A Taste of Dreams

Karen Crofts

BA University of New South Wales
Diploma of Education (Secondary) University of Sydney
Graduate Certificate (Creative Writing) University of Newcastle

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Discipline of Education and Arts
School of Humanities and Social Science
University of Newcastle
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Abstract

Food, as a social signifier, is an important device in literature that has been used skilfully by writers like Woolf, Proust and Carver. My short story collection, *A Taste of Dreams*, employs food as a theme across the collection to reveal details about characters and the relationships between those who come together to cook and dine. The essay that follows examines suburban fiction and domestic routines including the preparation and consumption of food, food-related spaces such as the kitchen and dining table and the significance of meals beyond the food itself.

Domestic fiction set in the Australian suburbs had a late and uncertain beginning. The image of the Australian bush and frontier dominated both art and literature through the nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries, well after the cities and suburbs were established. It was only after the Second World War, with the great post-war land boom, that artists and writers turned to the suburbs. Initially, this residential space, where the majority of Australians lived, was derided and spurned, viewed as homogeneous, status-oriented and uniformly conservative. Intellectuals attacked the architecture of the new landscape and concluded that the residents who bought into this lifestyle were conditioned by their streetscape.

In the 1970s, new writers like Garner, Winton, Malouf and Updike emerged. They looked beyond the streetscape, front fence and lawns to reveal the details, the diversity and complexities of lives within the suburban milieu. Domestic situations were explored against a background of iconic symbols and signifiers—the backyard, shed, garage, bedroom, laundry and kitchen—to reveal the unique details of characters’ lives within the suburban home.

*A Taste of Dreams* is a contribution to the genre of short story writing set in the Australian suburbs. Food links the stories and provides an avenue through which the reader can gain an understanding of the characters, their homes and their relationships.