

Dr Spock's Food Festival

Katherine Findlay and Ian Yeoman

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Abstract

Purpose – *The purpose of this paper is to make the reader think about the consequences of food scarcity and how science would deal with the situation portrayed through Dr Spock's Food Festival set in Tokyo 2050.*

Design/methodology/approach – *The paper takes the form of a trends analysis perspective.*

Findings – *The authors explain the circumstances (or drivers) of how food scarcity would lead to particular future state. The paper portrays eight driving forces from increased urbanisation to a knowledgeable society.*

Originality/value – *What if it did occur as molecular gastronomy and the desire for new experiences are core values of today's restaurant industry.*

Keywords *Tourism, Science fiction, Futures, Food festivals, Food tourism, Science*

Paper type *Trends paper*

Introduction

Food is relevant in almost every aspect of an individual's life and can either be seen as a necessity or a luxury. It is seen as something common between people of different cultures, languages and places. Food tourism has drawn much attention as a tourism product, it is seen as one of the key components of the tourist experience and food festivals provide an opportunity for society to socialise as by their nature they bring people together. But what is the future? By 2050, nearly ten billion people are forecasted to live on planet Earth, there will be new middle classes with new consumption patterns, oil will be scarce, the planet will be warmer as a consequence of climate change and five billion people are forecasted to take an international holiday (Yeoman, 2012). So what could all this mean for food tourism and food festivals? This trends paper portrays one future and the eight trends that will shape that future. The Dr Spock's Food Festival is about how science, education and new forms of consumption could shape the future of food festivals.

Scenario: Dr Spock's Food Festival – Tokyo 2050

Dr Spock's Food Festival is a science food festival, which is heavily influenced by technology and alternative foods, such as lab burgers, genetically modified organism (GMO) food and vertical farming. It is held in Tokyo, Japan. Here, science and science festivals have become mainstream in society. This scenario (or story) is told through the words of Sanjō.

Back to the future: experience the food of a robot

Imagine a world where more food is grown in the laboratory than on the farm. Because of the price of land, we are seeing urbanisation creeping into the hinterland. Influenced by climate change, there is a lack of water for thirsty mouths, resulting in science and innovation bringing solutions to the food chain. Today, food is grown in the lab because it can be produced faster and cheaper, it is healthier and nearer to the consumer. This is Tokyo today. Do you wish you had the opportunity to learn more about what Dr Spock would eat? Over the last 2 days, I have been to Dr Spock's Food Festival. It's all about how science interfaces with food production and what the future of food might be like. Attracting over 200,000 people, the festival saw people flying into Tokyo from all over the Asia-Pacific to experience this community based food festival. Dr Spock's Food Festival allows people to

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experience the role that science has in the production of food; it is about new food grown in the laboratory from stem cell meat and pizzas delivered from 3D printers.

Eat raw

Catering to a range of audiences, day 1 of the festival was about bringing the rural experience to urban. The world's population has grown to 10 billion over the last 50 years, leading to fundamental shifts in society; Japan's populations has become urbanised with a population of 100 million. The world is experiencing new challenges around food production; the agricultural industry cannot keep up with the pressures of demand. Dr Spock's Food Festival delves into these changes. Children of this generation do not know what it is like to experience plants growing in the soils of the land. This event allowed us to experience vertical gardens; I selected my own ingredients from the restaurant's indoor garden, to create my very own "raw meal", I made a delicious sprouted quinoa sushi. Raw food has evolved to become about eating simply and cheaply; it is about putting together basic ingredients into a nourishing meal. This trend has sprung from people living healthier lifestyles to extend their years, as with an aged population there are now many more people living into their 100s. People are increasingly ditching the junk for raw food. None of the meals produced were cooked above 47 degrees Celsius, preserving its natural state; meals were created from varieties of fruits, vegetables, nuts and seeds products, highlighting simple food.

The edible restaurant

For day 2, I was involved in a dining experience at a restaurant where everything, down to the table and chairs were completely edible. With the sweet maple-flavoured edible wooden frame, this restaurant catered to 200 festivalgoers, the candles on the table were made of butter melting away, trickling onto our plates. This has been led by the phenomenon "molecular gastronomy", which is a food science that investigates the chemical transformation that occurs while cooking. While waiting for the main, we all nibbled on our menus that had a potato flavour, dipping them into soy sauce. As I left I took one last lick of the wallpaper, which was like something out of Willy Wonka's chocolate factory.

Grow your own lab burger

The final day of the festival was about trading the kitchen for the lab, where we attended a "grow your own burger" workshop. As the agricultural industry cannot keep up with the demands led by an increased population and urbanisation, the world has turned to science. Diets are scientifically balanced in the form of a series of tablets and substitutes. Children do not know what real meat is like, fresh meat is available only for special occasions at a whopping \$5,000 per kilo, most of the protein consumed is grown in a lab.. Dr Spock's Food Festival gave us the opportunity to learn to grow our own burger. This workshop covered the basics of growing meat from stem cells, something that we will be able to take away and re-create in our own homes. The meat has the same texture, smell, look and taste as farmed meat. It is grown from cow muscle cells and these cells are cultured with chemicals to help them to develop and multiply, in just a few days a meat cake is formed. It was a strange experience, something very different.

So, what are the trends portrayed in Dr Spock's Food Festival?

Trend 1: the desire for community

Community is about an inclusive festival that involves the whole community. Dr Spock's Food Festival programming is focused on targeting a wide age group, this is demonstrated in the story with events that cater to everyone. This food festival is about teaching and learning through experiences. The idea is to make food more accessible to people from different regions and cultures to enable people to try different foods from different cultures. An open access community festival is about the sharing of social capital between individuals. It is about the programme being more accessible in terms of price and the type of activities. Food and farming are becoming more political issues (Yeoman, 2008) and therefore food tourism is gaining prominence in bringing together rural and urban communities (McKercher *et al.*, 2008).

Trend 2: hedonism

Hedonism is about pleasure seeking whereas healthy hedonism is about ensuring a balance between indulgence and the art of living responsibly (Yeoman, 2008). Hedonism in the Dr Spock Food Festival is about the discovery and sharing of food knowledge, leading to a society that is

more aware of the social issues surrounding food. The story demonstrates this through events that are fun interactive and are interwoven with educational elements. The aim of the festival is to inspire impressionable youth to get them more involved

Trend 3: the increased role of science in the production of food

Current food production may not be adequate to feed the future population, which is expected to increase to around ten billion by 2050 (Yeoman, 2012). This could lead to alternative sources of food production, such as meat being produced in labs, synthetic farming to speed the production of food and vertical farms, seeing fruit and vegetables produced in urban areas. GMO foods are therefore a realistic way to feed the world's population. Food production may see a dramatic shift from the traditional farm to the lab. Lab-grown food will provide a solution to feed an increased population, as demand for food begins to exceed supply. Today, a Tokyo recruitment agency has dedicated 20 per cent of its office space to growing fresh vegetables in its office block (Allen, 2013).

Trend 4: population migration, migration and nature

The long-term trend for oil prices is upwards (Yeoman, 2012) and this will lead to increases in the cost of food production. Along with this, the future will see a decrease in the availability of food production methods as urban cities grow into the hinterland (Evans, 2008). This rapid growth of urban areas, will lead to the creation of "mega cities" (Yeoman, 2012). As of 2013, according to the World Bank (2014), 92 per cent of Japan's population already lives in urban areas, therefore, as this increases this will continue to put pressure on resources. Urban farming will therefore be the source of "real food" in the future; children would not know what it is like to experience "rural life". Richard Louv (2008) recognises this as an issue for children in the future, as they become more disconnected with nature "The child in nature is an endangered species, and the health of children and the health of the Earth are inseparable" (Louv, 2008).

Trend 5: technology immersion

Information technology has seen a dramatic change in society in the last 30 years (KPMG, 2013). Technology functions will be used in this festival to enhance one's perception of reality – creating an augmented reality sphere (Yeoman, 2012). Japan has been rated as one of the top five countries in the world, in terms of their innovation and technology and technology plays a huge role in Japan's leisure economy (Euromonitor, 2013).

Trend 6: shifting markets – power to the east

Political power is forecasted to shift from the west to the east. This will see the expansion of economies in Asia, particularly India and China (Yeoman, 2012). China and India will drive world GDP growth and as such the new middle class consumers will take on the characteristics of western tourism markets, a consumption perspective including food festivals.

Trend 7: globalisation and importation

Globalisation creates a world without boundaries (Yeoman, 2008) and food is a symbol of that globalisation. Today, we eat food from all over the world from Japanese to Italian and create new cuisines that combine these cultures called fusion food. The Japanese food industry is very reliant on food imports and 40 per cent of all calorie intake is from imported food stuffs (Euromonitor International, 2013).

Trend 8: a knowledge society

Education and knowledge has increased in society with an increased number of people attending university. Some 58 per cent of young adults in OECD countries are expected to enter university-level programmes over their lifetimes (OECD, 2014). Society is therefore more knowledgeable and educated on world issues. This has been driven by a world, where information being very accessible, consumers find about anything via the internet. With this science has become mainstream, people are more interested in what is occurring in the world around them. People are more aware of food and have a growing concern with creating a more

sustainable society for future generations (Yeoman, 2008). Thus an increase in education creates more educated consumers who are more critical.

Concluding thought

Dr Spock's Food Festival is about educating individuals on the origins of food and bringing people together to experience food. In the last two decades, we have seen a dramatic change to the way we are eating; learning about why this has occurred will ensure we continue to find ways to feed future generations. This scenario raises issues that could be considered somewhat undesirable for the future of food, but are real. Today, science and technology are seen as the drivers of innovation. Society is more knowledgeable, demanding, sophisticated and searching for new ideas. Dr Spock's Food Festival represents this. Molecular gastronomy is the science of the restaurant industry, often portrayed as the ultra-luxury experience. Tourists in general are chasing new tastes and forms. The scenario might sound scary but often this scenario is happening already.

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Further reading

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