



Press Release
2 May 2019

Cheese made from Alex James, Heston Blumenthal, Professor Green, Ruby Tandoh and Suggs goes on show in V&A's upcoming *FOOD: Bigger than the Plate* exhibition

FOOD: Bigger than the Plate
Sponsored by BaxterStorey
18 May – 20 October 2019
vam.ac.uk/food | #PlateUp

The V&A's forthcoming exhibition *FOOD: Bigger than the Plate* will feature five cheeses cultured from human bacteria. Unique 'microbial portraits' of musician and cheesemaker Alex James (Blur), chef Heston Blumenthal, British rapper Professor Green, baker and food writer Ruby Tandoh, and Madness frontman Suggs will be on display, recreated as Cheshire cheese, comté cheese, mozzarella, stilton and cheddar respectively.

The project, titled *Selfmade*, was conceived in 2013 by smell researcher Sissel Tolaas and biologist and artist Christina Agapakis. It is being remade in 2019 for *FOOD: Bigger than the Plate* by biodesigner Helene Steiner, chef John Quilter (AKA the Food Busker) and scientist Dr. Thomas Meany – an interdisciplinary team based at Open Cell, an open research centre for biotechnology in West London.

Aiming to challenge cultural squeamishness about bacteria, *Selfmade* draws on recent scientific studies of the microbiome and its importance in how the human body functions. Contemporary society focuses on cleanliness and hyper-sanitation, however our gut health and experience of the world around us – taste, smell – are dependent on the microbial world.

To create *Selfmade* for the exhibition, Steiner and her team took bacteria samples from the surface of our donors' skin – including armpits, noses and belly buttons – using microbiology techniques to grow starter cultures which were then combined with fresh, pasteurized milk to create five unique cheeses. The intensive cheesemaking process was carried out by Foodbusker at Open Cell in Shepherd's Bush, London, working with a specialist cheesemaker, to produce:

- **Cheshire cheese** made using **Alex James's** bacteria
- **Comté cheese** made using **Heston Blumenthal's** bacteria
- **Mozzarella** made using **Professor Green's** bacteria
- **Stilton** made using **Ruby Tandoh's** bacteria
- **Cheddar** made using **Suggs'** bacteria

Once matured, the five *Selfmade* cheeses will be exhibited within a refrigerated display.

Selfmade is one of over 70 contemporary projects in *FOOD: Bigger than the Plate*, which explores how innovative individuals, communities and organisations are radically re-inventing how we grow, distribute and experience food. Taking visitors on a sensory journey through the food cycle, from compost to table, it poses questions about how the collective choices we make can lead to a more sustainable, just and delicious food future in unexpected and playful ways.

-ENDS-

Notes to Editors

- *FOOD: Bigger than the Plate* runs from 18 May – 20 October 2019.
- The exhibition has been co-curated for the V&A by Catherine Flood and May Rosenthal Sloan.
- Advance tickets are £17, concessions from £13 – available [here](#).
- Apply promo code FOOD40 at check out to redeem our early bird offer of 40% off individual advance tickets (available for a limited time only – refer to T&Cs on V&A website [here](#)).
- The exhibition will be accompanied by a new V&A publication, and a series of related events, courses and creative workshops.

Social Media

#PlateUp

Twitter: @V_and_A

Instagram: @vamuseum

Facebook: @VictoriaandalbertMuseum

About Open Cell

A biotechnology research hub built in 70 shipping containers in Shepherd's Bush London. OpenCell brings together interdisciplinary researchers and startups to build a bustling community of like-minded innovators. It was founded by Helene Steiner and Dr. Thomas Meany in 2018 with the support of the local Hammersmith & Fulham Council and regeneration focused property developers U + I Plc.

@opencelllondon

About Helene Steiner

Helene Steiner is a designer and engineer who works at the interface between technology and science. She co-founded Open Cell with the mission to provide affordable lab space to early stage startups innovating at the intersection of design and biology. She is the co-founder of a biotech company, Cell-Free Technology, where she develops computational and biological design tools for proteins and materials and leads the biomaterial platform at the fashion department at the Royal College of Art. She was previously a postdoc research fellow in Microsoft Research Cambridge where she developed biological interfaces. She has been hosted as a visiting research fellow in the

Tangible Research group of the MIT Media Lab. She holds a MDes from the Bauhaus University, MA from the Royal College of Art and an MSc from Imperial College London. She has been awarded a Frontier of Science, Kavli Fellowship by the National Academy of Sciences.

About Food Busker

John Quilter is an entrepreneur, You Tuber and TV chef. He is a co-founder of coffee business CRU Kafe and a co-founding member of beauty start-up Disciple Skincare. His weekly food show on You Tube; Food Busker has over 29M views, 250k subscribers.

In another life, John ran businesses for Raymond Blanc and Sir Terence Conran as well as operating his own Michelin-listed, award winning brasserie; Marmalade. He has also consulted for some of the most prestigious London institutions, including The Ivy, Le Caprice and Soho House, and has hosted numerous food stages at Taste of London, Big Feastival, and Good Food Show. He knows the chefs from the top Michelin starred restaurants all the way down to the pioneering street karts.

@foodbusker

About Christina Agapakis

[Christina Agapakis](#) is a synthetic biologist, writer, and artist and the creative director of [Ginkgo Bioworks](#), an organism design company based in Boston developing made-to-order microbes for applications in industrial technology, agriculture, food, and health. Her work brings together biologists, engineers, designers, artists, and social scientists to explore the future of biotechnology, from perfume made from extinct flowers to engineered probiotics and GMO beer. She has a PhD in synthetic biology from Harvard University, where her research focused on developing design principles for engineering biology.

About Sissel Tolaas

Sissel Tolaas has been working/researching and experimenting intensively with the topic of smell since 1990. Sissel is a pioneer and unique in her approach to smells and has developed a wide range of revolutionary projects worldwide with smells based upon her own knowledge - organic chemistry, linguistics, and visual art. Sissel established the SMELL RE_searchLab Berlin in January 2004, supported by IFF Inc. Her research and projects have won recognition through numerous national and international scholarships, honors, and prizes. She is very capable at collaborating intensively with and among other disciplines. Sissel has showed her projects in multiple museum and institutions i.e. MOMA, NGV, DIA, CCA, and worked with universities among others Nanyang Technical University, Harvard, Oxford. Sissel has done 52 City SmellScape research projects since 1996, of, for, and with major cities, all over the world. She has built up several types of smell archives and is currently working on smell molecule preservation /conservation archives on The World's Oceans and Decay in Detroit, Lascaux Cave, Historical buildings in UK, Australia's Indigenous Past. Since 2014 Tolaas is part of various start-ups in the field of the senses and technology.

Corporate support for the V&A is more vital than ever. Please help us by acknowledging the exhibition supporters. The exhibition is sponsored by BaxterStorey with further support from Cockayne Grants for the Arts.

About BaxterStorey

BaxterStorey provides bespoke hospitality services through restaurants, café bars, deli operations and executive dining rooms for a wide range of customers. Its heritage is built on the culinary expertise and the professional training and development of its people.

It employs more than 8,500 people at over 700 locations and provides food service excellence to clients and customers in business and industry.

BaxterStorey's core principle is to serve the best quality food, sourced and prepared locally using the finest produce. Through its chef and barista academies, it provides focused and dedicated training to front line teams helping them to provide great service and build a career for life.

The reach and talent of BaxterStorey's business enables it to draw on an extensive pool of expertise within the food service sphere in the UK, providing it with a strong foundation to share and distribute best practice both locally and across the country. <https://baxterstorey.com/food/>

With further support from

Cockayne Grants for the Arts

Cockayne is a private foundation based in San Francisco. Through its donor advised fund held at The London Community Foundation in the UK, it supports diverse and groundbreaking arts projects in the performing, literary and visual arts.

Sponsored by



With further support from

COCKAYNE

**The London
Community
Foundation**

For further PRESS information about *FOOD* please contact Sophie Steel on s.steel@vam.ac.uk / +44 (0)20 7942 2279, or vam@purplepr.com (not for publication). A selection of press images is available to download free of charge from pressimages.vam.ac.uk