

Cooking as a medium of Communication for Personality, Vitality, Feelings and Thoughts (Creating and detecting tastes beyond the senses)

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April 2020

1. Introduction

I decided to do cooking for my part-time Goethean Science studies which started in 2016. My mentor at the time, Margaret Colquhoun, an old friend and at the time one of the leading Goethean scientists in the UK, gave me a “why-not” movement of her eyebrows and I was off! That was some five years ago and many things have since changed – including me.

I started with an idea that there was more to cooking than simply warming things up, or stirring things, or mixing exotic ingredients and so on. It seemed to me there was something else – some called it “love” – and I was determined to investigate.

2. History of project

My first efforts were to talk to people involved in cooking. Clearly there were the cooks who created things to eat and there were the “eaters” who consumed those things. So I developed some questionnaires to try to pin down the thing, the unknowable, the unpinnable! I met many people. I learned a lot and the whole question changed.

I learned aspects of Goethean Science and I realized I had started on the other branch. Most of my colleagues involved in part-time studies in the Science Section were examining plants and were therefore on a journey from a mass of detail and multiple observations to that grand all-encompassing cosmic understanding – “beholding the plant within them”.

I, however, must start in the cosmos – take a cosmic idea – and descend through the other side from concept to material object. This is often called the creative process and is the path trodden by every creative person when painting, writing, making music and so on.

In fact I realized that my project involved a double journey. First, as the cook (creator) I would go from cosmic idea to edible cooked object and then, as the eater I would go from the edible object, eating my way upwards, through observations and slowly forming relationships to that grand moment when I, as the eater, “beheld the cooked object within me”.

Around this time I had a thought! Just as my plant colleagues were deciphering the secrets of the plants they were studying (in great detail), I wondered if a cooked object had secrets to discover.

Moreover I wondered two things. As the creator of the cooked object could I create a “message” within it? And later on, could the eater of the cooked object “receive that message”? I wasn’t sure how “cosmic” my messages might be, but I started on a path towards that goal.

3. Experiments and Experimental Design

The first problem was how to read the message – or “how to evaluate the cooked object”. I had some help here – I had taken part in some experiments at the Glashaus with Torsten Arncken, who is now my present mentor, where a group of us were asked to taste pieces of plant leaves. These plant leaves were taken from plants which had grown in different solutions of heavy metals – some were grown in “gold” water, some in “silver” water, and some in “lead” water and so on. Obviously the dilutions of the heavy

metal salts was enormous – equivalent to one in one million or more, and so there was no danger of physical harm. The evaluation method was to chew the plant leaf and draw a picture of how we felt about it. In our “feeling” we addressed not only our sense perceptions (what our senses were telling us about taste, consistency, colour, smell and so on), but also how it changed our inner experience(our mood, our vital processes and even our psyche – the soul, mind and spirit). The resulting images were strange to be sure, but when pinned to the wall and looked at as a group it was clear that different heavy metals gave rise to different groups of paintings. The shapes and colours each person used related to their inner experience more than their external sense perceptions.

So I decided that painting would be part of the evaluation. Then I had a further idea – eaters could also describe the object with words – perhaps five or so adjectives to say how they felt about the object.

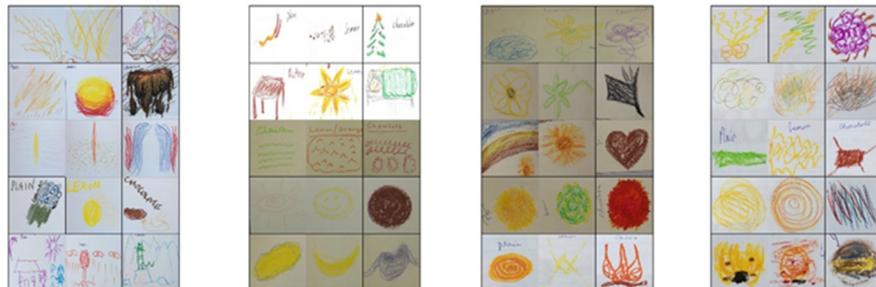
And finally I developed a system of “scoring” the object based on Steiner’s 12 senses. Thus I used two extremes – say “soft” and “hard” for the eater to tell me about how the object had affected the touch sense, or “light” and “dark” to say how the object had influenced the sense of seeing – and so on. The eater would assign a “1” to one extreme – and a “5” to the other. And so I got a list of values in the range of 1 to 5 to describe how each sense had reacted to the cooked object. For a few years this method seemed to produce interesting results. In particular it made clear that when we eat something, all of our senses are involved – not just the obvious ones like smell, taste, touch, warmth.

I learned later that this method did not lead to any kind of consensus amongst the various eaters I assembled for each experiment. And so I abandoned it and was left with my original choice of images and words.

The second problem was what to cook! I thought that the principles I was investigating could be done with simple recipes. I also wanted the ingredients and the cooked results to be relatively small and easily portable – and not subject to spoilage if left unattended for a few days (or weeks). They also needed to be relatively quick and easy to make. For my first experiments I settled on “cookies”, as I had learned to call them in my chosen home country of Canada – or “biscuits” as they are called in the UK. After some time I concentrated on 3 simple recipes – a plain shortbread style, a similar one with added lemon flavour and a very rich chocolate cookie (made with real dark chocolate bars). These recipes formed the basis of the first experiments.

In those first experiments I was the cook and various different groups of friends, colleagues and so forth were the “eaters”.

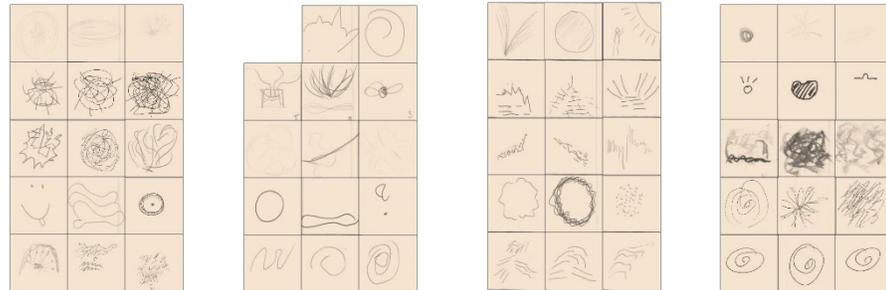
The images drawn by the “eaters” are shown here – each row of 3 images were drawn by one eater and correspond to each of the 3 cookies. There are four sets of five rows each corresponding to a total of 20 different eaters.



I established that the groups identified the 3 different cookies with images which were generally characteristic of the complexity of each cookie. Thus the images for the plain cookie were generally fairly simple in shape and colour, while the images for the chocolate cookie were quite complex in both shape and colour.

For my next set of experiments I wanted to evaluate whether different cooks making the same recipe would produce different results. In other words, would the cooks add something of themselves (the “Personality” and the “Vitality” of the title) to the final result? This time I felt the cookie recipes would not properly show the cooks’ influence and after much thought I settled on a recipe which produced small cheese squares (I call them “cheesies” below). The important point in this recipe was that the cook was compelled to use hands-on when mixing the ingredients (essentially cheese, flour and water). Thus I felt that any influence exerted by the cooks would be expressed through the use of their hands in the process.

When I used my grandchildren as cooks the results were astounding. In a blind tasting (the 20 “eaters” did not know who had made the samples they were eating) of three different sets of cheesies.



The 20 images are shown here in four sets of 5 pictures in each set – there are 3 images in each row corresponding to the 3 “cooks”. The “eaters” almost unanimously decided that the most interesting and tastiest cheesies were the ones made by my 9-year old grandson (central columns of 3), his 12-year old sister came second in popularity (leftmost column of 3), while granddad (myself) came dead last (rightmost column of 3)! Torsten remarked that the etheric forces of the youngest were the liveliest of all of us three and had clearly influenced the evaluation process.

And so I came to the final experiment. I had shown that one cook could produce different cookies. And that different cooks could produce different results from the same recipe – the cheesies.

Now I thought – if many cooks had the same mood and produced a set of “cheesies, then all of them switched to a different (second) mood and produced a second set of cheesies, would the “eaters” be able to detect a difference between the two sets of cheesies. To verify that there would be a measureable difference I decided that the evaluation (tasting/eating) would be done with three cheesies drawn at random from the baked results of many cooks and two moods.

The final design element was to choose two different moods. Many ideas could be tried:

Happy vs sad

Calm vs stressed

Love vs hate and so on.

I decided eventually to use two very strong, external (to the cook) influences – namely Sun and Moon – in fact, two objects literally out of this world!

Torsten and I discussed this and he remarked that he always found it useful to test these ideas on oneself at first.

So the experiment on myself proceeded as follows:

First the Sun influence

1. Look at different sun images and videos
2. Write 5 words to describe sun
3. Make a sun image

Then make Sun cheese sticks – prepare on tray ready for oven

And secondly the Moon influence

1. Look at different moon images and videos
2. Write 5 words to describe moon
3. Make a moon image

Make Moon cheese sticks – prepare on tray ready for oven

Bake all cheese sticks and put results in two containers – sun and moon

Prepare two sets of 3 sticks each – some sun, some moon – drawn at random by a third party (my wife) – who kept records of which cheesies were selected.

Then I (as the eater) would score both sets of 3 – and finally compare the scores with the records of what was selected.

As a side note here, I will confess that I had a pre-conceived notion that the “Sun” cheesies would taste better than the “Moon” cheesies. So, as a so-called Goethean scientist, I was suitably humbled when I did indeed detect differences between the two sets of 3 random samples my wife gave me – and found that the ones I had described as “heavy”, “chewy”, “solid”, etc. were the ones I had made while in the “Sun” mood. Whereas the ones I described as “cool”, “smooth”, “light”, etc. were made while in the “Moon” mood.

Never try to predict the outcome of a Goethean experiment!

However the point was proved and I now proceeded to run the experiment with more cooks.

Over the course of the next year, I did the experiment on four separate occasions with different groups:

First in Calgary, Canada at my house with four cooks (and the same people as four eaters).

Second again in Calgary at my house with four people (this time I excluded myself from the cooks and eaters)

Third time again in Calgary at my house with three people.

And the fourth time in Kimberton, PA with five people.

I will now present the results of all of these experiments.

4. Results

First here is the recipe we used:

Baked Cheese Sticks Ingredients (Full recipe)

- 2 cup grated aged cheddar cheese (approx.)
- 2 teaspoon dry mustard
- 1/4 teaspoon cayenne pepper
- 1/2 cup butter or margarine
- 1 cup flour
- 1/4 cup water

Directions

1. Combine all ingredients. Mixture will be soft.
2. Roll into flat shape – about 1/5 in. (0.5cm.) thick.
3. Cut into strips/squares of roughly 1" (2.5cm.)
4. Bake (convection) at 300 degrees F (150 C) until lightly browned (20 minutes).



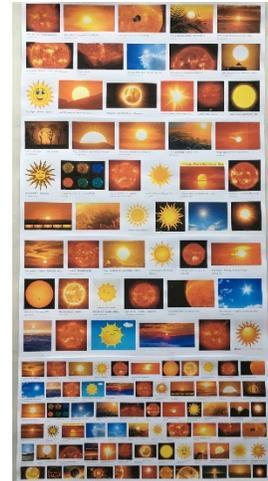
Here are some photos from the various experiments:
(Yes it was fun!)



And here is the procedure used in each experiment:

A. Sun Test

1. Look at different sun pictures
2. Play sun videos
3. Write 5 words to describe sun
4. Paint sun



B. Make Sun cheese sticks – prepare on tray ready for oven

C. Moon Test

5. Look at different moon pictures
6. Play moon videos
7. Write 5 words to describe moon
8. Paint moon

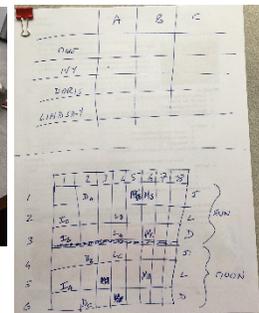


D. Make Moon cheese sticks – prepare on tray ready for oven

- E. Bake all cheese sticks (Sun and Moon) at the same time.**



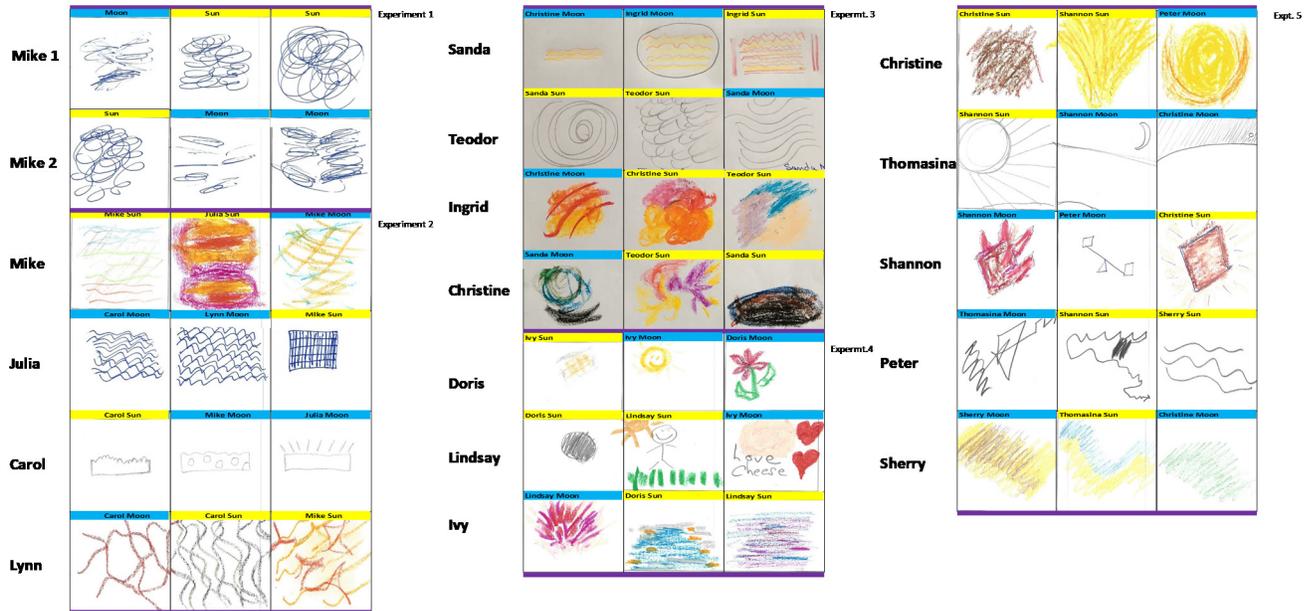
- F. Prepare sets of 3 cheesies for each eater – some sun, some moon – drawn by third party – in secret - at random – keep records.**



- G. Eaters taste each of the 3 cheesies and create images for them.**
H. Afterwards compare images with records of what was drawn from the baking tray.

a. Evaluation method

The paintings (images) from each of the five experiments (I include my self-experiment as the first) are shown below – with the baker’s name on the left of each set of three images:



Some notes on the images:

The “answers” (whether the cheesie was made while in the “sun” mood – or in the “moon” mood) are indicated above each image – accompanied by the name of the baker who made it.

Recall that when the eaters made these images they had no idea who made the cheesie – or whether it was “sun” or “moon”.

It is truly remarkable that in almost every case the images are consistent with the sun/moon mood used in making each cheesie.

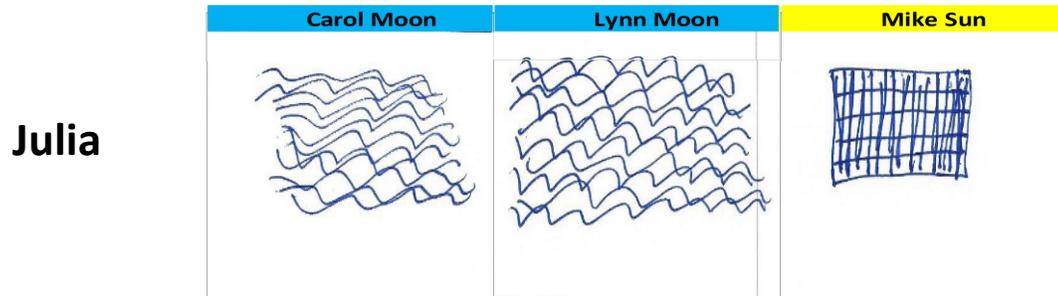
I would also note here that I somewhat deliberately made the three samples as two moons and a sun – or two suns and a moon – in no particular order. In a future experiment it might be interesting to give the eater 3 suns – or 3 moons to verify their consistency.

Also note that in some cases the eaters made images of their own cheesies, but in most of the cases they made images of other cooks’ cheesies – and yet the eaters were still able to sense the “sun” or “moon” in each.

b. Characteristic picture types

In general the “sun” images are heavier and more complex. The “moon” images by contrast tend to be lighter – more “wavy”.

In particular let’s look at the three images made by Julia in the second experiment:



Here we see the two “Moon” images are similar – horizontal wavy lines, while the single “Sun” image is square – or rectangular. How did Julia “feel” when she ate these three cheesies? I would remind you again, dear reader that Julia had no idea what she was eating when she drew these three images!

And one more example from Ivy in the fourth experiment:



What can you say about these three images?

Finally in one stunning example (Thomasina in the last experiment – no. 5), she (correctly) drew pictures of sun and moon for each of the 3 cheesies she was given.

c. Words – evaluation

The words for each of the eaters from all of the 5 experiments are shown below:

The background colour for each word indicates whether the cheesie in question was a

Sun or a Moon.

Mike 1	cool satisfy solid smooth earthy	warm chewy filling crunchy lasting	light comfortable warm soft round	Doris	chewy salty sticky	tasty gd text crisp spicy	crisp chewy
Mike 2	chewy solid warm	light thin wispy	distant layered	Lindsay	dense laborious depressed dark hard	light airy layers delicious happy	satisfied craving happy yearning discontented
Mike	light fine crisp clear layered	heavy mushy chewy fat dense	crumbly flaky pleasing light moister	Ivy	alert wakeful energized warm happy	down calm moody cool sad	semi-alert cheery happy cool pink
Julia	light lively airy easy clean	light lively airy expanded flaky	hard thick heavy dense droopy	Christine	blah greasy unpleasant depressed flat	tasty sunny sharp zesty alive	crispy light delicate savoury tasty
Carol	chewy heavy tired uninspired OK	cheesy different happy intrigued curious	cheerful satisfied light inspired proud	Thomasina	cheesy full tasty smooth tangy	crisp dull blank average plain	orange cough plain dull thin
Lynn	layered fragile long control tension	full round milk baby simple	chipper balanced fun cohesive stimulating	Shannon	wowsa red roof middle lingering	children neither hot nor cold lukewarm carrier	cheese earthy aroma sun balance
Sanda	curious surprised pleased patient normal	good impressed warm stable balanced	rushed pinched awake full wondering	Peter	thirsty hungry spiced oiled intrigued	oiled hungry spiced drugged lazy	hungry thirsty spiced sleepy dull
Teodor	sad displeasing repellent deeper viscous	airy levitation attractive fluid joyful	calm medium grey flat	Sherry	good sweet warm melt chew	watery dissolve minimal dry mixed	giving blank bland
Ingrid	crispy greasy salty moist tangy	dry flour spicy gritty tough	neutral daily good consistent zing				
Christine	clammy full tingly satisfied pleasant heavy	tingly full alive warm awake	unwell heavy overfull sluggish stiff				

Compare the words used to describe the “Sun” and “Moon” cheesies. They are different – not necessarily in favour of either sun or moon – but certainly different.

As an example here is what Carol thought about her three cheesies in the second experiment:

Carol	chewy	cheesy	cheerful
	heavy	different	satisfied
	tired	happy	light
	uninspired	intrigued	inspired
	OK	curious	proud

The single “Sun” cheesie was “heavy” and “tired” – while the two “Moon” cheesies were “happy” and “cheerful” – an opinion Carol formed while having no idea which was which!

5. Discussion

My original question was “Is there more to cooking than just the ingredients with some heat added?”

In my last series of experiments (the Sun/Moon ones) I have shown that the “mood” of the cook can be “transmitted” to the eater. Thus it seems that I have answered my original question.

Exactly how this happens is a further question I hope to tackle in future research work.

At the start of this article (Introduction) I speculated whether the cook added “love”. Now I have to wonder whether love of Sun or love of Moon is stronger – or different?

Finally there is one interesting phenomenon that was noticed only recently by myself and some of the participants. Several of them pointed out that when they were making the “Sun” dough for the cheesies it seemed quite dry – and they wondered if they had added enough water. Then when they made the “Moon” cheesies the dough seemed quite wet!

It also became evident from looking at the baking tray just after it came out of the oven that there was a visual difference between the “Sun” cheesies and the “Moon” cheesies. Here is the picture of the last experiment – there are 5 rows of “Sun” and 5 rows of “Moon”. Can you see the difference?



6. Conclusions

The mood of the cook can have a substantial effect on the final result. Moreover this mood can be “set” to produce a somewhat predictable result.

How does it work?

Can more moods be used to get other results?

What is the best mood?

As they say – stay tuned!

7. Recommendations

*Pay attention to your mood before you cook
– and especially never cook when you are in a bad mood!*

8. Acknowledgements

I would like to thank all the volunteers who helped me with my cooking experiments
– It could not have happened without you!

I would also like to thank the following individuals who have encouraged me and offered much useful advice during my journey.

Margaret Colquhoun

Torsten Arncken

Jean-Michel Florin

Wendy Cook

All the cooks who I interviewed in the past years. You set me on this path – many thanks.

All the students and mentors in the Goethean Science Part-Time Studies at the Glashaus, Dornach, Switzerland – without that yearly boost when I presented my latest findings I would have found it much harder to continue – thanks for your support.

9. Literature

R. Steiner, Man as a Being of Sense and Perception. Twelve Senses in Man

<https://wn.rsarchive.org/GA/GA0169/19160620p01.html>

Schmidt Number: S-4547

First steps in the development of a psychological test on the effects of food on mental well-being

Uwe Geier, Ina Hermann, Kathrin Mittag, Kirsten Buchecker

First published: 13 June 2012

<https://doi.org/10.1002/jsfa.5699>

1985, Toward a Phenomenology of the Etheric World - Investigations into the Life of Nature and Man. Editor: Jochen Bockemuhl

“Now Spinoza calls this kind of knowledge scientia intuitiva, or “knowledge in beholding”. It was this kind of knowledge that Goethe strove toward.” [Nature’s Open Secret, Steiner, Ch. 4, p47]

10. Personal Biography of Mike Galbraith

James Michael Galbraith (called Mike)

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I am presently 75 years old and living in Calgary, Canada with my wife Shura. We have been married for 50 years and our four children have all flown the nest some years ago – though still live in various cities in Canada. We have five grandchildren – eldest 22 and youngest 4. I am now retired – after my career as a geophysicist in the oil industry which I did for some 45 years or so. I was born in Scotland – went to Edinburgh University – worked several years in London – then moved to Canada,

My career, though now finished, was very satisfying – both intellectually and financially. I acquired many useful skills during this time – using Mathematics, Physics and the scientific method to investigate many challenging problems. I wrote many papers (50 or more) for Conventions, Seminars and the like – and I co-authored a book on the design of 3D Seismic Surveys using acoustic sources.

Over the years I came into contact with various esoteric doctrines like those espoused by Gurdjieff and Ouspensky, Tibetan Buddhism and the like. Then by chance some fifteen years ago I met my old University acquaintance Margaret Colquhoun – and she described what she had been doing during the years we had not seen each other. Mostly she had studied Goethean Science and the writings of Rudolf Steiner and then had set up Pishwanton near Gifford (Edinburgh) with which you may be familiar.

To cut a long story short I eventually realised that Anthroposophy – and Rudolf Steiner were exactly what I had been looking for all those years ago. So although older and hopefully a little wiser and calmer, I am now determined to pursue this path. I have continued my studies in Anthroposophy and am currently (2020) enrolled in the part-time Goethean studies program at the Science Section in the Goetheanum in Dornach, Switzerland.