In a 1983 satirical short story, Margaret Atwood imagined a future in which cooking has become a macho competitive sport:

Exclusive clubs and secret societies sprang up. Men meeting . . . would now exchange special handshakes - the Béchamel twist, the chocolate mousse double grip - to show that they had been initiated. It was pointed out to the women . . . that chef after all means chief . . .

(Atwood, p. 54)

By 2005, this was no longer a satire; the initiation was visibly there to be seen on the television series MasterChef, a programme in which masculinity came to predominate. MasterChef had once been a BBC cookery show in which ordinary people demonstrated their culinary skills; it was shown once a week in a sleepy Sunday afternoon slot. While there was competition for the title of 'MasterChef', it was the cooking rather than the competition that was foregrounded, and the emphasis was emphatically on amateur rather than professional chefs. The first presenter, Loyd Grossman, wrote in 1993: 'We believed there is no place from snobbism and pretention (sic) in our red, yellow and blue kitchens . . . What consistantly (sic)impressed me and everyone who works on the series is the coolness under fire of our amateurs' (Grossman, p. 7). A new format for MasterChef was first screened on British television in 2005, the same year that saw the first series of The Apprentice, now under the title MasterChef Goes Large and produced by Elizabeth Murdoch’s company, Shine. In its new version, MasterChef Goes Large abandoned the celebration of the amateur and set out to make the competition element more aggressive, as one of the judges, John Torode put it: 'When we transformed the old MasterChef into MasterChef Goes Large we wanted to up the pace and make the series more hard-hitting, so it was relevant to the way we live today'. (Torode, 2005 p.8) The new format was much more intensive and the competitive element more foregrounded; the judgement of each cook made on camera rather than the discreet and hidden assessments of the earlier formulation.

The television cookery programme does have a greater claim to the Reithian principle that the purpose of television is to 'entertain, inform and educate' than many other forms of contemporary lifestyle programming, in that it does set out to teach its audience skills and it is concerned with knowledge transfer. The first appearance of cooking on the BBC was precisely to
inform the public of how to make the best of scarce rations during a period of war; over the course of the war, there were, as Asa Briggs estimates: ‘1,196’ wartime broadcasts on food’ (Briggs, 1995 p.274). Lord Woolton, the Minister for Food, ‘made a point of giving a personal explanation on the wireless’ when new policies were introduced ’ (Calder, p. 383). As early into the war as September 8th 1939, Mrs Arthur Webb introduced a morning programme ‘Making the Most of a Wartime Larder’. (Radio Times, September 4th). As Maggie Andrews explains: ‘the radio was seen as an obvious medium for propaganda on food, alongside women’s magazines, posters, leaflets public information films and an army of educators and lecturers . . . (Andrews, p. 92). A food advice leaflet issued by the Ministry of Food clearly addressed women as the Home Front, an integral part of the war effort: ‘Let the Food Advice Centre help YOU to win the war on the Kitchen Front’ (facsimile leaflet, in Gardiner, p. 19), another read ‘Food is a munition of war. DON’T WASTE IT’ (quoted in Lewis, p. 156).

Kitchen Front was broadcast from 1940 as part of this second world war ‘Home Front Programming’ on the radio; it began at the suggestion of the Public Relations Division of the Ministry of Food (Briggs, 1985, p. 192) ¹ and commanded an audience of well over 5 million listeners. With the involvement of school and hospital caterers, domestic science teachers and dieticians, Kitchen Front was broadcast four times a week and gave listeners expert advice on food preparation and nutrition. It was fronted by the characters ‘Gert and Daisy’ (played by the music hall act Elsie and Doris Waters) and the programme was supplemented with a weekly column in The Radio Times and features in women’s magazines. Such features made use of cartoon characters; ‘Potato Pete’ and ‘Dr Carrot’ joined ‘Mrs Sew and Sew’ of the Make do and Mend campaign as comical characters ,who like Gert and Daisy, gave Ministry advice a spin of entertainment.

The 'housewife' was constructed as a key element in the war time campaign; in the words of another Ministry of Food recipe leaflet:

You want to get through your work and difficulties with the same spirits you expect of the Forces in action . . . Well thanks to government planning the foods that will feed you and your family to the pitch of fighting fitness are right at your hand. . . . To release ships and seamen on the fighting fronts, you, on the 'Kitchen Front' have the job of using these foods to the greatest advantage. (quoted in Patten, 2002, p. i)

Kitchen Front on the radio was central to this government planning, an extension of propaganda campaigns exhorting the housewife (and the address is always to women) to avoid waste, to
consume unrationed potatoes and explaining how to use 'foods to the greatest advantage' in the rationing which really began to bite in 1941. The presenter, Marguerite Patten, was a Home Economist who had been taken up by the Ministry of Food in 1942. Patten had initially cooked publically while demonstrating electric ovens for the North Metropolitan Electric supply company, and then worked for the Ministry of Food, giving war time cookery demonstrations for local authorities for the Ministry of Food Advice Bureau at Harrods. She understood such demonstrations to be essential war work:

Throughout Britain Food Advice Centres were established, staffed by home economists . . . We gave demonstrations in the Centres, and in market squares, hospital out-patient departments, works’ canteens, large stores . . . we all felt that we were playing a vital role towards the ultimate victory’ (Patten, 2002)

Marguerite Patten was to go on to regularly broadcast for Woman’s Hour and became one of the earliest professional cooks on television with her cooking demonstrations on the magazine programme Designed for Women, broadcast from 1947, and continued to cook for Harrods after the war, to advise on how to cope with post war rationing.

In America, early cookery broadcasting also emerged from radio shows which were sponsored by government agencies rather than commercial companies; as Collins explains:

. . . homemaking shows hosted by the likes of Betty Crocker and the United States Department of Agriculture’s Aunt Sammy instructed women and kept them company in the kitchen from before the Great Depression to the end of World War II and after. Cooking via broadcasting was already a staple for American housewives by the time television emerged. (Collins, p. 2)

After the war, rationing continued in Britain until 1954, and advice on making good nutritious meals on short supplies was still required for the nation. In 1952, Woman’s Hour introduced ‘two weekly food talks: ’ based on available supplies. . . . 'Planning the Week's Meals' gives ideas for complete family meals that are economical and nourishing' (Radio Times, January 25, 1952, p. 46). Patten continued to make regular appearances on Woman's Hour on BBC Radio, and began to move into television from 1946. From 1950, she co-presented Cookery Lesson with Philip Harben, who can be claimed as the first television celebrity chef. Like Patten, Harben's professional cooking experience had emerged from his wartime experience. He had enlisted in the Royal Air Force, but suffered an eye injury and so was assigned to the catering corps.
Harben was the first presenter of the first ever BBC television programme, *Cookery*, from 1946 to 1951, which was followed by *Cookery Lesson*. His 1945 book *The Way to Cook or Common Sense in the Kitchen* is presented as a 'modest introduction to the technique of cooking' (Harben, 1945 p. 6) with none of the flourishes later found in television chefs (most notably Fanny Cradock). Harben’s television appearances did nothing to make his approach any more elaborate; his 1951 *Philip Harben's Television Cooking Book* modestly explains: ‘I hope to show you in the simplest way possible something of the technique of this art which converts raw food material into delightful meals... We are going to approach the subject *analytically* - we shall take the machine to pieces, as it were, to see how it works’. His image of ‘The Kitchen of the Future’ is a modernist understanding of the kitchen as 'A practical workshop such as craftsmanship requires' (Harben, 1951, p. 7-8).

In this pragmatic approach to cooking, Harben shares with Marguerite Patten a democratic urge to share his knowledge and to explain techniques for the benefit of his audience; a spirit that emerged from the war time demonstrations that had shaped early broadcast cookery programmes, and from the context of post-war rationing that curtailed luxurious and elaborate menus. Cooking on the BBC was less about showing off his skills as a chef than it was about teaching the nation to make the most of scarce resources during rationing; as he explains: 'I started cooking on Television in April, 1946, when the service first reopened after the Second World War, and the food situation was still pretty grim. So all my dishes had to be definitely on the austerity standard - the B.B.C. insisted' (Harben, 1951, p. 90). Recipe titles in French are rare in Harben's cooking. He does acknowledge that his recipe for lobster has its source in classic French cuisine, it is 'based on that of Maitre Escoffier, probably the greatest cook that ever lived', but Harben swiftly adds that his own version is 'particularly designed for economy so that this reputed luxury dish can be brought within the reach of all' (Harben, 1951, p. 87). Despite this democratic impulse, Harben was ousted from his status as the most prominent television cook because of a commercial sponsorship deal which the BBC could not then countenance; ‘he fell foul of the corporation by agreeing to sponsor a frying pan’ (Moran, 2013, p. 312). Harben was eventually displaced as the BBC’s celebrity chef by Fanny Cradock.

Fanny Cradock, with her husband, ‘Johnnie’, brought a newly elaborate sophistication to television cooking in a Britain where rationing was now lifted; she first appeared on television in *Kitchen Magic* in 1955, broadcast at 10.15 in the evening. Like Harben and Patten, she had first cooked publically with touring live cookery shows, sponsored by the Gas Council. Cradock maintained the principle of educating her audience in cooking skills, but her approach was less democratic than that of either
Harben or Patten, her demonstrations were decidedly patrician, as she graciously imparted her knowledge to an aspirational audience, while dressed in a ball gown. As Nicola Humble puts it:

Fanny Cradock . . . burst onto the screen in 1954 (sic) in full evening dress, dripping jewels and mink stole, caked in heavy make-up like a pantomime dame. Fanny's act (and it was an act, since by many accounts she was actually a rather poor cook) involved cooking elaborate, expensive food in front of a theatre audience . . . The food Fanny demonstrated was bizarrely grand, upping the stakes in the arena of domestic entertainment. (Humble, p. 150)

The Cradocks were keen to display this grandeur in their personas and their food, and they demonstrate their superior culinary knowledge for the benefit of what Fanny termed 'the 'inexperienced cook'. The BBC published her recipes and suggestions for dinner-parties in a series of booklets, and both Fanny and Johnny wrote a weekly cookery column for the Daily Telegraph, under the shared pen name 'Bon Viveur', published as a book in 1964. Their editor, Winfred Carr, referred to the Cradocks as:

. . . the famous husband and wife team of gastronomes and cooks, who, more than anyone else, helped to put cooking in this country back on its feet at a time when it had almost withered to a grey, unpalatable chore, after years of food shortages, substitutes and rationing (Carr, quoted in Cradock, p.2).

Fanny Cradock aspired to embody a glamour and extravagance in her cooking, referencing the new possibilities for European travel and, like Elizabeth David, introducing a British audience to the exoticism of 'Continental' food. Her recipe collection begins with a quote from Escoffier and the explanations are larded with quotes from French chefs. The Cradocks assume the 'cook' to be a woman, and use the feminine pronoun throughout both their book and the television series; in their programmes, Johnnie's expertise extended only to wine and champagne, while it is Fanny who is the front woman and the cook in both the television and radio series. In her autobiography, Cradock is keen to assert a European sophistication, her superior culinary capital and a family heritage of gastronomy, which, ironically, echoes Richard Hoggart's 1957 repudiation of the 'shiny barbarism' (Hoggart, p. 193) of American culture:

. . . our childhoods were more Hepplewhite than Hille, more Aubusson than Axminster. Gastronomically, the influence was upon claret not Coca-Cola and our tastes were guided more by Ferrari and Ritz than by snack bars and tea-shops . . . . We knew Vosin and Boulestin, Negresco and Escoffier but had never heard of Mrs Beeton. (Cradock, Fanny, 1960, p. 14)
Although the Cradocks do claim to have had some experience of 'a smart and salutary session with Hard Times' (these are unspecified, but may well allude to the shared experience of war time and post-war rationing), it is made clear that their backgrounds and social milieu have allowed them a superior understanding of fine dining: 'Palates have memories and our standards were set very high' (Cradock, 1960, p. 139). She describes parents who went duck shooting in Norfolk, dined with Mr. Somerset Maugham and went to those Paris restaurants 'which are seldom invaded by tourists' (Cradock, 1960, p. 139). Her most successful dinner dish is 'known in the family as the Duke of Windsor's haddock soufflé... given to us by His Royal Highness' (Cradock, 1960, p. 178). Fanny Cradock's career as an expert chef graciously dispensing her culinary wisdom nonetheless ended in ignominy, when in judging an 'ordinary housewife's' recipe she patronised her to such an extent that she was widely vilified. The tension between the patrician superiority and the democratic impulse to share expert knowledge finally could not be sustained by the Bon Viveurs.

Delia Smith is firmly in the tradition of Patten and Harben rather than that of Fanny Cradock; like Patten, Smith came in to cooking as a Home Economist. Her approach to cooking was not as fine dining but as a practical explanation of everyday meals. In Niki Strange’s typology of the television cook, Delia Smith falls into Strange’s category of the ‘Cookery-Educative’: ‘instruction through cookery demonstration... an instructor, a verbal, written or visually articulated instructive discourse; and a texturally inscribed tutee to whom the discourse is addressed’ (Strange, p. 301).

Smith first appeared on television on the programme Family Fare in 1973, where she addressed the viewer personally as ‘you’, and repudiated elaborate and time consuming recipes, her mission to explain rather than to impress. As Charlotte Brunsdon puts it:

Delia is an assiduous instructor and facilitator, who has become increasingly concerned to instil basic cooking skills in the wider population and to extend the range of the national palate. She has a core repertoire of familiar British dishes, but is also indefatigable in tracing and adapting recipes from a wide range of international cuisines. She is concerned, above all, with showing the viewer how to do it, rather than constructing herself as a distinguished chef. This means that her self-presentation does not detract from what she is demonstrating. (Brunsdon, 2006, p. 47)

The introduction to Smith’s published collection of recipes for the Evening Standard (she wrote a regular column for the paper) makes it clear that she expects a wide audience, attempting ‘to fit something in for everyone... that is what I have tried very hard to do – with recipes for beginners, recipes for more experienced cooks, and even a few cheating recipes for reluctant cooks’ (Smith, p. 7). Her address to the reader is as a commuter concerned to feed a family with little time, with an understanding that the commuter may well be a woman worker:
...I tend to have city commuters at the back of my mind – perhaps because for years I was myself a commuter. I try to keep the recipes uncomplicated – the daily offerings are not intended to be great discoveries in the field of gastronomy but rather ways of making everyday family meals more attractive and interesting. Being an uncomplicated cook myself, I firmly believe it’s not always necessary to send hours of hard labour to produce something that tastes good. (Smith, p. 7)

There is a long history (dating back to Philip Harben) of the effect that a television chef can have in product promotion, but Delia Smith, although well aware of her potential advertising power has, unlike other celebrity chefs, not branched out into her own product lines and remains innocent of commercial associations. In a clear comparison with the American Martha Stewart, Brunsdon suggests:

...she does not have designs on your linen, drawers, bedroom, garden, hobbies and crockery. Delia has not made the fortunes of a couple of small manufacturers by recommending their pans or kitchen utensils, and the supermarkets like to be informed of ingredients she is likely to recommend, but her books and programmes retain a quite strong relation to the instructional and functional within the realm of cooking. She is trying to show you how to do something useful. (Brunsdon, 2006, p. 37)

Delia Smith was all about instruction, in her television appearances in her weekly columns in the Radio Times, which ran until 1986, and in her cookery books (which continue to be best sellers); she was, according to Humble, a reassuring presence: ‘reworking the ideas of chefs ... making them a bit more homely, a touch more English ... She makes exotic food seem safe and her ineffable ordinariness is one of the most reassuring things about her’ (Humble, p. 237).

If Delia Smith eschewed exoticism, the restauranteur Keith Floyd represented a new variation of the Bon Viveur lifestyle for the late 1980s and 1990s, in a series of programmes that appeared in a period that was more or less concurrent with Delia Smith’s series How to Cook. After appearances on local radio and television, Floyd first appeared in his own television series Floyd on Fish, and until 2001 travelled the world, filming in France, America, Australia, Spain, Italy, Africa and India, cooking and drinking as he went. In Humble’s description:

Floyd was the most extravagant performer of his day - he glugged back the wine meant for the stew, getting redder of face and wilder of gesture as filming proceeded ... the food appeared as if by chance, seemingly the product of his unending loquacity. The innovative programmes in which he starred opened the flood gates for the chef-performers and cooking game shows that were to dominate the television schedules for much of the next decade. (Humble, p. 240)
This was not the practical approach of Philip Harben or Marguerite Patten, the aspirational ‘Continental’ cooking of Fanny Cradock, nor the sensible instruction of Delia Smith; Keith Floyd’s programmes were about cooking as lifestyle. According to David Pritchard, Floyd’s producer, Floyd took television cookery beyond the feminine realm of domesticity:

Until then, cookery on television was really aimed at women. When Floyd came on to our screens he gave men a clear and open invitation to get into the kitchen and have a go for themselves. Forget about exact ingredients, pour yourself a glass of wine and relax . . . Floyd made it OK for blokes in pubs to have conversations about chillies and coriander . . . he cut down the fences that surrounded this relatively safe field of TV cookery shows. (Pritchard, pp.24-25)

Floyd was by no means the first man in the television kitchen; he had been preceded by Johnnie Cradock. Johnnie, however, despite the sub-title of Fanny’s 1960 book, The autobiography of two cooks, was constantly berated by Fanny in the studio kitchen and his expertise firmly limited to wine; Pritchard describes him as ‘her poor downtrodden husband’ (p.23). Another male precedent was Graham Kerr, the New Zealand chef known as the ‘The Galloping Gourmet’, who had first appeared on American television and on British television in 1969. According to Collins, The Galloping Gourmet, with its studio audience, was the first cooking show to really develop the entertainment potential of cooking on television (Collins, p. 106). What Floyd did bring to the television cookery programme was to take it out of the confines of the studio and to mix together the pleasures of exotic foods and places. Floyd set up a template for the cookery/travelogue programme which would go on to become a sub-genre of the cookery programme, with later celebrity chefs such as Rick Stein travelling to India, Spain and the ‘Far East’ (www. BBCFood, August 2015), Jamie Oliver to Italy and America, Gary Rhodes to India and China and, perhaps most clearly in the spirit of Keith Floyd, The Hairy Bikers (David Myers and Simon King)5, who have to date travelled with a camera crew and cooking utensils to Portugal, Namibia, India, Vietnam, Argentina and Mexico.

Pritchard claims that his programmes with Floyd were innovative in taking food programming away from the stuffy confines of instructional programming on BBC2: ‘Most food programmes in those days came under the auspices of the Education Department . . . they were most huddled together on BBC2’ (Pritchard p. 23). One BBC2 programme, Food and Drink, provided a space for celebrity chefs, and for chefs to become celebrities. It ran from 1982 until 2002, initiated by food writers Fay Maschler and Paul Levy and the wine expert Jancis Robinson, and was the first food programme on television to dispense with cooking demonstrations6. Food and Drink offered a combination of food
and drink expertise with contemporary celebrities, special guest appearances in the 1980s included such disparate figures as Henry Cooper, Germaine Greer and Russell Harty. Significantly, the first producer was Peter Bazalgette (who was later to bring *Big Brother* to British audiences), and the programme was among the first BBC outputs to operate as a multi-platform, with its magazine *Good Food*, later a website, and establishing the basis for a cable and satellite channel, BBC Food, distributed by BBC Worldwide. As Moran explains:

*Food and Drink* went on to pioneer the trend for television programmes to spawn commercial offshoots, such as BBC *GoodFood* magazine, launched in 1989, and the BBC Good Food Show at the Birmingham National Exhibition Centre, first held in 1991. The show's centrepiece was the British Gas Celebrity Theatre, where television chefs such as Gary Rhodes and Michael Barry performed, before moving to the book stand to sign copies of their books. (Moran p. 313)

*MasterChef* first appeared on BBC television in 1990; in its first incarnation it was seen as a forum for the amateur and home cook rather than for the aspirant professional chef, an understanding that was confirmed by *MasterChef* junior for under-16s, which ran from 1994 to 1999. *MasterChef*, like *Food and Drink*, made use of a combination of professional chefs and celebrity, with guest tasters each week. It ran in this original format until 2001 and was presented by Loyd Grossman until 2000. In *MasterChef*’s first year, the BBC published a book of the series with the subtitle: ‘all the winning recipes from the British Grand Prix for Amateur Chefs’. In an introductory note Loyd Grossman affirms: ‘we had a hunch that this country might produce some of the best amateur cooks in the world . . . remember that throughout history our amateurs have often been superior to other country’s professionals . . . ’ (Grossman quoted in Davis, pp. 8-9). Contestants were recruited 'modestly but widely' through newspapers, magazines and radio and by placing notices in 'food shops across the country' (Grossman quoted in Davis, p. 9). Among the first participants were a jazz musician, an interior designer, a probation officer, a librarian, a postwoman, a male nurse and the manager of a newsagent. Nicola Humble has described contestants in this period as 'non-chefs - usually nicely brought-up women of a certain age - (who) prepared elaborate dinner-party food while being interrogated by the lugubriously vowelled Loyd Grossman and two visiting experts’ (Humble, p. 24). The first series very much promoted the amateur spirit, and the first winner was emphatically not a professional chef, but a good home cook’, as the winner characterised herself: 'I come from a family with a tradition of good honest cooking' (Joan Bunting, quoted in Davis, p. 12). It is only the two youngest contestants in this first series who profess any professional ambition; one has completed a hotel catering course and another is a student who expresses his ambition to 'have his own cookery programme and to open his own hotel and restaurant one day. . . ’ (Anthony Harold, quoted in Davis, p.16).
Despite the programme’s emphasis on the amateur cook, clearly by 1990 there was already an entrepreneurial spirit among some contestants, and a recognition that a television appearance could promote a career in the food industry. By 1993, the distinction between the home cook and the professional chef was less clear; in a later compilation of recipes from the series, Grossman felt compelled to acknowledge:

We take great care to ensure that our enthusiastic amateurs aren’t failed or former professional cooks. However we're thrilled when a successful appearance on MasterChef encourages ones of them to go into cooking professionally. So far ten of our past contestants have been able to turn their passion for food into a career. (Grossman, quoted in The Best of MasterChef, p. 20).

The Food Network channel launched in 1993 on American cable television and introduced elements of the game show to the more educative mode of the cookery programme. According to Collins, in America:

The cable network gradually revamped the traditional instructional cooking program, adding live bands, participatory studio audiences, science, travel and game shows, making the genre a microcosm of television and entertainment itself. (Collins, p. 5)

That mixing of genres also had its effect on cookery programmes in Britain; the 1990s had seen the mingling of celebrity with ‘ordinary’ cooks in MasterChef and Food and Drink; new daytime programming introduced a studio audience and a more competitive edge. Can’t Cook, Won’t Cook was produced by Bazalgette’s company, Bazal productions, for BBC1, where it aired in a morning slot, marketed as a game show (a board game based on the programme appeared in 1995). The format required inexperienced members of the public to cook with the steadying hand of a professional chef, and offered a small prize of cooking utensils. Ready Steady Cook, broadcast from 1994 to 2010 in a tea time slot on BBC2, was produced by Endemol, the company which had taken over Bazal productions. According to Brunsdon: ‘Ready Steady Cook . . . is a cheap fast programme . . . It uses the medium in a way which makes its liveness exciting.’ (Brunsdon, 1997, p. 108). That excitement came from the use of elements of the game show, with a fixed cooking time, a studio audience and the challenge of creating dishes from an unknown collection of ingredients. Competition was, if not central to the format, important, although it was less the 'ordinary' people
who were competitors than the rival chefs who donated their small cash prize to charity. A spin off series for BBC1 replaced those ‘ordinary’ participants with celebrities.

In Britain, America and Europe, the growth of satellite channels meant that food programming and celebrity chefs on television went global. Carlton Food Network (titled Taste CFN from May 2001) launched in September 1996, the BBC’s UKTV Food in 2001, broadcasting cookery shows from the BBC archive. It was rebranded as Good Food in 2009 and is now broadcast by Virgin Media and Sky. BBC Food, owned by BBC Worldwide, first aired in 2002; it was replaced by the BBC Lifestyle channel in 2007, where ‘Food’ remains a central element in the programming.

In 1999 Jamie Oliver first appeared on television The Naked Chef which was broadcast for three series. It went on to air on the Food Network in 2000, and his programmes were broadcast on the French cable food channel, Cuisine+. According to Collins, Oliver ‘represented the young, male demographic that the network has constantly sought to balance out the genre’s traditional viewership’ (Collins, p. 178).

Jamie Oliver has used his media profile to promote a range of food related campaigns on television. In 2000, he set up his own television production company, Fresh One Productions in 2000, which has consistently produced programming concerned with the politics of food. Jamie’s School Dinners, in 2005, promoted healthier school meals, Jamie’s Ministry of Food, 2008 and Jamie’s Food Revolution2010, gave advice on healthy eating on a budget. His 2002 series Jamie’s Kitchen gave the participants work experience with professional chefs, and went on to offer those who completed the programme apprenticeships in his own restaurant Fifteen. Anita Biressi and Heather Nunn (2008) have berated Jamie Oliver for contributing towards a discourse in which celebrity entrepreneurs are understood to be the solution for social problems and for his advertising endorsement of a particular supermarket. They argue that it was Jamie’s Kitchen that repositioned him in the popular imagination as a businessman and a ‘moral entrepreneur’ (Biressi and Nunn, 2013, p. 70). Tania Lewis also understands Oliver’s persona to be fraught with contradictions:

. . . his hybridized identity as a celebrity chef cum public food activist has been marked by a number of contradictions . . . the mixed model of address of TV chefs is one that is highly contradictory, marked as it is by a desire to escape from the dominant discourses of food rationalism and industrialism and its concomitant embeddedness in a commodified food culture, with its emphasis on a discourse of individualism, health, and lifestyle consumption. (Lewis, 2008, p. 63)

Oliver cannot be entirely accused of individualism; his 2005 series Ministry of Food set up a cooking school in the deprived town (see www. Rotherham.gov.uk) with the injunction to residents to ‘pass
it on’, and has left a legacy in Rotherham that has been emulated in Britain and Australia. The Ministry of Food is a direct reference to the war time campaign; the book of the series is dedicated to Marguerite Patten: ‘To Marguerite Patten, one of the original of Food girls and, since those days, a national treasure and incredible food guru.’ (Oliver, 2008, p. 4). Oliver did put the politics of food on mainstream prime time television and genuinely engaged with the issues and with disadvantaged young people; his campaign ‘Fighting for Food Education’ for better food in schools put the question of nutrition for children on the government agenda and raised the amount provided for school dinners. Oliver acknowledges and celebrates the history and significance of the wartime Ministry of Food, and recognises its contemporary relevance:

. . . it was created for two major reasons: to make sure there was enough food to go round and also to educate the public about food and proper nutrition so they’d be healthy and fighting fit . . . The Ministry of Food was all about going to the people, wherever they were – workplaces, factories, gentlemen’s clubs or local shopping areas. And they did this by simply mobilizing thousands of women who could cook, then sending them out across the whole country to provide support and tips to the public. ] . . . we have a modern-day war on our hands now and it’s over the epidemic of bad health and the rise of obesity . . . (Oliver, pp. 8-9)

The ‘expert’ chefs of MasterChef in its current variation demonstrate no equivalent engagement; their role is judgemental rather than about sharing skills and knowledge, and their assessment is unassailable. Nick Couldry has identified MasterChef as a reality programme in which ‘an industry expert’ performs the role of an external authority, a ‘guide of individualized instruction’ (Couldry, 2010, p. 79). MasterChef Goes Large returned to its former title MasterChef in 2008, but maintained a new emphasis on competiveness; the sub-title of a 2011 book of the series MasterChef at Home is ‘Be a winner in your own kitchen’. In his foreword, John Torode employs of the language of opportunity and of personal transformation:

. . . it could happen for you . . . go on: Change Your Life! . . . Not only is it about a journey of food and cookery but one of real self-discovery. It’s about people who have grown up, chosen a life, and then decided it’s time to change and do something that they truly want to do for a lifetime’ (Torode, 2011, p. 8).

The new incarnation of MasterChef prided itself on its competitive cooking and the tough initiation it required, as the judge John Torode put it: ‘The result of all the blood sweat and tears that come from MasterChef is a set of what we feel are the best cooks who know the secret of taking ordinary food to the extraordinary’ (John Torode, 2011, p. 8). This version of MasterChef had a new logo, referencing the ‘@’ sign of a computer keyboard. The setting was now that of an industrial
workplace, with lockers and cooking stations for the contestants, and the presenters pacing the kitchen floor surveying and timing the contestants. This was no longer the television studio of Philip Harben, Fanny Cradock or Lloyd Grossman, or the domestic kitchen of Delia Smith and Jamie Oliver (who appeared to be cooking in their own homes); this is the kitchen as a work space. The time and pace of the cooking is foregrounded, with deadlines barked at the cooks, rather than the relatively gentle hints of Lloyd Grossman; this exchange between judge Greg Wallace and a participant is typical: ‘Are you going to be on time?’ ‘I hope so’ ‘We don’t do ‘I hope so – be on time!’

(MasterChef, BBC1, 19 March, 2015)

The approach to cooking is one of professional expectation rather than as a domestic or leisure activity; the cooking represents a return to the elaborate and aspirational dishes of Fanny Cradock. One of the judges was Michel Roux Junior, a starred Michelin chef who worked in his family restaurant, Le Gavroche; ironically, like Philip Harben, Roux fell foul of BBC regulations by becoming a ‘brand ambassador’ for a particular product. MasterChef nonetheless did promote Le Gavroche, during Roux’s incumbency, with Roux’s sous-chef Monica Galetti among the expert tasters and Le Gavroche designated as restaurant for the participants to work in during Roux’s term as a judge. This was not only promotion for the restaurant, but also for the cooking classes run by Roux and Galetti, advertised on the restaurant’s website, which implicitly invokes the association with television:

The Michel Roux Jr Experience from Cactus Kitchens is a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to spend time cooking in an intimate environment with Michel Roux Jr. This exclusive package will provide a VIP experience for each small class. For the first time ever, members of the public will spend the day cooking alongside Michel in the state-of-the-art kitchens.

(www.legavroche.com, )

Among the regular ‘challenges’ (another term familiar from The Apprentice) of the current variation of MasterChef is that the contestants are sent to work in the kitchens of a similar gourmet restaurant, The participants are sent there to learn the principles of ‘fine dining’ (in the words of the presenters), and it was clearly anticipated that this is a level of culinary experience that the contestants have not encountered before (even when the participants were celebrities, presumably not unfamiliar with good restaurants).

While the 1990 programme had emphasized the ‘amateur’ chef, the new version blurred any distinction between the amateur and the professional, with working cooks among the contestants. In 2008, a spinoff series, MasterChef the Professionals featured only working professionals. Torode is
clear that winning the contest will have a transforming effect: 'Whoever won would find their life changed dramatically - no two ways about it' (Torode, 2005, p.8), and the contestants are similarly convinced of the transformative power of the competition, as one of the 2013 participants expressed it: 'It will change my life forever' (MasterChef, The Professionals, 4 October, 2013). Most of the contestants interviewed for the 2005 series expressed an aspiration to own their own restaurant, or to go into the food industry in some way; these aspirant chefs are entrepreneurs just as much as the contestants in The Apprentice.

The programme makes use of close ups of participant’s faces at the moment of elimination, there is a long pause before the expulsion of one of the contestants, accompanied by tense music, all these are tropes that are familiar from The Apprentice. Like the Apprentice, contestants are interviewed on their departure, dressed in their chef’s whites as they clear their lockers; a failure to impress the judges is represented as a humiliating loss of status. Also shared with The Apprentice is the ease with which contestants are dispatched; the camera lingers on their walk away from the studio, but they are never referred to again. The language in which Torode introduced the book of the 2005 series is also resonant of The Apprentice:

The challenge was not just for the contestants but also for Gregg and me as judges. . . . My personal quest was to find someone who . . . had that special spark that would make them stand out head and shoulders above the rest' (Torode, 2005, p.6)

The contestants themselves use the language of the hopeful and ambitious participants in The Apprentice: 'I am going to win it . . .I’m going to do my damnest to win it, without a doubt’ (Mark Todd, quoted in MasterChef goes Large, p. 35), 'I'm very competitive and I give everything I do one hundred per cent. That's why I'm here' (Christopher Souto, quoted in MasterChef goes Large, p. 55) ‘I want to get through to the next stage . . . I want to get to the end . . . I want to win it!' (Mark Rigby, quoted in MasterChef goes Large, p 128). Humble has argued that it is the presenters on cooking programmes that have now become the focus, rather than the cooking:

As TV cookery programmes have become more sophisticated, it has become clear that the real product is not the food but the presenter. What we see increasingly with successful television cooks is an awareness of themselves as commodities, a willingness to package their personalities into neat boxes. (Humble p. 241)

It is not only the presenters of MasterChef who present themselves as a commodity, the contestants too have learned how to package their personalities; in the aftermath of Big Brother there is a knowing awareness that a television appearance can boost a career. As in The Apprentice, the
contestants are willing to accept the judges’ verdict without question, and express their willingness to learn from the experts. There is a shared belief by both contestants and judges that persistence and ambition will enable bring rewards: ‘What does it take to make a star chef? Ability, charisma, stamina, food knowledge and most of all passion’ (Torode, quoted in MasterChef goes Large, p. 13).

As Couldry (2006) and McGuigan (2014) have noted, in the neoliberal context ‘passion’ and ‘ability’ are terms which are now evoked across workplaces and which convert into the expectations of all employees to maintain commitment, focus and the ability to work long hours.

In his discussion of food on television, Toby Miller argues that the address to the viewer of the television cookery programme has shifted from that of a citizen to consumer:

In the era of ‘open’ TV, food television’s address to the consumer has displaced any meaningful address of the citizen, thanks to deregulatory polities that facilitate media businesses targeting specific cultures. The dominant interpellation is about learning to govern the self through orderly preparation, style and pleasure - the transformation of potential drudgery into a special event . . . (Miller, 2007, p. 143)

It is not only the address to the viewer that has changed in the broadcasting of cookery, the form and structure of the programmes has also transformed; elements from game shows and entertainment have become increasingly evident, and cooking on television is now informed by the drama and competition of reality television shows. What was once a ‘meaningful address’ and engagement with citizenship, instructing listeners and viewers on how to cook nutritional food and to use ingredients economically has become yet another site for the discourse of enterprise. As successive governments have seen ‘apprenticeships’ as a solution for youth unemployment and flagging productivity, MasterChef applies the conventions of The Apprentice and shifts the television kitchen from a domestic space to a workplace, Cooking on television has become yet another site for the discourses of enterprise and competition in which ‘passion’ and ruthless ambition are required in the interests of a neoliberal professionalism.
Notes


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1 ‘The Ministry of Food’ would later become the title of a television series (Channel 4, 2008) and recipe book by Jamie Oliver (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 2008), which attempted to bring the same principles to the new austerity of Britain after the financial crash

2 This was the first television cookery programme broadcast in the world

3 In 1995 - Delia Smith used cranberries in a recipe, and sales rose by 30 per cent

4 *How to Cook* ran for three series on the BBC between 1998-2002

5 Like Keith Floyd, The Hairy Bikers were not professionally trained chefs
Food and Drink was revived in 2013, and is currently still broadcasting
Jamie Oliver’s 2002 programme Jamie’s Kitchen literally auditioned participants for a work placement in Oliver’s restaurant.