

## La Cucina Futurista: A Call to Culinary Revolution, an Artwork, or the Death Throes of Futurism?

Adrian Bregazzi

The Manifesto of Futurist Cooking, *Il Manifesto della Cucina Futurista*, was published in Turin's *Gazzetta del Popolo* on 28th December 1930 (Berghaus 2006, pp.394-399). This is perhaps best known for demanding the 'abolition of pastasciutta, an absurd Italian gastronomic religion.' (pastasciutta is dried pasta):

[Pastasciutta] induces sluggishness, depression, inertia brought on by nostalgia, and neutralism.

Pastasciutta, 40% less nutritious than meat, fish or pulses, ties today's Italians with its tangled threads to Penelope's slow looms and to somnolent old sailing ships in search of wind

The apologists for pastasciutta carry its leaden ball, its ruins, in their stomachs, like prisoners serving a life sentence, or archaeologists. (ibid, pp.394-399)

Full-speed ahead, the Futurists opened the *Taverna del Santopalato* (the Holy Palate Tavern) in Turin in March 1931, swiftly followed by Futurist banquets in Italy and France. And putting flesh on these aspirational bones, dinners and formulae (recipes) appeared in *La cucina futurista* published in Milan in 1932 (Chamberlain 1989).

While the Manifesto's railing against pasta could make political sense given Benito Mussolini's *Battle for Grain*, coupled with the drive to develop domestic rice growing – Futurists had been great supporters of Italian fascism and Mussolini – the shock doctrine proffered no practical alternatives in either banquets, dinners, nor recipes. Instead it flew off on extraordinary but typically confrontational Futurist tangents including chicken with ball-bearings, and *aerofood* (black olives, fennel hearts, kumquats – with sandpaper, silk, and velvet). The taverna and subsequent banquets featured equally bizarre concoctions in Futurist environments, along with mechanical and recorded sounds, poetry, light, scents, and live fowl - early performance art – and all in direct conflict with the fascist regime's diktat for discipline, and nationalist and aesthetic conservatism.

And food-wise this must be seen in the context of national and international economic depression; the famine affecting more than half the population; the medieval lives of agricultural workers; and, referencing grain, the urban poor majority couldn't afford flour, while the wheat-growing landed working classes had no choice.

Elisabeth David pithily observed, 'Marinetti's bombshell contained a good deal of common sense; diet and methods of cookery must necessarily evolve at the same time as other habits and customs. But behind this amiable fooling lurked

a sinister note: the fascist obsession with nationalism and patriotism, the war to come.' (David 1963, p.94)

But firstly, we must have some historical contexts - we must look at Futurism and Italian Fascism.

### Futurism

Incipient Futurism reviled Italy's wallowing in the artistic and cultural glory of the country's past (the likes of the southern Renaissance; Boccaccio and Dante; the Roman Empire); its ignoring the rapid technical advances of the early 20th-century (particularly developing material technologies, speed and new methods of transport, and developments in telephony, radio communication and film); and politically, it scorned what it saw as the country's failure to develop since the *Risorgimento* (the 19th-century unification of Italy was completed in 1871).

The Manifesto of Futurism, originally *Il Manifesto del Futurismo*, was written by the Italian poet/impresario, Filippo Tommaso Marinetti and first widely published in Italy in the *Gazzetta di Emilia* in Bologna on 5th February 1909 (Berghaus 2006, p.17); and first published internationally (in French, and subsequently translated into English, German, Russian, Spanish, and other languages) in the prestigious Paris newspaper *Le Figaro*, on 20th February 1909 (Marinetti, 1909).

*Le Figaro* carried an editorial warning to its readers, 'Mr Marinetti [...] a hot-blooded talent known throughout the Latin countries by virtue of his resounding public appearances [...] is solely responsible for the ideas [expressed in the manifesto], which are singularly audacious and exaggerated to the point of being unjust to certain eminently respectable and – luckily – generally respected matters' (Berghaus 2006, p.427). Even with hindsight and given the deliberate shock tactics, this may seem a somewhat muted advisory given some of the content. The manifesto's eleven theses form a militarist, totalitarian, misogynist, technophilic declamation introducing a fiercely nationalistic, iconoclastic and aggressive ideal that fully anticipates Italian Fascism by years:

1. We want to sing about the love of danger, about the use of energy and recklessness as common, daily practice.
5. We wish to sing the praises of the man behind the steering wheel [of a racing car] whose sleek shaft traverses the Earth...

7. There is no longer any beauty except the struggle. Any work of art that lacks a sense of aggression cannot be a masterpiece...

9. We wish to glorify war – the sole cleanser of the world – militarism, patriotism, the destructive act of the libertarian, beautiful ideas worth dying for, and scorn for women.

10. We wish to destroy museums, libraries, academies of any sort, and fight against moralism, feminism, and every form of materialistic, self-serving cowardice. (Berghaus 2006, pp.13-14)

And from the perspective of an art work, this should be seen in the context of Marinetti's own innovative and confrontational performances, moreover, the history of the Paris avant-garde which had vigorously challenged public opinion since the gaze of Édouard Manet's naked *Olympia* of 1863; Gustave Courbet's uncompromising full-frontal female genitalia *L'Origine du Monde* of 1866; Paul Bilhaud's wholly monochrome, *Combat de nègres dans une cave pendant la nuit* of 1882 (a black canvas); and Eugène Bataille's *Le Rire* of 1883 (an image of the Mona Lisa smoking a pipe puffing smoke-rings); and had continued throughout the *Belle Époque* when Paris was 'still the 'capital of culture', the city to which artists of all kinds, in all countries of Europe, looked for leadership...' (Cottingham 2012, p.600).

Marinetti continues his railing, 'It is from Italy that we hurl at the whole world this utterly violent, inflammatory manifesto of ours, [...] because we wish to free our country of the stinking canker of its professors, archaeologists, tour guides, and antiquarians.' And, 'Set fire to the library shelves!... Divert the canals so they can flood the museums!... [...] Grab your picks and your axes and your hammers and then demolish, pitilessly demolish, all venerated cities!' (Berghaus 2006, p.15)

Hidden beneath his rambling vitriol is Marinetti's fundamental plea to free Italy from its glorious and divided past and to move the whole country forward to create a proud and contemporaneously glorious nation. This was made clear in the Second Futurist Political Manifesto, published at the outset of the Libyan War in 1911:

1. Every individual and our entire people must be given total freedom, other than the freedom to be cowards.

2. Let it be declared that the word ITALY must take absolute precedence over the word LIBERTY.

3. The tiresome memory of the greatness of Ancient Rome must be eradicated by an Italian greatness that is a hundred times more impressive. (Berghaus 2006, p.74)

This reference to Ancient Rome echoes a similar reference to the 2nd-century BCE Greek sculpture of Nike, the goddess of victory, in the original Manifesto, 'a roaring

motorcar, which seems to race on like machine-gun fire, is more beautiful than the Winged Victory of Samothrace' (Berghaus 2006, p.13); and, 'Penelope's slow looms' in the manifesto (ibid, p.396). It evinces the paradox that all avant-gardes must have histories, traditions, and mainstream practices from which they can advance but whose materials they must still use. And it is something that we will see repeated in *La cucina futurista*.

Futurism started as a literary medium, but soon embraced many of the visual arts; dance, music, and theatre; architecture, interior and urban design; and eventually, after 20 years of occasional interest in food, *La cucina futurista*. And in spite of the rhetoric of the first manifesto, it was not an exclusive 'ism in the same way as Cubism inherently determined the concerns of its artists – one merely wanted to be part of a more abstractly future-oriented art practice that 'sought nothing less than to revolutionise life and society in all their diverse aspects: moral, artistic, cultural, social, economic, and political' (Berghaus 2001, p.3) – and as such, Futurism was non-elitist and ironically singularly democratic (Salaris 2014, p.22). The one area of art practice that it could be said that it did originate, though having a firm base in the rallying political manifestos of the 19th-century – the art manifesto, or art as language – is often overlooked; indeed, art as language did not reappear until its inclusion in the Conceptual Art of the late 1960s, as an oxymoronic second-time avant-garde.

Critically, and throughout its history, Futurism was effectively divided into two wings – Marinetti's confrontation politics and his need always to be in the vanguard, and the hugely successful European 'modernist' design that fell under Futurism's technophilic umbrella.

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### Fascism

Italian Fascism, in the form of a single coordinated political entity, the National Fascist Party (*Partito Nazionale Fascista PNF*), was founded in 1921 by Benito Mussolini, and based on the more devolved Italian Fasci of Combat (*Fasci Italiani di Combattimento, FIC*), and the Italian Nationalist Association (*Associazione Nazionalista Italiana, ANI*). After Mussolini's *March on Rome* in 1922, the party ruled Italy until 1943. It strove towards building a strong, self-sufficient greater Italy. It espoused nationalism, patriotism, and xenophobia. And the ethics of fascism, order, discipline, hierarchy, can also be summed up in the motto, 'believe, obey, fight!' Under Mussolini, the PNF ruled Italy between 1922 and 1944.

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### The Battle for Grain

The Battle for Grain (1925) was the first of Mussolini's four battles in his struggle for autarchy – Battle for the Lira (1926), Battle for Births (1927), and the Battle for Land (1928).

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1924 saw a poor wheat harvest, leading to increased grain imports and increased prices – coupled with an increasing imbalance of payments and rising inflation. Something had to be done, and Mussolini determined that the country should become self-sufficient in wheat and grain, not least to prepare for war. Import tariffs were placed on wheat in 1925, 1928, and 1929, realising higher prices for bread and pasta for all. At the same time, financial support was offered to bring underutilised and waste land into wheat and rice cultivation (Battle for Land) – with generous support for both agricultural equipment and (imported) fertilisers (Morgan 2004, p.116). And the landed poor were granted the spin, ‘who, from contact with the green, healthy, and fertile land will feel elevated to thoughts of purity and to intentions of hard work’ (Duggan 2013, p.124).

In one sense this policy was successful as wheat imports fell by 75% between 1925 and 1935, and by 1940 the country was virtually self-sufficient in wheat; however, Italy’s entry into the European War cut off its major supplies of fertiliser, resulting in lower production and increased prices. At the same time, years of effective de-emphasis of fruit, vegetable, and wine production had serious effects on diet.

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### Futurism and food

Futurists had had dealings with food from the outset of the movement with their outrageous performance soirées, or *serate futuriste*, which were often followed by a party or banquet. One such banquet took place in Trieste on 12<sup>th</sup> January 1910; the order of courses was reversed, with each course accompanied by readings. It is probable that these theatrical names referred to fairly conventional dishes, with the ordering of the menu being the message:

*Caffè*

*Dolci memorie frappées* (sweet memories on ice)

*Frutta dell’Avvenire* (future fruit)

*Marmellata di gloriosi defunti* (marmalade of defunct glories)

*Arrosto di mummia con fegatini di professori* (roast mummy with professorial livers)

*Insalata archeologica* (archaeological salad)

*Spezzatino di passato con piselli esplosivi in salsa storica* (stew of the past with explosive peas and an historical sauce)

*Pesce del Mar Morto* (Dead Sea fish)

*Grumi di sangue in brodo* (clotted-blood soup)

*Antipasto di demolizioni* (demolition antipasto)

*Vermouth* (Ibba and Sanna 2015)

Futurist cookery had been anticipated in print by Guillaume Apollinaire in 1912, and cited in 1913 in his *Le Cubisme culinaire (le Gastro-Astronomie ou La Cuisine nouvelle)* (Apollinaire 1913). Apollinaire was known to Marinetti, and there is a reference to a meal of:

fresh violets whose stems are seasoned with lemon juice

burbot cooked in a decoction of eucalyptus leaves

rare sirloin steak seasoned with snuff [see below]

quail cooked in liquorice

salad with a dressing of walnut oil and eau-de-vie de marc

Reblochon cheese dusted with nutmeg (Apollinaire 1913)

And also in Jules Maincave’s *La Cuisine futuriste* in 1913 (Silvagni 2009). Maincave was a close associate of Marinetti (but was killed, fighting on the Western Front in 1916), and he was developing challenging dishes such as mashed potatoes with raspberry syrup; sole with crème Chantilly and eau-de-Cologne; fillet of beef with minced mackerel and gooseberry jelly; and sirloin seasoned with snuff (Millau 2008). Maincave also had views on the physical position of the kitchen, ‘Futurist cookery does not believe that dishes should be created in dark basements. We place the kitchen on the top floor, just like an artist’s studio’ (Giraud 2010). Maincave was personally cited in the Manifesto of Futurist cookery (Chamberlain 1989, p.38).

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### Il Manifesto della cucina futurista

On 15th November 1930, a banquet for Futurists at the *Penna d’Oca* restaurant in Milan, Marinetti announced, ‘the imminent launch of Futurist Cooking to renew totally the Italian way of eating and fit in as quickly as possible to producing the new heroic and dynamic strengths required of the race. Futurist cooking will be free of the old obsession with volume and weight and will have as one of its principles the abolition of pastasciutta. Pastasciutta, however agreeable to the palate, is a passéist food because it makes people heavy, brutish, deludes them into thinking it is nutritious, makes them sceptical, slow, pessimistic. Besides which patriotically it is preferable to substitute rice’ (ibid p.33).

The Manifesto of Futurist Cooking was duly published in December 1930 in Turin’s *Gazzetta del Popolo* on 28th December 1930, it was later re-published in Paris in January 1931, and was subsequently reported in the USA, England and Europe (Berghaus 2006, pp.394-399). As intended, it caused voluble debate wherever it was published.

The manifesto comprises of four parts, plus a brief introduction: *Against pasta*; *An invitation to the chemists*; *‘Sculpted meat’*; and *Equator + North Pole*, with the last two as examples of the new futurist food.

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*Against pasta*

Having listed yet more wonders of Futurism, Marinetti may be seen to be giving a broad hint about the true nature of the manifesto: 'Against practicality we Futurists therefore disdain the example and admonition of tradition in order to invent at any cost something *new* which everyone considers crazy' (Chamberlain 1989, p.36). And in stark contrast to the original 'scorn for women', he now advises that Italian men 'should harmonise more and more with the Italian female, a swift spiralling transparency of passion, tenderness, light, will, vitality, heroic constancy' (ibid p.36).

Above all we believe it necessary:

- (a) The abolition of *pastasciutta*, an absurd Italian religion.
- (b) The abolition of volume and weight in the conception and evaluation of food.
- (c) The abolition of traditional mixtures in favour of experimentation with new, apparently absurd mixtures, following the advice of Jarro Maincave and other Futurist cooks.
- (d) The abolition of everyday mediocrity from the pleasures of the palate" (ibid pp.37-8).

And glazing this with some national stereotyping, 'It may be that a diet of cod, roast beef and steamed pudding is beneficial to the English, cold cuts and cheese to the Dutch and sauerkraut, salt pork and sausage to the Germans, but pasta is not beneficial to the Italians' (ibid p.37).

*An invitation to chemistry*

Binding his argument to Greek mythology, Marinetti states that, 'Pastasciutta, 40% less nutritious than meat, fish or pulses, ties today's Italians with its tangled threads to Penelope's slow looms and to somnolent old sailing ships in search of wind. [...] Why let it block the path of those landscapes of colour form sound which circumnavigate the world thanks to radio and television? [...] And remember too that the abolition of pasta will free Italy from expensive foreign grain and promote the Italian rice industry.' This latter claim is both tardy and specious. The Battle for Grain was begun over five years earlier, and its aims were not to reduce consumption, more to increase provision of wheat and rice. Pastasciutta was vigorously advertised throughout the 20s and 30s, featuring happy, healthy, and distinctly un-svelte homunculi; one 1933 advertisement featured a chubby, knife-carrying chef riding a pasta horse, with the caption, '*...il mio cavallo di battaglia...*' ('my little battle-horse') (Pinkus 1995, pp.107-111).

The manifesto invites 'chemistry immediately to take on the task of providing the body with its necessary calories through equivalent nutrients provided free by the State, in powder or pills, albuminoid compounds, synthetic fats and vitamins. This way we will achieve a real lowering of the cost of living and salaries, with a relative reduction in

working hours. [...] Soon machines will constitute an obedient proletariat of iron steel aluminium at the service of men who are almost totally relieved of manual work. With work reduced to two or three hours, the other hours can be perfected and ennobled through study, the arts, and anticipation of perfect meals. In all social classes meals will be less frequent but perfect in their daily provision of equivalent nutrients.'

He then describes the requirements for the perfect meal:

1. Originality and harmony in table setting (crystal, china, décor) extending to the flavours and colours of the foods.
2. Absolute originality in the food (ibid p.38).

This has the feel of stream of consciousness dictation rather than considered writing (as does much of Marinetti's polemics) but in spite of 'all social class meals' the requirement for crystal and china would seem to exclude much of society from having a 'perfect meal'; and this distinction is further confirmed in the following recipes.

*Sculpted meat*

Includes recipes for *Alaskan Salmon in the rays of the sun with Mars sauce*; *Woodcock Mount Rosa with Venus sauce*; and *Sculpted meat*. The salmon and woodcock dishes are unremarkable, save for their preposterous names and the cost and availability of ingredients. However, *Sculpted meat* is a sign of things to come: it is a, 'symbolic interpretation of all the varied landscapes of Italy, is composed of a large cylindrical rissole of minced veal stuffed with eleven different kinds of cooked green vegetables and roasted. This cylinder, standing upright in the centre of the plate is crowned by a layer of honey and supported at the base by a ring of sausages resting on three golden spheres of chicken.' Here we even have a discrepancy between intent and content – the dish bears no relation visually or conceptually the 'varied landscapes of Italy'. Historic time precludes identifying whether this conflict is deliberate.

[and continuing the requirements for the perfect meal]

3. The invention of appetizing food sculptures, whose original harmony of form and colour feeds the eye and excites the imagination before it tempts the lips (ibid p.39).

*Equator + North Pole*

'an equatorial sea of poached egg yolks seasoned like oysters with pepper, salt and lemon. In the centre emerges a cone of firmly whipped egg white full of orange segments looking like juicy sections of the sun. The peak of the cone is strewn with pieces of black truffle cut in the form of black aeroplanes conquering the zenith.' The infantile insouciance of this assemblage is belied by the humorous and deliberate absence of cutlery.

[and continuing the requirements for the perfect meal]

4. The abolition of the knife and fork for eating food sculptures, which can give prelabial tactile pleasures.

5. The use of the art of perfumes to enhance tasting. Every dish must be preceded by a perfume which will be driven from the table with the help of electric fans.
6. The use of music limited to the intervals between courses so as not to distract the sensitivity of the tongue and palate but to help annul the last taste enjoyed and re-establishing gustatory virginity.
7. The abolition of speech-making and politics at the table.
8. The use of prescribed doses of poetry and music as surprise ingredients at accentuate the flavours of a given dish with their sensual intensity.[but note 6]
9. The rapid presentation, between courses, under the eyes and nostrils of the guests, of some dishes they will eat and others they will not, to increase their curiosity, surprise and imagination.
10. The creation of simultaneous and changing canapés which contain ten twenty flavours to be tasted in a few seconds. In Futurist cooking these canapés have by analogy the same amplifying function that images have in literature. A given taste of something can sum up an entire area of life, the history of an amorous passion, or an entire voyage to the Far East.
11. A battery of scientific instruments in the kitchen: ozonizers (*ozonizzatori*) to give liquids and foods the perfume of ozone; *ultraviolet ray lamps* (since many foods when irradiated with ultraviolet rays acquire active properties, become more assimilable, preventing rickets in young children, etc.); electrolyzers (*elettrolizzatori*) to decompose (*scomporre*) juices and extracts, etc. in such a way as to obtain from a known product a new product with new properties; *colloidal mills* to pulverize flours, dried fruits, drugs, etc.; *atmospheric and vacuum stills*, *centrifugal autoclaves*, dialyzers (*dializzatori*). The use of these appliances will have to be scientific, avoiding the typical error of cooking foods under steam pressure, which provokes the destruction of active substances (vitamins etc.) because of the high temperatures. Chemical indicators will take into account the acidity and alkalinity of the sauces and serve to correct possible errors: too little salt, too much vinegar, too much pepper or too much sugar (ibid pp.39-40).

While this call to arm the kitchen with chemistry and technology could be seen to presage the more recent *Molecular Gastronomy*, its own whimsy and errors suggest that this is just another example of Marinetti's spoken (as opposed to written) keyword rhetoric.

### La cucina futurista

*La cucina futurista* was published in 1932. It contained the misogynist tale, 'A lunch that avoided a suicide'; the Manifesto of Futurist Cookery; selected responses to the manifesto, and articles denouncing pasta; 'Against xenomania'; Futurist banquets; definitive Futurist dinners; Futurist formulae (recipes); and a little neologistic dictionary of Futurist cookery, replacing foreign words with patriotic Italian versions such *quisibeve* ('here you drink') as the replacement for *bar*.

Some puerile, unremarkable, probably inedible, preposterous, and only occasionally likeable dishes would include:

*Tavola parolibera marina* (words in liberty sea platter): On a sea of endive dotted with bits of ricotta sails half a watermelon with a tiny captain on board, sculpted out of Dutch cheese, who commands a sluggish crew roughly hewn from calves' brains cooked in milk. A few centimetres from the prow is a rocky reef of Sieneese Panforte. The sea and the ship are sprinkled with cinnamon or red pepper.

*Porcoeccitato* (excited pig): A whole salami, skinned, is served upright on a dish containing some very hot black coffee mixed with a good deal of eau-de-Cologne.

*Promontorio siciliano* (Sicilian headland): Chop together tuna, apples, olives and little Japanese nuts. Spread the resulting paste on a cold egg and jam omelette.

*Trote immortali* (immortal trout): Stuff some trout with chopped nuts and fry them in oil. Then wrap them in very thin slices of calf's liver.

*Datteri al chiaro di luna* (dates in moonlight): 35-40 very mature and sugary dates, 500 grams of Roman ricotta. Stone the dates and mash them well (all the better if you can pass them through a sieve). Mix the pulp thus obtained with the ricotta until you have a smooth *poltiglia* (mash).

*Pollofiat* (chicken fiat): One takes a good-sized chicken and cooks it in two stages: first boiled, then roasted. A capacious cavity is dug out of the shoulder of the bird, within which one places a handful of little ball-bearings of mild steel. On the rear part of the bird one sews in three slices of raw cockscomb. The sculpture thus prepared goes into the oven for about ten minutes. When the flesh has fully absorbed the flavour of the mild steel balls, the chicken is served with a garnish of whipped cream (from a meal served at the *Santopalato* in 1931).

*Terra di Pozzuoli e verde veronese* (soil of Pozzuoli and the green of Verona): Candied citrons, stuffed

with chopped fried cuttlefish. Chew them up as if they were anti-Futurist critics.

*Algaspuma tirrena (con guarnitura di coralli)* (Tyrrhenian seaweed foam with coral garnish): Take a bunch of freshly-netted sea lettuce, being careful the catch was not made near sewers or drains because such lettuce easily absorbs bad smells. Wash and rinse in plenty of running water. When it is clean, dip it in some lemon juice. Powder the leaves with sugar and spray with a wave of whipped cream. The coral garnish consists of an assembly of clusters of piquant red peppers, slices of sea-urchin caught at full-moon, and a constellation of seeds from a fresh pomegranate. The whole, with its artistic architectural lines and inspired arabesques, should be served immediately on a flat round plate, with waves made of broth added, and covered with a sheet of blue cellophane.

*Fragolammarella* (Strawberry breasts) A pink plate with two erect feminine breasts made from ricotta dyed pink with Campari with nipples of candied strawberry. More fresh strawberries under the covering of ricotta make it possible to bite into an ideal multiplication of imaginary breasts.

*Risoverde* (Green rice): On a base of spinach pour some boiled white rice with butter. Cover this with a thick cream of peas and ground pistachios.

*Against xenomanes* is a fifteen thesis xenophobic and fascist rambling against 'anti-Italianism' (liking foreign products, customs, people in any way). It ends proclaiming that the word Italy must rule over the words Liberty, genius, intelligence, culture and statistics, and truth. And, 'we, at first alert, will shoot anti-Italian xenomanes' (Chamberlain 1989, pp.58-62).

*La cucina* can be seen as a success in terms of putting flesh onto the skeleton of ideas posited in the manifesto, which it did in its banquets and dinners (real or imaginary), and its formulae, however improbable they may have been. But it has to be seen as a complete failure to provide an alternative for *pastasciutta*, or even to provide basic practical nourishing recipes to replace lumpen pasta-based dishes. It rails against harking back to classical antiquity, yet its banquets are in many ways tame compared with those documented from imperial Rome. The Emperor Elagabus 'served peas with pieces of gold, lentils with onyx, beans with amber, and rice with pearls; and cockscombs cut from living fowls' (Faas 1994, p.28). It expounds fascist xenophobia in *Against xenomania*, yet includes, inter alia, Alaskan salmon, Dutch cheese, and Japanese nuts. It advocates almost anarchic indiscipline in its 'tactile dinner party', where guests dress in pyjamas, and in a dark room, choose their dinner partner by touch alone; or the 'dynamic dinner' in which a doctor is 'murdered' by a

group of bullying soldiers simply for wanting to eat his dinner quietly.

An avant-garde requires a dominant system from which to advance, but it also requires an audience and funding (Greenberg 1939). The extant images of Futurist meals evince a well-fed black-tie bourgeois audience and clientele who don't conform to the fascist norm, who Marinetti referred to as the *leaders of society and the intelligentsia* (Chamberlain 1989, p.58), and who evince an immunity to national and international economic depression; the famine affecting more than half the population; and the medieval lives of agricultural workers. Indeed, these Futurist's antics are right on the cusp of the regime's proscription, though there is a marked absence of the verbal and physical violence central to the original manifesto.

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## Conclusion

There are different opinions on the objectives of the manifesto and the cookbook – was Futurist cookery to be taken seriously as a culinary revolution (under fascism), was it participatory artwork, was it an anarchic joke, cocking a snook at a philistine regime? (Chamberlain 1989, Novero 2010). It is difficult to separate the largely undocumented intentions and outcomes of the early 1930s from the critical perspective of 2016.

The original battle against *pastasciutta* had appeared to have real gravitas, even though it was doomed to failure from the outset. Xenomania and the requirement for Italian-produced ingredients fell fully in line with fascist ideologies, and the drive to autarchy. And, Futurist banquets and dinners first witnessed the physical consumption (and destruction) of artworks by diners/clients.

But Futurists did not do anything radical to the *structure* of social eating in the same way that Modernism changed the structure of building, graphics, furniture, product design, et al; and the very way that Marinetti changed the use of language in his early performances. Guests still sat on traditional chairs at traditional tables; they were served by traditionally dressed waiters; and they ate in restaurants. And the banquets, dinners, and dishes are wholly redolent of incipient Futurism's shock tactics, if a little toned down, and this repetition can be seen as death throes of any form of forward-looking Futurism. Marinetti had said in 1909, 'The oldest among us are thirty [Marinetti was actually 32]; so we have at least ten years in which to complete our task. When we reach forty, other, younger, and more courageous men will likely toss us into the trash can. Like useless manuscripts. That is what we want!' (Berghaus 2006, pp.15-16). Twenty years on, this was already looking passé.

An amusing irony is that for all the Futurist zeal for speed, there is no hint of fast food in the manifesto or the cookbook (and no *pizza*).

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### Postscript

In the *giudizi sul futurismo* (assessments of Futurism) at the end of the 1932 edition of *La cucina*, and missing from more recent editions, is a message from Mussolini, 'I am sorry not to be able to intervene at the banquet offered to F. T. Marinetti. But I wish you receive my fervent agreement which is not formal expression but a living sign of the greatest sympathy for the tireless and brilliant advocate of Italian, to the innovative poet who gave me the feeling of the ocean and of the machine, for my dear old friend of the first fascist battles, the brave soldier who gave his country an indomitable passion consecrated by blood' (Marinetti 1932, p.177).

Marinetti's legacy is clouded by his association with fascism and Mussolini. It is almost impossible to assess the long term effects of Futurist cookery, though the core ideologies of challenge and change, ingredients as ingredients, can be seen 30 years on in Henri Gault's *la Nouvelle Cuisine*, and 50 years later in so-called *Molecular Gastronomy* and its ilk.

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