

THE RESEARCH CENTRE FOR THE HISTORY OF FOOD AND DRINK



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What's Happening

European Summer University, 2-9 September 2007

The theme of this year's summer program, organised by the European Institute for the History and Culture of Food and the Université François-Rabelais, Tours, is "In Corpore Sano? Food, Food Fears, and Health." The goals of the program are to pursue and to develop the mobility of students from different countries, cultures, education, and disciplines and to permit students, professors, and researchers to meet in a European academic setting, focused on a relatively new area of human and social studies—the history and cultures of food. The languages are French and English, and the target group comprises postgraduate students. The deadline for applications is 11 June.

For details contact Marie-Claude Piochon:
mc.piochon@iehca.eu and contact@iehca.eu

What's Happened

Two Continuous Picnics

Sociologist Michael Symons made a flying visit to Adelaide on 20 April to launch the 25th-anniversary edition of his Australian classic, *One Continuous Picnic* (1982), at Matilda's Bookshop in the Adelaide Hills. Symons has added a new chapter to the book and a forward by old friend, Gay Bilson, who also gave an address on the night. Michael closed

proceedings with a short speech in which he warned of an encroaching capitalist ethos threatening small business. The attractive new edition is published by Melbourne University Press.

Vegetarianism, Health, and Identity

Nick Fox from the University of Sheffield in England presented a paper on the topic at a Research Centre seminar on 27 March. Jennifer Graue reports below.

Virginia Tech

Previous newsletters contained information on the conference *From Jamestown to the Blue Ridge: Cooking Up 400 Years of Culinary History in Virginia*, scheduled for Blacksburg on 20-21 April 2007. The conference has been cancelled.

Research Grants

The Culinary Trust is offering grants for travel and research to food writers during the pre-contract phase of their book proposal. Applications are available and will be accepted until 31 May 2007. The late Julia Child and Eva Haller established the grant program in 1999 as a memorial tribute to their friend Harry A. Bell. He encouraged and appreciated serious culinary pursuits and was a

A Research Centre of the
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and Social Sciences



mentor to many in the culinary profession.

A committee of culinary professionals will evaluate each application, and the Trust will notify recipients by 15 September 2007. The amount of funding typically ranges from \$3,000-\$4,000 but can vary according to the applicant's proposal and expense budget. Recipients have one year to use their research grant. Completed applications, supporting materials and a \$10 processing fee are due 31 May 2007.

For further information contact Trina Gribbins, tgribbins@hqtrs.com To request an application or for more information contact The Culinary Trust or visit its website at www.theculinarytrust.org

Conferences

30 May-1 June 2007, Canadian Association for Food Studies,

Saskatchewan

The theme of the Second Annual General Meeting of the Canadian Association for Food Studies is "Bridging Food Communities: Making Public Knowledge, Making Knowledge Public." Founded in 2005, the Canadian Association for Food Studies promotes critical, interdisciplinary scholarship in the broad area of food systems: production, distribution, and consumption. The deadline for proposals was 15 February; notice of the conference arrived too late for inclusion in the January newsletter. For information contact Catherine Phillips at cphil@yorku.ca

8-10 August 2007, World Wine Markets, Davis, California

The theme of this international conference is "Competitive Forces Affecting the Wine and Winegrape Industries." The host is the Center for Wine Economics and Business of the Robert Mondavi Institute for Wine and Food Science, University of California, Davis. The organisers hope the conference will bring together researchers and industry members to explore forces influencing the future path of the world wine industry, factors influencing consumers' wine consumption and wine choices, and factors affecting the competitiveness of different regions of production.

The deadline for submissions was 26 March; again the notice arrived too late for inclusion in the January newsletter. For information contact the Center at

cweb@primal.ucdavis.edu.

25-26 August 2007, Cultural History of Culinary Practices of North Eastern India,

Guwahati, India

The department of Humanities and Social Sciences, Indian Institute of Technology, Guwahati, is organising this conference. In the words of the convener, "Till now no effort has been made to bring forward a collective discussion on the changing nature of food practices in historical perspective which is important to map the complex socio-cultural cosmology of culinary practices of the region. The primary focus of the conference will be on the cultural transformation of culinary practices during the colonial times and its social impact."

Proposals were due on 30 March. Contact Dr.Arupjyoti Saikia: culinaryconference@gmail.com

Storia della lingua italiana e storia della cucina, 20-22 September 2007,

Modena

The theme of the next conference of the Association for the History of the Italian Language is "Words and Food: Two Languages for the History of Italian Society." Check the website at www.asli2007.unimore.it According to Cecilia Robustelli, those interested in presenting a paper should ignore the deadline mentioned there.

25-28 September 2007, 10th Symposium of The International Commission for Research into European Food History,

Oslo
The theme of the symposium is "From under-nutrition to obesity: Changes in food consumption in twentieth-century Europe." The program includes session on Norwegian Perspectives, Trends in Food Consumption, Consumer Choice, Industrial, Commercial and Political Influences on Consumption, and Social and Medical Influences on Food Consumption. For details contact Virginie Amilien at Virginie.Amilien@sifo.no

25-29 November 2007, Agri-Food XIV,

Brisbane

The University of Queensland and Griffith University are sponsoring this conference on social scientific research of agri-food systems. The Keynote Speaker is Tim Lang, Professor of Food Policy at City University, London. Tim is best known for his work on food policy analysis and for his commitment to public debate in the areas of human and environmental health, social justice, and consumer rights. Some of the themes of the conference include global influences upon agri-food systems, food, place and social relationships, cooking and culture, nutrition and diet, local food security, new technologies in food and farming systems, standards and audits, and gender issues in agri-food research. The deadline for proposals is 16 July. Contact Samantha Neal: samantha.neal@uq.edu.au

15-19 September 2008, The 17th International Ethnological Food Research Conference, Oslo

The theme of the conference, organised by the Norwegian Museum of Cultural History in Oslo, is "Cultural Crossroads: Food and Meals at Crossroads." Cultural Crossroads are intersections that imply meeting points, negotiations, and choices with regard to food, drink, and meals, historically and at the present time. Any of these aspects can occur in the context of heritage and innovation, nationality and cultural diversity, inter-generational or inter-ethnic groupings, or at work, school, or in institutions, to list but a few possibilities. Since the Museum hosts the conference, it would like to also invite contributions which reflect on the role of museums as institutions with an obligation to conserve material and non-material knowledge, including that concerning food, drink, and meals, and to transmit and present that knowledge to a wider community. For further details contact Dr Ann Helene Bolstad Skjelbred: Ann.Skjelbred@norskfolkemuseum.no

Publications

Gastronomie et identité culturelle française: Discours et représentations (XIXe-XXIe siècles), edited by Françoise Hache-Bissette and Denis Saillard, contains the papers presented at a conference in 2005 on the theme of "Gastronomy and the Cultural Identity of France." What follows is the

editors' summary:

Le rapport entre la gastronomie et la France semble aller de soi. Peu après l'invention du restaurant à Paris à la fin de l'Ancien Régime, ce sont des Français, Grimod de la Reynière, Antonin Carême, Brillat-Savarin, etc., qui fondent la gastronomie en élaborant un discours entièrement nouveau sur les plaisirs de la table.

Au cours du XIXe siècle, de nombreux chefs français, et notamment ceux qui exercent leur talent à l'étranger, codifient une « haute cuisine » internationale. La gastronomie française se montre capable de recréer les cuisines régionales en les nationalisant et également d'assimiler de nombreux produits et procédés provenant de cuisines étrangères. Les textes qui affirment son incontestable supériorité et son caractère national ne cessent alors de se multiplier, tandis qu'à l'étranger se modèlent, à travers l'examen de sa cuisine et de son art de vivre, des représentations de la France et des Français.

Nous interrogeons ici la notion d'identité culturelle, ses modalités, la chronologie de ses constructions. Aujourd'hui, s'éloigne-t-on nettement des conceptions présentes dans les textes fondateurs et normatifs de la première moitié du XIXe siècle ? Peut-on qualifier de rupture les mutations des dernières décennies qui se caractérisent par un renouveau des « cuisines de terroir » et une diversification croissante des sources et des inspirations de la haute cuisine qui affaiblit la place internationale de la gastronomie française?

Contact Carine Fadat at cfadat@nouveau-monde.net

C. Anne Wilson. **Water of Life: A History of Wine-Distilling and Spirits, 500 BC to AD 2000.** Blackowton, Totnes: Prospect Books, 2006. Pp. 310 + 24 figures. RRP£30.

This is an odd book. Its promotional blurb proclaims that its "plot could serve Dan Brown well. It involves mystery religions, secret sects, medieval heretics, the Templars and all the standard ingredients of a madcap adventure. But this time, it's true." Perhaps it's true, but perhaps it's not. Historians have traditionally credited the invention of wine-distilling to the twelfth-century medical school at Salerno. Wilson disagrees. In attempting to discover the origins and dissemination of the distilling process she delves into Dyonisian rituals of ancient Greece that apparently used distilled alcohol not as a drink, not even as a medicine, but as aqua ardens,

burning water that would not harm those initiated with it. From ancient Greece the secret of aqua ardens spread to heretical Christian sects that used it in baptisms, beginning with the Gnostics, then the Bogomils and the Cathars. The penetration of the Cathars into northern Italy resulted in the public emergence of distilled alcohol in thirteenth-century Bologna not as aqua ardens but as aqua vitae, the water of life, a medicine with amazing curative powers and a vital component in alchemical lore. Not mentioned in the blurb but included in the book is the Holy Grail, which in Wilson's argument was not a chalice but "a light-bearing object," and two of the earliest mentions of the Grail were in the works of two renowned medieval authors who might have been Cathars, Chrétien de Troyes and Wolfram von Eschenbach!

Perhaps, perhaps not. Little if anything is certain, as Wilson considers "possible" or "probable" developments and constructs "likely" or "more likely" scenarios with, as she admits, "circumstantial evidence," constantly hedging and fudging with "could have been" and "might have been."

That covers the first seven chapters or 144 pages, slightly more than half the text. The rest of book consists of one chapter on the late Middle Ages and four devoted to the British Isles from 1500 to 2000. Unlike the first seven, these five chapters contain information of interest to historians of food and drink and adopt a similar approach to that used in Wilson's book on Food and Drink in Britain. By the end of the Middle Ages wine-distilling technology had spread throughout Europe, as had the use of grain-based distillation and the acceptance of spirits as a medicine as well as a general pick-me-up. The most notable developments in the British Isles during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries were the increasing popularity of whisky in Ireland and Scotland and the widespread practice of domestic distilling of cordials, medicines, bitters, and flower waters, both alcoholic and non-alcoholic. In the following century domestic distilling declined while the consumption of spirits skyrocketed, increasing by almost twenty times in fifty years and leading to the social and economic problems illustrated by Hogarth's Gin Lane. As Wilson notes, "excessive drinking was turning water of life into water of death." Nonetheless, liquor was still considered a medicine and would be even into the twentieth century, as illustrated by the Scottish prayer to avoid an illness "that whisky will not cure." Only one

chapter covers the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. In it Wilson charts the advent of new drinks, such as vodka (responsible for a surge in violent crime), tequila, and blended whisky, and the rise of some and the decline of others in popularity, including rum, gin, and single-malt whisky. In general the consumption of spirits declined in the period following World War I but has been recently making a disconcerting comeback, especially among young drinkers. The book ends with a warning, "water of life has once more become water of death. It is a sobering thought."

Reviewed by A. Lynn Martin

Andy Smith is pleased to announce the publication of **The Oxford Companion to American Food and Drink**. It is listed at US\$49.50 but is selling on Amazon for US\$32.97.

The proceedings of the 2005 Symposium of The International Commission for Research into European Food History are due to be published in June 2007: P. J. Atkins, P. Lummel, and D. J. Oddy, eds. *Food and the City in Europe since 1800*. Aldershot: Ashgate, 2007.

Food, Culture and Society

The Spring 2007 contains the following articles:

Julie Kjendal Reitz, Espresso: A Shot of Masculinity

Ty Matejowsky, SPAM and Fast Food "Glocalization" in the Philippines

Melissa L. Caldwell, Feeding the Body and Nourishing the Soul: Natural Foods in Postsocialist Russia

Helene J. Sinnreich, Baluty Market: A Study of a Food Space

Tulasi Srinivas, Everyday Exotic: Transnational Spaces, Identity and Contemporary

Foodways in Bangalore City

Nancy Cushing, The Mysterious Disappearance of Maize: Food Compulsion and Food Choice in Colonial New South Wales

Jane Dixon, Sarah Hinde, Cathy Banwell, and Heather McIntyre, Car-Centred Diets, Social Stratification and Cultural Mobility: Directions for Food System Research

Publishing Opportunities

Culinary Aesthetics and Practices in 19th-Century American Literature

Monika Elbert and Marie Drews are soliciting articles for a collection on 19th-century American literature and food culture. The focus of the collection is the meaning and importance of food and the scenes of eating for 19th-century American writers. What are the social, political, and literary implications of scenes and sites of food? For what effect do authors employ culinary discourse in their work? How do references to foodways or culinary traditions influence public perceptions of race, class, and nation?

Abstracts are due by 15 June, the completed paper by 15 October. Contact Monika Elbert, elbertm@mail.montclair.edu, or Marie Drews, mdrews@wsu.edu

Websites

International Potato Center: <http://www.cipotato.org/>

With headquarters in La Molina, Peru, the International Potato Center seeks to reduce poverty and achieve food security through research activities on not only the potato, but also on the sweet potato and other root and tuber crops. The Center has a staff of scientists from 25 countries working on these pressing topics, and visitors with like-minded interests will appreciate the diversity of materials offered on the site. The site has a number of sections, and those dedicated to the potato and the sweet potato are most deserving of a visit. Within each of these sections, visitors can learn about each crop, its conservation, the pests and diseases that threaten each one, and a wide array of related statistics. The homepage itself is a great source of updated news reports on these plants, and recent items have included information on new growing techniques for potatoes (such as aeroponics, which involves suspending tubers) and the nutritional benefits of these plants.

African-American Cuisine: www.afrofoodways.com
The goal of the site is to document Michael W. Twitty's journey through the early history of African American cuisine from West and Central Africa to the colonial and antebellum South with detours in Southeastern Native America, the Caribbean, the British Isles, Germany, the Iberian peninsula, and France.

Obituaries

John Burnett

The social historian John Burnett, who died on 5 November 2006, aged 80, was intensely interested in ordinary people's lives. From *Plenty and Want* (1966) to *Clothes Make the Man* (which he was working on at the time of his death), Burnett, professor of social history at Brunel University, west London, from 1972 to 1990, set out to describe the life of the people of Britain in the 19th and 20th centuries in every aspect—what they ate and drank, how they were housed, their schooling, work and spending patterns. *Plenty and Want*, a social history of diet, was followed by *A History of the Cost of Living* (1969) and, in 1986, *A Social History of Housing 1815-1985*.

Derek Oddy

Alice Arndt

Alice Arndt died on 7 March 2007 in Richmond, Texas, of breast cancer, more than eight years after she was first diagnosed. She was a pioneer in the new field of Food History, studying, writing, and lecturing about it at every opportunity. She was active in several culinary historians' groups around the country. Alice always had lots of projects going. She published articles, taught classes, and presented lectures. She had way more ideas for books than her lifetime allowed, but she was happy that God gave her the time and the ability to finish *Seasoning Savvy* and the biographical dictionary *Culinary Biographies*.

Seminar

Vegetarianism, Health, and Identity: New Research from the University of Sheffield

Many omnivores may consider vegetarians to be all the same, or at least that non-meat eaters have a sense of camaraderie based on their common dietary practice. But new research shows that their varying reasons for being vegetarian make them almost as different as meat eaters and non-meat eaters. Doctor Nicholas Fox from the University of Sheffield in England revealed his findings in a talk on March 27 at the University of Adelaide. Dr. Fox's previous research on health identities based on choices like diet and exercise led him to study people who become vegetarians for health-related reasons. He wanted to know if they developed an identity based

on that choice and, if so, how that identity differed from those who came to vegetarianism for ethical reasons, such as concerns about the environment or cruelty to animals.

Dr. Fox found his participants in an online discussion forum for vegetarians. Although he considered other methods of finding participants for his study, he found the format of the online forum worked well. A researcher asked forum members questions and conducted follow-up interviews with 33 of them. The researcher was also able to observe forum participants in discussions that occurred without prompting by the research questions. While some may question the validity of research done in online forums, one big advantage to this method versus focus group research is that many participants have already developed relationships with one another. This has the potential for leading to frank and open discussions, plus it allows the researcher to check for disingenuous responses to interview questions by reading participants' online posts to see if their beliefs and attitudes are the same when engaged in conversations that are not direct responses to the research.

What Dr. Fox found was that there is a "health identity" based on vegetarian practices and that this identity is quite different from those who become vegetarians for ethical reasons. In fact, he found that vegetarian identities fall along two dimensions: physiological vs. holistic and internal vs. external. Those who have chosen to be vegetarians to prevent heart disease or cancer fall on the physiological side of the continuum, while those who have done so to put "a spring in [their] step," to quote one informant, lean toward the holistic side, although someone could fall anywhere on that continuum.

The more interesting finding though is the difference in identities based on the internal vs. external focus, because this seems to be where vegetarians really tend to separate themselves. Dr. Fox found that health vegetarians tend to have an internal focus and that ethical vegetarians have an external focus. Some respondents from the latter category actually view the health vegetarians as "selfish." Again, many would fall somewhere in between the two antinomies on this scale, but it seems that the motivation in this dimension is what really highlights identity differences.

Dr. Fox's research could be particularly useful to those marketing vegetarian food products. If it was found there were more ethical vegetarians, then

it would make sense to emphasize "free-range" or "cruelty-free" on packaging for dairy and egg products; likewise it would be more productive to emphasize "GMO-free" or "pesticide-free" on products if it was found most vegetarians choose that lifestyle for health reasons. These findings also open the door for more research. For instance, of the vegetarians who relapse and become meat-eaters again, it would be interesting to find out in which part of these two continuums they reside and why they decided to give up the vegetarian lifestyle. Dr. Fox's findings will appear in the journal *Social Science and Medicine*.

Jennifer Graue

Olives in Umbria

For an olive experience in Umbria check out the website of Brian and Lynne Chatterton: www.cottage-umbria.com

They offer an opportunity to study and to experience the production of olives and olive oil, whether it be picking in November or pruning in March and April. Their olive grove at Podere valle Pulcini is at an altitude of 550 metres, which provides a cool ripening period and results in flavourful oils.

