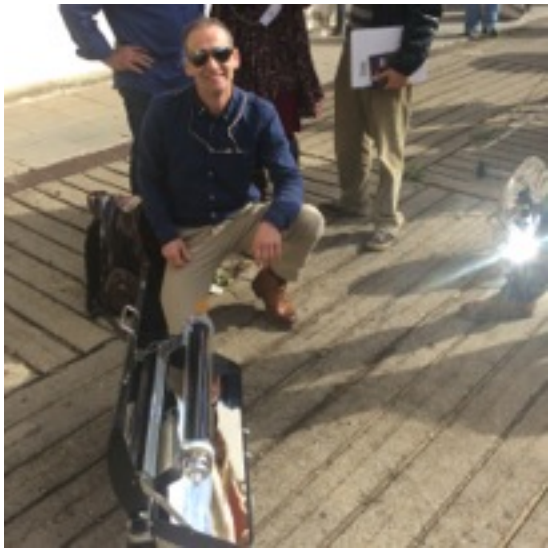
Stewart MacLachlan - SLiCK UK
CONSOLFOOD16, FARO, PORTUGAL - REPORT FOR SCI

I have spent the last decade and more working on various small scale solar cooking projects and the last few years have been very busy. I published a multi-year study on domestic scale solar cooking in the UK at the SCI International Conference in 2014. It confirmed that we can effectively and regularly solar cook in our difficult climate. Unfortunately I was unable to 'cross the pond' to present the study in person though I was encouraged to see such a powerful force for solar cooking progress underway. It was a real pleasure to contribute!

There are very few solar cooks in the UK so I have been grateful to have worked with a fellow enthusiast, Dave Oxford, based out in Cornwall on the Atlantic coast. In 2015, we set up 'SLiCK' to advocate for 'Seriously Low impact Cooking'. Our interests are based around rocket cookstoves, hayboxes and especially solar cooking, all in their infancy here.



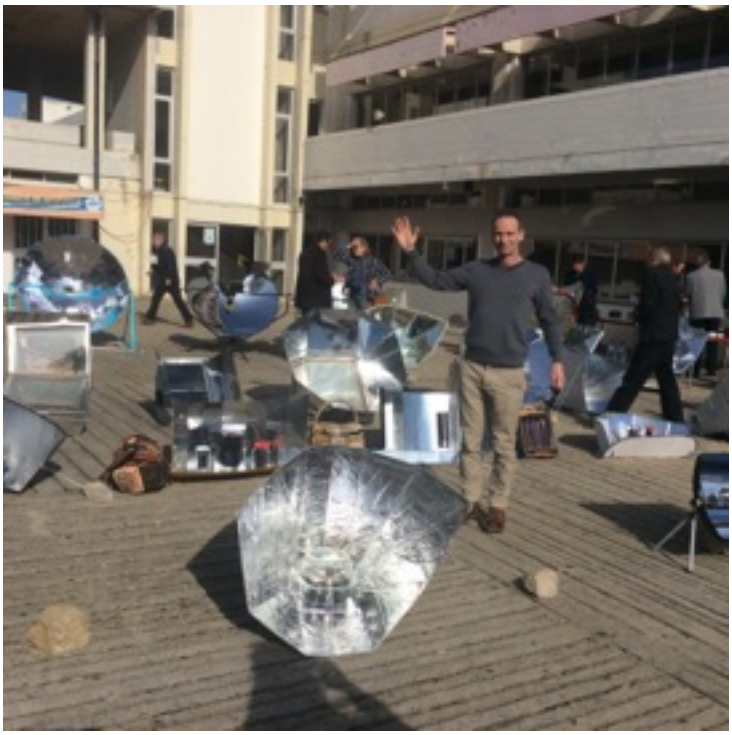
Dave and I were keen to test some of the vacuum insulated solar tube cookers and have imported some samples. Nobody had seen these in the UK before! Would these solar tubes work all year round? Proof of concept was delivered on Christmas Day 2014, when I easily grilled some sausages and bacon. So we started testing, measuring and recording as much detail as possible to see what is possible with this unconventional technology.

CONSOLFOOD16 could not have come at a better time as our preliminary studies were complete.

I have never attended a gathering of solar cooks before so didn't know what to expect. The conference was very professionally organised with a rapid fire lecture programme. It was clear from the subject material and the global diversity of the presenters that CONSOLFOOD16 would deliver a unique opportunity for advancement. I'll advise readers to peruse the extensive information posted by the organising committee on ***www.consolfood.org*** to get a full picture, which I cant even begin to summarise in this short report.

Alongside the lecture programme was the unique exhibition of solar cooking equipment with many opportunities for enthusiasts, advocates and academics to communicate directly with each other. Life is all about relationships and the conference provided a perfect opportunity to meet with some of the legends of the solar cooking world.

Our evacuated tube cooker which we have brought to market just last year was the only one on display and attracted a lot of attention. Back in the conference hall our even handed presentation on the durability of this type of cooker was met with keen interest and enthusiasm from attendees This was the only study in the programme concerning this new format for effective solar cooking. In collaboration with the other presentations in the field of solar food processing, we were able to provide some ‘cutting edge’ material.



It's great to live in these times in the developed west. Energy is so available and cheap. We can jet around and many people do this in an often unfulfilled pursuit of happiness or something like that. Energy sipping solar cooking has limited direct appeal in this profligate world. Perhaps that's why it remains so under-developed.

I would like to think that it might become widespread and common in just a few generations as a possible energy descent takes hold. But only if the development (and most importantly, popularisation) happens now while we have the energy budget to jet around and do stuff. For me this is why incubator meetings such as Faro are so important.

I’m indebted to SCI for providing me with the means to attend via their travel fund grant and would like to thank the staff and contributors of SCI for their continuing support for this vital technology.