



Experimental Cuisine Collective 2011 Anniversary Symposium

experimental cuisine

FOUNDATION TO INNOVATION

May 16, 2011
New York University

with presentations by

Charles Zuker, Columbia University

David Arnold, French Culinary Institute/Cooking Issues

Maxime Bilet and Grant Lee Crilly, The Cooking Lab

Michael Laiskonis, Le Bernardin

a roundtable moderated by journalist **Lisa Abend**

and **Jeffrey Steingarten** as master of ceremony

details and registration at experimentalcuisine.com

MAY 16 SYMPOSIUM'S PRESENTER BIOS

Charles S. Zuker, Ph.D.

Ask Charles Zuker how he got into researching how we taste, and he'll tell you it was driven by his desire to decipher how the brain represents our sensory experiences. Zuker wants to do more than understand why sugar is sweet. He wants to know how the brain can turn reception into perception. How do the physical and chemical stimuli that we take in all the time—through sight, hearing, taste, touch, and smell—turn into signals that neurons transmit to the brain? How does light hitting your eye change into a chemical signal that makes you squint? How do sound waves hitting the eardrum transform into words that you "hear" in your head? Why does a drop of lemon juice on the tongue make you wrinkle your nose?

Zuker and his laboratory have made advances in the understanding of sight and hearing. They've also discovered taste receptors for four of the five tastes: sweet, sour, bitter, and "umami" (savory). Salt is the fifth, and it's only a matter of time before Zuker tracks it down.

Perhaps more important than just discovering the receptors is Zuker's research showing that each taste cell is hardwired for one taste. Scientists used to think that every taste bud could pick up on all five tastes, and that a different signal would be sent to the brain for each one. Zuker's lab did experiments with mice that proved that taste cells are simpler than that. Each taste cell has only receptors for one taste modality. And each cell sends a specific signal to the brain. This signal doesn't change, even if you swap out one receptor for another. For example, you can remove the receptor from a "sweet" cell and replace it with a receptor that's normally activated by a bitter chemical, and now "bitter" tastes sweet.

Zuker went to college at 16. At 20, he started graduate school at MIT. By 26, Zuker had his Ph.D. and was a postdoc in Gerald Rubin's lab at the University of California, Berkeley. (An HHMI investigator since 1987, Rubin is now director of HHMI's Janelia Farm Research Campus.) He then took a position at the University of California, San Diego, where he has been since 1986. Dr. Zuker is also Professor in the Departments of Biochemistry and Molecular Biophysics and of Neuroscience at Columbia University College of Physicians and Surgeons. He has received the Alfred P. Sloan Award in Neurosciences, Alcon Award, Cogan Award for Vision Research, and W. Alden Spencer Award, Columbia University.

David Arnold

Dave Arnold grew up in the New York area and began tinkering with restaurant equipment after graduating from art school at Yale and Columbia. Initially, he customized equipment for use in art projects, but after meeting Chef Wylie Dufresne in 2004, he focused his equipment skills on the high-tech cooking movement.

In 2005 he joined the French Culinary Institute as the Director of Culinary Technology, where he is dedicated to helping chefs achieve their goals using new technologies, techniques and ingredients. There, he teaches Sous Vide Intensive, Sous Vide and Low Temperature Cooking, Hydrocolloids, Transglutaminases, and as part of the Harold McGee course.

Arnold is the contributing editor for Equipment and Food Technology for *Food Arts*. He has been extensively featured in *Time*, the *New York Times* and the *New York Times Magazine*, *Food & Wine*, *The Economist*, *Popular Science*, and many more. He lives in Manhattan with his wife and two boys.

Maxime Bilet

Maxime Bilet is one of the co-authors of *Modernist Cuisine: The Art and Science of Cooking* (The Cooking Lab, 2011), along with Nathan Myhrvold and Chris Young. He began working at the Cooking Lab in 2008 and was responsible for developing, writing, testing, and tasting all the recipes with his team, as well as working on visuals with photographer Ryan Smith.

Bilet was educated in the humanities at Skidmore College. He then graduated with highest honors from the Institute of Culinary Education in New York. He completed a stage at Jack's Luxury Oyster Bar and was quickly hired to the head chef position there by Jack Lamb. Moving to London, he accepted a stage with Heston Blumenthal's development team at The Fat Duck. Just prior to joining the culinary team at The Cooking Lab, Bilet trained as sous chef to open the London branch of Auberge de L'Ile.

Grant Lee Crilly

Grant Lee Crilly is one of the development chefs who worked on *Modernist Cuisine: The Art and Science of Cooking* (The Cooking Lab, 2011). He grew up in Seattle and spent much of his youth crabbing and fishing in Alaska, Canada, Montana, and the Pacific Northwest. He began working in Seattle hotels when he was 15 years old, learning from various craftsmen and tradesmen along the way. By age 18, he was head chef at La Rustica in Seattle. Subsequently, he practiced butchery at Bajon Jean Pierre in Paris and completed stages at L'Astrance and with Pierre Hermé's team at Grégoire-Ferrandi. Mr. Crilly helped open and worked as chef de cuisine at Busaba restaurant in Mumbai. He then returned to Seattle to work at Mistral and later served as chef de cuisine at Delicious Planet. Several years ago, he and a friend started SolTerra, a company that builds living roofs and walls, some of which support food systems, including urban bee colonies.

Michael Laiskonis

Michael Laiskonis grew up in Michigan, in and around Detroit. Though he initially began training for a career in the visual arts, an early exposure to cooking, particularly bread and pastry set him on a different path. This self-directed culinary training humbly began in a friend's pastry shop, where he became fascinated by the science of bread, its Zen-like process, and its living, breathing nature. He immersed himself in learning everything he could about the art and science of cooking, though always preferring to learn on the job rather than enroll in a formal culinary education. By the mid-1990s, he had entered my first restaurant kitchen, where he worked his way up to the dual role of pastry chef and sous chef under Rick Halberg at Emily's in Northville, Michigan. In 1997 he joined the newly opened Tribute restaurant in Farmington Hills, starting as a line cook for Takashi Yagihashi. This influence from both culinary realms, savory and sweet, has played an important role in his development, but the desire to focus on pastry alone eventually won out. In 1999 he became Tribute's pastry chef. The next five years at Tribute not only solidified his style and technique, but also attracted the attention of his peers and the media. In 2002 and 2003, he was named one of the Top Ten Pastry Chefs by Pastry Art and Design.

In 2004 he accepted the executive pastry chef position at Le Bernardin, working under Eric Ripert and Maguy Le Coze. Since he joined Le Bernardin, the restaurant has been awarded three Michelin stars, and given a four-star review by Frank Bruni in the New York Times. Bon Appétit named him its Pastry Chef of the Year in 2004, and in 2007, he was tapped as Outstanding Pastry Chef by the James Beard Foundation.

In addition to his work at Le Bernardin, Laiskonis has also worked as a consultant, involved with various restaurants and creative projects across the country, and most recently began working with pastry shops in Japan. He frequently appears in the media, including as a judge on Top Chef: Just Desserts and on Iron Chef America, and contributes to The Atlantic's online food section. When not working and thinking about food, he tries to find time to pursue his other passions: art, music, film, and photography.

Jeffrey Steingarten (MC)

Jeffrey Steingarten is a leading food writer in the United States. He has been the food critic at *Vogue* since 1989, where his monthly columns have earned him a National Magazine Award and nearly a dozen James Beard awards and nominations. His 1997 book of humorous food essays, *The Man Who Ate Everything*, was awarded the 1998 Borders Award for literary food writing from the International Association of Culinary Professionals, named food book of the year by the British Guild of Food Writers, and was a James Beard Book Award finalist. *The Man Who Ate Everything* has been translated into Chinese, Japanese, Dutch, German, Portuguese and Czech.

In 2002, Steingarten published a second collection of essays entitled *It Must've Been Something I Ate*. Steingarten's pieces have also appeared in the *New York Times*, *Men's Vogue*, and *Slate*. Working with Ed Levine, he was co-host of the show *New York Eats*, which aired from 1998 to 2000 on a local channel. Steingarten frequently serves as a judge on the Food Network program *Iron Chef America* and is one of the three judges on *The Next Iron Chef*.

Steingarten graduated from Harvard University in 1965, and Harvard Law School in 1968. He worked as assistant to Boston mayor Kevin White with future congressman Barney Frank. Steingarten departed from his legal career in 1989, joining *Vogue*. On Bastille Day, 1994, in recognition of his writings on French gastronomy, Steingarten was made a Chevalier in the Order of Merit by the Republic of France.

Lisa Abend (Moderator)

Lisa Abend is a journalist based in Madrid. For the past several years, she has been Time magazine's correspondent in Spain, where she writes about everything from international terrorism, to climate change, to immigration, to costumed debt collectors (with, needless to say, a fair number of bullfighting stories thrown in for good measure.) Her first book, *The Sorcerer's Apprentices: A Season at Ferran Adrià's elBulli* (Free Press, March 2011), explores the remarkable system of apprentices, or stagiaires, that Adrià uses to run his restaurant and, in the process, train the next generation of culinary stars. As a freelancer, she has written on learning the Basque language for *The Atlantic*; on volunteer bit torrent translators for *Wired*; on the plight of Roma women for *Ms.*; on prime minister Zapatero's republican upbringing for *The American Prospect*; on the recovery of the Iberian lynx for *National Wildlife*; and on the situation in Western Sahara for *The Economist*.

Abend contributes to several major American food magazines, and has written features on a Marrakech cooking school (*Bon Appetit*); on culinary travels through Extremadura (*Gourmet*); on a collective of grandmothers in Catalonia who preserve traditional cuisine (*Saveur*) and on learning to love pig face (*Food and Wine*). Her food writing has also appeared in the *New York Times*, the *Los Angeles Times*, *Slate*, and the *Christian Science Monitor*. She hosts an episode on Andalusia in the third season of PBS' *Diary of a Foodie*. In a previous life she was a professor of Spanish history at Oberlin College.