

CIRENCESTER SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY SOCIETY

The Society's lecture held on 10 December at the Parish Centre on "The Science of Cooking" was given by Professor Peter Barham, of Bristol University.

Using a fascinating selection of simple practical examples, he explained the factors determining how we "taste" food and drink. Much of the background to this work was done in collaboration with Heston Blumenthal and several video clips added greatly to the story.

Some well-established "facts" were dispelled; e.g. Chinese food containing MSG is not good for you. MSG is in fact a key precursor for the production of amino acids and surprisingly two ingredients with the highest amounts of MSG are parmesan cheese and tomato puree.

The five basic tastes detected in the mouth are supported by sensors in the nose that give the brain a more complete picture. More unexpected factors that play a part in the process of taste include sight, sound and even the colour of the plate.

Using sophisticated analytical techniques to identify the key taste-related chemicals, it is possible to predict combinations of ingredients that unexpectedly go together very well – the example which members tasted was blue cheese and chocolate!

At the AGM which followed the lecture, the following officers were elected to serve for 2009: Chair Prof. Peter Stoward, Vice-Chair Richard Gunner, Treasurer Dr Michael McEllin, Membership Secretary Joan Cooper, Committee Secretary Kathleen Wells, Programme Secretary Jo Newbould, Bulletin Editor Dr Tony Moody. Co-opted Prof. Roy Postlethwaite.

The next lecture will be held on 14th January at the RAC at 7 30pm. Dr Colin Snowden, Linacre College, Oxford will talk on "Can Fuel Cells Compete?". For more details see www.cirensociety.org.uk or ring 01285 651972.