

NEWS

QUEER FOOD CONFERENCE

A conference on queer food and drink will be held at Boston University from 27–28 April 2024. The event combines in-person and virtual panels covering a diverse range of subjects and costs \$45 to attend. It aims to bring together scholars, activists, artists, journalists, and food industry professionals. Registration for the conference opens early next year.



Further details are available at queerfoodconference.com

SOPHIE COE PRIZE IN FOOD HISTORY

Frank Veraart was awarded the Sophie Coe Prize 2023 for his book chapter ‘Catalysing Socio-Ecological Change: The Extraction and Processing of Edible Oils, 1910–1940’. The judges commented that his work is ‘powerful, intelligently and coherently argued, and disturbing. The author shows very clearly the capitalist world is changing the ecology as well as the social conditions of the rest of the planet.’

The judges reported that there were many strong entries this year. Papers by Julia Rhyder, Diana Garvin and Rachel Winchcombe were particularly commended. A link to Veraart’s paper and previous winners of the prize can be found at sophiecoeprize.wordpress.com/previous-winners/

Entry to the 2024 prize is now open and the closing date is Friday 26th April 2024 (Midnight GMT). The Prize will be £1,500, awarded to a single selected entry. Full details on how to enter can be found at sophiecoeprize.wordpress.com/how-to-enter.

DUBLIN GASTRONOMY SYMPOSIUM 2024

The seventh Dublin Gastronomy Symposium will take place 28–29 May 2024 at the Technological University Dublin,

Ireland. The topic for the DGS 2024 is 'Food and Memory: Traces, Trauma and Tradition'. Food leaves traces – in our memories, our cultures, our habits, our bodies, our tools and vessels, our landscapes and in language. As with previous symposia,



contributors are encouraged to interpret the theme from a broad perspective, including food history, archaeology, ethnography, pedagogy, architecture and urban planning, linguistics, psychology, sociology, material sciences, food and beverages studies, literature and the arts.

First held in 2012, this biennial international food conference is an exciting, multidisciplinary gathering of academics, practitioners from food production and tourism, researchers, scientists, writers, hospitality professionals and journalists – in fact, anyone with an interest and enthusiasm for gastronomy, including both food and beverages.

More information about the upcoming as well as previous symposia can be found here: arrow.tudublin.ie/dgs/

CULINARY HISTORIANS SCHOLAR PROGRAMME

Culinary Historians of New York will be accepting applications for its Scholars' Grants starting on or around 1 February 2024. The grants, generously supported by the Julia Child Foundation for Gastronomy and the Culinary Arts, fund groundbreaking research in the broad field of culinary history and are in the amounts of \$3,500, \$2,500, and \$1,500.

For further information (the 2024 application and due dates will be forthcoming in January), please bookmark culinaryhistoriansny.org/scholars-grant/

OXFORD FOOD SYMPOSIUM 2024

The deadline for submitting your proposed papers for the 2024 symposium closes on 31 December. Next year's topic is 'Gardens, Flowers, and Fruits'. Think small and large – from humble berries and petals to the huge challenge of climate change, from tiny spaces used for growing food to multinational behemoths towering over agriculture's future. Successful submissions will be confirmed in February with final approved papers due by mid-May.

The symposium will take place on 5–7 July at St Catherine's College, Oxford and 14–29 July Online (dates TBC). Further details can be found at oxfordsymposium.org.uk/next-symposium/



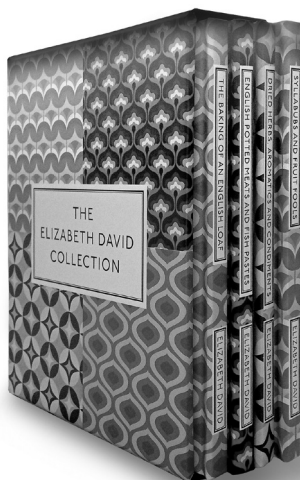
NINTH INTERNATIONAL CONVENTION ON FOOD AND DRINK STUDIES

The call for sessions for the International Convention on Food and Drink Studies closes on 15 January 2024. The ninth convention, organised by Institut Européen d'Histoire et des Cultures de l'Alimentation (IEHCA), will take place from 5–7 June 2024 in Tours, France. More information is available from iehca-internationalconference.eu

ELIZABETH DAVID COLLECTION

For the first time in 50 years Elizabeth David's booklets *The Baking of an English Loaf*, *Dried Herbs Aromatics and*

Condiments, English Potted Meats and Fish Pastes and Syllabubs and Fruit Fools are available to purchase as a mini box set. The black and white booklets were originally available in Elizabeth David's Pimlico cookshop in the 1960s and have become rare and expensive collector's items. Each 36-page booklet has been stylishly reproduced by Grub Street complete with bespoke full-colour artwork. The collection is presented in a colourful slip case and is priced at £25 or \$39.95 (USA/Can).



2024 FOOD CONFERENCE PERUGIA

The theme for the 2024 Food Conference Perugia at the Umbra Institute is 'Food & Hybridity'. The conference is an in-person event and will take place in Perugia, Italy, 13–16 June 2024. Professor Heather Paxson from MIT has been announced as the keynote speaker.

Proposals for individual papers, full panels, and roundtables are required by 31 December 2023. Visit the conference website: umbra.org/food-conference-home/ for further details.

OBITUARIES

DR EILEEN WHITE

Shortly before this issue went to print we heard that food historian and treasurer of the Leeds Symposium on Food History and Traditions, Dr Eileen White, died from cancer on 28 September 2023 at the age of eighty. A more complete obituary will appear in the next issue of PPC.

MARLENA SPIELER

Jewish food writer Marlena Spielier was as passionate about the taste and smell of food, as she was about its history and origins.

Born in Sacramento, California in 1949, she was the daughter of Russian-born Caroline Dubowsky, and American baseball player Isadore 'Izzy' Smith, who played on the same team as Joe di Maggio in the early 1940s. Her love of food was founded upon local ingredients, the sunny flavours of nearby Mexico and her Ashkenazi Jewish roots, which she always described as being 'transported from the Shtetl of Eastern Europe to the family table'. Her grandfather's second wife came from the Jewish community of Harbin in China, which became another inspiration for Spielier's writing.

The plight of her grandparents and other relatives during the Holocaust, led Spielier to become an ardent Zionist, which took her to Israel in 1967 at the age of 18 to live and work on Kibbutz Huldah. Whilst volunteering, the Six Day War broke out and it was during that time she developed her love of the rich, flavoursome Middle Eastern cuisine that would propel her into a successful career in food writing.

After a year in Israel, she returned to California where she met and married her first husband David Spielier. Together they collaborated on her first cookbook, *Naturally Good*, in which she included the staples of the Israeli diet, such as shakshuka, baba ghanoush and the hot, spicy sauce, zhoug, famed today in London restaurants and by celebrity chefs.

Whether writing for a cookbook, freelance journal or to a friend, Spieler always wrote from the heart with the aromas and tastes of her food clearly imaginable on every page. For many years she shared her appetite for cooking, eating and sharing food with her readers at the *San Francisco Chronicle*, whilst writing tirelessly on her cookbooks, of which over 70 were to be published. She wrote a number of books on the food of her heritage, as well as single subjects such as *Grilled Cheese* and *Yummy Potatoes*, the latter landing her the role of an ambassador to the UN's conference in Peru in 2008, the International Year of the Potato. Her books also included the food of her travels, with her favourites declared as Italy and Mexico.

During the 1990s Marlena moved to England where she met her second husband, Alan McLaughlan. On a return visit to San Francisco in 2011, Marlena was involved in a car accident which resulted in a head injury and damage to her olfactory bulb. The loss of both her sense of taste and smell, although devastating, did not deter the travelling food writer to continue with her columns and cookbooks, and with sheer determination and persistence she regained her ability to detect the nuances of flavours and aromas.

Red lipstick and a green polka dot handbag became the trademarks of Marlena Spieler, the American-born, Jewish food writer whose accolades spanned the globe. She will always be remembered for her humour, kindness, knowledge and above all, her ability to share her passion for delicious food.

She died suddenly at her Hampshire home on 6th July 2023 and is survived by her husband Alan, daughter Leah Spieler and stepchildren Gretchen, Phillip and Heidi.

RUTH NIEMAN

COLIN SPENCER

The writer and artist Colin Spencer died on 6 July 2023, just shy of his ninetieth birthday.

Food writer Mark Bittman has described Spencer as a being 'as close to a Renaissance man as you can get.' Spencer's first love was art (he studied at Brighton Art College and is recognised as

an accomplished artist) but as he explained in a 2016 interview ‘Paints and brushes cost money, so when I was in my early twenties it was cheaper to write.’ As a writer Spencer produced a plethora of work spanning journalism, fiction, theatre, history, broadcasting and activism. It is as a food writer that he is perhaps most renowned.

Although Spencer was not a strict non-meat eater, he was a staunch supporter of vegetarianism. He wrote several vegetarian cookbooks, including *Gourmet Cooking for Vegetarians* (1978). His passion for vegetarianism formed the basis of his column in the *Guardian* which he began writing in 1980 and continued for fourteen years. He fervently believed that you could not talk about food without being political. Fellow *Guardian* food columnist Matthew Fort recently observed that ‘For many readers, [Spencer] became the guiding light in an increasingly technological and complex food world.’

In 1993 Spencer published an acclaimed history of vegetarianism, *The Heretics Feast* (reissued in 2016 by Grub Street Publishing as *Vegetarianism: A History*). *British Food: An Extraordinary Thousand Years of History* followed a decade later for which he received the Gourmand best culinary history book in the world award and the Michael Smith Award for Work on British Food from the Guild of Food Writers. At different times during his career he served as both chair and president of the Guild of Food Writers which recognised his achievements with a Lifetime Achievement Award in 2010.

Spencer was born in Thornton Heath, south London on 17 July 1933 to master builder Harry Spencer and his wife Gypsy Heath. After studying at Brighton Art College he spent his period of National Service as a pacifist in the Royal Army Medical Corps before travelling in Europe. Spencer married twice but was openly bisexual. His relationship with theatrical director and producer John Tasker was the subject of his book *Which of Us Two? The Story of a Love Affair*, published in 1990. Spencer also wrote *Homosexuality: A History* (1995) and *The Gay Kama Sutra* (1997). The first volume of his memoir *Backing Into Light: My Father’s*

Son (2013) was described by Duncan Fallowell in *The Spectator* as ‘a work of stunning candour’ for highlighting the ‘tortures of enforced secrecy’ during his early years as an art student in 1950s Brighton and 1960s London. He also published nine novels and wrote seven plays including *Spitting Image*, about a gay couple, one of whom discovers he is pregnant.

Art played an important role throughout Spencer’s life with his first drawings appearing in *The London Magazine*. In 1959 the *Times Literary Supplement* published a series of his depictions of renowned authors including John Betjemen, Graham Greene and Evelyn Waugh. His oil painting of E. M. Forster hung for many years in Kings College Cambridge and he illustrated Katherine Whitehorn’s column in *The Observer*. His focus returned to painting in 2007 when he admitted that his art had ‘changed so violently in the last few years’, adding ‘Paintings defy explanation, they are images of the unknown, paths through conflict, compounds of sex and spirit, mysterious reflections, hints and fading memories which unsettle the darkness.’ Examples of his artwork can be viewed at colinspencer.co.uk.

Spencer is survived by his son Jonathan, and by three grandsons and a great-granddaughter.