmers' market movement.

It could be argued that under trade practices legislation the operators of these retail food stores are at risk of infringing trading practices by 'passing off' — deriving commercial benefit from misleading nomenclature and branding — because in fact their supplies are primarily sourced from wholesale suppliers, not directly from growers.

But the very existence of this retail produce business also signposts a vital change in community perception of food sources, and the mercantile advantage to be gained from the much bandied notion of 'farm-to-plate'.

Australians are vitally concerned about the source and provenance of their food. Buying direct from the producer, grower, maker or baker offers both a guarantee of quality, and an understanding of the processes undertaken to produce the edible goods we buy. Direct supply delivers consumers freshness, improved nutrition and reconnection to traditional food production.

We crave the notion of juicy ripe peaches dribbling down our chins, like the ones we used to pick from grandma's tree. We want golden yolks when we order eggs Benedict at the local café, and bread with flavour and a crust to support liberal smears of chunky homemade Seville marmalade.

Oranges, in fact, flag another milestone in the progress of the Australian farmers' market movement. They appear in recent Woolworths TV advertisements that feature the grower in his grove — a weather-beaten face under a towelling hat assuring viewers he goes to extreme lengths to ensure Woolies, 'the fresh food people', get the freshest, best oranges.

Woolies chief executive Roger Corbett and his team have finally recognised the retail power of the farmer's endorsement.

This realisation dawned on UK supermarket chain Sainsbury's several years ago. They regularly foster farmers' markets on excess capacity carparks — and see their revenue rise on market days. Other

UK supermarkets have hosted farmers' day promotions, and signpost produce by its source. Provenance buys consumer confidence which builds loyalty and retail spend.

These two milestones signpost the penetration of the notion of a farmers' market in our collective consumer psyche. They also raise significant issues of authenticity.

First crop

The first farmers' market in Australia started trading in 1999. At last count there were 70-plus operating in all states with at least another 10 flagged to start before the 2004 autumn harvest.

The movement is quintessentially a grassroots creation where like-minded individuals have banded together in varyingly formed and constituted groups to start community-based markets. They have sprung up in shopping malls, showgrounds, racetracks, warehouses, and car parks where a motley collection of tents, trestles and trucks collect on specific half-days (mostly mornings) in the month, the temporary infrastructure that allows farmers, their families and artisan producers to directly sell their edible wares to shoppers hungry for fresh food straight from its source. It is this direct through-chain relationship — food sold directly from producer to consumer, the market's food focus, and prominence of fresh food — that essentially defines a farmers' market.

The drivers for the rapidly growing farmers' market movement have varied from state to state but encompass stimuli as varied as food groups, church organisations, main streets committees, state development departments, local government, health promotions, farming associations, organic growers, agribusiness networks and commercial private market operators quick to see a viable living in regular stall fees.

The Bulletin cover story in May 2002 was a critical turning point — finally the 'Real Food Revolution' was out there on news stands.[1] Subsequent media coverage including *ABC Landline* followed and Australian shoppers began to discover there was an alternative way to buy food, other than pushing shopping trolleys mindlessly along supermarket aisles.

The other critical 2002 milestone was the inaugural farmers' market conference, 'Market Forces' hosted in Bathurst, New South Wales. Attended by 75 delegates, it provided an umbrella for people active in the movement, or wanting to discover the benefits of farmers' markets. At the time there were approximately 30 markets trading regularly.

At the plenary session the delegates agreed to create a national body,[2] the Australian Farmers' Markets Association (AFMA), which I currently chair, and adopted a generic charter. Since then AFMA has launched an informational website. [3]

Second crop

Seeding social change is a gradual process. The evolution of farmers' markets has taken at least four years to gather real momentum and establish a recognised social footprint.

There are various markers for this status.

Government

The House of Representatives Standing Committee on Environment and Heritage recently invited the Australian Farmers' Markets Association to present to the Sustainable Cities 2025 enquiry.[4] The Victorian Department of Primary Industry (DPI) is commissioning national research into farmers' markets. The Department has also facilitated the publication of a generic model for farmers' markets in Victoria.[5] This document was an

extension of a Victorian agribusiness network commissioned feasibility study that sought to establish the viability of farmers' markets on the fringes of western Melbourne. Victoria's Department of Regional Development is funding two 2004 training workshops for market managers and market vendors.

Urban Development

Anecdotal evidence suggests that property developers are considering incorporating market spaces into development plans for public and urban space. The Wangaratta Council has undertaken a community development that includes a purpose-built market space. Waverley Council in Sydney has elected to operate various markets in its redeveloped shopping mall; a weekly farmers' market operates already and is to be joined by a regular organic market.

The Sustainable Cities 2025 enquiry has requested a fuller written submission from AFMA on the relationship of farmers' markets to urban environments.

The University of Western Sydney recent workshop on the Future of Rural Land in Sydney also invited the participation of AFMA to discuss the role of farmers' markets in the preservation of urban fringe farmland.

Economic Development

The facilitation role of state and local government has been a significant driver in the growth of farmers' markets, particularly in Victoria and New South Wales.

Preliminary research into the economic impacts of farmers' markets has elicited some significant data.

The bi-monthly Hume Murray Food Bowl Farmers' Market in Albury-Wodonga reports an annual $1.5 million input to the local economy.

The Hastings Shire (Port Macquarie) operates a monthly market at the Wauchope showgrounds. Two years down the track the economic development officer reports achievements that include a half-million dollar investment in a hydroponic tomato business undertaken after the grower successfully trialed tomatoes at the farmers' market. Agricultural diversification projects are reported, at least five small farmers moving on from the market to the commercial sector. Notably too, several dairy farmers have moved into horticulture, particularly potatoes and avocadoes. A community kitchen is to be developed to support small value-add food businesses. The host town of Wauchope has blossomed, with new retail business starts and the community reporting social benefits and invigorated pride.

Health and Nutrition

Carnarvon Farmers' Market in northwest Western Australia operates weekly for six months of the year (the northern winter) and regularly attracts more than 1000 of the city's 6000 residents. In a 2002 survey, 39 per cent of the polled shoppers claimed they were eating more fruit and vegetables, 40 per cent had tried new varieties and 86 per cent said they had increased knowledge of local product.

Tourism Impacts

While farmers' markets are not primarily established to be tourist attractions they do attract non-residents when operating and can augment the food footprint and wine food tourism offer of a region. Farmers' markets are also a vibrant attraction in cityscape locations, best evidenced by the Growers Market in Sydney's Pyrmont.

The only research to date into the relationship between farmers' markets and tourism was conducted in South Gippsland.[6] More than 200 visitors to Drouin and Koonwarra markets were surveyed by self-administered questionnaire in 2003. Results

show that shoppers were predominantly middle-aged educated females; visitors who travelled up to 40km to shop, primarily motivated by a desire for farm fresh produce.

Significant repeat patronage and the impact of word-of-mouth marketing were also identified. The survey claims that farmers' markets do attract tourist visitation and provide host regions with benefits, particularly visitor participation in allied food wine tourism activities in the host region, notably after the market is visited.

The benefits of farmers' markets to the host community are complex, encompassing rural and urban economics, social cohesion, nutrition and public health. This paper seeks simply to examine some of these primary but critical second crop achievements.

It is now appropriate to consider some of the issues that have arisen from the addition of farmers' markets to the Australian food chain.

Growing pains

Fast growing adolescents are prone to aches and pains. So is the farmers' market movement — and there is no off-the-shelf antidote for most of them.

Firstly, it's a grassroots movement. Secondly, most of the participants are farmers or volunteers; true believers, unwilling to establish or adhere to constricting structure. But inevitably in our over-regulated society there are hurdles to jump and many have created difficulties for farmers' market operators.

It is important to highlight these growing pains in an attempt to add grist to the debate that should, and is increasingly occurring, within the farmers' market movement.

Regulation

Farmers' market operators need to comply with local government land use regulations — development application procedures must be followed. Occasionally the granting of permissions has been hampered by vested interests or blinkered local government officers.

Food Safety

More problematic has been the issue of food safety compliance. Food Standards Australia New Zealand (FSANZ) is responsible for national guidelines that are interpreted at both state and local government levels, and ultimately implemented by council food safety officers. There is no dedicated national code of practice written specifically for farmers' or any other food focused markets. The interpretation of the existing code is at best haphazard, and in some instances random audits by responsible authorities have caused unnecessary problems. There is a critical need for a national food market code of practice.

The host town of Wauchope has blossomed, with new retail business starts and the community reporting social benefits and invigorated pride.

Specifically, in Victoria there have been issues surrounding the sale of meat at farmers' markets. The regulatory body Prime Safe (soon also to administer dairy and seafood) unilaterally decreed that any meat sold at a market needed to be sold from 'a permanent building'. Prime Safe's unrealistic requirements required four walls, a concrete floor and hot and cold running water thereby

making it impossible to sell meat a farmers' market in Victoria. However, the Minister for Agriculture intervened and has sought the pursuit of proper consultative processes to examine the issues involved. The matter is still pending.

Public Liability Insurance

The vexing problem of Australian public liability insurance is well recognised. Farmers' market vendors are advised to carry $10 million coverage, so are market operators. Often the costs of doing so is prohibitive to both parties. One market is recorded as closing in 2003 due to insurance imposts. There is a critical need for a review of the actual risks of predominantly fresh food markets. The development of a market risk management model would conceivably facilitate a more realistic approach.

The bi-monthly Hume Murray Food Bowl Farmers' Market in Albury-Wodonga reports an annual $1.5 million input to the local economy.

Authenticity

Without doubt the greatest risk to the sustainable evolution of the farmers' market movement is the issue of authenticity.

AFMA has published a generic charter that endeavours to outline a best practice code designed to facilitate the operation of viable markets. This code is based on four fundamental principles:

- Food only — plus plant and food nurturing products like compost, worm farms and hay.
- Farm direct — the vendor or family member or employee is the producer, maker or artisan value-adder, obviating a role for resellers.
- Fresh food dominance — a fresh food dominant market will attract regular patronage simply because food is perishable.
- Not-for-profit community structure — to ensure that private pecuniary interests do not threaten the authenticity of the market.

These principles underpin the fundamental offer and point of difference of a farmers' market as distinct from other public or mixed markets.

Increasingly, it is apparent there is a growing need for an accreditation system to offer consumers a guarantee of authenticity which will also ideally bring influence to bear on some of the 'me-too' inauthentic markets, many of which host resellers or craft sellers while trading under the banner of a 'farmers' market'.

Private Operators

Circumstance has seen the evolution of a predominance of privately operated markets in Victoria. There are now several private operators who have established commercial businesses based on a network of markets. Simply, they run a series of regular markets in various locations relying heavily on a core of vendors who travel across the state to participate in these markets.

In some of these instances shoppers are faced with a static and predictable vendor base, and invariably one that does not offer locally grown food. On occasions local vendors have been restricted from participating with obvious trade practice implications.

While some private market operators adhere to accepted codes of practice there is the temptation to relax the rules to increase revenue. The promise of an additional stall fee can override those authenticity principles, so it's possible to discover markets selling diet pills, Chinese garlic, leather hats and underpants.

An additional strain being experienced in Victoria results from the competitive behaviour of several private operators who compete both for vendors and prime suburban sites where they can command higher stall fees. This is beginning to impact the livelihoods of urban fringe and regional markets which are seeing a drift of vendors to the more lucrative city-based sites, lured by the promise of higher sales revenues.

Seasonality and Diversity

Many markets have encountered issues relating to product diversity and seasonality. Simply, a staple food may not be grown in a region or may only be available at certain times of the year. In these instances some operators have agreed to relax the guidelines to allow vendors to sell neighbours' produce, or indeed a percentage of other regional produce where they act as resellers.

The Entertainment Factor

Shopping in a farmers' market in the fresh air surrounded by happy faces is far preferable to pushing supermarket trolleys. However, farmers' market operators need to be aware that the primary function is the sale of food. Markets that veer toward entertainment and tourism run the risk of skewing trading transactions to impulse rather than staple items. So jams and flowers take over from spuds and eggs. If the latter are not sold, and farmers do not make money and without adequate income and profit margin they will not continue to support the market. Multiply this effect and the market will fail.

Marketing to the Marketers

The rapid spread of farmers' markets has virtually absorbed what might be termed the bank of early adopter producers. There is a critical need to expand awareness in the rural and small farm sector and value-added food processing arenas of the benefits of farmers' markets. There is a need to recruit farm and food producers to the cause to meet consumers' voracious appetites for fresh, farm-direct and artisan foods. This recruitment drive is considered vital to the continued growth of the movement, especially in Victoria and New South Wales.

Australians are vitally concerned about the source and provenance of their food. Buying direct from the producer offers both a guarantee of quality, and an understanding of the processes undertaken to produce the edible goods we buy.

MBO — Market Manager Burn-Out

Repetitive strain injury (RSI) is an accepted condition, so too is MBO among market managers, especially after a period of two years' trading. The notion may sound trite but a manager's exhaustion and frustration can be a real threat to the viability of the market. The DPI research project intends to assess some of these factors and their impacts.

Structure for sustainability

The word structure is anathema to most activist groups, ditto the word government. However, both will play a vital role in the

continued and viable growth of the farmers' market movement in Australia.

Government departments of agriculture, economic development, and health, can play a significant facilitation role and continue to support the spread of farmers' markets. Appropriate funding streams, networks and research projects can all be auspiced by government bodies. Appropriate public sector support can advantage energetic community groups and provide the necessary underpinning for community endeavours.

The structure needed for continued sustainable growth essentially includes a national accreditation scheme and a membership structure. Government may ultimately facilitate the former (as the Californian Agriculture Department does) but the latter will need to evolve from within the farmers' market movement.

One thing is certain – consumer demand for fresh food from an identifiable direct source, be it organic or not, will simply continue to grow.

One thing is certain — consumer demand for fresh food from an identifiable direct source, be it organic or not, will simply continue to grow. We want unadulterated fresh and artisan or traditional food with taste and flavour. And farmers want to be better compensated for their labours.

What started as a personal fantasy one night in 1997 has miraculously evolved into far more than a fad. Australian farmers' markets have become a small but integral and significant link in the food chain and contributor to the Australian rural economy. May they continue to thrive.

[1] Anthony Hoy. Real Food Revolution. The Bulletin, May 18, 2002.

[2] Market Forces Conference Proceedings, Bathurst 2002.

[3] Australian Farmers' Markets Association Inc <http://www.farmersmarkets.org.au>

[4] Sustainable Cities 2025. Standing Committee of Department of Environment & Heritage. <http://www.aph.gov.au/house/committee/environ>. Hansard reference <http://www.aph.gov.au/hansard/reps/committee/r7258.pdf>

[5] Jane Adams Communications. A Guide for the Establishment of Farmers' Markets in Victoria. Department of Primary Industry Victoria, 2003.

[6] Lisa Melsen. Identifying the Potential Tourism benefits of Farmers' Market Visitation: An Analysis of the Gippsland Farmers' Market Visitor. 2003.

Economy and Extravagance
BIG PICTURE STUFF

In her book *Carnal Appetities: Food Sex Identities* (2000) Elspeth Probyn writes: "From family worries to environmental concern, eating continually performs different connections and disconnections. Increasingly the attention to what we eat is seen as immediately connecting us, our bodies, to large social questions." This session considered some of these social questions from the perspective of the large and small farmholder, the horticultural scientist and the food activist.

The True Price of Food
Patrice Newell

I want to remind you of the most famous farmer in Australia, if not the world. Every child knows his name. It's Old MacDonald.

Old MacDonald had a farm. Notice the past tense. Had. For it is my sad duty to report to you, that he's gone broke.

Like Old MacDonald, I'm a farmer. And on my farm we have animals that go moo, baa and oink.

But you also hear that mysterious sound from the song of old MacDonald — with an eee ii ee ii oh. That is a cry of madness, because, sad to say, the forces that sent Old MacDonald broke, are driving food producers insane.

There's a lot of it about, insanity. Insanity in pricing.

It is a matter of record that Coca-Cola bottles lolly water with a bit of fizz and it costs more than an equal volume of oil from the Middle East.

A litre of milk produced on an Australian farm commands a price scarcely above that of bottled water.

We're talking monumental stupidity here. And injustice.

How much should I charge for my olive oil, Patrice Newell's VIRGO? Extra-virgin, biodynamic, handpicked, chemical free, cold-pressed olive oil. This was the question that

occupied many hours prior to sending our first batch out into the cruel world.

Production costs for one brand of cigarette or another from Philip Morris are identical. Pricing identifies your niche in the market. Are you a Winfield or a Dunhill?

But for farmers, without the backing of a mighty enterprise and global clout, pricing isn't a form of advertising, but life and death. It is survival.

Yes, food is cheap, too cheap for sustainability. And down the track we will see clearly the price we've paid for cheap food.

For years, I've argued that our biodynamic beef, veal and lamb and now olive oil shouldn't cost much more than food produced with chemicals. I never wanted to grow food just for the rich, for the privileged. But here we were with a product that was costly to produce. I knew that if we were going to succeed — to survive — with the olive grove and the products from it, we were going to have to get a decent price.

It was going to have to be more Lexus than Falcon, more Dunhill than Winfield.

Like a good wine producer we were producing a special estate product that uses labour, not chemicals, intensively.

I looked at all the 250ml bottles of oil on the market and the pricing differentials were staggering. A 250ml bottle of Australian olive oil could retail for $10, or $29. Far too cheap on the one hand, far too dear on the other.

Somewhere in between had to be a decent, just, sane retail price that allowed everyone from the farmer to the food store to make a reasonable profit.

One $10 bottle of local olive oil was wholesaling for $5. Why? Well the oil was getting old and the producers wanted to get rid of it before the new season oil was ready to fill the vats. But that discounting meant they were literally giving it away. I can't afford to do that and I won't.

I need to find customers who'll value our product, trust our product and pay what I think, what I claim, is a fair price. Not a silly price, but an honest price that is value for them and enough for us.

How do we decide on that fair price?

What's been happening across every agricultural area — across the agricultural world — is that prices are being pushed, shoved, and driven down. Every season it gets worse. If we try very, very hard we can endure difficult droughts, but we cannot endure the permanent drought in revenue. The El Niño effect that comes from corporate giants screwing Old MacDonald and all the other farmers could soon have, just like Old MacDonald's, our farms in the past tense too.

Farmers do not control the price of inputs, any more than they can control the rain. But god knows, they try. And many have shown considerable skill at crisis management. Nonetheless farmers across Australia, because of the growing difficulties they face, have been driven to ignore the rehabilitation work required on their farms; in regard to better water use, in regard to the control of salinity, the planting of trees, the maintenance of fencing, the practise of fallowing and composting. The list of urgent problems goes on for hours and represents perhaps the greatest crisis agricultural Australia has to face. If farmers can't afford to do those jobs, it's not just old MacDonald who suffers, it is the total environment. It is Australia.

Maintaining farmland costs a lot of money. And farmers need to allocate time and funds every year to do it. Whether they're facing drought, or floods, or fire, or the insanity of food pricing. It simply has to happen. But how many farmers can meet their obligations when they're being screwed on price?

Yes, food is cheap, too cheap for sustainability. And down the track we will see clearly the price we've paid for cheap food.

It's the policy of cheap food that is accelerating land degradation across this wide brown land of ours and the land is getting much browner as a result.

I know that the people who have been loyal to the beef, veal and lamb we've produced at Elmswood over the years have done so because they believe our biodynamic farm is a part of a new movement of land management and renewal.

People pay $50 a course, but where is the respect for the farmer who grew that food in the first place and where is the return for his or her efforts?

They have learnt from our media work and educational brochures over the years that we're trying to grow food that is not only pure and nutritious but within the land's capacity and that we are not asking our land to produce something it cannot sustain.

So you have to work backwards on the idea of price. It's not a question of what will the traffic bear? It's a question of letting the land itself define its use. Let me repeat that: *the land itself must define its use.*

By continuing to ignore that rule, we are condemning millions of additional acres to salinity and sterility.

Yes, anything can be grown anywhere with tonnes of fertiliser and water; you could probably grow rice on the Nullarbor or cotton in the Kimberleys.

If the price of the damage was included in the price of the food, that packet on the shelf could well cost as much as a Lexus.

And don't kid yourself there's going to be a simple technological fix.

The corporate olive groves of Australia are an extraordinary sight. One grove in Victoria will soon have a million trees subject to computer controls and calculations. But what these mega-groves don't have is the subjective artistic stamp of a good sustainable farm. Where qualities like soil structure are sacred, where the earth smells healthy, and where the individuality of the farmer is as celebrated as the winemaker.

Read the food reviews in the posh newspaper supplements. The restaurant is praised for its service, the room for its décor, and the chef for his genius. And people pay $50 a course, but where is the respect for the farmer who grew that food in the first place? And where is the return for his or her efforts? Perhaps there should be a tip for the farmer — add another 10 per cent to the bill?

In my experience, biodynamic farmers have the most intense love for their farms, and regard them as nothing short of sacred places.

If Australians truly value good food, a healthy environment and the survival of a decent standard of living, they have to learn to pay a decent price — a higher price — for food products. Because if they don't, the art of farming will be totally lost, overwhelmed by factory farming in all its aspects.

If you buy food on the cheap, you're selling out Australia.

Food and politics – the odd couple?

John Newton

I'm a little mystified at the title of this session: Politics and food, the odd couple. Why odd?

I've always seen politics and food as inextricably intertwined, going together as naturally as Abbott and Costello (Tony and Peter that is), Clinton and Lewinsky, Jeanette and John.

Maguelonne Toussaint-Samat writes in the foreword of her book *History of Food*: "Empires have done battle for food, civilisations have been built around it, crimes committed, laws made and knowledge exchanged. The rest is literature".

Now that may be a fairly Froggy view of it, but it's not far from the truth, a truth it seems more Anglo cultures find difficult to understand.

Two Food and Wine Writer's Festivals ago, Scottish chef Nick Nairn spoke of his attempts to get a Ministry of Food started in Scotland. A group of us tried unsuccessfully to get this idea on the platform of the ALP. It was just after the shock Kennett defeat, largely attributed to his ignoring the bush, and farmers, many of whom are themselves in the food business.

We thought a ministry of food might be the kind of new thinking that the ALP needed. It didn't make it past the front door. Why, I asked my sponsor? "Well," he said, "it's a matter of funding. It'd take funds away from health, agriculture and others. But the main reason is, they just don't get it."

Several of us sent papers supporting the idea. Mine pointed out that food was central to culture, the economy, health, human rights, tourism and a fairly important component of Aboriginal welfare. But no luck.

Some years down the track we're faced with a real proof of the pudding: the genetic engineering debate. As the central part of what I want to talk about today, it's a concrete illustration of the closeness of that old married couple, food and politics.

In June this year, the NSW State Government's GM 'moratorium' bill passed through both houses of parliament. I say 'moratorium' because the legislation as it stands does not provide for one. What it does is give total discretion to the Minister to decide whether or not he will declare a moratorium. It does not state which crops will have a moratorium on them. If the Minister decides to declare a moratorium on a crop it will be done so by an order printed in the Government Gazette. And the Minister can also approve, at his discretion, any trial crops.

Leaving the central flaws aside, let us take a look at the curious Clause 15 of Division 2 of this bill, which states, in essence, that if a farmer's crop is invaded by the seed of his neighbour's GM crop, the farmer whose crop is invaded has to bear the costs of identification and eradication of the GM from his crop. As one farmer put it: "It's as if my neighbour's bull jumps the fence, gets among my cattle, stuffs up my herd's genetics then charges me a stud fee". It's a clause obviously designed to stop a repeat of the Percy Schmeiser case in Canada.

Schmeiser is a farmer in Saskatchewan in Canada. He has grown canola on his farm for 40 years and had never purchased seed from Monsanto.

Yet more than 320 hectares of his land was found to be contaminated by Monsanto's herbicide-resistant Roundup Ready canola. He contacted them and asked them what they intended to do about it.

The company took the 68-year-old farmer to court, claiming he illegally planted the firm's canola without paying a $37-per-hectare fee for the privilege. Schmeiser fought back.

The trial was heard June 5-20, 2000, in Federal Court in Saskatoon, Saskatchewan. Monsanto did not directly try to explain how the Roundup Ready seed got there. "Whether Mr. Schmeiser knew of the matter, or not, matters not at all," said Roger Hughes, a Monsanto attorney.

Justice Andrew McKay agreed a farmer can generally own the seeds or plants grown on his land if they blow in or are carried there by pollen – but the judge says this is not true in the case of genetically modified seed.

"It was a very frightening thing, because they said it does not matter how it gets into a farmer's field; [the seed is] their property," Schmeiser said, in an interview with *Agweek*. "If it gets in by wind or cross-pollination, that doesn't matter."

Monsanto outlined their request for patent infringement seeking damages totalling $400,000. And they won.

The Federal Court of Canada issued their judgment in the case of Monsanto vs Schmeiser Enterprises on March 29, 2001. In a key part of the ruling Justice Andrew McKay agreed a farmer can generally own the seeds or plants grown on his land if they blow in or are carried there by pollen — but the judge says this is not true in the case of genetically modified seed.

Schmeiser is taking Monsanto back to court and neither the cost nor the publicity has done them any good.

Now, looking at Clause 15 in the NSW bill and it's implications and genesis, could a reasonable person surmise that it was inserted at the behest of a bio-tech company — Monsanto, for instance — to forestall a Schmeiseresque problem cropping up? Is this paranoia, or true perception?

I rang the office of NSW Agriculture Minister Ian McDonald and asked to speak to someone about Clause 15. "Someone from policy will ring you back," said the Media person. No one did.

The odd couple — indeed.

CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT: THE VIEW; ROSS KELLY, RODDY KENNARD AND MARIA KELLY; PRE-DINNER DRINKS; MARY BRANDER CHATTING; PATRICE NEWELL, CHERRY RIPE AND JANE ADAMS; KAY RICHARDSON, PIPPA CAMPBELL AND LIANE COLWELL; RACHEL BLACKMORE, MARGARET BAIL AND BARBARA SWEENEY; JANET LODGE AND ANNE CREBER.

Frolic in the Vines dinner was held at Peter and Terri Robson's home at Ross Hill vineyard.

MENU

Frolic in the Vines

Ross Hill, Orange
Sunday, February 15, 2004

Menu

Presented by Edwena Mitchell
Edwena Mitchell Catering Company, Orange

Pickled walnuts and goat's cheese
with crusty bread and apples
Smoked trout dip
with lemon-pepper pita bread

Spiced lamb cutlets
Marinated and roasted chicken
Venison chipolatas
Barbecued potato, carrot, red capsicum, mushroom, eggplant, zucchini
Cramelised spring onion
Asparagus with hazelnut and verjuice
Green salad

Homemade chocolate and
strawberry icecream cones

Coffee and meringues

With special thanks to our hosts

Peter and Terri Robson, Ross Hill winery, for opening their home in inclement weather. Justin Byrne, President, Orange Region Viticulture Association (ORVA) and all the Orange region winemakers who participated in the evening.

Health and Indulgence
FIRST TASTES

Is our sense of taste innate or is it taught? If the latter, is it set once and for all or can we learn to like the taste of things we once disliked? How do you get your kid to eat broccoli? And why do people risk their health for the sake of a freshly shucked oyster? These are the questions explored here.

Taste with Lake

Max Lake

"So many faces, so many palates."
Oz Clarke, late one night at the Cork and Bottle.

Taste with the mouth, smell with the nose. These will always be two different sensations. We call a mix of the two flavour, but often the word taste is used to mean flavour. Men, women, and children may differ widely about a particular flavour. Preferences are quite individual and be thankful for that. Don't be too open-minded or your brains may fall out. Francois Rabelais [c.1500] wrote: "Everyone to their taste as the woman said when she kissed the cow".

Machines, with a hook-up of four special metering instruments, are supposed to be able to provide faultless, consistent odour profiles. Warwick University is selling one such to the beer industry. Permit an aged mortal to ask if they are so good why haven't the many fallible human assessors fallen by the wayside? Simply because life continues to excel art. Even the humble earthworm has about 1000 times the computer power of a recent Pentium processor.

There are hordes of influences. The debate on nature versus nurture is tireless. Nothing in biology makes much sense except in the light of evolution, and in taste this applies

all the way from amorous butterfly through to creative chef. Any old sperm can 'taste' 20 different molecules. A replay of all the stages of evolution of taste can be seen in the developing human embryo. As Goethe put it; "Miss the first buttonhole and you will not succeed in buttoning your coat".

There are five primary tastes in the human mouth and throat: sour, sweet, salty, bitter and *umami*. They combine to maintain the basic functions of the cell as it was, at the time life forms quit the sea. With master sourdough Parisian baker Lionel Poilane, I rate sour as the most important.

The primary taste quintet is relayed by three cranial nerves to a centre in the hindbrain which, in recognition of its evolutionary status, I have dubbed the worm's tastebrain. The human embryo defines it at six weeks. A second quintet of tastes appears later, general body sensations localised in the mouth. Emotions beyond the survival drives of the worm's tastebrain now start to cut in, e.g. the pain/pungency and pleasure of chilli. The others include hot/cold, mouthfeel, texture/crunch, astringency. Thus we perceive the differences between oils, lettuce, grit and tannin. We taste molecules most efficiently at body temperature.

Smell is obviously the second sense to appear. It travels by the first cranial nerve all right, but they were numbered from front to back as seen by the ancients. The smellbrain begins as a bud at the front end of the worm, The thinking brain develops from this bud. We are because we smell. In due course the cerebrum develops the fine tuning of chefs and wine connoisseurs. A toll is exacted on this pathway as numerous influences are brought to bear.

People may be unable to perceive specific odours and are said to be anosmic or odour 'blind' in that respect. They may not just lack the words. On the other hand, a rare individual may possess something like the odour sensitivity of the household dog, a super-smeller — 40 times human — by any reckoning.

Time is one of the most important and neglected influences on flavour. I am not only referring to personal responses exemplified by each nostril alternating about each 40 minutes (nasal rhythm). There are also the effects of time on the structure of flavour molecules; the sequence in cooking with early and late methods and additions. And most important of all, unless we exhibit the brainwave attention spike before tasting, nothing registers. Nothing like an animated discussion on politics, religion, or sex to lead to empty plates and glasses, unwept, unhonoured and unsung.

Are women more odour sensitive than men? Well, yes; at any one time a random thousand women are more sensitive smellers than a thousand men. But that is not the end of it. It has taken me half a lifetime to sort it out. In the sample above, there will probably be some females who are in mid cycle or early pregnancy. The hormone peaks then load the odds. This is evolution's fail-safe so that while ovulating she is in top sniffing form to select the healthiest sperm donor, should opportunity knock, so to speak. And vital for the integrity of the early embryo, to avoid eating anything that might be harmful to all those new cells. These days the evolutionary safeguard is often blunted by deodorant, aftershave, or perfume. Along with this female bias is the fact that an amazing number of average males simply can't be bothered to advance beyond the infant 'yum' and 'yuk' response to flavour. Many people who seem to have a problem are not odour dumb but rather inattentive or untaught.

The sexes seem to be equally competent at professional wine assessment.

From infancy to old age there is wide variation in smell and taste sensitivity and preference. Use it or loose it is the rule. The sense of smell is more acute in warm humid weather and also later in the day. Moncrieff's survey is a classic. Small babies adore their own faeces, only cheese anyhow. Infants quickly learn from their mothers and the childhood explorations of flavour are not the least pleasures of family life. There is a chance then to counter the seduction of the innocents occurring from commercially boosted salt and sweet food and drink.

How sad that there are tribes today which have very few descriptive taste words in their spoken language. What a simple, bleak existence. The pursuit of assertive flavour and fragrance, such as durian or the clove cigarettes of the Spice Islands, seems infinitely preferable. Even though the fruit has been described, by a non-devotee, as being "like eating custard in a sewer".

The ethnicity of flavours is not carved in granite but there are inescapable baselines. When I was able to taste them within a week of each other, the Tokyo version of a hamburger had 14 per cent more fat than the New York offerings of the same chain and the former was attractively more 'juicy'. Icecream made to specification in Australia solely for the Japanese market has more milk fat and more air is whipped into it, for a creamier mouthfeel. Chocolate made in Australia for Japanese consumers is less sweet than the locally eaten stuff. Australians seem to prefer a sweeter beer than most. Travel has seen to a huge sharing and mixing of the cooking of radically different cultures. The favoured fast food on the Shinkansen, one of the bullet trains, is 'curry rice' a great serve of plain boiled rice with a dab of some brown gravy vaguely hinting of lowest common denominator curry. Japan has shown the greatest change in the style of home cooking in my experience. Forty years ago, it was based on rice, seafood, chicken and greens, with texture and presentation (still exquisite) competing for attention. Now shaved beef at a hundred dollars or more for a small serve is to be had alongside some of the best haute cuisine in the world. *O-konomiyaki*, garnished rolled pancakes in fabulous regional styles, plus various broths are inexpensive and remain among my favourites. Quite like the Mexican corn flapjack rolls, separated by an ocean and some thousands of years.

Australian cooks currently serve a distinctively Oz food style of high quality along with some of the best wines in the world; and most for not much money. Cheong Liew was cooking up a fusion cuisine storm in North Adelaide in the fifties, well before Alice Waters at Berkeley. Now something like two-thirds of Australian homes are reported to stirfry, and to own a wok. Australians buy more cookbooks per capita than any other nation.

"We are to be understood as having given away the Empire and received in return, in delayed settlement of that very considerable invoice, the street-corner tandoori house," wrote John Lanchester in *The Debt to Pleasure*. They are now returning to the plain roast and boiled (difficult to learn to do well).

Garlic offers a good example of a flavour that polarises preferences, a perennial problem if only one partner enjoys it. Strange, that. Babies are known to suckle better and to thrive when the mother eats garlic. The only remedy for non-garlic lovers is to have an all-garlic meal (including dessert) like those at the San Francisco restaurant, the Garlic Clove, near North Beach. Jump in at the deep end and commence with the Stinking Rose

as an hors d'oeuvre. Such a repast would be good training before visiting the garlic festival at Gilroy in California. I swear, it can be smelled when flying it over on a still day in a commuter aircraft.

Odour blindness for one or more aromas is universal. There are more than 80 recorded. Robert Wright considered that a catalogue of the anosmias of an individual would be more reliable identification than fingerprinting. About 15 per cent of the population are 'blind' for geranium, violets, and/or burnt toast. Questioning people, as is my wont, one member of a partnership is often anosmic for burnt. They seem to seek each other out. Is this nature's way of striking an average?

Some of these anosmias can be cured. Research from the Monell group showed that about 50 per cent of males do not smell the male pheromone, androstenone. This is not a bad thing in primitive societies, as it can provoke serious aggression. Six weeks exposure to the aroma under laboratory supervision in Philadelphia cured a substantial proportion of the 'blind' group. Training like this, attention to sinus problems, or more rarely dosing with small amounts of zinc, can benefit. Some people deny a smell when a PET scan of the involved brain area is registering message received. They may benefit from psychological help.

Those unhappy people who have their face flattened in an accident often suffer damage to the nerve filaments that connect the nasal sensors to the olfactory bulbs just above on the floor of the base of the skull. They may be intact, but concussed, as the jargon has it, in which case some recovery may occur over the next 18 months. After two years without any progress it may be presumed that the nerves have been permanently damaged, probably sheared off at impact.

Smokers offer a challenge. They certainly disturb the odour acuity of those nearby. As far as the smoker, their sensitivity is generally undisturbed except for aromas directly related to the dreaded weed. I liken it to a colour filter over a camera lens. The focus is fine, just that the colour is altered. Any experienced smoker quickly learns to compensate. Their only problem looms when they attempt to readjust after finally giving it up, as sadly, most of we sinners do.

Taste blindness is less common. Years ago a famous Sydney chef suddenly began to seriously oversalt his dishes. Seasoning had to be delegated to a colleague.

A substantial number can't differentiate bitterness and astringency. Bottled tonic water is bitter. Strong tea is astringent. A red wine can be both. Inherited taste blindness for the bitterness of the thiourea chemical group has been used to research racial genes.

One of the oddest human individual responses is observed in the crossed sensation of synesthesia. Opinions differ on its frequency, but it's probably not all that rare because of kids and others failing to pass on their information for fear of ridicule. Richard Cytowic reports a 15-year-old girl who was sent to the school principal because she said that every time her boyfriend kissed her she tasted orange sherbet. Perhaps there is a short circuit. High-energy foods look larger to anorexics. Scarcely audible Baroque music can enhance flavour perception. I take my glasses off the better to sniff an aroma. Weird.

Who better than Oliver Sachs to describe his first encounter with a super-smeller, a 22-year-old medical student high on amphetamines? "I had dreamt [sic] I was a dog. It was an olfactory dream. And now I awoke to an infinitely redolent world, a world in which all other sensations paled before

smell. I sniffed like a dog and recognised before seeing them each had his own olfactory physiognomy, a smell-face far more evocative than any sight-face, emotions like fear, contentment, sexuality."

Patrick Suskind's brilliant novel *Perfume* depicts an equally gifted murdering perfumer. One near and dear to me became almost similarly efficient after a bout of encephalitis. This also means that the pleasure threshold drops and the nausea end of the response shifts to centre stage. Delight and disgust become quite distorted. Incidentally, Sach's medical student clicked back to normal a few weeks later. Now a practising physician, he remains uncertain if this was a win or a loss.

Having touched on negative aspects of flavour, let me conclude with some good news. If you are in reasonable health, and depending on the time of day, our evolutionary program is such that anything that tastes good probably is good for you. But there again, I would say that wouldn't I?

Let's hear it for the Southern Italians, sharing bowls of wheat pasta, as their feel-good, bonding hormone envelops them. The food tastes so good, dressed as it is with local seasonal free-run olive oil, garlic, the top *umami*-rated tomato sauce, pecorino cheese and maybe mushrooms, quaffed with their own red vino. Healthy. Northerners, a tad envious, privately regard them as strong North African swimmers. It's in the book.

Learning food preferences

Kay Richardson

Recent research about the way children acquire food preferences involves a theoretical approach to the exploration of food choice. If educators intertwine this with new developments in the field of learning sciences, they could change current teaching practices and develop innovative, effective curricula. Only then, will children have an opportunity to really understand food and make informed decisions about what they put in their gobs.

The Development of Food Preferences

In a recent publication, Jane Ogden suggests that food choices are determined by three main psychological models: firstly, the developmental process; secondly, the role of cognitions; and thirdly, psycho-physiological factors. "A developmental approach to food choice emphasises the importance of learning and experience and focuses on the development of food preferences in children."[1] Ogden's theories align with research emanating from America where childhood obesity has long been recognised as a public-health issue. In particular, Dr Leann L Birch, head of the Department of Human Development and Family Studies at Pennsylvania State University, has authored

more than 130 papers on this and related topics. She suggests the family environment, combines with genetic predispositions to "produce a range of individual phenotypes".[2]

The food preferences children develop will depend to some extent on a genetic predisposition for sweet, sour, salty, bitter or *umami* (savoury) tastes. The rest of a child's food preferences are learned as a result of experiences within their environment, which Ogden explains in terms of exposure, social learning and associative learning.[3] Early food lessons stem from a paradoxical curiosity to taste new food winning over the fear of being poisoned by that new food (neophobia). Much of a child's natural concern is quelled by observing the food intake of carers and peers. They also learn to prefer food that leaves them feeling satisfied or food not associated with nasty post-ingestive consequences such as nausea or vomiting.[4] Negative emotional food experiences, like being forced to eat something they don't like, also have a major impact on the development of food preferences,[5] as does viewing television.[6] These learning processes eventually result in cognitive structures and processes such as attitudes and beliefs about food and eating, which play an important role in the control of food intake and subsequent health as adults.[7,8]

I Don't Like It!

These few words often result in a tirade of protestations from parents regarding the fickle nature of children's food preferences. It is an ongoing parental dilemma, which seems to begin around the time children start to consume solid foods. Firstly, parents have to decide what to feed their babies — a choice influenced by many factors such as culture, socio-economic circumstances, advertising, public-health issues, baby health consultations, relatives, friends and, in some part, their own food preferences.

Then the children themselves begin to exert their own powerful influence over what gets offered. As babies, they can show like or dislike for certain tastes by screwing up their face, quivering with delight, screaming, or simply shutting their mouth. Their persuasive abilities are soon enhanced by a spoken vocabulary together with a propensity for nagging in a whiney voice, tantrum throwing and repetitious tugging at sleeves. Thus, family eating times often become a stage for significant, intricate parent/child interactions. If a child is forced to eat something he/she doesn't want to they will lack a sense of personal control, feel helpless and establish an association between the food and these bad feelings. It could mean they will never eat that particular food again.[9,10]

It is within a family context children initially determine (by observation) what sort of food is safe, what is culturally acceptable, what is morally correct, what is pleasurable and what value food holds. However, as many parents work full-time, urban dwelling continues to be the norm and global food empires have replaced local purveyors, children rarely witness food growing or preparation. While eating food with family remains a social activity for some,[11] due to many circumstances, less and less time is being spent around the family dinner table, therefore the only other place children spend the majority of their time food socialising is at school. The Australian Government recently suggested one of the ways to improve children's nutrition would be to "teach children food preparation skills",[12] as well as educating children about the social aspects of food. However, there was no attempt

to suggest any plausible methods of food socialising within schools.

The Way Children Learn in School

During the late 1990s, the Committee on Developments in the Science of Learning under the auspices of the National Academy of Sciences, advisors to the American Government, conducted "a comprehensive study of new developments in the field of learning sciences, based on research from developmental psychology, cognition, cognitive neuroscience, sociology, anthropology, learning, educational technology, and the design of educational environments."[13] The study concluded a child's conceptual growth is 'developed' due to a process of conceptional reorganisation, rather than accumulating bits of knowledge. Children are now seen to enhance their own learning, as they come equipped with many cognitive abilities:

- Young children seem predisposed to learn.
- Children are curious problem solvers who are self motivated by understanding.
- Children require assistance for learning from adult direction, structure, experience and support.

The above study and much of existing educational practice in Australia is based on the following theories:

Social Cognitive Theory

Albert Bandura is a behaviourist who proposes that children learn through observation and imitation. His theory emerged as social cognitive theory, which posits an individual's behaviour is uniquely determined by an interaction of three influences; personal, behavioural, and environmental. It focuses on how children and adults operate cognitively on their social experiences and how these cognitions then influence behaviour and development.[14]

Social Cognitive Theory, as applied to pedagogy today, reflects three basic tenets:

- Consequences such as rewards or punishments influence student behaviour.
- Students can learn by active participation and by observing others.
- Students can model observed behaviour.

In order for modelling to occur, a number of steps are involved:

Attention

If the students are going to learn anything, they have to be paying attention and to pay attention they should have no distractions and/or be interested. The model also has to be appealing, appear competent, prestigious or someone more like the student.

Retention

The students must be able to remember what they have paid attention to by using mental imagery and verbal descriptions and be able to call upon these memories to reproduce them with their own behavior.

Reproduction

Depends on the student having the ability to reproduce the behaviour in the first place, which will take practice and a belief in their capacity to gain that ability. They need to see themselves imitating a desired behaviour.

Motivation

Students need a reason to learn. It can be internal, like feeling proud of achieving a goal or improvement at a particular task. Or the reason may be external, like getting a good mark for an assignment. Three factors seem to influence student motivation. First, their perception of self-efficacy; if students believe they are capable, they will work harder. The second factor is feedback, so they can control and adjust their efforts and thirdly they need to believe they will achieve results within a certain time frame.[15]

Constructivism

Constructivism, as applied to pedagogy today, has the foundational premise that children actively construct their knowledge. Rather than simply absorbing ideas spoken by teachers, constructivist teaching practices help learners to internalise and reshape, or transform, new information. The educational application of constructivism surrounds developing curricula that match and challenge a student's current understanding in order to foster further growth and development of the mind.[16,17]

If a child is forced to eat something he/she doesn't want to they will lack a sense of personal control, feel helpless and establish an association between the food and these bad feelings. It could mean they will never eat that particular food again.

Jean Piaget (1896–1980) is recognised for his research in the area of cognitive development. He identified four stages of a child's development: sensorimotor, preoperational, concrete operational and formal operational. He argued that children construct their own understanding and meaning from a personal point of view via assimilation, adaptation, logic and other ways of thinking. His theory became known as personal constructivism.[18]

Lev Vygotsky (1896–1934) a fellow cognitive theorist, argued learning was not solitary learning as suggested by Piaget, but rather a process of knowledge appropriation gained via a child's social environment. He emphasised the active guiding role adults play as collaborators in the development of a child's knowledge. His theory became known as social constructivism.[19]

Learning Styles

The theory of Learning Styles has been researched, developed and successfully marketed by Rita and Ken Dunn over the last 30 years. They describe learning styles as the way a person processes, internalises, and studies new and challenging material.

The Dunn Learning-Style Model is complex and encompasses five strands of 21 elements that affect learning. Some of these elements are biological and others are developmental.

In contrast to Multiple Intelligences theory, Learning Style advocates suggest "children are not necessarily intelligent because they have potential or talent. Many people have wasted or damaged both their potential and their talent because they did not think intelligently". They also suggest "some students are intuitive; many others are not and require structure and supervision".[20]

Active Learning

Active Learning is defined according to whether you are describing the way someone learns or the method by which they learn. When learning is active, the students do most of the work. They energetically strive to take a greater responsibility for their own learning. It involves putting our students in situations which compel them to read, speak, listen, think deeply, and write. They engage in the learning process and become active participants in facilitating their own learning.[21] Active Learning is also commonly referred to as Collaborative Learning.

In contrast, movement literacy advocate Sandra Minton suggests using and interpreting movement as part of teaching is called active learning, which enables students to learn and remember concepts and ideas.[22]

Multiple Intelligences/Bloom's Taxonomy

Multiple Intelligence theory is well known by Australian educators and according to Wilma Vialle it has transformed teaching in Australia. She suggests Australian teachers are implementing the theory in two practical ways; teaching to and teaching through multiple intelligence. The best teachers seem to use a combination of the two.[23]

Teaching to multiple intelligences, recognises the existence of each intelligence and gives the students an opportunity to experience and develop skills particular to that intelligence which are linked to traditional academic disciplines. On the other hand, when teaching through the intelligences, students are offered learning activities based on skills identified within each intelligence, thus using those skills to further learning of a particular discipline. If not directly applied, Multiple Intelligence theory is used in conjunction with other learning theories, like Bloom's Taxonomy, especially in the area of curriculum development. For example, in the Denilliquin district of New South Wales, six participating schools created 30 units of work using a Multiple Intelligence/Bloom's Taxonomy matrix.[24]

curricula. The International Academy of Education suggests learning environments should encourage students to be active learners, to collaborate with other students and to use meaningful tasks and authentic materials.[25]

Psychosocial Aspects of Eating

A Spanish study suggests an important design element of school-based nutrition education is the identification of attitudes towards and perceptions of food and nutrition, including motivation, in the early stages of program development. It suggests effective nutrition promotion strategies must be creative, engaging, inexpensive and widely disseminated and they should focus on the development of skills and behaviours related to areas such as: food preparation, food preservation and storage; social and cultural aspects of food and eating; enhanced self-esteem and positive body image.[26]

A recent German study examined the relevance of psychosocial research on the development of nutrition education. The study concludes that "successful educational strategies should focus on providing a variety of foods, including the range of nutrient-dense healthy food and encouraging children to taste

Parent motivations, attitudes and beliefs determine, to a large extent, what food is available to the household, how the family socialise with food, whether cooking food is taught at home, what food is taken to school and whether food is purchased from school food providers.

Theoretical Application

Today's educators have the difficult task of integrating research on learning emanating from diverse psychological areas. As a result, there is a call to change current teaching practice and a search for innovative, effective

it. In addition, educational strategies should provide a stable and predictive pattern of social eating occasions to promote the social meaning and importance of eating and to enable social learning of food preferences. It also seems to be more promising to establish rituals of

meal preparation and eating than to provide cognitive knowledge in nutrition. Educational strategies should communicate the direct perceivable benefits of healthy eating and lifestyle patterns to children, and encourage a positive body image by providing advice and reassurance regarding the range of healthy and acceptable body weights and shapes".[27]

While there exists a plethora of evaluations of nutrition education programs there is limited information regarding the methods used to measure psychological variables. One such paper reviewed 265 nutrition education intervention studies and analysed the psychometric issues that arose. The report concluded that evaluation measures should be "appropriate to the purpose, duration and power of the intervention", and that they be adequately reliable and valid in relation to both the outcomes and characteristics of the target audience. It was also suggested that effective evaluation instruments would result from "considerable preliminary work …have adequate psychometric properties" and be "cognitively tested with each new target audience".[28]

Student Perspectives

Dr David Woodward has conducted four dietary studies on secondary students in the Australian state of Tasmania, including a study of dietary motivations. He found "substantial differences in student perceptions of different foods, in regard to a liking for the food, its perceived healthfulness and how often it was (seen as being) eaten by parents and friends". He and his fellow authors contend the key concepts dictating frequency of choice of particular foods are the student's liking of food and perceived parental usage of that food. In the first instance, the student is seen as asserting her or his own identity and in the latter, the student is seen as accepting parental control. [29,30,31,32]

Another recent Australian study investigated why 213 children (51 per cent female) from school grades 2 through 11, eat healthful foods and what factors motivate this behaviour. The author, Jennifer O'Dea, is a senior lecturer at the University of Sydney and a qualified dietitian and nutritionist with clinical experience in hospital dietetics and paediatrics. O'Dea suggests children perceive the major benefits of healthful eating to include improvement in cognitive and physical performance due to improved fitness, endurance, psychological wellbeing, feeling physically good and having more energy. The study identified the major barriers to healthful eating included convenience, taste and social factors. The children felt guilty when they ate junk food and contrasted these feelings with those associated with healthful eating like personal pride, self-reward, and a sense of accomplishment and self-efficacy. The study's participants were asked to suggest strategies for overcoming their perceived barriers to healthful eating and all of them expressed the need for parents and teachers to help with these strategies. O'Dea suggests the findings, when applied within appropriate theoretical frameworks, could be used to motivate children in educational settings.[33]

Similar studies in the UK also suggest understanding children's perceptions of healthy eating are vital to the design and delivery of school-based programs.[34,35] The authors conducted focus groups with 300 children aged between nine and 11 years. The study identified some key points with regard to healthy eating education in schools. "Firstly, children are adept at learning what they are supposed to know, yet doing what they would like to do. Programmes thus need to allow for

greater participation by children and to focus on behaviours, attitudes, and values as well as knowledge. Secondly, there needs to be greater attention paid to the pressures exerted by society and by peers on children to be a certain size and shape."[36]

Parent Perspectives

The family environment and maternal influence are significant factors in the development of children's food preferences and for providing opportunities for food socialising.[37, 38, 39, 40, 41] Parent motivations, attitudes and beliefs determine, to a large extent, what food is available to the household, how the family socialise with food, whether cooking food is taught at home, what food is taken to school and whether food is purchased from school food providers. Therefore, successful school-based interventions must involve parents and carers[42, 43] ... and act on existing levels of motivation and understanding with respect to behaviour change. Parents and carers must also have the necessary knowledge and motivation to assimilate nutrition information provided and they must be receptive to interventions aimed at encouraging change at a family or personal level.[44]

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Scenes from the banquet

CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT: LIANE COLWELL AND LYNELLE SCOTT-AITKEN; ALEX HERBERT AND SUE BOOTH; STEPHEN AND RHONDA DOYLE AND DEL REES; AWAITING DINNER; GORDON MUIR MADE CREPES ON THE SPOT; TONY BROOKS AND MAX DINGLE; A VIEW OF ROSS HILL VINEYARD; PAM GILLESPIE AND ROSS KELLY.

MENU

Dr Atkins' Lunch

Banjo's Bistro,
University of Sydney, Orange
Monday, February 16, 2004

Menu

Presented by Del Rees
Banjo's Bistro,
University of Sydney, Orange campus

Grilled breast of chicken with a reduction of wine, chicken stock and roasted mushroom glaze

Wild rice, zucchini, beans and snowpeas tossed in a hazelnut and olive oil dressing

Rocket, radish and cucumber salad

Fresh honeydew melon topped with mixed berries and ricotta

Watermelon, mint and ginger juice

Health and Indulgence
WHOSE LIFE IS IT ANYWAY?

If politics makes a strange bedfellow, then health and politics make for an even stranger one. Are we being duped into an addiction to food that's killing us by big food corporations greedy for dollars? Or are the roots of our unhealthy diets more deeply grounded in larger political systems? Does the health agenda drive the market or does the market drive the health agenda? Is it conspiracy or consumer stupidity that keeps us shovelling the sugar and chewing the fat?

Sweetness creep: Sugar with everything — the Coca-colonisation of the modern palate

Cherry Ripe

It happened in Canberra. It was a perfectly pleasant autumn evening. We'd gone to dinner at a restaurant on Green Square in Kingston. On the specials board was fish of the day. I ordered it. It came. A couple of lumps of white fish sat in the bowl in a puddle of clear sauce. They looked firm and perfectly poached.

I took a mouthful and nearly gagged. What happened next was like something out of *The Exorcist*. The mouthful of fish came out faster than it had gone in. It is the only time I have ever done a big spit in a restaurant (manners usually preclude it). Unbelievably, the fillets of fish had been poached in a clear sugar syrup! Fish in sugar! It was like having your main course and your dessert on the one plate. It was simply disgusting, and had come with no warning when it was ordered that it might be anything but savoury.

It was almost déjà vu. Fruit-with-everything characterised the early- to mid-1980s. Again in Canberra, but back in 1984, in a restaurant downstairs in Civic, I was served a fillet of fish deluged with a hot fruit salad — grapes, mango, the works — in a cornflour sauce that had the consistency and colour of

wallpaper paste. Back in those days we were still in the grip of nouvelle cuisine and all the abominations that that threw together, such as steak with kiwifruit. In those days, the humble Chinese gooseberry had not long been elevated — or at least shanghaied — by our cousins across the Tasman. Re-branded, kiwifruit was embraced by nouvelle cuisine chefs as a sign of their nouvelleness and would turn up with all manner of savoury main courses from steak to chicken.

Also back in the early 1980s, there was a fad for serving crustaceans with fruit, such as prawns or lobster with mango. Though many of us had wished that such combos had been consigned to the culinary graveyard, they are back with a vengeance. Even the mango–prawn combination had a retro-revival in the summer of 2003–4 in magazine and newspaper recipes.

However sweetness creep extends far beyond restaurant menus and magazine recipes.

The sugar quotient of just about anything one can think of, from tomato ketchup (replacing salt as a preservative) to porridge oats (which now come pre-sugared) is on the rise. We are in the grip of a worldwide pandemic of sugar addiction.

Anyone who has ever been to America would have been stung by its ubiquity. The bread is sweet fluff, like marshmallow. Even in sophisticated restaurants in the US the bread rolls taste sweet. It's insidious. And it's increasingly happening here, and not only in McDonald's buns. (There is anecdotal evidence that there is more sugar in the McHappy Meal buns — the Junior Burger — than those used for the other burgers.)

In Australia, sugar is appearing in what were once savoury snack foods, such as Kettle Chips and Twisties. Kettle Chips now come in Honey Soy flavour, and Twisties in Sweet Butter Toffee flavour. 'Heavenly Sweet' says the packaging of the latter. They ought to be: they are 11.3 per cent sugar. (That is, they contain 11.3 grams per 100g serve.)

But more noticeable recently — in the past 18 months, roughly since the beginning of 2003 — is the fact that not only in recipes in newspapers and magazines, but also in dishes on sophisticated upmarket modern Australian restaurant menus, the traditional — almost sacrosanct — barrier between sweet and savoury increasingly has been coming down.

The paradox is that it is happening in contexts where you would least expect to find it: on the menus of our most sophisticated palates — our top chefs — whose restaurant winelists are filled with expensive bottles of vintages which do not marry well with sweet food.

I believe that what we are now witnessing is perhaps the biggest palate shift in three centuries.

In this context I am not referring to hangovers from medieval times and historical accompaniments such as red currant jelly or mint sauce with lamb, or apple sauce with pork and so on. Such condiments were, before refrigeration, ways of preserving summer or autumnal fruits, which also (serendipitously, but probably accidentally) provided a source of Vitamin C in the mid-winter diet.

What is novel is the incorporation of sweet components in contexts which were previously savoury. It is almost impossible to eat in a Modern Australian restaurant these days without encountering a menu littered — chockfull — of combinations of savoury ingredients paired with a sweet element. In some restaurants which offer, say, eight main courses, it can be difficult to find a single dish that doesn't have a sweet component. And we're not talking sweet vegetables such as

parsnips or beetroot, but tree fruits — plums, apricots, peaches, cherries, apples, quinces — turning up in what would once have been savoury dishes. It's like having dessert with your main course.

In the last decade, salad dressings too have become sweeter, for instance there's palm sugar in the salad dressing at Rockpool and also aboard Qantas, up the pointy end. Even vinegar has got sweeter — witness the rampant use of balsamic vinegar to dress salads.

I would contend that there hasn't been so much sweetness in savoury courses since medieval times. Sure there was a flirtation with fruit 20 years ago, but it went away. This time it has achieved far wider currency. And leading chefs are falling into it.

It might turn up on Qantas — on QF1 out of London (albeit in first class) — as a carrot, orange and honey soup (doesn't that sound more like dessert?) or lamb with dates.

At his Sydney restaurant, Rockpool, Neil Perry — who's responsible for Qantas menus — has offered lobster tagine with a roast peach on his menu. Rockpool's menu in winter 2003 included salad of lobster, chicken and persimmon; snapper with a pomegranate salad; and tea-smoked duck with roast pear.

Or, take Luke Mangan, for several years (until early 2003) the recipe writer for *The Age* and *The Sydney Morning Herald*'s food sections. Of the seven starters on his 2003 winter menu at his Sydney restaurant Salt, nearly half contained a sweet element: kingfish sashimi with quince, baked quail with cumquats; and duck breast with pickled pear.

Of the seven mains at Salt, four had a sweet component: blue-eye cod fillet with pickled orange; clay-pot barramundi with dates; veal loin, veal shank tortellini and pear; venison with licorice, turnips and grapes. And then there were five desserts.

At Mangan's restaurant Moorish — where there is more historical justification for this, as the food references North Africa — fish again turns up in a clay pot with dates. Fish — blue-eye cod — with fruit?

A quick flick through the pages of *Good Living* in *The Sydney Morning Herald* over the past year turned up the following:

Spiced turnips and grape salad (marinated in a sugar syrup); dates in a lamb casserole (both Mangan); treacle in potatoes under white fish[1]; pear with barbecued pork chop; quail saltimbocca salad with pear, reduced apple juice and balsamic dressing[2]; prawns with honey and poppyseed dressing; duck with fig dumplings; lamb shank with riberries; sardines with currants[3]; Wagyu beef with a salad of chestnut and quince[4]. *Delicious* magazine even offered a recipe for pineapple, haloumi and prawns.[5]

Even at Marque in Sydney, elevated to three hat (highest) status by *The Good Food Guide* in 2003, sweetness creep has happened in the past year. One recent example was a duck carpaccio that came with disks of root vegetable topped with crumbled praline. Next door Kylie Kwong pairs Szechuan duck with plums or mandarins.

In Melbourne, Teage Ezard at ezard@adelphi reportedly offers sweet oyster shooters, and as recently as early 2004 George Calombaris at Reserve in Federation Square was pairing tuna with banana.

In early 2004, the headline on the cover story in the Sydney *Daily Telegraph Food and Wine* section read: Hot Fruit — We've come a long way since apricot chicken.[6] Inside, the recipes were all combinations of fruit-with-savoury. It heralded the return of the kiwifruit — with lamb cutlets; nectarine salsa with salmon; beef with apple wedges; pork with stewed plums; prawn

and kiwifruit kebabs; and chicken with caramelised figs.

A competition in 2003 which had some two dozen chefs vying to create the best dish from duck foie gras (fattened duck liver) saw three quarters of the contestants pairing this usually savoury delicacy with anything from honey to apples.

The winner, Brian Duncan (then chef at Sydney's Establishment) prepared spiced crusted quail with seared foie gras and poached quince, while third place went to baked foie gras marinated in Armagnac, white port and calvados and sprinkled with lavender honey on a caramelised quince tarte tatin. Although no entrant went as far as pairing foie gras with chocolate, I have read of chefs who have.

It is happening not only here. Cooking school proprietor and author Anne Willan, in her La Varenne newsletter 7 averred that "foie gras preparations have become virtual desserts". While the traditional vinous accompaniment to foie gras has been a glass of sauternes, there are nevertheless those who believe that sugar at the beginning of a meal certainly dulls — if not ruins — your wine palate.

Perhaps the most extreme example of sweetness creep was a meal at Longrain, the restaurant currently listed in *The Good Food Guide* as Sydney's best Thai. Bear in mind that Thai is a cuisine of contrasts, including texture, aiming for a flavour balance between hot and spicy, sour, salty and sweet.

Longrain chef Martin Boetz trained under — and picked up a great deal from his mentor — David Thompson, who himself has a tendency towards sweetness in his food, but Boetz has taken it further.[8] The food was unmitigatedly, unrelentingly, cloyingly sweet to the point of monotony. Although the jointed Barossa chicken was described as coming with a spiced quince caramel, it arrives smothered in a thick brown cinnamon syrup. Cucumber dipping sauce? A clear syrup, which offered no assuagement.

Caramelised pork was just that — lip-stickingly toffee-sweet. Syrup, syrup and more syrup. One of my dining companions, Ian Parmenter, joked that when he embarked on the main courses, he thought desserts had arrived.

Much more serious is the fact that there's a real problem matching wine with food of this level of sweetness: it knocks anything but dessert wine on the head. Assaulted with this level of sugar in the food, one's palate cannot discern the subtleties of even a half-decent red. Yet paradoxically, these restaurants serve expensive wines.

Such examples are myriad. Do we tolerate these increased sugar levels more because of our acceptance of cuisines which traditionally — and still do — use sugar as a spice, such as Thai and Moroccan?

Before the advent of refined sugar, people did mix fruit with savoury. However there were medicinal reasons for it, with roots in Galenic medicine (named for Galen, the 2nd century Greek physician who settled in Rome in AD 164).

Galenic medicine is the explanation of why, for instance, we eat melon or figs with prosciutto at the beginning of a meal. Although Dr Max Lake suggests "it's the aromatics of the melon and the salted pork that slot so well together", in this instance flavour was not the only determinant.

It is the placement of melon or figs in the meal which is significant. According to French taste historian, Jean-Louis Flandrin,[9] it's a hangover from pre-medieval times from the days when people believed in the four humours and that all things could be classified

as cold, wet, hot or dry. According to dietary perceptions and rules that prevailed in France (and Italy) in the 14th and 15th centuries, it was believed that the stomach cooked food.

Back then, according to Flandrin, "they thought that most fruits — acid fruits — were cold and wet (humid) and they thought of digestion as a cooking process — that the stomach was a cooking pot (marmite), and the food in the stomach was cooked by the heat of the body". If cold, wet ingredients weren't well cooked, one's body was unable to digest them, and that (lack of cooking) was the cause of maladies and sickness.

Figs and melon were considered cold and wet, and therefore needed more cooking time in the belly, and so needed to be consumed at the beginning of the meal. In contrast, less wet fruits such as apples or pears required less cooking time in the belly and could thus be eaten at the end of the meal. Half a millennium later, while the reasons have been lost, we still carry on this custom.

Guinea) via South Asia and the Middle East, Europe did have sugarbeet from which to derive sugar.

However, in the earliest English cookbooks refined sugar is considered a spice. The first written mention of sugar — not counting those by monk and chronicler, the Venerable Bede — is in the household expenditure accounts of Henry II (1154–89). According to the anthropologist Professor Sidney Mintz in his fascinating history, *Sweetness and Power, The Place of Sugar in Modern History*,[11] "sugar made from the juice of the cane reached England around 1100. It was used as a condiment and was purchased directly for the court".

Mintz points out that that the quantities purchased must have been very small: in those days only royalty and the very rich could have afforded it. In 1226, Henry III requested the mayor of Winchester to get him three pounds (1.5 kilos) at the great Winchester fair — if so much of it could be found from the merchants there.

Fish in sugar! It was like having your main course and your dessert on the one plate. It was simply disgusting.

Max Lake asserts that the craving for sweetness is innate — that we are genetically programmed to like it. Before refined sugar became available, sweetness was obtained in forms provided by nature, whether it was from fruit, honeycomb, sugar cane, sap (palm sugar), or palm nuts. Despite the advertisements of the late 1980s and early 1990s, which claimed that "sugar is a natural part of life", historically, refined sugar is a relatively recent addition to the human diet — only in the last millennium.

Before cane sugar spread from Oceania to Europe (sugar cane is a grass, native to New

However, Flandrin asserts that the French of the Middle Ages had a taste for sour foods with lots of spices: dishes were flavoured with verjuice (unripe grape juice) or vinegar and spices.

According to Flandrin it wasn't that sugar was unavailable — they had honey, or they could have made sugar from grapes — but that they didn't like it. He observed that little by little, throughout the 15th century, sugar consumption increased. Then in the 16th century there was a further increase, so much so, that in the cookbooks of the time Flandrin found that almost 30 per cent of recipes called

for sugar, which he calls "an astonishing change in French cuisine".

However, from the beginning of the 17th century there began to be a separation between sweet and savoury — with sugar removed from savoury dishes and hived off into desserts and pastries as a separate course.

Flandrin points out that in France from the early 1600s, there was a tendency to separate the two; the meat, the fish and vegetables began to come with salt, rather than with sugar, while eggs, cereals (grains, flour) and milk products came with sugar. It was one or other, not both at once.

It was "a separation that took a long time to happen," says Flandrin, adding that "the process nevertheless began in the 17th century, and went on until the end of the 19th century, becoming more and more absolute".

However, despite sugar being consumed in different contexts, its increasing levels of consumption, and Europe's increasing craving for sugar down the centuries, had many insidious consequences, according to Mintz.

This unnecessary food (a refined carbohydrate which we could live without) also changed the course of history. It was responsible for the Africanisation of the Caribbean and South America and the black African populations that exist in those places today and, more recently, even in Britain as a result of the migration from the 1950s onwards from its island colonies in the West Indies. The hunger for sweetness, in the form of cane sugar was the major impetus for the importation of slaves from Africa to the Caribbean.

Mintz tracks the rise of the Caribbean sugar plantations from the beginning of the 16th century, "staffed for the most part with enslaved Africans", which caused the importation of "vast numbers of people in chains from elsewhere to work them". As many as 20 million Africans were torn from their homes and the survivors transported across the Atlantic. It is claimed that up to half the slaves in the United States originally came through the Caribbean.

In England in the late 1700s, abolitionists (opponents of the slave trade) argued that for "every pound of sugar ... we may be considered as consuming two ounces of human blood".

Mintz avers that their dependence on sugar — much of which was consumed in tea — "led the Europeans to establish a monoculture to satisfy their own addiction".

The commodification of sugar and the importance of its trade meant that by 1800 this small area — the Caribbean — was responsible for nearly half of all the seagoing effort, both naval and civil, of all the Western European nations.

Mintz argues that "sugar production shows the most remarkable upward curve of any major food on the world market over the course of several centuries, and is continuing upward still".

Mintz goes so far as to assert that "the introduction of foods like sucrose made it possible to raise the calorific content of the proletarian diet" without increasing proportionately the quantities of meat, fish, poultry and dairy products. Refined sugar thus became "a symbol of the modern and industrial".

It is certainly a craving that multinational food companies have exploited as far afield as China, particularly in the product with the world's most recognisable brand name, Coca-Cola.

The Food Magazine, published by the Food Commission in the UK, under the headline 'Soft drinks — or liquid candy?' recently asserted that a single sweetened soft drink could contain as much sugar as several packets

of sweets.
It pointed out that in Britain, a 330ml bottle of Coca-Cola contains 35 grams of sugar, while a 330ml can of Fanta contains 34 grams of sugar, in both cases more than 10 per cent sugar. Yet the World Health Organisation (WHO) recommends that at five years of age, boys should consume only 50 grams of sugar per day, and girls, 45 grams. At age 10, the RDI for boys is 60 grams and for girls, 50 grams.[12]

In the US, where corn syrup is more prevalent as a sweetener than here, there is also a powerful corn (maize) syrup lobby: subsidised maize farmers who need a guaranteed market for their heavily subsidised American corn syrup used in Coca-Cola.

So powerful are the vested interests in keeping sugar consumption high, that US food industry lobbyists are trying to get US Congress to withhold US$403 million in funding to the WHO in retaliation for that organisation's report recommending limitations on sugar intakes.[13] And as we have recently witnessed, one of the most contentious issues in the recent Free Trade Agreement with the US was sugar.

In Australia, sugar consumption is about 25 per cent of our total dietary intake — more than double that of the WHO's recommended guidelines.[14]

However, according to nutritionist Rosemary Stanton, the exact percentage of sugar in the Australian diet really isn't known. She claims that the figure of 25 per cent is for total sugars, which includes fruit, milk and sucrose. She points out that the sugar industry sponsored a recent assessment of the last National Nutritional Survey (1995 data, published in 1999) which reckoned that we consumed only 10–15 per cent of our energy from added sugars (average 66 grams per day, ranging from 35 grams for those over 65 years of age, to 140 grams per day for 16- to 18-year-old boys). In the light of this, she questions what has happened to the rest of the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) Apparent Consumption figures of 117g per day (43.4 kilos per year).[15]

Paradoxically, here in Australia, despite the apparent increase in our appetite for sweetness, sugar consumption levels appear to have declined marginally. More significant, however, is that its delivery pathways have changed markedly.

Today we are taking sugar in different contexts. Although total sugar consumption peaked here after WWII at 56.8 kilos per person per year, according to the most recent data published by the ABS in 2000, it would appear that consumption has decreased in the past 65 years, from 50.8 kilos per head in 1939, to 48.3 kilos in 1988–89, to 43.4 kilos in 1999.

However there is a possible explanation for this anomaly: Stanton claims that prior to 1975, such consumption figures included the sugar used in brewing beer.

As Stanton points out, this means that earlier figures overestimate sugar consumption because they include sugar that would not have been consumed as such, but converted to alcohol in the brewing process. Once this anomaly is taken into account, actual sugar consumption is definitely on the rise.

So, whereas in 1939 Australians consumed 48.3 kilos of refined sugar a year, 16.3 kilos of which were used in manufactured foods (which presumably included beer, as well as jam and other foods) and 32 kilos as refined sugar, by 1988–89 (the most recent figures with a breakdown between manufactured and refined), we were consuming 42.7 kilos a year, 33.9 kilos of which was in manufactured foods while a mere 8.8 kg a year were consumed as refined sugar. In other words, whereas a third

of total consumption was in manufactured foods in 1939, 50 years later, four times as much sugar was consumed in manufactured foods.

According to Stanton, as we now take in such a large percentage of our added sugar in processed foods and drinks, this "has caused people to assume they're eating less sugar because they can't see it".

There is a further paradox here, with the creation and promotion of a huge, relatively new, category of so-called 'lite' foods advertised, for instance, as being 99 per cent fat free. However, such foods — particularly products manufactured to be low in fat — are instead padded with extra sugar and starches, meaning their total kilojoule content is not significantly reduced. So while people may be persuaded to believe that they are eating some form of diet food, they are unwittingly consuming sugar as a fat-replacement.

What has caused this increase in sugar tolerance levels?

I would argue that one reason is that the current generation — not only of chefs, but doubtless also their customers — has been exposed to increased sugar levels in a whole range of manufactured foods. This is a generation that was weaned onto sugary carbonated drinks instead of onto water, or even heavily diluted cordial. For those of us who grew up in the 1950s and early 1960s, sweetened fizzy soft drinks or packaged sweet fruit juices were not a daily option in our childhoods, but an occasional treat. Thus, many of us of an older generation find sugar levels in such carbonated drinks unpalatable, if not intolerable, which is not the case just one generation younger.

Furthermore, I would contend that our relatively recent embrace (in the last decade or so) of cuisines that do use sugar as a spice or ingredient — such as Thai and Moroccan — has inured our palates to the appearance of sugar in what have hitherto been savoury contexts.

Although, historically, refined sugar (sucrose) was not a necessary part of life, as sugar production has become more industrialised, its price has come down. Its ubiquity is also market-driven: sugar is a cheap ingredient in food manufacturing, adding bulk and palatability — as does fat. So while we can't see it — and aren't aware of its pervasiveness — rather than being able to avoid pure white and deadly refined sugar, we have allowed its remarkable upward consumption curve to continue, and a whole demographic has become habituated to its presence in contexts where previously it would not have been tolerated.

[1] Luke Mangan. The Sydney Morning Herald, 22 April, 2003; Good Living (supplement).

[2] The Sydney Morning Herald, 22 April, 2003; Good Living (supplement).

[3] Icebergs menu, Sydney 2003.

[4] Becasse menu, Sydney, July 2003.

[5] Delicious. February 2004:67.

[6] The Daily Telegraph, 25th February, 2004; Food & Wine (section).

[7] La Varenne. The Bulletin, October 2001.

[8] Tables. The Weekend Australian, 2–3 August, 2003; Review (supplement)

[9] Interview with Professor Jean-Louis Flandrin, in Paris, October 1993.

[10] Cherry Ripe. Ripe Enough? Australia: Allen and Unwin, 1999.

[11] SW Mintz. Sweetness and power: The place of sugar in modern history. New York: Penguin, 1986.

[12] The Food Magazine. Issue 64, Jan/Mar, 2004.

[13] The Sydney Morning Herald, 26 January, 2004.

[14] The Sydney Morning Herald, 22 January 2004; Health (section).

[15] Australian Bureau of Statistics. Apparent Consumption of Foodstuffs 1997–98 and 1998–99:11.

The politics of obesity; or it ain't the bloated capitalists, it's the bloated proletariat

John Newton

I want to begin this exploration of politics and obesity in the last year of the 20th century, in the intensive care unit of the Los Angeles County USC Center. A 22-year-old man named Carl is being wheeled in for treatment.

Carl tipped the scales at 500 pounds. That's 227 kilos. He was wheeled into the unit naked, connected to a ganglia of life support tubes, including one supplying him with air. He was drowning in his own fat.

Carl was being observed by journalist and writer Greg Critser. His eyes, Critser said, "darted about in abject fear". 'Second time in three months,' said Carl's mother to Critser as they passed, 'he had two stomach staplings and they both came apart.'

Carl was the catalyst for Critser to begin writing *Fat Land*[1] and in starting his own weight loss programme. Yep, Greg was a fatty too. And in an interview he did with Rachel Cooke of the *Observer Food Monthly* in March last year, he made some interesting observations about American obesity and class.

Greg Critser lost weight successfully. He was very pleased with himself. Yet, the more he thought about this, the more he realised it was not so much his own efforts as a triumph of his social and economic class. He pointed out that a patient earning more than $50,000 is more likely to be advised to lose weight than one with a lower income and that it's the urban poor who suffer the highest rates of obesity and ill-health.

What's going on? Well, it seems to me, after thinking about this problem and reading about it that it has a lot to do with the dominant political system in the West. American laissez-faire style capitalism.

Let me expand on that.

American capitalism now rides roughshod over every other system on the planet. Of the two hold-outs against its hegemony — tiny Cuba and the Chinese hybrid (Communalism? CapCom?); one is terminal, the other farcical.

Capitalism is a system that feeds on growth. There is only one other whose survival depends on rapacious growth without limits: cancer. In capitalist terms, growth means only one thing. Consumption. Capitalism creates goods and services, and 'consumers' (not citizens), gobble them up.

Con — altogether — sume, take — take, altogether. Curious, then, how the word consumption means using up, wasting away.

Is it any wonder that the world centre of this dominant system is the most obese nation in the world, probably in all history? If obesity is a disease, and we'll get to that, America is in the grips of a pandemic.

I don't want to drown you in figures, but roughly 30 per cent — that's 39 million — of Americans are classed as obese, including 25 per cent under the age of 19. And five million of them meet the definition of morbid obesity. Another 58 million are classified as overweight.[2]

The American definition of morbid obesity is anyone with a body mass index (BMI) of 40 or more. BMI, for those who don't know, is

calculated by dividing weight in kilograms by the square of height in metres.

It is my contention that those good old, elephant-thighed boys and girls waddling around their air-conditioned malls, laden down by plastic shopping bags, their own fat barely contained by their over-stretched skin, munching on Krispy Kremes and sipping on Coke and Pepsi are, only just, walking metaphors for excessive consumption.

Capitalism means unlimited growth. Unlimited growth posits unlimited consumption. The most direct item of consumption is food. You could, given the right conditions, eat all day. Especially if what you are eating is cheap. And it's the characteristic of the capitalist system to choose direct uncomplicated means to the ends of maximum profits.

Let's stick with Krispy Kremes, one of those good old American marketing success stories. The company started in 1937, in the south, and is now spreading around the world. The first shop to open here was in Penrith, an outer Western suburb of Sydney; an interesting choice.

In an article in *Harper's*, Greg Critser told of attending the opening of a Krispy Kreme franchise in the San Fernando Valley in Los Angeles, a place with a substantial Latino population. Critser asked the manager why they had located the store in this slightly non-mainstream area.[3]

"Because it's obvious," the slim Anglo manager replied. "We're looking for all the bigger families."

"Bigger in size?" asked Critser.

"Yeah," replied the manager, his eyes rolling, according to Critser, "like little glazed crullers". "Bigger in size."

The most important ingredient in Krispy Kremes isn't the hydrogenated soybean oil, nor the monoglycerides, the enriched bleached wheat flour or the sugar — it's marketing.

Good old Carl is propped up on his super-size recliner in front of the telly, watching shows starring svelte, active and successful people wedged in between the adverts for Krispy Kremes. Now Carl can't get the girl or the job or the house with the Olympic-sized swimming pool, but he can get his mum to waddle down the road and bring back a couple of bags of Krispy Kremes.

Capitalism is also predicated on exploitation by one class of another, the bourgeoisie, to lapse into Marx speak, exploiting the proletariat — the makers of Krispy Kremes and the consumers of Krispy Kremes.

Pure laissez-fair capitalism as practised in the USA is amoral. The only good is maximum profits. There are no bads, except not making maximum profits. The classic example is the tobacco industry.

Here's an extract from Karl Marx and Freidrich Engels' *Communist Party Manifesto*:

> *"The bourgeoisie, wherever it has got the upper hand, has put an end to all feudal, patriarchal, idyllic relations. It has pitilessly torn asunder the motley feudal ties that bound man to his "natural superiors", and has left no other nexus between man and man than naked self-interest, than callous "cash payment.*
> *It has resolved personal worth into exchange value, and in place of the numberless indefeasible chartered freedoms, has set up that single, unconscionable freedom — Free Trade."*

Stirring stuff: "no other nexus between man and man than naked self interest". Hey, if the Krispy Kremes make you fat, who cares — as long as I get your money. The more Krispy Kremes I sell the better my company performs on the stock market. And good old KK is doing really well. "Net income per share has compounded at more than 45 per

cent since 1998," gushed Fortune magazine in a recent story subtitled 'How Krispy Kreme Became America's Hottest Brand'.

That's all that matters, because the personal worth of customers has been resolved into exchange value. So eat up folks, we want even bigger families. I'll bet you a quarter pounder to a table for two at Tetsuya's that the major shareholders of the Krispy Kreme Korporation are rake thin.

Capitalism creates cheap, empty food for mass consumption. The capitalists who create it don't eat it. The rich are thin, the poor are fat.

Some years ago I read a science-fiction story that posited a new order of consumption. I forget the name of the story and its writer, but its idea has stuck with me.

In this new world, the higher up the ladder you climb, the less you have to consume. When you start out in life, you have a quota: 300 suits a year, 20 sets of golf clubs, 10 cars. Then, as you progress and become more powerful, you consume less, until, at the top of the tree, you live in an elegantly empty house, swathed in unbleached cotton, drinking green tea and eating kasha.

But today, we have capitalism. First, it creates a population of bloated proletariat. Then, another arm, the dream industry, offers images of physical perfection.

Carl goes to the movies and sees Brad Pitt and Jennifer Aniston up there on the screen — slim, glowing, beautiful, and unattainable. Carl will never look like Brad. He'll never have a girl like Jennifer. He drowns his sorrows in a dozen glazed devil's food and chocolate-iced sprinkle doughnuts

But sooner or later, Carl does get the guilts about being so fat. He's sick of stomach staples popping. He wants to walk! He decides to go on a diet!

Now, we all know why Carl is dieting. Because only fat people diet, and diets, as we know, don't work as well as Krispy Kremes. Doesn't matter, as there is "a cancerous proliferation of final solutions to the diet problem".[4] Tap the word diet into the Google search engine; you'll unearth 3,840,000 pages.

Obesity has a lot to do with the dominant political system in the West. American laissez-faire style capitalism.

The Krispy Kreme korporation sells you the doughnuts that make you fat. The dream factory sells you the perfect image of thin and successful. The diet industry sells you the chimera of easy weight loss. And the bariatric physicians staple you and liposuck you when all else fails.

It doesn't matter which way you turn. They're gonna get you, if you are unfortunate enough to be born poor, disenfranchised and to live in George Bush's America.

The obesity pandemic is spreading as more countries master American capitalism. Australia is shaping up really well, with 67 per cent of Australian males and 52 per cent of females overweight or obese — that's 7 million Australians. Morbid obesity is also on the rise — 114,000 in 2001.[5]

Even the French paradox is turning into the French problem as those wine swilling, butter-gobbling frogs turn into habitues of *Le Big Mac* and French clones like Quick and Flunch (KK is yet to set up shop). A survey of 22,550 people aged 15 and over, carried out by opinion pollsters Sofres, has discovered that since 2000, the number of obese people has risen from 9.6 per cent of the population to 11.3 per cent. That is to say, France in 2003 is home

to 5.4 million obese people and a further 14.45 million who are overweight.[6]

Now we come to the central paradox in this exercise. The notion that fat is a disease is being challenged. There is a substantial body of evidence to refute the idea that obesity, in and of itself, kills. Obesity, this theory goes, is not a disease. Poor old Carl is an extreme example — but his fatness isn't a disease, it's a symptom. Of a deep social malaise.

While I was thinking on this topic and thanks to Barbara Sweeney, I came across Dale Atrens' book *The Power Of Pleasure; why indulgence is good for you and other palatable truths*.

Mr Atrens, perhaps well known to some of you, is, above all, an assiduous researcher and cross referencer of research. At the back of his book are listed 900 references. Here is a slim selection from his collection of research on fat and obesity.

- A German study of 6000 grossly obese older men and women found that there was no increase in mortality in those with BMIs up to 32. Even in those with BMIs 33–44 (well into 'morbid obesity') the health liability was relatively modest.
- A Honolulu Heart Program followed a group of 4000 elderly Japanese American men for an average of 4.5 years. Compared to the men with the lowest BMIs' those with the highest BMIs were half as likely to die.
- A similar study of elderly white women in Maryland showed thin women who weight cycled (lost and gained weight regularly) or who lost weight were four times as likely to die.
- Most evidence suggests that weight loss increases mortality.
- Most obesity is more of a nuisance than a health hazard.

To re-cap. There's no doubt we're getting fatter. We're moving less and less because we're sitting and watching, sitting and working — every modern invention from the automobile to the computer to the drive-through burger barn means less motion. We're also getting fatter inevitably because we're getting older. That is normal.

A by-product of the success of the Krispy Kreme korporation and its fellow fast-food floggers is the obesity of the proletariat.

But being fat may not be doing us any real harm — except perceptually. Fat is demonised by the very society — and system — that created it. The fat are seen and portrayed as lazy, stupid and dirty.

What's the answer? Buggered if I know. I'm not even sure of the question. But let's hear from Victor Papanek — who may be edging his way towards defining the source of the malaise.

"The result of flooding the world with consumer goods is deep human dissatisfaction. Obviously objects alone can never fulfil real human needs and longings. What Karl Marx ... called 'the objectification of needs' has become the central aim of these post-Marxist times. Yet advertising and propaganda have managed to convince the populations of both the over-developed and developing nations that the real meaning of existence can be found in the simplistic notion that, we work to make money in order to buy things that will distract us from having to work."[7]

Let me end on a macabre note. Perhaps capitalism hasn't played itself out completely. Is there a chance that the all consuming political system will end in — human consumption?

Item 1.

'Horror Becomes Chic'[8] is the headline of a story about cannibalism. "It may be hard to digest," writes Peter Fray, "but it appears we

live in a time of cannibals." The story touches on the case of Armin Meiwes, the German cannibal who advertised for dinner. Berndt Jurgen-Brandes turned up and was happy to be eaten, with relish (you want the recipe?) by Meiwes. The internet, we are told, has bought cannibalism into the light.

I'll bet you a quarter pounder to a table for two at Tetsuya's that the major shareholders of the Krispy Kreme Korporation are rake thin.

Item 2.

You may remember the film *Soylent Green*, made in 1973 and set in a future not unlike the 21st century. The environment has been totally destroyed by the sorts of agricultural practices that are rife today. Consequently, real food is scarce, affordable only by the very rich; vegetables are sold behind iron bars in shops attended by armed guards, and remembered wistfully by the very old. Most eat only government distributed rations made by the Soylent Company (a descendant of the Krispy Kreme korporation perhaps?), Soylent Red and, later, Soylent Green. At the end of their useful lives, the old are ushered into a state-funded, seemingly paradisiacal home. Once inside, they are lost to the outside world. What happens to them? Pass me another slice of Soylent Green.

In the light of capitalism's relentless and amoral pursuit of profit and efficiency, would it surprise you if humans 'surplus to requirements' were processed for consumption? In *Goya*, Robert Hughes describes cannibalism as "terminal cruelty of unchained appetite".[9] Sounds to me like a reasonable definition of laissez-fair capitalism. Once you are no longer a consumer or a producer, you are of no use, unless consumed.

Especially if you're fat and juicy.

Post Script

After delivering this querulous theory, I was attacked by Alan Saunders for, among other things, calling capitalism a political system.

My very short rebuttal recalled Gore Vidal's remarks when discussing the Clinton plan for reforming the health insurance system of America along the lines of Australia's universal Medicare system, "Does he really think he can change anything?"

Such a remark underlined the real nature of American politics. And if there was any doubt, then the election of a puppet spokesperson for the oil industry should have allayed that.

Capitalism, in theory, is an economic system unrelated to politics. That theory, which might exist in a petri dish in some laboratory somewhere, went out the window with the fall of the Berlin wall and the resultant rush into the vacuum that event created by the now unrestricted forces of the free market.

In reality, since the fall of the Berlin Wall, or even before, since the emergence of globalisation in the 1970s, we had to face up to "the reconceptualisation of civilization through the prism of economics," as John Ralston Saul wrote.[10] And, as he went on to say, "Globalisation (perhaps a more precise way of defining what I was getting at than the old-fashioned concept capitalism) had shoved ethics to the side from the very beginning and insisted upon a curious sort of moral righteousness that included maximum trade (and) unrestrained self interest…" Krispy Kremes are after the really big families.

Fortunately, if Saul is to be believed, globalisation has given away to nationalism.

And that may even kerb the rapacity of the now outmoded multinationals.

Finally, in an article on the Symposium in the *Sydney Morning Herald's Good Living* supplement, I accused Alan Saunders of "sneering at" my paper. He replied in an email with a quote from Henry Higgins that "I have never sneered in my life. Sneering doesn't become either the human face or the human soul."

I accept his rebuttal. Alan, I am sure, has never sneered at anything or anyone.

[1] Greg Critser. Fat Land. New York: Houghton Mifflin, 2003.

[2] From the American Society of Bariatric Physicians, bariatric doctor is a specialist in treating obesity and the diseases caused by obesity. Here in Australia, we have the Society for the Study of Obesity.

[3] Greg Critser. Let Them Eat Fat. Harper's Magazine, March 2000.

[4] Dale Atrens. The Power of Pleasure. Sydney: Duffy & Snellgrove, 2000.

[5] Department of Health and Ageing and Australian Bureau of Statistics for morbid obesity.

[6] The Guardian, June 20, 2003.

[7] Victor Papanek. The Green Imperative: Ecology & Ethics in Design and Architecture. Thames & Hudson, 1995.

[8] Peter Fray. Horror Becomes Chic. The Sydney Morning Herald, 16 January, 2004.

[9] Robert Hughes. Goya. London: The Harvill Press, 2003.

[10] The Collapse of Globalism. Harper's Magazine, March 2004.

Scenes from the banquet

CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT: ROASTED MILK-FED SUCKLING PIG; ROSÉ JELLY AND STRAWBERRY SORBET SHOT WITH FRESH BERRIES; NELL SCHOFIELD PATS A RURAL REALITY AND TALKS TO THE HEALTH INSPECTOR; DUCK SAUSAGES MADE BY TONY WORLAND, TONIC; THE ORANGE BANQUET TEAM INCLUDED JOHN GRANT, LEFT, AND ANNA WONG, CENTRE; FIG, BULL'S PENIS AND STAR ANISE FOAM.

MENU

Rural Fantasy vs Rural Reality Banquet

Orange Showground, Orange
Monday, February 16, 2004

To start

Discs of fresh fig with beef penis and star-anise foam
by Anna Wong and Jerry Mouzakis, Neila Restaurant and Neila Foods, Cowra

Snail dolmades
by Simonn Hawke, Lolli Redini, Orange

Grazing

Roasted milk-fed suckling pig with champagne and pickled ginger jelly

Venison carpaccio with green apple and chocolate oil

Venison carpaccio with peach and sesame dressing
by Anna Wong and Jerry Mouzakis, Neila Restaurant and Neila Foods, Cowra

Vegetable antipasto

Rabbit terrine
by Simonn Hawke, Lolli Redini, Orange

Smoked Trout Pate

Chilli turkey
by Helve Fung, Lakeside Café and Cellar, Orange

Small leaf salad with orange dressing
by Anna Wong and Jerry Mouzakis, Neila Restaurant and Neila Foods, Cowra

Duck sausages
by Tony Worland, Tonic Restaurant, Milthorpe

Paperbark Trout
by Stephen Neal, Three Snails Restaurant, Dubbo

Bread
by Tony Worland, Tonic Restaurant, Milthorpe and Simonn Hawke, Lolli Redini, Orange

Fresh Curd Cheese
by John Grant, High Valley Cheese Company, Mudgee

Rose jelly with strawberry sorbet and fresh berries
by Edwena Mitchell, Edwena Mitchell Catering, Orange and Josie Chapman, The Old Convent Cafe, Borenore

Crepes made to order
by Gordon Muir, Orange Ex-Services Club, Orange

Plum and fig compote
by Josie Chapman, The Old Convent Cafe, Borenore

Symposiasts receive the kid-glove treatment as they are helped off the cattle truck that transported them to the banquet

The scene for the banquet is set

For the banquet, thanks go to…

the food suppliers

Beef penis from PD Mulligans, Cowra; berries from Borenore Berry Farm, Borenore; champagne from Danbury Estate, Cowra; duck from Dutton Park Ducks; figs from Norland Fig Orchard, Borenore; green apples from Borrodell on the Mount; oranges from Carro Park Orchard, Cowra; peaches from Blue Gum Farm, Cowra; plums from Hillview Orchard, Borenore; rabbit from Bumbaldry Rabbit, Cowra; milk-fed suckling pig from D'Souza's Pork; snails from Ross Hill Snails; trout from Archvale Trout Farm, Lithgow; turkey from David Hughes Butchery, Orange; vegetables and small leaves from Waru Organic Farm, Orange; venison by Mandagary Creek Venison, Orange.

ORVA and the wineries of the Orange region

Barton Creek, Belgravia Wines, Bloodwood Wines, Borrodell on the Mount, Brangayne of Orange, Burke & Hills, Bush Piper Wines, Canobolas-Smith Winery, Cargo Road Winery, Gold Dust Wines, Golden Gully, Ibis Wines, Jarretts of Orange, La Colline, Logan Wines, Monument Wines, Orange Country Wines, Orange Mountain Wines, Prince of Orange, Printhie, Reynolds, Ross Hill, Sharpe Wines, Templer's Mill, Word of Mouth.

all the people who made the banquet happen

Brian and Jill Cutcliffe, Archvale Trout Farm; Rhonda and Stephen Doyle, Bloodwood Wines; Kate and David Dixon, Borenore Berry Farm; Phil and Margaret Skinner, Bumbaldry Rabbits; Barry Gartrell and Gaye Stuart-Nairne, Borrodell on the Mount; Pearl and George Butcher, Cabonne Country Honey; David Hughes, David Hughes Butchery; Fred and Zanaie D'Souza, D'Souza's Pork; Jeff and Scott Nuthall, Dutton Park Ducks; Edwena Mitchell, Edwena Mitchell Catering; Jaro and Jillian Lear, JaroJill Estate; John Grant, High Valley Cheese Company; Pip and Justin Jarrett, Jarretts Geese; Helve Fung, Lakeside Café and Cellar; Simonn Hawke, Lolli Redini Restaurant, Orange; The Hansen Family, Mandagery Creek Venison; Cath Thompson, Over the Moon Concepts; Lesley Russell, McLachlan Street Kitchen;

Anna Wong and Jerry Mouzakis, Neila Restaurant and Neila Foods, Cowra; Warren Bradley, Norland Fig Orchard; Jason Bourke and Kate Moriarty, Orange City Council; Josie Chapman, The Old Convent Cafe, Borenore; Gordon Muir, Orange Ex-Services Club; Justin Byrne, Orange Region Vignerons Association; David Mulligan, PD Mulligan; Paul and Lisa Wilderbeek, Proven Artisan Bakery; John and Alison Dick, Red and Whites of Orange; Sonya Begg, Ross Hill Snails; Kim Currie, Rylstone Food Store; Michael Manners and Josephine Jagger, Selkirks, Orange; Tony Worland, Tonic, Milthorpe; John Streatfield, The Spud Man; Stephen Neal, Three Snails Restaurant, Dubbo; Tavia Lyons, TL Design and Levendilli-Blue; Anna de Baar and Michael Edwards, Waru Organic Farm; Peter Gibson, Pinnacle Wines.

the artists, who participated or showed their work

Ros Auld; Robert Bruce; Di Coleman; Ada Clark; Richard Hoskin; Annmarie Ingham; Alf Maniagli; Ian Marr; Glen Mickle; Errol Smith; Lyn Winters; Tim Winters.

and finally, for supporting the banquet…

Central Western Daily; Food of the Orange District; Hawkes General Store; Kezz Brett; Jennifer and Edward Mitchell; Nancy Lodge; Orange City Council; Orange Police; Orange Region Farmers' Market; Orange Show Society; Prime TV; Rural Fire Service; Salvation Army; St Vincent de Paul Society; Tony Honeyman; and banquet MC, Nell Schofield.

MENU

Breakfast

Banjo's Bistro,
University of Sydney, Orange
Sunday February 15
& Monday 16 February, 2004

Present by Margaret Emery
Chef and owner
The Old School Country Retreat,
Rye Park, NSW

Freshly squeezed orange, carrot/celery, apple/carrot/cabbage juice

Fresh fruit

Poached Loring and Crest Haven peaches

Bircher muesli

Jannei goat's yogurt

Toast, butter and jam

Tea and coffee

With thanks to food suppliers

Fruit and vegetables were sourced locally and some were purchased directly from producers at the Orange Farmer Market. Bircher muesli made by Margaret Emery.

Sri Lankan Breakfast

Banjo's Bistro,
University of Sydney, Orange
Tuesday February 17, 2004

This is a typical Sri Lankan celebratory meal enjoyed by families on birthdays and feast days. The meal was created in response to a number of the antinomies that had been discussed during the Symposium; traditional (the recipe for the mulligatawny is from Paul van Reyk's maternal grandmother's handwritten recipe book), economy, health, indulgence and caring.

Presented by Paul van Reyk and Margaret Bail

Symposium participants

String hoppers
(Steamed mats of rice-flour noodles)

Lamb mulligatawny

Coconut sambol

Mixed leaves mallung

Turnip mallung

With thanks to food suppliers

First-cross merino supplied by Hughes Butchery, Orange; spinach, turnips and turnip tops and rainbow chard supplied by Waru Organic Farm.

Appendix 1
Program

Friday February 13, 2004

3pm to 6pm: Registration
Co-ordinator: Ross Kelly
Welcome. It's time to register, collect your bag of goodies, get your bunk allocation, and volunteer for one of the many fun tasks on offer. Remember, we've planned for a hands-on Symposium and are looking for all participants to help out where they can.
6.30pm to 10pm: Welcome barbecue in the Machinery Shed
The opening night function celebrates three Australian icons – the shed, barbecue and sheep. It's only a short walk to the Machinery Shed from the Student Amenities; convene there at 6.15pm for directions.
6.30pm Wine tasting
7.30pm Welcome to the land, Neil Ingram
7.35pm Welcome from the City of Orange, Cr John Miller, Mayor
7.40pm Dinner

Saturday February 14, 2004

Need an early breakfast?
Breakfast will be served from 8.30am at the Orange Region Farmers' Market, but if you can't wait until then, you'll find tea, coffee and bread for toast in your common room.
8.15am: Bus departs for Orange Region Farmers' Market
Event host: Jane Arnott, Manager, Orange Region Farmers' Market
We'll have breakfast and sample the produce of the region at the farmers' market. Some of the produce will end up on the plate at the Box Dinner, Frolic in the Vines and the Banquet. Market manager, Jane Arnott, will show us around. Vouchers for breakfast have been included in your information kit.

10am to 1.15pm Free time
(10am Bus departs Orange Region Farmers' Market for University)
You can spend your free time in Orange – shopping, wandering, and lunching or, if you have a car, explore further afield. Otherwise, head back to the Uni to gear up for tonight's Box Dinner.

1.15pm: Bus departs from University for TAFE
If you have stayed in town, you can make your way on foot to TAFE. There's an Orange city street map in your information pack.

2pm to 11pm: Box Dinner
Venue: J Block, TAFE, Western Institute – Orange Campus, Cnr Anson and Prince Streets, Orange.
All the fun of cooking and eating together using local produce.

Sunday February 15, 2004

7.30am to 8.30am: Breakfast
9am to 9.30am: Opening
Venue: Student Amenities
Moderator: Paul van Reyk
Vale Alan Davidson Tribute. Barbara Santich
Alan Davidson, compiler of the million-word-plus The Oxford Companion to Food (and writing most of it), recipient of the prestigious Erasmus Prize, and co-founder with Theodore Zeldin of the 24-year-old Oxford Symposium on Food and Cookery died on December 2, 2003. The Erasmus Trustees said he had fathered, and given direction to, what amounted to a new discipline. There are as yet only a few academic courses of study that deal with food and drink, but the directors of those that do exist are aware of their debt to Davidson. The 13th Symposium of Australian Gastronomy honours him.
Introduction to SAG 13 themes. Alan Saunders

9.30am to 10.30am: Feeding the Forgotten
Venue: Student Amenities
Moderator: Paul van Reyk
Eating Rough: Rough Justice for homeless young people in Adelaide. Sue Booth
Homeless people constitute one of the most marginalised groups in society. This paper presents data on the nutritional status and food habits of such vulnerable, transient groups in the context of the failure of the welfare state to address the needs of its citizens and the need for food justice.

Institutionalising the deinstitutionalisation of food. Margaret Bail.
As the CEO of a large residential service for people with intellectual disabilities, people living in institutional care, it has taken 7 years to change the way food is regarded and served to residents. Menus are revolutionised and individualised. Food has been modified to suit specific needs. It has been necessary to 'institutionalise' new ways of doing things.

10.30am to 11am: Morning tea
Thank you to all the Symposiasts who have supplied the biscuits and cakes for our morning and afternoon teas. These breaks in the program offer a nice opportunity to chat informally, swap recipes, enjoy the deck and lawn. Don't forget your hat and sunblock.

11am to 12.30pm:
Fast and Slow
Venue: Student Amenities
Moderator: Jane Adams
Can Fast Food be Slow Food? Roberta Muir
Many people when they first become acquainted with the Slow Food movement have the impression that Slow Food must, by definition, be food that has been cooked for a long time, or that is intricate and time consuming to prepare. There are times for lengthy preparation and for long, slow cooking. But meals put together from well-selected, artisanal and fresh produce are just as much in the spirit of Slow.
The Slow Food Movement - An Evaluation. Barbara Santich
This paper will examine the aims of the Slow Food movement and their evolution over the past twelve years, and evaluate the results of the various activities of the organisation.
Fear, Fantasy, and Anxiety: Welcome to Microwave World. Roger Haden
An abridged history of the microwave oven, a little-studied cultural icon of our time. The dream of the instant meal is merely one aspect of the culinary 'utopia' the microwave oven appears to embody. It also reinforces everyday anxieties and fears related to food.

12.30pm to 2pm: Brown Bag Lunch
Venue: Student Amenities
Lunch monitor: John Newton
There never was such a thing as a free lunch, but there was the school lunch. Is it as good as we remember?

2pm to 3.30pm:
Morphing Fantasies
Venue: Student Amenities
Moderator: Scott Minervini
The Belgravia project. Professor Kevin Parton
The vision of the 'Belgravia Project' is to establish, evaluate and promote an innovative agri-viticultural management system that sustains the biophysical resources of the supporting ecosystems, builds and sustains social capital and attracts ethical investment.
Market Daze. Farmers' Market Fantasies Morph to More than a Fad. Jane Adams
Australia boasts 70-plus farmers' markets nationally, a vital grass roots movement that now delivers many city and regional communities fresh food direct from the farm to the dinner plate. The growth of this fundamental link in the food chain has economic and social impacts that are becoming increasingly better appreciated.

3.30pm to 4pm: Afternoon tea
More homemade cakes and bikkies, and an opportunity to start robust discussions now that a number of papers have been presented.

4pm to 5.30pm:
Big Picture Stuff
Venue: Student Amenities
Moderator: Alan Saunders
Why food is too cheap? Patrice Newell
Agriculture. An essential ingredient for the complete Australian economy. Ian Donges
Who owns, or should, own the water on the land? Peter Hedberg
A perspective on the GE/GM crops debate. John Newton

6.45pm: Bus departs
7pm to 11pm: Frolic in the Vines
Our fabulous Orange partners, a team of local restaurateurs and vignerons, have planned an evening among the vines.

Monday February 16, 2004

7.30am to 8.30am: Breakfast

9am to 10.30am:
First Tastes
Venue: Student Amenities
Moderator: Maria Kelly
Come, taste with Lake. Max Lake.
No collection of machines will ever replace the fine tuning of which the human brain is capable. Taste and smell are a montage of all phases of countless millennia of evolutionary honing, in perfect working order if the three T's are followed: Taste, Train and Talk.
The Oyster Paradox - Food or Fantasy?
Nicolette Stasko.
"It was a brave man who first ate an oyster", wrote Johnathon Swift. Food for the poor, food for the very wealthy, a single edible commodity - the oyster - throughout history has encompassed all of the antinomies of taste simultaneously and continues to do so today.
Growing Up, Cooking Food, Knowing How, Feeling Good. Kay Richards.

10.30am to 11am: Morning tea

11am to 12.30pm:
Whose life is it anyway?
Venue: Student Amenities
Moderator: Janette Fry
The Politics of Obesity. Or, it ain't the Bloated Capitalists, it's the Bloated Proletariat: John Newton
Roughly 30 per cent of Americans are obese. These good old boys and girls waddling around in their air-conditioned malls laden down by their own fat, barely contained in their over-stretched skin, put it down to the dominance of American style capitalism where growth means just one thing - consumption.
Sweetness Creep. The Coca Colonisation of the modern palate: Cherry Ripe
Not only are we in the grip of a worldwide pandemic of sugar addiction, but we witnessing perhaps the greatest palate shift in three centuries. The once sacro-sanct barriers between sweet and salty are coming down again. There hasn't been so much sweetness in savoury dishes since medieval times.
Raw Passion: Barry Littlewhite
Like your cheese in the raw? So do lots of others.

12.30pm to 2pm: Atkins Lunch

2pm to 3.30pm
The medium and the massage
Venue: Student Amenities
Moderator: Paul van Reyk
As foodies, much of how we approach food is mediated through those who write and/or speak about food publicly. How do our journalists, academics and agents provocateur decide what to say? As our final session, a panel of three food commentators - Alan Saunders, Barbara Santich and John Newton - will be grilled, roasted, stir-fried, and battered as to how they will cook their par-boiled and half-baked perceptions of the major themes and issues canvassed in SAG13 for the masses.

3.30pm to 5.30pm: Rest and refresh time
Free time for reflection on the Symposium and to get ready for the Banquet.

5.30pm to 6.30pm
Where to for the Symposium of Australian Gastronomy?
Venue: Student Amenities
Moderator: Barbara Santich
A plenary session to consider where we are heading with SAG.

6.45pm: Bus departs for Banquet
7pm to midnight: The Banquet
Venue: Agricultural Pavilion, Orange Showground
The 13th Symposium of Australian Gastronomy Banquet explores the theme of rural fantasies and rural realities. The Orange food and wine industry presents an evening that will cross, and challenge, a spectrum of sensualities. Dress to dare. Transport back from the Banquet will be leaving from 10.30pm (for you early birds).

Tuesday 17th February

7.30am – 8.30am: Breakfast
A traditional Sri Lankan breakfast.

Appendix 2
Biographies

Jane Adams is a food writer, wine and agribusiness marketing consultant and a passionate proponent of farmers' markets. She is currently chair of the Australian Farmers' Markets Association. Whenever possible she flees the city to tend friends' kitchen gardens and muck out chicken coops.

Margaret Bail was born in Queensland and schooled there and in Victoria. With her then husband, Murray Bail, she lived in India and London, travelling extensively in Europe, North Africa and USA. After graduating in social work from the University of NSW in 1978, she initially worked in non-Government youth refuges and adolescent foster care, and then in senior policy, program and management positions in the NSW Department of Community Services. Since 1997, Margaret has been the CEO of Government Large Residential Service for people with intellectual disabilities. She is an amateur cook, especially of Indian food, and makes pickles and jams under the label of 'pickleO'.

Sue Booth works in health promotion in the Department of Human Services (South Australia). A public-health nutritionist by training, her career includes clinical nutrition, extensive experience in community nutrition with low-income communities and schools, nutrition policy development at state level and university teaching and topic development. Her research interests include food insecurity and its consequences among vulnerable populations and a rights-based approach to food. She has published in the fields of clinical nutrition research, research methodology and food insecurity.

Ian Donges runs a family farm. He has been on the executive of the NSW Farmer's Association and the National Farmers' Federation. He continues to represent the interests of farmers on a number of Federal government boards and advisory committees, including at the World Trade Organisation meetings.

Roger Haden is a lecturer in Gastronomy at the University of Adelaide, teaching in the MA program. He has been a chef since 1981, working in Sydney, the Blue Mountains, New Zealand, and London. In 2003, Roger completed a doctorate on the subject of taste in Cultural Studies at the University of Technology, Sydney. The thesis takes changing forms of the oven as its focus (Latin for hearth), which allows for an analysis of the artefactual and conceptual technologies which have contributed to shaping the experience of taste in the West.

Peter Hedberg (M.Sc.Agr) is a lecturer in horticulture and viticulture at The University of Sydney, Orange, teaching in a range of plant, soil, and crop production areas. He is also a viticultural consultant and has been very involved in the development of the Orange region wine industry and of numerous vineyards across south-east Australia.

Max Lake was born in 1924. Max thought as a child, spoke as a child, and tasted as a child. He put aside foolish things as sagacity prevailed. Despite a 40-year interruption — as a surgeon and founder of the Lakes Folly vineyard in the Hunter Valley — Max is now fulfilling his ordained role as a teacher of flavour, convinced that his concepts will become second nature not more than a century hence.

Barry Lilywhite has been in the dairy industry for 20 years. He is a bacteriologist who has been making cheese for 18 years. He currently

teaches cheese making at Charles Sturt University. He has tasted many a raw cheese.

Roberta Muir Enthusiastic in all matters of taste, Roberta is a voracious reader who writes and cooks, supports the Slow Food movement (she was a founding member of Sydney's Harbour City convivium) and manages the Sydney Seafood School at Sydney Fish Market. She has an MA in Gastronomy from the University of Adelaide.

Patrice Newell has had a lifetime's experience in many aspects of the media, both in Australia and the USA. She has worked as a researcher, a journalist, a model, and a TV news reader. Sixteen years ago she left it all behind and moved to Gundy, NSW, where she raises beef, grows olives and writes books.

John Newton writes, mostly, about food for the *Sydney Morning Herald* and *The Age* newspapers, and *Divine* and *Slow* magazines. His books include *Wogfood, The Man Who Painted Women* (a second novel), *Food: The Essential A-Z Guide*, and, with co-author Stefano Manfredi, *Fresh From Italy* and *Bel Mondo: Beautiful World*. He is the co-editor of the restaurant guide *Sydney Eats*. He cares about the quality of food that Australians eat, and the ways in which it is farmed. He's often the voice of doom in an environment not noted for light and shade and likes to point out that not all is light and poetry in the 21st-century kitchen. The food chain is threatened. When the next thing that you put in your mouth could kill, maim or sicken as well as delight you, the food writer has responsibilities.

Kevin Parton is Dean of the Faculty of Rural Management, University of Sydney. He is an agricultural economist with research interests in risk management, decision analysis and research management. He is currently working on the impact of weather and climate change on agriculture, the relationships between weather and disease, weather-based derivatives, and a comparison between environmental farm planning in Canada and Australia.

Cherry Ripe has been a food writer for *The Australian* since 1990. She is the author of five books including *Goodbye Culinary Cringe*, *Australia The Beautiful Cookbook* (text) and *Ripe Enough?* and has also contributed to The *Observer*, UK and *The Wall Street Journal*. She is an international juror for the Slow Food Ark of Taste and is on the Board of Trustees of the Oxford Symposium in the UK.

Kay Richards, a recent Gastronomy graduate of Adelaide University and Le Cordon Bleu, has a passionate interest in the way children learn and interact with all things food.

Alan Saunders presents *The Comfort Zone*, a review of architecture and design, landscape and food, broadcast weekly on ABC Radio National. He is the author of *A is for Apple* (Random House), and *Alanna: A Novel* (Penguin). In 1992 he was awarded the Pascall Prize for critical writing and broadcasting.

Barbara Santich is Program Manager of the Graduate Program in Gastronomy at the University of Adelaide — the first group of graduates receive the award of Master of Arts in Gastronomy in December 2003. She is the author of six books, has written for numerous national and international magazines and journals, and currently contributes a regular feature to the *Australian Financial Review* magazine.

Nicolette Stasko is a reviewer, essayist, teacher and the author of *Oyster: from Montparnasse to Greenwell Point* (HarperCollins). She has published four volumes of poetry, most recently, *The Weight of Irises* (Blackpepper Press, 2003). Her work is widely anthologised and she has read at literary events nationally and overseas. Nicolette lives in Sydney, where she is working on her next poetry collection and completing a doctorate in Australian Studies at the University of Sydney. She regularly writes for *Divine* magazine.

Appendix 3
Where to Now? A report from the plenary session

Chaired by Barbara Santich

Barbara Santich started out with a history of SAG: Michael Symons finished One Continuous Picnic in 1982 and then wondered if a symposium in Australia, similar to Oxford, was a good idea. He organised a committee and SAG1 was planned. SAG1 was held in Sydney. The theme was An Upstart Cuisine. Barbara Santich and Michael Symons coordinated. Meals had to make statements as much as formal sessions. They asked people to bring a loaf of brown bread, to symbolise the early meals at Government House when wheat was in short supply and guest at Government House were asked to bring their own bread to meals. The bread was served with lobsters, mayo and homemade butter. There was also a Cheong Liew dinner. Alan Davidson attended and chaired the second session. They decided to do a newsletter. Don Dunstan, also in attendance, suggested that groups often don't achieve much but "ginger individuals" within a group can stimulate things. Decided to hold SAG2 18 months later, to reverse the seasons.

SAG2 was held in Adelaide. A High Tea contribution meal was held. The Where to Next? session held at the end of every SAG, as is done at Oxford. Oxford also debate future themes; Australia has always left this up to the next committee. SAG3 was in Melbourne

Discussion from the floor

Pippa Campbell, a first-time attendee, said she will return and encourage more young people to attend. It's intimidating as a young person because of the known industry/media attending. You don't know if you'll be able to hold your own, but her fears were alleviated once she arrived.

Rob Elliot, an orange resident, thanked all for their contribution on behalf of Orange. Felt there was great potential to influence the region. There can be an 'us and them' between producers and distributors, which needs to be broken down and holding intellectual gatherings in regional areas helps this. Said there had been a 'frenzy of interest' in SAG13 by local producers and suppliers. SAG13 was honouring regionalism by coming to Orange.

Roddy Kennard asked why locals didn't come?

Rob Elliot said he didn't know. Lots of producers feel intimidated, but lots of 'refugees from Sydney' in Orange who would fit in well. Influence on Orange from SAG13 being there will be great

Barbara Santich said Rob Elliot's answer outlines the benefits for this region from SAG13.

Roger Haden, a first-time attendee, said he'd first heard of SAG in London (heard about Philip Searle's dinner) then saw it mentioned in the Journal of Gastronomy in 1984 (in a Barbara Santich article). Had not been before because of lack of time and not a lot of interest (at the time) in academic food studies. Attends many conferences; the best ever was a food conference in Amsterdam where everyone was fed well, which leads to a more productive conference (whether it's about food or not). Thrilled to meet the food media. Would like to see papers before the conference – maybe circulated via the Internet. Propose a film slot – get people to vote for their favourite films before hand. Suggest bring in more people outside food studies - technology, economics, politics – a wider range of disciplines

Peter Thomas asked what's the 'mission' of the organism that is SAG? What is the criteria for success of this or next symposium? Need to understand the unit of measurement before you can analyse.

Barbara Santich said there was no mission other than "like-minded people getting together in a relaxed way with good food, wine and opportunity", convivial, the shape of each SAG is that which each committee gives it.

Peter Thomas endorsed the residential aspect, as everyone stays together.

Barbara Santich said the first and subsequent SAG's success have been measured by the buzz of conversation in the rooms as people come together.

Sophie Zalokar, another first-time attendee, said she hasn't been before due to financial/time constraints. Would like to see more practical applications of the papers. How can new food writers act upon the responsibilities of the issues? Feels we have a responsibility to do something about them (e.g. water/land management issues).

Barbara Santich said that the Grampians SAG had an intense session on issues for locals. It's up to individual attendees to take away from SAG what they've learned and do something about it.

Sophie Zalokar said delicate issues to enact upon need more time allocated to particular (big/important) issues directed by the person giving the paper.

Jane Adams said that this comes up every time for a good reason. One outcome of SAG13 is that Jane will be mentoring Sophie and helping her with some particular issues they've discussed. Jane was involved in committee for last Sydney SAG, which had some TV coverage at events that was controversial but obtained broader coverage.

Wasn't same communication process devoted to outcomes this time? As a half-way mark perhaps some of the critical papers could be distributed to the media now rather than wait for the proceedings to be published (which then go nowhere in particular)?

Barbara Santich said that at past SAG, general public have been invited to some sessions, something she is in favour of.

Jane Adams suggested that Sue's paper should be one of the ones distributed.

Key Issues

Barbara Santich refocused on the key questions:

> What have we learned from SAG13?
  Peter Thomas said there had been a profound impact on local community. Relevant to themes for future SAG to give support to rural communities even less advanced (in food/wine) than Orange.
> Did SAG13 have the right balance between talking and consuming?
  The response was "yes", by popular vote.
> Should there be a cap on costs?

Ross Kelly said that as we built the plan for this SAG we discovered GST issues. The income came close to the $50,000 threshold, any income above that amount and we'd have to pay GST. If we don't have residential component as part of cost we can stay under $50,000 threshold more easily and therefore have more attendees.

Kay Richardson suggested paying for the residential component separately to avoid the problem.

Paul van Reyk said legislation is increasingly prohibitive of these events. Pam Gillespie had a hard time getting insurance and there was much confusion as to whether we were covered by Uni/TAFE for events held on their sites. The structure of SAG is becoming increasingly difficult for the casualness we want them to have.

Jane Adams said need to form an incorporated association for SAG.

Ross Kelly said we have.

Barbara Santich said Oxford is a charitable trust.

Box Dinner

John Newton thought the most enjoyable event was the Box Dinner and that we should do more cooking for each other. Lianne Colwell sais this is a holiday for me. I don't want to cook. Karen Pridham, who cooks for a living, said she hated every minute of it. Rachel Blackmore loved all of it. It was a fabulous opportunity for us to get our hands on the produce of the region. Margaret Gregory complained she had no idea, prior to event, what the box dinner was about. Communication wasn't very good. She had a terrific team but felt they had a bad draw with ingredients. Barbara Santich said it was meant to be a challenge.

Alan Saunders said the Box Dinner is a traditional part of SAG. The first one happened when the SAG was at a monastery in Adelaide, to mimic monastic life of using what was local, in the garden, as monks would have (although produce was really bought from Central Market). Important principle that SAG is about looking after each other physically as well as intellectually.

Next committee must think about better communication,

Franz Scheurer said a measure of success of the Box Dinner is that, even for those outside their comfort zones, the end results were very successful for all. Rob Elliot supported what Franz Scheurer said, as a newcomer found the Box Dinner broke down the barriers, broke the ice. Jane Adams said it was a good team-building exercise and good to be outside comfort zones.

Communication

SAG has never been good at communicating to people what exactly the event is. It is marketed on trust; no program is issued as would be at most conferences, so potential newcomers may not come. The old ones come on trust. Better communication prior to event will broaden the draw

RB? said s/he assumed we were cooking from the literature that was sent prior to event, but that more info would have increased the pleasure. S/he came on trust because repeat attendee. Barbara Santich said SAG always has strong surprise element. Scott Minervini said that often the conveners don't know what's happening until it happens and that SAGs are a work-in-progress. Paul Van Reyk said that virtually 75 per cent of the content came in in the last two weeks. You couldn't do a program in those circumstances. It seems to be the nature of SAG, constantly balancing the notion that SAG is partially about surprise. Praised last night's event (Frolic in the Vines) because none of the conveners knew what the locals had planned and it was thrilling, fun, to be surprised. He was excited not knowing what tonight (The Banquet) was about. There's always a risk if you don't know what's happening that you may not get what you expect.

The Next Step

Barbara Santich asked if ther should there be a SAG14? The room voted "yes" by a show of hands. Were there any offers to host SAG14? Initially no response.

Paul van Reyk explained organising committee is a small group of people who spend a year arguing and compromising to get the best fit they can with issues, constraints etc. That it was exhilarating and time consuming. Lynelle Scott-Aitken said that conveners don't get a discount of the SAG they organise. Janette Fry

has been on a past committee, and said it's messy. But very rewarding, said Barbara Santich.

The question was raised as to whether there was another way to think about organising future SAG? Has the time come for joint ownership? There is a need to encourage young people in SAG, so they'll keep coming back.

Franz Scheurer said that isn't it part of the excitement of each SAG that each is organised by a new group with new ideas? He thinks value for money is more important than cost.

Graham Latham offered four papers from Le Cordon Bleu for next SAG, under Barbara Santich's guidance. Pippa Campbell was keen to help and get more young people to attend SAG. Paula Wadeson said if she's still in Victoria, will help too. It was decided SAG14 to be hosted by Victoria.

Maria Kelly offered help from SAG13 conveners debrief. Barbara Santich said she hoped Melbourne would offer. Suggests timing in conjunction with Melbourne Food & Wine Festival with option to involve general public in some sessions. Jane Adams said that would mean it would have to be in 12 months time.

Ann Fry said it was terrific to see young people involved. She's part of Yarra Valley Food Group and is happy to help. Paula Wadeson likes idea of a rural location. Barbara Santich said if it was part of food and wine month could have public session in the Yarra Valley.

Barbara Santich asked for any suggestions for theme of SAG14. Roberta Muir said it was up to each new committee to decide theme.

Barbara Santich thanked the conveners of SAG13.

Appendix 4
May 2004
Letter to Symposiasts from convening committee

Dear Symposiast,
Well, it's all over, at least for another couple of years. Your life probably got back to normal within a week or two of that rather hot, February long-weekend, but in the world of the hard-working convening committee the Symposium lives on – follow-up thank you letters have been done, the accounts have been settled and we've commenced work on producing the proceedings - all over a drop or three of Orange red.

However, there is still one outstanding task - to extend a big thank you to you for attending. Without your participation we would not have had a Symposium and, as a committee, we are enormously grateful for your support. We especially acknowledge the Symposiasts who presented papers; those who offered valued advice and guidance; and all those who helped in the kitchen, especially Margaret Emery, who prepared the delicious breakfasts.

We've received lots of congratulatory and thank you emails, and have been written up in a number of publications - John Newton did a piece in the SMH; Paul Van Reyk reported to the IACP and Anne Greber was heard on late night radio.

To sum up the weekend, we've included an edited version of Paul's IACP report.

Sixty participants, three days and four nights, 20 presenters; bounteous breakfasts, barbecues, banquets and bacchanals (okay, I'm kidding about the bacchanals, but a ***lot*** of Orange region wines were consumed). Weather so hot even the cicadas were too enervated to screech and a dramatic dust storm that looked set to blow both the plenary session and the town away.

In a break with the past, SAG 13 was held in Orange, in the Central Western region of NSW. The area was chosen for a number of reasons. Historically a cattle, wheat, fruit and vegetable growing centre, the area continues to grow good quality fruit but, as in most rural areas, farmers have had to re-evaluate and move into new areas of value adding, organic, speciality and gourmet food production. In the last decade, the area has also emerged as a wine district of some renown. The hospitality industry has benefited from the arrival of some serious chefs, who impress food lovers with their exploration of the local produce.

Another key reason for holding the Symposium in Orange was because they have an existing infrastructure that we could tap into: the University of Sydney Orange campus features farm management and wine making on its curricula, and had the necessary facilities (bar air-conditioning, but who knew it was going to be so hot), and the local TAFE has a cooking and hospitality school that was very keen to help us.

More importantly, perhaps, was our wish to stage the event in an area that produced the food that we were to eat, in an attempt to come face-to-face with the reality of producing food in a rural recession and an ongoing drought.

The theme, ***Food, Fears, Fads and Fantasies***, was explored through presentations of papers and panel discussions taking, as their jumping off point, the proposition put forward by Alan Warde in his book ***Consumption, Food & Taste*** that we make food choice based on four 'antinomies of taste' reflecting the norms and contradictions of modern cultures. These antinomies are novelty and tradition, health and indulgence, economy and extravagance, and care and convenience.

The Symposium began with two papers on populations for whom these choices are either determined by others or severely limited by circumstance - young homeless people and intellectually disabled residents of large institutions. The former argued for re-orienting services for the homeless around the right to food security, and the latter looked at the changes brought about in placing nutritious, tasty meals built around individual case planning, at the centre of residents' lives.

A session on the gains and losses of the Slow Food movement acknowledged its role in maintaining biodiversity, traditional foods and ecologically sustainable agricultural practice. This was followed by two sessions focussing on rural issues, including water control practices in New South Wales; the crucial role that agricultural exports play in the Australian economy; the case for and against genetically modified crops, and the real cost of food production. A positive note was struck when discussing the economic benefit of farmers' markets, and the exciting experiment of an economically sustainable community centred on wine-production.

Other sessions explored the development of taste and food choices in young children; whether the Australian palate was being pushed towards a preference for foods with high sugar content; the role of consumerist capitalism in generating obesity and diet faddism; the shift of our relationship to cooking as seen through a short history of ovens, and the oyster as a paradoxical food.

A final session explored the role of food writers in raising and informing discussion about the range of issues canvassed over the two days of formal presentations. The discussion was lively, focussing on the freedom each panellist had in raising controversial issues, and on their approaches to researching and authenticating their views.

Behind the scenes, local producers and chefs were engaged in creating meals that would embellish each theme. The challenge started on the opening night, which featured a taste-off between three types of barbecued lamb. The verdict is still out as to which one barbed up the best. Peter Hedberg, manager of the Uni's vineyards, took us through a tasting of Templar's Mill vintages.

After a big day out at the farmer market, we all trooped to TAFE for the traditional Symposium box dinner. We formed teams to cook a meal for each other, using a lucky dip box of local produce to express one of Warde's antinomies. The team dynamics and dishes served were as diverse and unexpected as, well, the regional food and wines.

For the Frolic in the Vines, Edwina Mitchell produced an al fresco meal based around Mediterranean grilled and roasted dishes, produced out of the most extraordinary homemade kitchen-trailer. The incredibly hospitable Robson family opened their Ross Hill home to all 60 of us. More than a dozen vignerons were set up on the lawn, each with a table of wines to taste. The magnificent view across the fields and hills, which, as the sunset, turned the colour of a golden Semillon.

And finally, there was the Banquet. Rural Fantasies vs Rural Realities started off with a whip-cracking, vinyl-clad Miss Muster and her extremely tall and cod-pieced sheepdog herding us into the cattle truck that would transport us to the Agricultural Pavilion of the Orange Showground. Once there we were fed, boy, were we fed. To start, bull pizzle on slices of fig, topped with star anise foam and snail dolmades, wrapped in vine leaves.

The pavilion was a riotous combination of agricultural show and farm table, including displays of pickles and jams and local craft. Plaster sheep looked out from under the tables,

which were set with television sets at each end. Live bunnies sat unnervingly close to their braised relatives, and in the corner, a real, live granny knitted and crocheted her way through the evening. We dined, nay, we stuffed ourselves with hare, pig, lamb, a sensational rabbit terrine, and what seemed like the produce of the entire Orange district. The culinary surprises kept coming, culminating in sublime desserts: a shotglass of rosé jelly with raspberry glace and fresh berries and just-cooked crepes and whole-milk ricotta served with poached plums and figs. And then there were the wines. All the local vignerons opened their cellar doors to bring an endless array of wines to the tables for tasting and consuming, providing an opportunity to drink across producers and through the years.

The Symposium succeeded in bringing together producers and consumers in a way that both parties agreed was vastly enriching and sustaining. Indeed, so successful was the move to regionality and so generous, creative and welcoming the producers, vignerons and chefs of the area, that the convenors of the next SAG declared that it, too, would be held regionally, this time in the Yarra Valley, Victoria. - Paul Van Reyk

The final task for the Sydney committee will be to send out the published proceedings of SAG13, so until then, all the best for happy eating, drinking, reading and chatting.

Cheers, and thanks, from all of us.

John Newton and friend