

SMALLUST.COM  
FOOD I

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# Small Just



# FIGHT



*'tis the season  
for overeating*



'Tis the season to be swapping lunches and dinners for hair of the dogs and canapés. It's December, the time for end-of-year break-ups and workplace Christmas parties, and the month where the healthy diet pyramid gets inverted and our diets seem to revolve around 'Sometimes Food'. So what better time for Small Lust to dedicate an entire month to Food!

For some, the first weeks of summer mean calorie counting, fitness regimes and the sudden urge to fit into a crocheted one-piece. For Small Lust, it means phone calls to our mothers dropping hints about shortbread and mince tarts, and the belief – nay, fact – that two coats of Johnson&Johnson Holiday Skin disguises an extra dress size.

December is choc-a-bloc with religious holidays that revolve around food. Chanukah, the Jewish festival of lights, runs from December 5 to 12, and is marked with family feasts, potato pancakes, and doughnuts. Eid ul-Adha, the biggest feast on the Muslim calendar, is on December 20, and involves lots of meat dishes to commemorate Abraham's run in with Allah. Christmas, which originated in the wintery Northern Hemisphere many years ago on December 25, gives most people their year's worth of dried fruit, nuts and poultry in one day.

It's ironic that all these holidays are about sacrifice and feeding the poor, but you couldn't find another two weeks where people celebrated excess, and consumed and wasted so much food. Candy cane, anyone?

To kick start our first week on Food, this week we feature SecondBite, a Melbourne initiative that's curbing retail food waste and bringing lovely fresh food to people in need. So if we take a leaf out of SecondBite's book, while it's inevitable that we'll all suffer a bout or two of indigestion this month, for goodness' sake let's all try and avoid wasting good food. Or at least sneak a doggie bag to your Christmas party for lunch the next day...



WASTE  
DON'T  
WANT  
NOT.

*working for  
a 'waste not, want not' society:  
megan gannon interviews secondbite's  
katy barfield*

“We’re a logistics business. We just ensure that the food doesn’t go in the bin, it gets redistributed to people who need it, and that it’s nutritious.”



SecondBite volunteers preparing fresh, nutritious meals



SecondBite supplies fresh lunches for the Choir of Hard Knocks' rehearsals

For people living in cosmopolitan inner-city suburbs in today's booming economy, when it comes to food, you'd think their motto would be 'Eat, drink, and be merry!'. But for every professional in a renovated terrace house, there's probably many more people struggling to get one or two square meals a day.

Melbourne community initiative SecondBite is doing wonders to bridge the gap between the 'haves' and the 'have nots' by rescuing fresh food that would otherwise be thrown out, and redistributing it to people in need.

SecondBite's executive director Katy Barfield said the group started two years ago when volunteers began collecting surplus food from Melbourne's Prahran Market and delivering it to Sacred Heart Mission in St Kilda. The group's simple but efficient business model, together with ever-increasing support from local retailers, means that SecondBite is on track to transport 16 tonnes of fresh food this month. From January to October this year, SecondBite rescued and distributed over 95 tonnes of surplus fresh food – enough for more than 190,000 meals – and 5,000 litres of milk.

SecondBite supports a variety of agencies that might prepare between 10 and 400 meals a day for their clients, and would not otherwise access such good-quality food for free.

"We're a logistics business. We just ensure that the food doesn't go in the bin, it gets redistributed to people who need it, and that it's nutritious," Katy said.

She said the demand on community agencies was increasing as house prices and the standard of living rose in inner-city suburbs.

"The social divide gets greater and greater as the economy booms and new people move into those areas," she said. "[South Melbourne] is an area where house prices are going up and a different demographic is moving in. You've got million-dollar houses, but you've also still commission houses and high rises."

Katy said it was natural that local retailers would want to cater for this new and affluent demographic, but it meant the lower socio-economic residents were being shut out.

"So you've got the local supermarkets and milk bars with their prices going through the roof, and all those \$3 cafes – they've gone, they're now all bistros and fine dining," she said.

Bargain hunters all know that the best time to score cut-price groceries is right on closing time, but what happens to the leftovers that won't make it to the next trading day?

"There's all this food going into landfill – \$5.2 billion a year and that's just in Australia," Katy said.

"There's no reason why all food that's edible can't be given to agencies – there's plenty of it out there and there's plenty of need."

Katy said SecondBite was committed to reducing the amount of food that went to landfill, but said its policy was to only collect and deliver fresh, good quality food.

"We try to impart to people that we're not a rubbish tip for [retailers] to get rid of refuse, because that costs us and we don't want to throw anything away ourselves," she said.

It's quite a sight to see the SecondBite volunteers carefully sorting through fruit and vegetables each Saturday at the South Melbourne and Prahran markets. Katy said they would start a fruit and veggie pick up at the Queen Victoria Market in the New Year.

"We only take food that's good quality and able to be eaten, but won't make it through to the next opening day."

Katy said the rising cost of fresh fruit and vegetables was hitting middle-class shoppers, so for lower socio-economic groups they were almost luxury items.

"When we take the food to the agencies they are so grateful for having fresh nutritious food. And if the way the fruit goes off the soup vans is anything to go by, then it's much needed and it's much appreciated," she said.

"It's an urban myth that people who are doing it a bit tough don't want to eat well – they do, they're human beings and we're all the same, there's no difference."

Katy said fresh, nutritious food brought so many benefits to people who were "living rough" and exposed to the elements.

"Whilst it's not the answer it's definitely part of the solution – if you can give people the nutrients that will put their bodies in better shape then that's going to help them feel better."

The beauty of SecondBite is that it delivers raw ingredients to various agencies – from soup kitchens and homeless shelters to refugee support centres – so they can use the food as they desire.

"The North Melbourne Asylum Seekers Resource Centre deals with a certain cultural mix of people. We deliver the fresh ingredients and that gives them the dignity to create a meal that they want to create for themselves," Katy said. "On the other hand the Sacred Heart Missions' clients are predominantly white Australian, and again they can create the kind of meals which that cultural mix will enjoy."

Katy said SecondBite was committed to enhancing the services that were already out there in the community, for example by enabling a soup kitchen to serve fresh, homemade vegetable soup instead of powdered soup.

"We don't ever profess to knowing more about the individual clients than the agencies themselves," she said.

Despite only working directly with the agencies, SecondBite has still been able to promote a sense of 'community' from retailer to recipient. Its "Help Yourself" project has been nominated for Civic Project of the Year in St Kilda, which enables community groups and individuals to collect food at a weekly drop-off.

"We're trying to rebuild that community feel – this is food that's been collected from that community of Port Phillip, it's stored at the City of Port Phillip and it services the City of Port Phillip clients," Katy said.

"Why that works from our point of view is that it's very economical to run because all the people come to one place, but also there's that 'community' element," she said.

SecondBite now has 110 volunteers, three paid employees, and will add a second refrigerated van on the road this month.

"It's quite a big operation now, and we're only limited by our resources – there's that much food, there are that many people in need, so the only thing that limits us is the infrastructure to get that food from A to B," Katy said.

Link:

[secondbite.org](https://secondbite.org)

Find out how you can volunteer or donate to SecondBite

"It's an urban myth that people who are doing it a bit tough don't want to eat well – they do, they're human beings and we're all the same, there's no difference."



Collecting leftovers at the Prahran Market

**TELLING  
THE CONSCIENTIOUS  
OBJECTORS  
FROM  
THE FUSSY EATERS**  
BY MEGAN GANNON

Long gone are the days of 'beef for the men and chicken for the ladies' – today's chefs, caterers and waiting staff need a PhD in dietetics to talk the talk with medical and ethical food avoiders. If you've ever been jealous of a fellow passenger receiving VIP service on a cattle class flight, here are some of the terms and conditions that might just have ensured special attention...

#### **Anaphylaxis**

Having a severe allergy to foods including nuts, peanuts, eggs, or shellfish can cause some people's immune and respiratory systems to completely shut down in a matter of minutes. In short, if a patron pulls the 'nut allergy' card when you're waiting on their table, don't call their bluff. More and more people are becoming prone to food-induced anaphylaxis, hence the presence of 'May contain traces of nuts' on everything from mayonnaise to meat pies these days.

#### **Coeliac Disease**

If you're a Coeliac (pronounced *silly-ack*) you can't digest gluten, which means sticking to a diet devoid of normal bread, pastries, pizza, pasta and beer. The life-long condition is caused by an allergic reaction to gluten, and manifests in an inflammation of the small bowel's lining. Gluten is a protein found mainly in wheat and to a lesser extent in rye and barley. For macho Coeliacs fearing a social life restricted to wine coolers, help is at hand: check out the gluten-free brews on offer at [SillyYak.com.au](http://SillyYak.com.au).

#### **Freeganism**

Freegans focus on acquiring foods (and indeed all goods in general) other than purchasing them, which they believe contributes to an exploitative, capitalist society. Their motivation is usually political as well as personal and financial, and hence they're also known as 'urban gleaners', 'skip dippers' and 'dumpster divers'. Late-night raids on supermarket dumpsters help reclaim and reuse some of the 17 billion tonnes of solid 'waste' that ends up in landfill each year in Australia. Rest assured there'll be stories to tell at every freegan dinner party.

#### **Lactose intolerance**

Also called hypolactasia, it describes an intolerance to lactose, a sugar found in all mammals' milk. Symptoms include nausea, cramping, bloating and diarrhea. Still considered a fallacy by some Italian barristas who refuse to offer soy milk in their cafes. Apparently 70% of adult humans are considered lactose intolerant, but let's remember that many African and Asian cultures don't consume milk beyond infancy. Some people who suffer intolerance to cow's milk are able to digest goat and sheep's milk.

#### **Macrobiotic**

A diet of mostly whole grains, beans, fruit and vegetables in their natural state. Modern macrobiotics is influenced by Japan's largely unprocessed diet and cooking styles. Avoids all highly processed and refined foods – that means no white sugar or flour, or stimulants like alcohol, coffee and chocolate. Not all macrobiotics are vegetarians as some consume fish. Yoko Ono, Gwyneth Paltrow and Madonna have done wonders to champion the cause.

#### **Vegetarianism**

Broadly speaking, a diet excluding any bits and pieces from dead animals, including poultry, game, fish, shellfish and crustacea. Vegetarianism may be taken on for many reasons: ethical ("It's wrong to kill animals"), environmental ("Don't destroy forests for cattle grazing"), and religious (including most Buddhists and Hindus). It's always interesting to challenge an ethical vegetarian as to whether they eat lollies and cheese. Many sweets contain gelatine (which is extracted from the collagen inside animals' connective tissues) and most cheeses contain rennet (extracted from the stomachs of young calves).

Variants on vegetarianism include **ovo-lacto vegetarianism** – discount eggs and dairy from the diet as well, and **fruititarianism** – only eating the fruit, nuts and seeds which can be gathered without killing the plant from which it is taken.

#### **Veganism**

A stricter form of vegetarianism, often adopted for ethical reasons, and generally a nightmare to invite to a dinner party. Most vegans avoid using (as well as consuming) any animal products, so that means saying 'no' to leather, fur, and feathers, and avoiding anything that's been tested on animals.

JUST LIKE MADONNA

Next week:  
The cupcake revolution – bringing back baking

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