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# Research Centre for the History of Food & Drink

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## Enclosures

### 1. Symposium on Children and Food

As announced in the January newsletter, the Research Centre is hosting a Symposium on Children and Food on 4 June. The Symposium honours Dr. Eva Gullberg, the Swedish food historian who is spending nine months in Adelaide as the guest of the Research Centre while studying the history of school meals in Australia. For details and the registration form see the enclosed brochure. If you would like more copies of the brochure and registration form, contact Julie McMahon at the School of History and Politics, tel 08 8303 5032; julie.mcmahon@adelaide.edu.au

### 2. Membership Renewal

The Research Centre hasn't asked you to renew your membership for almost two years. To renew your membership just return the enclosed form. Membership is free, but your donation helps pay for the costs of stationery, printing, computing and other activities.

### 3. Tasty Treasures ...an archival view of food and drink

This is the title of a joint presentation by the National Archives of Australia (Adelaide office) and the *State Library of South Australia* on May 21 at the Institute Building of the State Library from 2:00 to 4:30 as part of History Week. Enclosed for South Australian members is a flyer describing the seminar.

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### Congratulations New PhD

Carolyn Daniel's PhD thesis at Monash University on *Eating into Culture: Food and the Eating Body in Children's Literature* has been approved. Carolyn will present a paper based on the thesis at the Symposium on Children and Food. The following is the thesis abstract:

Food is an extremely effective socialising agent, and stories that feature food help to teach children how to be properly human. Descriptions of lavish picnics and traditional high teas add to the sense of adventure in many classic tales while more everyday fictional meals have a compelling mimetic effect. The fantasy feast is a powerful inducement to child readers, and the pleasure it produces 'sweetens' the discourse encouraging an unreflexive acceptance of the story's subtextual meanings.

The food trope in children's literature reinforces and reiterates the need for the legitimate human subject to embody prevailing culture; in other words, the axiom 'we are what we eat' rings true. For example, according to contemporary western cultural ideals proper female embodiment is connoted by thinness. Being thin is a conspicuous and culturally appropriate display of appetitive control and of modest desire. Children's literature reflects these ideals, valorising a very narrow range of acceptable body shapes and sizes and reinforcing gendered discourses of control.

Voracious monsters are a traditional mainstay of stories for children. They frequently reflect historically relevant fear of enemy others. That these monsters threaten to devour their victims reveals psychological anxieties about (re)incorporation—a fate that evokes both dread and desire.

The process of reading about food in children's literature can create visceral pleasures, which may be transgressive as well as sensuous and appetitive. The

pleasure inherent in the food metaphor owes a debt to the maternal body/aesthetic and is an acknowledgement of corporeality, the realities of which tend to be culturally suppressed. Thinking about the pleasures and processes of the eating body reveals the arbitrariness of phallogocentric logic, which sees the dualisms mind/body, inside/outside and male/female as oppositional and in conflict.

The thesis examines these themes and others through a diverse selection of children's literature ranging from Victorian to contemporary narratives including Frances Hodgson Burnett's *The Secret Garden*, Raymond Briggs' *Fungus the Bogeyman*, Lewis Carroll's *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*, Roald Dahl's *Charlie and the Chocolate Factory*, several stories by Enid Blyton, C. S. Lewis's *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe* and E. B. White's *Charlotte's Web*.  
*Gaudeamus igitur!*

### **Food, Culture, and Society**

Lynn Martin has been invited to join the editorial advisory board of *Food, Culture, and Society*, the journal of the Association for the Study of Food and Society. See below for details on the latest issue.

### **News and Notices**

#### **Feeding America**

Full-text reproductions of 76 historic American cookbooks are available on a website created by the Michigan State University Libraries. 'Feeding America: The Historic American Cookbook Project' was a two-year digitisation project funded by the Institute of Museum and Library Services. The MSU Libraries partnered with the MSU Museum to create the site. The 76 cookbooks featured on the 'Feeding America' site include some of the most significant works in American culinary history, including a 1798 printing of Amelia Simmons' *American Cookery*, the first published cookbook by an American author. The site also includes early works by the 'great ladies' of American cookery such as Eliza Leslie, Lydia Maria Child and Fannie Farmer. Other works in the collection represent popular cookbook genres of the nineteenth century, including church and charity cookbooks, early works on nutrition, ethnic and regional cookbooks and recipe brochures produced to advertise specific products.

The site features an essay and background material by Jan Longone, a nationally known culinary historian; biographical sketches of the cookbook authors; a glossary of nineteenth-century cooking terms and multidimensional images of cooking tools and artefacts from the collection of the MSU Museum. The text of each cookbook has been transcribed and made searchable, enabling users to search across the collection for recipes to produce specific dishes or to use specific ingredients. The cookbook texts can be viewed in the user's web

browser as JPG images or as HTML pages, and can be downloaded as PDF documents for ease of printing.

The 'Feeding America' website is at <http://digital.lib.msu.edu/projects/cookbooks/> For more information, contact the project manager: Ruth Ann Jones, Digital & Multimedia Center, Michigan State University Libraries; [jonesr@msu.edu](mailto:jonesr@msu.edu)

### **Food and Foodways Seeks a New Editor**

Carole M. Counihan is looking for a co-editor of *Food and Foodways* to replace the irreplaceable Martin Bruegel and to work with her on the journal. Applications are due 1 May, and initial inquiries are welcome: [carole.counihan@millersville.edu](mailto:carole.counihan@millersville.edu)

### **American Culinary History Center Opens**

A large and tasty slice of Americana has found a home in the Longone Center for American Culinary Research at the University of Michigan's William Clements Library. <http://makeashorterlink.com/?U166628AA>

### **Food, Culture, and Society**

The latest issue includes a special section on 'Eating and Thinking Globally' with the following articles:

- Imagining the Self and the Other: Food and Identity in France and the United States, by Christy Shields-Argelès
- Afro-Antillean Cuisine and Global Tourism, by Carla Guerrón-Montero
- Breaking Bread: The Roles of Taste in Colonialism, by Damian M. Mosley
- Empire of the 'Jungle': The Rise of an Atlantic Refrigerated Beef Industry, 1880-1920, by Jeffrey M. Pilcher

Another special section on 'Slow Food Reconsidered' contains the following:

- A Recipe for Connectedness: Bridging Production and Consumption with Slow Food, by Julie Labelle
- Globalizing Resistance: Slow Food and New Local Imaginaries, by Marie Sarita Gaytán
- Slow Food: What, Why, and to Where? by Janet Chrzan
- Slow Food, the French Terroir Strategy, and Culinary Modernism: An Essay Review, by Rachel Laudan

Finally, 'Perspectives on Teaching' has an article by Jeremy L. Korr and Christine Broussard on 'Challenges in the Interdisciplinary Teaching of Food and Foodways.'

To subscribe go to the website: [food-culture.org](http://food-culture.org)

### **1950s Rock'n'Roll'n'Food**

Mark Lamarr's BBC2 show featured an hour of 1950s rock'n'roll songs with a food theme. A playlist and facility permits people to listen again, but it didn't work for me. <http://www.bbc.co.uk/radio2/shows/lamarr/>

### **Slow Food's University of Gastronomic Sciences**

The University of Gastronomic Sciences is now taking pre-enrolments for the 2005-2006 academic year. This is for people wanting to start the first year of the basic three-year program. Last year 70 students from ten countries began their studies in the new university. So far 200 candidates have completed the first stage of pre-enrolment through the University's website. Pre-enrolments are open to anyone, whether Italian or not, with a high school diploma or equivalent. The first stage of pre-enrolments is free of charge and can be done via the University website: [www.unisg.it](http://www.unisg.it)

### **European Summer School, 5-11 September**

The François Rabelais de Tours University, France, and The European Institute of Food History are organising a European Summer School on the theme of 'Change, Innovation and Evolving Food Consumption Patterns.' The Summer School will provide accommodation and full-board catering for the students. There is no charge for attending, the students will only have to pay their journey to Tours. The Summer School is designed for PhD students or PhDs wishing to achieve greater depth on the relevance of nutritional history and cultures. Good knowledge of both English and French are essential. To apply send an email before 1 June with a detailed curriculum vitae, a brief description of the research project in food history and /or culture that you might be working on, a letter of intent, and a letter of recommendation by a qualified professor to [carole.accolas-ieha@wanadoo.fr](mailto:carole.accolas-ieha@wanadoo.fr) and [ieha@wanadoo.fr](mailto:ieha@wanadoo.fr)

### **Food and History**

The most recent edition of this journal contains the classic text of Norbert Elias 'On the Eating of Meat' (1978) and the following articles:

- Meat in History: The Butchery Trade in the Romano-British Period by Krish Seetah
- From al-Andalus to Spain: Arab Traces in Spanish Cooking, by Manuela Marin
- Pêcheurs contre 'Marsouins' et 'Belougas' (XVI-XIXème siècles), by Olivier Levasseur and Jean-Christophe Fichou
- The Changing Place of Vegetables in Dutch Food Culture: The Role of Marketing and Nutritional Sciences 1850-1990, by Adel P. den Hartog
- Alimentary Identities, Nutritional Advice, and the Uses of History, by Martin Bruegel
- Learning from America? The Travels of German Nutritional Scientists to the USA in the Context of the Technical Assistance Program of the Mutual Security Agency and its Consequences for the West German Nutritional Policy, by Ulrike Thoms
- Nutrition and Living Standards in Industrialising Belgium (1846-1913), by Yves Segers

- Culinary Historian Alan Davidson Receives Erasmus Prize 2003, by Anneke van Otterloo
- Alan Davidson: Some Personal Memories and an Unacknowledged Dispute, by Stephen Mennell
- Signs that Trigger a Poetic Response, by Johan Swinnen
- The Fairness of the Farm: Food, Ecology and Ethics in Ancient Greece, by Oddone Longo
- *Dieta e calendari nell'Occidente latino altomedievale*, by Francesca Pucci Donati

To subscribe go to [periodicals@brepols.net](mailto:periodicals@brepols.net)

### **Food Standards Australia New Zealand**

Food Standards Australia New Zealand (FSANZ) has invited individuals and organisations with an interest in the Australia New Zealand Food Standards Code to comment on proposed changes to the Code. The changes include recommendations to approve the sale of Roquefort cheese made from raw sheep's milk, food derived from a genetically modified corn and the use of an ice-structuring protein in ice cream and edible ices, and to amend the current requirements for the country of origin labelling of food. Before changes can be made to the Food Standards Code, FSANZ gives the community two opportunities to provide information or express an opinion on the scientific, public health, economic or social factors involved in making a change. Assessment reports for the items listed below can be found on the FSANZ website at [www.foodstandards.gov.au](http://www.foodstandards.gov.au).

### **A Culinary Terminology List from Simplot Australia.**

This website defines culinary terms used in Australia. It has the longest url that I have ever encountered—over two lines:

<http://www.simplotfoodservice.com.au/Hosting/Foodservice/FoodService.nsf/0/47C77A3F12A9742ECA256E9E0016882A?OpenDocument&1=30-Culinary+Terms~&2=~&3=~>

Perhaps just entering part of the url would enable a person to then follow links to the Australian culinary terminology, but I haven't tried it.

### **Conferences**

The number of conferences devoted to food and/or drink continues to impress. Information on some of them arrived too late to permit members to propose a paper and in one case to attend. I include all of them for your information.

### **Drink Up! Liquid Refreshments in Early America, 1750-1850, 1 April 2005**

The variety of liquid refreshments available in early American homes and taverns, who was drinking what, when and where, and how they were processed, procured, stored and served are the focus of a symposium sponsored by the Fairfax County Park Authority and the History

Department at George Mason University in Fairfax, Virginia.

Presentations explore the social, technological and economic history associated with beverages in early American homes and taverns in topics such as home and commercial beverage production, consumption patterns, imported beverages and trade. Discussions also investigate the material culture of table wares and containers in which beverages were stored, prepared and consumed. Speakers include Eleanor Breen (Mount Vernon), Frank Clark (Colonial Williamsburg), Ellen Denker (Independent Historian), David Hildebrand (Colonial Music Institute) and Justin Sarafin (Monticello.)

For information contact Susan Clark, Fairfax County Park Authority, 12055 Government Center Parkway, Suite 927, Fairfax VA 22035  
susan.clark@fairfaxcounty.gov or  
<http://www.co.fairfax.va.us/parks/collections/events.htm>

### **Second Annual Conference on Culinary Tourism, 30 April-3 May**

This takes place in San Francisco, with mobile educational workshops in Sonoma and Napa Valleys. For more information go to  
[www.culinarytourism.org/conference](http://www.culinarytourism.org/conference)

### **The Cultural Continuum of Cuisine and Consumption: A Symposium on Food, its Cultivation and Food-Oriented *Mentalités*, 20-21 May 2005**

This is the sixth annual interdisciplinary graduate student conference hosted and

presented by the graduate students of the department of Classical, Near Eastern and Religious Studies, University of British Columbia. This conference aims to bring together graduate students from science, social science, humanities, fine arts and beyond in an informal, friendly and supportive atmosphere where they can present their work, meet others in related areas, debate different points of view and engage in conversations relating to antiquity and beyond. For information contact [roy.kok@gmail.com](mailto:roy.kok@gmail.com)

### **European Cooking from Rome to the Renaissance, 17-19 June 2005**

This is the third session of this conference hosted by Serve It Forth! of Colorado Springs, Colorado. If you would like to present a paper or give a class contact Mary Morman ([sif@rialto.org](mailto:sif@rialto.org)) with an outline and synopsis of your class, paper or presentation and a brief curriculum vitae. Audio-visual and hands-on cooking presentations are also welcome.

The conference program features classes, papers, panels, and presentations on European cooking from Rome to the Renaissance. There will be hands-on

workshops in modern kitchens on cheesemaking, making sugar paste, Renaissance knives.

### **La Comida de los Puertos en el Mundo, 24-26 August 2005**

La Comisión Internacional de Antropología de la Alimentación, miembro de la Unión Internacional de Ciencias Antropológicas y Etnológicas, bajo los auspicios de la Universidad Veracruzana, la Universidad de Guadalajara y el Instituto Veracruzano de Cultura, convocan a su XXII Congreso Internacional en Veracruz, México. Los interesados deberán someter al comité científico del congreso las síntesis de sus ponencias en no más de doscientas palabras, a más tardar el 15 de mayo de 2005.

Los interesados pueden consultar el sitio web del evento:  
[http://www.uv.mx/adtusi/icafoxii\\_uv](http://www.uv.mx/adtusi/icafoxii_uv)

### **'How sweet are your words to my taste!' Eating Food, Imbibing Drink, and Devouring Texts in the Middle Ages, 15 October 2005**

The venue for this conference is Philosophy Hall, Columbia University, New York. The keynote speaker is Professor Paul Freedman of Yale University. This conference will explore medieval eating in its broadest terms. The organisers invite essays that discuss the history of eating and food, theories involving the digestion of words and the Word of God, images of edibles, the Christian host and dinner scenes. How did medieval people eat? How did medieval people think about eating? What does it mean to 'eat'?

For more information contact: Medieval Guild, Alyssa Meyers, Department of English and Comparative Literature; [anm2101@columbia.edu](mailto:anm2101@columbia.edu) or Jon Williams, Columbia University; [jkw2002@columbia.edu](mailto:jkw2002@columbia.edu)

### **Southern Foodways Alliance Symposium, 27-30 October 2005**

The eighth annual Southern Foodways Alliance symposium will take place on the campus of the University of Mississippi in Oxford. This year, the SFA—which celebrates, teaches, preserves, and promotes the diverse food cultures of the American South—examines sugar and sweetness. For more information contact John T. Edge at [johnt@olemiss.edu](mailto:johnt@olemiss.edu).

### **Conference of the Society for the History of Technology, 3-6 November 2005**

The Society for the History of Technology will hold its annual meeting in Minneapolis, Minnesota. One of the themes of the conference is Food Technology or Technology and Food. The conference web site is at [http://shot.press.jhu.edu/Annual\\_Meeting/Annual\\_Meeting\\_Main\\_Page.htm](http://shot.press.jhu.edu/Annual_Meeting/Annual_Meeting_Main_Page.htm)

### **New Zealand Culinary Culture, 14-15 November**

The only details I have for this conference is that the venue is Victoria University in Wellington, and the dates are approximate. Contact Michael Symons [duckpress@hotmail.com](mailto:duckpress@hotmail.com)

Food Excesses and Constraints in Europe, 3-4 February 2006

**The Scientific Committee of the European Institute of Food History** (Institut Européen d'Histoire de l'Alimentation) invites scholars to submit proposals for papers at its fifth annual symposium. The general theme will be Food Excesses and Constraints in Europe. The symposium will be in Tours, France, on 3-4 February 2006. The co-ordinators of this conference are Allen J. Grieco (The Harvard University Center for Italian Renaissance Studies, Firenze), Mary Hyman (Independent Food Historian, Paris) and Peter Scholliers (Vrije Universiteit Brussels).

Proposals should include a provisional title, a short abstract (ten to fifteen lines, with the presentation of the general problem and the approach), as well as one page with your cv and your most recent publications. These documents should be submitted before 31 May 2005 to Institut Européen d'Histoire de l'Alimentation, 12 Rue Etienne Pallu, F - 37000 Tours France. The documents should also be emailed to [ieha@wanadoo.fr](mailto:ieha@wanadoo.fr) and [christophe.marion-ieha@wanadoo.fr](mailto:christophe.marion-ieha@wanadoo.fr) at the Institute, as well as to Allen Grieco [[agrieco@itatti.it](mailto:agrieco@itatti.it)], Mary Hyman [[pmhyman@bigfoot.com](mailto:pmhyman@bigfoot.com)] and Peter Scholliers [[pscholli@vub.ac.be](mailto:pscholli@vub.ac.be)]. What follows is a statement from the organisers:

Over the centuries, limitations of food intake have been commonplace. Many and long periods of food shortages were often responsible for these instances, but they also occurred during periods of sufficient food supply when, according to rules and codes of diverse origin (religious, cultural, medical...), people have consciously restricted their food intake in order not to sin, not to appear ill-mannered, or perhaps simply not to get fat. In present-day over-fed Europe, the recurrent success of mass dieting programs, the never-ending nutritionists' efforts to find valid models for healthy eating, and the young-beautiful-slim ideal of the catwalk are manifestations of this. It would appear that a model of frugality has prevailed for many centuries in which excessive eating patterns are implicitly or explicitly condemned.

Nevertheless, on special occasions, excessive eating and drinking were and still are socially accepted, thus transgressing common habits, codes and rules. *The 2006 symposium addresses particularly those moments and places when food excesses are not only permitted but encouraged.* Moments of excessive collective eating and drinking were once manifold and were often (directly or

indirectly) linked to corresponding constraints. Examples might be the present-day Christmas meal, the Bacchanalia in Ancient Rome, guild rites of passage in the early modern period, the German *Fresswelle* of the 1950s, the carnival period preceding Lent or the *fêtes foraines* after harvesting. These kinds of special occasions are often directly linked to designated places where excesses are permitted, applauded and cheered (a fancy restaurant, a wedding banquet...). Outside of these physical or socially acceptable parameters, 'normality' reappears at once (and excess once again is frowned upon).

Both time and place must therefore be considered when collective excessive eating and drinking come into play: excess in 1500 differs from that indulged in 1900. Moreover, notions of food excess are socially and regionally bound: what one group may consider perfectly normal behaviour, another group may see as sinfully excessive.

### **Research Centre for the History of Food and Drink Website**

Redesigning of a new look user-friendly website with updated links and online subscription capability is now in process. Members will also have access to a listserve type emailing system for correspondence between members. Members will have the option of listing research interests and further contact details.

Watch this space:

[www.arts.adelaide.edu.au/centrefooddrink/](http://www.arts.adelaide.edu.au/centrefooddrink/)

## Reviews

**Andrew Jefford, *Peat, Smoke and Spirit: A Portrait of Islay and its Whiskies* (London: **Headline Book Publishing**, 2004), x + 406 pp., RRP £18.99.**

The island of Islay off the west coast of Scotland is famous for its seven distilleries of malt whisky, Ardbeg, Bowmore, Lagavulin, Laphroaig, Bruichladdich, Bunnahabhain, and Caol Ila. I am familiar with the first four but not the other three, so in the course of reading the book I visited the local liquor shop to purchase them. No luck, so I bought bottles of Ardbeg and Laphroaig. My advice is don't buy the book unless you are prepared to spend a similar amount on a bottle of single-malt whisky, because Jefford's tasting notes are seductive to say the least.

Jefford is a multiple prize-winning author (eight Glenfiddich Awards and five Lanson Awards), whose book on French wine regions, *New France*, received praise from Robert Parker, Pierre-Antoine Rovani and James Halliday. Nonetheless, as a single-malt enthusiast, I wanted the book on Islay to succeed more than it did, and my overall impression is disappointing. He claims that the distillation of whisky on Islay probably began in the late thirteenth or early fourteenth centuries as a result of contact with Ireland. However, the first definite reference to whisky in Ireland dates from 1406, in Scotland from 1494. The book contains a map of Islay, but the text mentions hundreds of lochs, rivers, mountains, villages, and other geographical sites that are not on the map. Another disappointment is the large amount of irrelevant material, such as an entire chapter on shipwrecks.

*Peat, Smoke and Spirit* has an interesting structure. The 'Introduction' brings the reader to Islay via an airplane flight from Glasgow. It contains such purple prose that I seriously wondered if I could bear to read the entire book. What follows is 'A word or two on whisky,' twenty-one pages of such dense technical detail that I looked forward to more purple prose. An indication of the technical detail is the twelve-page glossary, with about one-fourth of one page explaining the meaning of foreshots. Then come eight chapters on Islay's geography, early and recent history, peat, weather, nature, shipwrecks and modern situation. In between each of these eight chapters is a 'Glass,' in effect a chapter, on one of the distilleries—a total of seven 'Glasses' in alphabetical order. The structure doesn't really work; it results in repetition and confusion, and Jefford often mentions something briefly but then refers the reader to another section of the book for the complete account. The alphabetised 'Glasses' seem an indication that he could not get his head around a more sensible order.

The relatively small island of Islay produces 25% of Scotland's malt whisky exports, some of it as 'pure' single-malt whisky, some of it blended with grain whisky to form 'Scotch' such as Cutty Sark, Johnny Walker and

Ballantynes. The causes of Islay's success are difficult to discern. The three ingredients in making malt whisky are barley, yeast and water, but the distillers themselves are indifferent to barley varieties and yeast strains, while one expert considers the effect of the water on the finished product to be one or two in a scale of one hundred. What makes a difference is peat, which is burned to add flavour to the malted barley, but most of the peat comes from one source, and most of the malted barley is shipped to the distilleries from Port Ellen. Yet the seven distilleries make distinctly different-tasting whiskies. To return to Jefford's purple, some would say eloquent, prose, the ten-year old Ardbeg's 'soft, rounded notes of oily peat, of warm spice and of pale lemon fall gently through its aromas and flavours like sunbeams through high windows' (p. 77). A sixteen-year old Lagavulin 'opens sweetly and creamily, drawing you in disarmingly before bearing down with a swinging thurible of smoke and spice' (p. 287). Laphroaig's new make suggests 'bluebells in cool spring woods or hyacinths in a moist conservatory' (p. 336). The distilling process can make a difference, and the minimum of ten years spent in casks greatly affects the character of the whisky, but all the distilleries use second-hand oak casks, mainly from America. The distilleries are loath to reveal the secrets of their processes, for good reason, but in the final analysis some of the factors that create such an exceptional whisky are inexplicable—it's a mystery.

The story of Islay and its whiskies is far from romantic. The nineteenth century was a period of depopulation from 15,000 to 5,000 inhabitants (3,457 in the latest census) as a result of forced clearances and famine, while during the twentieth two world wars and the Great Depression forced the distilleries to close. More recently the vagaries of international commerce have also resulted in some closures, frequent changes in ownership and the arrival of multinational corporations. Only one distillery, Bunnahabhain, obtains its water from a spring; the source of the others is peat bogs, and the leach-infested water is consequently brown from a high level of vegetable content and the occasional dead animal. The cause of the dead animal is often chronic tick affliction, which can result in bleeding to death or death from diseases carried by the ticks. We can be thankful that, as already noted, the effect of water on the finished product is one or two in a scale of one hundred.

*Reviewed by A. Lynn Martin*

**Nita Tiffaha Jawary, *The Perpetual Table Cuisine of Judeo-Babylon and Old Baghdad* (A CD-Rom of Food Art Video Music. Stockists can be found at [www.nita.com.au/perp.html](http://www.nita.com.au/perp.html))**

I love food, cooking, cookbooks and books about food, and I frequently surf the net in search of inspiration or for a particular recipe and when conducting research. This, however, is my first digital cookbook! It is interactive; simply click on an entry in the Table of Contents and you will be taken to that point in the book. Alternatively the search facility may be used to locate a particular recipe or ingredient. There are short video clips, music and artwork interspersed throughout. The music is by Yair Dalal. The video clips are generally cooking demonstrations, often by Nita, and the majority of the illustrations are also by Nita.

The cooking styles of Iraq, once called Mesopotamia or The Land Between Two Rivers, can be divided into three different regions; Kurdish in the north, that of Basra in the south and the Baghdadi in the centre. *The Perpetual Table* is an insight into the cuisine of the Judeo-Babylonian community of Old Baghdad. This cuisine reflects the different cooking styles of the north and south as well as conforming to Judaic food laws. From the north came Turkish cooking practices and the use of sweet spices. The south was influenced by both Persia and India with the custom of using dried fruits to give a sweet and sour flavour to dishes coming from Persia and hot chilli dishes coming from India.

From clove necklace to Caulfield, this book tells the story of dishes, aromatic and sweet, taken from the ancient kitchens of Baghdad to downtown Melbourne where they are cooked today.

*The Perpetual Table* is a digital book of recipes, stories, cultural background and music of Judeo-Babylon and Old Baghdad pre-1951. It records a way of life preserved by a Jewish people who have lived in what we now know as Iraq for over 2000 years. The title, *The Perpetual Table*, comes from the Arabic expression, *Sifra Daima! May your table last forever!* (p. 7)

Nita is passionate about her cuisine and her recipes and heritage as are her assistants, the Synagogue Sirens. The women of the Sassoon Yehudah Synagogue regularly cook Judeo-Babylonian cuisine at home and for the synagogue.

The initial chapters focus on the history and background of this cuisine and the storytelling is descriptive and colourful. The first recipe chapter is on rice, the staple and favourite part of a meal in Iraq. The chapter contains detailed instructions for the preparation of numerous rice dishes from the simple *plau* with its many variations to *Plau Miluk* or King Rice, which consists of poached chicken surrounded by fragrant rice, liberally scattered with toasted almonds and fried sultanas, all shiny and fat. This dish shows how simple

ingredients can be transformed into an aromatic centrepiece.

Following rice is a chapter on baking which was traditionally a Thursday task, with pastries and bread baked for the entire week. This is a glorious chapter conjuring up many images of baking bread and pastries, sweet and savoury. Other chapters cover recipes for pickles, salad, meats (including many for offal) and a chapter for vegetarians. Spices such as cumin, sweet paprika, cardamom, turmeric, cloves, nutmeg, cinnamon, sumac and saffron are frequently used.

I had a few problems with the recipes themselves. The recipes do not state the number of servings. The recipe for *Kichri*, rice with lentils, requires a half a cup of rice, yet the recipe for *Sambusak B'jibin*, baked pastry boats, calls for 4 cups of self-raising flour. Recipe layout is inconsistent and serving suggestions are often omitted. For the newcomer to this cuisine these are essential.

I enjoyed reading, looking and listening my way through *The Perpetual Table*. Will I return to the CD-ROM regularly? Only time will tell. To me a cookbook is there to be 'consumed' wherever I choose, on the tram, on the beach, in the garden and THEN taken into the kitchen to cook whatever takes my fancy. To enjoy this book and all of its parts I need to be at the computer, not in the kitchen. I can print off the pages, but in doing so I lose the images, the music and video, all of which are so much a part of the 'book.' This brings about another question, where do I put the pages I have printed and how will I find them again? Perhaps I need an Internet Refrigerator, but at \$16,999 it will be a long wait!

*Reviewed by Dani Signorini, currently completing her dissertation in the Master of Gastronomy degree at the University of Adelaide.*

**Jack Turner, *Spice: The History of a Temptation* (London: HarperCollins, 2004), 409 pp., RRP \$A32.95.**

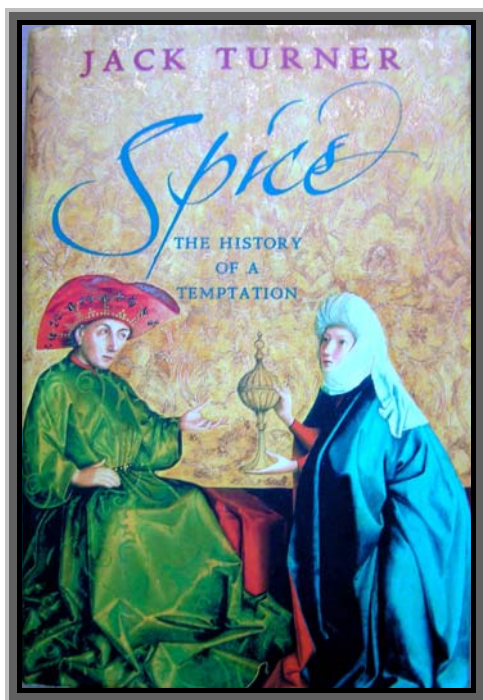
Here is a brilliant historical account written with a decidedly contemporary and literary flair. It is a study full of erudite and textured observation and packed with delightful citations from relatively obscure (often ancient or medieval) texts.

While in keeping with its subject, *Spice* remains at all times a rollicking good yarn. Jack Turner deftly blends scholarship and story telling to produce a tempting analysis of the motives and meanings behind the special place accorded 'spice' (particularly pepper, cinnamon, nutmeg and cloves) in western history. Turner weaves this complex history using tales of high adventure, exotic lands, brutality, betrayal, stupidity, courageousness and tragedy; with accounts of kings and conquerors, global circumnavigators, pirates, and ordinary people. Fact becomes indistinct from fiction in this story of human

emotion, imagination and desire, one rooted in the often ruthless economics of commodity supply and demand.

For centuries, Europeans fed on 'spicy' stories (the metaphor is always suggestive of adventure), captivating hearts and minds. Some would inevitably put their lives at risk to go in search of spice.

In Turner's rendering the characters become individuals, with emotions and desires foregrounded,



Jack Turner, *Spice: The History of a Temptation*

even though they might be as illustrious as Columbus. Personal passion figures from the beginning in this instance, as Turner looks behind the scenes of the discovery of the New World to suggest how spice hunters (like Columbus) were perfectly willing to fabricate the truth and perhaps to believe it, so great was their individual desire for success. The skilful humanisation of the monumental mythology that is 'Columbus' is retold by Turner as a story of a venture capitalist on his way to discover a spice route to the East (India) by travelling west. Turner stresses how the double misnomer 'Indian pepper,' ascribed by the great explorer to the central-American chili plant, illustrates that history can often stand for reality, simply as the result of the desires or machinations of an individual.

Even at the end of the eighteenth century a spice such as cloves (at that time only obtained from a tiny island of the Moluccas in Indonesia) could still drive men like the Frenchman Pierre Poivre (true!) to risk life and limb (he had as a result of earlier escapades lost an arm!) in acquiring it. In successfully stealing the spice and the plant that produced it from the Dutch, Poivre was seemingly unmoved by fear of the brutal Dutch monopoly in the Moluccas. Money, glory, power and passion only

added to the attractiveness of those aromatic fruits, flowers, barks and roots we call spice.

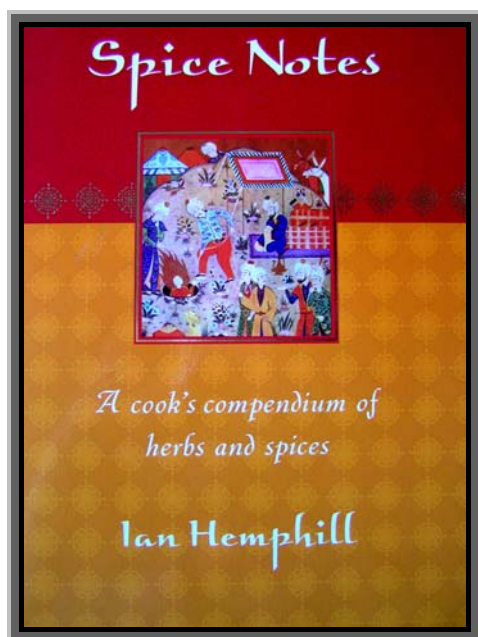
It's no wonder then that the term spice metaphorically refers to a certain degree of *intensity*, whether emotional, sensual or, for that matter, intellectual. The story of spice has simultaneously been one of human suffering and pleasure and thereby a catalyst for a diverse cultural production, from political power plays and intrigues to medical (humoral) lore, from religious edicts to romantic illusions and everyday distractions. This is the very character of the story of spice.

Turner contains the potentially explosive narrative character of this complex history by anchoring it to the theme of *temptation*, itself a powerful cultural force. He argues that, to a considerable extent, the extraordinary nature of the global search for spice between 1500 and 1800 involved a longing that found expression in the display of class and privilege and in romantic and spiritual sentiment. Also important was a perennial desire for the exotic and of course for unique *flavours*, which established spice as a culinary currency in its own right.

A 'history of spice'? More accurately, as Turner's subtitle implies, this is a book that quite rightly addresses how history itself is only the product of specific cultural forces. The lust for spice was clearly one of these forces that has shaped geopolitical relations, cultural mores and the individual's sense of self, all of which have shaped the modern world.

This is a book for historians of the everyday as much as those who prefer the big picture. *Spice* implies both. For the culinary historian the book contains ample descriptions of the foods, flavours and the cookery of the past, of the medical lore as well as of spiritual and religious beliefs regarding spices; all appear as intermixed, seemingly effortlessly, into the broad historical context of this enormously entertaining and at times even risqué read. Highly recommended.

*Reviewed by Roger Haden*



For those culinarily inspired by Turner's evocative study of spice, perhaps the perfect companion volume would be the above, Ian Hemphill's definitive, *Spice Notes: A Cook's Compendium of Herbs and Spices* (Sydney: Pan Macmillan, 2002), 496 pp., RRP \$40.00 pb; \$50.00 hb. Happy cooking!

**Nichola Fletcher, *Charlemagne's Tablecloth: A Piquant History of Eating*. (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 2004), 256 pp., RRP A\$49.95.**

A somewhat quirky slice of food history, which takes as its subject feasting in all its guises, *Charlemagne's Tablecloth* is written by an avid cook/historian who posits 'the feast' as an archetypal social institution. Whereas, Roy Strong's impressive, *Feast: A History of Grand Dining* (2002), is an account of 'grand eating' written with an eye for both aesthetics and social history, by comparison Fletcher's perspective on the topic of feasts lacks the theoretical 'connective tissue' of Strong's narrative. Also unlike Strong's book, Fletcher's account doesn't follow a strict historical chronology or reveal an extensive knowledge of literature and the fine arts on the part of the author.

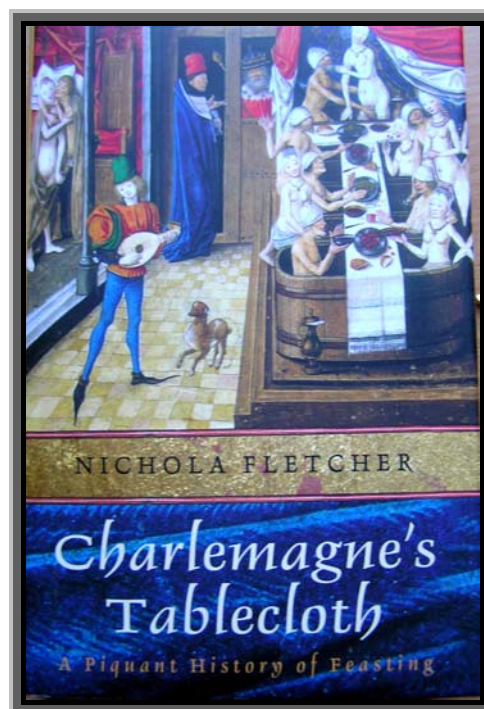
But Fletcher's background as a cook does steep the book's twenty-nine absorbing chapters with an enthusiasm that erudition alone cannot necessarily produce. Each chapter explores different —often famous—feasts of history, while also providing some varying definitions of 'the feast' along the way. The menu as a result varies from the table of the semi-mythical Midas to the lugubrious, infamous 'funereal' feast of prototypical modern writer on gastronomy, Grimod de la Reynière; from Carnival feasts to the Japanese tea ceremony; from Hogmanay to, as Fletcher puts it, 'men behaving badly' in the men's clubs of nineteenth-century Britain.

Celebratory feasts don't always attract the most expensive or glamorous of victuals, Fletcher relates. She describes with skill cannibalism and beggar's banquets, Lenten fasting and the Mexican 'feasts of the dead.' The format never allows for boredom, and the book makes for great bedtime reading.

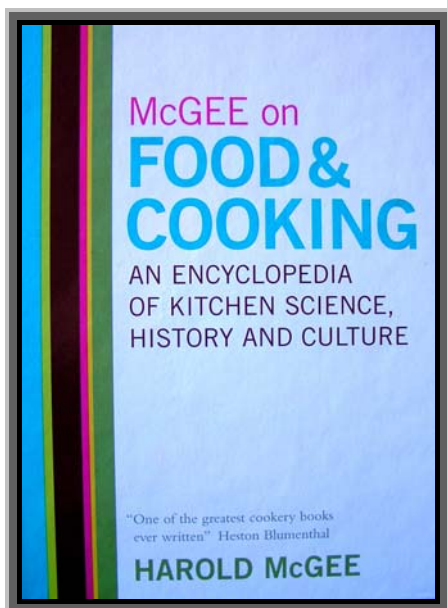
Rather light on overt historical interpretation, it thus makes up for this with an imaginative choice of subject matter. I liked in particular the chapter on venison, in part for not previously having known the extent to which deer (both stags and does) were objects of love, honour and myth as well as consumption during medieval and early modern times. Imagining Elizabeth I, for example, potting a number of deer for sport, fully aware of the cultural cachet conferred by such an act, remains as a summary vignette of how powerful a symbol and how valued a food venison once was. This particular chapter (12) also ends with a description of the author's own venison feast, recreated to do justice to the medieval spirit in which they were originally created.

To be particularly commended is the well-judged inclusion of accounts of Fletcher's own feasts, which somehow breathe life into the historical details of eating and drinking presented elsewhere in the book. Unlike other authors, Fletcher's culinary knowledge permits her to capture the essence of her own feasts in her writing. And Charlemagne's tablecloth? Fletcher describes that odd accoutrement on the first page. Entertaining, informative and enjoyable. Recommended.

*Reviewed by Roger Haden*



Nichola Fletcher, *Charlemagne's Tablecloth: A Piquant History of Eating*



**Harold McGee, *McGee on Food and Cooking: An Encyclopedia of Kitchen Science History and Culture.* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 2004). 884 pp., RRP \$A70.00.**

This is a completely revised, updated (and retitled) edition of McGee's much lauded 1984 classic, *On Food and Cooking: The Science and Lore of the Kitchen*, with 300-odd extra pages of McGee's lucid blend of scientific fact, culinary lore, and cultural analysis of foodways and history. A unique and marvellous resource for cooks who like science, for scientists who like to cook, and for the rest of us who enjoy knowing about the chemistry of cooking, the origins and history of food stuffs, and the technology of food "processing" —in the widest possible sense.

*Reviewed by Roger Haden*

**Member submission of review material is welcome.** Please give full publication details and cost of books reviewed, if possible. You may send your reviews to either Lynn Martin or Roger Haden, for inclusion in the *Newsletter*

### **Brunello and the Reinvention of a Tradition.**

The article in January's Newsletter about the museum at Montalcino prompted Brian Chatterton to write the following:

Jeff Pratt in his *The Rationality of Rural Life: Economic and Cultural Change in Tuscany* (Harwood Academic Press, 1994) gives an excellent account of the reinvention of the brunello wine of Montalcino. In the 1950s the Comune (district council) of Montalcino had a population of 10,000 with the lowest per capita income in the Province of Siena, Tuscany. The economy was based on charcoal and labour. The famous brunello red wine that traces its origins back to the thirteenth century had been forgotten by the rest of the world and was mostly consumed locally. By 1980 the population had fallen to 5,000 people, who had the highest per capita income in the Province based on a thriving wine industry. Brunello was exported around the world.

The catalyst of change was the Villa Banfi. This vineyard and winery were founded by the Mariani brothers based in New York. They had inherited a small family business importing Italian foodstuffs and made a fortune from importing large quantities of Lambrusco

from the co-operative wineries of Emilia-Romagna (the Bologna region) into the USA. They decided to invest over \$US100 million into the development of the Villa Banfi (a very large amount indeed the 1970s) and now own 3,000 ha. of land at Montalcino as well as a modern winery. Their decision to invest in Montalcino was based on the cheap land and labour in the area compared to the more famous wine regions of Chianti and Piedmont. Of course their enormous success has changed that, and brunello from Montalcino is now the most expensive wine in Italy. There has been a flood of investors into brunello boom (*boom* is now an Italian word) who have pushed up land prices to astronomical levels.

Brunello sells for \$US50 a bottle and sometimes even more, but selling wine at that price requires a slick marketing organisation with a strong export presence, as most Italians are reluctant to pay such prices for wine. Many of the newcomers without overseas marketing links have found it difficult to make sufficient profits from their investment to justify their high costs. The Montalcino's wine boom has filled the pockets of the local population but has not turned their heads. The majority still vote for the reformed Communists as do most people in Tuscany,

Umbria, Emilia-Romagna and the Marche. These regions are known as the Red Centre not for their famous red wines but for the solid block of left wing members they send to the national parliament.

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### **Don Dunstan Foundation: Public Forum on ‘The Costs of Food’**

*Peter Strawhan reports.*

On 1 April 2004 the Foundation in conjunction with Barossa Slow held a well-attended public forum, ‘Think Global, Eat Local: Food Issues for South Australians in the Global Market,’ at the State Library. Given Don Dunstan’s passionate involvement with food and the success of last year’s forum, the Foundation decided to repeat the successful formula on 17 March, with “The Costs of Food: What Price Australia’s Appetite.”

Barbara Santich and John Coveney were persuaded to return and Gay Bilson was coaxed from her McLaren Vale hideaway to complete the expert panel. Bruce Guerin chaired the program and in his introduction shared an anecdote from early in the Dunstan era when a Mr Baker was responsible for controlling the price of bread, based on a 30 year-old formula. Bruce pointed to coffee as an example of the disparity between what we as consumers pay (usually without thinking) for a cappuccino, as compared with perhaps 20 cents per kilogram the grower might receive.

Barbara Santich was the first speaker and posed the question, ‘Do we pay enough for our food?’ She suggested we probably paid too little, but sometimes too much, for example when we paid for excess packaging and the promotional costs of advertising. Advertising set out to persuade us that food should be cheap, ‘Why Pay More?’ we are constantly admonished. And after all, don’t we deserve to pay less? Barbara reminded us that in the nineteenth century potential immigrants were tempted by our low cost of living. Food was cheaper and meat both abundant and affordable. In the 1960s the big selling point of the newly arrived supermarkets was cheapness; we even had a grocer trading as ‘Tom the Cheap,’ and mass advertising shaped our expectations along those lines. Barbara supported her arguments with a number of graphs and illustrated the low percentage of our total household expenditure devoted to food. At present we spend about 14 per cent, compared to the United States with 9 per cent, the Philippines a massive 55 percent, and the United Kingdom 12 per cent. She would like to see a re-ordering of our priorities, with less expenditure on toys for grown-ups, like motor cars, and more on better foods rather than the increasingly popular junk foods and frozen or prepared meals that have ensured our current runner-up status to the United States in the obesity stakes.

John Coveney bounded in from Flinders University waving aloft, of all things, a jar of *couscous*—the latest creation from the food-manufacturing moguls, another indispensable item for the shopping trolley. Not only was this new product true to label, in that it actually contained *couscous*, but it was enhanced by basil and parmesan cheese. The label proudly claimed the contents to be 90 per cent fat free, a huge bonus. No longer would the purchaser have to endure the time-consuming tedium of boiling up the cereal in a saucepan of water. And, as John remarked, what a stroke of marketing genius to add basil and parmesan! Given that the food makers only respond to the demands of consumers, John wondered at the numbers who must have communicated their acute need for such a product. His natural ebullience had been momentarily stilled when he realised the jar of *couscous* signified a further diminution of what he called ‘food craft,’ that is, the food preparation skills of the community and hence a hidden but real cost. Such products are a part of the continual ‘dumbing down’ process, so much a part of globalised consumerism. The three-minute couscous represented not a lack of time but a lack of time better spent retaining traditional skills. John hastened to add that he was far from advocating a return to some mythical golden age with women at their place in the kitchen. For the food makers it’s more profitable to ‘bulk up food with sugar and fat,’ in apparent contradiction to our preoccupation with dietary diseases and popping vitamin pills. John also expressed his concern that the food industry is now targeting children as the dietary decision makers in many Australian families, hence the promotion of food as spectacle, and after all isn’t food just another commodity?

The redoubtable Gay Bilson chose to stimulate us with an entirely different approach to the cost of food. In her example, ‘Eating the City,’ the tab was picked up by the Melbourne City Council and the unpaid labour and skills of a number of Melbourne’s ethnic communities. The Council in 2004 engaged Gay as a food consultant/coordinator, along with food artist Alicia Rios and other specialists, to design and to construct an edible scale model of Melbourne’s CBD. The project occupied Gay for the best part of a year and was devoured in about an hour. One Iraqi gentleman arrived pushing a shopping trolley to wheel away more than his fair share of the comestibles. He was not alone in displaying his greed at this extraordinary display of free food. The idea behind the project was to celebrate food as a central cultural activity—‘eating culture’—and to display food as evidence of cultural diversity. Each community was given the task of building an allotted district to a three-dimensional scale on a two-metre-square table. The builders quickly found that it was easier to shape buildings from marzipan rather than metwurst. Gay disclosed that the streets were laid using sliced wholemeal bread, coated with butter and vegemite, a very Australian

contribution. There was also the problem of complying with a myriad of health regulations. Assembly day required all the timing and precision of a royal wedding. Once the huge refrigerated vans were unloaded and the 80 square metres of food-laden tables pushed into the correct position, the enormity of the project was finally evident. But only briefly, as soon as the tables were pulled away from each other the ravening hordes descended. Gay's final comment bears reflection, 'We commodify exotic cultures.' A brief question and answer session concluded another fascinating food forum. We also fell upon the admirable fare, in this instance provided by the victuallers and vintners of the Fleurieu.

Alicia Rios has been engaged to repeat the 'edible city' spectacle in London, New York, and Rotterdam. See her website: <http://www.alicia-rios.com>. This includes a discussion of the 'edible city' concept, including images.

### Creation Story

*This appeared on the ASFS chatline; the source was not acknowledged. L.M.*

In the beginning, God created the Heavens and the Earth and populated the Earth with broccoli, cauliflower and spinach, green and yellow and red vegetables of all kinds, so Man and Woman would live long and healthy lives.

Then using God's great gifts, Satan created Ben and Jerry's Ice Cream and Krispy Crème Donuts. And Satan said, 'You want chocolate with that?' And Man said, 'Yes!' and Woman said, 'and as long as you're at it, add some sprinkles.' And they gained 10 pounds. And Satan smiled.

And God created the healthful yogurt that Woman might keep the figure that Man found so fair. And Satan brought forth white flour from the wheat, and sugar from the cane and combined them. And Woman went from size 6 to size 14.

So God said, 'Try my fresh green salad.' And Satan presented Thousand-Island Dressing, buttery croutons and garlic toast on the side. And Man and Woman unfastened their belts following the repast.

God then said, 'I have sent you heart-healthy vegetables and olive oil in which to cook them.' And Satan brought forth deep fried fish and chicken-fried steak so big it needed its own platter. And Man gained more weight and his cholesterol went through the roof.

God then created a light, fluffy white cake, named it 'Angel Food Cake,' and said, 'It is good.' Satan then created chocolate cake and named it 'Devil's Food.'

God then brought forth running shoes so that His children might lose those extra pounds. And Satan gave cable TV with a remote control so Man would not have to toil changing the channels. And Man and Woman laughed and cried before the flickering blue light and gained pounds.

Then God brought forth the potato, naturally low in fat and brimming with nutrition. And Satan peeled off the healthful skin and sliced the starchy center into chips and deep-fried them. And Man gained pounds.

God then gave lean beef so that Man might consume fewer calories and still satisfy his appetite. And Satan created McDonald's and its 99-cent double cheeseburger. Then said, 'You want fries with that?' And Man replied, 'Yes! And super size them!' And Satan said, 'It is good.' And Man went into cardiac arrest. God sighed and created quadruple bypass surgery. Then Satan created HMOs.

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