

Invitation to an Ethical Feast

Please note:

This is hand-crafted slow media, intended for leisurely consumption and contemplation. It isn't hyper-summarised haiku for the time-impooverished.

Find a quiet, fragrant hour to relax with a hot cup of tulsi tea, and allow the languorous phrasing and stately syntax to gently massage your imagination with wonder, consequence and possibility.

Read in peace – enjoy....

Entree

In the third week of November 2009, on the shores of Lake Pichola in Udaipur, Rajasthan, a delightful and thought-provoking event will take place: a celebration of food traditions, an open investigation of food security, and an immersion experience in one of the planet's most dynamic cultures.

Think of it as a **bring-your-own-plate symposium** or a **round table discussion party**. It's about agrarian innovation and the wondrous dimensions of Indian food culture. It's about nourishment for our minds and hearts. It's about how our personal worlds connect with the cumulative realities we are creating.

A free, week-long gathering featuring **3 Feasts** and **Symposium**

There will be dancing, singing, performance, food, presentations and participatory workshops. It will be rich with intellectual and edible intimacy, partaken by participants who are activist advocates for global and personal well-being.

We expect roughly half the guests will be from outside India, and the other half from Rajasthan and neighbouring states.

You can be a part of this event in three simple steps:

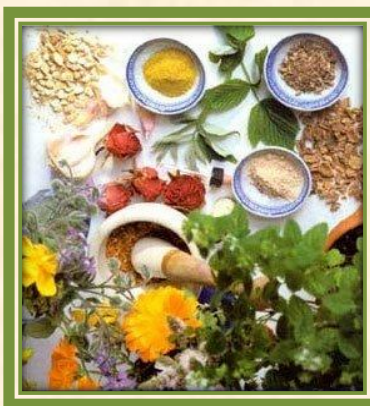
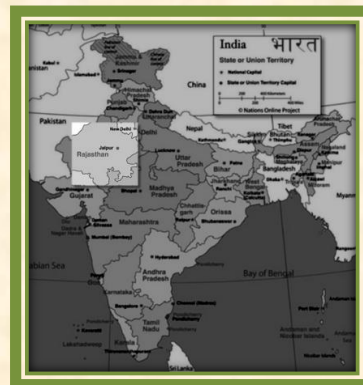
- [1] Imagine and prepare some form of contribution to the Feast while holding this in your thoughts:

I am what I eat. I am the change I want to see.

- [2] Register your intention to attend by replying to this email (register@ethicalfeast.in) or clicking to register on the website (<http://www.ethicalfeast.in>).

- [3] Make your way to Udaipur and join us....in person or online.

Above all else, this Ethical Feast is about being in each other's company and attending to the possibilities of the present.



du Jour

This invitation is extended from me to you, through the relations and mutual connections that inevitably link us.

The invitation process is open: feel free to pass on this invitation to those in your network who you think might appreciate it.

How to address you properly? It is challenging for me to write this invitation because it will circulate amongst my friends, family, and reach out further to acquaintances far beyond my personal network. By way of an opening, please allow me to introduce myself:

My name is John Brisbin, born to Lois and George nearly half a century ago in the United States. I grew up in small towns of the south, sailed and travelled, explored the production and meaning of media, learned some information technology, and exiled myself from the US during the first Bush regime. I'm now a citizen of Australia, a father, and the husband of a remarkable woman.

I'm passionate about food as a source of sensuous delight, and as a site of foundational ethics. My fondest childhood memories are of the kitchen table ringed by family and friends, the table bearing abundance pulled fresh from the garden...the conversation stirred into an energetic broth of ritual and play. For me the table is a place of enduring nourishment.

I've found many such **tables** in many lands over the years, including the fine banquet halls of the very privileged, the extraordinary festival tents of a Rajasthani village celebrating for three days straight, and the energetic, contemporary dining rooms of the middle class.

And now, perhaps catalysed by my visits to India over the past several years, I'd like to contribute something of **value** to the future that we are all shaping.

This event is my inspiration. Me? Mine? Of course there is no **me** as such. There is a community of selves involved...from the quiet advisors in my own heart to the network of friends and family who have encouraged me to develop the idea of this Ethical Feast over the past couple of years.

And circling outward even further: this is the first Ethical Feast with this name and format. Perhaps it is the first of many? With the publication of this invitation, the Ethical Feast meme is now yours as much as mine. So **[I]** becomes **[we]** and the possibilities grow exponentially.

If you deal with society, you must accept its ways, for its ways are your ways. Your needs and demands have created them. Your desires are so complex and contradictory – no wonder the society you create is also complex and contradictory.
- Sri Nisagardatta Maharaj, *I Am That*



Mains

Why India?

Over the years it has been my privilege to visit India and learn something of her soul and secrets from dear friends. Astonishing, advanced, archaic, and antithetical to complacent notions of **common sense**, India defies reductive depictions or descriptions. If you are Indian, or have experienced the country deeply, enough said.

If you only know India vicariously from its images, myths or media, then it's like reading the menu without sipping the soup. The Ethical Feast might be a great opportunity for you to finally immerse yourself in the great river of tradition, contradiction and surprise that irrigates this primal land and its people.

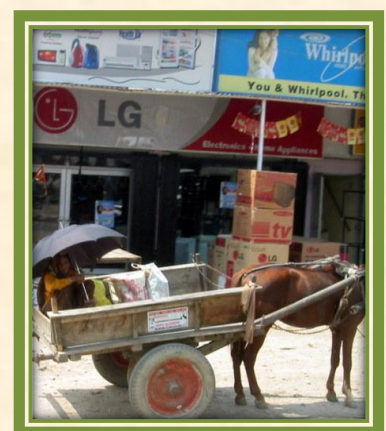
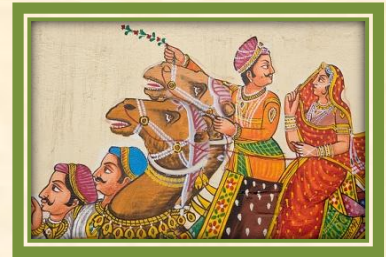
Looking forward and outward, I believe the future that India fosters is of great importance to the whole world. Consider the dilemma of a rising Indian consumer class that could reasonably approach 300 million people by the time a baby of today is ready to get a credit card.

Indians have every reason to wish for the modern conveniences enjoyed in Europe and the USA. Yet imagine the consumptive shock of adding another entire USA to a planet already under strain to satisfy our seemingly insatiable material hungers.

What are the possibilities for a convivial middle class India? Can the world's "colonial winners" legitimately ask the world's "aspirational poor" to respect ecological limits? Limits the West has so egregiously flouted? Regardless of what Europe or the US may say, will the energetic and upwardly-mobile developing world pause to consider the enduring legacy of the first-world's consumerist exploits before impetuously embracing the same future?

Many early invitees to the Ethical Feast have lectured, authored, and lobbied on these concerns at far deeper levels of sophistication than I suggest here. Yet our most fundamental challenge is ultimately personal. No mountain of intellectual exercise or activist effort can bridge the distance we personally have to cover every day. Personally. We will come together as equals, as peers, to explore the truth that **we are what we eat**. We compare notes and witness each other's journey to "be the change we want to see." This is the core of the Ethical Feast experience.

It really matters what future we all choose. The path forward appears to demand the full engagement of our hearts and a sensuous discipline of our appetites. What a delightful way to explore this territory together: around a congenial table, sharing each others' strengths and questions.



Why an Ethical Feast?

Ethical and *Feast*, like fat and thin, are two words that appear to repel each other, creating a sense of polar tension. *Feast* conjures an image of unrestrained abundance, while *Ethical* is all about empathic constraint.

This polarised tension is constructive: it invites the emergence of a third position. Perhaps, like me, you are not shy about holding contradictory ideas within a single breath...thus providing the moment in which novel insights can arise unexpectedly from unresolved dualism. I find that powerful paradoxes can be endlessly generative.

Ethical +/- Feast

Ethics are required for an awakened life. Yet there is a spectrum of ethical practice. Given too much head and not enough heart, ethics become extreme and resolve into life-defeating ascetic abstraction. Given too little rigour, ethics become relativistic pabulum. Somewhere on the spectrum is the powerful, resonant territory of the awakened spirit: a place where the psychic health of both the individual and collective is maximised.

A feast is a celebration of plenty. Yet without moral discipline the feast descends to gluttony. Abundance is also a demonstration of competence. When we deliver a rich harvest, our thanksgiving tables are groaning with the fruits of our labours. Otherwise we have failed to truly engage with the universal richness that abides in all lands. Someplace between these extremes is the grateful joy of plenty. This must be where the physical health of people and the environment is maximised.

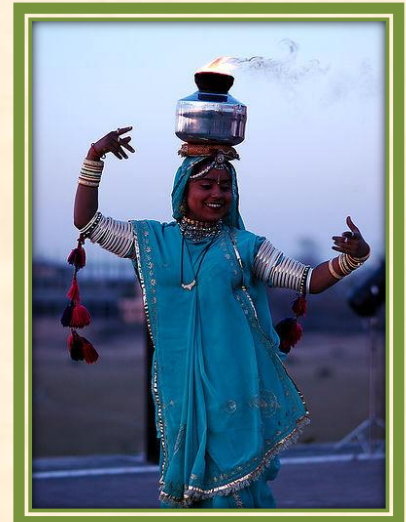
Now comes a unifying potential...Many of us are preoccupied by (1) a concern over right and wrong, and (2) a devotion to staying fed two or even three times **every day**. Yes?

For me, the circumstances of daily life mean that I focus on the pragmatic and immediate issue of my belly.... the vast complexities of global food and consumer systems is quite beyond the reach of a daily contemplation. What to do? Pretend my belly is too small to make a difference?

What about these dinner party conversation starters:

- In seeking change, how can we stoke our individual passions, yet move lightly, gently...cultivating strength through a respectful sense of discipline and restraint?
- Starting with our own careers, how extensively can we cultivate right livelihoods?
- How can societies learn to spark a self-reinforcing cycle of abundant nutrition and health?

Where do you wish to start the conversation? This Ethical Feast seeks to be an unfettered celebration of the liminal in service of the literal.



The Feasts

Three Feast events are planned for the week-long symposium. These events will attract details, assume variant shapes, transform themselves, and ultimately emerge on the day with a specificity that cannot be described or predetermined... your only option is to experience them!

Feast 1: Feeding the senses

In cooperation with **David Crow** and **Udaipur Shakti Works**... a gastronome's delight and an experience of the healing powers of aroma.

In this deliciously edifying session, David Crow, Mewari chefs, and local Ayurveds will discuss and demonstrate the salient health concepts in the local cuisine and the critical roles of medicinal herbs, aromas and local seasonal produce.

We will have an afternoon of food preparation and investigation, enlivened by passionate and insightful experts, with an open invitation to participate.

Main Course: Ayurvedic Mewari Meal

SPECIAL performance: Devotional music and dance by local Gunis (indigenous healers) (*Co-organized with Jagran Jan Vikas Samiti*)

LOCATION: Udaipur (in a sensuous venue)

DATE: 18 Nov

Feast 2: Farming the Traditions

In cooperation with **Ganesh Purohit and family**, with the people of Jhadol, and **Jagran Jan Vikas Samiti**.

What does it take to fill the bellies of an entire clan? How to prep and deliver food in huge quantities and still retain the rasa?

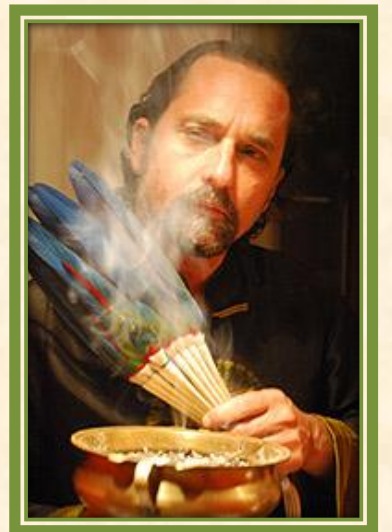
This feast will be cooked under a huge tent. Gather around pit-fired pots big enough to hold 100 litres of ghee. It's village feast cooking: local, seasonal, direct and delicious.

There will be farm visits, tours of medicinal plant gardens, cultivation cooperatives in traditional holy forests as well as school gardens and conversations with alternative farmers.

MENU: selected from Dal Bati, Churma or Laddu, Lapasi-Pudi, Maize Chapati, Dhokla –Dal, Maize Jajriya, Maize Hajya

SPECIAL performance: Roots of Gypsy Dance by Sayari Gypsy Circus (*Co-organized with Sayari Gypsy Troupe and artistic director Phil Tapp*)

LOCATION: Jhadol and surrounds.



Feast 3: Eating for the future

In cooperation with **Shikshantar** and **Quantum Productions**

India's surging affluence means a new food culture is evolving to suit the tastes and the lifestyle of the growing middle class. In this Feast, we will cluster into groups of 3 to 5 and join a host family to experience a new kind of Indian dinner.

This will be rich creole cooking: you'll find sumptuous samples from traditional favourites on the same plate as fresh jazz experiments at the borders of convenience and a global palate.

Freshen your sense of what is possible and consider how global suburbs may be the new frontier of future-shifting.

LOCATION: Udaipur (suburbs) **SOUNDTRACK:** Quantum Productions

The Pot-Luck Symposium

The three feasts will form one portion of the agenda. The other portion will be "bring your own plate" round tables: presentations and events proffered by the local and international participants.

Everyone who attends the Ethical Feast is invited to bring a presentation, lead a discussion, organise a debate, or hold a workshop; each according to their own gifts and passions.

These presentation and workshops will be aligned over the week to exercise our thoughts between the three peak Feast moments. We will make sympathetic clusterings as we get closer to the event.

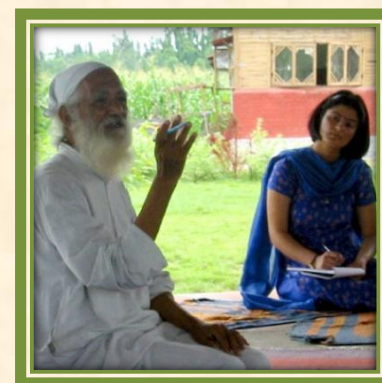
Presentations and workshops will be held in a range of facilities...from open-air tents and ashram gardens to haveli courtyards and conference rooms. Upon request, we can assist in organising the on-ground logistics.

You are welcome to post a message to the list of invitees (through the website) to recruit co-presenters or to gauge interest in your topic.

Documentation

The on-ground event will belong first of all to those who attend. In addition, there will be a profusion of media capture and interlaced remote connections. We are as likely to encounter VoIP video interviews and audacious twittering as the completely media-free respite of temporary autonomous zones.

Improvisational recordings and documentation will serve as memory sticky paper. The website will be a stable reference repository for the benefit of presenters and the actors who are remote in time and space.



Daily Specials

For up-to-date listings, please see the website at: <http://www.ethicalfeast.in> At the time of printing, this is a schedule of people and the “bring your own plate” contributions we expect to be partaking in:

TITLE	CHEF/GUEST	PLATE TYPE
Tulsi dreaming: the Cuppa for Another World	Christopher Dean	Presentation
A presentation of the films "Der Tag Broten" and "One Man One Cow"	house	Film
A Food Bank in the Land of Plenty: Experiences and Insights from a Practitioner	Lois Brisbin	Remote Presentation
Second Lives and the Fractal Determinism of "You are what you eat"	John Brisbin	Workshop
Tribal healing and medicinal plant cultures	Bhanwar Dhabai	Presentation
Seed Saving around the world: stories and passions	Michel and Jude Fanton	Presentation
Groundwater contamination and analytical models for rural health	Jagdish Purohit	Field Trip
Guni Mela: village wise people, demonstration and market	Rashtriya Guni Mission	Market
Air travel carbon offset investigation and options	Richard Jones	Ethical Logistics
tba	Kathy Sokol	Presentation
Greening Mahila Mandal: Zero Waste Designs for Campus Environments, Human Development, and Social Evolution	Prem Dixit	Presentation / Field Trip
Replanting the Global Garden	David Crow	Workshop
Details in the Heart's Gaze	Caroline Lieber	Visual Documentation
Reclaiming the Lake: ethical development in Udaipur	Jheel Sanrakshan Samiti	Presentation
Alternative Economic Strategies for Evolutionary Communities	Sergio Lub	Workshop
Gandhian metaphysics in the globalised village	Kishore Sant	Lecture
Soundscapes for Psychic Nutrition	Nishant Peralta	Sound Track/Poetry
Sustainable food and education in Udaipur: learnings for a transitioning future	Manish Jain	Field Trip
Rajasthan performance arts & gypsy circus	Sayari	Performance/Mixed
Rebooting Evolution: memetic trigger points in the body politic	David Kubiak	Presentation
Performance/Presentation: "Feeding Minds - Food For All"	Sandro Dernini	Performance/Mixed
Colour, Water: Abstract Channels and Poetic Actions	Rita Dixit-Kubiak	Performance/Mixed
Theatre laboratory: Wisdom of Water	Guillaume Brugman	Performance/Mixed
Transforming the public to the personal	Graham Bird	Remote Performance/Mixed
Food security and the practice of resilient communities	..tba..	Lecture
Buddhist economics and a radical regime of peace	..tba..	Lecture
Daily yoga sessions	house	workshop
Morning openings/evening closings	house	Performance/Mixed

As the group of attendees grows, so does the collective abundance of the “bring your own plate” round table symposium. What will you bring? What would you be delighted to discover on the agenda? Here are some ideas already in the suggestion/potential box:

pottery for peace
intensive cooking classes
dancing tutorials
voice lessons
carriage and tent making

incense-making
historical tours
activist volunteering
gypsy arts
open schooling

water treatment technologies
indigenous permaculture
healthy food systems for cities
Gandhian philosophy
Pushkar Camel Fair



House rules

Let me clarify:

Dogmas: This event is not associated with (or beholden to) any religious sect or tradition. All are welcome and all beliefs are respected. This is a condition of tolerance that is assumed to exist in our party at all times.

Dollars: There is no commercial empire paving the way for this event. Although we are being personally supported by the generosity of friends, we have committed to a decidedly non-commercial format and are actively exploring how much can be achieved on a barter basis.

Do-ers: When I say “we” it starts with the multiple personalities in my own head, and then enlarges to my life partner Caroline, intimate friends, and the advisory board (in formation). You can see more about them on the website. Udaipur Shakti Works is the primary partner in India, and BoaB interactive is supporting the initial production.

Double-takes: Note that, in contrast to the usual sort of symposium, the Ethical Feast intentionally seeks to lower the power differentials between attendees. This is a strategy to promote the unexpected emergence that only happens in a complex, dynamic system.

I’d like to feel I was amongst friends and guests at a large dinner party...not attending a show where there is a stage and audience seating. There are “big names” invited and there are people whose listing in the telephone book is their only claim to public fame.

(...at the table, are we not all joined at the belly?)

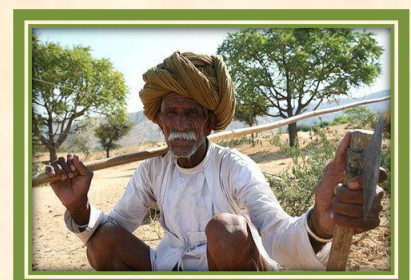
In the context of the Ethical Feast, we celebrate our common humanity and our life’s achievements are shared freely as gifts.

Costs (prix un-fixe)

TRAVEL: You’ll need to make your own arrangements to get to Udaipur.

PER DIEM: Once you arrive, your daily out-of-pocket expenses could be very modest indeed. We’ll have some basic plans organised to make things simple for you, or you can pick and choose to suit your tastes and experience level. We will arrange simple healthy fare for meals in between the Feasts.

FEASTS: The cost for joining each of the Feasts is based on your capacity to pay. It is my goal to ensure that everyone who comes to a Feast is able to join in, regardless of their capacity to pay. The caveat is that each person brings *something* to the table! (and maybe a little bit extra?)



SYMPOSIUM: The symposium events are generally free unless the session organiser/presenter asks for a fee to cover expenses. Consider this question for your own presentation/contribution so people can be prepared.

ACCOMMODATION: Your accommodation can be selected on a scale: US\$10 - \$70/night, or you can make your own arrangements.

TRANSPORT: Group movements will be arranged. Other logistical provisions will be handled to the best of their abilities by the (self) organising event committee (want to join?).

DEADLINE: Reservations for the Ethical Feast are invited until 15 October 2009, at which time we must close the doors to consolidate logistics.

SUPPORT: Look, this is a personal thing. There is no great cause or campaign to support. But if you are moved to ease this event into reality though financial (or other) means, please let me know via the website.



<http://www.ethicalfeast.in>



<http://maps.google.com/maps?t=h&hl=en&ie=UTF8&ll=24.574485,73.68041&spn=0.018226,0.034547&z=15>

I am the change I want to see.
I am what I eat.



THIS IS ORIGINAL INVITATION NUMBER [000] OF 108

