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# Australia's Culinary 'Coming Out'



## Richard Robinson

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Once perceived as a colonial backwater shaped by convicts, bushmen, laconic working class, and ANZACs, Australia has now asserted itself as a nation with strong and admired cultural attributes; home to world-class cities, globally recognised personalities, citizens of growing sophistication and a range of admired cultural institutions. One intriguing observation is that this accumulation of cultural capital has been mobilised by Australia's emerging reputation in the realms of food and drink. Is Australia's cultural 'coming out' indebted to its contemporary food and beverage professionals?

Australia's European heritage, and consequent worldwide exposure, began in the late 18th century. Before European contact, Australia's knowledge of the world beyond its seaboard was limited to visits by the Macassan Indonesians fishing for trepang, or sea cucumber. In 1788, under pressure to alleviate pressure on their groaning penal system, exacerbated by the loss of the American