



Creative Tastebuds 2020

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EDITORIAL

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Creative Tastebuds 2020

Featuring art, science, innovation and gastronomy, the interdisciplinary symposium, *Creative Tastebuds*, was planned to be held in the city of Aarhus, Denmark, on 9–12 May 2020. The key question of the symposium was: How can our sense of taste save the planet?

Unfortunately, due to the coronavirus pandemic, the symposium was postponed to the following year. Paradoxically, the global crisis caused by the COVID-19 outbreak highlighted the need for rethinking how to manage crises and sustainability issues via our food and taste. The present topical issue of *International Journal of Food Design* presents some of the papers and abstracts prepared for this symposium.

The *Creative Tastebuds* symposium 2020 was supposed to be the sequel of the first *Creative Tastebuds* symposium held in 2017. Based on the success of the 2017 symposium, it was the intention of the organizers to continuously facilitate debates on taste and sustainability. Thus, *Creative Tastebuds* was proposed as a platform for interdisciplinary dialogue, practice and research on taste. Bringing together scientists and innovators from different fields to expand our knowledge and understanding of taste, the platform is mediated

by creative practitioners of taste and art and stimulated by active audiences in inspiring venues.

It is a time of crises of climate, health, hunger and obesity – and of life-style diseases and increasing inequality. The grand question is how we can reconsider our individual pleasures and instead think of our common future on Earth.

The United Nations' Sustainability Development Goals and their demand for action put food culture in a new light: the good meal is no longer primarily defined by tradition, gastronomic ideals or individual preferences, but needs to reflect dimensions such as consumption ethics, production and the consequences beyond the food production system. Our way of eating has consequences for the survival of Mother Earth, and cooking has also turned into an act of responsibility. But then, what happens to taste? How can the sense of taste guide us to new and better food choices?

Many dilemmas are faced by producers, chefs, educators, researchers, politicians and, of course, eaters. To uncover the challenges, understand the complexity of eating and help the eater make choices, we need to embark on an interdisciplinary approach. Led by excellent thinkers, scientists and practitioners in the fields of taste, health, sustainability, art, food, cooking, as well as food design and philosophy, plus with inspiration by active participants, the *Creative Tastebuds 2020* symposium's goal was to qualify the knowledge and public understanding of food choices. Our wish was to explore how we eat for both pleasure and the future and to offer a possibility for rethinking the future(s) of taste, all in the name of sustainability.

As mentioned, the symposium was postponed one year. However, those who have thought about how to explore the ideas behind the symposium had already contributed substantially by addressing aspects of the question: How do we save the planet by our sense of taste? The results of these thoughts and research were formulated in a number of written accounts that are presented in this special issue of the journal.

This special issue of *International Journal of Food Design* contains a collection of three research papers, nine essays, and 20 abstracts under the heading *Creative Tastebuds 2020*, which were submitted in connection with the symposium. The collection of articles mirrors the wide-ranging content of the symposium theme, including both original research papers and essays.

The twelve papers cover diverse topics and show us how taste and sustainability relate in many ways. In general, the discussions of how taste can save the planet take place at different logical levels: One level is from the perspective of food itself and the craftsmanship and knowledge it takes to prepare new menus and use products that meet the demand for more sustainable cooking. A second level is about the relationship among food, eater and experience. Here, taste preferences, and how they can be changed towards new habits, are central for the analysis. The third level is a more philosophical analysis of how to understand taste and sustainability as concepts in the current historical context, and how they relate to historical developments. Combined, the articles show how important it is to work across disciplines to understand the many nuances of taste. In order to adjust our taste buds to a more sustainable future, we need to both look into the food, as well as the eating experience, and to reflect on our conceptual apparatus.

The first level, regarding the taste of food, is explored in Mouritsen's and Styrbæk's paper (2020). Here, the reader receives insight into the unique and

fruitful scientist-chef workshop, where research is going on while cooking together. The reader learns from this collaboration how to handle vegetables, get the best out of ingredients, enhance the umami taste all the while learning about the scientific background for this. The current demand for sustainability is a driver to develop new, innovative cooking skills and cuisines.

Regarding the second level, food, eater and experience, the common question is how to learn and change habits. Hwang et al. (2020) discuss how children can learn to love vegetables through play, familiarity and colour, whereas Galler et al. (2020) point to the importance of including children as co-designers in order to make them choose healthy foods. Damsbo-Svensden et al. (2020) present an ongoing teaching experiment at a culinary school and explore how systematic teaching can change the student's sensory knowledge. They argue that this segment is important because the people that provide food for others can have a huge impact on the development of more sustainable menus in the future.

Perez-Cueto (2020) stresses the need to know consumer preferences in order to make relevant plant-based food innovation. Jonatan Leer's research paper (2020) expands the discussion with his focus on a specific consumer group, namely the food tourists. Based on an example from the Faroe Islands, he explores how to design attractive experiences that engage people not only in the food, but also in the production and the environment. Bee Farrell (2020) takes up another important and timely perspective on this: Which role does the social media play when developing food preferences? Through an analysis of how our sense of sight is important for both our taste preferences and our use of social media, in particular Instagram, the author argues that a change towards more sustainable choices must recognize the role of social media.

On the third more philosophical level, five papers dig into the concepts we use and how we understand them. Karen Wistoft (2020) considers the concept of sustainability and its moral connotations, with an empirical focus on school teaching. She discusses what happens if sustainability becomes moralization with simple black-and-white messages, instead of ethical thinking for more nuanced and critical views that better prepare the child to make informed choices in the future. Højlund (2020) elaborates on the concept of taste and the necessity to define this as a 'social configuration' rather than as an individual experience. With the new demand for changing food habits, we need a sensory and interdisciplinary approach where tasting in playful collaboration with others is central. Adjusting to a new future is a common social challenge; it is not limited to the individual, she argues.

Dahlgaard and Averbuch (2020) also contribute with a conceptual analysis pointing to lifestyle as a central notion for understanding how to change habits of taste. The authors identify three strategies that describe different lifestyle approaches to the actual demand for sustainable living: *redeem*, *replace* and *reduce*. They argue that to secure sustainable changes of habits, we cannot rely on one strategy, but must draw on them all. In Brønnum's, Jensen's, and Schmidts' paper (2020), we are encouraged to not only look forward, but also look back into history when talking about sustainability. These authors show how historical events and times of crisis have changed our consumption of meat. Throughout time, taste has always played a role, it is argued. Now, when there is a need to adjust our carnivore food system and culture, we can use *umamification* as a strategy to make vegetables more attractive. It is argued that meat should not be completely excluded, but the status of meat in our

daily meals should change. The last article, written by Liselotte Hedegaard and Valerie Hémar-Nicolas (2020), proposes that a different conceptual design, rethinking wellbeing, pleasure and sustainability can create a new balance between individual and collective food interests.

Not surprisingly, through all the papers meat and vegetables are central examples when discussing how to adapt our taste buds to help save the planet. This is both a practical matter about the knowledge and craftsmanship of cooking, and a question that calls for new ideas and designs, but also for new ways of thinking. We hope this special issue inspires development of these three interdependent strands and meanings of taste.

We plan to continue the discussion at the next *Creative Tastebuds* symposium, to be held in Aarhus 3–4 of May 2021 (see www.creativetastebuds.dk for further information).

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She is partner in the cross-disciplinary centre Taste for Life and is head of a centre for food culture studies (FOCUS) at Aarhus University. She is the initiator of *Creative Tastebuds* Symposium 2017 (and 2021).

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