

# HELSINKI STREET EATS



By Bryan Boyer & Dan Hill  
With Ville Tikka, Nuppu Gävert,  
Tea Tonnov & Kaarle Hurtig

# Menu

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▀▀ The story of street food in Helsinki is inextricably tied to food in Finland in general, and so caught up in deep currents of regulation, politics, commerce, national identity and culture. As food is cultural artefact as well as sustenance and resource, its story is a manifestation of the nation defining itself, of becoming an industrialised,

connected and increasingly urban nation, and of Helsinki defining itself as a contemporary European city.

Imagining potential futures of street food in Helsinki, we first step back to consider the broader developments related to food and drink in the context of the last 150 years. While this short publication cannot

# WHY STREET FOOD? WHY HELSINKI? WHY NOW?

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go into the depth this history genuinely warrants the concept of 'path dependency' tells us that our futures are likely to emerge from ingredients already present in our culture today.

We also know that change can be sudden and rapid, and that street food can be a volatile, even mercurial, part of culture,

capable of changing very quickly and with great effect. But in uncovering the past, we may find traditional approaches or long-forgotten precursors which are ripe for reinvention.

Street food is interesting because it is highly visible, accessible, and a carrier for cultural change. While the 'new Nordic

'City Hall Square', 1820. The tori, or marketsquare, has remained the focus of Helsinki's street food for centuries, but should it be the only place? Ravintolapäivä suggests a range of alternatives ...



cuisine' with its focus on local and seasonal ingredients is radically re-shaping how people think about fine food around the world, and while the City's culinary culture strategy will enable organic food to flourish within the city's päiväkoti (daycare) system, the effects of these trends and strategies are initially within a limited ecosystem, only addressing particular strands of society and so with a slow trickle-down to wider culture.

However, street food—late night grub, coffee stands, mobile kitchens, kiosks, hole-in-the-wall sandwich joints, market stalls—affects a wider culture through its sheer everydayness. It is everywhere and forms an integral part of our public life, our civic spaces, our streets, our neighbourhoods. Street food also tends to require smaller investments, with individual business operating at a smaller scale and allowing innovation to happen at an accelerated pace. Seen from this view, it is a breeding ground for innovation that can percolate upwards. The speed of street food is exciting, but can it be more than fast food?

While street food can affect culture, it is also a representation of our culture through its diversity, quality, footprint, and personality. It helps individuals articulate their

own culture, and allows visitors an easy way into foreign cultures.

Helsinki has been chosen as a way of filtering the subject matter and focusing the conversation. In terms of quantities and attention it represents the epicentre of Finland's food systems. While there are many other food traditions within the different regions and cultures that comprise Finland, as a 'pocket metropolis' the reasonable scale Helsinki can work as a prism through which to observe these systems.

Sitra is interested in understanding the systems of everyday life, in order to assess how best to support, influence, and invest into them to enable a greater capacity for sustainable well-being.

As Sitra's Strategic Design Unit, we are interested in exploring the possibility of tangible prototypes to catalyze strategic impact. We pursue this through several tools and approaches, including the 'studio', a week long engagement designed to distill diverse inputs into a clear vision. A core component of the studio is the 'challenge briefing', a document produced to unpack a particular problem area. This deliberately stops short of framing detailed questions, as those will emerge through subsequent prototyping.



We cannot  
understand the  
potential futures  
of street food in  
Helsinki without  
considering  
developments over  
the last 150 years



**This particular document is a form of ‘challenge briefing’ presently without a studio, a summary of thinking, case studies and research in order to better understand the architecture of the problem. We hope that it provides a few clues as to core issues and next steps, as well as uncovering precursors, but is not intended to directly engage with policy, governance or the market at this point. That will follow as our work on this topic evolves.**

**But we start with some stories.**



# FOUR SHORT STORIES

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## Esplanadi, 1938

Snow falls softly on Esplanadi, dulling the noise from a passing truck. German soldiers are heading north, fresh off the SS Ariadne passenger steamer puffing smoke into the cold night air as it sits in the South Harbour.

The bar at the Kämp Hotel is warm, noisy and packed by comparison, full of journalists, academics, politicians, wealthy industrialists and their wives, and what is still a relatively new breed in Finland: international tourists here to see the ‘Daughter of the Baltic’. There is much chatter about the rumour that Greta Garbo has been seen vacationing in the Åland Islands. It’s early evening. Cigarette smoke curls around the bar. Helsinki’s bourgeoisie are picking at canapés to accompany their cocktails, vol-au-vents prepared by the hotel’s French cooks.

Across the grass and gravel promenade outside Kämp, the glass terrace of the Savoy restaurant glows golden in the dark sky. Savoy is a year old and still the talk of the town. The restaurant had been architect Alvar Aalto’s first commission

in Helsinki, designed as a jewel to top the ‘Industrial Palace’ building. A liveried black porter welcomes in well-heeled members of the Helsinki set, shuttling to and fro in a series of small elevators from ground floor to the birch-veneered interiors above. The menu is also French-inspired, but peppered with the first dashes of a Finnish fine cuisine: boiled halibut with hollandaise sauce; smoked salmon with spinach.

Down below Savoy, a man sways on a street corner, his hat and heavy overcoat casting a bulky shadow across the snow as he glugs pontikka from a bottle. The prohibition act had been rescinded in Finland a few years earlier, but years of illegal distilling of pontikka has left a healthy—or unhealthy—surplus of lethal home-brew on the market. He draws a few admonishing glances from the elegant ladies chattering in the doorway of Kämp, of which he is entirely oblivious.

The snow falls...

## Ullanlinna, 1960

The woman shifts nervously from foot to foot outside the restaurant's doorway. Above her, a green neon sign sputters into life, casting the restaurant's name in flowing script across the elegant square, although the sun seems to have no intention of disappearing anytime soon. Still, it was late, and he was late.

She dares not go into the restaurant without him. This is not simply a matter of etiquette, or timidity on her part; it's the law. In Finland, women are not allowed in restaurants unless accompanied by a man, so she waits. She finds this faintly offensive, as she's heard that the reasoning is that women in a restaurant or bar on their own could only be there for one thing, and it wasn't the food.

Dancing isn't allowed either, for similar reasons; this she finds more ridiculous than offensive. There had been some progress, however: after the Helsinki Olympics, Alko, who set such rules, had deigned to allow the introduction of something equally licentious: the bar stool.

That the new owner of the restaurant is a woman, Mrs. Paukka, is an irony also not lost on her, but it makes no difference. For all her progressive attitudes, the woman had never been to a restaurant before, just as no-one in her family had. But she'd heard about Mrs. Paukka's new menu—in particular the crispy fried Baltic herrings—and had pestered the man about going for weeks.

The sharp new kiosk across the square, owned by the restaurant and the only one in the country with an alcohol license, is full of men sitting, smoking, drinking, eating gelato, workers from banks and docks alike gathered around the small tables under the trees. She feels their eyes occasionally upon her. The woman pulls a copy of *Kaunis Koti* from her bag. She'd just bought the magazine from the R-Kiosk on Korkeavuorenkatu, and had intended to save it for the tram ride home, but it would prove more useful as a screen to hide behind for the moment.

A skid of leather shoes on the cobbles behind her, accompanied by "Anteeksi!"...

## Kallio, 2011

The death threat is both unlikely and entirely expected. It's also to be taken seriously. But not too seriously. It comes with the territory, after all. The photographer engages in light-hearted if careful conversation with the very drunk man who claims to have previously killed at least two people. Sitting down, the conversation meanders slowly away from homicide, to life on the street in general. The photographer relaxes a little, and his camera continues to surreptitiously take in the scene. All around, a familiar chaos is unfolding. The odd stumbling scuffles flaring out of nowhere, punctuating the raucous backdrop of shouts, leers and intoxicated bravado. People stagger around, faces buried in the folds of white paper clutched to their mouths such that you can't tell if, or what, they're vomiting or ingesting. The floor is awash with steadily increasing amounts of greased litter. Some corners of the square attract vomit, others urine. Some mild property

damage will follow. Someone will get quite badly hurt.

In the middle stands the grilli, impassive, impenetrable, a robust metal box as if designed to be hosed down, purveying gobbets of impossibly unhealthy, generic processed meat product in various forms and quantities, designed to line the stomach after a long night of drinking. Hot dog sausages, burgers, patties, meat pie—all are essentially the same: meat, salt and fat, supported, if not obscured, by seas of ketchup, mustard and garlic sauce. Delicious, if you've been helped into the right state of mind. It's effectively the only place to get food of any kind on a late Saturday night in Kallio, as it is with all the grillis in town.

The drunk's eyes roll up into his head, and he slumps backwards against the tree. The photographer moves his camera in as close as he dares, loosing off a couple of shots before he moves on.

## Tähtitornimäki, 2011

The queue along the footpath stretches back some 10 metres. Groups of Helsinki hipsters chat and eat while sitting on the grass. A fold-up table supports steaming tureens of tom ka, which is why this queue exists halfway along a random pathway down Observatory Hill.

Small paper lanterns are strung between trees. Some older residents are also present amidst the colourful throng of customers. Smiles are in abundance; everyone is enjoying the warm spicy thai soup as well as each others' company, basking in the warm glow familiar to social eating experiences. And to chilli.

The other ingredients—coconut milk, lemongrass, chicken, ginger, coriander leaves—are spread out next to the table. A simple board leans against one of the trees. "Tom ka, 2 euros."

These impromptu markers—the lines of lanterns, the queue, the pools of seated punters sprawling on blankets on the hillside, and the serving table-cum-kitchen at its centre—describe the footprint of Helsinki's newest restaurant, a restaurant which has no name and which will only exist for this one Sunday. There will be no trace by Monday morning, save a

few hundred sated stomachs and happy memories, and a cluster of 'Likes' on a Facebook page. It's August 22nd 2011. The unnamed thai kitchen in the park under the Observatory is participating in Helsinki's second Ravintolapäivä, or 'Pop-up Restaurant Day'.

Elsewhere in the city, over one hundred similar pop-ups are popping up at that very moment. Cup cakes and tapas, falafels and burritos, flat whites and frogs' legs, all served from parks, apartment windows and street corners—Ravintolapäivä encourages a range of food not usually available in Helsinki's streets to be served from places not usually allowed to do so, often by people not in the day-to-day business of running restaurants.

Like all the other pop-ups, the tom ka stall is only semi-legal, or semi-illegal perhaps, though its hard to reconcile any sense of criminality with the obviously good-natured atmosphere in the late summer sun on Tähtitornimäki. Despite the wait for the next batch to bubble up from the portable gas cooker, the queue is all expectant chatter as it starts to stretch up the hill to the playground...



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▀▀ A late bloomer, Helsinki grew up quickly. Through industrialisation and migration, its landscape and culture changed distinctly from decade to decade from the mid-nineteenth century onwards. The city's food cultures can be seen as one of its more visible and meaningful manifestations. Esplanadi in 1938, say, represented a quite different Helsinki to that of the belle époque thirty years prior, just as it feels 'a foreign country' to the Helsinki of 2011. Several 'golden ages' of food culture can be

drawn on the timeline of the city. The last couple years of fast-paced invention and development may well be the latest such age. Equally, there are troughs as counterpoints to the peaks, where the city's food habits represent a diminished cultural system, threatened through war, recession or other restrictive practices of various kinds. These peaks and troughs are not simple linear progressions, but sometimes simultaneous and overlaid, fractured across different groups of the population, and across differ-

# A BIT OF HISTORY

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ent spaces and times of day.

This historical trajectory in Helsinki is further entwined with that of the nation, and in particular the interplay between the beliefs and practices of its authorities and the changing attitudes and lifestyles of its citizens. Under the 'Nordic Model', the influence of the state and municipal governments is perhaps stronger than many other Western nations. Within Helsinki this authority is concentrated and multi-layered, comprised of strong local government as

well as feeling the implicit effects of also being seat of the national government.

The story of food culture in Helsinki is, then, also a story of urbanisation and migration, national independence and identity, world wars and multi-culturalism, travel and globalisation, technology and popular culture, human rights and the deconstruction of class society, the Nordic Model and the European union.



# First Golden Age

Although it would be possible to reach back to pre-urbanised ‘peasant’ food culture for a fuller history, our timeline essentially starts as Helsinki itself develops beyond Sveaborg, the pawn in a high-stakes game of chess between Sweden and Russia, and into an international city in its own right.

A smallish town founded in the mid-16th century, Helsinki was nonetheless a key node in Baltic navigation routes, and by the early 19th century the city benefited from cultural impact of several seafaring nations, through trade and military influence.

In 1809, this meant an increasing Russian influence in particular, though according to the notes of the visiting Prince Gagarin, this had yet to extend to the niceties of food preparation and presentation expected by visiting royalty:

“The councillors and elders of this distinguished city did not scrimp on the number of courses served nor on the honours bestowed, but the fish became mixed up with the meat, and the meat with the seasoning. The olives and cucumbers did not wait for the roast, but the currants came before the truffles and the truffles before the purée. The dessert was crowned with an orange, but shamefully aware of its deformity as

it had been caught by the frost, and this sweet, golden fruit had turned red and bitter. But among the other wines they served an old wine in old glasses, and what is more, it was a Rhine wine to which large cubes of sugar had been added. It was in this wine that we drank the toasts—The dancing in Helsinki was a hundred times better than the food.”

By the mid- to late-19th century, however, the Europe-wide ‘Belle Epoque’ ensured that Helsinki’s food culture, at least amongst the upper class for whom the epoch was particularly belle, was influenced by foreign cuisine from France, Scandinavia and Russia. This rich cuisine was introduced by the wealthy foreign visitors and Finns who were able to travel abroad on the grand tours of the age.

By the time a French traveller, X. Marmier, wrote about Helsinki in 1843, the city was a stew of cultural influences, again at least for the upper class and wealthier bourgeoisie:

“The saloons of the aristocrats are just as elegant as their most beautiful counterparts in Paris, and the society circles that frequent them, Finnish in their hearts, Russian by force of circumstance and French in spirit and customs, display to the foreigner

Helsinki's harbour during the Grand Duchy of Finland, under the Russian Empire, ca. 1890. Helsinki begins to emerge as a city at this point, building on several hundred years of cultural interchange thanks to its strategic position. Now, after the relative homogeneity of the 20th century, can we look to food as a bellwether that a similarly diverse multi-cultural city is emerging once again?



an unusual composition of ideas, with the old sympathies and traditions, their new aspirations and their many languages. In the course of one evening you can hear folk tales from the Tornio Valley, anecdotes from the Imperial court and the latest news from France. First they praise the singing of M. de Lamartine, then a naïve Finnish ballad, Swedish verses by Tegnér or the Russian elegies of Mdme. the Countess Rostopchin. An officer from a distant garrison tells of the wild tribes of Siberia in the Caucasus, one of the ladies tells of her recent journey to Italy, another passionately describes the banks of the Neva, and al the *mélange* of facts, analyses and cosmopolitan stories is quite enchanting.”

In parallel and as a result, a significant restaurant and café scene began to emerge, almost from nothing, such that professional chefs and waiting staff from Europe and Russia cooked and served in Helsinki's finest restaurants, such as Hotel Kamp and Kappeli.

Esplanadi had become the primary promenade in town some decades before, after the park was opened in 1812, but was now punctuated by outdoor cafés and kiosks, such as pastry chef Johan Jerogren's kiosk

built in 1839 and the kiosks built in the 1860s by Hartwall, a local beverage firm.

Although promenading on Esplanadi would have been the pursuit of upper class flaneurs, as a public space it was effectively open to all. Urban researcher Anne Mäkinen has discussed the rise of leisure time, and in particular leisure time spent outside of the home, increasing in the late-19th century, with the culture of 'sitting outside', and being seen to do so, increasingly fashionable.

These historic kiosks, tied closely to Helsinki's identity, are still present at the corner of South-Esplanadi and Fabianinkatu, where an original kiosk from 1883 stands proudly, still serving snacks and refreshments.

Lower down the social scale, the working classes had their own establishments — cheap, folksy kitchens and diners — but when wages allowed, the new kiosks became popular with all, not simply as a space for socialising but also for taking the 'tonic' of mineral water at a time when pure, safe drinking water was not widely available in the city. These mineral waters, introduced from central Europe, were the top sellers of their day.

Despite that stew of cultures being drawn

Port of Helsinki, 1856. As the city developed, Helsinki developed a highly-controlled concrete edge to its harbourside, preventing everyday people from contact with the sea, and sea-borne trade. Do we now use these edges of Helsinki as well as we might?



variously from the maritime tradition, spoils of empire and the grand tours, Helsinki remained a relatively small city, if not more of a large town, until the industry-led growth, and accompanying migration, of the 1870s. By 1905, Helsinki had 100,000 residents, enough critical mass to generate its own cultures as well as absorb others from elsewhere.

Yet public space in the city, as elsewhere, continued to be divided by class and status.

Merja Sillanpää, a researcher on Finnish food culture, sees a clear ‘tale of two cities’ within Helsinki at this point.

The centre was the playground of the emerging bourgeoisie and residual upper class, with a further subdivision on Esplanadi, the prime real estate for promenading, with the Finnish-speaking ladies and gentlemen strolling along the southern side and the Swedish-speaking along the north.

The lower working classes were to be found towards the outer margins of the city, then delineated between Korkeasaari and Seurasaari.

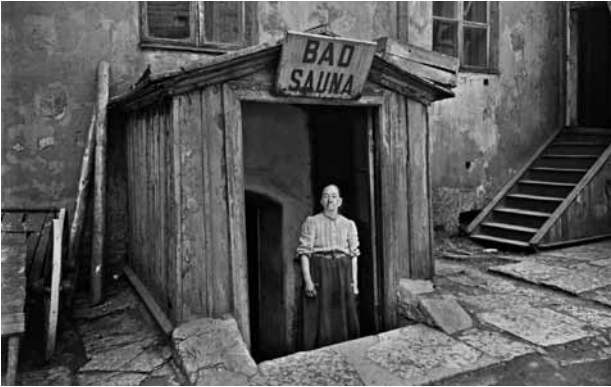
The marketplace, however, pulled all classes and social groups together. There, Russian and Greek immigrants would sell previously exotic treats such as ice cream and tobacco from their carts, touring from

market to market, and attempting to lure customers with cries of “*Harosjii, marosjii!*”.

Leaving aside the ‘democracy’ of the market, two cities co-existed in terms of built form too. This was a period of rapid urban expansion, and the turn of the century witnessed further flourishing of stylish kiosks and outdoor cafés in the centre to accompany the high quality of architecture springing up in the city. This is the Helsinki of Esplanadi and Bulevardi, and the Jugend-inspired buildings of Ullanlinna and Eira.

Architecturally, Helsinki is a city of details, components and urban environments, as opposed to formal experimentation at the building scale, and as Mäkinen explains, the beautification of the city would be achieved through these kiosks as much as through the grand buildings around them. Thanks to spaces like Esplanadi, and its activation through the kiosks and cafés dotted along its length, Helsinki gained a reputation as one of the most beautiful European cities at this point.

A Belgian journalist, Jules Leclercq, who visited Helsinki in 1913 and later wrote a book “*Finland of Thousand Lakes*”, described the city as the “most beautiful northern capital that even Stockholm and



Sauna on Mariankatu, 1913. Helsinki is a city of details, of hidden jewels, underground lairs, tacit understandings and stolen courtyards. Street food lends itself to inhabiting and enlivening informal spaces—but how to make the opaque or tacit visible and explicable, without losing its intensely local identity?

St. Petersburg didn't compare to", and that "one might think he's strolling on Tullier's or Champs Elysee" when he admired the scene of happy children playing with their hoops around the summer cafés, and exotic palm and banana trees of early 20th century Esplanadi.

At the unregulated edges of the city, however, a kind of rough and ready street food offer from stalls and carts developed, a mobile condition which was in line with the variable, vernacular architecture and tough living conditions of that environment.

The desire to continue to beautify the inner city whilst sanitizing the outer city would lead to a period of regulation within Helsinki that would directly affect the food culture over the following decades, inadvertently (perhaps) reversing the cultural diversity and entrepreneurial exploration of this first 'golden age'.

## Regulations emerge

Helsinki's entrepreneurial food culture had first emerged from regulatory frameworks such as the Business Freedom edict of 1879, introduced under Russian rule.

From within these formalised structures, though, a new culture emerged, linking the blossoming of a nascent Finnish national identity with changing mentalities and tighter regulations to match.

Sillanpää's intriguing research directly links the Fennomen movement, who created this new and idealised image of Finnish national identity, with the temperance movement, which was of course blossoming elsewhere around the world at that time.

In this vision, the ideal Finn was a sober, moral and patriotic figure, an appealing construct in a period of flux. The educated classes latched onto this model of a new Finnish citizen quickly, associating with this virtuous ideal, at least notionally.

Temperance was a core component of this new virtuous ideal, which of course began to directly affect restaurant culture. Restaurants were increasingly couched as dangerous establishments, and essentially 'out of control' licentious places. This was overlaid with the idea that the working classes couldn't, or wouldn't, control their drinking and hold their liquor, and were

in need of guidance from the authorities, usually in the form of restrictive regulation rather than more preventative educational approaches.

Such data that exists about alcohol consumption indicates that there had been no increase towards the end of the 19th century, yet these ideas—temperance, and restaurants being a social problem—even became a widespread notion amongst the general public, in some sense fuelled by the ongoing Russian oppression. Restaurants themselves suffered in the eyes of the general public. Almost in inverse relationship, as restaurants became to be seen as dens of iniquity, temperance associations became popular gathering places, particularly given the pressing political climate reduced places and occasions to discuss and build sense of identity elsewhere (Sillanpää 2002). The ideas quickly took root. The Friends of Temperance was established in Helsinki in 1884, but by 1888 over thirty other societies had come into being (with over 600 local societies by 1904.)

As a result of this external pressure, the nascent restaurant and café scene in Finland suffered. A groundswell of opinion around temperance led directly to tightened regulations and monopolistic, restric-



Russian street vendors in late 19th century Helsinki. Why is Russian cuisine largely absent in today's Helsinki?

tive alcohol licensing practice coming into force in 1876. Unlike elsewhere in Europe, the development of countryside inns and pubs suffered from early prohibition practices, such that they never had a chance to prosper. This change in cultural identity combined with urbanisation to produce a general resistance to restaurants amongst the Finnish working class in particular. For country dwellers and urban labourers, restaurants were seen as a) Swedish, and b) urban, both of which were somewhat foreign, if not a little terrifying. For many, this would remain the case until perhaps the mid-20th century.

Food hygiene would also become a significant issue around this time, another

factor with a long-lasting inhibiting impact, arguably to this day. In 1899, the regulations for food vending were tightened by the City, particularly around the vending of meat and other perishable food produce. This was ostensibly to address the potential spread of diseases throughout the city, and so would also fall in line with traditional concerns about the 'externalities' of urbanisation elsewhere.

In Helsinki though, the regulations extended into the aesthetic—in terms of style, quality and placement—of furniture and vending equipment, which came under scrutiny from the City Magistrate, who had the authority to grant street vending permits.

# From Prohibition to the Olympics

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The steady emergence of a national identity in Finland was thrown into sharp relief by World War I and Finnish independence. Although the Fennomens and others would breathe life into this new national identity by drawing from the past, contemporary ideas around rationality and functionality would also manifest themselves in this new culture, not least in food culture.

While the war itself would have an impact on cuisine throughout its duration, its true effects would become articulated in the new regulation of the national government, as Finland emerged from 1917 as an independent nation.

This included a new Health Care Order in 1917, governing the street vending of refreshments, sandwiches and coffee, which was extended in 1919 in order to actively limit the spread of coffee shacks, as well as decrease the use of underage employees. Additionally, food carts had to operate within designated vending locations, as well as meeting tidiness regulations.

Similar approaches were emerging elsewhere within Europe, often allied to rationalist philosophies around both hygiene and morality, and from within modernist architecture and planning sensibilities.

In practice, though, the influence of these

regulations would diminish with every kilometre from the city centre and the seat of power. While the centre was tightly controlled through the new laws, the edges of the city were growing more spontaneously, such that roadside coffee shacks and food kiosks continued to sprout up, serving the more working class Helsinki residents.

Although public intoxication had been a crime since 1733, prohibition came into effect in 1919. The combination of the Fennomens and the broader temperance movement had actually produced the lowest drinking rate in Europe, but it had not been concretized into law. Indeed, Tsar Nicholas had rejected four previous proposals for prohibition.

Combined with the formal end of Russian influence, and particularly through the rich food culture of St. Petersburg, the twin effects of tightened legislation and narrowed cultural identity had a drastically diminishing effect on Helsinki's restaurants. Add to this mix shortages of food, as logistics networks were dismantled by the war effort, as well as strong regulations on valuable products such as meat and sugar.

Foreign chefs, as well as other restaurant employees, fled the country throughout the war years and post-prohibition, leaving



May Day, 1961. While the festival of Vappu has always been good clean fun, even back in the early '60s, do Helsinki's rituals rely on being "well-oiled" a little too much?

Finland with a significant skills gap. Kitchens and dining rooms found themselves bereft of an entire layer of experience and craft, all almost systematically removed in less than a decade.

Prohibition was in effect for only 13 years, but its impact on alcohol licensing and restaurant permits was long lasting. During these years smuggling became significant, along with production of the illegal 'home-brew moonshine' of *pontikka*, and violence and crime rates soared. (Sariola 1954) Although public opinion swayed against prohibition, leading to its repeal by popular referendum in 1932, it was not until 1952 that Helsinki recovered.

Alko, the Finnish Alcohol Company, had been given monopoly over licensing in the 1930s. Arguably, however, it was drawing from the 1880s in terms of its approach to public alcohol consumption. Alko would only grant alcohol permits to the finest restaurants in town, implicitly curtailing the establishment of many then-emerging ideas around food culture.

Yet Alko's remit also extended to the furniture inside establishments. The humble bar stool, and the entire bar counter itself, were banned, as they were seen to encourage prostitution. The effect of this can still

be felt in Helsinki, where many bars are still without bar counters. Dancing was also prohibited, as it would surely encourage alcoholism, though the effect of this ban has not been so lasting.

For Alko, the primary function of restaurants was to serve food, not conviviality. Restaurants were a tacit mechanism for teaching people civilised manners. This bleak, rather stunted view of food culture ended with the 1952 Helsinki Olympic Games.

Events can change cities, and not simply through the provision of new hard infrastructure, but through through the soft infrastructures of cultural practice too. Urbanist and architect Timothy Hill points to Expo 88 in Brisbane as a key turning point for the city. Despite Queensland's subtropical climate, it was only then that people discovered the joys eating at outdoor cafés, and the city began to emerge from a similarly conservative, if not repressive, street culture.

In 1952, much of Europe was still under the pall of destruction and displacement cast by World War II. In Britain, for example, food was still heavily affected by rationing, doing little for the national mood—JG Ballard has said it was as if Britain had actu-





## The Helsinki Olympics in 1952 saw a lightening of both mood and regulation



ally lost the war—and it took the Festival of Britain in 1951, with its newly constructed showpiece leisure palaces along the south bank of the Thames, to begin to restore national confidence and ambition.

For a Finland heavily affected by the war, the 1952 Helsinki Olympics saw a lightening of both mood and regulations. Although the global impact of a 1950s Olympic Games barely compares to the live broadcast spectacles of the present day, Helsinki was placed on a world stage for perhaps the first time since Independence and the battles of the eastern front in World War 2.

We are left with the physical markers from that time, in terms of civic infrastructure and buildings such as the Olympic Stadium, Linnanmäki and Tennispalatsi, but the global influence on local cultural change was perhaps as significant, if less easily perceptible at first glance.

Many new restaurants were created for the foreign visitors, with existing restaurants and cafés undergoing a rapid face-lift. Café Ursula in Kaivopuisto is a cherished example of the legacy of the Olympics, a form of early ‘pop-up’ designed for tourists but left behind for the city’s residents. Elsewhere, what is now Olympix bar was originally a toilet servicing the Olympic

Stadium. The legacy extended to more than buildings, though.

*Lonkero*, aka Gin Long Drink, was created specifically for the Olympics, and is something of a national speciality. A blend of gin and grapefruit soda, it was served pre-mixed in factory-produced bottles in order to sell large quantities as quickly as possible to thirsty crowds; thus, it arguably has the dubious honour of being the first ‘alcopop’. The Hartwall variety ‘Original Gin Long Drink’ is still a bestseller in Alko stores today.

When it came to food, curious visitors to the Olympics expected to be able to taste ‘authentic Finnish cuisine’. There was one problem; there was essentially no such thing as authentic Finnish cuisine. The young country was still essentially resident in small towns and villages distributed across its large land-mass. Finland was a dispersed series of particular local cultures, each with particular local specialities.



World Festival of Youth and Students for Peace and Friendship in Helsinki on 1962. Events can temporarily change the atmosphere of a city, altering pre-conceived ideas about the function of public space. How might a city use events strategically, in order to imprint a lasting impression on its culture?

Necessity being the mother of invention, a national cuisine was manufactured for the Games, at least in part, drawing influence from these various local dishes, and centred on the traditional ingredients of bird game, fish and berries.

An Olympics now remembered elsewhere as a signifier of the Cold War—with the Soviet Union taking part for the first time—can be seen as the catalyst for the idea of Finnish food itself, for the introduction of Alko's most popular drink, and for directly changing the relationship between street and food through a new breed of cafés designed with some notion of 'European-style' outdoor dining and promenading in mind.

Although cultural change often occurs at a generational pace, and after the Olympics many restaurants still reserved their right to practice patronising policies on their clientele, 1952 effectively marked the end of Helsinki's most repressive, restricted era of food culture.

Modern architecture had thrived in Helsinki well before the 1952 Olympics, and not least in the structure of the humble kiosks.

At the end of the 1920s, the city started to engage with the kiosk more directly,

acquiring several and demolishing any in bad condition (Mäkinen 2003a). A new architectural language—modernism—was afoot, consistent with the ideas behind modernity, and in this context stressing rational, ordered approaches to health, fitness and cleanliness. The city appointed an architect Gunnar Taucher (1886-1941) to design a modern kiosk for these modern places in modern times.

Taucher's original sketches, from 1928, were actually more transitional than revolutionary, continuing a line in ornamentation familiar to the National Romantic or Jugendstil decorations that had flowered in Helsinki over the preceding decades. Yet in the transition from drawing board to construction, Taucher's kiosks were stripped of excessive decoration in keeping with the rational, spare clarity behind much European modernism. The kiosks emerged as round, pillar box-like figures in concrete, with ornamentation replaced by advertising elements.

By 1937, the kiosk design had evolved again, with Taucher introducing a wooden kiosk with pronounced canopy. This baseball cap-like form would define the kiosk building for decades. Internally, the new kiosk was designed with modern services in

mind, with facilities for electricity, running water, drainage, a boiler to heat the water, alongside space for other essential equipment. This was kiosk as system—a machine for cooking in, perhaps—rather than simply kiosk as container.

By the Olympics, the design had been modified again to include a straight front wall, and such kiosks appeared in the city centre as well as at key suburban intersections.

And by the 1960s, the archetype of the contemporary grilli emerges, in a minimalist cube that served equally well for selling newspapers or hot dogs. Makinen (2003b) suggests that this ‘universalised’ style, stripped of decoration, reduced or even removed the unique characteristics of the Helsinki kiosk.

Now the city is left with traces of all these archetypes, each defining a stage of development in its culture as much as architecture of the kiosks themselves. It is possible to take a short walk through central Helsinki and frequent either the wooden, highly ornate National Romantic kiosks or the metal grilli, to move between Taucher’s pillar box and baseball cap designs. Like the rings in a tree stump, each marks a point in history; each has a story to tell in respect of

Helsinki’s relationship with modernity, and so too its relationship with food culture.

As is often the case with iconic structures, however, many of these kiosks were meant as temporary structures (cf. Eiffel Tower, London Eye etc.) The city expected to have to provide a platform for a local terrace culture merely for the foreign visitors visiting in and around the Olympics; once they had departed, so could many of the kiosks and street cafés.

Indeed, after the Olympics, irrespective of any new local demand that had emerged, many of these establishments were shut down. Café Ursula was one such survivor, alongside the Gin Long Drink, but for the next two decades Helsinki only had a few permanent outdoor summer cafés.

In terms of a broader interest in food, the green shoots that had sprung up in the local consumer culture during the early 1950s had not yet taken root in officialdom. There was little active encouragement to build upon an international influence that had briefly altered the city, and in many cases there was active discouragement. In retrospect, the global glow faded as quickly as it had appeared.



The 1952 Olympics changed Helsinki's attitude to open-air eating and drinking, as the city braced itself for a wave of "European" attitudes. While the facilities were often rudimentary, the cultural change was significant; yet few physical traces remain. What other crumbs are left over from the '52 Olympics, that we might usefully draw from?

# Social mores & beefburgers

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Yet the door had been opened, just a little.

As Finland started to undergo further rapid urbanisation during the 1960s and '70s, the nation was, relatively speaking anyway, turned upside down. A migration from the regions to the growth centres of Southern Finland also meant a migration of local food cultures and traditions, and the menus of the 1960s reflected this.

For example, students arriving in Helsinki from the city of Pori in South-Western Finland brought with them the now famous burger *porilainen*, with the ingredient *Metsätäjä-sausage* (nowadays known as *Lauantaimakkara*, or 'Saturday sausage'). It's now a staple of Helsinki street food.

Finland's urbanisation occurred at a time coincident with deeper changes in social mores and patterns of living sweeping across western cultures. From within late-1950s America and western Europe, the teenager had emerged as a distinct cultural phenomenon, as a new idea.

For the first generation of Finnish teens, America was fascinating, hugely appealing, even exotic, particularly given Finland's complex relationship with the Soviet Union at the height of the Cold War.

As a result, American street food, served

from small hamburger grills, was an instant success when it hit the streets in the early 1960s.

Structured, franchise-based competition came in the form of the British hamburger chain Wimpy, setting up three restaurants in Finland in 1973. Other popular chains from this time include Speedy and Carrols, entering the market in 1975. McDonald's only arrived in Finland in 1985.

This late urbanisation also meant a shift from an agricultural society organised along the patterns of the land to a service sector organised into five-day working weeks. Weekends, leisure time, disposable income and office-based work in city centres blossomed as a class-based society began to fade in favour of a more socially-mobile structure, ultimately heading for the so-called 'spirit-level' society and economy.

These factors all combine in a new kind of urban life, predicated on leisure for all, as well as work, and a conspicuous form of leisure at that. Pizzerias emerge in Helsinki alongside the hamburger franchises, in the mid-70s, and become popular quite rapidly. These new food-types, the hamburger and the pizza, both represent a more casual form of eating, in stark contrast to the formal 'sit-down' means of home or restau-



Fine-dining Helsinki-style, late-1950s. (Restaurant Lido opening, 21 February 1958.) Photograph features legendary Finnish designers Maija-Liisa Komulainen and Nanny Still, with gentlemen friends. These highly successful women could not have entered the restaurant on their own. How is today's social fabric set through everyday rituals around food and social spaces?

rants. This was food that could be eaten in the street, on the move, without dressing up to go out for a meal. It was designed to be shared amongst friends and enjoyed at any time of the day.

Despite these interventions, in both social structure and eating habits, socio-economic status still mattered, and food culture in Helsinki effectively resided in two parallel universes: a high-end fine-dining scene that was mutually exclusive with the everyman's chain restaurants, pizzeria and grill.

In either strata, however, the perception of what food was actually for had changed. Tellingly, even Alko's annual report of 1963 'admits' that restaurants were places of leisure in which customers were allowed to enjoy themselves.

And by the mid-1960s, restaurants began to open the door to all-comers, perhaps stimulated in part by greater competition. The sector had started to expand after regulations had been loosened in 1962, as part of a strategy to increase the number of common pubs and restaurants.

But despite Alko's new dawn, and while elsewhere in Europe waiters served their clientele with as much food and drink as they desired, in Finland it was still thought

to be the role of the restaurant staff to moderate the intake of their customers. Control extended beyond limiting consumption to include deciding who could enter in the first place, with whom and in what attire.

This particularly affected women. Even though the bar stool had been reclaimed from its purgatory, the authorities were still creating an atmosphere in which women in public were associated with licentious behaviour. Indeed, up to the mid-1960s, women couldn't even enter a restaurant without an accompanying man, nor in a larger group of women. When they did get in, their choice of attire was also regulated such that some restaurants insisted on skirts and dresses, rather than trousers.

As the decade ran its course, however, and inflected by the social developments of the sixties, such attitudes began to fade away. By the end of the decade Finnish women could make their own decisions about what and where to eat, and with whom, if anyone at all.

By the 1970s, then, women were allowed into restaurants on their own, entirely new types of food had emerged in line with new social patterns, and Alko had decided that food could be fun.

The restaurant scene in general had

Young woman in Helsinki city centre, 1959. Note the canopies outside Stockmann in the background. Does street food, which tends to be in open public places, sidestep the exclusionary social mores of the time and suggest more open versions of contemporary culture?



expanded significantly, principally through the burgeoning café chains, and alcohol consumption was also on the rise. Although burger and pizza joints had brought food out onto the street, albeit not necessarily with any kind of sophisticated experience in mind, the amount of terraces in the city stayed very low. They were more common as independent summer cafés than restaurants temporarily annexing outdoor space.

In 1977, only 35 operating outdoor terraces had alcohol permits, and even these were not actually located on the streets. Regulation had remained tight in comparison to a greater public acceptance and interest in outdoor terrace and café culture. While many North European nations had little in the way of terrace culture—in mainstream public opinion, it was essentially seen as more of a Mediterranean phenomenon—few had such tight regulation inhibiting its potential development.

Yet opinion was beginning to turn, with the scarce supply of outdoor cafés becoming a topic of mounting concern in the media. As elsewhere in Northern Europe, an outdoor café culture came to be seen as a sign of urban development, and the newspapers steadily filled with stories complaining about the paucity of cafés in the city, or

that operating hours were out of sync with contemporary living and working patterns.

In retrospect, these are the first tentative steps towards the ‘night-time economy’ or ‘24 hour city’, as it was referred to in 1990s policy circles. Yet they were also simple, rather mundane complaints about non-existent opening hours at weekends (Ruoppila 2000.)

At the scale of the 20th century, Helsinki’s relationship with street food could be drawn as a gentle arc, where the last decade begins to achieve similar conditions to the first. A liberalisation of regulations for restaurants and alcohol consumption throughout the 1980s and 1990s ripples through to the street, alongside a new restaurant boom across the city.

If the start of the century had been characterised by a freer, more open attitude to food, drawn from the cosmopolitan belle époque-era Helsinki, then this was beginning to be echoed at the century’s end.

In between 1900 and 2000, tight regulations, not least in actual prohibition, and conservative cultures in both populace and policy—sometimes forged in the crucible of Independence, sometimes affected by war—created moments of a stunted,



## Shifts in popular culture are now changing expectations in food as well



inhibited food culture in the city. But from the mid-century onwards, a steady curve upwards in attitude, quality, volume and variety of eating establishments means Helsinki now rides transformations in popular food culture concurrently with many other Northern European cities. (Sillanpää 2002.)

No doubt this is partly due to other shifts in popular culture, such as the cheap flights and package holidays to European destinations—especially to the Mediterranean, and their outdoor food cultures—that many Finns enjoy. The amount of Finnish travellers to foreign destinations tripled between 1980 and 1990, and although it would take a decade for even some of those experiences to begin to be replicated back home, the mass experience of alternative approaches to food and drink have contrib-

uted to the transformation.

Similarly, radical upheavals in the Finnish media landscape opened eyes too. The Finnish ‘monoculture’ of the early- to mid-20th century was suddenly coloured by new voices, such as local radio stations *Radio City* and *Radio One*, as well as new urban free-sheet newspapers, like *City Magazine*, founded in 1986. As with similar Northern European cities at that time, this new media directly altered the stories that the city told about itself. They changed the idea of what the city was, what it could be, and that included what food and drink was about (See the well-documented impact of *City Life* magazine on Manchester, founded in 1983, for a similar story.)

Moving into the 1990s, influence from Western Europe in particular pervaded Helsinki to an extent unseen since the belle époque.

New thinking in urban planning such as pedestrianisation, plazas and malls—actually old thinking, simply rediscovered—was generally welcomed into the city, albeit calibrated by the local cultural and climatic conditions. In concert with this, both populace and policy seemed game to try out new restaurant ideas, with authorities in more tolerant mood, at least comparatively.



A newsstand kiosk at Helsinki bus station, 1983. Helsinki's kiosks tend to offer food/drink OR news, yet a 1995 design competition for Helsinki kiosks suggested a more diverse set of hybrid functions. How might multiple functions be combined to position the kiosk as a more productive and versatile fixture in our neighbourhoods?



Sociologist Sampo Ruoppila has rather poignantly characterised the Finnish adoption of other European social transformations as occurring in a particularly Finnish way: with great delay, but instantaneously. The sum effect of these changes—in media and cultural production, ‘lifestyle’ and working patterns, local public space and globalisation—would become entirely evident in food culture.

As ever, albeit with that delay, food is a weathervane for broader cultural conditions. The division between fine dining and everyman’s cafés finally erodes at this point, at least in most cases. New restaurants explored ethnically-inspired food and international cuisine, whilst relaxing their attitudes to clientele with ‘service culture’ in mind. Not only could customers enter a restaurant wearing jeans or shorts, but waiter themselves were allowed to dress more casually.

Much of the ‘old guard’ in the Helsinki food scene were actually easy pickings for these new entrants. The new set had not only been born in an atmosphere of increasingly fierce competition but citizens began to realise what the dining establishment had represented for so long.

Regulatory attitude followed public at-

titudes, again lagging behind somewhat. The distribution of liquor licenses in particular had curtailed the establishment of new terraces. In 1983, the city had only 30 terraces; by the 1990s, relaxed regulation enabled public demand to be met, at least to some extent, such that Helsinki soon boasted over 500 terraces.

As is often the case with regulation, it was not the actual letter of the law that had changed, but the interpretation of the regulation. Thus, these are questions of attitude and culture rather than regulatory change as such, and the attitudes and culture of particular city officials were beginning to be directly affected by the broader conversations about urban life and urban culture sweeping across Northern European cities, not to mention the economic opportunities that this new form of activity promised.

One consistent feature of the debates in all these other cities centred on the co-location of outdoor café culture and residential environments. While the benefits of co-location in terms of ‘vibrant, mixed-use centres’ could not be denied, the noise associated with outdoor dining was often characterised as incompatible with homes. This debate spilled over into the legislation in 1999, when residents living next to

some particularly loud bars complained to the extent that a hard stop of 22:00 was put on all terrace operating hours, all week, all year-long, everywhere in the city in residential areas.

As immigrants began to move to Helsinki in meaningful numbers for the first time that century, if not ever, the ethnic food scene started to flourish. A foothold of sorts had occurred in the 1980s, although all ethnic restaurants were actually run by Finns, as foreigners and immigrants were not permitted to run businesses until 1991. This change enabled 80 ethnic restaurants in 1992 to become 110 by 1999, with pizza becoming the nation's favourite dish by 1994.

The growth in fast food chains was even more pronounced during the '90s, with hamburger joints increasing from 40 to 250 in eight years. A Carrols, McDonald's or Hesburger could be found in every mall and every reasonable-sized town in Finland. Equally, the traditional grill kiosks continued to consolidate their grip on the late-night scene, their sausage-based snacks just about fending off the new competition from the kebab-pizzeria combo.

## A second Golden Age dawns?

When strolling around Helsinki, “a visitor doesn’t necessarily get an impression that this capital city is a vivid centre for urban food culture and street eats,” says Johanna Mäkelä, sociologist and researcher on Finnish food culture for the Finnish Consumer Research Centre.

Helsinki is something of an ‘opaque’ city, where an inadvertent wrong turn can lead down an apparently empty street in the middle of town. Activity buzzes away inside, but often behind curtains or otherwise out of view. Yet this is a misleading appearance; Helsinki today boasts a multitude of fascinating urban activity around food, not to mention diverse menus.

From the mid-1990s onwards, the city has transformed itself from a strongly legislated and somewhat grey city into a tolerant, vibrant and innovative hub that is home to an increasingly interesting food scene.

In this, it draws from a wider transformation in the idea of a Nordic cuisine. When the Copenhagen ‘locavore’ restaurant Noma was voted the world’s best in 2010, Nordic cuisine suddenly didn’t seem so much an oxymoron, or idle aspiration, but something whose time had come. Restaurants such as Faviken in Jämtland, northwestern

Sweden, have continued to flesh out the idea. Helsinki, along with the other core Baltic cities, draws some positive afterglow from the idea of Nordic cuisine, and is beginning to make significant contributions of its own.

Finnish food itself is now an acceptable topic around the policy table, within the academy, amongst entrepreneurs, and yes, at the dinner table too. After years of being downplayed or considered irrelevant in the Finnish political and societal discourse, food is now seen central to numerous debates—in terms of urban culture, business and entrepreneurship, sustainability and carbon, health, education, urban planning, logistics, agriculture, tourism, regional economies, even soft power and nation branding.

In terms of the city, it is agreed that food is an inherent part of urban culture to a degree that “when people now talk about design they tend to shoehorn food somewhere into the same sentence,” as Mäkelä puts it.

Indeed, in 2012 Helsinki is World Design Capital, and the programme has a firm emphasis on Finnish food culture within Finnish design culture. And within the City of Helsinki, there is a new culinary culture

strategy for 2009–2012.

Ville Relander, project manager for the culinary culture strategy, explains that “the key topics of the strategy, unveiled in autumn 2010, aim to innovatively develop Helsinki’s food supply and services to create new spaces and market places where food and people can connect, to offer better and more organic food for its citizens, and to increase urban farming and improve the current food ecosystem.”

That the City sees the need for a food culture strategy, the first such in its history, indicates the centrality of food to contemporary urban issues. No longer a simple question of sustenance, food as a system draws in core concerns of sustainability and carbon, health and well-being, ethical consumerism, logistics and transport, retail, cultural consumption and production, regional and national identity, as well as increasingly focusing on the social and cultural aspects of food and eating.

Whilst the media focus is often on the developments in Helsinki’s restaurant scene, street food is perhaps the arena that most clearly reflects the broader changes, and acts as a signpost as to future food cultures. Kiosks helped create a distinctive identity for Helsinki and articulated in public both

the belle époque and modernist city; the outdoor cafés of the Olympics presaged the eventual restaurant terrace culture almost 50 years later; the creation of porilainen reflected the mixing of distinct regional cultures into Finnish culture; and the arrival of the hamburger heralded the arrival of fast food chains. In each case, street food has suggested a new pattern of living in Helsinki, via a new kind of food culture.

In fact, the humble, accessible origins of street food, as compared to the relatively inaccessible, high-end, fine-dining culture of the formal restaurant scene, also suggests the outcome, at time of writing, of an increasingly wide and deep interest in food across the population generally.

At this point, the arc of Helsinki’s street food is back on the upswing.


The humble kiosk has reflected the changes in Helsinki’s built form, and so culture to some extent, for over a century. From the first 19th century variations on National Romantic style, via Taucher’s modernist canopied cylinders, to the metal grill boxes of the 90s, the kiosks stand around us in the street as a silent reminder of how Helsinki’s culture has changed, and is changing.

Despite their everyday nature, it appears that the kiosks have not been taken for granted by Helsinkians, if at least we judge by the number of affectionate names for them:

*'kipsa', 'kitsa', 'kipari', 'snägäri'...*

Yet only a decade ago the number of active, well-patronised kiosks have dropped to a handful, alongside the grilli kiosks. Over the last couple of years, however, kiosks have been re-opening, and serving as a platform for both a wider variety of proprietors and street food concepts. These newer operations are almost a counterpoint to the persistent, gritty grill kiosks. The small businesses within range from tiny street cafés to ice-cream kiosks, from hot dog stands to food trucks and experimental multifunctional concepts that provide spaces for small events and happenings, playgrounds for kids, or retail for local design, handicrafts, flowers.

Many of these new street food concepts are being run by entrepreneurs who see their activity as part of a field of creative or cultural industries, rather than the traditional food sector. They are part of wide, diverse and richly patterned networks across the city and beyond. For them, food offers a platform for civic engagement, explora-



## Food offers a platform for civic engagement and grass-roots activism



tions in urban culture, and a form of grass-roots activism in much the same way that music, politics or media can, or used to.

With that in mind, financial value is not the only form of value returned by such enterprises—building cultural capital, political capital, social capital or environmental capital is just as important. In the context of a heavily industrialised food production sector, and a grocery sector still dominated by a handful of players, that is an important distinction. It's a new kind of business, at least through the lens of the existing commercial food sector, and the regulatory environment that controls it. It asks questions, at least implicitly, of both aspects—policy and commerce—as to the right way to think about and react to this

Helsinki's tori, or marketsquares, provide a grid of spaces to explore, each with their own character, alongside the other distributed grids of kiosks and cafés. How to play up the individual characters of each square and kiosk, as implicit introductions to the neighbourhoods and communities they sit within?



activity positively.

Examples of this current kiosk revival would include the old kiosk at Kasarmintori that, after being unoccupied for decades, re-opened as Café Kasarmintori in 2009 and has helped reinvigorate the formerly desolate old square at the heart of the city.

Similarly, the Kukkapuiston Kioski in the Eira district became Rakkauden Kioski (Kiosk of Love) in 2010, offering organic produce as well as games for people to borrow and play in the adjacent park.

See also the Karhupuiston Kioski (Bear Park Café) in the Kallio district, a gay-friendly summertime kiosk that has played a key role over the past decade in transforming the park from forbidding space to neighbourhood favourite, working in close collaboration with the City and the local community.

Leaving this emergent scene of small entrepreneurs aside for the moment, some existing players in the food market are hungrily eyeing Helsinki's kiosks. Both HK, the big meat producer famous for its

sausages, and Snacky, the local grill chain, are looking to take over more of Helsinki's grill kiosks when the current leases expire in 2012.

The fact that the license renewal cycle for grill kiosks is 10 years surely stimulates further questions. If food culture is now explicitly recognised as being closely associated with innovation cycles in urban culture, and a relatively fast-moving cultural field, is a decade the right frequency with which to issue licences?

Balancing the interests of large and small players across the finite number of kiosks will be a key challenge for the city, but it also indicates the field of opportunity that this has become. As Helsinki and its population look towards the future, the challenge will be to foster a distinctly local idea about the flavors and delights of food itself, but also see the culture, policy, and business aspects as possibilities for distinction, enhanced quality, and international attention.

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▀▀ In the wake of ongoing developments in cuisine among competitive cultural capitals, Italian Prime Minister Silvio Berlusconi spoke from another era when he claimed in 2005 that, “there is absolutely no comparison between [Parma ham] and smoked reindeer.” Indeed, there is no comparison—and that’s the point.

As industrial notions of standardization

irrespective of local context recede into the background, cities and regions are now judged based on how unique their contributions are, as well as how good they are. Due to its intricate relation to the accumulated history of a culture, its dependence on local climate, food easily serves as a cornerstone of a place’s identity.

As the City of Helsinki’s Ville Relander

# OPPORTUNITY SPACE

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puts it, “Food can have a significant role in bettering the well-being of all citizens in Helsinki, as well as help to create a more positive image both locally and internationally.” The city has recently enjoyed a flourishing of food-related activity including two examples which we will look at in more detail below, Ravintolapäivä and the Camionette Crepes food truck.

The focus now should be on intelligently using these and other experiments to co-create a supportive policy context that will create a virtuous cycle of development moving forward. Both examples included moments of slight deviance from official policy and procedures, but in taking these risks have helped to shine a light on new areas of possibility for other entrepreneurs, commu-





As streets and paths cut across the ice in the winter, the city is alive with a completely new map. How could these transient activities be emphasised more?

In the cold months all of the kiosks are closed. Snowy February might be fair enough, but breezy September? A missed opportunity. Why?

nity organizers, and city officials alike.

The opportunity is to explore these ad-hoc innovations in street food that simultaneously produce value on three fronts:

— By increasing street activity and making them more habitable (safe, vibrant, engaging) at all times of day, particularly throughout the evening

— As a growth area for small and medium sized enterprises that are uniquely Finnish and specifically targeted towards the advancement of the local service economy

— And by lowering the carbon footprint of our daily sustenance by taking advantage of Finland's growing network of local and organic agriculture.

Together these factors contribute to a net positive enhancement of well-being in Finland in a way that is sustainable from social, financial, and ecological perspectives. Due to market trends, ventures are in fact more likely to grow in the future if explicitly developed and marketed as sustainable. What used to be 'good business' is increasingly seen as just business.



A faster rate of innovation will be required for Helsinki to capitalise on its current opportunities





Lentävä Lehmä (“Flying Cow”) cheese stall in Hakaniemi market is a hidden gem in Helsinki. Why don’t more people know about it?



The Baltic Herring Market dates back to 1594 in Helsinki. It now offers many forms of local food beyond herring, but only for a week each year. Could it run more frequently?

For Helsinki to capitalize on these opportunities a faster rate of innovation will be required within the areas outlined in this document. Permitting and permissions currently present a high barrier to entry for new food business operators: how can we make it easier for them to bootstrap new operations? How might the city government encourage faster cycles of innovation by exploring the ‘levers’ it has as the landlord for 61% of Helsinki? What would incentivize entrepreneurs to be adventurous in exploring more diverse and unique business ideas? How might the city begin to see citizen-led innovation as a way to prototype new operating principles from a policy perspective?

These are just a few of the questions that the development of Helsinki’s culinary culture in the past few years have already brought up.

Camionette and Ravintolapäivä have been chosen because they are in some sense opposites of each other. The former is a single food business located at one point

in the city, but operating 24/7. The latter covers large parts of Helsinki, as well as other cities in Finland and abroad, but only does so for the duration of its events which happen just a few times a year. One is limited in space, the other in time. What they share is an emphasis on bringing diversity to the offering available, both in terms of cuisine and service concepts. By exploring the cases of Ravintolapäivä and Camionette we are positing that expansion on these axes—location in time and space, as well as diversity of offering—are important for Helsinki’s continued development as a city with a thriving food culture.

When considering the relationship between food and the spaces of the city, the opportunities are twofold: on a block by block level within early-adopter zones the task is to retain enough density and diversity of positive food experiences so that new attitudes towards food are visible as a cultural shift rather than isolated incidents. Enabling density and diversity enhances the feeling of momentum and



The birth of Camionette Cafe & Crepes was not easy for everyone involved. The city felt misrepresented when Tikka, the founder, went to the press feeling rejected. Meanwhile, to Tikka the city was opaque and inscrutable. A joined up permitting process would address much of these concerns.

progress, makes it easier to perceive. Following closely behind, policy approaches that enable early pockets of density and diversity to spread to different parts of the city is an important aspect of maintaining equity for all.

In establishing Camionette in 2011, the young entrepreneur Tio Tikka originally intended to create a roving truck that sold crepes from different points throughout the city. While this proved difficult to achieve, he was successful in securing a fixed location for his truck on the edge of Lasipalatsi, a central fixture in the street life of Helsinki.

Rather than opening a truck for a few hours here and there, Tikka decided to keep the truck open 24/7 from day one, a decision that was made easier by an outpouring of support on Facebook in advance of the opening.

Tikka was interested in creating “a choice for people to eat well also late in the night”, and he also acknowledges that the truck helps keep the vicinity of Lasipalatsi safe

throughout the night, with a calmer, slower atmosphere emanating from the truck to its immediate surroundings compared to near by grillis. With these positive affects coming as ancillary benefits to both nighttime and daytime economies, the question we might ask now is how to make it easier for similar business to sprout up?

Is it possible that a small food operation standing in one corner of a public square changes the experience of that space? The experiences at Karhupuisto in Kallio affirms Tikka’s observations. The kiosk there has been pointed to by neighborhood residents as having played a key role in revitalising the area over the last two years. Researcher Johanna Mäkelä happens to live next to the square at Kasarmintori and thinks that “kiosks might show the way for other businesses and initiatives to further engage dwellers and reinvigorate the area.”

Mäkelä sees that “the squares seem to be very influential and meaningful places in Helsinki,” and so the cultural capital generated by altering the perception of a



Could Helsinki be known as the Nordic capital with the highest per capita density of ethnic restaurants?

square has a form of multiplier effect. As the traditional home for market places in many western cultures, public squares big or small are spaces of socialisation and congregation. A place where people came together to buy and sell, but also to converse, to mix, to hang out. In a basic way, these active are where the city happens.

Kauppatori (Market Square) is the most obvious example of this, and a space experienced by most if not all of the three million or so tourists to Helsinki each year who are looking for a bit of authentic Helsinki. Although this statement does not come without a certain degree of irony, Kauppatori does possess the traditional coffee and munkki (doughnut) stalls, as well as stalls for berries, fish and other Finnish produce. Truly authentic or not, the image of the city is being constructed by these simple stalls, and the millions of visitors each year who visit them. Although Kauppatori is a relatively controlled construction of ‘Helsinki’ oriented primarily towards tourists, its format has much in common with a

more local market like Hakaniemi just over a kilometer north.

Each is linked to a particular kind of spatial experience of food—in this case, strolling through a market and filling a bag of fresh produce from independent retailers specialising in particular foodstuffs, stopping to have a coffee and a snack in the street as you go, probably arriving and departing by public transport, or on bike or by foot. This is obviously quite different to visiting a generic supermarket by car, with very little interaction with the street, and so with people, whilst reinforcing a car-based mode of urban organisation. In the market square, the push button efficiency of the super market is replaced by a more social interaction that builds over time in the form of shared experience.

So the format of food retail and consumption can have direct effects on urban experience and space, at both the micro level—the kiosk in the square—and the macro level—the patterns of housing location and transit. In that sense, per-



Rightly proud of its achievements in social mobility, and with the fastest ageing population in Europe, how can Finland's street food serve elders as well as it does hipsters?

Helsinki's 'solar kitchen' at Kalasatama, led by Antto Melasniemi, drew worldwide attention. How is food linked to tourism and city branding?

haps a richer set of street food concepts in Helsinki would be able to expand the way the city's space is used, opening up a wider range of possibilities for urban culture, for entrepreneurs, for policymakers, and for citizens.

This is what the City of Helsinki's culinary culture strategy is aiming to facilitate, says Ville Relander. As an example of this kind of outcome Relander suggests Antto Melasniemi's HEL Yes! pop-up restaurant in the Kalasatama area in early 2011. Populating an old vegetable warehouse, HEL Yes! served imaginative Finnish cuisine for a few weeks, luring the 'hipster' community to one of Helsinki's primary redevelopment projects. The HEL Yes! concept had first appeared at the London Design Festival in 2010, and in bringing the team back to Helsinki, the City was in effect deploying new food experiences to create social interactions that imagine a new use for the Kalasatama district. Continuing to change the perception of Helsinki, HEL Yes! took the concept to Stockholm in February of

2012.

Food helps us change the stories that the city tells about itself.

### **Food builds relationships**

Food is a primary social object, so inherent to everyday habits and daily patterns that it provides a form of connective tissue for most of our relationships. We share sushi with work colleagues, have intimate dinners with loved ones, cook for our kids, grab a coffee from the same café every day, explore new gastronomy as a form of adventure, shop at supermarkets or specialist retailers, grow food in backyards or community gardens, and often experience distant cultures first through their food.

During Ravintolapäivä, many participants made the same observation, according to one of the organisers, Olli Siren.

"The event genuinely changes peoples' social relationships—if only for a short period of time—as people don't just do business and transactions with each other, but often engage in richer social encounter



For its brief existence, the Museum of the Near Future, a pop up in Kaivopuisto, could easily claim that it has Finland's tastiest museum cafe (pictured here). Could Finland be known as the country that has the best snacks at its institutions? What about petrol stations?

because of the authenticity and personality of the situation where food is sold and consumed. And this is one of the main reasons why Ravintolapäivä is at the very core of rethinking how food can create new urban culture.”

Ravintolapäivä and its contemporaneous developments—food trucks, organic delis, locavore restaurants—are helping rewire how Helsinki's neighbourhoods


work, through their emphasis on social interaction. Whilst the food is the easy thing to point to, the relationship-building and broader socio-cultural experience is the stronger driver behind the event. Ravintolapäivä's focus on a narrow span of just 24 hours contributes to its success by providing a density and diversity to the experience. As we explore below, the next question is to consider how events like this might become absorbed by the city more deeply. Then, the positive relationship-building effects may be replicated or grown to a new scale, leaving a lasting effect on the city's cultures beyond a single day.

“The idea of enhanced social relationships is at the heart of the Helsinki food culinary strategy,” says Ville Relander. “The Helsinki market squares and food markets should be places to meet people and socialise, not only to buy groceries and consume food”, however organic, local, or tasty they may be.

Social interaction is intrinsic to food and drink, a fact which many western cultures



Food helps us  
change the stories  
that the city tells  
about itself







This is no Iso Roobertinkatu. Rather, lively pedestrian streets and terraces require joined-up consideration of everything from the mix of commercial offerings to street furniture, waste collection, and rights of way. Can this view of conviviality become the new normal?

lost touch with in the post-war period of efficiency and rapid urbanization. Although it would be cheaper to buy beer by the can or wine by the box and drink it at home, we choose to go to the local bar to drink with others. Although it would be quicker to buy ready-meals and heat them up at home, restaurants of all shapes and sizes are being inserted into any spare gap in the fabric of the city as eating out takes hold during the working week in Helsinki, not just at the weekend.

Food is both a token to enable social interaction as well as an outcome of the changing patterns of the city. As working lives become more flexible, so too food habits shape themselves around the new patterns of the everyday. Johanna Mäkela says “Food is typically very situational and we can see how the structure, rhythm and contents of eating are changing simultaneously.”

As the most public example of eating, street food has the potential to lead these changes in a way that is relatively low risk.

The kiosk no longer need be quite so rigid in its operation. Currently Esplanadi’s kiosks open during the day for coffee, while the grillis are closed metal boxes. Late at night, the Esplanadi kiosks are closed with the grillis the only option. This rigid pattern is seasonal too, with many of the older kiosks only open in the summer months and only some grillis toughing it out through the winter. While Helsinki’s winter presents a challenge to most outdoor activities, it may be that there is more appetite than there used to be, or kiosk operators think, given the greater interest in street food in the city today and the persistence of late night culture, including clubs and bars, even in the winter months. If Helsinki’s markets can be re-calibrated as destinations for a broader range of social interaction—over and above grocery shopping—what possibilities for more flexible operation will also be opened up?

As Mäkela notes, “It might be a very interesting opportunity for street food providers to rethink how they could better



How can we begin to value nutrition, quality, experience, and uniqueness of offering right alongside food safety and maximisation of economic returns?

understand and benefit from the different rhythms—the constantly changing breathing of the city?”

### **Experiment, refine, repeat**

Traditionally, Finnish authorities have been exceptionally prescriptive in terms of the regulations that affect food culture, and particularly street food. The city’s overarching urban planning guidelines are highly detailed, thorough and relatively prescriptive. Its various licensing policies have been strict and inhibiting, historically speaking. While Finland prides itself on high levels of safety in food handling and preparation, new questions are emerging about the industrial-scale assumptions that these restrictions are based on and the energy-intensive infrastructure that they require. Looking forward, cities that are able to maintain high levels of personal and food safety without strangling innovation will reap the rewards in an environment of tough international competition for tour-

ism and highly skilled migrants alike.

In the future strokes the story of food culture in Helsinki since at least the 1952 Olympics has been one of a gradual opening up of possibility. It has not been a smooth trajectory, and for those interested in developing food culture caught in the midst of any one of these decades, the pace of change would have felt glacial. The odd policy alteration, or re-interpretation, may have sometimes felt like ‘one step forward, two steps back’.

Still, in the second decade of the 21st century, the city is markedly different to the Helsinki of the grey, post-war years. The amount of outdoor terraces available for eating and drinking, with some pushing back on the 22:00 hard-stop regulation, is an order of magnitude greater. The Ravintolapäivä ‘pop-up restaurant day’ is slowly spreading across Finnish cities and even other nations, carrying its Helsinki provenance with it. The quality of the restaurant scene is, at its best moments, comparable with other similar-sized cities





At its best, Finnish food is highly defined by the seasons, particularly its berries. How can seasonality become a feature of everyday food?

in Europe.

Perhaps more fundamentally, a growing number of people are questioning the social norms that the authorities have built regulations around. This includes exploring further what food can mean, what street food can mean, where it can be explored, and at what time of the day or night.

Tio Tikka, the entrepreneur behind Camionette Café & Crepes food truck, sensed this general mood change when he opened his business in May 2011 after a long and frustrating process attempting to obtain permission and licenses from the City of Helsinki.

Despite his apparently immediate popularity, the process itself is still instructive in terms of ‘barriers and opportunities’. Tikka only broke through the final layers of regulatory resistance when his story gathered momentum on Facebook, and was then picked up by the local media. Seeing the thousands of people interested in, and mobilising behind, the idea of the Camionette, the authorities eased off and allowed



How many kioskis serve organic coffee or local beer? Not many. Why not?

Tikka’s applications.

Overnight success takes a long time, it seems, recalling Ruoppila’s phrase: “with great delay, but instantaneously.”

A basic barrier to this kind of innovation is the lack of available space for budding street food entrepreneurs in the first place. The City owns the majority of the real estate in Helsinki and, in the opinion of those interviewed here, has been slow to make it available for use by mobile food entrepreneurs. The perception amongst the small entrepreneurs is that the City finds it easy to lease space for a ‘corporate’ commercial event—for example, a Formula 1 car show—in the centre of the city but the same spaces are not made available for small business use.

Ravintolapäivä, Camionette and others have already begun to change expectations, and Tikka hints that “the City is already in the process of rethinking the role of street food in the city and adjusting the legislation accordingly, possibly already later in 2011.” Indeed, ten additional spots will be opened



In late 2012 Tukkutori, Helsinki's wholesale market, will open to everyday citizens. Can it also serve as a launching platform for new food businesses?



Left are free, traditional plastic bags and right are biodegradable bags that cost 12 cents each. The state of these two spoils of bags in a local K-Market are just one subtle indicator of the hunger for a more sustainable retail offering in Helsinki.

for similar trucks or carts in 2012.

Seen from a distance, the experiences of the instigators of Camionette and Ravintolapäiva and the city's response offer a compelling justification for more explicit co-design processes to guide the development of local policy. By more actively involving food business operators and other groups in this process the city stands to create a better bridge to the outcomes of their policy work, with the benefit of increasing good will and decreasing compliance costs. In combination this yields a more enthusiastic community around food and food culture, and offers Helsinki a unique claim in a European marketplace that is crowded with cities delivering good food.

### Filling in the gaps

From the point of view of both emergent entrepreneurship and optimising and activating urban space, opening up available space for rent by small street food businesses is a win:win. Cities generate numer-

ous 'in-between' places, defined by ad-hoc or inefficient use and undefined activity. As the footprint of street food ventures is relatively small, street corners, parking lots, and vacant spaces might all be added to the usual array of public spaces, such as parks, squares and malls. In Helsinki's winter, sea ice expands the surface area available to the city—the ice has been used for street food for centuries, as it happens.

Yet there is no clear legislation for these activities. Legislation in this area arguably faces challenges familiar to other legislative arena over the last two decades, in that it is caught within the disruptive crossfire of mobile, distributed communication and networked, emergent organisation models that are simultaneously local and global.

Ravintolapäivä provides an interesting case study of how a transient city-wide yet distributed event, enabled via lightest possible layer of organisation can occupy these legal grey areas. This open initiative, which encourages people to establish their own 'restaurants' for a single day and provides



Many of the city's restaurants are open only in the evening, leaving the daytime streetscape a bit devoid of activity.

a basic means by which people can find out where they are, has become a huge success. It has not simply spread across Helsinki, but to other Finnish cities, and now other parts of Europe. At the time of writing, the event has given birth to over 200 'restaurants'.

Instinctively using contemporary tools like Facebook, with its participants weaving together the experience using other social media (Twitter, Google Maps, Flickr etc), the formal organisation is barely there. This presents something of a challenge for City officials used to regulating in far more structured organisational contexts.

To their credit, however, in the eyes of those responsible for Ravintolapäivä the City has responded very well, by remaining sanguine about the event whilst taking a 'hands off' approach to management, and essentially wishing it well.

It might help that the current Mayor is a fan, but the general 'light touch' approach of the City - simply leaving a message on the Ravintolapäivä website hoping that ev-

erybody has a great day - was well-judged in the eyes of all involved, and could not have been in starker contrast to its approaches throughout the preceding century.

As Olli Siren remarks, it may also be because "in reality there is quite little the officials can do to curb a well-meaning, decentralised and social media savvy movement, without ending up looking like dull bureaucrats totally alienated from the culture."

Finnish bureaucracy has traditionally focused tightly on food hygiene regulations, which are purported to be world-class as a result. However, the perception that there is highly prescriptive regulation is not quite true; as with most areas of legislation, it's the interpretation and enforcement that counts. Tio Tikka relates an example of where the regulatory environment is relatively relaxed, as long as people follow the rules in principle: "One should have a water heater in the food preparing facility but there are no requirements to actually ever use it," he notes.



Could Kiosks and other small retail outlets create opportunities for innovation in the built environment as well?

Finns are also rightly proud of their cultural proximity to nature, and natural experiences. How could this be tied to everyday food?

These include:

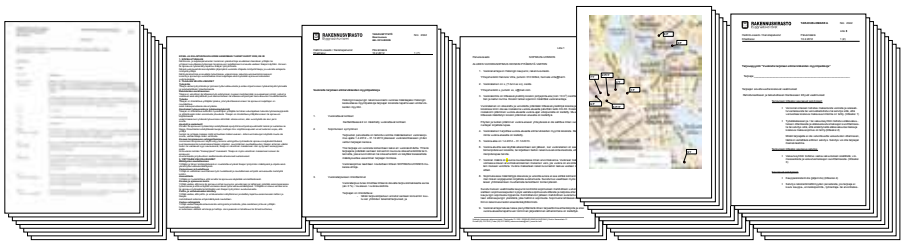
The primary legislative barrier is simply the opacity of legislation itself.

- A notification for setting up a new business from the National Board of Permits and Registration,
- Permits for using the space as a restaurant from the Building and Construction Control Agency,
- Hygiene license and a hygiene plan for the Food Safety Authority,
- Inspection and a possible emergency plan for the City Rescue Department,
- Possible terrace permit from the Public Works Department,
- Notification for the Police,
- Alcohol and liquor license from the National Supervisory Authority for Welfare and Health,
- And permits for playing music outdoors from the Environmental Administration.

In the eyes of many attempting to navigate it, the primary legislative barrier is simply the sheer mass, complexity and opacity of legislation itself.

A new entrepreneur still needs up to ten different permits and licenses, liaising with at least four different departments.

These relatively rigid official practices are naturally intended to serve the public interest, but they can make it challenging to develop equally well-meaning projects. This



In spring of 2012, the City of Helsinki opened a tender for 9 food trucks. The application process, represented above, involved more than 60 pages spread across multiple documents. With a little work, could Helsinki grow a reputation as the world's best city to get a food business off the ground?

highlights the necessity of a pragmatic, human-centered approach to legislation. A small amount of effort into unifying and streamlining the permit and license procedures will go a long way towards lowering the barriers to entry for new entrepreneurs and operators who are more experimental in their business concepts.

Moving beyond 'one-offs' such as Ravintolapäivä and Camionette, in terms of diversity, frequency, quality, and permanence, will take a concerted effort on all sides.

Given a more open dialogue between citizens, entrepreneurs and City officials, street food and food culture can continue to be a fertile field in which Helsinki explores the idea of what kind of city it is and what a city can be. Seen in this light, food culture acts as a platform for a richer range of meaningful social and cultural interactions.

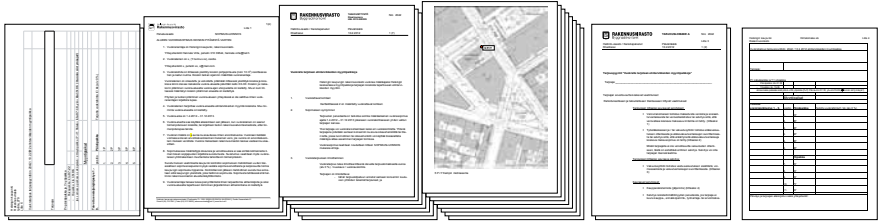
As the diversity and quality of street food continues to rise in other European cities, Helsinki needs this development in order to remain competitive. Ville Vesterinen, the

CEO of Helsinki-based mobile gaming company Grey Area, explains that urban quality of life is an important aspect when hiring and retaining top software engineers. In terms of preventing domestic 'brain drain' and attracting foreign talent ('brain gain'), the challenge for Helsinki is to foster an urban culture that is not only well-functioning but thriving, responsive, and unique. One that will not only attract top talents in the first place, but retain them as well.

Equally, as other cities and nations explore more sustainable food cultures—localavore, organic, healthy, less intensively farming, better resource use, greater citizen engagement—Helsinki will need an active food culture to continually develop its own thinking and practice to remain competitive.

For a relatively young city, Helsinki has seen a lot of history. Many of the central themes of the last 150 years of western culture have been played out here in fast forward.

Indeed, the story of Helsinki's food cul-



ture is somewhat like a roller coaster ride. It plumbs the depths as well as ascending to high points that are genuinely world-class. Helsinki's opportunity is to find a Finnish take on these globally relevant themes in a manner that is both distinctive, and so competitive, whilst progressing everyday quality of life for its citizens.

Many of the ingredients have been sourced. It's time to draw up the menu and get cooking.



# A NIGHT ON THE TOWN IN 2011

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Photographs by Kaarle Hurtig

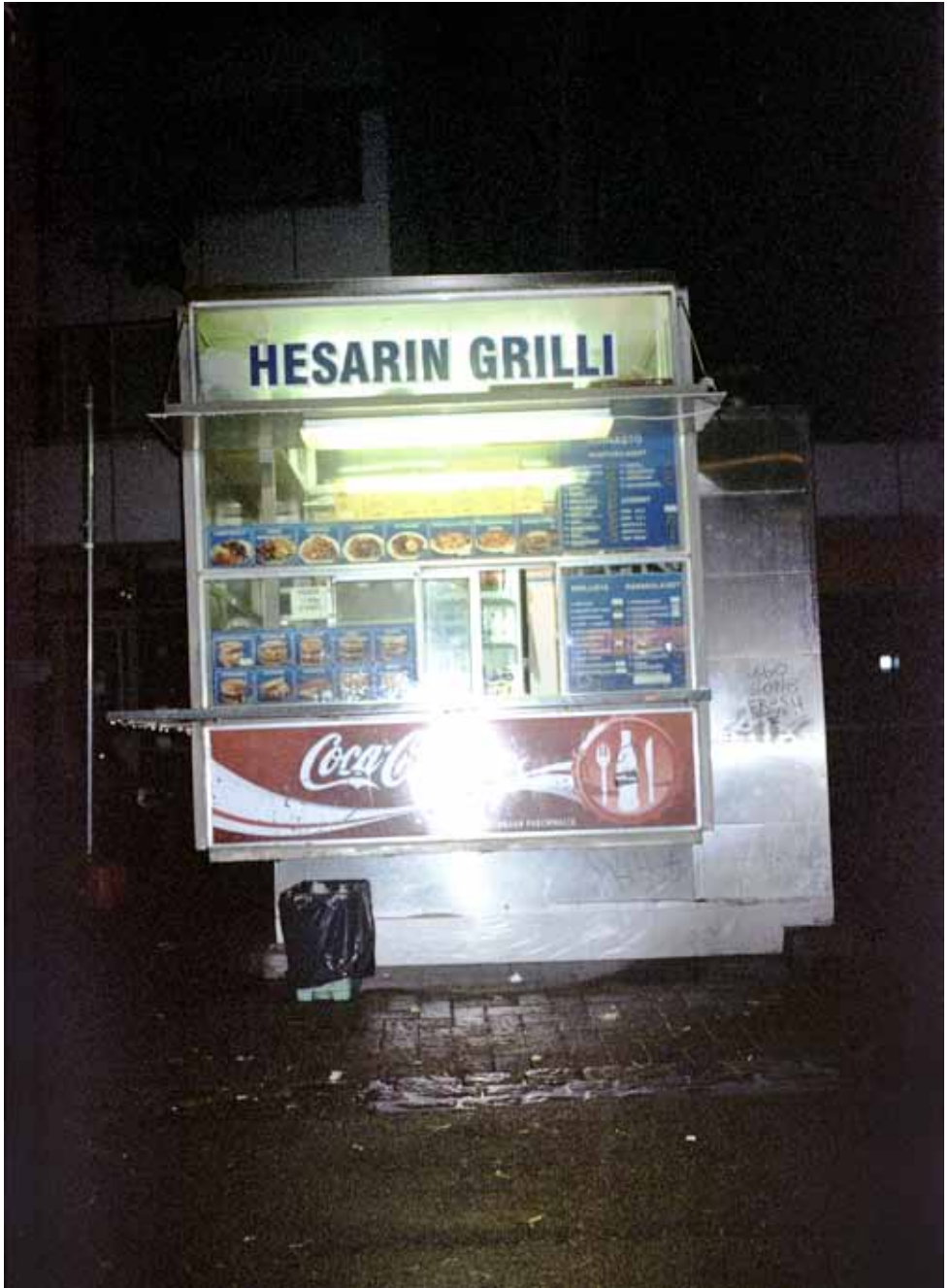




Jaskan Grilli, 4:35, Late August



KarhuPUiston Grilli, 2:00, early August



Hesarin Grilli, 3:45, early August



Uudenmaankatu, 3:15, mid August



Kurvin Grilli, 3:25, early August





Karhupuiston Grilli, 2:20, early August



Kurvin Grilli, 3:30, early August



Iso-Roba, 5:05, late August

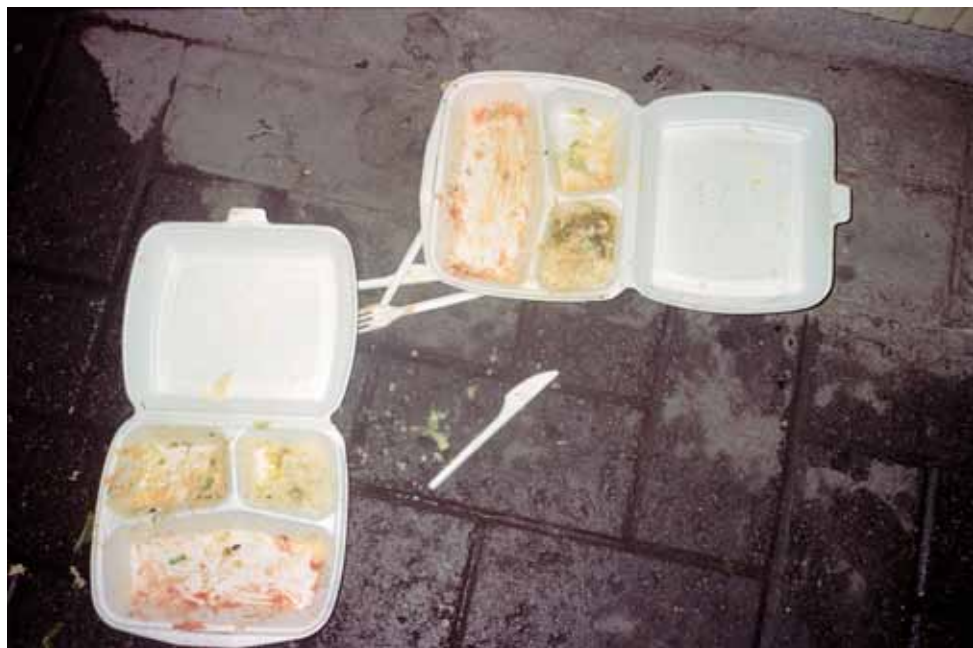




Jaskan Grilli, 4:15, late August



Behind Jaskan Grilli, 4:05, late August



Iso-Roba, 5:35, late August



Iso-Roba, 5:20, late August



# A DAY IN THE CITY

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Photographs by Dan Hill & Bryan Boyer





Meilahti, 14:00, July







Sepänpuisto, 15:30, July







Korkeavuorenkatu and Johanneksen kirkkopuisto, 18:40, late August







Baltic Herring Fair, 14:10, October





Sinebrychoffin puisto, 18:00, August









Kaivopuiston rantaa, 11:00, February





Hietalahdentori, 9:00, October



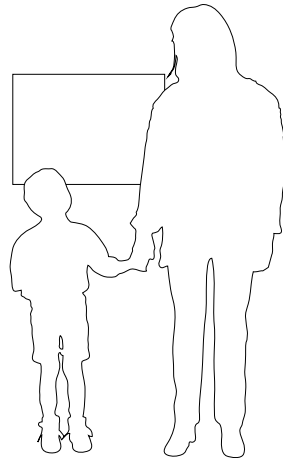




# HOW TO READ A HODARI

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Alongside this book we've created a small run of posters that explore the geography, and make-up of hodari, the sausage snack which is ubiquitous on Helsinki's streets. Since you've downloaded this as a PDF or printed it on demand, the poster is reproduced in the following section on separate pages. We wouldn't want you to feel left out.





GINGER

Finland imports tomatoes during the colder months

TOMATO CONCENTRAT

# Where Does Hodari\* Come From?

ORIANDER

ONIONS

TOMATOES

MSG

ONIONS

POTATOES

*Finland grows many potatoes  
but some are still imported  
from the Netherlands*

E

MUSTARD SEED

CONDIMENTS

KETCHUP

M  
CC



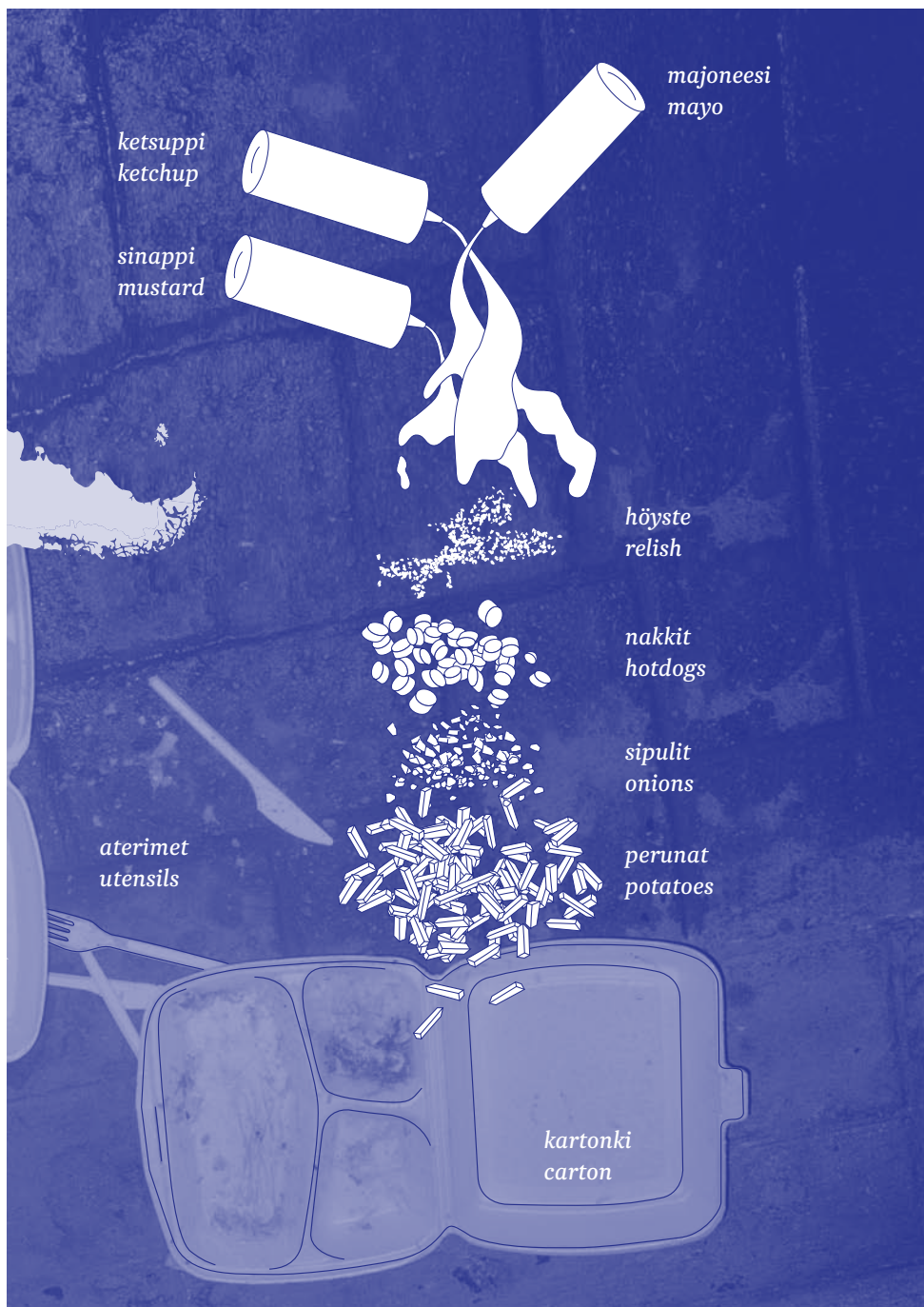
*\*Nakki, hodari, makkara, these are just a few of the words used to describe the reigning champion of Helsinki's street food kingdom: the sausage. This poster is an introduction to the most popular form of nakki. For such a local thing, it can be a surprisingly global production.*

PEPPER

SUGAR

USTARD SEED

ORIANDER



ketsuppi  
ketchup

sinappi  
mustard

majoneesi  
mayo

höyste  
relish

nakit  
hotdogs

sipulit  
onions

perunat  
potatoes

aterimet  
utensils

kartonki  
carton



PALM OIL  
PEPPER  
GINGER

SITRA





*Asia  
produces  
spices and  
oils used  
mostly in  
condiments*



# HELSINKI STREET EATS

Late night grub, coffee stands, mobile kitchens, kiosks, hole-in-the-wall sandwich joints & market stalls—street food is an integral part of culture through its sheer everydayness. It is literally all around us.

Street food is a breeding ground for innovation that can percolate upwards. It tends to involve smaller investments, with individual business operating at a smaller scale and allowing innovation to happen at an accelerated pace. The speed of street food is exciting, but can it be more than fast food?

Today food is linked to sustenance as much as it is sovereignty, carbon as much as culture. Therefore, innovation in this area is a key part of the strategic positioning of cities and regions who now compete for attention in a crowded global market.

Sitra is asking a simple question: how can Helsinki leverage its rich history and existing experiments to rethink the business, policy, and experience of street food?

We're interested in enabling food entrepreneurship with an eye towards diversity, quality, and sustainability. If this sounds tasty, let's talk!

Myöhäisillan pubiruoka, kahvilat ja kuppilat, siirreltävät keittiöt, nakkikioskit ja markkinakojut – katuruoka on erottamaton osa arkipäiväistä kaupunkikulttuuria.

Katuruoka tarjoaa hyvän alustan ruokainnovaatioille. Koska toiminta on pienimuotoista, pienetkin investoinnit riittävät jo pitkälle ja innovointi voi edetä nopeassakin tahdissa. Katuruoassa nopeus houkuttaa, mutta voisiko se ollakin enemmänkin kuin pikaruokaa?

Ruokaan liittyy monia eri ulottuvuuksia, kuten ravintoarvot, itsemääräämisoikeus, ekologisuus ja kulttuuri. Niinpä ruokakulttuurista nousevat innovaatiot ovat kaupungeille ja erottumaan pyrkiville alueille strategisesti tärkeitä niiden kilpaillessa huomiosta globaaleillakin markkinoilla.

Sitran yksinkertainen kysymys kuuluu: miten Helsinki voisi hyödyntää historiaansa ja meneillään olevia kokeiluja katuruokakulttuurin kehittämisessä?

Olemme kiinnostuneita edistämään ruokayrittäjyyttä kohti uusia innovaatioita, laatua ja kestävyyttä. Jos tuntuu tutulta, jutellaan lisää!



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▀▀ We wrote (and continue to develop) this document as an entry point into the complicated issues represented most visibly by the simple presence of food in our everyday lives. By publishing it now, when the ideas are still developing and the history only partially written, we're interested in opening this work to the broader community.

If what you've read has been interesting as a historical curiosity, good. If it's inspir-

ing enough to motivate you to ask questions about the status quo, all the better. And if what you find on these pages is relevant enough to you and your interests, we hope that those few of you who had the tenacity to make it all the way here to the end are able to find some hook or foothold upon which you can develop your own ideas and work.

If there's something in this document that you feel strongly about, let us know. If there's

# SO NOW WHAT?

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something that you feel is wrong or misrepresented, we welcome your corrections and contributions.

As a public body, Sitra offers this work in the public domain under a Creative Commons license. On [Low2No.org](http://Low2No.org) you will find a PDF for reading, or perhaps even remixing.

Over the coming months Sitra will develop small scale prototypes as we search for opportunities to enhance sustainable wellbeing

in everyday food culture. Developing our own prototypes helps us evaluate opportunities for systemic change. Equally, we're interested in whatever experiments *you* might be creating.

As always, we will be sharing updates whenever possible on the [Low2No.org](http://Low2No.org) website. Stop by and leave a note?



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Johanna Mäkelä, Special Researcher at National Consumer Research Center, Helsinki 6.6.2011.

Olli Siren, Organiser of Ravintolapäivä, Helsinki 8.6.2011.

Pekka Mustonen, Special Researcher at City of Helsinki, Helsinki 9.6.2011.

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Olli Sallinen and Saana Sipilä, Kiosk Entrepreneurs, Turku 11.6.2011.

Johanna Porola, Kiosk Employee, Turku 12.6.2011.

Grill Entrepreneur, Turku 12.6.2011.

# List of plates

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## CREDITS

**Cover images:** This book is printed with four different cover images. Collect them all: "Isoroba", Kaarle Hurtig, 2011; "Ravintolapäivä", Martti Tulenheimo, 2011; "Ima Helsinki", Pertti Jenytin/LEHTIKUVA, 1959; "Helsingfors, the Capital of Finland", US Library of Congress, 1901

**Page 4:** "City Hall Square in Helsinki, Finland in 1820, before the rebuilding of Central Helsinki" Wikimedia Commons [http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Helsinki\\_1820.jpg](http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Helsinki_1820.jpg)

**Page 17:** "The Russian cathedral and the harbor, Helsingfors, Russia, i.e., Helsinki, Finland" ca.1890—ca.1900 US Library of Congress <http://www.loc.gov/pictures/item/2001697409/>

**Page 18:** "Interior of the Port of Helsingfors (harbor scene, Helsinki, Finland) 1856" US Library of Congress <http://www.loc.gov/pictures/item/99614047/>

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**Page 25:** Kalle Kultala (LEHTIKUVA)

**Pages 27:** Olympic World Photo Pool (LEHTIKUVA)

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by Kaarle Hurtig (kaarle.hurtig@  
gmail.com).

Research for 'Where does Hodari  
come from?' by Tea Tonnov (tea.  
tonnov@gmail.com)

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## LOW2NO & SITRA

**Low2No** is a project by Sitra, SRV  
and VVO.

Low2No is a platform for urban  
innovation, centred on a mixed-use  
block being designed for Jätkäsaari,  
due for completion in 2014.  
Numerous strategies are carried  
within Low2No, including prototypes  
for street food, food retail, food  
delivery, urban agriculture and so on.

Sitra is an independent fund  
operating under the supervision  
of the Finnish Parliament, which  
seeks to promote stable and  
balanced development in Finland,  
qualitative and quantitative growth  
of the economy, and international  
competitiveness and cooperation.  
Our operations are funded out of the  
returns from our endowment capital  
and business funding.

## CONTACTS

**Bryan Boyer**  
bryan.boyer@sitra.fi

**Justin W. Cook**  
justn.cook@sitra.fi

**Dan Hill**  
dan.hill@sitra.fi

**Jukka Noponen**  
jukka.noponen@sitra.fi

**Marco Steinberg**  
marco.steinberg@sitra.fi

### Contact details

Itämerentori 2  
PL 160  
00181 Helsinki  
Finland

sitra.fi  
low2no.org



Late night grub, coffee stands, mobile kitchens, kiosks, hole-in-the-wall sandwich joints & market stalls—street food is an integral part of culture through its sheer everydayness. It is literally all around us.

Street food is a breeding ground for innovation that can percolate upwards. It tends to involve smaller investments, with individual business operating at a smaller scale and allowing innovation to happen at an accelerated pace. The speed of street food is exciting, but can it be more than fast food?

Today food is linked to sustenance as much as it is sovereignty, carbon as much as culture. Therefore, innovation in this area is a key part of the strategic positioning of cities and regions who now compete for attention in a crowded global market.

Sitra is asking a simple question: how can Helsinki leverage its rich history and existing experiments to rethink the business, policy, and experience of street food?



**SITRA**