



# **Creativity in the Kitchen**

**An international workshop**

**7 – 8<sup>th</sup> July 2014**

Organised by:

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## 1. Background to the event

Creative chefs are able to create new food forms or sensory experiences (van der Linden et al, 2008), using a blend of personal predisposition, knowledge acquired through training and repetitive practice, knowledge of rules that are integrated and internalised and knowledge acquired through reflective practice (Albors-Garrigos et al, 2013; Horng & Hu, 2008; Hu, 2010). The culinary creative process involves idea work, creative teamwork and naming, with idea work the domain of the head chef, taking inspiration from, e.g., art, nature and science, much the same as other artists (Bouty & Gomez, 2013; Albors-Garrigos et al, 2013; Horng & Hu, 2008). Horng & Hu (2009) described four stages – idea preparation, incubation, development and verification. Chefs believe that idea work cannot be observed or described, and they cannot explain what happens in their heads during the process (Bouty & Gomez, 2013), although Ottenbacher & Harrington (2007) refer to chefs ‘cooking the idea in their heads’. If we could unlock these processes and develop them in others, including children, it could promote success in restaurant businesses and also enable consumers to make optimal food choices, improving health and reducing waste through more creative use of food in the home or by being offered creative, healthy options in restaurants. Further, learning creative cooking practices may benefit flexible thinking processes and creativity more generally (Ritter et al, 2012).

This workshop explored creativity in culinary practice, aiming to develop new research agendas and establish a network of researchers in this important field.

The workshop was a collaboration between the School of Hospitality and Tourism Management, the University of Surrey’s multidisciplinary Food, Consumer Behaviour and Health Research Centre (FCBH) and the University’s newly established ILLUME multi-disciplinary creativity research centre. ILLUME’s mission is to explore, understand and develop the creative process, with the aim of developing cutting edge, evidence-based approaches to facilitate creative thinking, including in schools and businesses. The FCBH undertakes studies of influences on food choice, including for instance, labelling, policy and education. It aims to provide evidence to promote the consumption of a safe, nutritionally adequate and sustainable diet.

## 2. Overview of Event:

### 2.1 Delegates:

The event attracted delegates from both academia and industry, and also from across Europe (Delegate list attached as Appendix 1). Some delegates (who were also presenters) joined via SKYPE. In the case of the Professors Kaufman and Beghetto, this was to reduce the costs of their involvement; in the case of Dr Zampollo it was because she was unable to attend to present her paper owing to taking up a new position.

### 2.2 Programme:

The final programme is attached as Appendix 2. The programme included Keynote presentations by key figures in 'Creativity' as a generic discipline (Kaufman and Beghetto) and also a key figure researching creativity in the particular context of chefs (Stierand). We also had two further invited speakers, one who is an expert in fostering creativity in innovation teams (including those in the food sector; Nel Mostert) and Nuria Masnou who works for the Alicia Foundation, an institution set up by Ferran Adria aiming to promote cooking and creativity skills in both chefs and the general public. These two presentations took the form of practical workshops. An additional workshop was led by Sowden, exploring measures of creativity. In addition to invited presentations, a number of papers received from those researching creativity in the context of culinary arts. The final session comprised a workshop to identify themes arising from the event, which might be developed further into research themes (a summary of these is given in Section 3). Presentations have been made available to all delegates (with permission). An additional (last minute) presentation was given by 'Dovetailed', a company using 3D printing technology to 'print' fruits from droplets of gels.

Delegates engaged actively in all sessions, and were particularly active in the sessions led by Sowden, Mostert and Masnou. These also formed useful sessions to integrate delegates. In the session led by Mostert, she illustrated a tool that she has devised to facilitate creativity.



In the session led by Nuria, delegates (in groups) were tasked with developing dishes from a range of given ingredients, using techniques previously illustrated.



Delegates also enjoyed a Workshop Dinner in the Lakeside Restaurant.

## **2.3 Evaluation of the event**

The event was evaluated highly by those attending, albeit few evaluation forms were received. The only negative related to the quality of accommodation in Manor Park!

## **3. Event themes**

Throughout the event, delegates were asked to jot any ideas and thoughts arising from presentations on to post-it notes and add these to flip chart over the 2 days. The final session of the event asked delegates to sort these into themes that might be progressed as new research agendas. The key themes arising were available resources, promotion and creativity, creativity and risk, gaining expertise and translation into practice, how do consumers evaluate creativity in dishes, measuring creativity in cooking.

### **3.1 Available resources**

This theme related to the skills and resources needed to be creative in the home. It included issues such as how to introduced new technologies into the home, how available equipment

in the kitchen affects creativity, how kitchen décor affects creativity (creative aesthetics), how available time and financial resources influence creativity, comparing the success of interventions aimed at creating more healthy meals (whether cooked from scratch or from convenience products), how to engage the lower SE classes in developing culinary skills.

### **3.2 Promotion and creativity**

This theme included how the availability and presentation of more healthy foods (e.g. fruits and vegetables) in stores affects motivation to be creative (e.g. co-locating products that could be used together), how store décor and layout influences creativity in meals, and how the way food is advertised influences creativity – e.g. make creativity seem achievable through use of products and people that consumers can relate to.

### **3.3 Creativity and risk**

This theme was approached both from a domestic and industry perspective. From an industry perspective, what needs of the customer must the chef take account of when cooking?, how does the personality of the chef influence creativity (e.g. risk taker) and the influence of positive and negative feedback on creativity, what environmental factors affect the perception of risk of choosing a particular dish. From the domestic perspective, how do the needs of the family influence creativity – what are the priorities when feeding a family (e.g. many chefs spend months perfecting a dish, with many failed attempts along the way. At home the food needs to be edible every time it is served, and the costs of failures are not easily borne.

### **3.4 Gaining expertise and translation into practice**

This theme covered issues such as how domestic chefs can stimulate their creativity, how to teach cooking skills the use of cooking blogs, including styles of cooking presented and suitability for those on low incomes, role of on-line recipes/cooking programmes/recipe books in motivating creativity, stress attached to perception of need to be creative within the home setting, whether creativity in the home is beneficial, whether it is important to link chefs and lay people and whether chefs and the public need the same skill set to be creative. In a professional setting, how do you develop creativity, and what moves an apprentice to a master in their own right, is apprenticeship necessary to develop skills?

### **3.5 How do consumers evaluate creativity in dishes**

This theme included how a consumer's background influences their perceptions of the creativity of a dish, what parameters are used to judge creativity by consumers, does the servicescape/atmosphere affect how creativity is judged by consumers, are there differences between creative consumers and creative cooks?

### 3.6 Measuring creativity in cooking

Who judges the creativity of chefs, and how do their views link to what is appropriate to consumers?, can we develop measures of creativity specific to cooking, for both professional chefs and domestic cooks?, can we identify levels of creativity in cooking?, what are the dimensions of creativity in cooking?

## 4. Outcomes of Event

An immediate outcome is to publish a special issue of the *Journal of Creative Behavior* (JCB) that will be guest edited by Paul Sowden, Anita Eves and Monique Raats. *JCB* is the original and longest-standing journal devoted specifically to work that advances our understanding of the phenomenon of creativity in the broadest sense.

The workshop has also created a group of interested individuals who are keen to progress this area of study – from both academic institutions and industry. With the identification of potential research themes, the aim is to investigate potential sources of funding to develop these themes further.

## 5. Acknowledgements

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- The Psychology IT team for setting up international links for remote presentations
- Lakeside restaurant for its assistance with practical workshops and flexibility in catering for special diets at short notice

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## Appendix 1 – Delegate list

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