



## FOOD

By Wayne Visser

*~ Food is a universal language spiced by delicious local dialects ~*

Have you ever been away from home on a trip, or beyond the ready conveniences of the city, and started to miss your favourite foods?

Or if you think back, are there certain foods that you associate with particular periods of your life?

When is food a treat and when is it a chore?

So much of our lives revolve around food.

How often don't we find ourselves planning or preparing food, eating or digesting a meal, or even just daydreaming about some or other delicacy?

From the moment we are born, food shapes us.

We are taught what is good food and what is bad food, when we should eat and when we should abstain, how much is too little and how much is too much.

We soon learn about the vagaries of appetite and appeasement, the possession of cravings and indulgences, the slavery of diets and binges.

Food takes in the full spectrum of human experience - from our highest virtues to our basest vices, from the painful ache of hunger to the blissful glow of satisfaction, from the wholesome fruits of earth's bounty to the artificial concoctions of science's manipulation, from the steady sustenance of staple foods to the delicate delights of fine cuisine, from the dreaded sight of the foods we loathe to the intoxicating joy of the foods we love.

Like so many things in life, food works on multiple levels.

In its most elementary form, food is all about nutrition. It is our source of energy, the fuel for our activity.

And yet, it is also so much more.

Food is the ritual which structures our day, the way in which we celebrate our blessings and mourn our losses.

Food is a symbol of abundance, a sign of plenty, recalling the harvest festivals of old.

Food represents the habits of generations past and the legacies for generations to come.

Our ancestors passed their remarkable food discoveries down through the ages – what flavours and what heals, what grows well and what preserves well, what grinds to flour and what presses to wine.

This wisdom owes its survival to a strong oral tradition – the telling and retelling of food stories.

The written word has been no less important.

Since time immemorial, recipes have been chiselled into tablets and etched into palettes, written on scrolls and inked on parchments, printed as scripts and published as books.

The swapping of recipes is a glue which cements families, a thread which ties friendships, and a yeast which leavens communities.

Food is the original tradable commodity, the seminal object of barter.

Even in mythical terms, Adam and Eve traded their innocence for an apple, exchanged their obedience for the fruit of knowledge.





Throughout history, food has been a stimulus for the discovery of new lands, a catalyst for the establishment of new civilizations.

The phenomenon of globalisation was set in motion thousands of years ago by the spice trade.

Food is as universal as it is diverse.

The commonality of food allows us to connect across the divide, even while the uniqueness of food allows us to retain our differentiated identity.

Like language, food can create shared understandings, but this should never be at the expense of the rich heritage of local dialects.

Food enables us to express who we are and where we are, to tell the tale of how we got there and what lies ahead.

Food links us to the chain of life.

It connects us to the land and binds us to our cultures.

It emphasises our interdependence with nature and stresses the unity of humanity.

Food is an analogy for creativity – we can be starved of inspiration, or feast on ideas; sometimes, we have all the ingredients to make magic happen; other times, we overcook our efforts at ingenuity.

But food is also an art in itself – every time we prepare food, we engage in an act of creation, a demonstration of creativity; we are artists mixing a palette of colour and flavour, painting a dish of texture and aroma.

There is no limit to the masterpieces we can craft.

Food, unlike any other art form, engages all of the senses.

It is the quintessential holistic art – best appreciated when fully consumed, and a change agent as soon as it is taken in.

Food has transformative power.

We all partake in the sacrament of the Eucharist in our own way – every time we quench the thirst of our minds and feed the hunger of our souls.

So take care what you eat today.

Let it be food which sustains and delights you, food which boosts your energy and buoys your spirit.

In short, have a yum-yum day.



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