

The Federation of Taste

When the founders of federation drafted the Australian Constitution they left no trace of a concern for gastronomy - though many of them, like Edmund Barton and George Reid for instance, certainly rated gastronomy highly.

Their law-making nonetheless had a profound influence on the new nation's cuisine – and still influences our tastes 110 years later.

Food regulation underpins nation-building. Australian history from convict colony to multicultural nation is intimately linked with food law as well as food lore.

A century after the decision to bring the colonies together to form one nation, are we finally creating a 'federated cuisine'? And is it a republican cuisine of liberty and equality, or just for an aristocracy of privileged enthusiasts?

The five sessions of the Symposium savoured these ideas:

Session 1: *A Good Constitution*

Australia has a Constitution that is silent about food but sets down the framework for state and federal governance of food production, distribution, importation and of food industries. Is it time to democratise the government of food with a Constitution that is clear about how it legislates taste and regulation that aims for more than the mediocrity of minimising harm. Is it time to appoint a Minister of Gastronomy?

Session 2: *Revolutionaries*

Is there a role for revolutionary ideas or is zeal dangerous to the sound and strong gastronomic body politic? Do we need real revolutionaries to lead us to a republic of taste instead of food critics dispensing toques and crosses?

Session 3: *The heritage of absence*

Forgotten food is a result of colonisation displacing indigenous foodways. It is also an effect of civilisation needing to ignore its rubbish. How can a contemporary cuisine redeem or at least recognise the heritage of taste and of waste to gain food security?

Session 4: *Federated by food*

Fusion means more than linking elements of different cuisines – it also refers to the way food forms nations through social fusion. Food can be the hidden ingredient in turning both colonisation and immigration into forms of the federation of peoples.

Session 5: *Place and taste*

How are places and tastes connected and how powerful might this make 'home cooking' - and where is our taste leading us?

