



# Food

## for thought

Visitors to LSE will have noticed that from whichever direction they approach the School, they arrive first at a food and drink outlet. From the north, you hit up against the George IV pub, with its welcome to the scholarly and unscholarly alike: 'Quench your thirst with social science's first'. From the south, the Garrick, fronting onto the Aldwych and presenting the 'Hello' friendly face of LSE to the world of earning and yearning, so that Westminster and the City can see, behind glass, students and teachers sipping chai latte and cappuccinos with the trendiest. From the east the Café on the Plaza, enabling students to be close enough to the Library to seem industrious without having to relinquish their leisured second breakfasts or their browsing of *'The Beaver'*.

We are ringfenced with pizzas and pints, cake and coffee. The School now has nine bars, cafés, pubs and restaurants of one kind or another. As my colleague Julian McLunchburger of the Department of Nutrition, Ingestion, Burger-technology and Lunch Environments (NIBLE) recently argued at a meeting of the Funding Committee, this is not just because minds need to be fed, but because in a market driven world, an institution like LSE has to earn its keep. Tuition fees, contract research and grants from research councils are all very well, and may pay for a few books, but they don't mend the roof or pay the wages. Pizzas and ciabatta can reach the income parts that lectures and seminars cannot reach, and for every lecturer or library book paid for by fees or research grants, ten can be bought with the income from buns and Bollinger.

Even the poorest students (and even the richest staff) have to eat and like to drink, and whatever limits to income may be imposed by scholarships and fee waivers, the School can meet at least some of its obligations by stir fry, smoothies, and Professor Brew Bucket's Olde Peculiar Ale. Hence the expansion into catering which, if Dr McLunchburger's latest proposal comes to fruition, will transform Houghton Street and its surrounds. After bread, education. And after panini, higher education. That's not just because the starving cannot study, but because the income from the bakeries funds the universities. Either way, the bread comes first, together with a little wine, and perhaps a bit of cheese and a few nibbles.

But this is just the start, according to Dr McLunchburger. At the moment we are in the pilot

stage, but the expansion into Lincoln's Inn Fields with the New Academic Building has opened up new vistas. Whilst some of the new building will be used for unprofitable old fashioned academic activities, the ground floor will be dedicated to 'Nibbles with the Rodent', providing picnics for the park. The rich traditions of the School will be stirred into the gastronomic pot to give a special pedagogic and social science flavour to the expanding provision. And just as the School is extending its provision of education across the globe, so too will it be able to extend its provision of educationally supportive foods. If the UK can export Chicken Tikka Masala to India, it can export Tawney Take Aways to North America, the Lakatos Lunch Box to Europe, and Hayek Hampers specially designed for Christmas on the other side of the world.

And whilst education follows bread, it should not forget it. A syllabus founded on gastronomy must not ignore its origins, and so food, its consumption and consequences, will increasingly become an organising theme and an empirical content for graduate and undergraduate courses. The Department

of Rule and Rebellion is leading the way with a new graduate programme on Global Gastronomy: universality and particularity in the economy of food, and is planning methods training in the calculus of calories. Dr Cornfodder's ground breaking, or sod turning, course on Rye Bread and Revolution: the price of bread and the pace of riot, will be served both on campus for dining-in students and as a take away programme for distance learners. Burgers and Bureaucracy: Weber and nutritional networks is in the planning, or kneading and seasoning, stage, while Table Manners, Civility, and the Regulation of Conflict has already gone before the sub-committee on Farinaceous Fees. All of these courses will eventually be provided in refectory situations, combining at one and the same time mental and bodily ingestion, replacing 'whistle while you work' with 'lunch while you learn'.

The marketing is already being prepared, under the general image Food for Thought. Edible stickers will be handed out across central London, and potential customers will be invited to 'Sup Soup with Social Science' and 'Munch with the Methodologists'. The familiar 'LSE' will now become a double acronym, and each package will carry the injunction *Let's Start Eating*. ■

**Rodney Barker**

