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Food Democracy

From consumer to
food citizen

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*To my three chickens, Coco, Maud
and Mrs. Grump*

—John Coveney

*To all current and future food democrats, ...
Viva la revolution!*

—Sue Booth

Preface

There can be no doubt that the current industrial food system is broken and the links are severed at many points along the supply chain. News of the damage continues to filter into the public realm. Increasingly, there are media reports which punctuate the public's consciousness; inhumane treatment of animals at the point of slaughter, supermarket giants with billion dollar profits expanding their tentacles into non-food retail industries, food safety scares and outbreaks, increasing levels of diet-related chronic diseases, food producers being unfairly treated by supermarkets, grocery prices rising, regulators taking supermarkets to court...and the 'Big Food' juggernaut continues.

Sounds somewhat depressing, doesn't it? What on earth could you, your household or your community possibly do to redress the balance? Reminiscent of David versus Goliath? Sounds all too hard, ... or is it? Indeed some people may be practicing food democracy already, and are unaware that they are part of a growing alternative food movement. Food democracy is the counter weight to the current food system and offers a corrective opportunity. It posits that people can take small steps to regain some control, or influence the food system. Indeed, the small efforts of a large number of people to impact a larger system should not be underestimated.

The book starts with a brief analysis of the current food system, and what is wrong with it. Chapter 2 explores the foundations of food democracy, after which Chaps. 3, 4 and 5 examine examples of Australian food democracy in action at household, community and national levels. Food democracy is an alternative food system revolution where passive consumers are transmogrified into active citizens. With this in mind, Chap. 6 takes a practical look at the 'how to' of food democracy. Finally, the authors offer their reflections on food democracy in the final conversational chapter.

The genesis for this book came from a suggestion by John Coveney after several years of us both teaching the Master's level topic, Food Democracy and Public Health at Flinders University. In the process of developing and teaching the course two things became apparent, firstly many students were unfamiliar