THE 'EEEUW' FACTOR: The Viscerally Sensorial Realities of Being the *Colonial Gastronomer*

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Author's statement: This paper includes images that people may find confronting or disturbing. No offence is intended in showing these images.

This article was prepared on Gadigal and Wangal lands. The places in Sydney Living Museums' care are on Aboriginal lands. Sydney Living Museums acknowledges the First Nations Peoples, the traditional custodians, and pays respects to the Elders, past and present, and to all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

Abstract

As the *Colonial Gastronomer* at Sydney Living Museums I research, interpret, write, blog, lecture, broadcast and present interactive programs to engage and educate audiences about Australian colonial food and heritage. But how do you learn about the sensory qualities of foods that were popular two hundred years ago, especially those that have been discarded from the mainstream (particularly Anglo-Celtic) Australian culinary repertoire? How they looked and tasted, their textures and aromas? My answer: make them. This has meant preparing and cooking foods that many Australian people find offensive, distasteful, disgusting and 'gross': calves' feet jelly, boiled calves' heads, brawned pig's face, peeled tongues, and collared eels so fresh they twitch and jump on the

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benchtop when filleted. This auto-ethnographic analysis draws on my experiences of working with articles of culinary disgust, particularly animal heads and tongues, to reflect upon the pedagogical processes involved in my role as the *Colonial Gastronomer*. It explores the intellectual and emotional effects of sensory engagement with these foods, and my internalised conflict between my personal socio-moral sensibilities and the highly visceral yet positive mimetic experiences, of working with foods that elicit disgust.

Keywords

Museum interpretation, culinary heritage, disgust, mimesis, pedagogy

The *Colonial Gastronomer* is an invented persona who has been at the centre of 'Colonial gastronomy' programming at Sydney Living Museums for the past ten years. Food has long played "a key role in the elaboration of memorable and transformative experiences [within] the museum" (Shields-Argelès: 2016: 29), and the colonial gastronomy concept underpins several forms of interpretation and audience engagement across Sydney Living Museums' colonial-built properties. Colonial gastronomy sits within the *Eat your history* interpretation concept, which includes a food history blog, a book, an exhibition, a lecture series, and bespoke in-museum programming on small and large (1000+ people) scales. Their aim is to teach visitors about life in the past in a less didactic fashion than more conventional museum methods, and in museum parlance, help audiences 'engage, inspire and emotionally connect' with the museums by adding flavour and meaning to their collections and their histories, in a palatable and easily digestible way (puns intended and well-worn). They also encourage audience members and readers to reflect upon today's food culture and to consider their own relationship with food in the context of their own heritage (Newling, 2015: 1-2; Moon, 2016: 29-32, 181).

As the name suggests, Sydney Living Museums' sites are predominantly located in and around Sydney. Diverse in nature, they include the flagship Museum of Sydney, which stands on the site of New South Wales's first Government House, a convict barracks, a crime museum and seven house museums, six of which were built in the colonial period (i.e. 1788 to Federation in 1901) and interpret this period in history—hence the <u>Colonial</u> Gastronomer. The house-museums range from a row of humble tenanted terrace houses in inner-Sydney's Rocks area to the stately homes of influential colonial statesmen and their families, an iconic

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modernist house in Sydney's northern suburbs, and the home of a 'genteel' middle-class family in Nowra, on New South Wales' South Coast. Built on Aboriginal peoples' country between 1788 and 1950, the museums represent aspects of Australian domestic culture from place-based 'lived' perspectives, with class and labour, gender roles, racial identity and social change being significant themes. Due to the number of places and types of museum experiences offered ('walk-up' visits, education programs, themed public events, digital content), Sydney Living Museums' audiences are broad ranging, including local, interstate and international visitors of diverse cultural backgrounds; and families, school groups, local and international tertiary students, community and interest groups and independent adults.

Tasting time

Novelist L P Hartley said in 1953, "the past is a foreign country; they do things differently there" (1997: 5, see also Lowenthal, 1985). As an interpretation curator my role is to make the past a more familiar place for museum audiences, and help them relate to and make sense of people and practices that happened 'there'. Through Sydney Living Museums' *Eat Your History* initiatives (which include colonial gastronomy), I use food as a way of understanding and communicating history, and making the past meaningful and relevant for audiences. My questions are simple: "What do these places tell us about food in the past and in the present?" and "What does food tell us about these places and the lives lived within them?"

The former residents of the houses that are now cared for by Sydney Living Museums were predominantly of British and Irish extraction and, to a lesser degree, European immigrants, from all classes. They range from governors, statesmen and influential landholders, their families and servants (assigned convicts or paid employees, including Aboriginal people who worked as domestic help or footmen) to 'free' immigrants seeking new lives for themselves in Australia. Some of these residents were middle-class home-owners, others working-class lodgers and tenants, and in some cases, generations of their descendants. Colonial settlers brought their own food cultures (which then had to be adapted to this new locale), and because the majority were from Britain and Ireland the food culture represented in these museums is primarily Anglo-Celtic in character.

The museums' food-related spaces (kitchens, sculleries, dairies, dining rooms, vegetable gardens) and collection items (such as cooking equipment, dining accoutrements, family cookbooks and manuscript recipes), inform research and interpretation, in conjunction with written texts and ephemera in Sydney Living Museums' and other institutions' libraries and collections. The latter includes archival material, literary works, published cookbooks (British and, from 1864, Australian), menus, letters, journals, memoirs, oral histories. These provide clues and harder evidence of what was cooked and eaten during this period. Of significance to this paper is that unless they include intimate and descriptive details, the sensorial aspects of the making processes and resulting dishes – their visual (colour and form), taste (flavour) and textural (mouthfeel) characteristics – are generally not conveyed and can only be imagined or guessed. Artworks and illustrations can sometimes be found, giving an idea of colour and form but not texture and flavour. 'Traditional' foods that have remained as part of our food heritage can be sampled to give an idea of these sensations. But much is missing – what of the preparation and making processes, the base ingredients, the time taken, the alchemy of cooking?

I study academic texts, cookbooks and food histories, and use other pedagogic tools such as online forums, YouTube footage, television documentaries and historical cookery programs (all from local and foreign sources) for information, practical how-to tips and visual cues. I consult industry specialists – butchers, bakers, cheese makers, fermenters and the like – and attend hands-on workshops. But ultimately, the most effective pedagogical tool that helps answer these questions is to make the food in question from a period-appropriate recipe in what might be called a mimetic process, (re)creating the dish according to the recipe instructions.

While acknowledging that it is impossible to properly recreate them, as we cannot know exactly what they were like, the 'replica' dishes and the steps taken to make them (even if only approximations or representations of the originals) have enabled me to experience the visual, textural, aromatic and taste qualities of the ingredients and resulting dishes as closely as modern ingredients allow, and learn about the materiality, smells, textures and flavours of foods that were eaten in colonial times.

Megan Watkins (2015) determines mimesis to be a form of "relational pedagogy... [which] may occur as either a passive or active relation... perhaps even at a temporal or spatial remove" (29). I use mimesis to create active relationality with the past, albeit with temporal and to some degree spatial remove, in context of the museums' kitchens and dining rooms where these foods would typically have been cooked and eaten. The mimetic process has also provided an intimate understanding of the human labour required to prepare them for consumption, albeit using modern equipment, such as refrigeration, or using a gas rather than fuel stove or stainless-steel pots rather than iron. Working with the materiality and sensory properties of food has thus been a central part of my self-directed learning. It has enabled me to (re)create dishes and techniques from old recipes and open opportunities for intellectual, emotional and sensorial engagement with the products and processes involved. Drawing on my knowledge of history, formal training in gastronomy and experience in museology, I consider the foods and production processes in relation to the relevant time period, but also, as a contemporary domestic cook and pedagogue, in the context of museum interpretation, messaging and meaning making.

Mimesis has been identified as a means of "enabling social and cultural transmission" (Watkins, citing Tarde, 2015: 28), and indeed it is not my goal to master or perfect the technique or final dish. Instead, I perform these tasks as a form of pedagogical transmission, to interpret them for museum audiences, and impart knowledge about what they tell us about the past.

Understanding these processes enables me to help visitors make sense of food-related museums' spaces, which, as 'cultural (re)productions' (following Watkins, 2015: 21) are themselves pedagogic—passive yet evocative and immersive in the right conditions, reinforced by objects on display, or active engagement with them. Recipes tell us how to make dishes, but not how hot, steamy or smoky the kitchen would have been, the sounds and smells, the weight of iron pots when filled with food, the steady rhythm required to whip egg whites until stiff without mechanical appliances or the pressure needed to overcome the resistance from cream in a churn just before it turns into butter.

This approach to my work has meant preparing and cooking foods that were welcomed onto Anglo-Australian tables in colonial times and well into the twentieth century but now

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offend and disgust many people. Cooking calves' heads, brawning a pig's face, peeling tongues, making jelly from calves' feet, rendering fat for tallow or dripping and collaring eels so fresh they twitched and jumped on the benchtop as I filleted them have not been easy or pleasant tasks. They are highly sensory and visceral processes. The base ingredients are otherwise foreign in my kitchen and can be unsightly, smelly, messy, greasy, slimy, gooey and sticky, 'gross' even. The very physical nature of the raw offal products – particularly sheep, cattle and pig heads, whole tongues and calves' 'feet' (the term used historically in cookbooks), has made preparing these dishes confronting and challenging for me. I struggle to reconcile feelings of repulsion and disgust with a compelling fascination with them as culinary ingredients, and for their pedagogical value.

During the process of learning to play her guitar, Elaine Lally (2015) came to think of the instrument and its strings as "teachers" (186). Despite being instinctually disgusting, these ingredients and culinary processes, through mimetic practice, could also be considered as the instruments of my learning, my instructors—the "active agents" in interpreting the recipes. They have, in my role as *Colonial Gastronomer*, exposed me to some of the sensory realities of colonial foods—visual, olfactory and textural. They have also given me pause to consider the bases of my instinctual yet culturally derived disgust responses to these foods, which are illogical and incompatible with my field of work.

Becoming disgusting

Offal is still cooked and eaten in many countries outside Australia but have been discarded from most Anglo-Australians' culinary repertoires (Alexander, 1996:132; Roden, 2007:134; Ripe, 2008; Wood, 2012). Along with other offal products, whole animal heads, tongues and feet can be found in shops in Chinatown, 'Continental' European butcheries, specialty grocers or eateries (see Churchill, 2010), but are rarely found in mainstream supermarkets or food outlets. Many Anglo-Australian consumers find them disgusting or, more colloquially, 'gross' (Rozin et al, 1999: 341).

This relatively recent disgust of offal is not unique to Australia (Mennell, 1996: 309; Nathan, 2007; Ripe, 2008). Food writer Claudia Roden, a specialist in Middle Eastern and Jewish cuisine, notes that this has occurred in "the new countries of [Jewish] immigration—

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especially the Anglo-Saxon countries, which have long been squeamish about [such] meats" (2007: 134). Although I experienced emotional and gut responses when preparing these meats in my own kitchen (feelings of revulsion and repugnance, grimacing, holding my breath, averting my eyes, distancing myself by pulling away), in the role of *Colonial Gastronomer* working with them is necessary.

These foods have proved to be effective interpretative tools to demonstrate the difference between past and present tastes and invite museum audiences to reflect on why some foods are rejected in our society. They demonstrate changes in visual aesthetics in what is deemed appropriate for the table; no longer is it considered 'polite' to have obvious reminders of our food's animality in view (see Mennell, 1996: 309,313). The textural nature of these foods also play a part in the cultural shift away from these foods. Their non-flesh texture and particularities, whether smoothness, slipperiness, fatty richness or density, can be disconcerting and disagreeable (see for example, Wood, 2012). Rhys-Taylor explains that the 'adhesive' nature of the jelly in which eels were sold is a cause of aversion towards them for modern consumers, stickiness being "among the most disturbing of sensory qualities" (2013: 136). Dishes made with heads, feet and tongues share this characteristic, and were valued for their gelatinous qualities.

In the right conditions, jellied foods kept longer without refrigeration. Acting as a barrier to oxygen, jelly also helps prevent foods from discolouring and gives otherwise dull foods an aesthetically pleasing gloss, hence the layer of aspic used on pâtés (which is often avoided or discarded by some consumers) and indeed, tongues. Jelly was also regarded as healthful and easy to digest, so there are practical bases for their place in the colonial diet. Gelatin also allowed foods to be crafted into decorative shapes to please the eye, an affect perhaps only the upper classes had the means to indulge in, while the lower orders ate them in less ornamental capacities. The ambiguity of not-solid yet not-liquid mass is disturbing to some modern diners, particularly in savoury applications, although interestingly, tolerated in sweet dishes.

The object of this paper is not to establish why these foods have been rejected but to explore the reasons why I find them so confronting, and yet compelling. Historical and generational class-based prejudice and food 'snobbery' posited by scholars (see Rhys-Taylor, 2013; Ripe

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2008; Turner and Edmunds, 2002; Mennell, 1996: 304-316) may account for my feelings of disgust, albeit subliminally. To understand my conflicting emotions in my attraction to these foods I have drawn from philosopher Carolyn Korsmeyer's *Savouring Disgust: the Foul and the Fair in Aesthetics* (2011). This work investigates the 'paradox' of disgust—as a negative emotion which also engenders positive forces of engagement. It focuses on aesthetics and disgust in visual art but many of Korsmeyer's findings apply to my experiences of working with foods which elicit disgust responses yet generate desirable outcomes for the *Colonial Gastronomer*. I have played on the obscurity of these now culturally maligned and 'gross' products in developing the *Colonial Gastronomer's* reputation and authority on historical culinary tastes and practices, which, as I describe in this paper, have tested and extended the boundaries of my sensory tolerance of foods that instinctually trigger disgust responses.

A head for history

During the writing of this article I made brawn for the first time, guided by cookbooks in Sydney Living Museums' collection (Appendix, recipe 1.1). Traditionally made from a pig's head (or parts thereof) and trotters, recipes for brawn are common in nineteenth and early twentieth century cookbooks used in Anglo-Australian households. For this reason, it is a dish that the Colonial Gastronomer should be familiar with and experience at least once. But it took great resolve for me to undertake the challenge: the thought of a pig's head – with eyes, ears, teeth, jowls and snout-bubbling away on my stove filled me with trepidation. Brawnmaking is a labour-intensive, mucky and visceral experience, as the meat has to be removed by hand from the various parts of the head once cooked. It is no longer a dish commonly eaten by most modern Anglo-Australians, let alone made in the home. As Rhys-Taylor (2013) found with jellied eels in London, for many Australians brawn belongs in the past, enjoyed by older generations or 'foreigners'. My mother, who was born in 1928, happily ate brawn in her youth, but in my childhood memories from the 1960s and 70s, brawn was a mass of jellied meat bought in plastic-packaged rolls as pet food. Within a matter of decades brawn had disappeared from my mother's suburban middle-class table and ended up in the cat's bowl.

Today brawn for human consumption is commercially manufactured for delicatessens and specialty shops as a 'luncheon' meat or 'continental' smallgood. It is often marketed as

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presswurst, suggesting a strong association with northern European cultures, further indicating its lost currency in the Anglo-Celtic culinary heritage (brawn as pets' food cannot have helped its reputation). The dish might also appear as *pâté de tête* or 'head cheese' in gourmet or revivalist restaurants, but regardless of the name, brawn, like many other offal products (one exception being liver pâté), is rarely found in mainstream supermarkets, nor are the requisite pigs' heads or head-meat cuts to make it. Instead one must find a specialty butcher who stocks them or will order one in.

After fretting for several weeks over the decision to make pig's head brawn myself I braced myself and ordered one from a small butchery committed to sustainable meat production. I will return to the realities of my brawn-making experience in due course, but my trepidation was not unfounded – this was not the first time I had cooked an animal's head. Several years ago, inspired by illustrated plates in nineteenth-century cookbooks, I cooked calves' heads for a meat-themed Colonial gastronomy program held at Vaucluse House museum. It took some time to procure the heads, my local butcher needing three weeks to order them directly from an abattoir. Packed in clear plastic bags and smeared with blood, the heads were without skin and ears, but eyeballs remained in their sockets. The butcher divided one head through the nose and forehead according to cookbook instructions, leaving the other whole. The halves would be poached in deep baking dishes with aromats, one half then crumbed and baked in the oven following a Mrs Beeton recipe, while the other half and the poaching liquid would be used for a Mock Turtle soup.

Cooking the whole calf's head (Appendix recipe 1.2) was difficult to negotiate. As boiling large cuts of meat is no longer fashionable (modern tastes lean towards baking and roasting), the large oval cauldrons one sees displayed in historical kitchens are no longer a standard kitchen requisite. A thirty-litre caterer's stockpot had to suffice, but its size and depth meant I needed to stand on a stool to see inside the pot and to lift out the head once it was cooked. Wrapping the head in muslin, knotted at the top, made it easier to remove, and without the skin to keep the head intact, helped prevent loose pieces escaping during cooking.

Once boiled, the calf's head was grotesque, far more disturbing to behold than in its raw state. Without skin to hold it in place, the greyish boiled flesh fell away from the bones, the

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nasal passages were exposed at the muzzle, and the lower jaw revealed teeth, surprisingly clean and even, while the eyes stared vacantly (perhaps accusingly). It conjured scenes from horror films, of creatures with flesh partially torn or eaten away clinging tenuously to their faces. My teenage children's responses were powerfully direct, exclaiming "eeeuw, yuck!" and "that's gross". It seemed inconceivable that such an object could be presented at table, even if the meat itself was regarded as palatable.



Calf's head uncooked.



Half head in pot.



Cooked calf's head.

The cooked head took centre stage on the table in the Vaucluse House kitchen for the Colonial gastronomy 'Meat' program, with a selection of other meat dishes I had also prepared – the brains from the head in butter sauce as instructed in the boiled calf's head recipe, the baked half-head and soup, and a whole boiled tongue. They were not offered for tasting for food hygiene and safety reasons, but visitors found the display highly confronting, particularly the heads and tongue. When the group recognised and realised what was laid in front of them, many responded audibly—intakes of breath, quiet groans, mutterings of "oh god", "oh no". Some displayed more visible responses, reacting with open horror: grimacing, halting their steps, recoiling or turning themselves away from the display to keep the offending dishes out of sight (see Ahmed, 2103: 83). The 'eeeuw' factor was high, but the disgust responses from visitors added a frisson and potency to the program that would not have been experienced had less authentic media been used, such as illustrations from period cookery texts or generic photographs.

The objective of the gastronomy programs is not to shock, but to challenge and, where appropriate, extend museum visitors beyond their 'comfort zone'. Elements of wonder, fascination and even horror, take visitors beyond passive involvement. They open space for reflection and discussion about the subjective nature of 'taste', and about generational, social and cultural change, all prime objectives for effective historical interpretation (Moon, 2016: 28-32).

That I prepared the dishes myself and exhibited them 'in the flesh' rather than defer to 'safer' options is the area of my work that members of the public and media often find fascinating (for example, Karnikowski, 2011; Anderson, 2018), and has the elevated the cachet of the *Colonial Gastronomer* as a persona, and my authority in the field of culinary heritage interpretation.

Mind matters

Making these dishes has not only extended my historical knowledge and culinary skills, but also helped me gain a visceral appreciation of preparing pre-industrialised offal dishes. Modern food systems have not only distanced the majority of consumers from the source of the foods we eat; but also meats in their original state. While whole fish may be sold with

their heads intact, 'whole' chickens are sold *sans* head and feet, meat, chicken and fish are increasingly sold with their 'life-reminding' features removed—skinned, filleted, trimmed and portioned and some ready-marinated—minimising the need for direct contact with the raw product to prepare it for cooking.

Offering them in neatly shrink-wrapped on trays with fluid-absorbing inserts widens the distance between the purchaser and the reality of the meat's animal source. With these types of hidden manufacturing processes, 'convenience' foods and retail packaging, our relationship with food and where it comes from has changed significantly since the colonial era, and indeed, in more recent decades (Steel, 2013: 166, Jubas, 2015: 132, Mennell, 1996: 307-316). Social meaning and connotations and socio-moral values have also changed, about what cuts of meat are appropriate to eat and regarded 'proper' at the table (Mennell, 1996: 313-316; see also Rhys-Taylor 2013: 236,241).

While we understand that these are animal products, our minds are trained to see "without recognition", says Korsmeyer; "seeing is always 'seeing as' something or other … a partial, ambiguous … and inchoate experience" (2011: 66). Meat displayed in a butcher's shop can be seen by omnivores as food, as opposed to 'chopped-up parts of dead animal'. However, for many consumers, more blatant reminders of a food's origins can produce strong disgust reactions, especially from those who prefer to be disassociated from the original form their food took. It is difficult to disassociate whole animals' heads and tongues from their living origins and, as may be the case with brains, tripe or other organ meats, not to consider their biological function in the living animal. In these cases, where "food is inseparable from imagination" the 'gross-out' or 'eeeuw' factor is often the result (Korsmeyer, 2011: 71,218; Ritger et al, 2016: 30,31).

These responses are, according to emotion and behaviour theorists, forms of ideation that stem from the knowledge of the nature or origin of the food as body products (Henchion et al, 2016: 2; Korsmeyer, 2011: 66). These ideational associations are prime triggers of 'core' disgust as they "remind us of our own animality" (Rozin et al, 1999; 331-332). Indeed, having prepared ox, calves', sheep's and pigs' tongues in the course of my work I now quite often think of my own tongue in its greater form, its nether regions hidden deep in my throat, and having a comparable stump and roots. I eat tongue when required to for my

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work, but I have to consciously ignore (or swallow?) the ideational thoughts of my own tongue as I do.

Disgust as a food rejection response is, for the most part, culturally learned (Rozin et al, 1999: 31; Rozin and Fallon, 1980: 194,197,201). To offal enthusiasts, articles of the 'fifth quarter' (i.e. beyond the fore- and hindquarters of an animal) might be acceptable, but devotees are in the minority in Australia and other Anglophone countries where offal cookery "has largely been abandoned" (Roden 2007: 134; see also Alexander 1996: 123; Ripe, 2008; Mennell, 1996: 311). According to Meat and Livestock Australia market reports (2008, 2012), there is limited demand for offal in the domestic market, where it comprises between three and five per cent of meat consumption, and most is sold into overseas export markets or the pet food industry. As non-skeletal 'organ' meat or 'viscera', offal is distinguished from 'flesh' or skeletal muscle meat in current Australia New Zealand Food Standards Code legislation (ANZFSC, 2016: 2.2.1). Applying anthropologist Mary Douglas's (2002) theories of culturally perceived "dirt" being "matter out of place" to animal meats, it can be argued that for many modern Australian consumers, offal resides outside the current schema, belonging instead in a 'residual' category of acceptable animal food (37). While intact offal meats such as livers, brains, kidneys, sweetbread (thymus) and oxtail, and less obvious foods which conceal offal ingredients, such as pâté or *foie gras* may occupy an ambiguous position in the food-schema, whole tongues and animal heads do not fit the mainstream Australian culinary aesthetic, and according to Douglas, "discordant [items] tend to be rejected" (2002: 37). Australian chef, cookbook author and ex-restaurateur Stephanie Alexander notes that while regarded as delicacies in some cultures, liver was "controversial", brains and tripe were rarely cooked at home, and "young cooks have almost never bought a tongue [and] some recoil in horror when faced with one" (1996:123,132,128,714,720). Both the physical realities and related ideational notions contribute to many modern consumers' finding them disgusting.



Veal tongue, raw.



Veal tongue, cooked.



Veal tongue, cooked.



Peeling ox tongue.



Ox tongue in pot.

Preparing a tongue for the table requires intimate hands-on intervention and, is for me, unappealing (Appendix recipe 1.3). As argued by theory of ideational disgust, just the thought of handling a tongue—an organ that once resided in an animal's mouth and licked who-knows-what in its lifetime, sending taste messages to the brain, and maneuvered food into the animal's digestive tract—can be disturbing and repugnant. More tangibly, for the uninitiated an ox tongue may be unexpectedly large, dense and heavy, its root (extrinsic muscles) ungainly and ugly, its papillae coarse and rough-textured. Some tongues I have worked with have had dark patches that are similar to the patterning of a piebald cow's hide, leaving me to wonder if the coat of the animal to which it belonged shared these properties. Subsequent investigation indicates that this is the case (Curtis, 1839: 375). Once cooked, the outer 'skin' must be peeled away by hand while the tongue is still warm, by running your thumbs between the mucosa layer and the edible flesh beneath. Thinner parts of the skin on the edges and underside have a tendency to stick to the flesh and must be carefully prised and peeled away with a knife. It is a fiddly, scrappy, messy, sticky and unattractive process.

In colonial times, tongues were 'dressed' for the table. Illustrated cookbooks show whole tongues languishing gloriously adorned on a platter, ready to be carved by a nominated diner or table attendant as part of the dining proceedings. Often the untidy root-end is covered with a ruffle, suggesting that this part of the organ was also then seen as unattractive, perhaps even distasteful. Some recipes say to remove the root, but according to Eliza Acton (1855) it was valued by some people 'for the sake of the fat' (2002: 183). Recipes also instruct that the tongue be glazed and decoratively garnished. If not pickled, the edible meat of the tongue tends to have a bluish rather than fresh-fleshed pink hue, no doubt adding to tongue's unappetising appearance for many consumers, past and present.

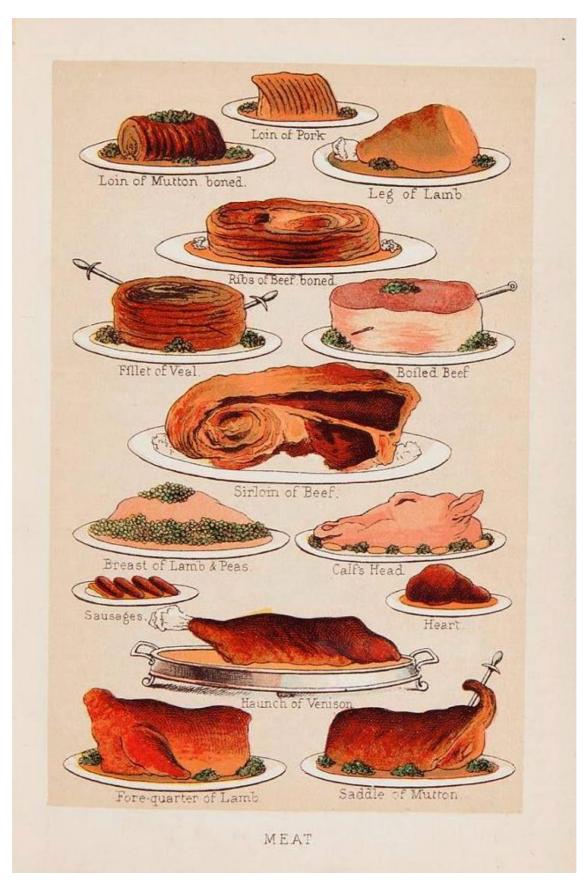
The new order

Alexander's observation that younger cooks find tongue repugnant suggests a shift in taste and acceptance. Heritage is culturally determined, each generation choosing what to retain from the past, some more accepting of conventional practices than others (Turner and Edmunds, 2013: 236; also see Rhys-Taylor, 2013). It is important to acknowledge that notions of acceptability, or conversely, distaste and disgust, are localised and temporal, and that the "regimes of distaste that uphold sensory boundaries of social class" are fluid and subjective (Rhys-Taylor, 2013: 238).

According to Douglas, however, once something contradicts the culturally perceived 'natural' order there is "no rite of aggregation [and] tolerance is withdrawn"; once rejected by society it is regarded as 'abnormal' (2002: 36-37, 98-99). Offal, I argue, impinges on modern Australians' idea of order within the context of acceptable table 'meat'. Despite offal products being legally classified as meat (ANZFSC 2016: 2.2.1), their various forms and 'uncertain' textural qualities separate these products from flesh meat. They occupy a marginal space in the culinary repertoire, and according to Douglas, "all margins are dangerous" in the accepted social order (2002: 122). Calves' heads, ox tongues and other marginalised animal products may have a place in the culinary arts, but not, for most Anglo-Celtic diners, on the table itself, in plain view, in their recognisable forms (see Mennell, 1996: 308-314).

According to Korsmeyer, "the ugly can be tolerated in its proper place" (2011: 48); but the table is not one of those places for many Australians today. Douglas observes, so as not to "disturb these [now] established assumptions … we find ourselves ignoring or distorting … uncomfortable facts which refuse to be fitted in …" (2002: 38). For many modern consumers, offal is an uncomfortable food category and 'matter out of place' on the proverbial Australian meat tray.

Our forebears handled, cooked and consumed these ingredients (as cooks from other cultures still do) as a matter of course and welcomed them on their tables. Tongues sat alongside turkey and ham at weddings and balls; calves' heads were picked over to extract the most prized parts – the jowl, palate and eyes. These were 'hero' dishes in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, and cookbooks and menus show that they were still acceptable in mid-twentieth century Australia. While wealthier households could leave the 'dirty' work of preparing them to their servants, 'everyday' cookbooks from this period suggest that less affluent, self-catering cooks would prepare tongue, head or head-meat dishes at home for their families. If the premium ox tongues and calves' heads were beyond the budget, sheep's tongues and heads were economical alternatives. Whole heads and tongues appealed to both rich and poor; they were not foods of necessity but sought after and valued. Yet for more recent generations of Australians (including myself to some degree), the presence of these blatantly animalistic foods on the dining table betray and corrupt diners' moral sensibilities and senses of civility, and contaminate their tables.



Mrs Beeton 'Meat' colour plate.

Dirty work

In summary then, disgust responses can be elicited by things that are both morally and materially disgusting. There is considerable scholarly debate as to which sensory experiences are the most powerful elicitors of disgust (see Korsmeyer, 2011: 30,31,36,57). Sight and smell are strong candidates, but taste and touch involve direct bodily contact with the foods in question, which has greater potential to physically 'contaminate' (Ahmed, 2013: 83). A calf's head may be visually confronting, but disassembling a pig's face or peeling a tongue requires immediate, intimate proximity.

Viewing, handling and cooking an animal's head, tongue, feet or hooves are not what I consider pleasant or benign activities. For me—and, I would argue, for the majority of modern domestic cooks in Australia—a dead animal's head severed from its body and destined for the pot is visually and emotionally confronting, even disturbing. Yet I find the concept of cooking with them strangely compelling, a matter I find somewhat disturbing in itself, on a moral basis. With eyes, muzzle or snout, mouth, tongue, teeth and ears present—all sensory agents in themselves—it is difficult not to recognise a face, to which we instinctively look for expression of a being. Due to their "representational qualities", these culinary objects of disgust "share the impression of life turning toward death" (Korsmeyer 2011: 36).

Discussing more progressed states of decomposition and decay, Korsmeyer says (citing Kolnai), that "the disgusting is 'pregnant with death'" (2011: 36). I argue, however, that in their fresh uncooked state these heads, tongues and feet are instead pregnant with *life*. This kind of "cognitive evaluative judgment" is a prime elicitor of feelings of disgust, as "a violation" of the socio-moral code (Korsmeyer, 2011: 29,32). More so than a physical sense of disgust I am left with a feeling of moral corruption for the part I have played as the cook, in that it is my actions through the cooking process that cause the final "transition between life and death" (Korsmeyer, 2011: 122). In their whole, unprocessed forms these foods seem to many modern diners to be base, coarse, lowly, brutish, foul—indeed, uncivilised (Korsmeyer, 2011: 39,80).

According to Stephen Mennell, this trend is not new: it has been evolving with an increased consciousness about animal welfare, and "the softening of manners" that accompanied the rise of the bourgeois and middle classes in the nineteenth century in England and France, resulting in "a growing tendency to conceal the slaughtered creature's more recognisable features" on dinner tables (1996: 307-309). For modern diners, they belong to a crude and unsophisticated Australia, where our colonial ancestors' diet and eating habits were boring, unappetizing, abysmal and abominable (O'Brien, 2016: xii-xiii). Tongue and other offal products were also associated with poverty and wartime in the early-mid twentieth century, when, unlike fresh flesh meats, they were not restricted by rationing during World War II, and they came to be regarded as inferior (Ripe, 2008). A "cultural anaesthesia" has developed with the loss of these foods from our tables, and with their disappearance, a "numbing and erasure of sensory realities" of handling and eating them (Seremetakis, 1996: 23). Whether through cultural or technological changes with industrialisation, the extent to which we view, handle and consume non-flesh animal meats has diminished the sensory nature of food preparation; we have lost touch with them.

Facing reality

Even when these non-flesh foods are disguised or concealed as brawn, pâté or less distinguishable offal dishes, knowledge of where they come from and the role they played in the living animal can challenge cultural values and socio-moral codes because they "harbor an awareness of the fact that to sustain one's own life one takes another", a reality that many of us would rather ignore (Korsmeyer, 2011: 45). I am, in principle, an advocate of nose-to-tail eating and utilising all parts of an animal as a form of respect for it having been bred and killed for human benefit. Yet on a conflicting socio-moral basis, I am left with a lingering sense of regretful complicity that in purchasing, handling and cooking the whole heads I have performed an act of betrayal and violation of a recently-living animal. My conscience is somewhat alleviated by reconciling these activities as professional development exercises; it's not me, it's a function of being the *Colonial Gastronomer*.

In preparing this paper, I reviewed photographs I took when cooking the calves' heads for the Vaucluse House 'Meat' program, and wondered how I managed to negotiate such a challenge without balking, and yet repeated the exercise again using a pig's head for brawn.

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In its whole form the pig's head I purchased looked forlorn and pitiable, ears askew, and an alarming amount of blood staining its eyes and cheeks, as though it had been crying blood. Brining helped clean it up, and once lying in the cooking pot the face looked almost chimerical, a small white eye peeking out from beneath the ear, the snout crinkled like an elephant's trunk. But the most difficult part of making the brawn was separating the flesh, fat and extraneous matter from the head once it was cooked. The natural collagen in the head and trotters made the mass of meat unctuous, tacky and slippery, and I found myself working with outstretched arms as I sought physical distance from the repellent mess before me. As I pulled the head apart I noted the look and feel of my own face contorting in response to the various parts of the pig's facial anatomy.

The 'eeeuw' that I emitted involuntarily was audible as I withdrew what I can only guess were the sinuses, extending from within the snout area into a concealed cavity behind the bones under the eyes. (As I write this I am conscious of my own sinuses sitting either side of the bridge of my nose, and can imagine—almost feel—the sensation of their being pulled away from their rightful place.) The most challenging aspect, however, was handling the snout meat. Peeling back the skin of the snout revealed a colourless yet vaguely dirty-looking mass within. "Neither fat nor meat", it was more dense and pliable than aspic or jelly, but with no detectable fibre or flesh to give it substance or structure (Henderson 2004: 39). In *The Whole Beast* (2004), nose-to-tail chef Fergus Henderson assures his readers, "do not be discouraged, it is delicious in your brawn" (2004: 39), so I broke it into blobs, but they clung to my fingers as I tried to flick and scrape them into the accumulating mass of edible facial meat. I found the process so discomforting and repugnant I didn't include the snout-substance in the brawn; I couldn't stomach the thought of it.



Pig head in pot.



Making brawn.



Brawn, made.

Self-disgust

More concerning for me, in making the brawn, is that the calves' heads and the tongues I had prepared in the past were for specific museum programs or film shoots, but the brawnmaking has no concrete outcome, beyond perhaps a story for Sydney Living Museums' *The Cook & the Curator* food heritage blog. This leaves me, on a socio-moral basis, questioning the motive behind the exercise—professional knowledge and credibility, personal curiosity, intrigue, or perhaps even a desire for some macabre thrill?

Throughout *Savouring Disgust*, Korsmeyer explores the 'paradox of aversion', questioning why "seemingly normal [people] willingly seek out experiences that deliver unpleasantness" or have a peculiar, perverse or macabre desire for union with an object of personal or cultural disgust (2011: 37,39,113,121). While Douglas attests that "all margins are dangerous" (2002: 122), they can also be spaces for creativity. As an advocate and practitioner of 'forensic' or experimental history, I try to reproduce or imitate processes to better understand what I read or hear about rather than accepting them passively.

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Performance studies scholar Rebecca Schneider proposes that "the past performed ... can function as [a] kind of bodily transmission ... [that] negotiates and perhaps becomes, materiality ... [which] conventional archival research can only imagine" (Schneider, 2012: 146). The sensate knowledge that comes with first-hand experience becomes "flesh memory and the knowledge imbued in it" becomes "matter in and through the museum educators' bodies" (Rodéhn, 2017: 3,9). It is in the *doing*, therefore, that knowledge is produced, transmitted and upheld, internalised and performed (Rodéhn, 2017: 10).

According to anthropologist David Sutton, food is central to "cosmologies, world views and ways of life" (2010: 215). Relating this to more sensory experiences, Deborah Lupton identifies the centrality of food and eating to "our subjectivity, our sense of self, and our experience of embodiment, or the ways that we live in and through our bodies, which itself is inextricably linked with subjectivity" (2016: 317). It is said that the proof of the pudding is in the eating, but I am not so interested in taste, aesthetic or gustatory. I feel obligated to sample what I have produced, however, the process being incomplete—although not pointless—without experiencing the end result. It often takes great resolve for me to eat some of the foods that I have prepared as the *Colonial Gastronomer*. I am by definition an omnivore but often bypass meat in favour of vegetarian options. I am not a fan of organ meats and find many types of offal distasteful, some even inedible, usually because I find their texture or flavour unpleasant (the brawn I made, however, was surprisingly delicious).

For me the object of the mimetic exercise is rarely to taste or eat; it is the practice of process that I value, and at times crave. It is precisely the "multisensory experience, which involves the dissolving of the object into the subject" (Sutton 2010: 211, citing Borthwick 2000: 135) that enables an "autonomous circuit between inner and outer sensory states and fields" to create a more powerful or meaningful "perceptual" experience (Seremetakis, 1996: 6). Each stage is necessary, valuable and meaningful, from the first seeding of the idea to acting upon it, reading the recipe and imagining what is involved, sourcing the raw ingredients, negotiating and reconciling them in my mind, thinking through the necessary steps to be able to perform them in my kitchen. Even when using modern facilities and equipment, which in many instances is inevitable, or at least prudent (refrigeration, for example), consideration can be given to past alternatives. I find that sense can be made of a dish by witnessing, experiencing, embodying (by seeing, feeling, listening, smelling, tasting),

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recording, reflecting upon and evaluating the physical changes that foods undergo as they are converted from an assemblage of raw ingredients into food. With experience, the transformation of form, substance and flavours through alchemic processes of preparation and cooking can be recognised, rationalised, codified and refined, giving a greater understanding and appreciation of the dish as a culinary art.

Sutton attests that "the sensory aspects of food [are] central to an understanding of lives and experiences" (2010: 220). Combined with other types of culinary research (consulting menus, letters, contemporary writings and social histories), the mimetic process helps make sense of particular foods and the processes involved in making them, and sometimes, provides insights into why they may no longer exist in modern Australian's culinary repertoire. Mimesis has helped me understand the sensory nature of cooking in the past, some of which has become lost or made obsolete with modern technologies. Before temperature control mechanisms were installed in ovens cooks used bodily contact to measure the heat of an oven and would sense when a cake or bread loaf was cooked by its smell. People could feel the various stages of tension and release in the churn as the unseen cream within was turned into butter by their own hand, and recognise the sloshing sound created by the buttermilk as it separated from the solid mass of butter when it finally formed. These sensory skills have been replaced by thermostats and temperature probes, and automated mechanisms and sensors, timers and alarms.

If I am to work in the field of historical interpretation and education, and be any kind of authority on colonial gastronomic experiences, these are processes I should be well versed in experientially, rather than theorising about them from written accounts. I must stress that putting myself through these experiences is not imposed upon me by my employer; I am largely self-directed when it comes to designing a program or interpretation concept. And so I return to reconciling my desire to perform these confronting tasks as a form of professional development, seemingly removed from my 'everyday' self. I continue to question whether I am acting under the demands of being the *Colonial Gastronomer* or a more personal, ego-driven motive—seeking a badge of honour for being 'authentic' and adventurous, even dangerous? Indeed, I savour the challenge, find thrill in the boldness of an idea and the frisson of risk and disgust, as well as the extension of my skills and knowledge.

Role play

In her PhD thesis Monica Torland explores the "identity construction in terms of possessing one's core 'self' and/or multiple identities" to satisfy one's work role (2013: 95). She posits that "people can take on more than one identity" and exert behaviours that are not in accordance "with their 'real' self" (96). It is unlikely that I would be making the dishes described in this article in my 'everyday' role as a domestic family cook, but when much of this work is performed in one's own time in their domestic home environment, the line between personal and professional "role identities" can become blurred. Korsmeyer proposes that the wont to "imitate ... to mimic behavior, repeat stories and copy [practices] until they become thoroughly understood, even incorporated into personality ... is a potent influence on character" (2011: 43). It is imitative practice that I believe gives integrity, authenticity and, indeed, character to the *Colonial Gastronomer*. But I grapple with the porosity between my perceived identities, and with my willingness to engage with 'gross' culinary objects and experiences.

This paper supports the notion that despite being "horrible to contemplate", displeasurable experiences can be deep, effective processes of learning (Korsmeyer, 2011: 125). While being confronting, unpleasant and repellent activities, the "rapt attention" required for me to dismember a pig's face or peel a tongue has been at the same time, absorbing, and riveting (Korsmeyer, 2011: 107,118,125). In undertaking these culinary experiences, I have encountered difficult thoughts and feelings but these have in turn given me insight which I might not otherwise have acquired. In preparation for a program, presentation or writing task, strangely these processes can be meditative and calming. They help to allay my fears about producing a thoroughly researched experience which appeals to and exceeds audience expectations. Korsmeyer suggests that as a "modifier of attention ... the imitation of even a disgusting object can become a source of pleasure. Pleasure in difficult art is essentially cognitive, an expansion of understanding" (2011: 43). For me, pursuing these mimetic culinary processes, gross as they may be, is transformative as they enable "capacitation, habituation and embodiment" and therefore affect the ways I "act, feel and think" (following Flowers and Swan, 2016: 7). By approaching these tasks in a professional capacity I have been able to justify and normalise them, and deploy a level of emotional detachment that helps obviate my instinctual disgust responses. I may not enjoy peeling a

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tongue or dismembering a pig's head, but I am less fearful of their viscerality, and can approach them in a more practical, desensitised way.

Sensory experience

Performing a specialist communications and 'interpretative experience' role in an internationally respected and reputable institution, the Colonial Gastronomer is expected to have sound knowledge of history and food in context of place. Gastronomy programming and the *Eat your history* exhibition, book and blog appeal to an audience that is more foodfocused than general museum patrons, but also to people looking for a 'different' type of cultural and, in the case of programming and exhibitions, social experience (see Johnston and Baumann, 2014). Following the concept of "productive" leisure explored by De Solier (2013: 6), these initiatives may be considered a form of "material media" as they are educational and almost always include a practical, skills-based element: while they are not cooking classes per se, in-museum programs often include a hands-on activity, and similarly, the book and blog contain recipes and instructive 'how to' guides and videos. These interactive opportunities aim to satisfy museum audiences who look beyond the material, seeking personal, emotional and intellectual connections to the past-and the museum-through sensory, knowledgebased, participatory experiences rather than passive consumption of more conventional interpretation (Levant and Mihalache 2016: 10; Morris, Hargreaves, McIntyre, 2017: 22,30,33).

The animal heads, tongues and feet have interpretative meaning. They are platforms for discussion about culturally determined food traditions, heritage, prejudices and value judgments. Through the *Eat your history: stories and recipes from Australian kitchens* book (Newling, 2015), the *Eat your history: a shared table* exhibition (Museum of Sydney, 2013–14), *The Cook & the Curator* blog (Hill & Newling, 2012–ongoing) and short filmed segments accessible on Vimeo and YouTube, these and other aspects of historical interpretation are explored through food with larger audiences beyond the confines of museum walls. My aim as an interpretation curator more broadly, is to potentially transform museum audiences' ways of thinking about the role of food and also the museum itself, as active agents in the audience members' own sensory and emotional connections to the past, and to their own history, heritage and identity.

Consuming identity

As with many other public-facing interpretation and educator roles, being the *Colonial Gastronomer* commands a high level of emotional labour and 'mental load' (Torland, 2013: 33; Flowers and Swan, 2015: 30). The museum presenter must be "teacher and host, entertainer and performer, live up to [visitor] expectations [and] be damn interesting all the time ... [to] capture and maintain visitors' interest" (Rodéhn, 2017: 8). A lack of integrity – some scholars use the term 'inauthenticity' (for example, Torland, 2013: iii; Ashforth and Tomuik, 2000: 194-198) – is quickly recognised by museum audiences, whereas being able to relate and express *genuine* emotion derived from personal experience promotes a level of authority that one expects from a museum professional.

In her study on the day-to-day working processes of museum educators and presenters, Cecilia Rodéhn identifies that "the preparations which the visitors do not see … hold a key to understanding the entire pedagogical project" (2017: 4). As this paper has illustrated, working from old recipes and re-creating dishes from the past provide me with a connectivity – albeit imagined or perceived – to the times in which a recipe was written, and the processes performed historically by cooks and diners. According to Watkins, "it is the pedagogic nature of [object-human] relations and attendant processes that carry force and leave their mark" (2015: 30). As such, my mimetic, materialised and sensorial experiences with 'gross' culinary products have been useful pedagogical tools.

The tongues, animals' heads and dishes they have produced, have been active agents in my discovery of particular kinds of sensory aspects of food preparation that are likely to have been experienced by cooks and diners in the past. The sensory experiences of working with foods and techniques that have been made redundant with new technology or discarded by modern consumers on socially derived bases have demonstrated to me what has been lost along with these foods—skills, tastes, sensory and emotional connections, resulting in a diminished physical and emotional relationships with the dishes and their base ingredients. Whether tedious or fascinating, fun or disgusting, they have created opportunities for emotional, perceptual, creative and cognitive processes that have transformed my understanding of them in a historical and present context.

We look to the past to learn about the future. These, and similar pedagogical experiences undertaken in the role of the *Colonial Gastronomer*, have caused me to reflect on my own tastes, preferences and prejudices. We understand that our current diet and consumption habits are globally unsustainable and if 'future foods' include substances we find repugnant – insects, lab-grown algae products and so on, these prejudices are going to have to be overcome (Ritger et al: 34). We may have to 'get over ourselves' and face the realities of our food sources, their origins and production processes, and overcome notions of moral, material and mentally generated disgust.

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APPENDICES

Appendix 1.1: Recipe for Brawn, Presbyterian Women's Association, 1895

BRAWN

Procure a pig's head and feet. Clean and divide the head. Take away the thick part of the cheek, which may be salted for future use. Put the remainder, including nose, ears and feet, into a saucepan with enough water to cover them. Simmer gently 4 or 5 hours till the meat falls from the bones, turn into a pan, remove bones, season to taste with pepper, salt and nutmeg.

Put into moulds previously wetted; when cold it will turn out, and is ready for use. May be improved by arranging slices of hard-boiled egg in mould when preparing it.

Cookery book of good and tried recipes, Women's Missionary Association of the Presbyterian Church of New South Wales (1920), first published 1895

Appendix 1.2: Recipe for Boiled Calf Head, Eliza Acton, 1855

BOILED CALF HEAD

First remove the brains, wash the head delicately clean, and soak it for a quarter of an hour; cover it plentifully with cold water, remove the scum as it rises with great care, throw in a little salt, and boil the head gently until it is perfectly tender.

In the meantime, wash and soak the brains first in cold and then in warm water, remove the skin or film, boil them in a small saucepan from fourteen to sixteen minutes, according to their size, and when they are done, chop and mix them with [herbs finely minced]; warm them in a spoonful or two of melted butter, or white sauce; skin the tongue, trim off the root, and serve it in a small dish with the brains around it. Send the head to the table very hot with parsley and butter poured over it...

Modern cookery for private families, Eliza Acton (2002: 189), first published 1855

Appendix 1.3: Recipe for Boiled Tongue, Isabella Beeton, 1863

BOILED TONGUE

Put the tongue [pickled and soaked in fresh water for 2 or 3 hours] in a stewpan with plenty of cold water and a bunch of savoury herbs; let it gradually come to a boil, skim well and simmer very gently until tender. Peel off the skin, garnish with tufts of cauliflower or Brussels sprouts, and serve. Boiled tongue is frequently sent to table with boiled poultry, instead of ham, and is, by many persons, preferred.

If to serve cold, peel it, fasten it down to a piece of board by sticking a fork through the root, and another through the top, to straighten it. When cold, glaze it, and put a paper ruche round the root, and garnish with tufts of parsley.

Isabella Beeton, Beeton's book of household management, 1863

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