

# THE RESEARCH CENTRE FOR THE HISTORY OF FOOD AND DRINK



## Newsletter No. 43, January 2007

Director, Roger Haden, 08 8303 5605, [roger.haden@adelaide.edu.au](mailto:roger.haden@adelaide.edu.au)

Editor, A. Lynn Martin 08 8303 5916, [lynn.martin@adelaide.edu.au](mailto:lynn.martin@adelaide.edu.au)

Research and Administration, Margaret Meyler, [margaret.meyler@adelaide.edu.au](mailto:margaret.meyler@adelaide.edu.au)

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### What's Happening

Roger Haden reviews 2006 and previews 2007.

### What's Happened

The indefatigable Janet Clarkson has earned the gratitude of culinary historians by making available her research on online cookbooks. Details below.

**Slow Food's Terra Madre 2006**, the World Meeting of Food Communities, took place in Turin in October. Ade Peace reports below.

**Food: Representation, Ideology, and Politics** was the theme of an international colloquium hosted by the Centre of Advanced Studies, Department of English, Jadavpur University, Kolkata, India, on 16-18 November 2006. Murray Couch and Tammi Jonas report below.

**The Second Bulgarian National Pepper and Tomato Festival** took place in August 2006. For the details see below.

**Peter Scholliers of Vrije Universiteit Brussel has established FOST**, a research group on Social and Cultural Food Studies. As explained by Peter, eating isn't just about staying alive; it's also

about thinking, talking, writing, reading, and dreaming about food and drink. Historians, sociologists, archaeologists, linguists, and philosophers explore this extensive field of research, paying attention to social and economic policies, health issues, identity, globalisation, and much more.

[http://www.vub.ac.be/FOST/fost\\_in\\_english](http://www.vub.ac.be/FOST/fost_in_english)

The students in Peter's course have upgraded a website that includes links to other sites dealing with the history of food mainly in Europe. <http://www.vub.ac.be/SGES/foodlinks.html>

### Review of Events and Expectations: 2006-2007

All involved with the Research Centre in 2006 were pleased to see the website revamped and regularly updated. Since we operate with the voluntary help of University of Adelaide students, ex-students, staff, and ex-staff, it's good to see everything working well and reasonably in sync. 2006 was of course the year of Cookery Books as History, a conference that drew an audience of 80 plus from all around the world. A selection of papers from the conference now looks likely to appear in the Fall 2008 edition of Food, Culture, and Society. The selection of the papers and finalisation of the detail are still in process, with the announcement of the selected papers to occur shortly.

We also hosted two seminars, one on the globalisa-

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A Research Centre of the  
Faculty of Humanities  
and Social Sciences



tion of wine and the other on post-war Italian immigrant food culture (with Nadia Postiglione, University of Adelaide PhD candidate). These events were well attended. Thanks to all of those who helped and took part. The enthusiasm and support of members and volunteers are vital for the future success of the Research Centre's activities. Thanks also to our intrepid finder of curious (but indispensable!) facts, essential conference info, and tidbits from the academic world of food and drink, Prof. Lynn Martin, editor of our newsletter. This publication will remain in electronic form for the foreseeable future, as we can no longer support the financial cost of paper publication. But now the good news: our membership has steadily grown in 2006 to over 400 members.

We will host two seminars in 2007, one on molecular gastronomy at the end of April and the other on the ethics of food at the end of October (the Oxford Symposium, this year on the subject of food and morality, will be held in September). Precise dates of these events will follow—see the website! Speaking of which, while current issues of the newsletter are already available through the website, we plan to publish the current issue online to coincide with the emailing of the electronic version. Additionally, the latest book reviews and conference details will also appear independently on the site. Without a counter it is difficult to tell how many of you are using the site. We receive only a small number of emails and inquiries.

In October this year Adelaide will again be savouring the gastronomic delights of Tasting Australia. The Research Centre's role in this event will be in the form of a collaborative effort between ourselves and Adelaide's historic Carrick Hill (<http://www.carrickhill.sa.gov.au/>), an estate comprising a mansion and extensive grounds and gardens, bequeathed to the state of South Australia in the 80s, and which "contains the unique private collection of two perceptive art connoisseurs, Ursula and Bill Hayward," who built the house in the 1930s. We have proposed two events, the first a lunch matching the Hayward's style of food with contemporary Australian wines, preceded by a talk/discussion on wine (and whiskey!—Bill Hayward's preferred dinner-time drink) and food matching. The second event will feature the authentic state-of-the-art 1930s kitchen of Carrick Hill. A select group will be able to enter the world of 1930s cookery and service and take part in a discussion about modern kitchen design,

its origins, and future. Details will be posted on the website once the program has been finalised. The future looks bright for the Research Centre. In 2006 the Graduate Program in Gastronomy at the University of Adelaide underwent an internal review that subsequently recommended closer ties between the University's Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences and the Research Centre for the History of Food and Drink. This means more interaction between our School of History and Politics and Research Centre activities, including the exchange of ideas and participation in events. Gastronomy also welcomed a new senior lecturer, Dr. Rachel Ankeny, who I am sure will play a supportive role in the Research Centre's projects.

Plans are afoot to host another conference in mid-2008, this time with the theme of Food and Performance, although the Research Centre welcomes alternative suggestions at this stage. The proposed conference may well again utilise the facilities of the Art Gallery of South Australia. Thanks again to all of you for your continuing support, and especially to Margaret Meyler, Chris McElhinney, and the crew at Web Services. All the best for 2007, Roger

## Conferences

### **29-30 March 2007, Frankfurt, Germany 1st International Conference On The Latest Innovations and Trends In Weight Loss And Weight Management**

The host of this conference is the International Society for Antioxidants in Nutrition and Health and the conference focuses on slimming ingredients. For more information contact the Society's website at [www.isanh.com/slimming](http://www.isanh.com/slimming)

I must confess that the focus of both the conference and the society seem rather odd!

### **29 March-1 April 2007, Christ Church College, Oxford**

Sweet Secrets and Strange Delights  
Christ Church has selected topical and controversial themes for its 2007 spring Special-Interest Weekend, fourth in the College's series. Both are linked to the 200th anniversary of the abolition of the slave trade in the British Empire in 1807. Participants can choose one of two themes: the History Option is entitled Empire, Sea Power and Abolition; the

Food and Drink title is Sweet Secrets and Strange Delights.

Food and Drink participants will hear of the evolution of sugar from luxury food to cheap commodity, its types, varieties, and by-products, and its many applications in the British culinary tradition from the Middle Ages. It also includes sampling and a comparative rum tasting. Details are on the Christ Church website at [www.chch.ox.ac.uk](http://www.chch.ox.ac.uk)

**20-21 April 2007, Blacksburg, Virginia  
From Jamestown to the Blue Ridge:  
Cooking Up 400 Years of Culinary History in Virginia**

This symposium on 400 years of food and cooking in Virginia commemorates the founding of Virginia (and hence the United States) at Jamestown in 1607. It will feature presentations on the culinary history of Virginia by a wide range of culinary experts, historians, and cookbook authors, including food writer Barbara Haber. Beginning with the foods eaten in Jamestown and the early days of the Virginia colony, speakers will focus on plantation and slave foods, the Civil War period, and on up to foods of the present day. Virginia Tech's famed Civil War historian, James I. Robertson, Jr., will discuss Civil War rations and their impact on common soldiers. Participants can visit an exhibit of the Peacock-Harper Culinary History Collection at Virginia Tech, with its colonial-period manuscript cookbooks and period cookbooks from England. For details of the program <http://www.culinarycollection.org/id18.html>

People may register at <http://www.cpe.vt.edu/culinary-va>

**9 September 2007, St Catherine's College, Oxford. Oxford Symposium on Food and Cooking.** This year's theme is **Food and Morality**:

Food and quality—should food be good?

Food and safety and the environment—should food be clean?

Food and justice—should food be fair?

Food and human nature—is it right to take pleasure in food?

Submit proposals for papers to the Editor, Richard Hosking, by 15 April. He will notify authors if their

proposals are successful in May; completed papers must reach him by 14 July. <http://www.oxfordSymposium.org.uk>

**12-14 October 2007, University of Georgia, Athens. WHEATS 2007: Workshop for the History of Environment, Agriculture, Technology, and Science**

WHEATS is a workshop designed for graduate students (and, space permitting, very recent Ph.D.s) whose research investigates the intersections between environmental history, agricultural history, the history of technology, and the history of science (in any combination). Housing will be provided and some funding will be available to defray travel costs for those whose papers are accepted. Those interested in participating should submit a one-page abstract and short curriculum vitae by 15 March 2007 to Chris Manganiello at [cmango@uga.edu](mailto:cmango@uga.edu) For further information visit the WHEATS 2007 website: <http://www.uga.edu/wheats2007/>.

**21-23 September 2008, Youngstown State University, Ohio.**

**Famine and Mass Violence**

Famine and mass violence frequently go hand in hand. Unfortunately, scholars of famine and scholars of mass violence often deal with different questions resulting in a wide lacuna in research and the methodology for analysing connections between famines and violence. The convenors welcome proposals that try to bring the role of social forces and governments in the emergence of famines together into coherent frameworks, whether they put more emphasis on the famine or the violence side. Both case studies and theoretical approaches are welcome. For details contact Christian Gerlach, Department of History, University of Pittsburgh, [hcg3+@pitt.edu](mailto:hcg3+@pitt.edu) or Helene J. Sinnreich, Judaic and Holocaust Studies, Youngstown State University [hjsinnreich@ysu.edu](mailto:hjsinnreich@ysu.edu)

**The Potato: From the Renaissance to the 21st century: History, Society, Economics, Culture, 2009, Tours**

This major international conference on the potato corresponds to France's hosting of the World Potato Congress. A seemingly commonplace vegetable, in

that it is so embedded into our customs, the potato is however a product whose appearance on the plate of Westerners is only relatively recent, in the eighteenth century, and is still unknown in whole regions of the globe. This international conference is aiming to cover all of the themes that have anything to do with the potato, and there are no limits, not only from a historical standpoint, but also from standpoints of an economic and geographical, artistic and sociologic, scientific, and medical nature. It is not limited to the contemporary period, and it is not restricted to France; this conference wants to attempt to provide an overall view of the place held by the potato across civilisations. The deadline for submissions is 31 May 2007; potato-colloquium@univ-tours.fr

## Publications

### Anthropology of Food and Eating

This is a special issue of *Anthropological Notebooks*, edited by Liza Debevec. To receive a free pdf version contact Liza on [liza.debevec@zrc-sazu.si](mailto:liza.debevec@zrc-sazu.si)

The contents include:

Liza Debevec and Blanka Tivadar, Making Connections through Foodways: Contemporary Issues in Anthropological and Sociological Studies of Food

Gabriele Weichart, Same Stuff, Different Meaning .... Same Meaning, Different Stuff? A Story of 'Bread' and 'Wine' in Indonesia

Michael R. McDonald, Learning Island Foodways: Tasting Ethnographic Methods

Susan Lewis, Recipes for Reconnection: Older People's Perspectives on the Mediating Role of Food in Contemporary Urban Society

Elizabeth Mei-Li Roberts. Negotiating Food Choice: Parent's Perception of Children's Eating Behaviour

Aitzpea Leizaola, Matching National Stereotypes? Eating and Drinking the Basque Borderlands

Nataša Rogelja, Healthy Mediterranean Food in Local Perspective: The Case of the Slovenian Coast

Elise Billiard, When Tradition Becomes Trendy: Social Distinction in Maltese Food Culture

### Food and War

**The Summer 2007 edition of *Food, Culture, and Society* is a special issue on Food and War.** The articles include:

Helen Zoe Veit, "We Were a Soft People:" Asceti-

cism, Self-Discipline, and American Food Conservation in World War I

Joy Santlofer, "Hard as the Hubs of Hell:" Crackers in War

John Fitzpatrick, The Columbian Exchange and the Two Colonizations of Aotearoa, New Zealand

Jeremy Rich, Hunger and Consumer Protest in Colonial Africa during World War I: The Case of the Gabon Estuary, 1914-1920

Kenneth Moure and Paula Schwartz, On vit mal: Food Shortages and Popular Culture in Occupied France, 1940-1944

Ellen Messer and Marc J. Cohen, Conflict, Food Insecurity, and Globalization

Mustafa Koc, Rupen Das, and Carey Jernigan, Food Security and Food Sovereignty in Iraq: The Impact of War and Sanctions on the Civilian Population

### Guide to Farmers' Markets in Australia and New Zealand

Australia now has more than 80 farmers' markets, and New Zealand has 20. This 460-page guidebook devotes four pages to each market and contains details of times, locations, and produce as well as a profile of a market "hero" who has played a major role in the market's success and a sample recipe from produce available at the market. The price is \$19.95. The authors are the Chairman of the Australian Farmers Markets' Association, Jane Adams, and her New Zealand counterpart, Ian Thomas. Contact Jane Adams [jacom@bigpond.net.au](mailto:jacom@bigpond.net.au)

### Annual Review of Anthropology

The most recent edition of *Annual Review of Anthropology* (Volume 35, 2006) contains seven articles on the subject of food:

Lynne Phillips, Food and Globalization

Peter S. Ungar, Frederick E. Grine, and Mark F.

Teaford, Diet in Early Homo: A Review of the Evidence and a New Model of Adaptive Versatility

Michael Dietler, Alcohol: Anthropological/Archaeological Perspectives

Stanley J. Ulijaszek and Hayley Lofink, Obesity in Biocultural Perspective

Jon D. Holtzman, Food and Memory

Michael Silverstein, Old Wine, New Ethnographic Lexicography

Mamadou Baro and Tara F. Deubel, Persistent Hunger: Perspectives on Vulnerability, Famine and Food Security in Sub-Saharan Africa.

## **Publishing Opportunities**

### **New Global Studies**

This new journal is soliciting papers for its inaugural edition. Its editors want to publish innovative and creative approaches to understanding globalisation and welcome contributions from all disciplines. <http://www.bepress.com/ngs/aimsandscope.html>

**Storied Dishes: Women Reveal Memories Behind Favorite Recipes.**

Food writer and historian Linda Murray Berzok, seeks short compelling memoir essays from women recalling women—family or friends—from whom they have inherited favourite recipes for new book called *Storied Dishes: Women Reveal Memories Behind Favorite Recipes*.

The essays should be from 750 to 1500 words and should tell a complete story—beginning, middle and end. These need to be memories with an edge and some depth. They may be amusing, satiric, disturbing, sad, poignant, powerful, and/or uplifting. Contributors are encouraged to reveal their feelings and reflect culture and character.

As a first step send an informal, three- to four- sentence abstract to [lmberzok@hotmail.com](mailto:lmberzok@hotmail.com)

### **Food Culture Around the World Series**

Greenwood Press has decided to expand this series to another 9 volumes, bringing the entire series to 23 in total. The series editor, Ken Albala, is looking for authors of *Food Culture in Central America, Scandinavia, Portugal, possibly Greece, as well as others*. These are reference works of about 70,000 words that would be due in 16-18 months, meant for students rather than specialists. They cover the historical background, ingredients and cooking methods, recipes, holidays and celebrations, eating out, diet and health, and various other related topics. [kalbala@pacific.edu](mailto:kalbala@pacific.edu)

## **Websites**

### **Online Historic Cookbooks**

Janet Clarkson has compiled a list of freely available online historic cookbooks, and she continues to add them to the list as they become available. Currently the list contains over 400. The list is available in pdf format at

[www.mydatabus.com/public/TheOldFoodie/z/Online\\_Historic\\_Cookbooks3.pdf](http://www.mydatabus.com/public/TheOldFoodie/z/Online_Historic_Cookbooks3.pdf)

It is also available via a link from her blog at <http://theoldfoodie.blogspot.com/2006/12/online-historic-cookbooks.html>

A couple of comments from Janet:

I have concentrated on books containing recipes, as trying to include all books on food was becoming unwieldy ( a second list is in preparation).

I have not included books available via EEBO and the Thomson-Gale eighteenth-century database etc. as these are not free.

I gave up trying to include all of the nineteenth-century resources available on Google books and the Internet Archive as there are too many!

I have not yet included every book on cuisine or gastronomy at Gallica.

### **Sociology and the Global Politics of Food**

The students in this course taught by Tracy E. Ore at Saint Cloud State University have created a website to serve as a “clearinghouse” of information on the politics of food. The purpose of this site is to provide information about a variety of ordinary items people consume and the actions that they can all take regarding the politics of food in everyday lives. <http://web.stcloudstate.edu/teore/Food/Facts2/index.html>.

## **Films**

### **Our Daily Bread**

This documentary by Austrian filmmaker Nikolaus Geyrhalter depicts the mechanical monotony of industrialized food production. The film developed from Geyrhalter reading that the percentage of income Europeans spend on food decreased from 30 in the 1950s to 8 at present; he wondered what made modern food so cheap. The answer is the mechanisation of food production to such extent that humans have little part to play. For example, machines cut open salmon and vacuum out their guts in seconds.

### **Fast Food Consumption Habits in Australia**

Emily Brindal at CSIRO Human Nutrition is currently undertaking research on fast food consumption habits in Australia. She is seeking participants

to complete her online survey, which is designed to collect information about the social and psychological context of fast food consumption. To participate you need to be 16 years or over and have eaten fast food from McDonald's, Hungry Jack's, KFC, Red Rooster, or Domino's recently enough that you can recall details of what you ate, when, and so on. The link for the study is [www.fastfoodstudy.com.au](http://www.fastfoodstudy.com.au).

### **Convivial Times**

Leonie Furber's latest program of culinary tours includes Lord Howe Island, Tasmania, Andalucia, Northern Spain, Tuscany, and Bathurst and Orange. For more information go to [www.convivialtimes.com.au](http://www.convivialtimes.com.au) or call Leonie Furber on 02 9380 8327.

### **Bulgarian National Pepper and Tomato Festival**

The second Bulgarian National Pepper and Tomato Festival took place in the village of Marash on 26-27 August 2006. The program included:

performances of local and national folk bands.  
folk rituals typical of Marash.

preparing of cans, tomato pastes and ketchup in pot on open fire.

testings of products made from tomato and pepper.

testings of traditional Marash dishes.

exposition and sale of peppers, tomatoes and canned vegetables.

exposition and sale of seeds and tools for preparing vegetable cans.

sale of baskets, delicacies, delights and others

Contests included:

faster eater of 1 tomato salad.

the farthest thrown tomato.

faster eater of 1 green pepper stuffed with cheese.

the farthest thrown pepper.

Prizes were awarded for:

1. Tastiest (lutenitza) tomato paste
2. Biggest red pepper
3. Biggest green pepper
4. Biggest yellow pepper
5. Longest pepper
6. Pepper with most interesting shape
7. Most beautiful doll made from peppers
8. Tallest pepper plant raised in plant pot
9. Reachest peppers collection
10. Biggest red tomato
11. Biggest green tomato
12. Biggest yellow tomato
13. Longest tomato

14. Tomato with most interesting shape
15. Most beautiful doll made from tomatoes
16. Tallest tomato plant raised in plant pot
17. Reachest tomatoes collection
18. Most attractive sell stand
19. Tastiest Marash cheese pastry
20. Tastiest Marash plate

### **Terra Madre 2006**

Notes on the "World Meeting of Food Communities"

It took about 26 hours to get from Adelaide to Turin, the home of the biennial Terra Madre, which is the political flagship of the Slow Food movement. And I went as an academic delegate with mixed expectations. One prominent Slow Food member from Adelaide had attended the inaugural Terra Madre in 2004 and vowed never to go near it again; another had been so impressed as to envy my attendance two years later. One American participant described the occasion in 2004 as "a life-changing experience;" another cavalierly dismissed it as no more than "a photo opportunity." Considering the nature of Terra Madre—it lasts four days, comprises multiple plenary sessions, includes a large number of Earth Workshops, and facilitates numerous opportunities for informal exchange—it is perhaps not surprising that the event generates a variety of responses. But these differences in judgement were markedly at odds with one another. So what was most striking about this "world meeting of food communities"?

First, it was held in a remarkable venue. Until late in the twentieth century Lingotto was a vast manufacturing site occupied by the Fiat company under the direction of Giovanni Agnelli. It had brought capital, labour, prosperity, and modernity to this region of northern Italy. But as the motor car industry had gone into severe decline, the site was transformed into a vast entertainment and conference centre, with one of the more spectacular buildings recently given over to ice-speed skating during the Winter Olympics. The symbolism of the venue was therefore inescapable. What was once an icon of twentieth-century modernity and mass consumerism had been superseded by a twenty first-century social movement that aimed to reassess the relationship between people and their environment, above all through the basic medium of food.

Second, Terra Madre was in no sense the epitome

of slow. Despite the Slow Food movement being as much about slow living as it is about gastronomic issues, this was a huge, high-powered, fast-moving event. In total, the attendance comprised 4000 small-scale artisans from a wide range of livelihoods, 1000 cooks from many culinary backgrounds, and 400 academic delegates who were to focus on new ways of fostering the progress of small-scale producers. But convivium members were still arriving from the five continents, especially Africa, as the opening ceremony began, and while venue and organisation were entirely up to the task, there was a hurried pace to the first day that culminated in a spectacular, dynamic, and frenzied opening ceremony. As flag-bearing representatives, mostly in national dress, walked down the central aisle to join Italian and international delegates on the huge stage facing the assembly, the noise and the emotion were overwhelming. Then, in an impressive display of the institutional links between Slow Food and the political establishment, a rapid succession of articulate and powerful speakers rattled off their messages to the overall assembly. Third, despite the hierarchical nature of Slow Food's international structure and the markedly rational character of the biennial's political discourse, Terra Madre proved to be a context in which charismatic leadership and the generation of high emotions could play an important part. The Slow Food movement is now established in over 80 countries with a membership of 100,000. It is distinctly hierarchical in organisation: every aspect of it, including attendance at Terra Madre, is orchestrated from Slow Food's headquarters in Bra, a small town not far to the south of Turin. Yet from the moment when its founder and president took to the stage and gave his opening address through to his final remarks four days later, one could not but be struck by the importance of his charisma and the adulation that was accorded him. In the final session, a prominent politician referred to the president as "the recognized shaman that is Carlo Petrini," which in the context of this particular ritual spectacle seemed absolutely warranted. It is difficult to think of another post-modern movement in which the authority and influence of one man is anything so pronounced and inescapable. Fourth, the political discourse of Terra Madre proved strikingly left wing, at times indeed radical, while its program for change was primarily

concerned with reform and transformation at the local level, whether in the First World or the Third. Some of the major topics that arose in Earth Workshops were climate change, overpopulation, ocean pollution, soil loss, and the iniquities of the global marketplace. The ones that gave rise to the most polemical comment were multinational attempts to control seed production and the loss of biodiversity. But all of these debates were resolutely focussed on the attempts by small-scale producers to revive traditional ways of production, devise new sources of rural livelihood, and create innovative relations with regional markets, in brief to make contemporary rural artisanship less dependent on the global and more reliant on the local. At the core of these ambitions was the production of food that was "good, clean and fair," the outcome of "an honest agriculture carried out by respected producers," as Petrini put it in one session.

One thing became quite clear: a significant cultural division exists between those at centre of Slow Food in Italy who are concerned to develop a holistic critique of post-modern society, and those at the periphery for whom a petit bourgeois concern with fine food and wine is the paramount concern. A meeting of Australian delegates was told in no uncertain terms, "if Slow Food was once mainly about fine dinner parties, it certainly isn't nowadays." A particular kind of rural imaginary exists at the core of Terra Madre thought. The small scale producer with a Pig Earth-like relation to the soil and an equally idealized relation to his consumers is not a construction that would survive long in the face of scrutiny from anthropologists and political economists. But it is also the case that the elaboration of myths about tradition, community, regionalism, as well as prospects for the future, is as central to the success of a movement like Slow Food as any other kind of political rhetoric.

Now ... where's that invitation to the next Foodie event at the Hyatt?

**Ade Peace**, Discipline of Anthropology, University of Adelaide.

### **Feasting at the Glocal Table**

An International Colloquium on Food: Representation, Ideology, and Politics at the Centre of Advanced Studies, Department of English, Jadavpur University, Kolkata, India, 16-18 November 2006

The globalisation theorist Roland Robertson coined

the phrase “glocalisation” to capture the inextricable nexus between globalising and localising pressures. This colloquium, held in the metropolis that is Kolkata, was a feast at the “glocal” table. Living elements—produce, spices, food, meals, feasting, famine, sensuality, sex, social control, the public, and the private—were blended as local and global cultural and political flows.

This was not a particularly large gathering, but the scale and depth of the interest in the representation, ideology, and politics of food was considerable.

Apart from Bengal and other Indian states, presenters came from the United Kingdom, the United States, Australia, and Italy. The focus was interdisciplinary, notably from the humanities and social sciences (English, literary studies, history, cultural studies, sociology, and anthropology), and contemporary critical apparatus was at play (feminism, postmodernism, poststructuralism, postcolonialism, gay and lesbian studies, queer theory, multiculturalism, and cosmopolitanism).

The first plenary set the tone with sex, tradition, gender, sensuality, politics, and pleasure. Vidya Rao, a distinguished singer of classical Indian music, spoke of food metaphors in songs and their interpretation. In a bravura performance she not only sang but paused to interpret words into English and make commentary about the links between food, romantic longing, and the anticipation of sexual congress. She invoked “food as seduction, food as ‘me,’” as the female narrator, typically, longingly offers herself, metaphorically, in the songs. Rao said, “You can eat without thinking, but you can’t taste without being mindful.”

Following Rao’s sensual and scholarly performance, the dishes on this glocal table included:

- Tammi Jonas of the University of Melbourne and Krishnendu Ray of New York University, among others, examined food and cosmopolitanism as experienced in domestic and restaurant foodways in Melbourne, New York, and Kolkata.
- Speakers addressed moments in the history and politics of food: Hindu nationalism and vegetarianism, culinary texts creating the female domestic subject in specific sites in pre-national India, and food health texts creating the religious subject. Setting a solid foundation for this discussion was a presentation entitled “Nation on a Platter: The Culture and Politics of Food in Colonial Bengal” by Jayanta Sengupta, Profes-

sor of History at Jadavpur University. This presentation established cuisine and culinary art as a site of national formulations on which hegemonic aspects of colonial culture were established and resisted.

- Sajni Kripalini Mukherji gave an engaging presentation, “Re-Kola-nisation,” in which she offered an account of Jadavpur University staff and student united action against the 2003 Gulf War. This took the form of a boycott of all Coca Cola products on campus and the creation of their own locally produced “Kola,” a refreshing blend of cumin, tamarind, and countless “secret” ingredients. Colloquium attendees were served the Kola at morning tea on the final day.
- Neelini Sarkar and Soumik Datta, Jadavpur graduate students, sketched the increasingly global foodscapes of Kolkata. They claimed that, “the global restaurant experience is not about appreciating global cuisines.”
- National, regional, and diasporic Indian literature, in which food and produce code gender regimes, came under critical scrutiny. Writers well known outside of India, such as Jhumpa Lahiri, Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni, and Anita Desai, were among those under review.
- A number of social history accounts focussed on the Bengal famine of 1943 and political organisation (particularly by women using Marxist ideology) in protest and response. Professor Supriya Chauduri, one of the organisers of the Colloquium, examined the use of “food” and “hunger” in literary and cinematic representations of this famine.
- Murray Couch from La Trobe University offered a queer take on culinary memoirs, and Ruth Vanita of the University of Montana discussed the use of food as literary metaphor in the first Indian public debate on homosexuality and same-sex desire.
- Some papers revised familiar themes: the practice of domestic production of recipe books, the excesses of feasts under the Mughals, and the political and cultural reverberations of the spice trade. Dr Rimi Chatterjee, another of the conference organisers, has a forthcoming novel *The City of Love* (Penguin, 2007) that presents a revised account of the early modern spice trade, which linked Europe-Africa-Asia in early

modern times.

- A number of papers explored the centrality of food in migration and identity construction. In addition to the Indian diaspora, a paper from an Italian journalist, Lorenzo Pavolini, given as part of an Italian cultural festival in Kolkata, discussed cooking, lingua, and identity: “Maccheroni, Pizza, Pastasciutta: A Journey to the Border of the Land of Plenty.”
- Oxford University Press launched books by two of the presenters, Ruth Vanita and Ira Raja, that deal with the ongoing debates on food, its metaphors, and its significance:

Pandey Bechan Sharma ‘Ugra,’ *Chocolate, and Other Writings on Male-Male Desire*, Translated from Hindi and with an Introduction by Ruth Vanita (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2006).

John Thieme and Ira Raja, eds., *The Table is Laid: The Oxford Anthology of South Asian Food Writing* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2007).

As well as feasting at this glocal colloquium table, there was out-of-session feasting: Bengali street food, typical Muglai, globalised Chinese, a hybrid meal at Flury’s (a Kolkata landmark) in which the cooks displayed their knowledge of spices to create some delicious chilli prawns that are notably not an ‘Indian’ dish, the indigenised Raj salty onion and chilli omelettes on white toast for breakfast each morning, and finally a traditional Bengali thali which culminated with a delectable mishti doi (sweet yogurt) and the ubiquitous paan.

**Murray Couch** is a Senior Research Fellow, Australian Research Centre in Sex, Health and Society, La Trobe University. Tammi Jonas is a PhD student at the University of Melbourne.

Roger Haden Reviews

**Mark Kurlansky, *The Big Oyster: New York in the World, A Molluscular History* (London: Jonathan Cape, 2006).**

Readers who appreciate Mark Kurlansky’s narrative-driven brand of food history (*Cod, Salt, Basque History of the World*) will not be disappointed with his latest book that tells the fascinating story of New York harbour and river estuary’s famous oyster beds from the time of European settlement until

today. While Kurlansky never hides the fact that he is telling a woeful tale of human greed, negligence, and thoughtlessness and of ecological disaster, he never preaches or appears to voice openly critical correctives, although his epilogue is entitled “enduring shellfishness!” The story itself is exemplary. Its scale is huge, the history entirely consequential, its rhythm set by periodic human tragedy, and all driven by that inexorable historical force, consumption.

Having only until now associated oysters and New York with the well-known bar in Grand Central Station, I was amazed by the awesome events related to possibly the largest oyster bed system the world has ever seen. The statistics are enough to confound, as are the recipes that Kurlansky includes, indication enough of the sheer quantity of oysters that slipped down the throats of millions of hungry, but as often gluttonous, fans of this noble bi-valve. The culinary (ab)uses of oysters are truly mind boggling: oyster soups, chickens stuffed and/or swimming in oysters; “take a leg [of lamb,]... stuff it all over with oysters and roast it,” etc. Roasted, fried and steamed, stewed, in gravy, oysters, oysters, and more oysters picked off the rocks from anywhere around Manhattan—oysters a foot long (Kurlansky cites Thackeray’s comment that eating a New York oyster was like eating a baby!).

This is as much the history of the everyday lives of ordinary people, such as oystermen, cartmen, boatmen, and the slaves who worked in the industry or who sought refuge aboard the oyster boats that constantly crisscrossed the harbour, as it is of high society. Oysters were a food of the poor in eighteenth-century England, and a taste for them was never class specific. Kurlansky broaches this subject interestingly when he recounts Charles Dickens’ trip to the big oyster in 1842 (he also looks at the changes Dickens noted in his second trip to New York in the 1870s) and discusses the slums and the plight of the poor in the city of a thousand oyster cellars, saloons situated in the worst areas but which had an elite clientele. Dickens spent enough time visiting the slums and oyster cellars and remarking on both to make such visits popular among subsequent visitors to New York, who followed his lead and took slum tours under police escort, Dickens-style.

As usual Kurlansky lets the tale do most of the talking, and he has chosen such an enthralling story that

its hard to put down, especially when the life of old New York and its history seem so starkly in contrast with the image of the metropolis today. Successive waves of violent occupation—Dutch, English, and home-grown American—are but skirmishes from the perspective of long-suffering *Crassostrea virginicus*. Little wonder too that after waves of immigration to New York and a budding reputation as the oyster capital of the world, already by the time of Dickens' first visit many beds were nearing exhaustion in the lower East and Hudson River areas, while the cultivation rather than simply the wanton destruction of oyster beds only began in the mid-1800s.

Eating so many oysters also required opening them of course. Kurlansky describes the popularity of oyster-opening competitions in the nineteenth century and the record set by Billy Lowney of a 100 oysters in three minutes and three seconds in the late 1870s. New York needed more men and women like him as a result of the 700 million oysters produced annually by 1880! As for eating them, *The Oyster Empire* (1883) boasted 10 dozen on the half-shell in one sitting, which might indicate personal consumption rates. In general, Kurlansky describes the New York of the second half of the nineteenth century as “overtaken by oystermania.”

Kurlansky always makes sure that the narrative stays on track, coming back to the oyster (including a fascinating chapter on its biology, life cycle, and reproduction), and to the ongoing effects of the commerce it inspired at the very outset of early North American colonisation. He briefly details the European oyster industry, since it underwent decline in the nineteenth century and therefore had an impact on demand for New York's oysters. He also looks closely at culinary styles, chefs, and restaurants that featured oysters. The recipes included at various points add a sense of culinary reality to the story.

The inevitable also occurred. Kurlansky covers the sewage flowing and rubbish dumping into the ocean and the ecological impact on the oyster beds in the early twentieth century. By 1930, as the city's population approached seven million, the oyster beds were shut down because of pollution. Sewage sludge continued to be dropped into the sea until 1987. Kurlansky introduces the reader to the ecological devastation in the opening pages of the book where he surveys the industrially polluted wasteland of what was once an idyllic pond at the southern

end of Manhattan. For the oyster and the waterways this is a sad, even a grim, tale. The subject, oysters, allows Kurlansky to take an in-depth perspective on the social and economic history of one of the world's great cities and to show, as in his other works, how food is an invaluable window through which to examine culture. It connects high with low, the everyday with the decision-makers, and enables the reader to grasp in its wholeness the life and tenor of a city and its appetites.

**Warren Belasco, *Meals to Come: A History of the Future of Food* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2006).**

From amid the contemporary welter of academic food writing—what Warren Belasco himself aptly calls a “boomlet”—comes this superb work. Having read and thoroughly enjoyed *Appetite for Change*, I expected nothing less than thought-provoking, erudite, and engaging social history from Belasco, who writes thoughtful, witty, finely-tuned prose, this time taking the form of a careful deconstruction of Western food stories of the future, stories that have been in circulation for the last two hundred or so years.

*Meals to Come* warns against unreflective acceptance of the represented “facts” concerning food and the future. Moreover, it urges us to “resist using worn clichés that obscure what the struggle over the future is really about: power.” Indeed, as my faded copy of *Food for Beginners* (1983) states, “Food is power,” and, while that is no real surprise, understanding the intricacies of power also means comprehending power relations; how political agency is strengthened by discursive means, and how the fictive, the mythological, and the fanciful frequently act as narrative vehicles for the “hard facts” pertaining to supposed economic realities. Any representation of reality, present or future, is just that, a representation. Power in this context is totally engrossed in the stories that have circulated for years, stories about food, in the present instance. And nowadays, more than ever, such spin makes the consumer world go round.

As Belasco adeptly shows, future food stories invariably represent extremes of optimism and pessimism, fear and hope, trust and insecurity, foreseeing alternatives of heaven on earth or doom and destruction with similar frequency. Figuratively speaking, alternative food realities have been around since

Eden. The Land of Cockayne was the medieval peasantry's food fantasyland, while my generation had Star Trek (and its wondrous "replicator," which oddly doesn't get a mention from Belasco) and The Jetsons. Belasco firstly concentrates on the defining food-related discourses of modernity, beginning with Malthus, Condorcet, and the English radical and utopian thinker William Godwin, who wrote an influential essay on population in 1820. In addressing the subject of the future of food in this historical context, Belasco analyses the rhetoric employed to illustrate, with reference to a huge range of examples, that here is a subject which has pricked the imaginations and tugged on the moral conscience of many and varied futurists of the last two centuries, many of whom, one should add, only have an academic interest in food.

This involves a close comparative study of the central questions that concerned these thinkers, most famously Malthus, who worried for the future ability of man to feed himself given the pressures of unchecked population increase. How will human beings feed everyone with the available resources? Is this even possible? How much is this a political question, as much as one related to agriculture; a social issue, as well as a biological one?

Belasco must have had great fun reading the various narratives and arguments, as indicated by the range of suggestions for future diets he relates: algae burgers, wood pulp, synthetic protein, "little white pills," and treated effluent (Australia's current water crisis has prompted plans to recycle sewage as drinking water!). He presents such examples with a broad purpose in mind: to unveil, I suppose predictably enough, that "behind the statistics lurk subjective, often moralistic assumptions about diet, human adaptability and creativity, the nature of the good life, and political change." Of the many quoted writers, "think tankers," and "prophets" with widely variant interests, Belasco argues that "even the most interdisciplinary [of these]... rarely ventured much beyond their own values, paradigms, and experiences." Moreover, food-oriented "futurists have not really been discussing the future so much as they have been projecting contemporary events, worries, and hopes onto the future." This is a crucial point, since the focus of the analysis (at least in Part I, "The stakes in our steaks," an introductory discussion of the historical arguments for and against meat-centred and vegetarian diets) is on identifying the tenor of the arguments and of the terminology

used. It reveals that often the stakes are economic or political and also expose common enough race and gender bias (meat is for men, while Indian and oriental vegetarian diets are inferior).

In general, Belasco breaks these debates down into easily identified camps, with the Malthusians (pessimists) and Cornucopians (optimists) representing the essential dichotomy, which at one point is identified as "faith versus doubt." The anti-meat eaters, in general, are of course pessimists, and the carnivores largely cornucopians. Binary oppositions such as these emerge as a commonplace in his analysis, but this takes nothing away from Belasco's perceptive account, as he looks closely at the metaphors, expressions, and phraseology drawn from a very impressive range of quotations and resource material. He concentrates on American history, which I found a little disappointing since a history of the future of food might have taken a more global or at least international perspective. Yet, in fairness and judging from Belasco's exhaustive research, this would certainly have required another volume.

Belasco has split the book into three parts: debating the future of food (on the part of think tanks devoted to this question), imagining the future of food (on food in fiction), and discussing three variant cornucopian futures, classical, modernist, and what Belasco calls "recombinant." He continually sorts the doom-sayers from the optimists, while debunking dystopians and utopians alike (my favourite prediction of the latter being that in the future we will raise mini livestock including "dog-sized cows" at home on suburban lawns!).

Belasco uncovers the personal prejudices and mores at play in this highly emotionalised discourse, as he discusses the debates that, because of food's association with survival and the future of life on earth—everything or nothing!—act as a ready plank on which to mount an ideological allsorts of loaded arguments and dodgy predictions, stretching from the-world-will-be-exhausted-by-the-year... type to food will be instantly available to all, made from nothing more than sunshine and air. Such stories are appealing because we all eat, and we all need to eat. If the political climate is one of conflict, for example, food can easily be represented in ways that rouse popular sentiment (as did freedom fries). Add a little fear to a forecast concerning food and such ideological seasoning can work political magic. Issues related to the application of technology and

science, to politics, economics, social justice, gender, race, and class all find common expression in such future food-related discourse, and all are dealt with comprehensively by Belasco. He quotes utopians, reformers, vegetarians, sundry do-gooders, and even etymologists, noting, for example, several cases of scary demographics advanced by scientists who, having witnessed the horrifying effects of pushing insect populations to their limits, proceeded to make gloomy predictions about the human propensity for overpopulation, the breakdown of law and order, cannibalism, and so on.

One of the big mistakes in pessimistic futurology according to Belasco relates to the ability of agriculture to keep up with demand for food by a growing population. Modern agriculture has in fact exceeded most if not all expectations. This fact influences Belasco's discussion of a "recombinant future" (part "modernist" part "classical") when nostalgia and the new exist side by side, where, to paraphrase Belasco, we have our vitamin supplements and smart foods but also our copper pots and desire for simple traditional dishes. The future never cancels out the past, and little white pills will never supersede real food, not as long as real food is readily obtainable.

I was pleased to see Belasco finally declare his hand at the end of this highly informative and entertaining book. For the most part he cleaves to the path of careful analysis, weighing up the various alternative projections for the future in a study as attuned to the bizarre and the humorous as it is devoid of polemic. Finally, however, after raising our awareness of the power of ideas and of food's ideological role, after "recognizing [that] the incremental, uneven, and often contradictory means by which complex futures are invented is [a] very pragmatic" process, Belasco voices his concern about the problems we presently face, including climate change, the widening income gap, and environmental degradation. How can these be "overcome through pragmatism alone?" he asks. If pragmatism has enabled us to achieve current levels of productivity, it has also contributed to our troubles. Debate should not be foresaken, or the question of future food left aside as one for scientists, or rationalised visions of the future, alone to answer. "Where are the outrage, the urgency, the sense of mission," he asks. Vigorous debate on the question of food will in fact require more of the same Belasco argues: "more romance... more utopians proposing 'dreams to live by,' more public intellectuals issuing impassioned wake-up calls, and more public citizens hungry to foresee and act."

More stories, but also better stories, enticing, inspiring stories which hopefully inform with a real knowledge of

the value of good food and of the culturally complex processes which make that possible; not merely stories of big science laced with cute promises about freedom from the drudgery of cooking. The future of food includes the pleasures of cookery, of the table, and of the garden.

Belasco's book shows adroitly how well food is mobilized to further the agendas of a whole raft of often non-food related interests. It finally demonstrates however the arguably greater need to redirect our investment in food debates with renewed energy at a time when the future to some extent is already here.

Meals to Come will certainly be the standard work on this important although until now little-covered subject and the significance and timeliness of Belasco's engrossing book in this reviewer's opinion cannot be overstated. Highly recommended.