

# TASTES OF JUSTICE

## THE AESTHETICS AND POLITICS OF FOOD-ART PRACTICES IN ASIA AND AUSTRALIA

Edited by

Francis Maravillas, Marnie Badham,  
Stephen Loo, and Madeleine Collie

ROUTLEDGE



This volume is a timely response to the burgeoning practices of food-based art and their politics, highlighting some of the most compelling demonstrations of this in Asia and Australia today. It is unique not just for how it connects creative and critical inquiries into the aesthetics and politics of food with urgent questions of justice and care, but also as a rare gathering of artist writings. Significantly, the book's critical layering of artist voices alongside the perspectives of scholars and curators in and from Asia and Australia contributes to the 'discursive density' being called for by leading thinkers and practitioners in the evolving field of contemporary art.

**Michelle Antoinette**, *Associate Professor in Art History and Theory at Monash University in Melbourne, Australia*



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# Tastes of Justice

*Tastes of Justice* reveals the diversity of creative and cultural practices in contemporary food art and performances in and between Asia and Australia. It examines the ways in which these engender new frameworks for the sensuous, affective, social, and material dimensions of the alimentary in creative practice.

It interleaves scholarly chapters by artists, curators, theorists, and historians with artists' perspectives in the form of visual essays, recipes, and case studies. In doing so, it offers conceptual framings in art and curatorial practice and critical understandings of lived experience, challenging the normative epistemologies that typically operate between aesthetics and politics in food art and performance.

The book critically engages with themes including enculturation, diaspora, museology, sustainability, activism, and socially engaged art; it reworks notions of collaboration, correspondence, and commensality in human and more-than-human relations. *Tastes of Justice* offers its readers unique techniques to attend to invisibilities, inequalities, relationalities, and justice, where the politics of food art is inseparable from its aesthetics – from the way it tastes.

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The Aesthetics and Politics of Food-Art  
Practices in Asia and Australia

Edited by Francis Maravillas,  
Marnie Badham, Stephen Loo,  
and Madeleine Collie

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# Contents

<i>List of Figures</i>	<i>x</i>
<i>About the Editors</i>	<i>xiv</i>
<i>List of Contributors</i>	<i>xvi</i>
<i>Acknowledgements</i>	<i>xx</i>
<b>1 From Commensality to Cultural Difference: A Critical Introduction</b>	<b>1</b>
MARNIE BADHAM, FRANCIS MARAVILLAS, STEPHEN LOO, AND MADELEINE COLLIE	
<b>2 The Edible Archive: Performative Repasts and Art History in Singapore</b>	<b>7</b>
FRANCIS MARAVILLAS	
<b>3 <i>Nasi Goreng Diplomacy</i>: Diplomatizing Politicized Rice</b>	<b>17</b>
CHU HAO PEI	
<b>4 Strange and Difficult Fruit: Durian as a Marker of Time in Southeast Asian Contemporary Art</b>	<b>26</b>
JOELLA KIU	
<b>5 The Social Kitchen: Art and Collaborative Survival in Indonesia</b>	<b>41</b>
BIANCA WINATAPUTRI	
<b>6 The Taste of Iron: Who's Afraid of Red, Yellow, Green, and Blue</b>	<b>55</b>
ARIANA CHAIVARANON	

<b>7 Therapeutic Botany: Plant Medicine in Contemporary Art</b>	<b>60</b>
REBECCA BLAKE	
<b>8 Boat Noodle Soup Three Ways: Some Notes on Hospitality, Indeterminacy and Cultural Exchange in Food-Art Performance and Social Practice</b>	<b>77</b>
MARNIE BADHAM, PLOY KASAMA YAMTREE, STEPHEN LOO, AND MICHAEL HORNBLow	
<b>9 Bakudapan: <i>Please Eat Wildly</i></b>	<b>99</b>
BAKUDAPAN FOOD STUDY GROUP	
<b>10 <i>MMMEOW: Mapping Migratory Meals at the Ends of Worlds</i></b>	<b>105</b>
STEPHEN LOO, POPPY DE SOUZA, SAMID SULIMAN, AND MARNIE BADHAM	
<b>11 Mutton Fishing: The Importance of the Ocean for Cultural Continuity</b>	<b>125</b>
JODI EDWARDS	
<b>12 The Sensory and the Social: Food, Memory, and Community Engagement in <i>Aftertaste</i></b>	<b>131</b>
MEGAN R. FIZELL	
<b>13 <i>Chew Chew Spit Spit</i> and <i>A Jeepney Ride</i></b>	<b>148</b>
RICE BREWING SISTERS CLUB	
<b>14 Following Vegetal Worlds: Towards Expanded Curatorial Methods</b>	<b>155</b>
MADELEINE COLLIE	
<b>15 <i>If a coconut falls</i>: Cultural Reclamation Through Colonial Archives</b>	<b>173</b>
KEG DE SOUZA	
<b>16 Multispecies Commensality: Sharing a Meal with Fungi, Chickpeas, and Seaweed</b>	<b>178</b>
ALIA PARKER	

<b>17 Putting Your Stomach on the Line: Justice, Vulnerability and Hospitality in Food-Art Praxis</b>	<b>194</b>
LINDSAY KELLEY AND CASSANDRA TYTLER	
<b>18 A Coda in Recipes for Tasting Justice</b>	<b>201</b>
STEPHEN LOO, MADELEINE COLLIE, MARNIE BADHAM, AND FRANCIS MARAVILLAS	
<i>Index</i>	<i>213</i>

# Figures

2.1	Lina Adam, <i>The culinary history of Singapore performance art re-presented</i> , 2014.	11
2.2	Lina Adam, Course 03 of <i>The culinary history of Singapore performance art re-presented</i> , 2014.	12
2.3	Lina Adam, Course 10 of <i>The culinary history of Singapore performance art re-presented</i> , 2014.	14
3.1	<i>Nasi Goreng Diplomacy</i> Cambodian session, with collaborator Sin Sokhorn, 2024.	18
3.2	<i>Nasi Goreng Diplomacy</i> Philippines session, with collaborators Merla Provido (Iloilo) and Christie Marcaban (Camarines Sur), 2024.	21
3.3	<i>Nasi Goreng Diplomacy</i> Myanmar session, with collaborators Jasmine, Swe, Eric, Su, and Jo (Yangon and Irrawaddy region), 2024.	22
3.4	<i>Nasi Goreng Diplomacy</i> Malaysia session, with collaborator Aunt Mas, 2024.	23
3.5	<i>Nasi Goreng Diplomacy QR codes</i> , 2024.	24
4.1	Tiyan Baker, <i>Head Party</i> , 2022, durian, rope, string, fabric, thread, wire, coins, bells, beads, bamboo, vinyl, bowls and platters, sunflower seeds, fruit, resin teeth, hair, durian cookies, back scratcher, hand-rolled cigarette, ashtray, spoon, paper doilies.	29
4.2	Nathan Beard, <i>An exercise in disappointment</i> , from <i>Low Yield Fruit</i> , 2022, bronze, silicone, steel, paint.	31
4.3	Nathan Beard, <i>A letdown after all that dazzling packaging</i> , from <i>Low Yield Fruit</i> , 2022, bronze, silicone, steel, paint.	31
4.4	Khairullah Rahim, <i>Buah Dabysat</i> , 2022, video, 7:18 mins.	33
4.5	thesupersystem, <i>Hutan jauh diulangi, hutan dekat dikendana</i> , 2022, mixed media.	35
6.1	Ariana Chaivaranon, <i>Who's Afraid of Red, Yellow, Green, and Blue</i> , performed at deCentral Bangkok, Thailand, 2024.	56

6.2	Ariana Chaivaranon, <i>Who's Afraid of Red, Yellow, Green, and Blue</i> , performed at deCentral Bangkok, Thailand, 2024.	56
6.3	Ariana Chaivaranon, <i>Who's Afraid of Red, Yellow, Green, and Blue</i> , performed at deCentral Bangkok, Thailand, 2024.	57
6.4	Ariana Chaivaranon, <i>Who's Afraid of Red, Yellow, Green, and Blue</i> , performed at deCentral Bangkok, Thailand, 2024.	58
7.1	Fiona Hall, <i>Cash Crop</i> , 1998–1999, carved soap, painted banknotes, vitrine, 115 × 130 × 55 cm (vitrine dimensions).	65
7.2	Edwin Roseno, <i>Lucky Bamboo (Dracaena)</i> , from <i>Green Hypermarket</i> series, 2011–2012, digital print on aluminium, 40 cm (diam.). <i>Collection: Queensland Art Gallery   Gallery of Modern Art. © Edwin Roseno. Gift of the artist through the Queensland Art Gallery Foundation 2013.</i>	71
8.1	Ploy's organic boat noodle recipe, 'Why is the River Laughing?' Bangkok Design Week, February 2023.	78
8.2.1	Cooking, spices, and the boat for Ploy's organic boat noodles, 'Why is the River Laughing?' Lost Klong Collective, Bangkok Design Week, February 2023.	85
8.2.2	Cooking, spices, and the boat for Ploy's organic boat noodles, 'Why is the River Laughing?' Lost Klong Collective, Bangkok Design Week, February 2023.	86
8.2.3	Cooking, spices, and the boat for Ploy's organic boat noodles, 'Why is the River Laughing?' Lost Klong Collective, Bangkok Design Week, February 2023.	87
8.3.1	Rehearsal and performance of Stephen's sonic boat noodle soup, 'Why is the River Laughing?' Lost Klong Collective, Bangkok Design Week, February 2023.	89
8.3.2	Rehearsal and performance of Stephen's sonic boat noodle soup, 'Why is the River Laughing?' Lost Klong Collective, Bangkok Design Week, February 2023.	90
8.4	Shopping, cooking, and noodle boat for Pa Jiew's soup, 'Why is the River Laughing?' Lost Klong Collective, Bangkok Design Week, February 2023.	93
9.1	Bakudapan, <i>Cooking in Pressure</i> , 2017, embroidery on cotton fabric.	100
9.2	Bakudapan, <i>Cooking in Pressure</i> , 2017, performative dinner at OK Video, Jakarta.	102
9.3	Bakudapan, Mock-up of <i>Jurnal #2</i> .	102
9.4	Bakudapan, <i>Please Eat Wildly</i> , 2017, workshop, Yogyakarta.	103
9.5	Bakudapan, <i>Please Eat Wildly</i> , 2023, foraging workshop, Yamaguchi, Japan.	103
10.1	MMMEOW 'studio cooking space', RMIT University, Melbourne, December 2023.	106

10.2	Menu and proceedings of <i>MMMEOW</i> lunch at MFI ‘Making Connections’ residency, RMIT University, Melbourne, 15 December 2023.	112
10.3	A transcript of overlapping conversations heard in a five second grab of the ambient sound recording during <i>MMMEOW</i> lunch, including Stephen’s and Poppy’s prerecorded voice notes played back over the loudspeakers. The diagonal lines and bold words read downwards speculate on what two different people at different locations in the space may have eavesdropped.	115
11.1	Rodney Chatfield collecting mutton fish (abalone), Batemans Bay, NSW, March 1989.	128
11.2	Uncle Ossie Cruse barbequing mutton fish at the book launch for <i>Muttonfish: The Surviving Culture of Aboriginal People and Abalone on the South Coast of New South Wales</i> , Eden, NSW, c. 2005.	129
12.1	James Tylor, <i>Mai : Kaurna Contemporary Food</i> , detail, commissioned for <i>Aftertaste</i> , Fairfield City Museum & Gallery, Smithfield, New South Wales, 2023.	138
12.2	Lindsay Kelley, <i>Baking Strange</i> , installation detail, commissioned for <i>Aftertaste</i> , Fairfield City Museum & Gallery, Smithfield, New South Wales, 2023.	141
13.1	Mixing local rice, yeast, fruit, and stories at the <i>Chew Chew Spit Spit</i> workshop, 98B COLLABoratory, 4 August 2019.	149
13.2	Writing stories to chew and spit on rice paper with food ink, and adding to the rice wine mix, at the <i>Chew Chew Spit Spit</i> workshop, 98B COLLABoratory, 4 August 2019.	150
13.3	<i>A Jeepney Ride</i> , in which the collectives gather and ride, sharing stories of doing things together, 18 August 2019.	152
13.4	<i>A Jeepney Ride</i> after party, sharing food made by Party Yang, Goto Lechon Know, 18 August 2019.	153
14.1	<i>Colocasia</i> tubers stored underground in a mix of cow dung and ash, to deter pests, for use throughout the year (Joida, Karnataka), 2023.	160
14.2	Patented palm oil seeds were distributed across Indonesia, November 2023.	162
14.3	Keg de Souza, <i>Green Hell</i> , 2023, installation view at Inverleith House, Royal Botanic Garden Edinburgh, 2023.	164
14.4	Nathalie Muchamad, <i>Breadfruit, Mutiny and Planetarity</i> , 2024, installation view at 2024 Asian Art Biennial.	167
15.1	Keg de Souza <i>If a coconut falls</i> , 2024, detail of the publication cover.	174
15.2	Keg de Souza. <i>If a coconut falls</i> , 2024, page detail from the publication.	175

15.3	Keg de Souza, <i>If a coconut falls</i> , installation view at Sunaparanta Goa Centre for the Arts, Goa, India, 2024.	176
15.4	Keg de Souza, <i>If a coconut falls</i> , installation views at Sunaparanta Goa Centre for the Arts, Goa, India, 2024.	176
16.1	Alia Parker, Series of experiments in the bio-kitchen with aquafaba, agar-agar, textiles, glass petri dishes, and <i>Pleurotus ostreatus</i> , 2021.	183
16.2	Alia Parker, Aquafaba-agar foam preparation, whole roasted chickpeas, and seaweed for ‘How to Share a Multispecies Meal’, 2022.	186
17.1	Cassandra Tytler, <i>In Solidarity We Eat Dirt!</i> 2024, mixed media, cookies made using Lindsay Kelly’s Tierra Bendita Cookies recipe, in <i>Soiled</i> , Gallery25, Edith Cowan University, Perth, Western Australia.	195
17.2	Installation view of <i>Soiled</i> , Gallery25, Edith Cowan University, Perth, Western Australia, 2024. Actor pictured: Julia Hales.	196
17.3	Cassandra Tytler, <i>It Will Not be Pure</i> , 2024, video, 15:58 mins, in <i>Soiled</i> , Gallery25, Edith Cowan University, Perth, Western Australia.	197
17.4	Cassandra Tytler, <i>It Will Not be Pure</i> , 2024, video, 15:58 mins, in <i>Soiled</i> , Gallery25, Edith Cowan University, Perth, Western Australia. Actors pictured: Donita Cruz and Ella Hetherington.	198
17.5	Cassandra Tytler, <i>In Solidarity We Eat Dirt!</i> , 2024, mixed media, in <i>Soiled</i> , Gallery25, Edith Cowan University, Perth, Western Australia.	198

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**Marnie Badham** is an artist-researcher whose creative and critical research sits at the intersection of socially engaged art practices with a focus on Indigenous-settler collaboration, food-art-politics, and creative cartographies, coupled with expertise in participatory research methodologies and the politics of cultural measurement. Through aesthetic and dialogic forms of encounter and exchange, Badham's collaborative practice attends to relational ethics while bringing together disparate groups of people (artists, communities, industry, local government) in dialogue to examine and affect local issues. Badham is Associate Professor, School of Art RMIT University, Naarm/Melbourne, and a director for *Res Artis: Worldwide Network for Artist Residencies*.

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**Madeleine Collie** is a curator, writer, and researcher whose work engages with the politics of plants, poetics, and ecological relations in contemporary art.

Madeleine has led transdisciplinary research teams across art, design, science, public space and critical theory. She founded the Food Art Research Network in 2020 as a platform for peer learning and slow curatorial research. She is co-editor of *Earth Ethics: Art, Institutions and Regenerative Practices* (Monash University Publishing, 2025) and guest curator at Kin Museum, Sápmi.

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**Marnie Badham** is an artist-researcher whose creative and critical research sits at the intersection of socially engaged art practices with a focus on Indigenous-settler collaboration, food-art-politics, and creative cartographies, coupled with expertise in participatory research methodologies and the politics of cultural measurement. Through aesthetic and dialogic forms of encounter and exchange, Badham's collaborative practice attends to relational ethics while bringing together disparate groups of people (artists, communities, industry, local government) in dialogue to examine and affect local issues. Badham is Associate Professor, School of Art RMIT University, Naarm/Melbourne, and a director for *Res Artis: Worldwide Network for Artist Residencies*.

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**Francis Maravillas** is Programme Leader, BA (Hons) Art Histories and Curatorial Practices: Asia and the World, and Senior Lecturer at LASALLE College of the Arts, University of the Arts Singapore. His research focuses on the aesthetics and politics of food in contemporary Asian art. He is particularly interested in the performative, relational, and sensuous processes of the alimentary in art, its relationship to the everyday, and entanglement in politics of survival in a region marked by multiple, overlapping (post-)colonial histories and processes of globalization. Maravillas is widely published, and he co-curated *Bruised Food: A Living Laboratory* (2019) at RMIT University Gallery, Melbourne.

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**Rice Brewing Sisters Club** is an artist collective that was formed by Aletheia Hyun-Jin Shin, Hyemin Son, and Soyeon Ryu in 2018. The collective's work is based on a common interest in processes of 'social fermentation' as an artistic form and encompasses visual art, performance, creative writing, oral history, ecological thinking, and 'auntie wisdom'.

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# Acknowledgements

We acknowledge the First Peoples on whose unceded lands this book was conceived and prepared. We respectfully acknowledge their Elders, past and present, and recognize their enduring connection to Country, culture, and community.

As the *Tastes of Justice* editorial and curatorial collective, we offer our heartfelt thanks to all our extraordinary authors and artists for their generosity of thought, intellectual rigour, and imaginative engagement over several years. The diversity of perspectives explored in the book, from the conceptual and aesthetic, local and diasporic, to the praxial and political is a testament to a rich and under-researched field of creative practice in the region.

The genesis of this book and the ideas it carries can be traced to a series of earlier collaborative projects. These include *Bruised Food: A Living Laboratory*, an exhibition curated by Marnie Badham and Francis Maravillas at RMIT Gallery in Melbourne, Australia, in 2019, and *The Sounds of Justice Are Music to My Mouth*, an online listening and eating event curated and hosted by Madeleine Collie, Marnie Badham, and Stephen Loo in partnership with Liquid Architecture, the Food Art Research Network, and the Contemporary Art and Social Transformation (CAST) research group at RMIT University in 2021. The book structure was formed through our convening of an international double-panel presentation at the 2022 Art Association of Australia and New Zealand conference, similarly titled *Tastes of Justice: The Aesthetics and Politics of Food-Art Practices in Asia and Australia*.

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# I From Commensality to Cultural Difference

## A Critical Introduction

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The diverse food-art practices of Asia and Australia highlight critical issues relating to the aesthetics and politics of food in art as well as to the ethics of curating relational practices of commensality and hospitality in and across specific sites and contexts (Badham and Maravillas 2019). Indeed, food has long been a recurring motif in art of the region, one anchored in the popular valorization of the alimentary as a vital ingredient of sociality and an index of memory and identity (variously coded in cultural, gendered, and religious ways) in a region shaped by the legacies of overlapping colonial histories (Maravillas 2014). As performative, social, and material practices, food art engenders diverse forms of cultural expression and creatively mediates cultural and historical relations by tapping into transnational and diasporic connections to an imagined ‘home’ (Khorana 2018; Ang et al. 2018). These practices also give rise to a complex set of entanglements and exchanges that span the scales of the molecular, community, and global. Artists engaging with foodstuffs and foodways can draw our attention to pressing concerns of sovereignty, race, migration, gender, labour, and climate change, as well as the sensuous, affective, and material processes of the alimentary in art.

The curation and exhibition of these practices, however, also raise both practical and conceptual issues. Cooking and galleries rarely mix; foodstuffs are difficult to collect in museums; and eating always creates unpredictable experiences (Badham and Maravillas 2023). Both politics and aesthetics are challenged by the messy and transgressive processes of consuming and sharing food. Gallery exhibitions typically remove these practices from their cultural and community contexts, or they uncritically stage demonstrations of food cultures as spectacle. This flattens their sensory and social complexities (Badham and Maravillas 2019) and tends to overlook non-normative affects and dissonant perceptions (Loo 2022). At the same time, the multi-sensorial and affective dimensions of food-art practices have given rise to an epistemology modelled on taste rather than sight and an ethics predicated on complexities of hospitality in art (Maravillas 2014).

In this collection, we explore the ‘tastes of justice’ by probing the aesthetics and politics of food-art practices in, across, and between parts of Asia and Australia. In particular, the book examines the ways in which such practices have engendered new social, affective, and material frameworks for understanding the alimentary in art, the vital engagement with more-than-human relations,