

OBITUARY

Lois May Butt

7th January 1933 – 19th January 2022

Lois Butt attended the first Symposium of Australian Gastronomy in Adelaide in 1984 and from then until 2007 was a regular attendee, contributor and organizer. The words below were spoken at her memorial held in a Country Club overlooking her beloved Yarra Valley. After the formalities were over we stood outside as the shadows lengthened on a perfect summer's day and toasted her with champagne, a fitting tribute to a woman whose life revolved around family, friends and all that was good in food and wine.

I'd like to thank Geoff and the family for inviting me to speak about Lois and her life in the world of food. To begin I have some words from her longtime friend Stephanie Alexander AO who could not be here today.

'My memories of Lois are inextricably linked with the heady years of the early Symposiums of Australian Gastronomy. Philosophers, social scientists, agronomists, a few writers and a very few active food practitioners came together to discuss very weighty topics. I often found myself at odds with academia versus what always seemed to me to be more compelling – the sensual, joyful benefits of eating well for its own sake. Lois was always on the side of the food practitioners, contributing great food, humorous asides as well as offering hours and hours of practical and administrative assistance to record the words of the speakers. She and Geoff shared a love of food and wine and had great stories of the early days of the Victorian wine industry. My sincere sympathy to all the family.'



I met Lois in 1992 at Canberra airport on the way to one of those Symposiums Stephanie alluded to; we shared a taxi to the conference venue, a lucky break for me, as I knew absolutely no one on the participants list. The glitterati of the culinary world; Cooks, writers, poets, academics, scientists and diplomats, including the rather intimidating Margaret Whitlam who came as a day-tripper, probably to rub shoulders with the fabulous Claudia Roden.

Lois was unfazed by the august company—to her Symposiums were exactly as the ancient Greeks intended; convivial occasions for drinking, eating and conversation and occasional wild dancing in the wee small hours. In her signature white linen shirt, she moved about the room with ease, knowledgeable about most things but never a show off and always ready to introduce a newcomer.

In the years that followed it became apparent to me just how much Lois contributed to the food scene in her home state of Victoria and beyond. She cooked professionally in Board Rooms, in Cooking Schools and in