

# FOOD FOR THE FUTURE



**C**onsumers are changing – living longer, travelling more and accessing huge volumes of information. Changes in behaviour and lifestyle are affecting how, when and why we eat certain foods. ‘Preventive health and wellness’ and ‘convenience’ are two food megatrends Australians are already embracing.

MLA is working to ensure red meat is best positioned to target these trends – and those quickly emerging – by collaborating with innovative businesses, as well as with global food trend experts, technology developers and nutritionists. This is being done via the MLA Donor Company (MDC) 2Morrow’s Food program.

MDC High Value Food Frontier Manager Michael Lee said that as well as identifying trends, it was important to have relationships and strategies in place to be able to react to them quickly.

### Mobile meals

“One of the major food trends is convenience, which includes snacking-on-the-go and ready meals,” Michael said.

“Developing products and services that go beyond steaks, chops, roasts and sausages is a key initiative to grow high-value demand.

“A good example of this has been the recent work MLA supported to promote the US slow cooked, pulled meat concept in Australia. Now it’s well accepted, we’re investigating what’s next.”

Based on information gathered by the MLA-managed Insights2Innovation program, Michael said meat floss (see breakout box) had been identified as a product with potential both in Australia and as a high-value export.

“Like pulled meat, meat floss would allow us to add value to secondary leg and shoulder cuts and position a new snack usage for red meat,” he said, adding that a small project is underway to assess its potential.

A separate project is investigating the potential for developing red meat alternatives to common sandwich fillers such as tinned fish or protein spreads.

“This project aims to make it easier for people to extend the occasions in which they eat red meat, past dinner, by tapping into the convenience trend,” Michael said.

“Beyond shaved and sliced cold meat, red meat currently doesn’t have a big role in ‘on-the-go lunches’.

“We’re looking at what’s available in other countries, the potential in Australia and possible products such as spreadable sandwich fillers using fresh red meats and sauces, sold via delis.”

### Healthy ageing

Preventive health and wellbeing is another food trend gaining traction in Australia.

“This trend is about making better food choices to ensure a healthier, active lifestyle,” Michael said.

“It seems to have been driven by the baby boomers, but has wide appeal.”

MLA is responding via activities and communications which share red meat’s evidence-based credentials as a nutritious food choice, and encouraging people to eat red meat as part of a healthy, balanced diet.

“We’re also developing products and technology, such as powdered beef boosters, high moisture cooking and 3D-printed meat, that will make it easier for people to continue eating nutritious, red meat meals in later life,” Michael said.

“These techniques will also help place red meat in a positive position within other food trends, such as ‘naturally functional’, ‘designed for me’, ‘free-from’ and ‘high protein.’” ■

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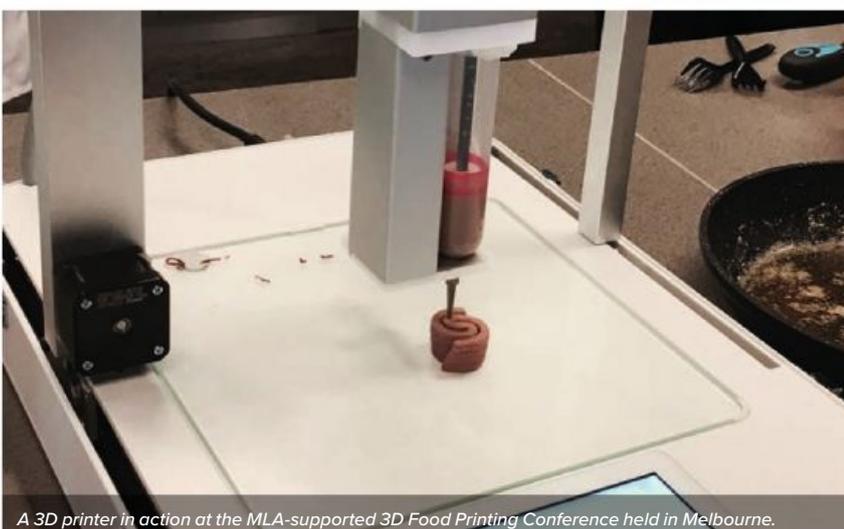


## ‘Meat floss’ is:

- a shredded, dried meat snack popular in Asian countries, traditionally made with pork or chicken
- has a light, fluffy texture, hence its Mandarin name *rousong*, meaning ‘fluffy meat’
- often candied with different sauces and spices added
- a popular Chinese New Year treat in China while in Malaysia it is popular during Ramadan
- commonly eaten as a bun filling (pictured above), a soup topping or on its own as a snack.

## What are some red meat innovations being investigated?

- 3D-printed meat that allows chefs and consumers to ‘design’ the look, taste, texture and nutrient content of their food
- ‘smart’ packaging that reacts with the environment either in the package or outside it, to tell consumers:
  - if the pack has been tampered with
  - the provenance or origin of the food
  - when meat is perfectly aged and ready to cook
  - how the meat should be cooked, depending on the portion size and time of day it is purchased (e.g. slow cooked versus grilled)
- the impact of new technologies, such as ‘smart’ fridges and other appliances and devices, on how we order, deliver, cook, store and consume red meat.



A 3D printer in action at the MLA-supported 3D Food Printing Conference held in Melbourne.