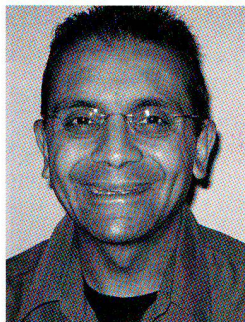


# Culinology:

## The marriage of culinary arts and technology



BY DR AJAY SHAH

**CULINOLOGY**, A TERM trademarked by the Research Chefs Association, is the blending of culinary arts and food science and technology. The term "culinology"

was coined by Winston Riley, the first president and founder of the Research Chefs Association, to describe and formalise the fusion of two disciplines – culinary art and food science and technology.

The Research Chefs Association, headquartered in Atlanta, Georgia, US ([www.culinology.org](http://www.culinology.org)) certifies research chefs to earn the designation Certified Research Chefs, to prove their professional value to the food industry. The organisation has grown to over 2,300 members worldwide.

When food product development was in its infancy, the driving force of new product development was the product development teams, which comprised almost exclusively of food scientists. These pioneer food scientists were the ones who had the tremendous task of creating foods in a manufacturing setting that were first and foremost safe for consumers to eat, but at the same time provided a convenience to consumers.

Consumers were initially willing to sacrifice flavour for food safety and convenience, and initially these new products were a way to preserve food and extend shelf life. Then, as families and consumers began to turn more and more to convenience foods and spent less and less time in the kitchen preparing meals and at the same time consumers' palates became more educated, a demand was created for better quality products that also had better flavour. Around the same time, manufacturers began to understand the need for a team of product developers, comprised of both chefs and food scientists to create food products that could meet all the needs of consumers and manufacturer, but that also tasted great at the same time.

As members of the product development teams, both food scientists and chefs had a role to play. Chefs brought their wonderful flavours and ingredients, the knowledge of

how these flavours and ingredients interacted, and how to make the most of flavours in a dish or products. Food scientists conversely knew how to manufacture the foods to meet all manufacturing requirements, but could be lacking in making flavours the best they could be. They did not understand the food from a culinary perspective, and how to balance the flavours using the best possible ingredients available. The marriage of culinary arts and food science and technology in product development was inevitable. Both groups had two separate skill sets that both needed to be employed to create the best products food manufacturing could offer.

As food scientists and chefs began to team up, initially the skills they had remained separate. The chefs began to educate food scientists on flavours and creating delicious recipes and food scientists began to educate the chefs on how to make these great tasting foods fit within the manufacturing processes and parameters. Up until recently, chefs and food scientists remained in one or the other discipline, but as the need to learn both sides of product development equation became more important, both groups have sought to educate themselves on other skills necessary to become more proficient in both the food science endeavour and the culinary arts skills needed in product development.

A culinologist is the person who has combined both of these disciplines and practices both skill sets, in the culinary and food science field, to develop the best possible products. Many in the industry have become working culinologist by default. They have had to learn both skill sets in order to remain an asset to their company.

Currently, several degree programs are offered in the US that focus on combining the basic knowledge from both culinary arts and food science needed into one four-year degree. These programs are relatively new, having been developed within the last several years, but are producing the next generation of product developers, better known as "culinologist". The program typically includes two years of food science class work paired with two years of culinary class work and hands on training. The culmination of the program is a four year degree that gives the graduate the base knowledge to move forward in his/her career and develop the finer skills

that only hands on experience can offer. For those already in the field or working as a chef or food scientist, there are still options to transition into a culinology position.

A food scientist can take any variety of culinary classes offered through an assortment of resources to get the culinary training that can add to their current food science skills, or even go to culinary school and learn those culinary skill hands on and in depth and obtain a culinary degree at the same time.

Several culinary schools in the US also offer certificate culinary programs which are typically shorter than the full time 1-4 year culinary degree programs offered and many short term classes are available. Many culinary schools are starting to realise the need for programs that combine culinary arts with food science and have developed food science and/or product development classes as part of the curriculum.

The Research Chefs Association also offers short courses for either food scientists or chefs to learn the basics about the other side of the discipline. The culinologist can be a great bridge between the traditional food scientist and chefs either within the company or between company's product development teams, helping the two groups to speak the same language in communicating targets and goals of the project.

While the need for chefs and food scientists as separate disciplines may always remain, the culinologist offers potential employers a two for one benefit, someone who understands both sides of the product development coin. The culinologist has a better understanding of the whole product development process, than a food scientist or a chef alone.

Universities and TAFE colleges in Australia could offer the program under licence from Research Chefs Association, or they could model a similar course which covers and matches the curriculum on offer in US. The food industries in Australia would benefit immensely and hence open up many opportunities for a culinologist to apply themselves for this new and growing discipline.

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