

Kerry Packer and Food Consulting? Not as far-fetched as you might think. It seems that the great man knew a lot about how we eat. Suzee Brain recounts her time with KP and tells us a lot about F&B DNA – it's fascinating stuff...

Why Kerry Packer was the best food consultant I ever met

Recently I have been on a speaking circuit with Mark Bouris, host of the TV show *The Mentor*, running a series of breakfasts for TabCorp clients on the topic 'Doing Business in Hard Times'. Mark weaves his three key messages through a funny and engaging story on a meeting he had with Kerry Packer and what he learnt about business from that meeting. Standing in the wings listening to his story, I realised I have my own Kerry Packer story to tell. Kerry was gruff, imposing and un-PC in every way (and then some!) but he taught me something that laid the very foundation of what Brain & Poulter stands for. His teachings still guide our team on every job.

Don't believe the words 'Kerry Packer' and 'Food Consultant' go together? Then read on and hopefully be as inspired by his words as I was 35 years ago...

It was Saturday, 5th March 1983. I was executive chef for Kerry Packer based out of the Channel Nine studios in Willoughby and it was election night. In those days, Channel Nine ruled the airwaves for current affairs and news so on the Saturday evening Packer had invited Bob Hawke, Labour leader and leader of the Opposition into the studio

for a live cross as the election counts came in. On the next morning, he had also secured Malcolm Fraser for a live interview – would Fraser be speaking as the returned Prime Minister or as the conceiver? And here's where the food consulting magic came in....

Packer came to brief me in the tiny shoebox of a kitchen off the boardroom on how he wanted the two events to run. He blustered to me that for dinner for Bob Hawke on Saturday night "I want you to serve pumpkin soup, rack of lamb and apple pie. Plenty of beer and soft drink and the place card needs to read Bob Hawke." He continued as I took furious notes "For the Sunday breakfast the menu is to be scrambled eggs with truffle, Bollinger and the placecard has to read – The Right Honourable member for" And with those instructions he turned on his heels and left my kitchen.

Two politicians but two very different approaches to the menu. You see, Packer knew that we all carry our own F&B DNA, a certain way that we like to eat that reflects our heritage, our self-worth, our social status, our personal values and our aspirations. When we eat according to our DNA we are aligned with our own view of ourselves. Packer knew if he could connect with each guest by reflecting their values back to them via the food that he stood the best chance of getting a great interview out of them.

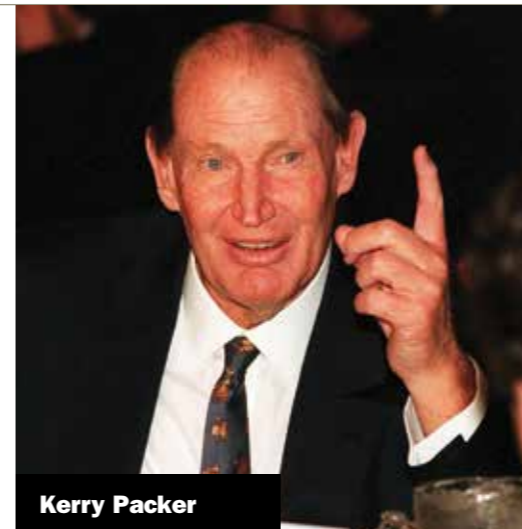


SUZEE BRAIN
Director
Brain & Poulter

My Big Aha

And so, my 'Aha' moment was had as I stood scooping out the pumpkin seeds of the ornamental pumpkins to create the 'bowls' I would serve Bob Hawke his soup in (this was the 80s!!).

The success of F&B precincts and outlets is linked to how well the concept, design, placemaking and tenancy mix is aligned to the customer's heritage, self-worth, social status, values and aspirations. That's why cookie cutter precincts never 'feel' right and why our company places so much time and importance on really immersing ourselves in the physical suburbs as well as running our 'food filter' over the demographics to map out exactly what the F&B DNA is of any shopping centre trade area we are working on. Through testing and measuring trading results of various cuisine types and mapping it back to the trade area F&B DNA, we have been able to uncover some crucial insights that creates a much-improved tenancy mix. Our goal is always to create a tenancy mix built in response to the



Kerry Packer

F&B DNA clues abound everywhere

Because one of our first big tourism booms was Japanese visiting the Gold Coast and South East Queensland, Japanese hot food trades better than Chinese hot food in Queensland. This isn't so much because the tourists want to eat Japanese food but, as tourism grew, so did Japanese workers residing in Queensland to support the tourism. It was those workers who wanted to

Islanders also need larger, more robust cuts of pork from the butcher and value sized portions and packs of sushi.

Indian people don't like to buy Indian food out of bain maries and the Vietnamese prefer to buy whole fish over fillets. The best customers for a chocolate Café are Asian (we call Max Brenner the Asian Pub!)

Three per cent of any one nationality supports a cuisine focused on their most popular national cuisine, 15% of any one nationality in a trade area supports an entire food precinct of that country's cuisine.

So, when you're dissecting your next Quantum report or looking over your lease expiry profiles, I encourage you to see past just the labels of 'Millennials' or 'Baby Boomers' and really spend time coming to terms with how your

customers are eating when they're not in your centre.

Are they in their garages turning lambs on spits or pickling vegetables in their garages to put on antipasto plates? Are they making batches of baklava and in need of bulk supplies of nuts?

There are F&B DNA clues everywhere if you spend the time to get out of the office and into the streets around your centres.

A toast to the big man

As frightening and unpredictable as it was to work for Kerry Packer, I am so grateful to him for what he taught me about human behaviour and how when you harness it and reflect it back to the audience, success is sure to follow.

I raise my glass of Fanta (his preferred drink) to Packer and thank him for what he taught me about food consulting. Cheers KP. **SCN**



A lesson learned – reflecting values via food



Scones, a New Zealand cafe essential

cook and eat Japanese food and now it's part of a Queensland food precinct DNA.

Mexican doesn't trade as well in suburbs with high levels of Asian decendency. When we ask the Chinese customers why they don't partake in the Mexican food they say it is "unhealthy" in their eyes – the cheese and sour cream in particular is not common in their own cuisine heritage.

Above average levels of single parent households bodes well for taverns (date nights needed!) while drive throughs are preferred when a trade area is over indexed in young families.

Western Australian centres can sustain fish and chips in the tenancy mix more than in any other state because of the higher levels of English migrants in many trade areas.

Scones are vital on a café menu if you live in New Zealand. Pacific

trade area F&B DNA rather than copying the mix that's working elsewhere because that's when you get loyalty, high levels of repeat trade and the ripple effects of cross shopping. Here are a few unique F&B DNA examples we've uncovered over the years: