

Digest

Volume 20 (2000-2008)

An Interdisciplinary Study of Food and Foodways

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Ways of Foodways

Digest: An Interdisciplinary Study of Food and Foodways

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Lucy Long, in volume 19 (1999), wrote that “Anyone who teaches knows the heuristic value of food. It can be used as a teaching tool in all manner of ways – to teach content, methodology, presentations style, critical thinking, reading, and writing skills. Look at how many major thinkers have used food to illustrate their theories and philosophies – Aristotle, R. Barthes, Levi-Straus, Bakhtin, de Certeau, Bourdieu, Derrida, etc.” Food research, scholarly discussion, and a plethora of important foodways books have continued to increase since Professor Long made that statement, in fact, food studies have legitimately entered the world of academic study. Indiana University at Bloomington (IUB) has announced that their Department of Anthropology has begun to accept applications from prospective students for its brand new PhD program in food studies, the first academic foodways studies program in the United States. A discussion of the birth of this exciting new interdisciplinary course of study is in this volume.

We recognize, with gratitude and accolades, Lucy Long for the dedication she has given to the Foodways Section of American Folklore Society and to the Digest. At the last AFS conference in Canada (October 2007), the editorial baton for the Digest was passed along to Eve Jochnowitz and Jacqueline Thursby, co-editors, and both members of the AFS Foodways Section.

The five foodway essays included in this issue are from foodways panel participants who presented the papers at the 2008 AFS conference in Quebec. Beginning with Eve Jochnowitz’s ethnographic discussion of Urban Soup Kitchens, three of the essays discuss regional foods: “What Color is Your Gravy” by Theresa A. Vaughan, “Persimmons Make it Mitchell” by Selina Morales, and “Food and Migration: Towards a Definition of Border Cooking” by Dr. Jesús L. Tafoya. The final

essay is “Feasts and Feasting in the Society for Creative Anachronism” by Sarah Lash. The essay collection is eclectic and represents a variety of approaches to collecting, classifying, analyzing, and presenting foodways. Included in each of these essays is at least some emphasis and discussion of the quality of food and its use.

Many Americans are living the illusion that fast, cheap food is the best food, and the toll that attitude is taking, especially for the disadvantaged, is incalculable. From free recipe cards at the grocery markets to television food channels, the trend is still toward preparing and using highly processed foods. There is no doubt that these highly processed foods are quick-to-fix and markedly cheaper than more wholesome and nutritious products available in expensive health food shops or pricy, so-called organic grocers. Americans overall are reaping the consequence of poor nutrition, and it is time we heed food and foodways information and become food-wise simply because of the serious consequences of not doing so. Books and Websites listed in this issue may aid in that pursuit.

The essays are followed with further information about the IUB announcement, and then there is a listing of special food issues from other disciplines and the popular press concerning foodways. The list is by no means complete, but it will be maintained and updated by Eve Jochnowitz on her website (<http://inmolarann.blogspot.com>). Following the food issues list are two Brigham Young University syllabi. One is for Professor Jill Rudy’s “A Feast of Foodways” course; the other is for Professor James E. Faulconer’s “Philosophy of Food.” Three brief book reviews of recent foodways texts follow the syllabi: *Best Food Writing 2007*, Holly Hughes, ed.; *M.F.K. Fisher among the Pots and Pans: Celebrating her Kitchens* by Joan Reardon, and *The End of the Line: How Overfishing Is Changing the World and What We Eat* by Charles Clover. Finally, there is a not-necessarily-new list of foodways books too good to miss. The last inclusion is the list of food-related Websites.

We hope you will enjoy this issue, and we would like your responses and suggestions for the 2009 issue.

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