



## INTERDISCIPLINARY RESEARCH SEMINAR



*Source: iStock by Getty Images*

### Serving up Trust for Conflict Resolution

Speaker: Abhinay Muthoo

(National Institute of Economic and Social Research)

(joint paper with: Alethia Cameron, Food and Agricultural Organisation,  
and Sanna Nurmikko, University of Surrey)

#### Abstract

This paper explores the role of gastronomy in developing trust and its application in conflict resolution. We develop our argument on the well-founded basis that trust improves negotiation outcomes and scientific evidence for the role of food sharing in the development of trust and bonding, largely manifested via our “feel-good hormones” including oxytocin and endorphins. We then draw examples from the ethnographic and historical record that exemplify how feasting and sharing meals has, and continues to be used ubiquitously to build trust, forge alliances, and resolve conflict. Finally, using a real-world scenario, we demonstrate how specific principles of trust development using gastronomy could be applied to address persistent “stalemate” negotiations, where lack of trust is a key contributing factor.