



September 21, 2015 Dinner Meeting Recap

The Chicago Section IFT 2015-2016 Kickoff Meeting was a great success. This meeting also marked the first of our "Celebrate Chicago!" themed program to mark our 75th year as the Chicago Section IFT. Dr. John Coupland, President-Elect for IFT was our guest and gave an informative, entertaining, and inspiring presentation "Being Proud of Food Science: A Chicago Story".

"...Chicago is the most American City..." One of Dr. Coupland's opening lines, an observation and declaration that grabbed everyone's attention and had heads nodding early on. A UK native and Penn State professor - Dr. Coupland knows how to make friends quickly in the Windy City. As the audience was taken on a historical journey of the food industry of America, we learned why Chicago has been the lifeline of our nation's food supply since the Industrial Revolution. We gained insight from a food science perspective on how truly amazing this time was - advances in food science and technology allowed for easy access to commodities previously unavailable or unaffordable: meat, dairy, processed cereal products where now a part of the American lifestyle. White bread - for centuries reserved only for the most stately - could now be included as a part of a full and affordable meal at Chicago-founded establishments like McDonalds. It was an exciting time.

You cannot discuss the Chicago foodscape at the turn of the century without taking a tour of the beef industry and the expose on food safety and worker's welfare as written in *The Jungle* by Upton Sinclair. Dr. Coupland painted a typical picture here - broad strokes around the socialist movements of the day, horrific processing and work conditions common during the Industrial Revolution. But, with a new twist, he revealed haunting similarities between the uproar of the 1900's and the parallels of our day - the GMO debate, discussion on Organics, The Food Babe and others that raise their voice in protest. He presented direct quotes from heads of the slaughter industry of yesterday, that echo the voice of food giants today.

It is through this looking-glass of hind sight that Dr. Coupland urges us, the Food Science Community, to cease our silence in the debates of today - join the conversation. Engage. Discuss. Interact. Be Proud of who we are and what we do. He reminds us, for every headline, for every extremist or reactionary supposition about our global food industry - there are quiet hero's making a difference. We are feeding the world safe, nutritious, and (often) delicious food. And still, over 100 years down the road from where Dr. Coupland's discussion began, Chicago is at the center of this awesome marvel of food science. Be Proud!

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