

**Food design**

**An interdisciplinary quest for progress**

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## EDITORIAL

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# Food design: An interdisciplinary quest for progress

Recently, I attended the third *efood* conference in Lisbon, Portugal. For me, as for many of my colleagues, the *efood* meeting was the first conference I could attend after a long period of COVID-19 pandemic with lockdowns and travel restrictions. It was great to mingle with students, entrepreneurs, designers, colleagues and friends again and to have the opportunity to be inspired by their work. However, it was also overwhelming to see so many interesting projects. Because food is part of our daily lives, from early morning breakfast to late evening dinner or snack, our minds are preoccupied with food for several moments each day. And many people play a role in this food supply: farmers, transporters, store workers, cooks, caretakers, garbage collectors and many others. And all people seem to have an opinion on what tastes good, how to store products, how to prepare them and so on. This makes the field of food design so dynamic and complex, and sometimes overwhelming.

The role that you can play in the complex food system depends on your personal talents. Perhaps your talent is creating an exhibition or presentation to raise awareness of pressing topics, creating inspirational dinners, developing new food products or recipes, teaching students about food production or eating habits, helping develop new food laws to secure food safety, studying

eating behaviour and writing scientific papers or helping disseminate this knowledge to a wider audience. All these talents are valuable to develop the food system in the best possible direction and allow you to contribute in your own way.

*Efood* (<https://efood2022.com>) is one of the few conferences specifically focused on food design and was previously hosted in 2017 and 2019, all in Lisbon. Other food design meetings include the *Creative Tastebuds* meetings in Denmark (<https://creativetastebuds.dk>), for which the *International Journal of Food Design* has published a set of papers in several Special Issues. Several *International Conferences of Food Design* have been organized in London (2012), New York (2015) and online (2017) (<https://onlineschooloffooddesign.teachable.com/p/food-design-conference>). In addition, an active community in Latin America has organized annual food design conferences since 2013, in which Spanish is the main language (<https://www.lafooddesign.org>). All these conferences bring people from many different disciplines together and assist us in building the networks that we need to create projects that may bring about desirable, long-lasting changes in the global food system.

While attending this conference that covers the relatively new field of food design, I wondered: what are the defining characteristics of the field of food design? And one of them should definitely be the diversity of people it brings together. A food design meeting brings together people of many different levels of expertise, including students, educators, researchers, practitioners, policymakers and corporate personnel; and from many different backgrounds and disciplines, such as gastronomy, hospitality, food technology, nutrition, health education, psychology, anthropology, art and design. And even though they are connected through food, these disciplines have often evolved almost independently of each other. In our academic endeavours, we need to take this complexity into account, work together and try to integrate different approaches, because all these stakeholders play a role in one way or another in people's interactions with food, and all these views matter if we are to develop products, services and systems that can function in the real world. For example, the current issue features two articles that provide insight in the lives of people with special needs: people with swallowing disabilities (Smith et al. 2022) and marathon runners (Karahanoğlu 2022). In both cases, the articles go beyond physiological and nutritional needs and show the intricacies of what it means to improve specially designed foods and integrate them optimally into consumers' routines. The papers show how designers integrate insights from physiology, psychology, sensory perception, food technology, user testing and commercial considerations to create viable solutions.

The second characteristic I find specific to food design is that designers strive to make the world a better place. As we can see in the title of the paper written by Boudewijn Boon and I in the current issue, food design is not just about considering aspects, or being inspired by them, it is also about striving for improvements (Boon and Schifferstein 2022). There are many challenges in the realm of food that require design input. Some of us are working to create more engaging eating experiences, others are trying to support people in eating healthy or making our eating habits more sustainable. Despite personal differences, people in the food design field feel united by their passion to use the knowledge of food to improve the world we live in. Designers build on the expertise of the various disciplines and can take advantage of tools and methods that can structure and guide their design processes. For instance, the paper by Céline Gallen and colleagues discusses how a combination of

design thinking and prototyping was used to improve the acceptance of foods containing insects (Gallen et al. 2022). This interest in the process of how we can improve (elements of) the food system is essential in food design.

With this new issue, the *International Journal of Food Design* continues its ambition as an academic journal to support the development of food design. The journal supports an open view, in which many approaches are welcome, to allow the field to develop in all its diversity. We build on scientific traditions with evidence-based research, but also adopt a sympathetic view to create space for innovative approaches, to work towards any improvements in the food system that seem desirable. Feel free to join us on this journey.

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## CONTRIBUTOR DETAILS

Rick (H. N. J.) Schifferstein is an associate professor at the Faculty of Industrial Design Engineering of Delft University of Technology. His topics of interest include (multi)sensory perception, food design and experience-driven innovation. He has contributed to 100+ papers in international scientific journals, including *Acta Psychologica*, *Food Quality and Preference*, *Chemical Senses*, *Materials & Design* and *International Journal of Design*. He is principal editor of the *International Journal of Food Design*, and co-editor of the books *Food, People and Society* (Springer, 2001), *Product Experience* (Elsevier, 2008), *From Floating Wheelchairs to Mobile Car Parks* (Eleven International, 2011) and *Advanced Design Methods for Successful Innovation* (Design United, 2013). He is founder and director of the Food & Eating Design Lab <https://delftdesignlabs.org/food-design/>, in which staff members and design students work together to improve people's interactions with their daily foods.

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