

EDIBLE ETHICS
THE ROLE AND RESPONSIBILITIES
OF AUSTRALIA'S FOOD MEDIA

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ABSTRACT

The role of food writers has changed – no longer are they concerned only with recipes and lifestyle issues. Today's food writers are faced with writing on a broad scope of topics that stretch from recipes and restaurant reviews through to health, nutrition, and social and ethical eating issues.

This study first outlines the professional role and responsibilities of food writers, and then examines the idea that, in a professional capacity, food writers are journalists. As such, food writers are faced with the responsibility of acting in the best interest of the public when they report information on food and food related issues. Yet, unlike their international colleagues, Australian food writers do not have their own code of ethics, although they do have an active professional association, the *Food Media Club of Australia*.

This study identifies the ethical dilemmas faced by the Australian food media, and looks at how they are currently dealing with issues such as accepting junkets, and the idea of food being a subjective topic. It then considers the potential consequences of unethical professional practices by food writers before recommending the development of a professional code of ethics for Australia's food media. Academic literature on the media and media ethics is considered, although there is little written specifically on the food media itself. Therefore, in order to ascertain specific insight and knowledge as well as some understanding of the current operations of Australia's food media, interviews with industry professionals and an ethics expert were conducted. Additionally, information was gathered from members of international food media associations. The various interviews revealed a common concern over the lack of information published by the food media on social and ethical food issues such as genetic modification, and sustainable agriculture. Consequently, after examining approaches used by food writers in the United Kingdom to publish such information, recommendations also include a more strident and proactive approach by the Australian food media in order to reach the general public with information that they, the food media, deem important to the future of Australian food.

DECLARATION

This dissertation contains no material that has been accepted for the award of any other degree or diploma in any university or other tertiary institution and, to the best of my knowledge and belief, contains no material previously published or written by another person, except where due reference has been made in the text of the thesis.

I give consent to this copy of my dissertation, when deposited in the Barr Smith Library at The University of Adelaide, being made available for photocopying and loan.

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