

# Feeding Frenzy, a culinary concert – staged in Bergen

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In the spring of 2006 artist Fast Forward staged a Feeding Frenzy at Landmark at Bergen Kunsthall. A Feeding Frenzy is a 'culinary concert' which involves cooks, musicians, waiters and the audience. During the 90 minute work, 400 plates of food were created and served to the assembled audience. The musicians were following a musical score written especially for the event and the audience were invited to do whatever they pleased. Live video of the procedure was projected for all to see. The sold out event served as a meeting ground for music, art, performance, food, media and intense social activity.



Fast Forward writes about the origins and rudiments of Feeding Frenzy :

The first Feeding Frenzy took place in 1990 in New York at a space called Lotus Arts. I was the only cook and I invited two musicians Ikue Mori and Guy Klucevsek to join me. As far as I was concerned, I was the third musician - I just happened to be using non-traditional instruments. There was one waiter and an audience of about 70 people. I prepared ten different dishes and the musicians improvised on multiple drum machines and accordion. Since then, Feeding Frenzy has grown to fifteen performers (five cooks, five musicians, five waiters) for most productions and includes a score for the musicians, live video and refinements that are implemented for each successive performance. Being flexible is an inherent part of Feeding Frenzy. For the performance at Landmark, the best arrangement was 4x4x4 (four musicians, four cooks, four waiters).

## Food for music

During the 1980s, my work centered around giving live concerts for acoustic percussion. The origins of Feeding Frenzy evolved out of a natural progression towards incorporating food in that music. Often, I would use vegetables as mallets, such as leeks, or carrots and subsequently added a wok to the battery and started 'wokking up' items and handing them out to the audience. The flash-fried almonds were hissing and popping sympathetically with the electronic sounds being produced by my collaborator at the time Takehisa Kosugi. This was an enlightening experience on a performative level as it broke down the usual barrier between performer and spectator and allowed a pathway to 'sharing with' and 'providing for' a group of people. Actual items from the stage were given to the audience, who in turn ate them and welcomed them as part of their metabolism. In essence, they 'ate the sounds' and by doing so, were far more an integral part of the performance. We were collaborators to a very small degree - partners in crime if you will - and they destroyed the evidence. But the most important aspect of this interface was the disturbance of the invisible yet long established protocol of keeping the performer and the onlooker separated. Not separate on a metaphysical level, but most certainly on an interactive level. I suppose this protocol is related to respecting the performer, the unwritten code which stipulates that audience members are to be seen, but not heard. You are allowed to observe, but please don't think about infiltrating the moment. It might 'unbalance' the performer/s, or distract them from their concentration of presenting the best rendition that is humanly possible at that moment. It was definitely time for me to assist in liberating at least my own audiences.

## Moment to moment

So Feeding Frenzy was born and we'd break as many rules as we could in the process. Number one: The entire audience is invited to do whatever they wish to do during the performance. The one exception is usually smoking, but other than that - no holds are barred. This means that the work itself must be conducive to such a situation. Moments of subtlety are hard to guarantee when you have no control over what the majority of people in the room are about to do. That's fine, if those moments happen at all, they will happen naturally on a collective level. There are almost always 'waves' in a Feeding Frenzy, unplanned stretches which are initiated by one group and quickly spread to others like a real-time virus, including silences. During a performance in Dijon, one of the cooks kept striking a bell with his knife for more than five minutes with the audience playing along in unison on their glasses. There are also no particular episodes, or movements, in a Feeding Frenzy. It starts at zero and ends at 90 minutes. Musical moments, or delivery of a particular dish, come and go, they ebb and flow. Serving as a type of anchor, there is a large projection of the elapsed time which allows everyone to reference their position in the piece at any given moment. When you attend a Feeding Frenzy, you are also active as a performer within that context. It is an active rather than a passive role, but at the same time it is also obligation free.



## Freedom of artistic expression

And control . . . just how much should a Feeding Frenzy be controlled? And how important is it for me to relinquish control? How much should I determine what takes place at any given moment? Actually, I would prefer to exercise no control whatsoever, because proclaiming freedom of expression and shrouding it with predetermined rules seems counteractive to the cause. But at the same time, having no rules or artistic choices prohibits a necessary structure. In the end, Feeding Frenzy itself teaches me just 'how much' control to exert over the work. I reached a type of middle ground at some point, using a skeleton structure which allows ultimate freedom to all involved while still allowing a stable framework in which to operate. And 'operate' is the operative word in this case as Feeding Frenzy is most certainly an operation. All the participants learn the rules, prepare in advance and eventually come together to execute the work. As a general rule, time has proven that the less artistic control I wield over something, the more I seem to appreciate it afterwards. So Feeding Frenzy is a useful vehicle to flex this control variable as each performance is unique. It almost never involves the same performers, food, music, images, audience or circumstance and in that sense, it is volatile. In most cases, I never meet the participants until the day of the performance and there are strictly no rehearsals. This lends towards the culmination of the moment, where all the pieces come together to form the whole, incorporating all the good and bad things that can possibly happen. Rehearsals would dilute that moment and incorporate learned behavior, potentially resulting in some of the essence being extracted before the main event. **The sum of the parts**

There is a new score for the musicians for each production. This consists of an instructional score written entirely in text, where the instructions lie within time parameters as short as fifteen seconds and as long as five minutes. The musicians are asked to adhere to those instructions, but are free to interpret them in any manner they choose. They have several days to reference the score and make choices for use in the concert. Their individuality and personal approach to the music brings diversity while remaining true to the overall musical direction of the work. For the most part, the musicians are working independently from each other unless there is an instruction to do otherwise. For the Bergen performance the musicians were Øle Ham on percussion, Thomas Dahl on guitar, Bjørnar Habbestad playing flute and electronics and KHiB's own Trond Lossius on mandolin, mandocello and slider.

# Feeding Frenzy

## MENU

B E R G E N

You may, or may not receive any of the following dishes

### chef Alicia Rios

- \* Goat cheese balls with crunchy sesame
- \* Spinach raisin chapatis with yoghurt sauce
- \* Couscous with chick peas and almonds with tahini lemon coriander sauce
- \* Vegetable tortilla pasana
- \* Gherkin cups with green salad
- \* Spiced fried rice with ginger
- \* Roasted aubergine with olive oil and hot sauce
- \* 'Pa amb tomaguet' from Catalonia
- \* Almond stuffed dates with a surprise
- \* Wafers with pistachios, honey, almonds and sesame seeds and fruits of the garden

### chef Niklas Seglevi

- \* Sweet grape and tomato salad with mozzarella
- \* Olive and herb marinated cucumber noodles with walnut feta dip
- \* Avocado mousse with lime roasted pepper with parsley/para nuts
- \* Forest mushroom omelette with truffel oil and lemon salt
- \* Warm spinach and sweet potato salad with walnut pesto
- \* Honey glazed beetroot and farmer beans with parmesan
- \* Herb grilled baby aubergine with warm feta filled white pepper
- \* Fennel, figs and capers in saffron butter with pumpkin salsa and lime
- \* Cinnamon flavoured melon salad with vanilla yoghurt.
- \* Rum and honey caramelised banana with After 8

### chef Paul Lidal

- \* Lettsteft chevre på toast med honning-glaseret selleri
- \* Sopp cappuccino med pistaj
- \* Brokkolitempera med rødbejvare
- \* Wonton med koriander og grønnsaksfarse, soyasjy
- \* Frittert potetmos med miniasparges og persilleskum
- \* Grønnsakspletter og pastinakkrem med sherryeddiksirup
- \* Grillert endive med appelsin- og cumin-sjy
- \* Gorgonzola i sjokolade med hvitvinsgele
- \* Posjert paere med mulle- og akevittsaus
- \* Pasjonfruktompott med mynte

### chef Mattias Thronsen

- \* Salat med dressing
- \* Brødkive og tomat
- \* Tomat og sopp
- \* Sopp og ysta geitemelk
- \* Grønne stengler med røde bær og gammel rødvin
- \* Ovnsvidde potteter
- \* Eksotisk ertesuppe
- \* Blåder, erter og ris min
- \* Sprit, ost og pære
- \* Rista frossen fløtemelk og blåder

Similarly, the cooks are working parallel to this procedure. They are given written guidelines which outline how they can approach cooking for the event, including information about quantity, preparation, hardware etc. Each cook is required to serve 100 plates of food during the duration of the event, ten courses providing ten servings per course. Other than requests in the guidelines, they are free to cook whatever they desire. The one caveat is that Feeding Frenzies are always strictly vegetarian. This simplifies the food in terms of dietary concerns for most people and there is no reason to contribute to the harming of animals for this art project. The cooks are given a shopping budget for ingredients and agree to arrive at the venue two hours beforehand to arrange their tables and offer their planned menu. During the performance, all the sounds produced from the cooking process are amplified and woven into the soundscape. Sizzling and frying, boiling and steaming, mixing and beating, chopping and dicing are all fodder for the composition - there is very little sonic discrimination in a Feeding Frenzy. The cooks who offered their services for the Bergen event were Alicia Rios from Madrid, Niklas Seglevi from Stockholm, and Mattias Thronsen and Paul Lidal, both from Bergen.

Simultaneously, the video crew are somehow behind and in front of the scene at the same time. Camera operators are surveying the events taking place live and

offer them for large scale projection on the wall. The video element of the Bergen Feeding Frenzy was produced by Jeremy Welsh, Elin Solvang and Mattias Arvastsson (all from KHiB).

The most important people in the room by far at any Feeding Frenzy are the wait staff, for they determine who receives the food once it has been prepared. In this case the wait staff was headed by Sandra Trute and Laurence Welsh. When a cook signals that a course is ready, the waiters collect those ten plates and distribute them to members of the audience. This continues throughout the concert - diverse dishes being delivered from table to table, wines being poured. Feeding Frenzies often tend to be celebratory even though there is no guideline for that, I like to think that it is celebrating the freedom of the moment.

Fast Forward