

THE RESEARCH CENTRE FOR THE HISTORY OF FOOD AND DRINK



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Director, Roger Haden, 08 8303 5605, roger.haden@adelaide.edu.au

Editor, A. Lynn Martin 08 8303 5916, lynn.martin@adelaide.edu.au

Research and Administration, Margaret Meyler, margaret.meyler@adelaide.edu.au

In This Issue

Not only is locavore the Oxford University Press Word of the Year for 2007, but it also features in Barbara Santich's article on Origin Labelling of Food. In addition to articles on Ireland's ancient breweries, the knork, and a Barbara Wheaton workshop, this issue contains the usual sections on websites, publications, and conferences.

The 16th Symposium of Australian Gastronomy: Cry the Beloved River—a loaf of bread, a glass of wine, a piece of coal—living well and in a sustainable manner in the 21st century

The 16th Symposium of Australian Gastronomy will convene in the Hunter Valley, NSW, from Sunday, 26 October, until Wednesday, 29 October 2008. The organising committee chose the above theme because it wished to draw attention to the Hunter as a valley with a river running through it and examine its past, present, and future with reference to the sometimes-competing industries that have developed along it. In the beginning the river provided transport for the logging industry, and river ports sprang up. In the twentieth century emphasis shifted to mining, agriculture, market gardening, viticulture, and now tourism. All of these activities have had their impact on the river and should provide points of discussion regarding sustainability and how well we eat. The ongoing problem of avoiding elitism when it comes to expounding the desirability of fresh and flavoursome food for all will also be a topic of discussion.

The main venue for the symposium will be Potters Hotel and Brewery at Nulkaba at the gateway to the wine country and close to Cessnock. www.pottersbrewery.com.au
Spring in the Hunter offers a fresh, green landscape. The vines are leafy, the weather is usually reliable, the air sparkles and daylight saving will be in operation. Local chefs who are passionate about local produce and enthusiastic about the

project will prepare the meals. They will endeavour to source seasonal ingredients from the region—local venison, seafood from Port Stephens, angus beef, quail, ducks and chickens, and fruit and vegetables from the market gardens around Maitland. The following websites may also be helpful:

www.winecountry.com.au/
www.hunterweb.com.au/
www.huntertourism.com/

For information contact:

Liz Hemphill at lizart1@bigpond.net.au

Reay Tannahill, 1929-2007

Reay Tannahill combined her ability as a popular historian with the fictional talent of an historical novelist. To both she brought her skills as a researcher and was meticulous in her use of sources. She was born in Glasgow in 1929 and educated at Showlands Academy and the University of Glasgow where she read history, later taking a postgraduate certificate in social sciences.

Her most celebrated non-fiction work was *Food in History*, which was highly praised on its publication in 1973. It had been preceded in 1969 by *The Fine Art of Food*. In her new book she wanted to emphasise food's role not only as the stuff of banquets but as the sustenance of ordinary people. Tannahill was among the first to alert people to the potential dangers of GM foods. Revised editions came out in 1988 and 2002. Folio is planning a special edition for 2008.

From *The Times*

A Research Centre of the
Faculty of Humanities
and Social Sciences



Websites

Eating isn't just about staying alive, it's also about thinking, talking, writing, reading, and dreaming about food and drinks. This is the research subject of FOST (Social and Cultural Food Studies). 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. More information about FOST, its publications, and activities is on the website: http://www.vub.ac.be/FOST/fost_in_english/

<http://foodandbody.ucdavis.edu> is the website of a new academic food group. The Studies of Food and the Body Multi Campus Research Group brings together faculty and graduate-student scholars in the humanities and social sciences from the Davis, Berkeley, and Santa Cruz campuses of the University of California who are exploring the relationship between food, the body, and culture.

<http://online.wsj.com/articleSB119887784934256273.html> contains the review from The Wall Street Journal by Geoffrey Norman of Steven Gdula's book, *The Warmest Room in the House*. Gdula argues that the kitchen has become the modern house's studio devoted to self-expression and ostentation and tries to explain how it became so.

Foodsville is a new culinary website that welcomes users with the following blurb: "Welcome to Foodsville! There's a lot to see, learn, and do in Foodsville. Register for free and become a Foodsville resident. Move into one or more existing neighborhoods, where people like you are sharing books, recipes, ideas. Or build a group around your specific food interest or interests and invite your friends. Take a trip on Foodsville's Electronic Area Transit and discover the bounty of our community." <http://foodsville.com>

<http://www.food-i.dk> is a subject gateway that covers food and nutrition.

Many thanks to Cara De Silva for putting notices of the following eight websites on the ASFS list serve: <http://www.cervantesvirtual.com/FichaObra.html?Ref=3596> contains the transcription of the Catalan cookbook by Rupert de Nola, *Libre de doctrina per a ben servir, de tallar y del art de coch*, published in 1520.

<http://www.press.uchicago.edu/Misc/Chicago/706842.html> contains Six Recipes from the Medieval Kitchen: Recipes from France and Italy by Odile Redon, Françoise Sabban, and Silvano Serventi, translated by Edward Schneider.

<http://www.cs.cmu.edu/~mjw/recipes/ethnic/historical/ant-rom-coll.html> contains ancient Roman recipes from Apicius, *De Re Coquinaria*, translated from the Latin into German by Robert Maier, and then translated from the German into English by Micaela Pantke.

http://www.daviddfriedman.com/Medieval/miscellany_pdf/Misc9recipes.pdf is a 156-page collection of medieval recipes that begins with a lengthy bibliography of sources and then moves to a valuable discussion of ingredients. Compiled by David D. Friedman.

<http://www.la-cour-des-saveurs.com/enmedieval/rec-med.htm> is a collection of medieval recipes in French.

<http://www.scils.rutgers.edu/~sroczyms/food.html> has links to other websites on medieval and Renaissance food and drink.

<http://www.ems.kcl.ac.uk/content/pub/b005.html> is a careful analysis of Don Quixote's diet based on the information in Cervantes' novel. The conclusion: "Several things about this analysis require comment. Firstly, such a diet would have left Don Quixote seriously deficient in energy; his calory intake is only about a quarter of that required by a 50-year-old male with even a sedentary lifestyle. The consequences of long-term malnourishment of this order would be wasting of the flesh and loss of muscle tone. Secondly, he is below the recommended daily amount of all nutrients, but is especially deficient in Calcium (8%), Vitamin C (6%) and Vitamin E (10%)."

<http://www.geocities.com/tcastros/Historyserver/Fuentes/indexfuentes.html> contains a bibliography of sources for the history of food in Spain prepared by the Research Centre's favourite Spanish pocket rocket, Teresa de Castro.

Publications

Frédérique Audoin-Rouzeau and Françoise Sabban have edited the proceedings of a conference organised by the Institut Européen d'Histoire et des Cultures de l'Alimentation (the European Institute of Food History and Cultures) that took place at Tours in 2002: *Un aliment sain dans un corps sain*.

The most recent volume of *Food & History*, edited by Allen Grieco, Mary Hyman and Peter Scholliers is devoted to the theme "Food Excesses (and Constraints) in Europe from Antiquity to the Twenty-first Century."

The latest edition of *Food, Culture & Society* contains the following articles:

Ilva Mattson Sydner, Birgitta Sidenvall, Christina Fjellstrom, Monique Raats, and Margre Lumbers, "Food Habits and Foodwork: The Life Course Perspective of Senior Europeans"

Mark McWilliams, "Good Women Bake Good Biscuits: Cookery and Identity in Antebellum American Fiction"

Martin Pitts, Danny Dorling, and Charles Pattie, "Christmas Feasting and Social Class"

Defne Karaosmanoglu, "Surviving the Global Market: Turkish Cuisine 'Under Construction'"

Peter Scholliers, "Twenty-five Years of Studying un

Phénomène Social Total: Food History Writing on Europe in the 19th and 20th Centuries”

David McMurray and Joan Gross, “Teaching About Globalization and Food in Ecuador”

Conferences

28-29 March 2008, Information and Food Practices, Tours, France.

Information and Food Practices is the theme of the next colloquium of the Institut Européen d’Histoire et des Cultures de l’Alimentation (the European Institute of Food History and Cultures). The organisers are Eva Barlösius (Leibniz-Universität, Hannover), Marylin Nicoud (Ecole française de Rome), and Martin Bruegel (INRA, Ivry-sur-Seine). For the program go to http://www.iehca.eu/new_docs/programme_colloque_08.doc

4-6 April, 2008, Sixth Annual Shasha Seminar for Human Concerns: Food: Power and Identity, Wesleyan University, Middletown, Connecticut.

Endowed by James Shasha, the Shasha Seminar for Human Concerns is an educational forum for Wesleyan alumni, parents, and friends that provides an opportunity to explore issues of global concern in a small seminar environment. Marion Nestle, the Paulette Goddard Professor in the department of nutrition, food studies, and public health at New York University and the author of *Food Politics: How the Food Industry Influences Nutrition and Health and What to Eat*, opens the seminar with a keynote address. Other presenters include Karen Anderson, Eric Asimov, Jimmy Daukas, Rosa DeLauro, David Fischhoff, Darra Goldstein, Barbara Haber, Faith Middleton, Krishnendu Ray, Ruth Reichl, and Gina Athena Ulysse. For more information or to receive a brochure, contact Kathy Macko at kmacko@wesleyan.edu.

7-8 May 2008, Cognitive Approaches to the Concept of Food in the Mediterranean Cultures, Girne American University, Turkey

Various cultures live in the Mediterranean. Various civilizations have lived in Turkey and Cyprus. Also the immigrants brought their own food to Turkey and Cyprus. Sephardim came to the Ottoman Empire after their expulsion from Spain in 1492. Additionally, Ashkenazim settled in Turkey. Cyprus has had Turkish, Greek, Jewish, Armenian, Italian, and British inhabitants for centuries. The organisers of this symposium wish to focus on the food culture of various cultural groups that live in Turkey, Cyprus, and in other Mediterranean countries and investigate the relationship between the food culture and cognition in different fields, such as linguistics, anthropology, education, translation studies, history, literature, and Jewish studies. The deadline for submissions is 1 March 2008. Send them to Derya Agis at deryaagis@gau.edu.tr / deryaagis@gmail.com

28-30 May 2008, The Second International Working Conference for Social Scientists on Sustainable Consumption and Alternative AgriFood Systems, Arlon, Belgium

This second working conference will focus on the practices of Alternative Food Initiatives and how they contribute to sustainable consumption through four themes:

Alternative economic development

Social justice and agricultural labor

Consumer action as civic engagement

Rethinking methods for sustainability research

Guest speakers include E. Melanie DuPuis and Franck Cochoy. E. Melanie DuPuis, University of California, Santa Cruz, will present her new work, “The Politics of the Stomach: US and EU Eating as Political Culture.”

The talk will extend her previous work in her co-edited September 2007 *Gastronomica* special issue on “The Politics of Food.” Her talk is also part of her current book project: *Good Food/Just Food : A Reflexive Politics of Eating*. Melanie DuPuis is also the author of *Nature’s Perfect Food : How Milk Became America’s Drink*, editor of *Smoke and Mirrors : The Politics and Culture of Air Pollution* and co-editor of *Creating the Countryside*.

Franck Cochoy, Professor of Sociology at Université de Toulouse Le Mirail, worked on the history of marketing from a sociology of science perspective and published *Une histoire du marketing* in 1999. Most recently he has been following this work with an analysis of the various market mediation schemes. In 2003 he published *L’âne de Buridan ou une sociologie du packaging*, which highlights the shifts in the economic adjustments that are associated with new awareness of product packaging or, more generally, the knowledge, references, and tools involved in sales relationships.

The deadline for submissions 3 February 2008: <http://www.suscons.ulg.ac.be/>

4-8 June 2008, The Joint Annual Meeting of the Association for the Study of Food and Society and the Agriculture, Food and Human Values Society, New Orleans, USA

The program chair, Alice Julier, is now calling for people to submit abstracts for papers, roundtables, and panel topics. In particular she is seeking participants for the following panels: The marketplace and consumer resistance
Masculinities and food
Media representations
Food studies pedagogy (building undergraduate programs)
Food labour across the food system
Literary representations
Moral panics and food
Publishing (roundtable on the state of academic and popular food books).

She also wants to draw attention to the Society’s undergraduate and graduate paper competitions. A full description of the conference, the call for papers, and the competition guidelines

can be found on the Society's website: www.food-culture.org. Contact Alice at a.julier@comcast.net

10-12 July 2008, Good Food / Bad Food, University of Kent, UK

The organisers of this interdisciplinary conference invite proposals for papers from scholars in literature, history, anthropology, art history, sociology, cultural, media and film studies, and other related fields. They also welcome contributions from professionals in the field of food writing, restaurant reviewing, and the like. They hope that this conference might lead to the establishment of a more or less formal network of people working on and in food writing, and they plan an edited volume showcasing the most exciting work in the field.

Subjects might include the following:

Food in Fiction

Snacks

Poisoning

Nutritional advice

Restaurant reviews

Table manners

Disgust

Indulgence

Junk Food

Modes of production/morality (fair trade, organics, GM)

Hunger

Eating dangerously

Travel

The alimentary

Send abstracts of 300 words to the organisers by 1 March

2008: Dr Nicki Humble, Roehampton University, at

N.Humble@roehampton.ac.uk, and Dr Sarah Moss, University of Kent, at S.K.Moss@kent.ac.uk

14-15 July 2008, Food, Society, and Public Health,

The British Library Conference Centre, London

The sponsor of this conference is the BSA Food Study Group. The aim of the conference is to explore the interface between food, society, and public health through a sociological lens. Practices and decisions involving food are not solely matters of individual behaviour or action and food and health therefore need to be considered within the context of families, communities, other social groups, and society at large. Understanding differences in food consumption patterns could offer wider insights into, for example, social class, ethnicity, self-identity, or the life course and the implications of these patterns for social and health inequalities. This conference will bring together researchers, practitioners, and policy makers interested in addressing such topics.

The format of the conference will allow for in-depth presentation and discussion of key topics along with shorter sessions for the presentation of emerging findings, work in progress, and new research from postgraduate students. Further details and online abstract submission form available from <http://www.britsoc.co.uk/events/food>

The abstract submission deadline is 29 February 2008. Direct any administrative enquiries to liz.jackson@britsoc.org.uk and any academic enquiries to w.j.wills@herts.ac.uk.

15-19 July, 2008, Meeting of the Society for the Study of Ingestive Behavior, Paris, France.

Alan Spector, the president of the Society, and the Society's board have decided to implement two topical tracks for the meeting. One track will be called Social/ Behavioral/Clinical and the other will be called Integrative Physiology. The two-track system is being implemented in the hope that the yearly meeting will attract more appetite researchers, particularly those doing work in an area related to the Social/ Behavioral/Clinical track. The existence of this track will help ensure that there is programming of interest to such researchers throughout the meeting. The Society's board hopes that this change will help create a "critical mass" of behavioral/applied researchers that will make the meeting more appealing as a venue for both formal and informal scientific exchange. More information is at <http://www.ssib.org/web/>.

8-9 August 2008, Reading and Writing Recipe Books: 1600-1800, University of Warwick, UK.

This international interdisciplinary conference will provide an environment that allows recipe book scholars to meet and discuss important issues such as comparative methodologies and periodisation, thereby offering a key opportunity to shape the course of future research on this genre. It is also the first conference worldwide to focus exclusively on early modern recipe books. Keynote speakers include Margaret Ezell, English, Texas A&M University; Mary Fissell, History of Medicine, Johns Hopkins University; Gilly Lehmann, Université de Franche-Comté; and Janet Theophano, Folklore and Folklife, University of Pennsylvania.

Proposals for 20-minute papers on any aspect of recipe book studies are welcome, including:

Methodological essays from the disciplines of history of medicine, literature, material culture, culinary history, etc.

Periodisation of generic conventions

Overlap of and distinctions between various types of recipes, for example, medical, culinary, cosmetic, sugarcraft, etc.

Possibilities of new scholarly directions, for example, recipe books as life-writing sources

Editing a recipe book for modern audiences

Evidence of larger cultural influences, such as gender, social status, and geography

How manuscript and printed collections relate to one another

The deadline for submissions is 31 January 2008. Michelle DiMeo at m.m.dimeo@warwick.ac.uk and Sara Pennell at s.pennell@roehampton.ac.uk

Travel bursaries for students and junior faculty will be available. Further information is at <http://www2.warwick.ac.uk/fac/arts/english/events/recipebooks>

Word of the Year

Locavore is the Oxford University Press Word of the Year for 2007. The past year saw the popularisation of a trend in using locally grown ingredients, taking advantage of seasonally available foodstuffs that can be bought and prepared without the need for extra preservatives. The locavore movement encourages consumers to buy from farmers' markets or even to grow or pick their own food, arguing that fresh, local products are more nutritious and taste better. Locavores also shun supermarket offerings as an environmentally friendly measure, since shipping food over long distances often requires more fuel for transportation. <http://blog.oup.com/2007/11/locavo>

Knork

It's a combination knife and fork, whose integration has led to the creation of this infelicitous term, surely the greatest barrier to its adoption (though the name of the combined spoon and fork, the spork, is almost equally off-putting). The term suddenly appeared all over the British press during October and early November 2007 as the result of a survey of eating habits by the supermarket chain Sainsbury's. Because meals are now so informal, often eaten on the sofa in front of the television, traditional cutlery is too much hassle. The survey reported that 11% of 18- to 34-year-olds did away with knives and used a fork as an all-in-one eating tool. The survey called this a knork, but it's merely an improvised tool, not a true knork. The real one is an American invention of 2003 by a young entrepreneur named Mike Miller, whose British sales prospects have had a wonderful public relations boost as a result of the survey. His knork is of stainless steel, with an enlarged handle for gripping and outer tines beveled into a curved shape to help it cut foods. <http://www.worldwidewords.org>

Rencontres de l'honnête volupté, The Society of the Friends de Jean-Louis Flandrin, hosts a series of seminars that take place from 6:00 to 8:00 pm at the École des hautes études en sciences sociales, 54 boulevard Raspail 75006 Paris. The program for 2007-2008:

7 December: Anik Buj, "Boire le chocolat aux 17e et 18e siècles"

14 December: François Georgeo, "La consommation d'alcool en Turquie," and Catherine Granger, "La table des souverains sous le second Empire: alimentation, cérémonial, arts de la table"

18 January: Julien Fouin, "Panorama de la presse culinaire," and Vincent Chenille, "Gourmandise et cinéma"

1 February: Alain Drouard, "La formation des cuisiniers dans l'histoire," and Céline Martinet, "La formation des cuisiniers aujourd'hui"

15 February: Nathalie Peyrebonne, "La cuisine en Espagne au Siècle d'Or," and Albert Torecilla, "La cuisine au temps du vice-roi du Pérou"

14 March: Anne-Elène Delavigne, "Toute la finesse de la viande: À propos du travail des bouchers-abatteurs," and Frédérique Desbuissons, "La cuisine du Réalisme"

28 March: Delphine Lesbros, "Recettes de peinture à la Renaissance," and Dany Leriche, "Du corps allégorique au corps fromager"

11 April: Pascal Ory, "De l'histoire de la gastronomie française, du 18e siècle à nos jours, considérée dans ses rapports avec l'histoire de la littérature," and Agnès Viénot, "L'édition de cuisin : panorama"

16 May: Julia Csergo, "Le gastronome, un homme de poids," and Bénédicte Baugé, "L'évolution spatiale du restaurant: du cabinet particulier à la cuisine ouverte"

23 May: Valérie Boudier, "L'ustensile de cuisine et ses représentations à l'époque maniériste," and Tiphaine Campet, "L'avant-garde culinaire"

6 June: François-Xavier Paris, "La mine de sel de Taoudénie (Mali) et le commerce transaharien"

20 June: Christiane Balthazar, "Pas de crudité pour César, ou Genèse du mets 'salade,'" and Antoine Jacobsohn, "Les couches chaudes : techniques et morale"

Admission is free and membership in the Society is not necessary but encouraged.

Barbara Ketcham Wheaton: A Culinary Historians' Workshop

Wheaton will host a special weeklong workshop on Reading Cookbooks as Sources for the Study of Social History at the Astor Center in New York City from 3-8 February. Cookbooks are excellent but complex sources for the study of food and social history. Participants will look at British and American cookbooks of the sixteenth century through mid-nineteenth and learn some critical evaluation tools within these themes: Ingredients. The repertory of ingredients within the individual book or manuscript: geographic reach, economic status, qualities within prevailing nutritional systems, esthetic and sensory qualities, seasonality.

The Kitchen, its equipment and culinary techniques. What are the most ancient pieces of equipment; what are the fundamental techniques that appear in the Western European/British/American culinary systems? How are they applied to the ingredients that appear in these texts?

The Meal. How the meal is brought to the eaters. Where does it take place, how is it presented, served out, and eaten? Cookbooks as a Genre. The development of culinary language, the relationship between the writer and the reader, and the range of materials that typically or atypically appear in cookery writings.

The Authors. There are four people in every cookbook: the writer, the reader, the cook, and the diner. What were their worldviews, their moral, economic, and esthetic expectations? How did they fit into their times and places?

The workshop is restricted to 12 persons. All participants need to complete an application form explaining their wish to attend. Email dduda@astorcenternyc.com to apply. Cost: \$1500, which will include materials, breaks, Sunday evening dinner, and Monday through Friday lunches.

Origin Labelling of Food

In December 2007 the Country of Origin Labelling (CoOL) scheme came into effect for packaged foods imported into Australia, after having first been introduced by Food Standards Australia New Zealand in December 2005 to apply to unpackaged fruit, vegetables, nuts, and seafood and later to unpackaged fresh pork and pork products. This means that virtually all imported food products on retail sale must now clearly indicate the country where they were produced or made, or in the case of packaged food the label must include information on whether the ingredients were imported or a mix of Australian and imported. The Country of Origin Labelling standard applies to fresh as well as to frozen, preserved, pickled, and dried unpackaged fruits and vegetables, and to raw as well as cooked, dried, or coated seafood. Labelling Vietnamese prawns as “imported” is no longer adequate; it is obligatory to state the country of origin. Supermarkets and individual food retailers have diligently complied with the new standard for fresh fruits and vegetables, though the “Product of” information is typically in very much smaller type than the price.

The new standard represents a tightening of earlier standards in response to consumer concerns and the need to give consumers adequate information, particularly when imported products represent a growing proportion of the food supply; for example, between 1978/79 and 1998/99, the proportion of imported crustaceans and mollusks in our food supply rose from 10% to 48%. It is difficult to find accurate, up-to-date details since 1998/99, when the Australian Bureau of Statistics ceased publication of Apparent Consumption statistics, but the overall trend is for imported foods to be even more pervasive. Australia, of course, has been a significant food exporter for almost two centuries while at the same time also importing certain foods; historically, however, the foods that were imported were those which could not be produced here or were considered to be of better quality than the domestic product. What is new from the late twentieth century is that we import and export the same foods and “imported” tends to signify inferior rather than superior quality. Australia sells navel oranges to the United States in winter and imports American navels in our summer. We export a high proportion of our best quality fish and crustaceans and import seafood of lower quality to satisfy domestic demand.

By legislation all Food Standards Australia New Zealand foods must satisfy the three basic objectives of protecting public health and safety, preventing misleading or deceptive conduct, and providing enough information to enable consumers to make an informed choice. The labelling requirements

for imported foods clearly comply with these criteria. But why do origin-labelling requirements begin and end with imported foods? Surely these same considerations, and especially giving consumers adequate information, are equally relevant when it comes to identifying the source of foods produced in Australia according either to region or state of origin, especially for fresh foods such as fruits and vegetables, meat, and fish. The almost complete lack of origin labelling of fresh foods in Australia stands in stark contrast to the norm in many other countries. In France at both village *épiceries* and huge hypermarchés the provenance of all fresh fruits and vegetables, whether grown in France or imported, is clearly shown. Consumers can in season choose between the products *du pays*, those grown locally, and foods from elsewhere. Fish too is often identified by which waters it came from, whether it’s a product of aquaculture or wild catch, and sometimes even whether it’s been line caught or netted. In Majorca seafood is further identified by its Latin name and the name of fisherman who caught it. This information is provided because European consumers value it; they care about provenance because of its link to the quality of the food. Similarly in the United Kingdom and the United States domestically grown fruits and vegetables are often labelled by the county or state of origin.

Here, however, supermarkets argue that such labelling would be far too difficult, citing the wide range of producing environments in this country, which means that fresh produce, particularly fruits and vegetables, might come from a different region from month to month, or even week to week, though how this differs from the situation in Europe is hard to understand. In any case, they add, consumers don’t care where foods come from so long as they’re Australian. Certainly, other things being equal, or at least perceived to be equal, Australians indicate an overwhelmingly preference for Australian-produced food. Research conducted by Roy Morgan Research in July 2007 found that 89% of Australians consider it “very important” or “important” that the fresh food they buy is grown in this country, and a slightly smaller proportion believes the same for processed food.

But would they would also consider it “very important” to know the actual provenance of the fresh Australian produce they buy? Who knows? No one has yet asked consumers if they would care which state or region of Australia their potatoes and apples and lamb chops and mussels come from. Supermarkets appear to believe that the question is of no importance. Indeed, were a survey to be conducted, it’s quite possible that the general ignorance of consumers regarding the origin of their food, together with the marketing emphasis on the concept of “freshness,” would nullify any result.

In an informal survey I conducted among members of the Food Media Club Australia, admittedly, not a representative sample of Australians, an overwhelming majority agreed that, “Knowing the origin of fresh produce is very important to me,” and that, “Knowing where foods come from influences my choice.” Most respondents favoured fresh fruits and vegetables, seafood, and cheeses being labelled by state or region. Their reasons include the ability to make an informed choice, concern about food miles, freshness, traceability, and food

safety, all of which apply equally to country-of-origin labelling, and a wish to support particular producers.

Pie in the sky, the supermarkets might retort, but would shoppers put their money where their mouths are? Research in other countries suggests that when origin is associated with quality consumers will certainly pay more. University of Tasmania student John Paull surveyed consumers to find out whether they would pay a premium for foods labelled organic, Australian, and Tasmanian and concluded that while Certified Organic attracted a 16% premium, Australian was valued at a 26% premium over Chinese, and Tasmanian 32% over Chinese. In other words, this sample of consumers would not only pay more for Australian food but would happily pay even more for foods produced in their own state.

Cynics might argue that this reflects simple parochialism, but such an argument is itself simplistic. As the Food Media Club survey indicated, the reasons for wishing to know the provenance of fresh foods are indisputably valid. Possibly chief among them is the awareness that foods today travel increasingly long distances from place of production to place of consumption, such transport using fossil fuels that produce carbon dioxide and other greenhouse gases with consequent implications for climate change. While long distance movement of foodstuffs is not a recent phenomenon—ancient Egypt imported wine to supplement its supplies of locally brewed beer, and Imperial Rome brought olive oil and ham from Spain to satisfy its fastidious palates—the scale is vastly different today, as different as oil from the wind and camel power of earlier centuries. According to an Australian study published in July 2007, the items in a typical weekly food basket in Victoria (excluding imported products such as tea and chocolate) travelled a total of 70,803 kilometers; even the modest selection of fruit and vegetables travelled 8,370. It's important also to recognise that domestically produced in Australia would translate as imported in Europe; peppers and zucchini grown in the Ord travel as far to Melbourne as avocados from Israel to London.

Concern about food miles has led to a growing interest in local foods among consumers worldwide. Farmers' markets have blossomed as local has become the new organic; in Australia there are now more than 90 regular, if not weekly, markets in all states including the Australian Capital Territory. The ultimate manifestation of this trend is the locavore movement that originated in California about two years ago and has rapidly spread worldwide with dedicated locavore restaurants, including Melbourne's 100 Mile Café and the Locavore wine bar in Stirling, South Australia. It's also inspired a best-seller, *Plenty: One Man, One Woman, and a Raucous Year of Eating Locally* (2007), in which Canadian couple James Mackinnon and Alisa Smith document their year of sourcing sustenance from within 100 miles of their Vancouver apartment. In Australia ABC rural reporter Kim Honan became a locavore for a month, vowing that for the entire period she would eat and drink only foods and beverages produced within a 100 mile (160 kilometers) radius of Port Macquarie, New South Wales. (For more on the trials and tribulations of being a locavore, go to <http://www.abc.net.au/rural/features/locavore/>.) Her

choice of territory was providential. Not only did it offer coffee and wine, two essentials of modern life (respectively from Sandy Beach, north of Coffs Harbour, and the Hastings area), it also allowed her to enjoy spanking fresh oysters and lobster, corn-fed chicken and plenty of bananas, fresh and dried. Basing herself in Bourke might have proved more problematical.

The locavore life, however, has its hardships; for Kim Honan it meant no chocolate, no fresh crusty bread, no tantalisingly aromatic fresh-from-the-wood-oven pizza. It also meant quizzing shop attendants, stallholders, and farmers on the composition and origin of their products. Few consumers, even those who would prefer to buy at least some locally sourced products, would be prepared to go to such radical extremes.

In not recognising the preferences of a growing proportion of consumers for buying local or at least less-travelled food, Australia is at odds with the United Kingdom, where some supermarkets have even introduced food-miles labelling for certain products. A recent survey indicated that 7% of shoppers in the United Kingdom cited "Knowing which country the food has come from" as the primary reason for food choice, only slightly less than the 9% concerned by fat content. According to the Food Standards Agency, 21% of consumers in the United Kingdom are concerned about food miles. In 2007 a survey concluded that British shoppers are now more likely to choose foods for their ethical and sustainable criteria than for their health attributes. The culmination of these trends is an increased interest in both buying British and buying local, and British supermarkets have responded with new buying policies.

According to the Sainsbury's website, its customers increasingly look for local fresh produce and produce from sustainable or organic sources. The company's sourcing strategy through its twelve "regional champions" specifically encourages local producers, and Sainsbury's supermarkets reportedly carry 3,500 locally produced products. Waitrose similarly has a local and regional sourcing strategy and purchases over 1,200 "product lines" from 300 or more producers, using shelf edge ticketing and product labelling to identify British, regional, and local foods. In selected regions its supermarkets promote regional fruit and vegetables and other fresh products such as milk and meat. In 2006 Waitrose sales of local and regional foods were reported to be 92% greater than in 2005. British supermarkets are not alone in recognising the shift in consumer attitudes. Over the next five years the Big Lottery Fund in the United Kingdom will invest £10 million in local food initiatives such as farmers' markets, community-owned shops, and community-supported agriculture schemes to "re-connect consumers to the land by increasing access to fresh, healthy local food with good, traceable origins."

Tim Lang, professor of food policy at City University London, argues that supermarkets should take more responsibility by making decisions on behalf of consumers; in other words, they should adopt particular buying policies and reduce consumer choice. Supermarkets now recognise the need to understand consumer preferences for local and regional foods. A recent conference on "Provenance and Carbon Footprint of Food and

Drink” addressed this issue, with presentations on “Identifying consumer priorities regarding food provenance” and “Assessing the true demand for locally produced food to understand who is driving this market and the longevity of this trend.”

So why are Australian supermarkets apparently not similarly interested in the provenance of foods and sourcing locally? Is this a function of the dominant position of the big two, which together account for two-thirds or more of grocery sales in Australia, compared with around 6% through farmers’ markets? Or a belief that freshness, often pseudo-freshness for fruits and vegetables, with several weeks between harvesting and reaching the supermarket shelves, is all-important?

The two issues of origin labelling and local sourcing are separate but interrelated, and both relate to quality or at least to consumers’ perceptions of what constitutes quality (I’m convinced that Bowen mangoes taste better than Northern Territory ones!). If consumers believe that produce from a particular region, whether oysters or cheese or tomatoes, is better in some way than similar produce from a different region, perhaps because it’s fresher, or because it’s produced with fewer chemicals, or because the atmosphere is somehow “cleaner,” then they will be tempted to buy it and, price permitting, they will. Similarly, if they believe that local produce is better for whatever reasons, they will prefer to buy local. It’s likely that for some consumers local will always represent better quality simply because it is local, and their reasons for buying local produce could certainly be called parochial. Objectively, however, such a claim could not be justified, since so much depends on harvesting and handling practices, on temperature control for seafood, and on slaughtering practices for meats.

At stake is the ability of consumers to make an informed choice. There are certainly legitimate reasons for giving consumers information on the state or region of origin of at least some foods, most particularly fresh fruits and vegetables and fresh seafood, so that they have the opportunity to choose foods from preferred areas, whether local or not. And eventually knowing where our food comes from might be the first step towards finding out how it arrives on our tables in the forms it does.

Barbara Santich

Uncovering the Secrets of Ireland’s Ancient Breweries

In 2003 two archaeologists, Billy Quinn and Declan Moore, were scheduled to excavate a grassy mound known as a *fulacht fiadh* (pronounced full-oct fee-ah). About 5,000 of the mounds have been discovered throughout Ireland, most dating from 1500 to 500 BC. They’re not much to look at; excavation reveals a rectangular trough (*fulacht* is Gaelic for recess) surrounded by a horseshoe-shaped arrangement of burnt stones. No one’s certain what they were used for, but in a flash of insight, Quinn proposed a hypothesis in keeping with his nation’s cerevisaphilic reputation: The Bronze Age relics might just be Ireland’s first breweries.

The odd mounds have long mystified archaeologists. Experts agree that the sites, usually located near streams, were likely used for boiling water, but excavations have yielded little more. One long-standing theory suggests they were used to boil meat, not an unreasonable notion, since *fiadh* can refer to deer. But few animal remains have been found near the holes, contrary to what might be expected around prehistoric kitchens.

Quinn believes that his theory, published recently in the journal *Archaeology Ireland*, is supported by the circumstantial evidence. Even for Bronze Age inhabitants, who lacked metal cooking vessels capable of withstanding fire, ale would have been easy to make. There are only three ingredients, hot water, milled grain, and yeast, which the ancients may have cultivated and stored on a stick that was passed down from generation to generation. The hot water converts the starches in the grain to sugars, creating a solution that, with fermentation and the addition of yeast, eventually becomes ale. (Beer requires hops, a plant that wasn’t widely used before the fifteenth century.) According to Quinn, ale would have provided a safe, nutritious alternative to milk and water. “Because it’s boiled,” Quinn says, “you know it’s uncontaminated.” It’s known that Stone Age Scots drank a cereal-based beverage, and a Sumerian tablet from 1800 BC is inscribed with a recipe for brewing beer. “From the early Christian period to the Middle Ages,” Quinn adds, “children were sent to school on a diet of light beer.”

Quinn and Moore got a crash course in ancient techniques by visiting breweries in Spain, Belgium, and Canada. Then they repurposed a cattle trough, filling it with water and placing it in a clay-lined hole. Using granite stones toasted in a nearby fire, the pair heated the water until it was steaming but not bubbling — according to the brewers they consulted, 153 degrees Fahrenheit is the ideal temperature for breaking down starch into sugar. Then they scooped in barley. After bringing the concoction to a boil, they transferred it to containers, added bog myrtle, meadow sweet, and, of course, yeast, all ingredients available in the Bronze Age boozers. Three days later, the slightly fizzy copper-colored ale was ready for consumption.

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