

ABSTRACTS

SESSION 1: A GOOD CONSTITUTION

1.1 JEANETTE FRY

Warning may contain traces of nuts

Since Australia's earliest beginnings as a Colony, food regulation has been part of our daily lives. The convicts who arrived with the first fleet were allocated weekly rations of bread or biscuit, salted meat, flour, peas and butter. This paper looks broadly at the history of issues surrounding the regulation of food additives and labelling in Australia. It will focus on the effect of Federation on these laws in relation to prepared foodstuffs in general and to one breakfast cereal in particular.

In June of 1994 Jeremy Bingham, Deputy President of the NSW Chamber of Commerce, presented a paper to the Centenary of Federation Advisory Committee. He was speaking of the need for national harmonisation of standards and regulations: "We still have differences in packaging laws and differences in food laws affecting national products. So you cannot necessarily have the same thing in the cornflakes in each State. To have the best federation, doing all the things it ought to do, these things that remain ought to be fixed up." The paper will briefly outline this slow progress towards a true Federation and a quest for uniformity between the States and Territories using the example of the story of the humble Corn Flake. Corn Flakes and Federation shared their early gestational years, let's look at how they fared

1.2 JANE DIXON, LYNDALL STRAZDINS, CATHY BANWELL, DOROTHY BROOM & DAN WOODMAN

Time and taste in Australian culinary culture

Government policies have clearly influenced Australia's culinary culture. An underexplored but powerful influence concerns government labour market policies, and in particular support for a flexible labour market. Emerging over 30 years, and pivotal to a 'deregulated economy', Australia's flexible labour market is characterised by: an increase in the number of household hours worked each week; the intensification of labour routines; and greater variability in work schedules with the emergence of a more casualised and shift-based employment regime.

We argue that culinary deregulation, which is an amalgam of continuous dietary novelty and the de-ritualisation of eating, is a major consequence of economic deregulation. We describe how labour force induced 'busyness' and variability is shaping national dietary practices. Australia ranks 21st out of 27 OECD countries for children eating their main meal with their parents. This type of culinary culture is a health hazard, and possibly injurious to the capacity for a convivial society.

Constructing a healthy and convivial society competes for temporal resources with labour market participation. To the newly constituted National Food Policy Working Group – charged by government with adopting a paddock to plate approach - we urge consideration of the interconnections between the plate and labour market policies.

1.3 NANCY POLLOCK

Regulated foods, regulated bodies

The State (in both New Zealand and Australia) is becoming more intrusive in its regulatory processes that are designed to direct Tastes towards healthy foods, and thus healthy bodies. This paper addresses controls of Taste that aim to bring individual consumption within national health concerns. Following from Mintz' argument that Tasting Food, Tasting Freedom is illusory, it is becoming clear that controls over what we eat are being imposed at an alarming rate, but are subject to few counter-criticisms. Through the media we learn that the New Zealand government will ban the sale of

unhealthy food on school premises from June 2011 (NZ Herald Jan.19, 2011).

Not only are we told what is deemed 'Healthy' food, but it is becoming subject to regulation, not free choice. The fat and sugar content of the foods, the tasty elements, have been given a strong negative valence. They are seen as major contributors to obesity, and thus costs on health systems. "Looking for Flavour" (Santich 2007) to develop new tastes and flavours from various parts of the world is being threatened by reduced options. Teaching children how to choose 'healthy' foods, whether sweet, salty or fatty, has never been harder. Are parents or teachers, or nutritionists the best source of direction; what is the place of legislation in controlling tastes, food choices and obesity?

SESSION 2: REVOLUTIONARIES

2.1 MARION MADDOX

Convivial nation: towards a political gastronomy

Australia proudly adopted multiculturalism as official policy in 1973. It was an unapologetic Australian response to diversity. Those seeking a shorthand for Australia's rich cultural variety often resorted to the riot of flavours to be found at any school fete, council street fair or community bring-a-plate. The Third symposium of Australian Gastronomy in Melbourne in 1987 was titled, 'A multiculinary society'.

Multicultural policy was initiated by the flamboyant Immigration Minister, Al Grassby 1975, Prime Minister Malcolm Fraser added the title 'Ethnic Affairs' to the Immigration portfolio. In 1990, the fourth Hawke ministry for the first time gave 'Multicultural Affairs' its own job title, with responsibilities allocated within the Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet. Since then, only two ministries have overlooked Multicultural Affairs as a portfolio responsibility. The exceptions were the last Howard front bench, and—after Rudd restored the portfolio under Laurie Ferguson, albeit only at Parliamentary Secretary level—the Gillard government, until she restored the Parliamentary Secretary position in February 2011.

The shaky stocks of multiculturalism in Australian domestic policy paralleled a loss of confidence in how we live together, revealed through such cracks as the Hanson phenomenon ('I believe we are in danger of being swamped by Asians'), the Tampa affair ('We decide who comes here, and the circumstances in which they come') and the Cronulla riots.

Can a gastronomic understanding help us regain a durable and robust vision of national togetherness?

2.2 STACI CRUTCHFIELD

The bitter taste of gastronomy

There has been too little public conversation around equality in the gastronomic workplace. Instead traditional gender stereotypes continue to be reinforced, analysis of working conditions across the industry in no way reflects the true impact on the health of the workers and there has been no change to public awareness that those, not possessed of, or willing to promote a personality flamboyant and or grating enough to warrant a shot at food fame, are subsisting on minimum wages.

Just as Australian cuisine looked like losing its gangly legs of insecurity, across a spectrum broader than the few established grande dame restaurants of taste, and was moving away from the tutti-frutti palate freak outs of pacific rim and fusion experiments to a place where upcoming talent could entertain the ideas of specialisation, appealing to a niche market and creating dining houses with individual personalities, the emphasis has come to be on high drama theatrics and the Sylvania Waters side of the kitchen world. These in house intrigues were once the reserve energy boosters for a burnt out and seriously over it work force. Now the in demand items of consumption by the general public, they are a far cry from the principles of emancipated ingredients and respect for the

culinary arts presented by revered industry maestros. Instead participation in the theatre of taste has been diverted by the notion that the consumers should focus on criticism rather than discernment, resulting in food appreciation classists of the worst kind.

Faced with a society where the disenfranchised are enabled to be physically idle and a poor quality diet becomes a wise economic decision for the individual, what will be the impact on the intellectual and social contributions will they will make to the greater community?

2.3 COLIN BANNERMAN

Federated food: the revolution we had to have?

Although the leading figures of Australia's colonial and federation periods had little to say about food and even less about gastronomy, with a little imagination one can trace some parallels between the processes of nation-building and cuisine-making. The act of federation failed to inspire the emergence of anything that could be described as 'Australian cuisine'. However, within fifty years of federation change was underway, transforming Australia's bland diet of predominantly British-style food into the bland diet of multicultural renderings (with welcome exceptions for enterprising gourmets) that characterises eating in 21st century Australia. In the popular sport of history-making it has been described as Australia's food revolution, and much of the credit for it has been directed to migration. This paper suggests that we probably would have had the revolution without the migrants, and that it wasn't much of a revolution anyway. But it was, perhaps, a federation of tastes.

SESSION 3: HERITAGE OF ABSENCE

3.1 CHRISTIAN REYNOLDS

A load of rubbish – the state of municipal food waste in Australia

Australian households are throwing out more than \$5 billion worth of food each year, with over 40% of household food wasted. This non consumed food constitutes a needless waste of resources and energy. To further complicate matters, the management, transport and disposal of this non-consumed food is a problem that does not have a comprehensive federally legislated and governed solution. Instead the collection and processing of municipal food waste is organised by local area councils with support and additional funding from state and federal governments. This has resulted in conflicting waste practices across Australia.

Evaluating the municipal food waste disposal options that are available within Australia (home and centralised composting of organic waste, sewer disposal, animal disposal, and co-disposal of food waste via landfill etc), this paper will examine which of these options are the most economically and environmentally efficient for Australia.

The paper concludes with a discussion on the development of Australia's contemporary municipal waste system. Highlighting how municipal food waste has been managed and what improvements can be made to minimise environmental damage, economic loss and reduce the unnecessary waste of 936 kilograms of food per household per year.

3.2 JACQUI NEWLING

Sweet tea: a universal comfort

The First Fleet to New South Wales arrived with a two years supply of salt provisions, but tea and sugar were not included in the government rations. Testament to their resourcefulness and willingness to experiment with native produce, first fleeters' found an adequate substitute to this domestic necessity in *Smilax glycyphilla* leaves, a species of native sarsaparilla. It earned the name 'sweet tea', was lauded for its health benefits, and, according to Watkin Tench, "was drunk universally". But how universally was it taken? Many extant letters, diaries and journal entries make mention of the new beverage; an analysis of these primary references gives us an insight into the Europeans engagement with native produce across the social tiers, demonstrating the social differentiation in this micro-society. Further, the consumption of sweet tea provides evidence of the need to maintain 'civilised' cultural practices, which offered necessary comfort for displaced individuals who found themselves in an unknown place in uncertain times. The native tea alternative was eclipsed by the bottomless cup of 'real' tea, imported with Sydney's connection to global trade routes.

Smilax glycyphilla can be found growing in bushland along Sydney's fore shores, largely due to native plant regeneration projects. The session will conclude with an opportunity to taste the first fleet settlers' 'sweet tea'.

3.3 IAN BERSTEN

Lost flavour and tea regulation

Tea regulation has been largely handed to the tea industry to regulate itself. This has resulted in the tea industry accepting a two year life for 'fresh tea'. This time has no relationship to the actual freshness of tea as determined scientifically, around six weeks maximum from date of manufacture. The consumer is expected to complain but the average consumer has no idea of what a cup of tea made from fresh tea actually tastes like. It is unlikely they have ever had a good cup of tea in their life as they have only experienced teabag tea.

Tea experts advise consumers to make large leaf tea in teapots and other useless devices when it can be easily demonstrated that more than half the flavour is thrown out with the leaves. A hundred years ago small leaf tea came from Colombo and reached the consumer in a relatively short time to make a reasonable cup of tea.

Tea is widely praised in the media for its health benefits but nowhere is a cup of tea defined. It can be shown that one cup of tea has the health benefits of twenty bottles of iced tea.

SESSION 4: FEDERATED BY FOOD

4.1 TAMMI JONAS

From Meat Pie to Phở in Just Four Decades: If you are what you eat, are Australians cosmopolitan?

An Australian immigration official in the 1950s was reported to be 'indignant at the suggestion that New Australians might be introducing their food habits into Australia: "That's not the idea at all," he said. "What we want is for these migrants to become absorbed into the Australian community, not to bring their own habits with them." Thirty years

later, historian Geoffrey Blainey wrote that Asian immigration was too high for 'public sensibilities'. John Howard, then Opposition leader, soon echoed Blainey when he spoke of high rates of Asian immigration as a threat to 'social cohesion'. Pauline Hanson's racist discourse of the late 1990s (in which her most famous contribution to Parliament was 'We are in danger of being swamped by Asians') not only rehearsed Blainey and Howard's rhetoric of a decade earlier, it carried favour with disenfranchised rural and urban fringe regions seeking greater economic protectionism.

Given the swift diversification of the population in the past forty years, it seems both anachronistic and counterproductive to push 'the Australian way of life' as a homogeneous possibility, yet this is what politicians and the media continue to do, including in discussions of a 'national dish' (especially around Australia Day). This paper traces shifts and stagnations in national conversations about multiculturalism alongside an analysis of the increase in multicultural restaurants and cookbooks in Australia. It also draws on interview data with three generations of Australians of diverse ethnicities to better understand the role food plays in developing the everyday cosmopolitan attitudes of Melburnians.

4.2 DIANA NOYCE

From Slippery Bob to Baba Ghanoush: the influence of immigration policies on Australia's cuisine

Throughout history, food has played a critical and defining role in individual cultures and the overall development of civilisations. 'Tell me what you eat, and I shall tell you what you are', the French philosopher of food, Jean Anthelme Brillat-Savarin, wrote nearly two centuries ago. But what we eat changes as we change. Traditions, particularly culinary traditions, are not really fixed once and for all at the moment of their inception. Rather, they are created, shaped, and defined over time as cultures interact, influence, or absorb one another, to paraphrase Flandrin and Montanari. Immigration has been a vital feature of Australia's history and identity. One of the motives for creating a federated Australia was the need for a common immigration policy. The nation today is composed not only of its own indigenous peoples but a wide variety of ethnic and cultural groups. Although Australia has always been multicultural, for at least a century and a half after European settlement, the British predominated. This changed after the Second World War when Australia launched a program of social engineering on a massive scale. Immigration has not only played a central and essential role in the development of Australia as a nation, but has also shaped Australia's culinary traditions.

In examining and tracing Australia's various immigration policies from the colonial period and up to the present time, this paper gives an overview of the role they have played in determining what we eat. Perhaps no other nation has had such a changing culinary culture as Australia.

4.3 ALEXANDRA GREGORI

The implications of colonial governance for Filipino cuisine: have the Filipinos lost their culinary heritage through centuries of colonization?

In Australia, European colonization has been accused of displacing the indigenous people and, more specifically, in gastronomic circles, displacing indigenous foodways. The question of how to reconnect Australia's cuisine with its indigenous heritage has been causing debate for some time. This same question may be asked in the Philippines.

Like the Australian Aboriginals, the Filipinos have lived with colonial supremacy for centuries, and have also played host to a broad range of guests and migrants. The Spanish arrived in the early 16th century and made a successful take-over bid. They proceeded to unify, Christianize and generally modify this archipelago of over 7,000 islands, and were only expelled in 1898, after losing the Spanish-American war. Control was then transferred to the United States - a control America would maintain for the next fifty years. Both introduced products from other corners of the globe that have since found their way into Filipino cooking.

Yet, even before colonization, traders came from all over Asia bringing utensils, unknown ingredients and different cooking methods that have been adopted by the Filipinos. Arabs, Chinese, Malaysians and Indonesians all had an influence on local cuisine long before the Spanish arrived.

Together, trade and colonial governance have spiced up a simple, Pacific island cuisine. Beautifully summarized by food historian Monina A Mercado:

“Filipino food was prepared by Malay settlers, spiced by Chinese traders, stewed in 300 years of Spanish rule and hamburgered by American influence ...[Thus] the multi-racial features of the Filipino - a Chinese-Malayan face, a Spanish name and an American nickname – make up Philippine cuisine, producing dishes of oriental and occidental extraction.”

Filipino cuisine has never had the recognition of neighbouring cuisines. Observers have suggested that the Philippines is a culinary desert; its national cuisine too degraded by the effects of colonial governance to compare well with the purer cuisines of Thailand, Japan or Indonesia.

Yet, despite these modifications, Filipinos have nonetheless ‘developed distinct culinary preferences of their own.’ Traditional Filipino recipes, handed down from generation to generation, may have been adapted to include many imported ingredients over the centuries, but they have somehow managed to retain a distinctly Filipino flavour.

And the Filipinos enjoy their food and love to eat, sometimes as often as six or seven times a day. Eating - along with basketball, texting and Manny Pacquiao - is a national past time; food and generous hospitality ‘an expression of cultural passion and pride.’

By studying the evolution of this colonized culture, one can better understand the unique blend that is Filipino cuisine – to understand that perhaps this culinary fusion has only added depth to an indigenous heritage, rather than diminishing it.

SESSION 5: PLACE & TASTE

5.1 JOSEPHINE GREGOIRE

Feeding the immigrant child

I am the daughter of Italian immigrants, born in Australia in 1966. My father settled in Canberra to “build” the Capital. He is now in his 70’s and when we are in the car together driving around Canberra he points to buildings such as the Australian National Library and says to his grandchildren in a humble and unassuming voice, “I helped build that.” Post world war migrants from non-English speaking backgrounds did more than physically build our Nation, their contribution to the development of a uniquely Australian food culture is significant.

Food features dominantly in my most vivid childhood memories. A whole pig suspended upside down in the garage and the three day extended family ceremony of making *gluten free* sausages. My *Nonna’s* grandmother’s homemade crusty bread baked in the backyard wood fired oven. The most intense experience would have to be the melodramatic winemaking process. As a child of immigrant parents I participated in recreating the place Italy in Australia – through food and wine.

I have come to a deeper understanding about the importance of place thanks to an intimate discussion with Indigenous Elders, Mr Don and Ruth Bell. The answers for a healthy evolution of an Australian food culture are not about imitating faraway places and their people. The answers, as I discovered, may well be under our feet and the need to establish strong roots in the soil we now call home.

Amy Trubek, *“The Taste of Place; a Cultural Journey into Terroir”* (2009) explores this connection between food and place, particularly through the French notion of *terroir*, the taste of place. I am now married to a French chef and own a French restaurant in a small town Bungendore.

Perhaps the answer for the healthy evolution of an Australian food culture is not about looking at faraway places and people. The answers, as I discovered, may well be under our feet. During an open hearted discussion with the local Indigenous Elders, Mr Don and Ruth Bell I came to deeply understand the importance of place. I explained to Ruth that each time I come back from my trips to Italy I get very sad and depressed and find it hard to settle back into everyday life. “Of course, you feel like this – you and your ancestors are not originally from this land, your body and soul knows Italy.” This profound statement has helped me stop looking and yearning for the faraway lands and has helped me start making a serious attempt at establishing roots in the soil we now call home.

5.2 MICHAEL SYMONS

Our households: towards an alternative gastronomics

Since the late 1990s, a mainly U.S. network of scholars has established the discipline of “food studies”. Under that influence, Adelaide University next year (2012) starts teaching food studies. Previously, the university offered a Master of Gastronomy. The contention here is that gastronomy, in which these Australian symposiums led the world from 1984, remains an alternative, more ambitious discipline.

At the risk of caricature, food studies works within existing academic paradigms. While gastronomy is often a modest study, tackling individual foods and artisanal and regional promotion, Brillat-Savarin saw it rivalling any other discipline, both in scope and contribution.

To illustrate the fuller intellectual framework of gastronomy, as it yet might become, this paper considers households. Not merely domestic arrangements, but our immediate localities, our town/cities, our States and our Federation can also be viewed, gastronomically, as households. Two or three further versions will be mentioned, not least the market economy.

In exploring what is meant by a household, this other name crops up, “economy”. Despite different connotations, the two words ultimately mean the same. The other side’s “food system” might sound more technical, objective and therefore important; but “household” brings romance, humanity, tumult and taste.

The choice of word helps draw an important distinction between households and other social organisations, to be called “institutions”. Lessons will then be found concerning political economies (including our Federation) and market economies. For example, a more authentic economics – gastronomics? – explains the chasm we recognise between local street markets and Woolworths.