



CIRCUMFERENCE 2019: Sourdough and knowledge sharing

On the first Thursday of September this year FOCUS and Food Organisation of Denmark facilitated their first CIRCUMFERENCE seminar. The seminar was held as a pre-event to this year's Food Festival in Aarhus. The tasting tent at Tangkrogen created a cozy and un-formal atmosphere around an

exciting day where flour, ideas, knowledge, residual products and finally sourdoughs circulated amongst students, producers, bakers, scientists and entrepreneurs.

The idea behind the seminar was to circulate knowledge about sourdough in an experimental and curious atmosphere across disciplines and institutional borders. Instead of a more traditional seminar, this day valued collaboration and practical involvement from all participants regardless of age or experience.

The day began with an interesting inspirational talk from Joshua Evans MPhil in History and Philosophy of Science at Oxford University. Joshua represented a scientific angle at the seminar. He introduced the tent to the notion biocultural diversity, and raised the interesting question - where does the global biodiversity come from in all kinds of fermentation? Explanations such as geography, cultural traditions and terroir was introduced and further two questions for reflection was raised: how does the diversity change, and where is the diversity going?

Nefissa Naguib, Professor of Anthropology followed Joshua with an inspirational yet different scientific focus. As an anthropologist she told stories about her field-work in Norwegian Breweries, where wild yeast was treated as almost human to inspire the audience to also think of fermentation, and in this case sourdoughs as something other than an object. With reference to Joshua's talk Nefissa also raised an interesting question for further reflection: what kinds of diversity is created in the specific cuisine when the production includes objects from other cultures and countries that contributes with their specific microbial culture?

From scientific contributions to more hands-on experience the day developed with the planned three sessions. Five workshop groups produced in total 35 different sourdoughs based on small inspirational talks. LOOP:Food lab introduced different bi-products from their partners that the workshop groups used in their first sourdough production in session one. In session two, taste-expert and chemist Lisbeth Ankersen, Innova Consult, introduced a chemical perspective on taste, and explained how ingredients influences the micro-organisms in the sourdough and in the end has a great deal of importance for the taste we experience when eating the bread made from the sourdough. The third session was introduced by anthropologist Susanne Højlund that inspired the workshop groups to "get to know their sourdough" more intimately. By sharing stories from the field of people's



Sourdough in the making



Lunch after the sessions, served kindly by Food Festival

relationship to their sourdoughs, Susanne explained how a sourdough in many ways represent much more than just a starter for baking. People actually build up relationships, share memories and include their sourdoughs in their family history. Following this talk, the groups all created a persona for their sourdough based on the special traits that the ingredients was imagined giving. All of the sessions where recorded by the graphical recorder Matie Bach Sørensen, and the final sourdoughs where drawn by Matie for further understanding of the personalities that the workshop groups had given to them.

Since the workshop was facilitated in collaboration with Food Organisation of Denmark and food festival, we wanted to share the experience with the visitors at the festival. 400 portions of sourdoughs were created from the workshop groups last personalized sourdoughs and distributed together with the "friend book" of the sourdoughs. It is our hope that the 400 small sourdough starters will thrive and live on amongst the interested visitors that took one home - we are following their new lives in the Facebook group: <https://www.facebook.com/Surdejshistorier-106239200765651/>

The afterlife of a number of the sourdoughs were also followed by the Taste for Life "Gastronauts" of Risskov Gymnasium that attended Circumference. In collaboration with the Rob Dunn Lab they have done tests and recorded how the different sourdoughs developed within the following 14 days after the seminar. Other attendees at the seminar also brought home some of the residual products and sourdoughs to work with, test and further develop.

A special thanks to Food Organisation of Denmark and Food Festival for hosting the event, Nefissa Naguib and Joshua Evans for contributing at Circumference, and to all the other attending people on the day who contributed with knowledge, insight and to a good and relaxed atmosphere. Lastly also, thank you to Taste for Life for supporting the seminar.

On the longer term we hope that CIRCUMFERENCE 2019 was basis for inspiration to conduct new research and innovative ideas for culinary entrepreneurship, new products and pedagogical practice.