

Charities Commission Report 2007

In 2006 the Symposium was relocated to St Catherine's College, Oxford. The success of the 2006 Symposium and the flood of spontaneous positive feedback received confirmed to the Trustees that relocation was the right decision, and provisional bookings have been made at St Catherine's up to 2010.

The subject of the 2007 Symposium was 'Food and Morality'. It took place from 7 - 9 September 2007, and attracted approximately 180 attendees from 10 countries to participate in the discussion of 40 scholarly papers. The sheer number of proposals submitted reflected the immense public interest in this topic, and the breadth of scholarship evident in the programme made a significant contribution to the thinking and research into this area.

To complement the papers the scholarly tone was set by internationally eminent plenary speakers including Ruth Reichl, editor-in-chief of Gourmet magazine.

The Proceedings: The volume of the 2007 Proceedings, edited by Susan Friedland, was published by Prospect Books and went on public sale in September 2008 at the Symposium.

Fundraising / American Friends: In support of the educational mission of the Symposium, the American Friends of the Oxford Symposium organised a fundraising picnic to benefit the Symposium Trust. The American Friends also produced commemorative aprons, tea-towels and tote bags for sale, donating a proportion of the proceeds to the Symposium Trust.

New Initiatives: Paul Levy and Carolin Young initiated discussions with Oxford's leading museums and libraries to create a world-class, public exhibition related to food in 2011.

Charities Commission Report 2008

The subject of the 2008 Symposium was 'Vegeables.' It took place from 12 - 14 September 2008, and attracted approximately 160 attendees from 12 countries to participate in the discussion of 34 scholarly papers. The sheer number of proposals submitted reflected the immense public interest in this topic, and the breadth of scholarship evident in the programme made a significant contribution to the thinking and research into this area. We are also encouraged by the number of young, first-time attendees (approximately 20% of the total).

To complement the papers the scholarly tone was set by internationally eminent plenary speakers, including biodiversity expert James Godfrey (Chair of the International Potato Centre) and the Symposium's own Claudia Roden, Elisabeth Luard, Fuchsia Dunlop and Raymond Sokolov.

This past year, the meals themselves became a chance to expand our exploration of food across cultures. Internationally acclaimed chefs and experts who allowed us to achieve this were Sri Owen, Camellia Panjabi and the Italian region of Emilia-Romagna.

Our post-banquet group art project, initiated in 2006, has become a permanent feature of the Symposium, because of its success in building community. This year Symposiumists created Arcimboldo-inspired food sculptures out of vegetables.

Further information can be found in the FT's article of 17 January 2009 about the event:

<http://www.ft.com/cms/s/2/dfb98226-e35a-11dd-a5cf-0000779fd2ac.html>

The Proceedings

The volume of the 2007 Proceedings – Food & Morality, edited by Susan Friedland, was published by Prospect Books and went on public sale in September 2007 at the Symposium.

Fundraising: Fundraising efforts, led by Cherry Ripe, expanded in 2008, with both contributions in kind (food, wine and labour), which allowed us to save money, and donations from private individuals and corporations solicited by Trustees.

American Friends: In support of the educational mission of the Symposium, the American Friends of the Oxford Symposium organised a fundraising picnic to benefit the Symposium Trust. The American Friends also produced commemorative aprons, tea-towels and tote bags for sale, donating a proportion of the proceeds to the Symposium Trust.

New Initiatives: Paul Levy and Carolin Young, on behalf of the Trust, negotiated with the Ashmolean Museum and other leading cultural institutions in Oxford to create a multi-venue food-themed exhibition in 2011.

A proposal for a new, expanded website, that will allow for public discussion groups in addition to edited, official-approved papers, was drawn up.

Discussions took place with the head of English Heritage to create a Symposium-sponsored English Heritage Open Days event in 2009.

A draft proposal of new grants and awards was drawn up, which we hope to develop further in 2009. We have committed, with the help of acclaimed chef Raymond Blanc, to creating a new set of assisted places especially for young chefs.

Charities Commission Report 2009

We are proud that the 2009 Symposium, held from 11—13 September at St. Catherine's College, Oxford, was fully subscribed with a waiting list. A record 220 people from over 20 countries participated in the weekend.

We attribute this significant jump in attendance (37.5% higher than in 2008) to the improved calibre of our programme, in particular the emphasis placed on symposium meals as an integral part of our educational content; as well as to the successful implementation of an online registration system, which proved especially good at attracting younger symposiasts as well as foreigners.

Our 2009 theme, 'Food & Language' also proved enticing. Over eighty proposals to present were received, of which forty-two were accepted. The eminent historian Simon Schama delivered the keynote address. Two further sessions of expert panels included leading linguists, anthropologists, editors and authors, who assisted our exploration of the theme's many nuances.

Our 'educational banquets' included a Samuel Pepys' inspired feast prepared by Fergus Henderson, which included a traditional baroque 'banqueting course' of music, song, as well as a flammable jelly sculpture by Bompas & Parr, which commemorated the burning of the original St. Paul's during the Great Fire of London.

On the Saturday night, Raymond Blanc, together with the senior staff of Le Manoir aux Quat' Saisons and the winners of our inaugural 'Raymond Blanc young chefs' grant', prepared a five-course dinner that paid tribute to the language of French gastronomy. Lunches designed by other symposiasts explored the cuisines of Turkey and Brazil. Award-winning designer Jake Tilson created commemorative menu cards that explained the foods and beverages being served.

Our 'extracurricular' food and art activities included a reading of food-themed poetry led by Australian symposiast Gae Pincus and the creation of a commemorative 'food wall/book' led by Spanish food artists Alicia Rios and Antoni Miralda.

Young Chefs' Grant Programme

Raymond Blanc assisted us in the implementation of a new programme to enable young chefs to participate in the Symposium. Three winners, selected by Mr. Blanc on the basis of an essay, were given free attendance as well as free room and board for the weekend and two days prior to it, during which they had an opportunity to work in the kitchen at Le Manoir aux Quat' Saisons. Winners also received a selection of books.

Website

A significant upgrade was made to the Symposium website. In addition to cosmetic enhancements, the improvements allow online payment via credit card from anywhere in the world. Other structural enhancements have been made in preparation for further expansion in the future.

The Proceedings

The volume of the 2008 Proceedings – Vegetables, edited by Susan Friedland, was published by Prospect Books and went on public sale in September 2008 at the Symposium.

Fundraising: Fundraising efforts, led by former Trustee Cherry Ripe, expanded in 2008, with contributions in kind (food, wine and labour), which allowed us to save money, while improving the quality of our meals as well as to raise funds with a silent auction and raffle.

The Advisory Board, led by Elisabeth Luard, held a popularly attended 'Oxbridge Luncheon', which was especially successful because all food and wine was donated.

Future Initiatives: Paul Levy and Carolin Young, on behalf of the Trust, continue negotiations with the Ashmolean Museum and other leading cultural institutions in Oxford to create a multi-venue food-themed exhibition, which is now scheduled for summer 2013.

Webmaster Marc Millon and Carolin Young developed an initial plan for the next phase of website expansion, as the next step in creating a business plan.

Carolin Young held meetings with the Northmoor Trust and volunteered at their Children's Food Fair, with a view to creating further Symposium participation at this and other venues aimed at educating children about food.

Charities Commission Report 2010

The Trustees are happy to report that our 2010 Symposium, held from 9-11th July at St Catherine's College, was once again fully subscribed with a waiting list. We consider this a demonstration of the continuing vigour and popularity of our annual gathering of food-historians, writers, food-professionals and academics along with members of the general public by providing a forum for discussion which brings together a wide spectrum of interests. In addition to the formal presentation of papers, what we learn from each other in informal discussions, the contacts we make with like-minded people across the world and from many walks of life, including those who advise governments, are undoubtedly influential in ways we cannot quantify.

The subject, Cured, Fermented and Smoked Foods, attracted 220 Symposiasts from more than 20 countries. Keynote speeches were delivered by anthropologist Sidney Minz on *The Absent Third: the Place of Fermentation in a Thinkable Food System*, while Harold McGee gave us *A Chemical Introduction to the subject under discussion*.

Papers presented included the traditions of Scandinavian preserved fish, Afro-American foodways, fermented fish seasonings in Japan and the Mediterranean, fermented taro in Africa, Korean kim-chee and food preservation in Central Asia, Transylvania's charcoal bread, dried and fermented foods and the role of women in the culture of the Inuit nation; the smoke-cured and fermented milk of Kenya's Samburu, the use of fermented root-starch in Ethiopia, fermentation as a useful tool in contemporary food-preparation, sourdough fermentation from the viewpoint of the microbe - demonstrating the wide range of information our symposiasts are equipped to share.

The highlights of this year's 'educational banquets' - an important adjunct to the discussion-programme which broadens our field of influence by attracting well-known chefs and sponsorship from national and overseas food-producers - were Jeremy Lee of the Blue Print Cafe's *Feast of Cockaigne*, an Irish banquet sponsored by Tourism Ireland, a fiery Sichuanese feast delivered by Barshu in Soho, and a dramatic array of traditional Norwegian ingredients presented via sailboat from Norway to Cardiff, preserved, as the subject of the Symposium dictated, by salting, fermenting and smoking.

Thanks to the generosity of these contributors and numerous sponsors, the Symposium has been able to offer these meals, which augment the exploration of our chosen topic, without increasing our operating costs. In the meantime, our modest increase in registration fees has allowed us to begin to rebuild our reserves. We were also able to raise funds through an auction and raffle organised by Sri Owen.

For the second year, we offered three free places to young chefs selected by Raymond Blanc, which were funded by two private sponsors. We were also able to find a sponsor for an assisted place for one of our authors, who would otherwise be unable to attend. The American Friends of the Oxford Symposium for the third year sponsored research, travel and attendance costs for an emerging scholar, who won the Cherwell Studentship.

The additional requirements necessary to expand our programming in this way as well as in order to reach our longer term objective of increasing the educational content of our website have caused us to make changes to our organisational structure. Carolin Young resigned as Chair-Organiser of the Symposium at our July 2010 Trustees' Meeting. The Trustees elected Paul Levy Chair of the Trustees, while appointing Elisabeth Luard into the new role of Director, (Claudia Roden and Paul

Levy remain co-chairs of the Symposium weekend itself). Additionally, we appointed Susan Haddleton to assist in organising meal sponsorship and Jake Tilson to oversee the future expansion of our website.

Although still in early stages, the Trustees and Advisory Board have actively been working on proposals to increase our reserves through private and corporate sponsorship that might allow us to expand our programming in the future.