

# THE DIGEST

*A Newsletter for —  
The Interdisciplinary Study of Food*



Volume V, no. 2

Spring 1983

With this issue of The Digest, we have shifted our focus away from course outlines to present you with a paper on "Funny Foods" by Thomas Adler. Adler has been doing food-related research for many years. After completing a Ph.D. in folklore at Indiana University, he was involved in a Foodways project in Georgia. Adler, an associate professor in the English Department, of the University of Kentucky, is currently compiling information on Kentucky foods and foodways.

We plan to include a foodways paper in every issue of the Digest. The newsletter provides you with an excellent opportunity to test your research and writing on colleagues with similar or complimentary knowledge about food. However, we are dependent on our readers for contributions, so please submit articles to us. In addition, we would appreciate your sending any information on upcoming food-related events, book and film reviews, and general notes and queries about foodways activities.

Nancy Klavans  
Janice Gadaire

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## FUNNY FOODS: HUMOR IN THE FOODWAYS OF KENTUCKY'S BLUEGRASS REGION

What foods and foodways provoke humor?<sup>1</sup> As stated, the question is misleading, since humor and folkways are not genres, but analytic constructs which can cross-cut one another at any point, seemingly without rhyme or reason. Yet, in actual practice, some interesting and important patterns can be seen in the occurrence of smiles, laughter, and joking connected with foodways.

In the Bluegrass region of Kentucky, where I'm now studying traditional foods and foodways, humorous talk and action arise from and are directed at certain specific foods, diners, food-events, and food-handling techniques or transformations. How does it work? Some humorous patterns seem universal, while others are significant only regionally, or ethnically, or locally. The specific patterns of humorous meaning that might underlie foodways are perhaps best approached with the aid of contemporary humor theories.<sup>2</sup> One group of theoretical understandings of humor, current among many humanists, is grounded in the concept of incongruity. An incongruity analyst notes that the experience of talk or action as humorous depends on the bisociation--or simultaneous double association, if you prefer--of two different and normally incompatible frames of reference, such as Nature and Culture, Social and Anti-Social, Pure and Impure, Food and Drink, and so on. The categories change, but the idea of humor being expressed through appropriate incongruities is central.

Another group of approaches, the "social-scientific" group, includes theories of humor grounded in psycho-functionalism. Some of these explain humor as aggression, while others emphasize the cathartic projection of anxieties, either directly or in

inverted symbolic forms. It seems fairly obvious that any or all of these mechanisms might be at work in any given corpus of food-related humor, but less obvious that they might be unequally distributed among the foods that make up a particular regional or esoteric system. By surveying some specific types and examples of food-related humor from Kentucky, I'd like to illustrate this point.

A preliminary observation: When a diner blurts out in mid-bite, "Hey, this tastes funny!" he's not usually about to start laughing. The funniness of food that does not taste as the eater expects is related to intentional humor, but only insofar as they both involve incongruities. The eater's first reaction to food that tastes or smells "funny" is always deadly serious. Any incongruous taste or smell--one which doesn't agree with past experiences--is never laughable, unless it's been engineered as a prank or practical joke.

Particular favorites in pranks are those foods which stimulate involuntary functions or have other direct physical consequences, that is, all foods that are laxatives, astringents, eructives, producers of intestinal gas, or which are unusually spicy, strong, pungent, or just plain smelly. This group, about which many stories and jokes exist throughout Euro-American tradition, includes garlic, onions, beans, peppers, prunes, chocolate laxatives, Limburger or other strong cheeses, and green apples or green persimmons. Usually the humor comes from the substitution of one of these potent foods for a blander or less consequential one; but even when the effect of a deliberate substitution is not observed, the prankster's sense of humor may be gratified by the fact of contamination itself. Anxiety about dreadful contaminations<sup>3</sup> explains not only the horrified facial expressions, but also the laughter that typifies audiences hearing legends about mice in Coke bottles, or about Kentucky Fried Rats. Contaminations, dreadful or otherwise, inform a lot of foodways humor, in and out of Kentucky. In her fine article on Kentucky

Burgoo--which is a thick, multiple-meat-and-vegetable stew, Cathy Barton pointed out that both cooks and spectators at a burgoo supper swapped jokes across the bubbling stewpot, and that most of the jokes were about the burgoo itself and "the type of foreign matter that could so easily fall into the stew."<sup>4</sup> It is worth noting that pranks are the only expressive form in which intentional humor can be linked to actual, tangible foodstuffs, as opposed to humorous talk about food. As I assembled this material, I was repeatedly struck by the apparent seriousness of most foodways; yet the unfunny of food in our mouths exists in sharp contrast to the humorous uses that we make of food with our minds. In actual life, bad food can be funny, but only if someone else eats it.

A good many funny stories about food build on esoteric-exoteric distinctions, particularly where the outsiders or non-members of the humorist's own group are laughed at for eating their own shapeless, unrefined, low-status foods or for misuing his most typical foods through ignorance.

"A favorite story in Kentucky is that of the family who sent a well-cured Kentucky ham, which sometimes contains white flecks when it's more than a year old to a Northern friend for a Christmas gift. They heard nothing about it for weeks, and finally ventured to ask whether it had been received. Back came an apologetic letter. The recipients . . . appreciated the loving thoughtfulness that prompted the gift, but . . . when they cut into the ham, they found that it was spoiled; it had white spots on it--and so they had to consign it to the incinerator."<sup>5</sup>

And not only Northerners make these mistakes. Daniel Drake, an early settler in the Bluegrass, recorded in his late 18-th century diary an account of some ignorant immigrants from Holland who took their bohea--that's an old name for black Chinese tea--and cooked it up with bacon, to eat like greens.<sup>6</sup> Even good food is funny, if it's miseaten by others.

A good deal of the verbal humor of food is transmitted in written or even published forms as in the case of humorous recipes. Mock recipes mock a good many different things, to judge by the Kentucky examples, but their force arises from their assumption of real recipes' prescriptive and nominative stance. Like real recipes, humorous ones also name things as ingredients and say how to combine and transform them. But here the recipe's concern with control over selection, transformation, and re-combination is metaphorically extended. A typical example, filled with culinary puns, is one called "A Good Way to Preserve a Husband.

Be careful in your selection. Do not choose too young. When once selected, give your entire thoughts to preparation for domestic use. Some insist on keeping them in a pickle, others are constantly getting them in hot water. This makes them sour, hard to get along with, and sometimes bitter. Even poor varieties may be made sweet, tender, and good by garnishing them with patience, well-sweetened with kisses. Wrap them in a mantle of charity. Keep warm with a steady fire of domestic devotion and serve with peaches and cream. Thus prepared, they will keep for years.

Similar advice-giving recipes offer in the usual mechanistic cookbook manner prescriptions for Happy Homes, Successful Everyday Lives, and the maintenance of the American Way of Life. Although witty, these don't really deal with foods, and may not strike all readers as intentionally humorous. The desire to write down a genuinely incongruous, and therefore genuinely humorous recipe--perhaps, as with the foregoing, just to fill an empty page or half-page in a compiled fundraising cookbook--is much more evident in this 1979 recipe for "Elephant Stew," which calls for 1 medium size elephant, seasoned brown gravy, and optionally, two rabbits. The instructions, say:

Cut the elephant into bite-size pieces. This should take about two months. Cover this with brown gravy and cook over a kerosene fire about 4 weeks at 265°. This will serve 3,800 people. If more are expected add two rabbits. Do this [only] if necessary, as most people do not like to find [sic] hare in their stew.

While the humor of elephant stew clearly depends on the obvious incongruities of size, time, and quantity, the text might also be assimilable to the elephant joke fad of the early 1960s, which has been explicated by Alan Dundes and Roger Abrahams as an interracial expression of aggressions and anxieties. The pun on rabbits (= hare) is independently widespread, but might have special force in Kentucky, where both rabbit stews and the addition of rabbit meat to other kinds of meat stews are longstanding traditions.

While the tension between foods as eaten and foods as imagined is central to this whole domain, it seems to me that humorous recipes find their fullest forms of expression when they refer to actual foods. Several subtypes are distinguishable: the dialect recipe; the intrusive author-as-eater recipe; and, borrowing a currently fashionable analytic term, the deconstructional recipe, in which the whole turns out to be less than its parts. Let me present each of these in turn, using more Kentucky recipes.

A fine Southern dialect recipe, printed in Virginia in 1874 and reprinted in a popular Kentucky cookbook of 1949 is "Mozis Addums' Resipee for Cukin Kon-Feel Pees." The original is really meant to be read, not heard, and is filled with eye-dialect spellings:

Gether your pees 'bout sun-down. The folrin' day, 'bout 'leven o'clock, gowge out your pees with your thum-nale, like gowgin' out a man's eyeball at a kote-house. Rense your pees, parbile them, then fry 'em with som several slices uv streekt middlin (Bacon), encouragin uv the gravy to seep out and intermarry with your peers. When modritly brown, but not scorcht, empty into a dish. Mash 'em gently with a spune, mix with raw tomarters sprinkled with a little brown shugar and the immortal dish ar quite ready. Eat a hepe. Eat mo and mo. It is good for your genral helth uv mind and body. It fattens you up, makes you sassy, goes throo and throo your very soul. But why don't you eat? Eat on. By Jings! Eat. Stop! Never, while thar is a pee in the dish.<sup>9</sup>

While Mozis Addums' presence is strongly implicit in "his" dialect recipe, the explicit intrusion of an author into any recipe can convey humor through the special juxtaposition or association of two different frames of reference: the aloof, impersonal, and nomological framework of the conventional recipe, which just specifies dish construction, is incongruously bisociated with the living, consuming presence of the author-as-eater. Two Kentucky examples from newspaper columns bring their authors into recipes for the same old-time food: shucky beans, also known in the Bluegrass as shuck beans and in some Appalachian areas as leather britches or hull beans. All these names refer to beans dried and cooked with their hulls on. A Mr. W. L. Knuckles of Frankfort, Kentucky, submitted to the Louisville Courier--Journal an account of:

The way to preserve and cook shuck beans: Pick tender hull beans from the vine, and string. Put them in a clean place to dry, taking them in at night and on damp days. After they are thoroughly dry, place them in a clean box and store away for future use. When hungry for shuck beans, put them in water to soak overnight. Then cook with hog jowl until tender and send for me. While I am coming, cook a pone of cornbread and skin a good strong onion.

Verna Mae Slone wrote an entire column on shucky beans for the Troublesome Creek Times, in Knott County, in eastern Kentucky. Using as her subtitle the proverbial comparison "so good your tongue will slap your brains out," Mrs. Slone also concluded her description of the cooking process with advice about side dishes. She says,

Serve with cornbreak, buttermilk, pickled beets, or sauerkraut, then give me a big plate and plenty of elbow room. If there is anything in this world that I like better to eat than a plate full of shuckie beans, it's two plates full.

It's important to note that the main consequences of the intrusion, in both these cases, are humor and praise for the dish.



The deconstructional form of the humorous recipe, which involves the rejection or subtraction of an ingredient, may also attest to the excellence of the remainder. Consider the oft-cited recipe for a real Kentucky mint julep, which goes:

Pluck the mint gently from its bed, just as the dew of the evening is about to form upon it. Select the choicer sprigs only, but do not rinse them. Prepare the simple syrup and measure out a half-tumbler of whiskey. Pour the whiskey into a well-frosted cup, throw the other ingredients away and drink the whiskey.<sup>12</sup>

The mint julep, that is, has been deconstructed into its essential material and immaterial ingredients; not just whiskey, simple sugar syrup, and mint, but also gentility, selectivity, concern with precision, and a feeling of haughty connoisseurship. All these connoted niceties are abandoned as easily as the tangible "other ingredients" at the punchline. Closely connected to the mint julep recipe is a deconstructed recipe for a whole meal, cited in Kentucky as the "Kentucky Breakfast" since at least 1913. Josiah Combs reported it as a series of questions and answers to be exchanged while a small group of drinkers stir sugar into a pre-breakfast drink:

Q. Have you gentlemen ever participated at a Ky. Breakfast?

A. What is a Kentucky Breakfast?

Q. A Kentucky Breakfast is a big beefsteak, a quart of bourbon and a houn' dawg.

Q. What is the dog for?

A. He eats the beefsteak.<sup>13</sup>

Unlike the dialect recipe and the intrusive author recipe, the deconstructional recipe is a simply structured joking form that is often verbally performed; I expect several of you have heard related types or versions. Frequently the deconstruction performed in a humorous recipe may be juxtaposed with an absurd catch, as in the

many planking recipes which exist for preparing marginally plausible food-sources like carp, possum, rattlesnake, or mudpuppy. The cook is usually told in some detail how to fasten the fish to a plank or board, perhaps even of a specified wood; the planked food is then to be carefully roasted, grilled, or smoked, and the final instruction is always to "throw away the fish and eat the board," is an unmistakable rejection of the source involved.

Real foods are eaten only when they are seen by the diner to have undergone an important series of transformations into generic dishes.<sup>14</sup> Below the level at which they are assembled according to recipes into generic dishes, foods are not consumable; rather, they are only food-sources or dish-ingredients. At each of these lower levels, the received cultural meanings of potential foods are structured into a system of decision-making, governing edibility and eating, which is important because the same system works equally well as a producer of humorous incongruities. At any level of a hierarchical food system based on sequential selections, transformations, and recombinations, the culturally-sanctioned rules of limitation that are assembled into individual foodways competence will always generate some marginal items. An impossible or unfit source, like the carp or mudpuppy cited above, is funny because it is not impossible to imagine as food, and that seeming opposition is sufficient to humorously confuse the categories FOOD and NON-FOOD. The apparently serious suggestion to consume food from a marginal source might provoke only an anxious smile, but its employment in intentional humorous formulations like the deconstructionist planking recipe, or like another Kentucky informant's favorite imaginary funny food, Carp Jello-O involve more complex incongruities, which signal that the suggestion is humorous, and so defuse the anxiety. The humor of Carp Jell-O is partly based on the marginality of carp; as that informant pointed out to me, there is an incongruity of tastes involved in the notion of combining any fish--even a fish

considered edible--with a brand of gelatin dessert that is usually sweet and fruit-flavored.

Marginal ingredients or marginal parts of the source animals and plants used for food are also potentially anxiety-provoking, and hence lead to nervous laughter. A good deal of anxious humor surfaces with almost every mention of lamb fries, which are thought by many central Kentuckians to be typical of the region. Lamb fries, or mountain oysters, are the cooked testicles of sheep, cattle, hogs, or even horses or turkeys, and though I could easily illustrate how any dish of fries may be the stuff of anxious humor, often used in pranks, a better illustration of the compounding of marginal status with incongruity is another imaginary dish: "Cow Fries," which are doubly funny foods because of the bisociation of a female source animal with a distinctly male kind of "variety meat."

Actually, any food which is linked to emic conceptions of sexual identity or performance is highly charged, and therefore, as the Freudian anxiety theorist would argue, suitable for that investment of libidinal energy called cathexis. Cathected foods are funny, at least to those people who build pranks or elaborate jokes or other humorous expressions around them in order to externalize a fundamentally sexual concern. Lots of jokes and other humorous expressions use bananas, cucumbers, and carrots as phallic substitutes, and I offer as a Kentucky example a recently-received piece of xeroxed entitled "101 Reasons Why a Cucumber Is Better Than a Man." The phallic comparison is absolutely explicit by the time you've read through even three of four of these:

The average cuke is at least six inches long; cucumbers stay hard for a week; you know how firm it is before you take it home; you only eat a cucumber when you feel like it;

and so on. Of course the cucumber as eaten, as generic dish, is not really phallic, but it is conceived as such because of its shape in the raw or ingredient form. Complex dishes can also be linked to sexuality, or at least to a gently-implied romance, as in one Kentucky woman's name for a sweet, gooey, multiple-layered dessert dish, that she calls "The Next Best Thing to Robert Redford."

Four major groups of funny emerge from this hasty survey. First, the Beans-and-Prunes group: foods known for their special alimentary properties--strong-smelling, spicy, astringent, bitter, gas-producing, or laxative. Second, foods associated with sexuality, usually through a real or imagined resemblance to sex organs or through the foregrounding of the food's aphrodisiac properties. Third, imaginary generic dishes prepared from sources or ingredients considered unfit to eat. Last, and in retrospect most interesting to me, are the humorous references to actual foods that typify a region or culture. In the Kentucky sources cited here, fun is made of and with ham, burgoo, lamb fries, shucky beans, greens and sidemeat, field peas, and whiskey. All these foods are well-known Kentucky Fare, so well-known, in fact, that their appearances on Kentucky tables may be said to take on the semblance of secular rités. Incongruous humor draws attention directly to these foods and helps to signal their importance to regional eaters. Incongruity theory seems most apt in explaining the humor of this group, as well as of the imaginary foods, though projections of anxiety about the violation of perceived natural categories are involved too. The humor of foods linked to sexuality and to the Bean-and-Prune, or "prank" group best illustrate mechanisms of anxiety and aggression, although a really well-contexted study of food pranks might show that apparent aggressions actually

express, on a higher level, social solidarities among the pranksters and victims. Whatever the particular mechanisms involved, the flexibility and stability of both humor and foodways, as they intersect, demonstrate convincingly how we rely on foodways as a metaphoric domain in which to work out and express abstract understandings of our social and cultural realities.

Thomas A. Adler

Lexington, Kentucky

October, 1982

## FOOTNOTES

<sup>1</sup>This paper is essentially unreconstructed redaction of my presentation to the "Foodways" session of the American Folklore Society's Annual Meeting, Minneapolis, Minnesota, Oct. 14, 1982; since it is more in the nature of a research note than a finished article, I would welcome critical responses from readers interested in the "problem" of foodways and humor.

<sup>2</sup>I have borrowed the basic division of humor theories into "humanist" (= incongruity) and "social-scientific" orientations from Thomas A. Burns and Inger H. Burns, Doing the Wash: An Expressive Culture and Personality Study of a Joke and Its Tellers (Norwood, Pa.: Norwood Editions, 1975), pp. 4-12.

<sup>3</sup>See Chapter 4, "Dreadful Contaminations," in Jan Harold Brunvand, The Vanishing Hitchhiker: American Urban Legends and Their Meanings (N.Y.: W. W. Norton, 1981), pp. 75-101.

<sup>4</sup>Cathy Barton, "'It's Nothing But a Big Bowl of Soup!': Kentucky Burgoo and the Burgoo Supper," Kentucky Folklore Record 24: #3-4 (July-December, 1978), p. 110.

<sup>5</sup>Alvin F. Harlow, "Weep No More My Lady" (N.Y.: Whittlesey House, 1942), pp. 283-84.

<sup>6</sup>Daniel Drake, Pioneer Life in Kentucky 1785-1800, ed. by Emmet F. Horine (N.Y.: Henry Schuman, 1948), p. 206.

<sup>7</sup>The Art of Cooking in Mt. Sterling (Mt. Sterling, Kentucky: Mary Chiles Hospital Auxiliary, (1967), p. 73.

<sup>8</sup>Henry Clay State Champs 1979 Cook Book (Lexington, Ky.: n.p., 1979), p. 177.

<sup>9</sup>Marion Flexner, Out of Kentucky Kitchens (N.Y.: American Legacy Press, 1949), p. 155.

<sup>10</sup>Allan M. Trout, Greetings from Old Kentucky, vol. 2 (Frankford, Ky.: privately printed, 1959), p. 89.

<sup>11</sup>Verna Mae Slone, "Now & Then: Shuckie Beans," Troublesome Greek Times, (Hindman, Ky. 19 September 1981), p. 6.

<sup>12</sup>Isabel M. McMeekin, Louisville: The Gateway City (N.Y.: Julian Messner, Inc., 1946), p. 155.

<sup>13</sup>Josiah H. Combs, The Kentucky Highlander from a Native Mountaineer's Viewpoint (Lexington, Ky: J. L. Richardson & Co., 1913), p. 21.

<sup>14</sup>The concept of the generic dish as the product of a series of transformations is introduced in my monograph "'Sunday Breakfast was Always Special with Us': A Report on Foodways in South Central Georgia," Folklore Preprint Series 7:1 (February, 1979), pp. 2-24.

### THE PHILADELPHIA FOODWAYS GROUP

The Philadelphia Foodways Group is a multidisciplinary organization of students and faculty from the greater Philadelphia area. This group was originally formed in 1977 to provide scholars doing research in food with an opportunity to meet with like-minded colleagues. Although the group had not been convened in over a year, Dr. Judith Goode and Dr. Sol Katz organized a meeting which was held on February 8, 1983. Leslie Sue Lieberman spoke on "Slave Nutrition Adequacy: an Input-Output Analysis from 1800-1850." Following Dr. Lieberman's presentation, the group exchanged information on their current research. The meeting was then adjourned to a local restaurant where an informal dinner was enjoyed by all. For information about upcoming meetings contact:

Dr. Judith Goode  
Department of Anthropology  
Temple University  
Philadelphia, Pennsylvania  
(215) 787-7773

## CONFERENCES

### MEDICAL EDUCATION SYMPOSIA

Two continuing medical education symposia will be held at the Waldorf-Astoria Hotel in New York City from June 3 to June 5, 1983. The first, "Nutrition, the Brain and the Mind," will take place on Friday, June 3rd. Sessions will include "Food for Thought: An Introduction" by Robert Ornstein, Ph.D.; "Tryptophan and Other Amino Acids: Effects on Human Sleep" by Ernest Hartmann, M.D.; "Food and Food Constituents that Affect Human Mood, Performance and Pain Sensitivity" by Harris R. Lieberman, Ph.D.; "Behavior as a Common Focus of Toxicology and Nutrition" by Bernard Weiss, Ph.D.; and "Nutritional Imprinting" by G. Harvey Anderson, Ph.D. The second symposium, "The Brain's Control of Weight: Theories and Implications for Treatments of Obesity," will take place on Saturday June 4th and Sunday June 5th. Sessions will include "The Brain, The Mind and Weight Control: Introduction to the Symposium" by Robert Ornstein, Ph.D.; "Setpoint a Model for Brain-body Interaction in Regulating Fat Storage" by William Bennett, Ph.D.; "Dieting and Binge Eating," "Medical Consequences of Overeating," "Natural Weight, Dieting and Eating" and "Social, Cognitive and Physiological Control of Weight and Eating" all by Janet Polivy, Ph.D. and Peter Herman, Ph.D.; "The Causes of Obesity" by Albert Strunkard, M.D.; "Desirable Weight and Longevity-Status of the Controversy" by Reuben Andres, M.D.; "The Treatments of Obesity" by Albert Strunkard, M.D., and "Implications of Setpoint Theory for Treatment and Research Strategies" by William Bennett, M.D. For information about the symposia contact:

Continuing Education

Pacific Medical Center

P.O. Box 7999

San Francisco, CA 94120

(415) 563-4321, ext. 2761



## SOCIETY OF NUTRITION EDUCATIONAL ANNUAL MEETING

The Society for Nutrition Education announces its sixteenth annual meeting to be held in Denver, Colorado from July 10 to 13, 1983. This year's theme will be "Promoting Health Through Nutrition: Cooperative Ventures." For additional information on the Conference contact:

Society for Nutrition Education

1736 Franklin Street

Oakland, CA 94612

## FOODWAYS SECTION MEETING

The Foodways Section of the American Folklore Society will have its annual meeting during the general AFS meetings in Nashville, Tennessee (Radisson Plaza Hotel), October 26-30, 1983. The date and time of the Foodways Section meeting will be determined by the convener and program chairs. At last year's meeting it was suggested that this meeting be held in a restaurant rather than in a rather blah hotel meeting room. Such a get-together would be the official Foodways Section business meeting and would be in addition to the regular AFS-sponsored foodways dinner.

In order to make more definite arrangements for this dinner meeting, we need to have a preliminary head count of the section's members (and other interested parties) who would be interested in such an outing. Students from Western Kentucky

University have offered to do the early scouting around for an appropriate restaurant. (That's the kind of fieldwork we would all like to do!). If interested, please send your name and address to:

Sue Samuelson  
1983 Foodways Section Convener  
Department of Folklore/Folklife  
Logan Hall 415 CN  
University of Pennsylvania  
Philadelphia, PA 19104

More definite information on the meeting's time and place will be published in The Digest and the AFS program.

## NOTES AND QUERIES

The Equity Policy Center, headed by Irene Tinker, is now conducting a world-wide study of street food. Fieldwork is already under way in the Philippines, Senegal and Bangla Desh. Niloufer Ichaporia is in the process of developing films and exhibitions in conjunction with EPOC's efforts. For additional information on this study contact:

Irene Tinker  
1525 Eighteenth Street N.W.  
Washington, D.C. 20036  
(202) 232-3465

In addition, Niloufer Ichaporia would like information on any institutions interested in funding films and exhibitions. If you have any suggestions please contact Ichaporia directly.

Niloufer Ichaporia  
Lowie Museum of Anthropology  
Kroeber Hall  
Bancroft Way and College Avenue  
University of California  
Berkeley, CA 94720  
(415) 642-3681

## BOOK NOTES

A Quaker Woman's Cookbook: The Domestic Cookery of Elizabeth Ellicott Lea.  
Edited, with an Introduction by William Woys Weaver. (Philadelphia: University of Penn Press, 1982) 310 pp., introduction, glossary, bibliography, index. \$20.00 hardbound.

When Elizabeth Ellicott Lea's cookbook, Domestic Cookery, first appeared in print in 1845, it was hailed as a boon to all newlyweds and inexperienced housekeepers. The recipes were the simple, everyday ones used commonly during the 1800's by cooks in Pennsylvania, Maryland and Delaware. Domestic Cookery, thus, gave a true picture of nineteenth century folk cookery in the Mid-Atlantic region of the United States.

In A Quaker Woman's Cookbook, William Weaver has provided the reader with both a facsimile copy of the 1853 edition of Mrs. Lea's book and an erudite discussion of Mrs. Lea as a woman living within the context of the nineteenth century Quaker world. Weaver's book is the first to examine Quaker cookery as a folk-cultural phenomenon. As such, he clearly demonstrates how a cookbook can be used as a document to help scholars doing historical or cultural research. William Weaver's book, A Quaker Woman's Cookbook will be a valuable addition to the library of anyone involved in food-related studies.

N.G.K.

Fading Feast: A Compendium of Disappearing American Regional Foods by Ray Sokolov. (New York: Farrar, Straus Giroux, 1981) 276 pp., introduction, index. \$17.95 hardbound.

On assignment for Natural History Magazine, Raymond Sokolov crisscrossed the United States in search of old-time cooks who still practice traditional food preparation techniques. He interviewed these people, collecting both their culinary wisdom and their recipes. Sokolov's articles, which first appeared in Natural History, are now collected in Fading Feast. [Each chapter provides a snapshot of a vanishing American regional food.] Although written in a popular style, these essays should provide useful information for academics working on food-related research.

N.G.K.

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