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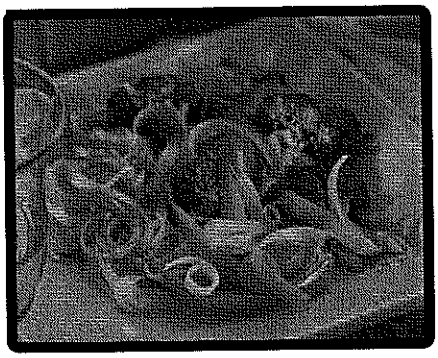
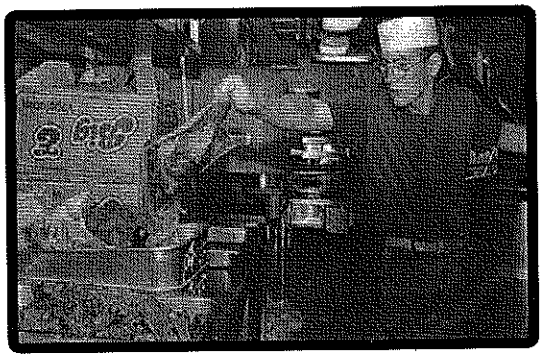
An Interdisciplinary Study of Food and Foodways





Eating and Community: The Social Power of Food

Digest

Letter From Editor -- Eating and Community: The Social Power of Food
DIGEST: volume 18 1998

Anyone who has ever planned an office party, birthday dinner, Thanksgiving feast, family reunion, romantic picnic, or any other gathering knows that food has social power. It can bring people together both literally, providing an excuse for such an event, and emotionally and psychologically, offering a commonality around which individuals can "connect" with each other. Out of this feeling of connection can grow a community—a group sharing a sense of unity, togetherness and belonging.

The articles in this issue of the Digest explore several types of social groupings, examining the ways in which food is used to construct, affirm, and, in some cases, challenge the group. As in any community, the role of the individual personalities, histories, and tastes of members has to be negotiated with the identity of the group as a whole. The more institutionalized groups, such as the military food events discussed here by Richard Burns, impose a structure which seem to allow for very little individuality, yet individuals still find ways in which to insert that individuality and force it to be recognized (although not perhaps by those in authority). At the other end of the spectrum, are informal communities that develop around specific food value systems, such as vegetarianism. As Stuart Varner demonstrates in his article on vegans, such groups develop lifestyles around food patterns that then in themselves are attractive to members and help maintain the community. In other words, eating is only one commonality holding the community together. In between these types of communities are families and geographically-bounded neighborhoods. Through an analysis of Jewish holiday meals, Kim Miller explores how women translate cultural expectations for performance into expressions of individuality as well as a "domestic religion" shared by the women in the larger ethnic community. Food festivals, such as the Pickle Day event in New York City described by Annie Hauck Lawson, offer occasions for communal celebration, celebration that then translates into common experiences and a sense of community.

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Stuart Varner
(Emory University)

Introduction

Abundance, Culture and Veganism

Though it would be a gross oversimplification to characterize contemporary American culture as "post-scarcity," it seems to be true that for the visible majority of Americans, the availability of food does not cause much anxiety. Therefore, for most of these people, food choice is less a question of survival and more a question of personal/cultural preferences. While the most talked about result of the American abundance of food is obesity, it also makes possible alternative lifestyles such as veganism. While many people consider a meat-free diet to be synonymous with a pleasure-free diet, thousands have turned to veganism for a myriad of reasons. In this paper, I examine some of these reasons by situating veganism in the cultural context from which it arises and consider how this food choice allows for the expression of alternative identity and the development and maintenance of alternative communities. Throughout this study I take the perspective that vegans are not necessarily martyrs to a puritanical ideal but rather people who find pleasure in a life of refusal, which rarely remains confined to foodways.

Meat-Free Diets and Veganism

Although the cultural focus of this paper is veganism as it is experienced in the United States, meatless diets can be found all over the world. These diets fall, though not very neatly, into three categories. In the first are people who do not consume meat due to ecological or economic circumstances. According to Alan Beardsworth and Teresa Keil, this type of veganism is an involuntary diet and they speculate that many of these people would consume meat if it were possible (218).

The second category consists of people who refrain from eating specific meats because of religious conviction. Several religions — Hindu and Buddhism to name only two — disallow the consumption of certain meats. Though, as R.S. Khare points out, there may be "several rival historical forces and value paradoxes in Hindu ideology" which can account for the Hindu avoidance of beef, such a diet is voluntary only to the extent that we can see religion, and culture for that matter, as voluntary (9).

While the diets described above are dictated by circumstance or religious/cultural injunction, meat-free diets have also been practiced for personal, even *counter*-cultural, reasons. The ancient Greek philosopher/mathematician Pythagoras practiced and advocated a meat free diet based on ethical arguments, which ran counter to the common foodways of ancient Greek culture. Thus, for centuries, individuals in Western societies who did not eat meat were sometimes called "pythagoreans" (220). The now common term vegetarian was first used in 1847 when the Vegetarian Society was formed in England.

In August 1944, Elsie Shrigley and Donald Watson coined the term "vegan" to refer to a lifestyle free of all products made from animals according to vegansociety.com. Both had been devoted vegetarians as part of the English Vegetarian Society, but, due to the increasing use of what they considered to be unacceptably violent procedures in animal processing factories, they could no longer reconcile eating dairy products or eggs with their views on animal rights. Along with six like-minded friends, Shrigley and Watson began the Vegan Society in London with the mission of "promoting ways of living which avoid the use of animal products — for the benefit of people, animals, and the environment."

The data is sparse at best, but according to the Vegan Socitey homepage, the Vegan Society reports that there are thousands of people living in Western societies who consider themselves vegan today.[1] Most vegans, as well as vegan organizations, cite three main reasons for practicing veganism. One is personal health. This comes from the belief that food from animals is unhealthy and that modern ways of raising animals for human consumption can lead to a multitude of health problems. To support this claim vegans often refer to the use of hormones, particularly Monsanto Corporation's bovine growth hormone, and antibiotics given to animals that can lead to cancer and weakened immune systems in humans.

Environmental concerns are another reason some people choose veganism. The Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations published a report in 1992 called "Livestock and the Environment: Finding a Balance" which sums up most of these concerns. The report begins with the assertion that one of the major global challenges in the coming decades will be how to preserve the planet's natural resources while providing enough food for the growing population. The writers of the report, Cees de Haan, Henning Steinfeld, and Harvey Blackburn, focus on the role of food producing livestock, and humans' use of them. They write, "[t]he way livestock are kept and milk and meat is produced will be a key factor in the future health of the planet. Animal agriculture is one of the most important components of global agriculture and livestock is one of the main users of the natural resource base."

The report found that currently the world's population is using 206 million tons of meat per year and predicted that, due to population increases as well as projected rising standards of living, this figure will jump to 310 million tons by the year 2020 unless drastic changes in global diets occur. These figures do not account for non-meat uses of livestock such as dairy and leather production. The environmental impact that will result in the form of, among other things, more land allocated for raising livestock, is expected to pose real dangers for the natural systems on which human life — not to mention animal life — depends.

However, the most common explanation for a vegan lifestyle is centered around the idea of animal rights. This is also the case with vegetarians, but the organization, Vegan Action in Berkeley, California, along with most vegans I have spoken to, argues that the conditions under which animals are raised for use as food, fur, and leather are so inhumane that it becomes desirable to avoid animal products completely. In other terms, the decision to be vegan is often seen as a boycott against particular foods.

Constructing a lifestyle that is in keeping with vegan beliefs is a complex, contradictory, and often difficult task. At first, the list of products vegans do not use may seem fairly obvious. Clearly meats (including fish and sea food) are off limits, as well as leather and fur. Furthermore dairy products and eggs are avoided. This is the most obvious way vegans differ from vegetarians. Some of the less obvious products that vegans refrain from using are bee products such as honey and wax. Also, there are a number of animal by-products that are very common in even the most innocent looking food. Gelatin is one such product that is found in many candies as well as Jell-O. Another problem ingredient is casein, a milk fat often found in (so-called) non-dairy creamers and many kinds of bread.

Most vegans find that it is impossible to avoid all of these products but try to do what they can. The effort spent on living as closely to the values of veganism as possible suggests that vegans take this choice quite seriously. This is because veganism, as an alternative food choice, is often seen as part of a greater commitment to an alternative and even oppositional culture. Because these terms alternative and oppositional are somewhat vague, I want to clarify that I use them in reference to Raymond Williams. Williams, in his article "Base and Superstructure in Marxist Cultural Theory," asserts that the "theoretical distinction" is the difference "between someone who simply finds a different way to live and wishes to be left alone with it [alternative], and someone who finds a different way to live and wants to change society in its light [oppositional]" (416). In the next the section I will further explore veganism in terms of this distinction.

Veganism As An Alternative Food Choice

Unlike Hindu and Buddhism, both Judaism and Christianity teach that humans are superior to animals and often view animals as "gifts" from God to people for their use and consumption. While it would be erroneous to say that American culture is Judeo-Christian in any strict sense, these religions have been incredibly influential in forming the norms

of American culture, particularly its foodways. Finding reliable statistics has proven to be difficult, but it is safe to argue that the consumption of animal products has been normalized in Western — particularly American — cultures. Anyone who has tried to find a vegan meal at a fast food restaurant will attest to this. So will anyone who has looked for vegan bread in a supermarket only to find that the two options are the mostly synthetic Wonderbread and the $3 half-loaf of kosher rye. This combined with the reactions to a vegan diet most vegans get from friends and family, which typically range from awe to terror, is enough to see veganism as a true cultural alternative.

Taking this a step further, Carol J. Adams has argued that a meat free diet — whether it be vegetarian or vegan — represents a challenge to patriarchy. She equates the violence of eating meat to the violence that is often attributed to masculine behavior. This leads her to propose that the increased popularity of vegetarianism over the past twenty years is directly linked to the rising acceptance of critical feminist theory (Beardsworth and Keil 238).

That veganism represents at least a personal questioning of the dominant attitudes toward food in American culture can clearly be seen as an alternative in Williams' terms. Furthermore, veganism can be seen as at least having the potential to be oppositional. At least two organizations, The Vegan Society and Vegan Action, indicate that they are committed to educating and converting more people to a vegan lifestyle.

However, some have argued that the food industry's ability to present vegan foods as fetishized commodities and, therefore, sell them at exorbitant prices seems to diminish veganism's ability to push for social change in and of itself. After all, a critique of dominant American attitudes would necessarily include a critique of consumerism which thrives on a fragmented marketplace and "lifestyles" defined by habits of consumption. Indeed, it is true that even the decision to be vegan, as well as the ability to do so in a healthy manner, depends upon the over abundance that marks Western privilege. Writing about the health food "revolution" in the 1970s, Warren Belasco goes so far as to argue that the "oppositional grammar" of the movement was rendered nearly useless as words like "natural," "organic," and even "revolution" lost their "context and power" due to their constant use by advertisers (108). Containing a social movement in a lifestyle ghetto, particularly if it is a well-lit and gentrified ghetto like the one defined by health food, has historically taken the steam out of movements for social change.

For the purposes of this paper, I want to simply assert that the choice to consume in accordance to vegan concerns is an alternative to the dominant and normalized foodways of American culture. However, I maintain that even though veganism may not represent a threat to the status quo in and of itself, it is frequently a very important part of two projects that may have more radical possibilities. The first project, and the focus of part one, is the assertion and performance of an alternative political identity. From this perspective, veganism can be seen as a symbolic act of personal defiance that is often only one of many activities. Part Two looks at the second project, which is the creation of alternative communities. Here I explore how community values are maintained and amended through the use of food. It is not my goal to argue that veganism alone will bring about mass social change. Rather, what I have seen is that commitment to a vegan lifestyle is at least a symbolic enactment of personal values and that the fundamental values of veganism — environmentalism, animal rights, and personal health — are often able to find outlets other than food choice.

Part 1: Identity and Veganism

In his book The Practice of Everyday Life, Michel de Certeau argues that people are able to consume without being consumed and can find ways of operating that allow them to function in the holes of an economic "grid" which exists all around them without being reduced to it (xiv). He argues that, like poachers in the medieval Lord's forest, people can develop tactics for making their lives meaningful without the consent, yet under the nose, of power (xxi). It is my contention that opting for a vegan diet

is one such tactic whereby practitioners make at least a symbolic claim for conscious control over their lives. The vegan diet, from this perspective, is one way among many for people to consciously assert an alternative identity and to find pleasure in doing so.

The first vegan I met was a fellow student at Queens College in Charlotte, North Carolina. We became friends at Amnesty International meetings,

and we often ate lunch together in the school's dinning hall. The campus dining facilities were far from vegan-friendly, and his lunch would typically consist of a plate of rice, steamed broccoli, and carrots. Even though there were very few, if any, vegan options on the menu at the cafeteria, he was required to buy a meal plan because he lived on campus. Though he was very thin when I met him, I watched as he lost even more weight over the course of the fall semester. By winter break, he couldn't wear his rings anymore.

Understandably, he did not come back to school the following year. My experience with him made me consider veganism to be an extremely hard lifestyle full of sacrifice. However, when I began graduate school, I met many more vegans who did not see it has a sacrifice at all. I interviewed one of these people, Tommy, to find out about his perspective on veganism, politics, and pleasure.

I assumed my lunch-time friend from college was very strict in his adherence to his vegan beliefs, but, because we never spent much time together outside of club meetings and the cafeteria, I cannot really be sure. However, I have spent a lot of time with Tommy. I have seen him spit out a mint

someone gave him because it was made with gelatin, and I have watched him prepare a meal that consisted of frozen green peas and pasta sauce with a veggie patty on the side. In other words, Tommy is the strictest vegan I have ever met.

It has been my understanding from reading about veganism that the most common reason for choosing this diet is concern for the treatment of animals. Therefore I was surprised that Tommy did not mention this aspect of veganism until I prompted him to talk about it several minutes into our discussion. While he certainly knows, understands, and agrees with the animal rights arguments for veganism, personal health is a greater concern for Tommy. "It is the same reason that I don't smoke or drink," he said, "I am boycotting an industry that sells us poison."

Tommy explained his diet with rationality and logic. "People say, 'well, you need to eat meat,' so I say, 'Why? If it is all about protein and calcium, well, I can get that from other, non-animal, products and avoid the cholesterol and fat.'" However, this

does not mean that pleasure is out of the picture in Tommy's diet. He said that people often comment that what he eats cannot taste very good and that he is denying himself pleasure. However, he explained, "Sometimes my mom makes these vegan cakes and even my non-vegan friends think they taste great." Furthermore, Tommy argues that he sees in his veganism a different kind of pleasure. He explained this alternative pleasure: "By creating and eating a meal that will allow my body to function well and stay healthy, I get a lot of pleasure."

Because a vegan diet is countercultural, I found it very interesting that Tommy's mother seemed so supportive. When I asked him to talk about his family's attitude toward his diet, he said they were generally very supportive. Some members of Tommy's family practice Islam, which, while not vegan, uses food choice to express belief. The Islamic prohibition on pork — because it is "unclean" — seems similar, if more spiritual, to how Tommy explains his own avoidance of animal products.

Furthermore, Tommy sees a connection between his family's acceptance of his veganism and their perspective on American society as African-Americans. He argued that oppressed populations, such as African-Americans, understand and accept

and possibly even adopt counter-cultural ideas faster than people in culturally privileged positions. "It is easier for me to explain to my mother how the same system that oppresses black people is also responsible for selling us poison than it would be to explain this to a wealthy white man," Tommy explained.

At this point in our conversation, I realized that there were two strains which were emerging. The first was that veganism is important to Tommy for personal health reasons and the second was how oppositional politics, expressed through veganism, are important to him. I asked if there was a direct link for him. "Sure," he said, "a good soldier is healthy and well disciplined in body and mind."

This statement connects very well to attitudes that Belasco argues were common in the American counter-culture(s) during the late 1960s and 1970s. According to Belasco, the arguments for health food often centered on survival. Whether that meant surviving when you are unemployed or surviving when the police come to raid your commune, health food was considered to be both an important part of feeling good and being able fight "the pigs" in the streets (30). Belasco argues, however, that the health food movement quickly turned into a fashion trend and, in doing so, lost much of the radical potential it was credited with. "Jaded as we now are," he writes, "by commercial phrases like 'natural, whole grain goodness,' it may now be hard to see revolutionary significance in the eating of unhulled rice and curried carrots, or granola and yogurt" (28).

I asked Tommy to comment on what Belasco refers to as the gentrification of the countercuisine. He saw no real connection to the way he practices veganism and this phenomenon. He pointed out that his diet does not really consist of so-called health food but mainly of generic foods from supermarkets. He sees the health food market as a very class specific practice that he cannot really afford to take part in.

So for Tommy, veganism plays a significant role in the way he negotiates his individual political identity. Refusing to buy products he sees as poisonous, participating in a boycott of sorts, is a very concrete way for him to perform and communicate his beliefs. Also, because Tommy values health for political and, he admitted, "aesthetic"[2] reasons, he feels that a vegan diet is the best way to maintain his health. Overall, he sees veganism as a necessary choice because it is consistent with his larger political beliefs. Though it may seem like a strange but ultimately non-

threatening mode of resistance to non-vegans, as Belasco points out, "being different in something so basic and taboo-laden as food might lead to being different in other [and maybe more threatening] things" (28).

Part 2: Community and Veganism

One way that the personal choice to go vegan can lead to other "ways of being different" can be seen in how often vegans are also part of larger networks of people that (loosely) form oppositional communities. Such communities often have concerns and interests that include but are certainly not limited to the personal health, animal rights, and environmental concerns that a vegan diet speaks to. In order to study the role that veganism plays in these communities, I have conducted informal, qualitative ethnographic research in Bowling Green, Ohio. I found a small but quite active network of people who practice veganism, though how strict they are varies from one individual to the next.

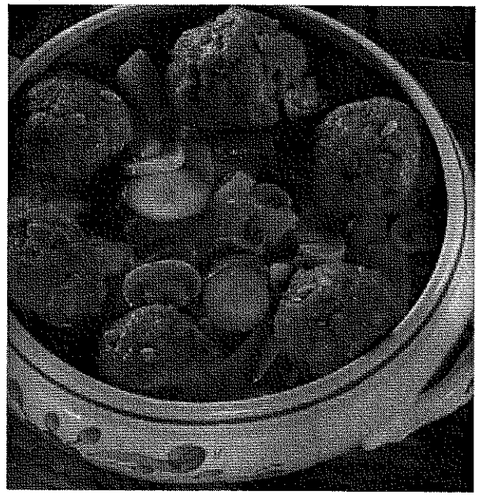
I started the research at one of the many vegan potlucks that are organized throughout the year. Since I have lived in Bowling Green, I have seen signs for these potlucks, usually held in the basement of the United Christian Fellowship (UCF) building across the streets from the campus of Bowling Green State University. Contrary to popular belief, these potlucks are not sponsored by the UCF or any religious organization. Nor are they organized by a group at the university. Generally someone in the community will decide it is time for a potluck, make the reservation, and hang up flyers around town and on campus.

The vegan potlucks in Bowling Green have roots in the tradition of vegan activism which has been notably promoted by Food Not Bombs, an organization that has collected soon-to-be discarded food from restaurants and grocery stores and prepared vegetarian meals for poor and/or homeless people in the United States for over 20 years. The people who volunteer for Food Not Bombs are usually local activists and/or local "punks" and "hippies" who tend to be involved in other more or less underground/alternative lifestyle subcultures. Food Not Bombs has used its connections to these subcultural communities to spread its philosophy of a gentler society through gentler foodways.

Most, though by no means all, of the media coverage Food Not Bombs has received has come from the underground press, usually zines, which have, since the late 1970s, been the main mode of underground communication. Articles in these zines about the philosophy of the vegan lifestyle and also of community outreach events have been a huge influence on some of the residents of Bowling Green, particularly the descriptions of community potlucks. I have attended several of these potlucks, and on this occasion I looked at the community that develops around veganism at these events.

As per the instructions on the flyer, I arrived at the UCF at 4:00 p.m. with my vegetarian contribution to the feast — this time a large bowl of humus. However, I was the only one there. A few minutes later, two more people showed up, who, seeing that I was the only other person there, immediately left to get the food they had thought they would have no time to procure. By 4:30, twelve people had gathered, and we decided to get the program started. The predictable phenomena of the late start is lovingly attributed to "punk time."

The official title for the event was a "Community Vegetarian Potluck" which was meant to imply that it was not just for students of the University and, more importantly, not just for people who are friends of the organizers. However, those in attendance were pretty much the same crowd that always comes, and they were mostly students at the university. Most of the attendees were women and most were white[3]. The handful of new faces were the members of a new Vegetarian club on campus



who had been expressly invited and, as it turns out, were already acquainted with many of the other participants.

In addition to the "great food and conversation" the flyer promised, a woman from a local Catholic church came with a film about the School of the Americas in Ft. Benning, Georgia. She is part of a movement called SOA Watch that seeks to raise awareness about this tax-sponsored military school and strives to generate enough opposition to have it closed. She started the video at about 4:30 and led a short discussion after the viewing. The video was shown in a very small room, set up like a living room with couches and chairs, on the main floor of the UCF.

After the post-video conversation broke up at about 5:00 p.m., everyone went down stairs to eat. Though we had talked about taking our food outside, everyone seemed to forget this after they filled their plates. Instead we sat on the couches in the basement. At about 6:30, people started clearing the tables and cleaning up. Everyone had left by 7:00 p.m.

Though there is no cohesive and coherent system which could be used to summarize the values of those assembled at this potluck, it is safe to say that all consider themselves politically left-wing—sometimes even radically so. This potluck then, being a cultural production/event for this group, should be full of symbolic expressions that embody these beliefs. Clearly, the food is an example of this. It is fairly obvious that, because most of the food was vegan, there was some level of concern for the core values of veganism: personal health, environmentalism, and animal rights. However, this does not necessarily mean that all the participants firmly held these beliefs. I talked with one woman who usually eats meat, and she said that she came to her first potluck just to meet other people. In her own words, "I didn't know many people in town, and vegetarians are usually nice people. I thought I might make some new friends." This shows that a desire to be part of a community, not simply a desire to publicly perform a lifestyle choice, can also be encoded in the food at the potlucks and also in the event itself.

Further evidence that the potlucks are as much about community as individual commitment to a vegan lifestyle can be seen in the food participants brought. Though the flyers welcomed vegetarian dishes, everyone brought vegan dishes, even those who do not consider themselves vegan. There were two instances where people realized that what they had brought contained non-vegan ingredients after the food had been served. In both cases the ingredients discovered would fall under the category of vegan minutia: refined sugar (usually bleached with crushed animal bones) and caseinate (milk protein). However, the offending parties felt like they had committed a cultural transgression.

This lead me to think of how cultural capital, or in this case subcultural capital, circulates within this network[4]. Those in attendance who knew all the rules and were able to explain why certain ingredients were not vegan had more cultural capital than the others. It is no surprise that those who had been coming to the potlucks for years were the ones who knew the most. This indicates that another function, though not necessarily purpose, of the potlucks is to educate people about vegetarian/vegan foodways. The other side of this, however, is that it gives those with the specialized knowledge an opportunity to display their abilities. Therefore, one of the attractions of the potlucks is the opportunity they provide for some to take on the role of "the ones who know everything."

These opportunities seem to be particularly important in alternative communities in general.

BUTTER, CHEESES and DIPS

TOFU SOUR CREAM

Top a baked potato with this "sour cream," sprinkle with chives or chopped green onion tops, and serve with a tossed salad — you'll have a meal fit for a king. Use this sour cream wherever you would use regular sour cream. Top fruit for a tasty dessert. Dollop onto waffles, pancakes, or crepes, served with fruit topping. Use to cover toast spread with ORANGE MARMALADE or other jams.

- ½ c. raw cashews (optional)
- ½ c. water (less if using no cashews)
- 16 oz. brick tofu, rinsed and drained
- 1 t. salt
- 1½ t. lemon juice

Put dry cashews into liquefier and mill with lid on for a few seconds. Add water and liquefy. Add remaining ingredients and liquefy until smooth. Makes about 3 cups.

Because alternative lifestyle choices are often dismissed as eccentric by mainstream culture, the need to show that one possesses a body of specialized knowledge and to display this for a sympathetic audience can be an important way of legitimizing what dominant cultural common sense says is illegitimate. These potlucks give certain individuals a forum in which to be knowledgeable which is non-existent in most other situations. Also, they allow those who are not "in the know" to learn about the workings and values of the community.

One of the most obvious ways to perform understanding of the community's workings and values is what kind of food you bring. Most of the food brought to the potluck was prepared at the participants' home, and most people indicated that their contribution was a favorite dish. By and large everyone was humble about what they brought, pointing out that they wish they had used more garlic, or, in one case, a woman pointed to what she brought saying "this really isn't very good at all." Food that the community participants prepared themselves was given more praise than store bought food. One person who brought several packages of pita bread was gently chided for his lack of ambition.

Food that requires individual effort is valued for many reasons. It shows that the event and the people attending were seen as important to the cook for him or her to spend the time and money on preparation. Also, this particular group seems to value being in control of what you eat because so often processed foods have politically questionable ingredients. Clearly there is contradiction here. No one brought food that they had grown themselves. However, home preparation seems to be a symbolic expression of this desire for control. It also expresses trust among the members of the community that they will not feed each other questionable foods, at least in vegan terms.

The presentation of the food, at first, did not seem to indicate much about the community. Most of the dishes were in very simple, often old and most likely second hand serving platters and bowls. It seems that the presentation was simply functional and nothing else. However, as Jean Baudrillard argues in his book The System of Objects, there is nothing in contemporary society that does not have a determined — or, more precisely, over-determined — cultural meaning(s). That the participants did not go to any great lengths to use expensive and/or ornate dishes — which, in my previous church potluck experience, is the norm — indicates that function and thrift are valued over other factors such as "beauty," gadgetry, or expense. However, a performance of functionality is still a performance, which signifies a value judgment.

Food, while obviously very important to potlucks, is by no means the only form of symbolic expression that can be analyzed. Because the potluck is a social event, the greater context of the ritual needs to be given some attention in order to get some more insight into how this oppositional culture functions. Fashion is one such part of the context that is also very important. Every time you are seen by someone — including yourself — you are at some level performing, and clothes are a very important part of this performance. Clothing is perhaps the most common way people perform their identity, so paying attention to fashion in any social gathering where I assume fashion is given additional consideration should be particularly significant in terms of the values of a community.

There were no instructions on the flyers that would indicate appropriate dress, but everyone came dressed leisurely. More importantly, the participants were, almost without exception, dressed in various countercultural traditions whether they be punks, art school beatniks, or hippies. Like the presentation of the food, these various traditions allow the people to perform anti-mainstream, anti-commercial, and pro-functionality values.

Of particular interest to me on this fashion note was the couple who came to present the SOA video. They were much older and much more conservatively dressed than most of the young people in attendance. The husband wore jeans and a button-up shirt with tennis shoes while his wife wore shorts, a short sleeve shirt, untucked, and Birkenstock sandals – not the typical uniform of a fascist by any stretch of the imagination but a good bit closer to the center than what most people were wearing.

While the husband seemed somewhat shy, the wife seemed to go out of her way to meet new people and talk about what was going on. The younger participants, however, seemed a bit confused and even a bit uncomfortable by their presence. I heard many people ask if they were someone's parents and several people, after the couple had left (early, I should add), said that they were actually pretty cool as if this was not expected. I am not arguing that all of this is based purely on dress, but fashion was clearly an indicator of difference.

This observation, once again, points to the way subcultural capital circulates within this community. If you know how to make something vegan, you are in the door. If you know all the ends and outs of the vegan lifestyle, then you become a teacher/leader. But in order to be immediately taken seriously in this particular space, you have to convincingly perform an "authentic" and "sincere" articulation with "The Underground." Food and clothes are clearly important props in that performance. While many will deny the existence of these rules and may even debate the meaning of "The Underground" itself, there are clearly traditions at work that serve to buttress this idea of the community. While these traditions are buttresses, they are also a wall: in this case, a wall around a subcultural ghetto.

This problem was given some attention in the planning process, particularly in the decisions concerning the promotion of the event. In the past, flyers have sometimes ended up looking very "punk rock." By this, I mean they were designed with cryptic, sometimes menacing icons and collage-esque design. This sort of flyer has been successful in attracting people who consider themselves punks *or* who at least want to be identified as such, but it can also alienate those who may be put off by this subculture. So the question becomes, when the sign says "Community Potluck," what community is it referring to: the local punk/underground community or the Bowling Green "community" in general? Because the intention was a Bowling Green community potluck rather than a punk potluck, the flyer for this potluck attempted to reflect that by using less chaotic design and more wholesome graphics.

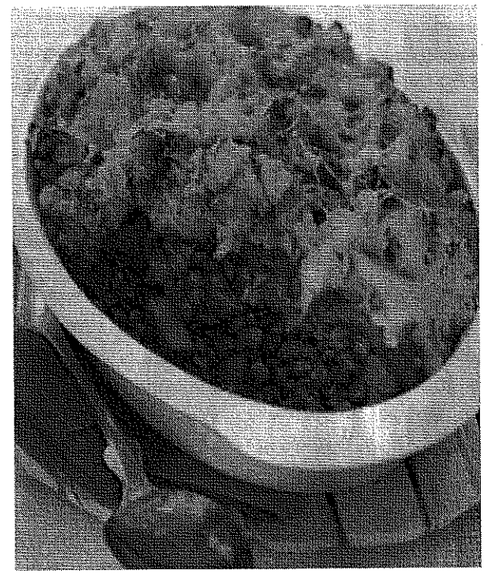
Another aspect that had to be taken into consideration was whether or not to have a program other than the food. In the past these potlucks have been opportunities for video showings on so-called "radical" political topics like the Zapatista rebellion in Mexico and the 1999 Anti-WTO protests in Seattle. Long time planners of potlucks said that, while they like the idea of watching these videos and having discussions afterwards, these events tend to

be more sparsely attended than the ones with no specific program. Eventually it was decided that the video about the SOA would be shown, but, by placing it on the agenda ahead of the food and by announcing it as a suggestion rather than something everyone was expected to participate in, the organizers felt that the video, and thus the political ideology it reflects, was not being imposed upon the participants.

In light of these attempts to broaden the scope of the potlucks, viewing them as an expression or construction of community identity is a very tricky matter. I think it is helpful to see this potluck as a negotiated expression of community. The way subcultural capital seemed to flow at this event along with the conscious, though seemingly inconsistent, decisions which lead to a certain degree of "un-punking" the potluck shows a desire to articulate the subcultural identities and practices with those of the local community. Though the tradition that has been established for the potlucks has reflected the punk identity that many of the organizers claim or are at least sympathetic to, the apparent desire to open this up to a wider community marks a significant change in the agenda(s) of the planners.

It seems a bit forced though to talk about the event as a component of a local or subcultural heritage, but the idea does seem useful for teasing out other layers of complexity. Change, particularly where heritage and tradition are concerned, tend to raise strong feelings in those who feel that their identity is somehow invested in the event in question. This did not seem to be the case, however, among the people I spoke with. Part of this can be explained by saying that such a short tradition for such a transient community cannot entice the kind of investment of identity that older and larger traditions do such as Christmas.

However, this explanation seems overly dramatic and ultimately wrong since the actual event does not seem to have changed that much over the years despite the attempts at outreach. Several people expressed a desire to come to a potluck and not know most of the people in the room. If this is in fact the case, this potluck must have been very disappointing. Everyone seemed to know one another, and it was interesting to note how quickly small groups of close friends began to form after people got their food. One participant I talked to indicated that she had been to a potluck two years ago, not knowing anyone, and had not been back



because only one person talked to her the whole evening.

However, just because this potluck in most ways failed as a community-broadening event, I do not see it as a failure. It provided a group of friends that see themselves, at least in a broad sense, as a community, a chance to come together and reaffirm their identity. Kathy Neustadt, in her book on clambakes, argues that as a tradition, the clambake not only unites the organizing community but also serves to shapes that community's conception of itself. She points out that each year the participants have to choose to have the clambake, and to choose all of its details, they have to evaluate what is truly important to the community. "Traditions," she argues, "are self-maintaining only as long as the group interprets survival as positive" (162). The same can be argued for the role of vegetarian potlucks in Bowling Green's oppositional community.

At some level the meanings of this community must be evaluated and, if necessary, renegotiated. This is reflected in the decisions to change or at least reorganize certain components of the event: the poster and the "agenda" for example. Even if these changes did not create a change in this particular event, they seem to represent a change in the way the meaning of the group identity is thought about. This shift in the paradigm may then be reproduced in the myriad of other day-to-day activities that require identity negotiation.

Conclusion

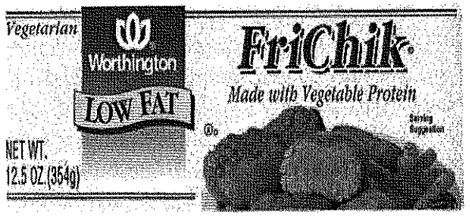
The anthropologist Mary Douglas argues that "[i]f food is treated as a code then the message it encodes will be found in the pattern of social relations being expressed" (36). If veganism is treated as a code, then we can expect its core beliefs to be expressed in the social relations of its practitioners. It has been my contention throughout this chapter that veganism is not a real challenge to the normalized foodways of Western societies, simply an alternative to them. Furthermore, because veganism is a countercultural practice, I have expected that people who practice a vegan diet would also be involved in countercultural activities that go beyond foodways. A good example of this is Jason from Bowling Green.

Jason became a vegetarian in 1993 and has had a predominantly vegan diet[1] since 1997. He first started for health reasons and later became aware of the environmental concerns. Recently though he has been thinking about how these issues that lead him to veganism are connected to his criticisms of capitalism. Jason sees that the treatment of animals by the food industry and the environmental damage it contributes to are, in part, the result of business philosophies that seek only to maximize profits. While he sees that his vegan diet answers some of his concerns, he is worried that it often does not challenge the problems of consumerism and over-consumption.

First of all, Jason also has concerns about the price of some vegan food. "The class issue," he said, "is something I am rethinking now that I don't have any money." After finishing a Masters degree, Jason and a friend decided to start their own magazine with the intention of, in their words, "providing a resource and outlet for people to find and express themselves." The magazine strives to be as free of advertising as possible and is doing well but is by no means making Jason much money yet. Because organic food and vegan food tends to be very expensive, he finds himself having to compromise in ways that he might not have when he was still a student. "If the choice is feeding four people with a cheese pizza for $10 or going to a vegan restaurant and spending $10 a plate, we'll get the pizza."

Trying to feed himself in accordance with his vegan concerns is not the only challenge Jason faces. Vegans also try to cut out all leather products. It is easy enough to find vegan coats but shoes become a real problem. "Is it better to buy seventeen pairs of canvas shoes or one pair of leather shoes every three years?" Jason asked. "My veganism," he said, "is mediated by my consciousness of consumption." The lack of concern about consumption, especially amongst vegans, is a source of frustration for Jason. He pointed out that he has seen people send back food they ordered in restaurants because they did not realize their dish had cheese in it. "That is just wasteful," he said.

In our conversation, he said that he has become much more interested in a practice known



as freeganism, which is advocated in a pamphlet called "Why Freegan?" that is published by a self-identified freegan from Clearwater, Florida named Koala. Calling itself the "Ultimate Boycott," freeganism is a lifestyle that tries to avoid buying anything. The freegan lifestyle goes beyond food, which they prefer to find in dumpsters or on plates left by customers at restaurants, to living in abandoned buildings, rent free, usually referred to as "squatting." This is the logical extension of the vegan

argument that the choice not to eat animal products is a boycott of a consumer system that treats animals as products to be exploited by humans. Freegans criticize veganism for "voting with dollars." "I don't vote because no matter who I vote for, the government always wins," writes Koala, "and when you 'vote with your dollars' consumerism always wins" (Koala 3).

The value system at work for freegans is very different from Tommy's. The author of "Why Freegan?" argues that doughnuts, which are rarely vegan, are great sources of calories to make it through the day because they are often thrown out even though they are perfectly edible. In fact many freegans are not vegan at all. "If it's free, don't read it, just eat it" was a phrase I heard from one freegan I met as he was commenting on the vegan need to read the ingredients of everything. The freegan philosophy figures that if it is going to be thrown away anyway, consuming it will not encourage anyone to restock the item, thus the freegan is not contributing to over-consumption.

Clearly, there are very few people who are willing to adopt the freegan lifestyle due to risks and difficulties, both imagined and real. However, most vegans I have talked to are aware of the inconsistency of veganism, which is for many a protest of consumer culture that is tied up in commodities that are often overpriced and fetishized. But I do not think it is reasonable to dismiss veganism as a pointless non-protest, despite the contradictions and the impossibility of total avoidance of animal products. The research I have done shows that veganism often plays an important part in the construction of alternative/oppositional identities and groups. While veganism alone will not stop the destruction of the planet and the life-forms who live on it, it is an important way for people to express, create, and sustain oppositional values that are often reproduced in other, more radical ways. As I have noted, most of the vegans I talked to are involved in other activities that range from direct political action, like organizing protests and risking arrest at the Republican National Convention, to devoting large amounts of their time to radical projects like Jason's commitment to the magazine he co-edits. Without the relatively small commitment to a cruelty-free lifestyle that veganism requires, it is hard to imagine these people would make the larger commitments that are necessary to do what they do.

NOTES

[1] Jason does not like to call himself a vegan because he has known many people who are very militant about being a vegan, and he finds that this attitude tends to alienate other people.

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HOME FOR THE HOLIDAYS:

HOLIDAY FOOD PREPARATION AS RITUAL

KIM MILLER

(The 1999 winner of the Sue Samuelson Prize for best student paper)

While women do not exclusively make the holidays, they are generally the ones who organize the holidays at home. They make the dinners, plan the menus, invite the guests, do the shopping, arrange the flowers, clean and decorate the house—all in an effort to make the holidays special for their families and for themselves. While women of all religions, and even those who profess no religion, make holidays, I find it interesting that it is Jewish women (such as Barbara Meyerhoff and Susan Sered), writing about Jewish women, who have written about this domestic activity as part of a woman's religious life and part of a woman's contribution to her family's religious life—as "domestic religion." In fact, the phrase domestic religion came into academia through Barbara Meyerhoff's informant Rachel in Number Our Days: "We girls had another kind of religion. We couldn't doubt too much because we didn't know enough. . . . You see this is from what's going on in the family. That's the root of being Jewish. Jewish comes up in you from the roots." She continued "We girls had what you could call domestic religion, that means it comes into you through the rituals"1

The Judaic tradition explicitly requires women to organize their kitchens, their food purchases, and their cooking to meet religious requirements. In fact, Jewish women traditionally have very few religious requirements within the synagogue. Women are responsible for *Kashrut*, for preparing foods in a ritual manner. Every week, they make sure that bread and wine are ready for ritual blessings, and they prepare special foods ahead of time in order to have warm meals over the Sabbath. Yearly, they clean their houses of *chametz* before Passover. The Passover *Seder* could not take place without this preparation. Because of this, the Jewish sphere highlights women's contributions to holiday celebrations.

It does seem, too, that in Judaism, there is an emphasis on *passing on* the religion and culture—and thus the traditions associated with the religion and culture—which is made explicit, for example, in the *Seder* ritual itself. Moreover, some Jews seem to view this connection, forged with others through tradition, as religious. A few years ago, when I asked some of my friends and family what was religious to them about the Passover *Seder*, my Jewish friends told me that the *Seder* was religious to them because of the links it creates among people. My husband told me that the *Seder* was religious to him because: "It establishes my descent . . . to human beings which is the most spiritual connection I will usually allow myself; that I really accept on a profound level, I think."

This connection, found so clearly within the *Seder* ritual, is precisely the same kind of connection Elizabeth Ehrlich writes of in her memoir, Miriam's Kitchen She introduces her recipe for *kneydlekh* (*matzo* balls) with a short note about how her daughter called Ehrlich's mother to obtain the recipe. She then writes: "My daughter calling my mother for the recipe? My mother who approximated her mother's recipe? Her motherless mother who reinvented her mother's recipe? The ancient and timeless *matzo* ball? Yes, that's my religion" (218). Here is a connection among generations formed, not by a dogmatic religious ritual, but by the domestic rituals of sharing a recipe and making that recipe in a manner that is traditional within the family.

The *Seder* is a religious ritual, which is explicitly ritualistic. But, for a woman preparing for the *Seder* dinner, the ritual begins long before everyone is seated around the table and the opening words or the *hagaddah*are read. It begins in the kitchen, maybe a month or a few weeks, before the actual day of the meal, when she begins to clean her cupboards, change over her dishes and cooking utensils, and make her shopping lists. This ritual of domestic holiday preparation, however, is rarely mentioned by those who study rituals. Perhaps this is because these rituals are domestic rather than official. Perhaps it is because the women who

Hanukkah

Another name for Hanukkah is the Festival of Lights. Jewish families gather together to light the Hanukkah candles, one each night for eight nights. They remember the story of Judah Maccabee, who led his people in a fight to win back the temple in Jerusalem from the Syrians over two thousand years ago. When they got ready to open the temple again, they found only enough oil to light the lamp for one night. But the lamp burned on and on, giving light for eight days! The Hanukkah tradition first came to America when twenty-three Jewish men, women, and children arrived in New Amsterdam, New York, in 1654. Over the years, Jewish families from many parts of Europe came to the United States settling in New York, Newport, Charleston and other cities. The Hanukkah holiday is just right for the cold dark nights of winter. Lighting the candles, singing, playing the dreidel game, exchanging presents, and eating special foods make the Festival of Lights one of the happiest holidays of the year. And it lasts for eight days!

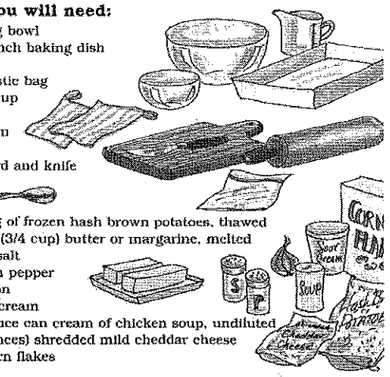
Holiday Potato Bake

Makes 8 servings

Help mom out with the holiday cooking by contributing this dish to the holiday table.

Things you will need:

large mixing bowl
12 x 8 x 2-inch baking dish
small bowl
self-seal plastic bag
measuring cup
rolling pin
mixing spoon
can opener
cutting board and knife
potholders



2-pound bag of frozen hash brown potatoes, thawed
1 1/2 sticks (3/4 cup) butter or margarine, melted
1 teaspoon salt
1/4 teaspoon pepper
1 small onion
1 pint sour cream
1 10 3/4-ounce can cream of chicken soup, undiluted
1 cup (4-ounces) shredded mild cheddar cheese
2 cups corn flakes

1. Ask your GROWN-UP HELPER to preheat the oven to 350°.
2. Grease the baking dish using a little butter on your clean hands.
3. In the mixing bowl, combine the thawed potatoes, 1/2 cup of the melted butter (save the other 1/4 cup for step 8), and the salt and pepper.
4. Ask your GROWN-UP HELPER to help you peel and chop the onion and add it to the bowl.
5. Add the soup, sour cream and cheese to the bowl and mix everything together well.
6. Spoon the potato mixture into the greased baking dish, pressing down on the mixture with the back of the spoon to "pack" it into the dish.
7. Measure the corn flakes into the plastic bag and seal it, getting as much air out of the bag as possible. Crush the corn flakes by rolling the rolling pin over the bag.
8. Pour the crushed corn flakes into the small bowl. Add the 1/4 cup of melted butter and mix.
9. Sprinkle the corn flakes and butter mixture over the top of the potato mixture.
10. Ask your GROWN-UP HELPER to place the baking dish in the oven and bake for 45 minutes. Check to be sure your GROWN-UP HELPER uses potholders to take your dish out of the oven when it is cooked.

initiate and share these rituals are too busy doing them to write of them. Perhaps these rituals are not written about because they are so individualized—so esoteric from woman to woman and from family to family. And yet, I do not believe that they are so individualized that they cannot be compared. It seems more likely that these rituals are just so ingrained, so much a part of our lives, that they do not seem exceptional. And yet, what would Passover be, what would Christmas be, if some woman in our lives did not spend the time to shop and clean, cook the meal, set the table, decorate the house, and invite us over to share in a meal of traditional foods that we've had so many times before? Women who prepare these holidays may or may not define their actions as having ritual or religious significance. And, clearly, not *all* holidays have religious significance. But, for Christians at least, it would seem that Christmas dinner is as much a domestic ritual as the *Seder* is for Jews. It is a part of family tradition, a way to link individuals in time and space, but, more importantly, it is a way to bring the religion home and to make it meaningful to family members.

Celebrating these holidays imparts religious values, but perhaps more significantly, these celebrations pass on a tradition that is part of the religious culture of the household. It would not be Christmas if my aunt didn't hold her huge holiday dinner, inviting all the aunts and uncles and cousins. It would not be Christmas if there weren't ham and turkey and yams and mashed potatoes. It would not be Christmas if her house were not decorated, if presents were not exchanged, if there were no tree or pie or left-over meats and rolls made into sandwiches to fortify football watching and card playing until past dusk. It was only until I entered the Jewish world of my husband's family, and, in the process, left behind many of the traditions I had grown up with, that I truly understood the ways in which much of what a woman does in her home reflects her culture, her traditions and her religion.

To better understand the thought and care that go into making a holiday dinner, I interviewed my husband's aunt, a Jewish woman who loves to cook and has large family gatherings at her house for holidays. I chose to interview her for several reasons, but perhaps the biggest reason was that her holiday dinners seem to be some of the most traditional in the family. She takes great joy in her cooking and baking and cooks nearly everything from scratch by herself.

My aunt, however, was not sure how much her Jewish holiday food preparation had to do with religion. When I asked her what making the holidays had to do with her identity as a Jew, she told me that she cooked all the traditional foods the way her mother did it. She gave me an example from this past Passover. She'd found a short autobiography her grandfather had written and introduced it into the *Seder*. She told me that there were three generations sitting at the table, so when they read her grandfather's writing, "it felt like there were four generations that were tied together."

Also, in response to the identity question, she told me: "I guess that's part of it, when you're sitting around the table . . . and you're eating and it's part of the . . . and the traditional foods and the traditional holiday celebration. . . . It's that thread that goes back."

Yet when I asked her if the tradition was religious for her, she told me: "I'm not . . . so sure it's as religious as it is historical, or you know, like a tie that binds. Is it religious? I don't know if it's *religious*, but is there a traditional tie that binds? Absolutely." So, for my aunt, this tie is traditional, and it has to do with her identity as a Jew, but it does not seem to be part of what she views as "religion."

Perhaps there is a difference between older Jewish women, whose participation in organized, synagogue-based religion was low, such as those interviewed by Barbara Meyerhoff and Susan Sered, and younger Jewish women, such as my aunt, whose daughters have been *Bat Mitzvahed*—women who have been able and encouraged to participate more fully in the "Great Tradition" of Judaism, *or* perhaps it is only a difference between different women and their concepts of religion. For my aunt, at least, making holiday dinners contributes to her identity as a Jew and hopefully to other family members' Jewish identity as well, and so carries a great deal of religious and cultural significance. But at the same time, she does not necessarily see her actions as "religious."

Despite the fact that I have already quoted others who find this "tie," this connection, religious, I do not think that my aunt is in the minority. Most people, especially women, are not used to thinking of what they do in the home as ritualistically or religiously important. But their actions are ritualistically and religiously vital, even if they are not religious quite in the same way that saying a mass, or even simply attending synagogue, is.

What do women do that is so vital? They bring the religion home, they make it part of the family culture, and they participate in, share, and celebrate the ritual and cultural ties they have with living and dead family members.

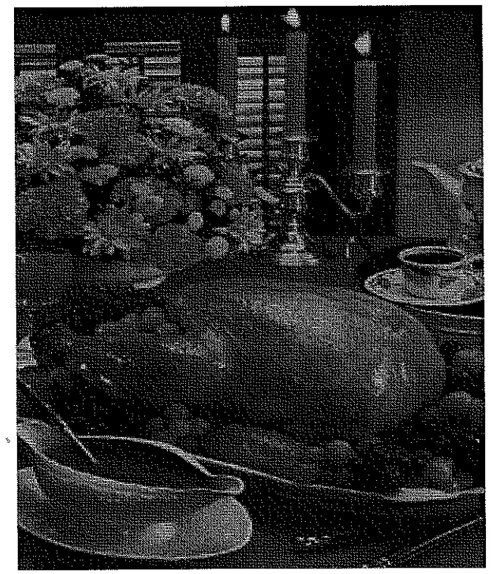
Meyerhoff writes:

> In religious and domestic rituals, Jews are able to experience profoundly meaningful connections, on many levels: with their ancient forebears, with their biological parents, with fellow Jews, and with themselves at other points in their individual histories, particularly as children. Ritual may be an occasion of personal integration, in which one is aware that he/she is the same person now that he/she was long ago, despite so much change, in one's body and one's world. Ritual takes up the task of allowing for an experience of continuity, for it provides the opportunities for the most basic, cherished symbols to become vivified, active and transformative." (229-230)

My Aunt Debbie manages to make her holiday dinners meaningful in many ways. She makes traditional foods. She takes care; she pays attention to detail and aesthetics. She makes accommodations to family members' likes and dislikes. By doing these things, she makes holiday dinners pleasant experiences for her guests, and perhaps she ensures that these traditions will be continued by her daughter or son.

Debbie generally begins her holiday dinner preparation two to three weeks ahead of time. She comes home from work every night, bakes something and freezes it. For *Rosh Hashanah*, she told me, she makes soup a day or two before, and

then the day before she prepares top of the rib, potatoes, grilled vegetables, and gefilte fish – the one thing she does not make from scratch. The day of the holiday, she takes her frozen baked goods out of the freezer, places them on trays, sets the table, and makes the turkey and *matzo* balls. The gefilte fish and chopped liver platters are also made on the day of the holiday, and fruit is cut up. Debbie often has help with her "day of" preparations, but even so, it is clear that she expends a lot of time and energy on preparing traditional foods and foods, particularly desserts, that her family likes. This extensive list of tasks leaves out shopping, cleaning, and calling people to tell them what time to show up — all of which are time consuming in their own right.



Preparing for the holiday takes a lot of time, but Debbie tells me that it isn't difficult for her. She's got it down to a "system," and yet, she works for weeks preparing the *Rosh Hashanah* meal. In fact, the only thing Debbie appears to buy pre-prepared for the meal is gefilte fish, and even this she cooks in a broth with vegetables the day before. Debbie also has a woman who works for her — who worked for her father — who helps set up on the day of the holiday, but who also cleans the turkey and makes the chopped liver because my uncle loves it. What Debbie truly seems to enjoy is the baking, and she spends a lot of time doing this. She even bakes enough to provide baked goods for the second night of the holiday, which is spent at her brother and sister-in-law's house.

What few changes Debbie has made in the traditional menu seem to have been made mainly to accommodate the tastes and desires of herself and her family. Debbie bakes more than her mother did. Her mother used to make a marble cake, while Debbie makes several desserts. Debbie serves fresh vegetables instead of canned, although she attributes this change to a change in availability rather than taste, and has changed her *tzimmes* recipe to be more to her taste. She buys gefilte fish rather than making it, and she changed her mother's Brisket to top-of-the-rib, which she feels is healthier. But she accommodates family members more than this. For *Rosh Hashanah*, she makes traditional foods and desserts, including *rugalah*, apple cake, and honey cake, "and then," she says, "I throw in some other things that people love like chocolate chip squares and brownies, and Harry and Joanna, [her niece and nephew] die for meringues, so I make meringues for them . . . I know my brother doesn't like turkey, so I make him meat. That's why I still keep the meat . . . Elana [her daughter] doesn't like raisins in her apple crisp . . . so I have to keep a section of the apple crisp without raisins."

"A section of it?" I asked

"Yes. Because I like raisins."

In this way, Debbie attempts to make the holiday pleasing to herself and to others. But she also told me:

> I think it's very important that things look nice. I think for a holiday to be special, that it has to be different from the rest of the days. So the table has to be a little bit dressier and, um, we don't normally eat in the dining room . . . And we have a tablecloth and the good china and the good crystal and hand-me-down kind of things from parents and grandparents and stuff like that, so I like to have all of that out.

While Debbie attempts to make things easier for herself by making things ahead of time, she puts

a lot of time into making things both look and taste good for her holiday meals. She told me:

> When I go to grill vegetables. . . . now I grill vegetables because I find that it's quicker, easier, and I can do it a day in advance. I have a lot of people . . . for *Rosh Hashanah* we had about 20. For *Seders*, it varies from 23 to 30, so I have to think of ways . . . I have to do certain things in advance. I can boil the eggs the day ahead, I can do the vegetables, so, for the vegetables, I'll sit there and say, what are the colors. Because it's very important to have red and white and green, and, um, and the mushrooms. . . . So I'll go and pick vegetables that not only taste good, but look colorful on a plate.

But there are clearly tradeoffs made when Debbie tries to follow tradition, and yet follow her own idea of aesthetics. When I asked Debbie what preparing for Passover had to do with being Jewish, she answered:

> Tradition. . . . All tradition. It sets it apart. I think it makes the holiday feel special; I think it makes you remember where you came from . . . My grandfather was very traditional. I mean we changed all the dishes, and I think that we sit down at the *Seder* table, none of the dishes match. One set of the dishes matches, but the others are really . . . they're old ugly dishes. But because they're old ugly dishes, there's something about that, that just . . . you know, it *ties*. You know it's eight days a year. It's actually one day, one *Seder*, that we bring up all these ugly dishes. But those dishes belonged to my mother, they belonged to my aunt, probably some of them belonged to my *grandmother*. I mean these are hellacious dishes, [laughing] but the table looks really neat when you have all these ugly dishes on there for some reason.

Although she describes the dishes as ugly, they carry history. And somehow, the place settings look nice regardless of the fact that the dishes are not ones Debbie would have chosen herself. When I asked Debbie to describe a good and bad holiday meal, she did not talk about the food or décor, tastes or aesthetics, but about the *people* participating in the event.

> The only Jewish holiday that I did not like was one that, after I was married, that I stayed with another couple and we stayed in Cleveland. And it didn't feel like a holiday . . . too few of us I think. Not having family, and things like that, it just didn't feel the same. One other one, I guess, was when my father started experimenting by inviting people who really didn't *know* about the holiday. He felt that it was a time of educating, but it became so much so that it really wasn't a Jewish holiday . . . Because there were non-Jews who were observers, not participants. And if you don't participate in a holiday, it's not a holiday.

From this, one can conclude that for Debbie it is more important to have family around for the holidays than to have good food or fancy table settings. It is important that everyone feels comfortable at the table and *participates* in the holiday. As Debbie repeatedly stressed, it is the ties with other people, with family members at the table — in life and in spirit — that are important.

In her seminal book on women's moral development, In a Different Voice, Carol Gilligan finds that while men and boys are more concerned with "justice" when making moral judgements, women and girls are more concerned with "care." She points out that in women's self descriptions "[their] identity is defined in a context of relationship and judged by a standard of responsibility and care" (160). She writes that:

> The sequence of women's moral judgment proceeds from an initial concern with survival to a focus on goodness and finally to a reflective understanding of care as the most adequate guide to the resolution of conflicts in human relationships. [This] study demonstrates the centrality of the concepts of responsibility and care in women's constructions of the moral domain, and the close tie in women's thinking between conceptions of the self and of morality. . . (105)

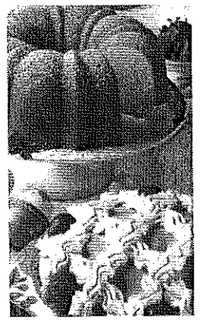
According to Gilligan, then, relationships are central for women. Through them, women define themselves. They define their morality by how well they care — for themselves and the people around them.

Making a holiday dinner for one's family is a manifestation of this care. It is nurturing, and yet, more, it is a way in which women hold their families together. It is a way to perpetuate family tradition, but it is also a forceful way to illustrate the *value* and the *joy* to be found in family and family ties.

When I asked Debbie what making the holidays had to do with her identity as a mother and as a wife, she responded:

> I think it's part of the warmth and . . . family feelings that comes with mothering, and things like that. And the hope that the kids will remember. And, I have to say that *Seder* is the one holiday, actually, I mean, Josh [her son] doesn't give us a big hard time, and this is a kid who always gives a hard time about everything — he shows up. Especially for *Seder*. And I have to believe, it's because he enjoys being there. And the singing, and the things, you know, and I just think that all of that nurturing and having the same group of people makes a difference."

Yet, it is clear, even from Debbie's short statement about her son, that her reasons for perpetuating domestic holiday ritual are not simply about "care."



Women who make holidays attempt to ensure the continuation of the tradition, they get to please others and take satisfaction in the pleasure of others and their own accomplishments, but women also get the opportunity to relive and replay for others their improved versions of past experience. Being the holiday tradition bearer is a powerful role. One gains, to some extent, control over the tradition, and the ability to change, add, or delete elements.

But are picking out groceries at the market, slogging through cookbooks to make a menu, or standing around in the kitchen by one's self making *matzo* balls really ritual actions? Or are they merely preparation for a ritual? Because women often do these things alone in the privacy of their own kitchens, these are not easily observable except in our own homes. And in our own homes, they may seem unexceptional or mundane. Mundane or not, I believe that these actions are part of the ritual – that over the years these actions become canonized, they become traditional and ritualized.

In "Bobbes and Zeydes: Old and New Roles for Elderly Jews," Barbara Meyerhoff writes that:

> Ritual is a common means used for creating experiential access to the past. It is a form that is usually deeply familiar to the people in a culture, often going back to their earliest memories. And it is, by its very nature, a form that interferes with ordinary perceptions of time and change. By its repetitiveness and formality, it is an assertion of order and predictability, an expression of the "tradition," *per se*, whatever its content. Whatever else it communicates, ritual is always a statement about continuity. (229)

Ritual is also about change. Domestic holiday celebrations change in response to personal desires and to family events — lifestyle changes, marriages, deaths, and births. They also change more subtly from year to year as creative energy waxes and wanes and as family members help create, request, or insist upon the inclusion of various elements in holiday celebrations. Thus, domestic holiday celebrations are particularly *flexible* events that allow family members to participate in their creation and recreation.

Rituals are able to change us, but rituals are set into motion, they are changed and renegotiated, by people. Just as domestic rituals mold those who participate in them, they are also molded by those participants. Rituals are events that allow families to play out tensions in their lives. They allow us to create and recreate, to make new traditions and carry on old ones, to rebel and conform. Rituals are used by women as a venue for sharing values and life strategies with family members. Rituals are not simple social control, but complex interaction.

Although Debbie was not sure how religious her holiday preparation was, when I asked her if she thought these holidays would happen without women, she responded: "I think they would be lacking a great deal. I think if I were to ask my children who had more influence, even though Henry [her husband] was in Jewish education, I think they would probably say me."

"As a Jew."

"Uh-huh."

It is probably not exactly accurate to tie domestic holiday celebrations exclusively to religion. Domestic holiday celebrations are certainly ritualistic, but these rituals often have as much or more to do with family, tradition, and culture as they do with religion. Still, it is wrong and even demeaning to the women who spend so much time cleaning and shopping and decorating and cooking and just plain preparing to pretend that it is only men who have the important ritualistic roles in our society. This does not mean that I believe women need no ritual roles outside the domestic sphere, only that we should not ignore the significant but largely ritual role that so many women have taken upon themselves within our society for so long.

NOTES

1 These kinds of activities have been characterized as "Little Tradition" (as opposed to "Great Tradition") by Robert Redfield in 1956. But, the only thing "little" about these rituals is their relative scope (involving often only one family). The rituals are not "little" in their meaning or significance.

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FOODWAYS IN THE MILITARY

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Anyone who has ever eaten in a military station's mess hall knows that SOS, or "shit on a shingle," which is chipped beef with gravy on toast, is a relatively bland dish. This standard fare is characteristic of an environment where the preparing, cooking, serving, and consuming of food are part of one's enculturation into the armed forces. Some may have eaten C-rations in lieu of a hot meal and relied on a heating element to prepare any one of a range of canned meals requiring the use of a special opener that recruits receive in basic training. Those who had the luxury of dining in military mess halls may have become acquainted with powdered eggs and instant mashed potatoes, foods that require very little skill but that often reminded a soldier of the home-cooked meals he or she enjoyed back home. My paper examines how the preparation, serving, and consuming of such slop depend upon the world view of those whose duties lie in the sacred domain of the mess hall galley. Only cooks, mess men, and an occasional inspecting officer may enter the galley, an arena in which a few men control the digestive systems of hundreds.

I draw from my own experiences as a cook in the United States Marine Corp. Adding to a growing body of scholarship on occupational folklore in general and military folklore in particular, this study also contributes to a number of foodways studies such as those appearing in the special issue of Western Folklore (1981) that focused on foodways and eating habits, Paul Dickson's Chow: A Cook's Tour of Military Food (1978), Linda Keller Brown and Kay Mussell's anthology Ethnic and Regional Foodways in the United States (1984), and Charles Camp's American Foodways (1989).

After high school, I left Texas for Marine Corps boot camp in San Diego in 1969, naively assuming that of all the armed forces, the Marines would teach me how to stay alive if my worst nightmare was realized and I was shipped to Vietnam. However, there was also the appeal that joining an organization that took only a "few good men" would somehow raise my status among my high school buddies, many of whom went on to college. Little did I know that following boot camp,

Burns in 1970

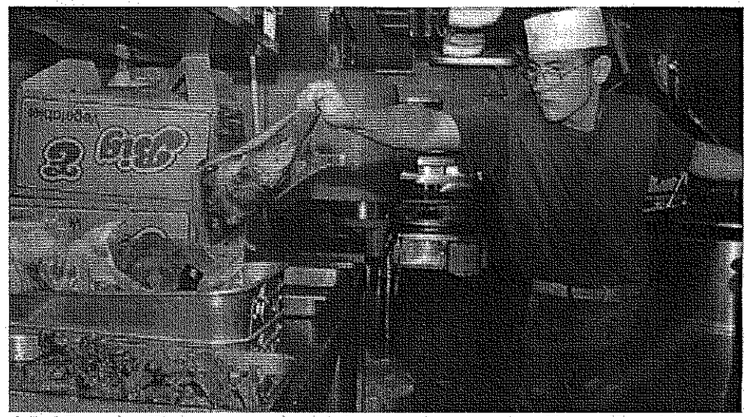
I would receive orders to train as a cook, a job that did not seem like a very manly one to me at the time.

From the first days of Marine Corps boot camp, a recruit learns the importance of not only when and what to eat, but also how to eat. Recruits are forced to sit at attention in absolute silence. In such a setting, any efforts to ask or pass condiments were mostly futile. Most, if not all, of those recruits would eventually serve on mess duty, lasting several days during which they would find themselves assisting in food preparation, serving, cleaning, and performing whatever other tasks the cooks demanded of them. Before long, the mess hall became simply a break from the rigors of training

and a brief opportunity to fuel bodies, enabling recruits to endure the physical and mental challenges of the day. Little did I know during the twelve weeks of Marine Corps boot camp in San Diego in the summer of 1969 that I would become one of those cooks.

Despite my lack of interest, I was trained as a field cook and assigned to the Cook Section of H&S Company, 3rd Battalion, 8th Marines, 2nd Marine Division, at Camp LeJeune, North Caroline, where I remained until my discharge in 1973. Avoiding combat entirely, I took up a spatula and spoon. My only consolation to retaining my dignity was that all Marines during boot camp were and still are trained as riflemen, and I still periodically was required to qualify at the rifle range.

The cultural boundaries that existed between Marine cooks and those whom we served were boundaries that became particularly apparent whenever I changed an institutionalized recipe into one that reflected foodways within certain ethnic and regional groups. After my promotion to chief cook, during which time I won the prestigious "Chef of the Month" award, which eventually led to my promotion to sergeant, I gained a measure of control not only over what I cooked but also over those whom I served, a set of power relations this paper examines. I join other folklorists who view the preparing, serving, and eating of food as arenas for contestation, as sources for negotiating folk group identity within an institutional setting.

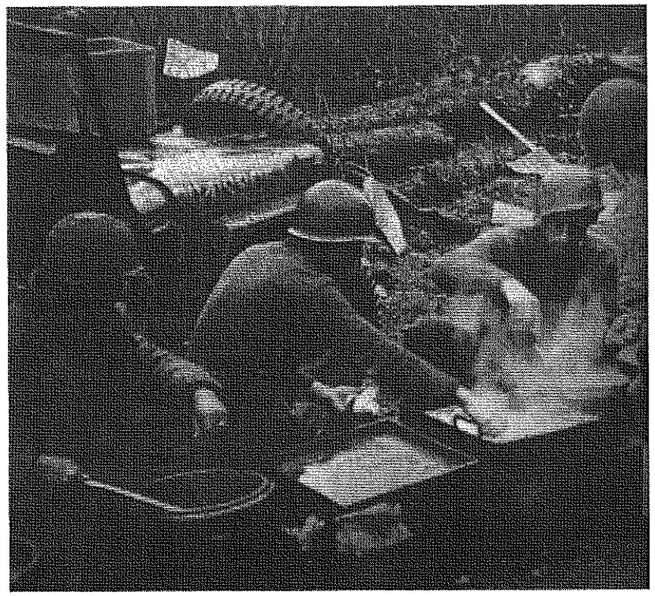


LCpl Douglas Walters, a cook with 1st Battalion Landing Team, First Marine Regiment, 15th Marine Expeditionary Unit (Special operations Capable), tossed a bag of ribs into a pan on the mess deck of USS Peleliu (LHA-5) in August 2001. Walters was one of several dozen Marines working long hours in the galley to keep the nearly 2500 embarked Marines and sailors fed (Karcher 2003: 54).

Cooks in the military have their own body of oral traditions that have much in common with military folklore in general, such as those materials Bruce Jackson, Lydia Fish, Carol Burke, and others have examined. However, there are differences between the folklore that Vietnam veterans have provided collectors and the folklore of those whose military occupational specialty was in the area of food services, or "bean-burners." It was the cook who ultimately controlled the digestive systems of combat personnel, and the specialized training they received differed markedly from the training of others beyond boot camp and advanced training.

There were two types of cook schools: field-cook training and mess hall training, the first lasting only three weeks and the second lasting approximately three months. When I completed boot camp, I received orders to attend field cook school, which I assumed meant I'd be going to Vietnam. Consequently, I was scared because by then I was very much regretting having joined the Marines, especially since an increase of reported Marine casualties in Vietnam weighed very much on my mind. Admittedly, I had ambivalent feelings about joining a branch of the service that had a reputation of seeking "a few good men" and about what I perceived to be a rather effeminate job, that of a cook. My arrival at Camp LeJeune and enculturation into the cook section changed those notions, and I soon learned how members of our section dealt with the demanding institutional requirements of their jobs in ways that made them

quite distinct from other Marines in our company. Not only was I growing accustomed to dealing with non-Marines' attitudes toward Marines in general and cooks in particular, but I also learned of the attitudes non-cooking Marines had toward what it was we did.

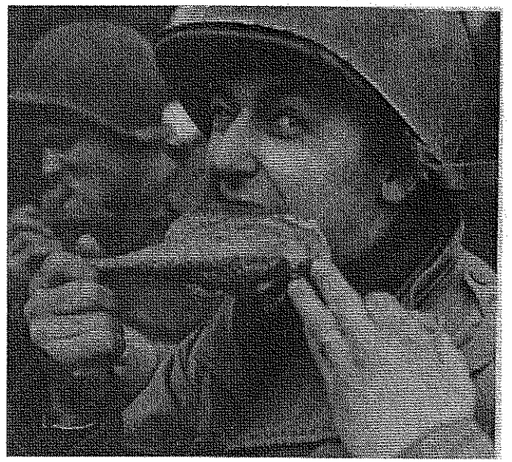


The Marine Corps boasts all its personnel are riflemen first, and all recruits, no matter what jobs they eventually receive, undergo advanced training; additional training depended upon your assigned MOS (military occupational specialty). Yet, despite the limited training we received in cook school, we also responded to the culturally specific expectations that many of our consumers had toward different kinds of ethnic foods.

For example, it seemed as if we couldn't add enough oregano to many Italian dishes, despite the recipe's instructions for amounts — most recipes were for 100 portions, so we factored in the number of mouths we'd feed accordingly. Any additions or changes we made to a recipe were strictly forbidden, which left little room for creativity. Yet, whenever a dish, such as chitterlings, was prepared, we frequently added far more onions when boiling the intestines than the recipe required, thinking onions would reduce the perceived stench that pervaded the galley. In an effort to appeal to ethnic diversity, Marine cooks prepared other ethnic dishes as well, but I found that it was not so much what we served but the amount and method of preparation of standard military fare that was often left to the cook's sense of what he thought would appeal to specific ethnic and regional groups. For example, as troops formed lines to enter the galley during breakfast, which was the only time they entered the cooks' domain, the persons in charge of frying eggs took orders, and often burst the yolks of eggs to enable them to be eaten as sandwiches. Many African American Marines favored eggs that were almost burnt with absolutely no hint of runniness. Southerners favored grits with honey and butter, while certain kinds of pastries appealed to troops from Michigan's Upper Peninsula. Rarely did we resort to powder for scrambled eggs, but occasionally we were forced into such situations by the lack of fresh eggs. Fortunately, a few talented cooks could disguise the final product to make it appear as if it contained fresh eggs. The same was true for mashed potatoes. It seems the more a dish was garnished with sprigs of parsley and the greater the eye appeal, the more popular the specific dish became. Additionally, we had a recipe for Creole sauce, but one that was rather bland, so a skilled cook would add certain seasonings that an original recipe did not call for.

Because a few of us were trained as field cooks to work with whatever resources were available, we tended to ignore military procedures requiring us to write the recipes on separate forms, which were to always be available to an inquiring Officer of the Day or inspecting officer. What we did in the galley and what we told an inspecting officer gave rise to food contamination stories, such

as the one about the cook who fed a dead cat into a grinding machine to mix with the ground beef in a chili or spaghetti sauce recipe. One of the things that most annoyed food inspectors, better known as the OD, was the tendency to measure ingredients, such as salt, with our hands rather than a measuring cup. Challenging an OD's presumed authority over what emerged from the galley, an officer might ask a Marine, "How much salt did you just put in that stew?" whereupon the cook who lacked a recipe



form might reply, "'bout a handful," illustrating the lack of control an officer had in such situations. Stories abound of the Marine field cook who tested the pancake batter with the toe of his boot, or tested the degree of doneness of a spaghetti noodle by flinging it against the wall to see if it stuck.

Occasionally, an OD would try to assert his authority and sometimes would even raise his voice at us. The mess chief would then intervene, especially if a valued cook was facing disciplinary charges. He might take the officer aside and resolve the matter, most often amiably but sometimes in an intimidating manner. The first mess sergeant under whom I served upon my arrival at Camp LeJeune, an African American gunnery sergeant (E-7), took an OD into his office and, according to a witness, threatened to reach deep down into his "black bag of tricks" if he continued to harass his cooks, leaving the young lieutenant dumbfounded. Such encounters were not unusual, given the views some ODs had toward cooks, but the black gunnery sergeant's manner of handling threats was much more stylized than any of the three or four who later filled the position. And it was certainly good for morale.

While other Marines were required to stand early morning company inspections, cooks were usually allowed to sleep late since their work shifts were so different from those of others. As a result, cooks were sometimes thought of as having it easy, even though our work hours made it necessary for us to arrive at the mess hall every other morning by 4:00 a.m. A few of us even had to prepare breakfast earlier than that for troops departing for such destinations as Guantanamo Bay, Cuba, and for those standing night guard. Naturally there were stories of what happened to those who stayed out too long the night before and came in with hangovers or still inebriated, but these few infractions were often overlooked by those who knew they depended upon us for their meals.

Characteristic of all occupational groups, these stories shared among members of the cook section often demonstrated our distinctiveness as a group, while serving to unify us in our efforts to defend ourselves against those who did not understand what it was we did. Ultimately, the chief cook is the fall guy who took credit for good meals and the blame for bad ones. We all understood the idea that no matter how many good meals one prepared, one bad meal would destroy any goodwill cooks may have earned.

There were also stories that reflected the role and attitudes others had toward mess men whose jobs were rotational. Such "mess duty" usually lasted a month; however, sometimes a person who was on duty and was assigned a comparatively easy job, such as working on the salad or dessert bar, would occasionally request an extended period on mess duty. Most Marines, however, dreaded mess duty, and nobody knew this more than the cooks. Because mess duty is rotational, nearly all enlisted non-NCO Marines (privates, PFCs, and lance corporals), serve on mess duty, beginning in boot camp, so it is work that is often considered a form of punishment. Frequently, a company would assign mess duty to its

troublemakers, and even though the mess chief or chief cook might object, we usually took whomever we could get — much like the Marine Corps itself, despite its claim of taking only "a few good men."

A few of the cooks in our unit were OJT (on the job training), who began as mess men but had opportunities to display their culinary talents and were sometimes, after much red tape, re-assigned to the cook section. A few of these recruits to our section had served in Vietnam. However, there were some who were re-assigned for more dubious reasons, such as the marine awaiting discharge after serving as a grunt in Vietnam and murdering the prisoners he was guarding because nobody would relieve him in order to eat. He was relegated to our section while awaiting a psychiatric evaluation.

And then there were anecdotes about the marine who always seemed to be the target of pranks and insults, which I refer to as Miller stories. Miller rode a beautiful Harley Davison, but refused to protect it from the elements, and argued after the rain damaged its electrical circuitry, that there was no point in covering it with a tarp since "somebody'd just steal it." Demonstrating his fierce independence from other Marines who were required to wear either dress uniforms or civilian clothes, Miller habitually rode off the base into the adjoining town of Jacksonville wearing his "whites", even when they were covered with food stains. Not only does the dress code for cooks include a paper cap and a set of whites that set them off from other Marines in the mess hall, but personnel were never to wear their utilities or work clothes of any kind off base unless on official business. Of course, Miller's whites not only drew attention, but the filth that frequently covered his whites also earned him harsh reprimands by the MPs, the CO, and eventually the mess sergeant. Miller would repeat the offense with absolutely no regard to disciplinary consequences.

Rank did not come easy to Marines assigned as cooks, and those who were promoted were not necessarily those who deserved it, such as a staff sergeant who probably never attended cook school but was nevertheless promoted to a dubious position of authority. One day, during a field excursion, this staff sergeant felt he had to show who was in control. I was faced with the problem of cooking steaks to be served in an hour, even though the cases of steaks that had been delivered to me were frozen solid. The staff-sergeant, who was later released from the Marines since he failed a physical because he was extremely overweight, insisted I bake the steaks in a field oven, box and all, even leaving intact the plastic Saran wrap that separated the layers! Though I risked insubordination, I diplomatically suggested an alternative to his method. When I was faced with training a new crop of Marines who did not have the benefit of cook schools since such training was no longer available by 1973, I made every attempt I could to get out of the Marines and was successful in getting an early honorable discharge.

These stories are just part of a larger body of oral traditions that reflect an identity often based upon imagined perceptions of how others see that identity. Many marine cooks felt that their significance in the military was often overlooked, and the skills needed to fulfill their duties were unrecognized or even dismissed. Ultimately, they felt their status as soldiers, and therefore, Marines was questioned. Their folk narratives addressed the imagined misconceptions of other Marines as well as members of other branches of the military. Cooks were trained as soldiers; they often had to work under dangerous conditions; and their duties were crucial to the success of military operations. Marine cooks have been forced to drop their spatulas and

pick up their rifles during combat. Our job required skill, discipline, and training, just like any other role in the Marines, but it also required creativity and a subtle understanding of the rules and boundaries restricting that creativity. What we offered other Marines was a combination of the typical institutional food that promoted the conformity of a "few good men" and dishes that celebrated "home" and regional or ethnic diversity.

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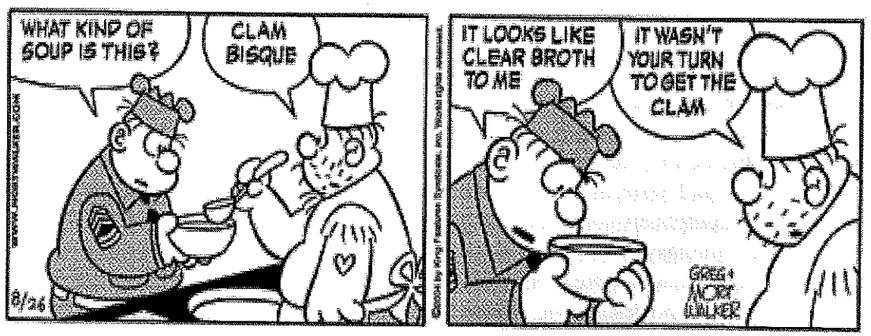

Looning as a Statement of Downeast Identity

BILL MANSFIELD
(National Park Service)

Introduction

In the spring of 2000, I conducted folklife research on Harkers Island in the "Down-East" region of Carteret County, North Carolina. While investigating the area's hunting culture, about a dozen people told some interesting stories about hunting loons. Listening to their accounts reminded me of an article I saw concerning folklore as an expression of identity.

Elliot Oring, in a 1994 article of the Journal of American Folklore, argues that the informally learned cultural expressions, known as folklore and folklife, are statements of identity. People acquire their traditions from their community, and voicing those traditions marks the individual as a member of that community. Oring's concept is particularly valuable in understanding traditions connected with loon hunting.

The natives of Carteret County's Outer Banks took full advantage of their rich wildlife resources to put food on the table. As Cooper Mason says in an interview, "They didn't have no [sic] Food Lion to go to, or no [sic] Hardee's biscuit for breakfast. If you could catch it, you could cook it."[1] At first glance looning — as loon hunting is locally known — appears to be just another way to obtain food; however, listening to people talk about the loon reveals that this waterfowl is more than an exercise in hunting and gathering; rather, it is a profound statement of identity.

Hunting Loons

Early each spring the loons' migration north brings them to the Outer Banks of North Carolina. The return of the bird marks the return of good weather. In an interview, Jim Guthrie declared loon hunting "the start of spring."

> Remember how tough the winter was? How you had to have wood to keep the fire going? I'm telling you! After a long winter you'd wake up one morning with this warm southwester blowing on your face and you'd say, "Hey man, it's time for the loons to start flying!"

The warm weather provided a welcomed break from the tedium of winter. Men seized the opportunity to get out of the house and enjoy the company of their comrades under the pretext of gathering food. Congregated around a fire in the pre-dawn darkness, David Yoemans compared loon hunting to a party.

> Jim Guthrie concurred:
> Looning was a form of recreation. You'd get up early in the morning go across the sound and over to the beach. Set a little fire and wait for the loons to fly . . . It wasn't the l oon hunting itself, it was the *occasion*.

The loon is powerfully built with a slender neck and long pointed bill. The bird swims under water to catch fish and its long legs, positioned far back on the body, make the loon quick and graceful on — or under — the water. The loon usually flies alone at great height and considerable speed, presenting hunters with a difficult target.

The challenge of bringing down a loon added to the hunt's excitement. "A lot of the deal," said David Lawrence in an interview, "was to see who was the best shot." Joel Hancock reported in another interview: "It takes a true marksman to hit one. If it were any easier, everybody could do it, and any harder, nobody could do it. Only the best could hit them." Good-natured teasing contributed to the hunt's entertainment. In an interview, Frank Moore said, "You made fun of one another if you missed."

All of the hunters I talked to reported that the loons themselves would ridicule a poorly aimed shot. Frank Moore recalled a time he missed a loon, and the bird "just flapped his feet together like he's waving goodbye to you." When this happened to Corey Lawrence, he said in an interview that he felt the loon was "mocking [me]." David Yoemans recalled in an interview:

> They're hard to kill. You can shoot him and shoot him and it'll look like feathers are falling out of him, and he will turn and come back over you, like he's laughing at you.

The difficulty of shooting a loon brought a certain degree of celebrity. "It was something people bragged about," Jim Guthrie reported.

Shooting a loon was an accomplishment for a grown man, and it was a rite of passage for a young boy. When Jim Guthrie was growing up on Harkers Island in the mid-1940's, "looning was the thing to do for young boys to prove their macho-ism [sic]." David Lawrence, who came of age in the 1950s, declared a boy's first loon was a source of family pride comparable to when an "inland boy kills his first deer." His son Corey, born in the 1970s, reported that killing a loon remained an important marker of early manhood for his generation.

> When I was coming up in school the boys in my class would do it. They would say, "I snuck over to the Banks and got two [loons]." And I'm talking, like, 4th, and 5th grades. We were, like 10, 11, and 12 years old.
>
> [We] would go over there and try to mimic what the older men had done. It was a sneaky thing and we wouldn't even want our parents to know about it. But we'd do it just because our parents were doing it, and their parents had done [it], and we knew we were supposed to do it.

Corey Lawrence's account of "looning" is couched in secrecy because hunting the loon is illegal. According to Jim Guthrie, the Migratory Bird Act of 1936 gave the loon protected status. For most, the illegality of hunting loons only added to its appeal, and few obeyed the loosely enforced law. This changed in 1948 when wildlife officers organized a large raid that captured 75 loon hunters in one fell swoop. Since then looning has continued, but on a more furtive and much less social basis.

Joel Hancock still hears shotgun blasts early on spring mornings. "What else [other than loons] could they be shooting at that early in the morning?" In an interview, Corey Lawrence claimed to know of people who enjoy the "outlaw" status that comes with looning, but believes people continue to hunt loons because "they were raised doing it. They don't see any wrong in it." He hopes his son will also hunt loons.

> I can't say I'd encourage my son to do it. But there is going to be the day when he walks into the house and is excited because he brought home a loon.
>
> And I might point my finger at him and do like my daddy did. "You could've got caught! Do you know what kind of trouble that can be?!"
>
> But deep down inside I'm going to be proud, like my daddy and say, "That's my boy bringing home a loon."

Using the Loon

People still consider loons a culinary delicacy. Corey Lawrence has relatives who prefer the taste of stewed loon to a goose and knows of a man who buys loons for himself and his friends to eat. Once, during a discussion of food, one of his co-workers asked, with a beatific expression, "Is there anything better than a pot of loon?"

Joel Hancock knew a woman who boasted of six loons in her freezer, "cleaned and ready to eat, so she could have one bird per month during the fall and winter." He once heard of a man who would scrape the pot clean, sop the gravy and use the last bit of gravy as cologne; "he wanted to smell like stewed loon."

Loons provided more than competitive entertainment and food for the table. When Frank Moore said "they *used* what they killed," he implies nothing was wasted. We eat the loon. Used the feathers for pillows and mattresses and used the leg bone for a [fishing] lure."

Joel Hancock elaborated:

> They would take a [loon's] leg bone and hollow it out at about five or six inches from the middle. Then run a big hook through it. It looks like a minnow going through the water. My daddy says you'd catch more mackerel and blue fish on a loon bone than anything else.

Additionally, loons provide material for stories. While these narratives are ostensibly about hunting the loon, they reveal the narrators' self-perceptions and their relation to the larger society. The stories can be roughly divided into three categories: loons-opposing-natives, natives-opposing-loons, and natives-opposing-outsiders.

In the loons-oppose-natives stories the birds invariably triumph over the local hunters. There are many examples of these stories, where the hunters fire shell after shell at the loon to no effect. Sometimes the loon mocks the hunters, slapping his feet together or circling back, giving the hunter another shot. The most widely circulated story involves Telford Willis, a man with the reputation of the best shot on Harkers Island. Joel Hancock told his version of the story:

> There was one [loon] that was flying down the shore, people would shoot at him, and they hit him. They'd even see the feathers fly.
>
> Finally, he got to Telford, and he was waiting for him. He got him right in his sight, and he let go. He hit the loon and the tail feathers flew . . . but the loon kept flying.
>
> Telford was frustrated. He shook his fist and said, "Fly damn you! You may live today, but you'll freeze to death this winter!

This tale type is usually preceded or followed by stories describing the loon's abilities. Presenting the loon as a strong and clever adversary makes the loon's escape more understandable and taking a loon more praise worthy.

In the natives-oppose-loons category of stories, the hunters triumph over the loons. In this tale type, hunters can boast about the number of loons they have taken or the difficult circumstances surrounding their success. In one story, Telford Rose consistently demonstrated his ability as a hunter by shooting loons with a light gauge, double-barreled shotgun. According to David Lawrence, "A lot of [men] were using 12-gauge shotguns. They'd empty them out [and not get a loon]. Uncle Telford's killed a many a one with that 410 double barrel. He'd say, `It's not the gun, but the man behind it.'"[2]

Joel Hancock tells a story of a fantastic loon hunt attributed to Willy Guthrie.

> They called him "Lying Willy," 'cause he told big stories. And one of them was about a loon. It was during the depression and times were real hard. He only had one shell and he knew he had to get whatever he was going to get with one shell.
>
> So he went to the banks, [and] finally, at the end of the day he saw a loon. But it was flying too far off for the shot to hit him, so Willy thought real quick and took out his pocket knife and broke off the blade and dumped the shot out of the shell and shoved that knife blade into the shell.
>
> He lined that loon up with an oyster rock, and he shot, and the knife cut the loon's throat and opened a half a bushel of oysters when he hit the oyster rock. And he got his blade back! [laughs]
>
> My daddy would say, 'That was a lie that was told for the truth.' Obviously it was a lie, but it was a lie that was repeated lots of times.

In the third category of stories, natives oppose outsiders. In a discussion on boat building, Jamie Lewis alluded to a story about the time local loon hunters bested a nationally recognized skeet shooting champion. Usually the opposition comes from game wardens contesting the natives' claim to hunt loons. All of the hunters have, or know somebody who has, outrun or outsmarted a game warden. The natives enjoy a moral victory even when the wildlife officials capture them because it is generally believed the officials do not play by the rules. David Lawrence tells a story where a game warden sits in a country store and listens as a local brags about his illegal hunting. Before making the arrest the game warden introduces himself. "Do you know who I am? I'm the game warden." The local man replies, "I'm mighty pleased to meet you. I'm the biggest liar in Carteret County." This apocryphal story echoes the belief that wildlife officers captured 75 hunters in the great raid of 1948 only because the game warden first won their confidence and then entrapped them.

Stories of captured hunters beating the legal system are also common. David Yoemans tells about pleading the case of two brothers, hauled into court for shooting loons. He wins their release by convincing the judge they are simple-minded and not competent to stand trial. With their child-like performance the defendants in Yoemans' story entertain the courtroom, and win their freedom by fulfilling the judge's expectations of dim-witted loon

eaters.

Joel Hancock tells two stories of loon hunters' triumph over the legal system.

> I don't remember the details of it, but Ivy Scott was arrested for loon hunting and he got a man in Beaufort to represent him. [Ivy] knew the judge's mother had died the week before. And the guy who represented [Ivy] said, "Judge, Mr. Scott is a gifted fiddle player and to let you know how valuable a talent he is, I want you to let him sing a song before he pleads his case. Ivy played and sang "If I Could See My Mother's Eyes Again."
>
> It was said that by the time he finished, the judge was bent over in tears and set him free. [laughs]
>
> Of course, there is one other story. Again, these are tall yarns. They said there was this man from the Island that had been arrested three or four times for shooting loons.
>
> And [the] Judge asked him, "If you will tell me what it is about a loon that makes you risk life and limb and face incarceration, just for shooting a loon, I'll let you go. I want to know what will make you risk everything just to kill a scavenger bird."
>
> He says, "Judge I'll] tell you. There is a certain way you can cook that loon and it'll taste just like a bald eagle." [laughs big]

In all of these stories, local hunters use their talents to surmount what they consider an unjust law. The two brothers are clever enough to "play dumb" and beat the system. Ivy Scott plays upon the judge's emotions as deftly as he plays his fiddle to win his freedom. In the third story, the man not only wins his freedom, but also puts his crime in perspective, ridicules an unjust law, and elevates the loon to the sacred status of the national bird.

The Loon as a Symbol

In addition to recognizing the relevance of the loon, these stories demonstrate the connection between folklore and identity. This is evident in the way that possession of loon-lore links people of the Down East Community and in the transformation of the loon from an unconscious to a self-conscious symbol of the islanders.

In situations where identity is challenged, Oring says, the folklore of identity becomes more visible (226). In this case, the loon becomes a more visible symbol of identity for the natives of Harkers Island. As their more traditional culture comes into greater contact — and conflict — with the more dominant culture of the mainland, the loon becomes more visible as a symbol. One of the initial challenges to local identity came in the late 1960's when school consolidation brought students from Harkers Island into close contact with students from the mainland. "I was in high school when I first learned it was an insult," says Joel Hancock, a member of the first consolidated class. "People from Beaufort would say, `He's nothing but a loon-eater.'"

Karen Willis Amspacher also belonged to one of those early classes.

> You know there was a certain stigma about being from down east, especially about being from Harkers Island. I was in one of the first classes that went to East Carteret High School, in the consolidated schools. [There was] a lot of prejudice. [People said] you 'talked funny.' They [said] you can build a boat but you didn't get credit for much else. You were referred to as "loon eaters." You were on the bottom rung of the social ladder if you're from Harkers Island.

The scholars from Harkers Island certainly stood out from the more numerous mainland students. They spoke with a distinctive down east brogue and came from a place where most people earned an uncertain living from the sea. Mainland students used the symbol of the loon to denigrate the students from Harkers Island.

The derogatory symbol makes perfect sense to members of the dominant culture. They consider the loon a disagreeable animal that scavenges its living from the sea. The bird is difficult to shoot, hard to cook, and possesses a strong flavor — definitely a low-status bird when contrasted to more desirable, elite waterfowl such as ducks, geese, and swans. Comparing Harkers Island natives to the bird implies that they, too, are an ornery low-status people who scavenge an existence from the sea.

Having these negative associations attached to the loon, a bird that plays an important part in the island's culture, is a serious affront to the natives. That the word loon represents the bird as well as a slang term for lunatic adds bite to the insult.

More recently, the struggle for identity has moved from the mainland campuses to Harkers Island itself. Real estate developers have discovered the scenic beauty of the down east landscape and have stayed busy turning the working-class waterfront into an exclusive seaside resort. In transforming the area into "their" playground, wealthy outsiders threaten the traditional culture and challenge the natives' sense of identity.

In response to that threat, the people from Harkers Island have turned the epithet of "loon-eater" on its head and take great pride in their connection with the bird. The loon consciously becomes their symbol because it *is* a scavenger, a tough bird that can make its living from the sea and thrive where more "elite" birds would fail. Loons are good fishers, and "they are great swimmers," explained David Lawrence. "You've got a lot of diving ducks, but none can stay under as long as the loon." Loons are also independent: "They don't flock like ducks and geese do; they stay off to themselves. They are very territorial." No doubt, the Islanders see themselves as tough, independent "birds" who, like the loon, make a living from the sea and succeed where more "cultured" people would fail.

All of the people interviewed for this project spoke of loons with respect, commenting on how hard they are to hit. David Lawrence's son, Corey, expressed his respect.

> I don't think people [see] them as noble as a pintail or a canvasback or something like that, but I've got more appreciation for them. I'm a duck hunter, but I've got more appreciation for the loon.

When pressed to explain this appreciation he continued:

> I was trying to compare [the loons'] stubbornness . . . their ability to survive and withstand. I was trying to compare that with the natives here and how we are a lot like the loon. We're a hardy people, and we're survivors. We've had it a lot rougher here because we're not in the big city with all the conveniences, but yet we've managed to survive.

Harkers Islanders embrace the loon as a symbol for several reasons. They strongly identify with the bird's habits and habitat. Adopting the loon as a positive totem distinguishes Islanders from outsiders and defies outsiders' expectations. The loon helps the natives assert their claims to the place that used to belong to them.

Loon hunting consummates their connection with the bird. Killing a loon gives natives a chance to tweak Uncle Sam's nose and show the intrusive federal government, the ultimate outsider, who is really in charge. Such an act clearly identifies the hunter as a member of the down east cultural community. Preparing the loon for the table makes a very similar statement. Consuming a stewed loon can be compared to an act of communion, connecting communicants with their ancestors and distinguishing themselves from outsiders.

When asked about the future of the tradition, Corey Lawrence replied:

> I think it will continue right on. I know of a handful of boys that still come across a loon every once in a while and bring it in and think about the old-timers. It's in your blood. Something you were brought up doing you're going to keep on doing.

While the practice of hunting loons may dwindle, the bird's value as a symbol is bound to rise. In 1999, the Core Sound Waterfowl Museum, located on Harkers Island, presented "Loon Day," a festival celebrating the traditions associated with looning.

The museum organizes a "loon hunt" where visitors use binoculars and cameras to bag a loon. There are contests for loon calling and carving the best loon decoy. (Traditional hunters describe these competitions as "bogus" because neither calls nor decoys were ever employed in looning.) Veteran and reformed loon hunters gather on a stage to tell stories about loon hunts of yesteryear. Representative of the Fish and Wildlife Service talk about the bird and the importance of preserving its habitat.

Even though some of the efforts of the Core Sound Waterfowl Museum at codifying the "sacred" status of the loon are spurious, they are effective in reminding and educating people of the natives' special connection with the loon and the loon's habitat.

NOTES

[1] All of these interviews took place in the offices if the Core Sound Waterfowl Museum in May of 1999 and March, April, or May of 2000.
[2] Several people told a version of this story for the survey and I've heard variants of this tale from others over the years. Beaufort Story teller Graydon Paul popularized this story in a collection titled Carteret County: Fact, Fiction and Folklore by Graydon & Mary Paul (Beaufort, N C: Published by the author, 1976).

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"FINGER LICKIN' GOOD...?": FRIED CHICKEN, BLACK FOLKS, AND THE POLITICS OF THEIR FOOD[WAYS]

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African Americans or Black people are indisputably in the midst of a cultural moment where food, race, class, and identity are causing a culinary disturbance. This disturbance is the result of several recent phenomena including assumed levels of racial comfort, which often actually lead to acts of racism; an increase in Black upward mobility; and an explosion of and interest in Black food culture. The last several years have born witness to such recent remarks as those of golf pro Fuzzy Zeller about African American golfer Tiger Woods, to lawsuits being issued against Denny's Restaurant, to the "updated" versioning and revisioning of "soul food" restaurants and cookbooks to accommodate our "new age" ways of dining. Yes, African American people and their food[ways] are in the middle of a semi-tumultuous affair. African Americans in particular and Americans in general can barely escape ingesting this combination of race, culture, identity, and power in the form of food. Consider, for example, the following phenomenon taken from a national newspaper within the last five years: in 1997, the New Orleans' newspaper, The Times-Picayune, reported that the Delta Kappa Epsilon fraternity circulated a flier advertising a party taking place on the observance of Martin Luther King Jr.'s birthday. The flier had images of fried chicken from Popeyes, watermelon, and a "forty" — a forty ounce of beer, usually a malt liquor like Colt 45 or Olde English 800, which are both often displayed by Blacks in hip hop videos, movies, etc.

Yes, African Americans are in the middle of a culinary "displacement" if you will. It is, however, a food sweep that has many non-African Americans asking: "What is the big deal?" These same foods are eaten by people everywhere, so what makes them "African American" or "Black"?[1] As the title of this paper suggests, my discussion seeks to examine this culinary phenomena to "get at" what makes some foods part of the racial politics and culinary experience specific to African Americans.

One of the issues this discussion seeks to address is that food and race intersect to affect different ethnic and racial groups in very specific ways. History has a great deal to do with the way a culture views the foods that certain groups regularly consume and the perception of themselves in the consumptive process. One food in particular, chicken, has become an icon in African American food culture because of its persistence in the African American diet and because of the often insidious meanings it engenders when consumed by Black people.

Every culture has languages or signs that signal the importance of an artifact to the community. In African American food culture and history, chicken serves as this sign because of its prominence in the African American diet, but more importantly because of the historical narrative that has emerged from this relationship.

During the period of enslavement, chickens were often eaten by African Americans, both slave and free. In some cases, chickens were used to augment rations on slave plantations. African American food scholar Jessica Harris maintains that fried chicken is one of the African American's greatest contributions to American cuisine having its origins in West African cookery. Recipes for deep-fried food are few and far between in English cookbooks of the colonial era. It was not until the mid-late 1800s that fried foods show up regularly in cookbooks, particularly Southern cookbooks.[2]

Market trading provided another avenue to the consumption of chicken. Aside from being one of the greatest forms of social interaction between whites and Blacks, scholars have noted that slaves were frequently allowed to trade and engage in business, using the possessions given them by their masters or those cultivated by their own hand. As Phillip Morgan has pointed out, masters permitted slaves to produce and exchange goods because it benefited them to do so. For one, it enabled slaves to add to their own provisions and thus avoid excessive hunger. Two, it enabled the slave owner

to display his benevolence; and last, it served an economic interest. [3]

Records of market activity indicate that in the late eighteenth century those enslaved in Virginia controlled the poultry trade. Travelers' accounts have observed that flocks of poultry were numerous, and that "there are very few [slaves] indeed who are denied the privilege of keeping dunghill fowls, ducks, geese, and turkies [sic]."[4] Blacks had such a stranglehold on this market that white marketers were often trying to find ways to subvert and destroy that monopoly.

Court records reveal the levels of involvement by Blacks in market trading and ambiguously suggest that often foods sold by Blacks were stolen goods which they then gave to market butchers to sell.[5] In some cases, Blacks had well-stocked vending areas at the market where they sold goats, chicken, rolls, etc. It is from these suggestions that anecdotes and tales about "chicken stealing darkies" come. Sheet music, trade cards, and other material culture are prevalent showing chicken houses with a Black hand reaching in under the dark of night.

Much later, tales were created to suggest the increasing level of African American dependency on chicken both as sustenance and necessity. For example, "the chicken bone express" metaphorically describes Black travel during the days of migration when Blacks were barred from eating in segregated facilities. Travelers, either by train, bus, or car, would have to carry their shoeboxes of fried chicken, deviled eggs, and other delicacies because they were not allowed to eat in white establishments. The saying goes that you could always tell when Black folks traveled by following the trail of chicken bones tossed out windows.[6]

Other contributors to the deleterious national narrative that had begun to develop around African Americans and chicken include restaurants like the "Coon Chicken Inn." M.L. Graham's Coon Chicken Inns reinforced the stereotype that "darkys" and chicken go hand and hand, a continuance of the tale that emerged during enslavement when African Americans were often accused of pilfering chickens from the master's chicken coop. When caught, they were shot, thus the adage: "the only good darky is a dead darky."[7] For these restaurant goers, historian Kenneth Goings surmises "that by eating the Coon chicken, whites could annihilate/ingest the "darky" and simultaneously satiate their hungering appetites."[8]

According to Goings, the origin of the inn and other such artifacts were in direct response to post-Emancipation climates from the 1880s to the end of W.W.I. In response to new advertising technology and the growth of consumer society, brochures, pamphlets, trading cards, and other artifacts allowed the new South to vindicate their feelings of rage against African Americans, especially those who migrated. This backlash created an ideology of Black inferiority which was perpetuated with racist stereotypical food objects like the happy darky, such as Uncle Rastas' cream of wheat, and the mammy, Aunt Jemima. According to Goings, this was one of the most effective ways to "attract attention, arouse humor, and provide the consumer with a sense of racial superiority."[9]

This means of pacification by creating popular food images of African Americans was an effective endorsement technique aimed primarily at the white working class because they tended to buffer the elite from groups considered troublesome or problematic, which were usually considered to be Blacks at this time. These objects of material culture also served the class and race interests of the elite by enabling working-class whites to identify on the basis of race, forgetting their economic background. In this way, a "white" race could unify against "the other."[10]

It is out of this historical context that chicken has held a position of both prominence and disdain for the African American. It is prominent because it is inexpensive, easily shared and amenable to numerous recipe variations. This accounts for its frequent appearance at fundraising events, funerals, weddings, family reunions, and most any other gathering held by many African Americans. In fact, it is for these reasons that it has a legacy of appearing on numerous church tables as "the gospel bird." Scholars of religion and sociology, Jualynne E. Dodson and Cheryl Townsend Gilkes, in their article, "There's Nothing Like Church Food," indicate that in the African American tradition,

specifically, chicken is a central part of the African American Christian experience. They go on to discuss in detail how chicken provided a primary means by which Black women could contribute to the church coffers by selling chicken dinners, etc. when their contributions were otherwise shunned: "The sale of chicken dinners was [and is] a principle means whereby many churches raised money to build their sanctuaries and schools as well as to generate income for a variety of activities."[11] African American women have been known to compete for the title of having the best fried chicken. With this, chicken has extended its role from nutritive and utilitarian to power and status.

This celebration notwithstanding, the standard visibility of chicken in African American culture has caused the stereotype of "chicken loving Black folks" to become more pronounced. Dodson and Gilkes argue that because chicken has been so reinforced in the African American imagination with chicken dinners for sale, its presence at most every Sunday dinner, and gracing the table at almost every holiday, many Blacks refuse to eat it publicly. They do not want to be associated with the stereotype.

None of this is to suggest that fried chicken is only enjoyed by African Americans and certainly not just by church-going people. What it does suggest is a particularistic relationship to this food by a certain group of people. As David Kingery suggests, the meaning of objects is based on "part of a collective memory/reality built by and associated with a group of people."[12] While many people enjoy and savor the taste of chicken, few cultures can add that they possess such a historical narrative about chicken — a negative narrative that has embedded, indeed, disrupted this enjoyment process. This narrative, no doubt, has had its effects.

At some point in their lifetimes, all African Americans will confront these chicken stereotypes, directly or indirectly. Because we live in a society where racism is deeply embedded, yet unacknowledged, statements will continue to be made without any thought as to the outcome or the effect. Consider, for example, a statement made by David Cohen, news director at KDNL-TV (Channel 30) in St. Louis, MO, when on the eve of the Black Expo he suggested a story be developed on heart disease and how it affects Blacks because they are known for their consumption of "fried chicken and mashed potatoes" (Berger A2). In all fairness to Mr. Cohen, the statement may have been one of genuine concern. But when you consider the stereotype and the historical narrative, the comment is called into question because it is situated within a racist society and thus a racial context. It is these types of statements, often made unconsciously, which reflect not only the historical evolution of deeply seeded racism, but simultaneously perpetuate the historical narrative.

A recent experience illustrated for me how this narrative is even more complicated when it is perpetuated among members of the in-group — that is, African Americans themselves who have bought into the stereotypes. While attending a food conference, I was dismayed over the lack of vegetables offered during the meals. One morning, while others were enjoying ham biscuits, I remarked that vegetables and fruits were missing from the menu. One of the guests suggested to me that I was not "black" because I did not eat pork. I responded that I was actually more "Black" because I preferred fruits and vegetables as well as fish and sometimes chicken — preferably fried and with hot sauce. With this response, she silently acknowledged my position and then went on publicly to remark, "Oh, okay. We'll keep you."

While that exchange allowed me to remain "Black" without "losing cool points," the issue here is that I had to resort to the all too familiar stereotype in order to reestablish and maintain my presence in the African American community. In this instance, the narrative was used to reaffirm my presence in the group despite the intra-racial conflict. Once I mentioned objects with which we had shared common experiences, I became an acceptable member of both the Black race and the community of food scholars. I had both proven my worth as an African American and that I had a working knowledge of food scholarship. This exchange suggested that as an insider/yet outsider non-pork eater, I knew the code, the language which helped to identify me as a member of the community.

Food and race intersect daily, and African

Americans often find themselves at the center of this evolving phenomenon. There are profound meanings embedded in normal, everyday foods for which a particular group may have a fondness and a historical association. Food has the power to unite and transform these particular cultures, while simultaneously dividing them from the wider American culture. As we continue to move more and more into health consciousness as African Americans, we need not abandon or be ashamed of the stereotypes. Like other groups, we need to celebrate what Vertamae Grosvenor refers to as our "peasant foods." But we also need to do something more: as members of the American society we need to see and understand foods for what they are — powerful signifiers of the racial and cultural issues embedded in our national narrative.

NOTES

[1] Terminology often confounds and conflates the issue. For the purposes of this discussion Black and African American will refer to darker skinned people in the United States.
While some people
may not have been born in the US, they are categorically assumed to be *Black* if their skin color is equal to that of other dark skinned people born in this country.
[2] Jessica Harris, The Welcome Table, p. 24
[3] Phillip Morgan, p.359.
[4] Ibid.
[5] Yentsch discusses a 1734 case of "Frank," possibly a free black, who was charged with stealing five lambs and William Metcalf, an Annapolis butcher, who received the merchandise.
[6] Valca Valentine, a staff writer for the Charlotte Observer makes reference to the "chicken bone express" in her article, "The Road to
Freedom: Price Davis
' Journey Leads to New York...and Back Again."
[7] See Goings
', Mammy and Uncle Mose, pp. 39-40.
[8] Ibid., p. 1
[9] Ibid., p. 11
[10] Ibid., p. 13
[11] Dodson and Gilkes, p. 523
[12] Kingery, p. 3

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PICKLE DAY IN NEW YORK CITY

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For the past two years, as summer waned, International Pickle Day was held in New York City. Co-sponsored by the N.Y. Food Museum and the Lower East Side Business Improvement District, this street fair celebrated the diversity and union of New Yorkers through the pickle in myriad forms.

Nancy Ralph, founder of the New York Food Museum, says the event captures the diversity of New York and the depth of its culture as available through traditional ethnic foods. "We hope people will reconnect to the integral value of folk traditions and that Pickle Day will reawaken an interest in cooking, NYC history, and cultural and intergenerational exchange."

The outdoor fair was held on Orchard Street, a street significant as the early 20th century hub of the Lower East Side. Here, immigrants, overflowing stores, and brimming pushcarts competed for outdoor space. Orchard Street's history is documented at the Lower East Side Tenement Museum.

The First International Pickle Day was preceded in August 2001 by a recipe-testing event. At the New York Restaurant School, cooks prepared and shared pickles reflecting their cultures and identities — Indian tomato chutney and date tamarind chutney, Haitian *piekliz* (hot pepper and shredded cabbage) , Polish *kapusta* , Upstate New York bread and butters, German pickled beets, Russian fresh pickles, Vermonter mustard pickles, and Italian *melanzine sott'olio* (pickled eggplant). The testing helped the N.Y. Food Museum to prepare the Pickle Day exhibit and tested recipes for the book, Pickled by Lucy Norris (2003, Stewart, Tabori and Chang).

The first Pickle Day was on September 30, 2001. Participants, still reeling from the terrorist attacks, pluckily set up tents and tables, pickle barrels, pictures, and history posters along the street. Home cooks and commercial pickle makers gave out samples of their wares, performance artists dressed as pickles distributed packages of "Twang" (pickle-flavored salt), a child demonstrated the making of *kapusta* in the context of her Polish-Brooklyn family history, and music filled the street. The gray chilly day turned windy and rainy, which abbreviated the celebration.

Brilliant sunshine marked the Second Annual International Pickle Day on August 25, 2002. Enthusiastic New Yorkers turned out in droves for samples of half and full sour cucumber pickles, olives, *chiquetaille de morue* (Haitian salt cod), sauerkraut, *lift* (middle eastern beet and horseradish-pickled turnips), Russian vodka cucumbers and dilled watermelon, Asian *kim chi*, salted turnips, pickled ginger, preserved lemons, and sweet pickled scallions. Visitors lingered over the information posters that lined Orchard Street. Some recorded their own pickle stories, which were read over pickle-enhanced cocktails at an evening gathering at a Lower East Side lounge.

Pickle Days of the future are planned to reflect continuing varieties of food made by New Yorkers. For more information, visit the New York Food Museum website at www.nyfoodmuseum.org.

RESOURCES

Book Notes

The American Regional Cookery Index. By Rhonda H. Klieman. Neal-Schuman Cookery Index Series, Number 2. (New York: Neal Schuman Publishing, 1989. Pp. vii + 221, table of Contents, introduction, index, No Price Marked.)
This index provides a tool for librarians, food studies researchers, and chefs who are seeking recipes of regional dishes. It draws from twenty-five cookbooks that are both reputable and in English, focusing on those recipes that are not commonplace. The result is over 20,000 entries of approximately 10,000 recipes. These are arranged according to names of dishes (jambalaya, sopaipilla), types of dishes (cake, pie), major ingredients (mushrooms, venison), preparations (barbecue, poached), and group — ethnic, state, and region. A quick perusal suggests that, although by no means a complete listing of recipes, this index is a useful resource and an invaluable time-saver for food scholars and practitioners.

Anyway You Cut It: Meat Processing in Small Town America. Edited By Donald D. Stull, Michael J. Broadway, and David Griffith. (Kansas: University Press of Kansas, 1995. Pp. xiv + 269, table of contents, preface, contributors, index; $35.00 cloth, $17.95 paper.)
This interdisciplinary collection of essays draws from scholarship by anthropologists, geographers, and sociologists as well as the more pragmatic perspectives of journalists and industry specialists. It offers ethnographies of several communities in which the processing industry has had an impact, including towns in Kansas, Nebraska, North Carolina, and Iowa. The analysis focuses on the economic and sociological results of these businesses and in some cases includes practical suggestions for dealing with various issues. This information, plus the statistics and maps provided, offer a useful approach to understanding the interconnections of business practices, the larger economy, immigration, and the place of foodways in "small-town America."

The Bay Shrimpers of Texas: Rural Fisherman in a Global Economy. By Robert Lee Maril. (Kansas: University Press of Kansas, 1995. Pp. 303, table of contents, introduction, endnotes, selected bibliography, index; $35.00 cloth, $17.95 paper.)
This book combines ethnography with sociological, historical, and economic research to provide an in-depth study of the occupation of commercial shrimp fishing off the Texas coast. It nicely provides both a global perspective, addressing the impact of international events on the Texas industry, and a local one, allowing the individuals involved in the industry to tell their own stories. The book also acknowledges the diversity of people — white males, women, Vietnamese, and Latino — who make up this occupation, and explores the balancing act that occurs between shrimpers as a single community set against larger forces of nature and corporate economy and shrimpers as individuals acting according to individual interests and histories.

Breastfeeding: Biocultural Perspectives. Edited by Patricia Stuart-Macadam and Katherine A. Dettwyler. (New York: Aldine de Gruyter, 1995. Pp. 430, foreword, acknowledgments, biographical sketches of contributors, index; $32.95 paper, $65.95 cloth.)
The twelve articles and three commentaries in this volume offer studies on different aspects of breastfeeding, giving historical, cultural, psychological, and biological contexts and analyses of the activity. The authors take an activist stance, stating in the forward that they promote breastfeeding for biological as well as psychological reasons and are trying here to understand the "adverse cultural forces" that have lead to a decline in breastfeeding in the US over the last one hundred years. While aimed specifically at health and medical professionals, the book includes essays and information relevant to scholars interested in women's roles in society, perceptions of childhood and the family, and cultural notions of the body, sexuality, nutrition, and health.

Chilies to Chocolate: Food the Americas Gave the World. Edited By Nelson Fosier and Linda S. Cordell. (Arizona: University of Arizona Press, 1996. Pp. xvii + 191, table of contents, preface, introduction, epilogue, appendix, further reading, notes on contributors, index; $14.95 paper.)
This wonderful collection of essays takes a food-biography approach to examining the history, uses, in rituals as well as in diets, and impact of foods "the Americas gave the world." Each essay focuses on a single item, tracing its introduction to new cultures and its development as a food, providing a single lens through which to explore the history of food in general. Foods singled out include tomatoes, potatoes, amaranth, vanilla, maize, beans, chili peppers, cacao, and quinoa, and an appendix lists other food plants indigenous to the Americas. Two other essays and the introduction give a broader look at the historical contexts in which these particular food interchanges occurred, and the epilogue suggests ways in which these original foods should be preserved, not only for the biological diversity that is necessary for the well-being of the eco-system, but also for the cultural diversity they represent.

Dining Car Line to the Pacific: An Illustrated History of the North Pacific Railway's Famously "Good Food" with 150 Authentic Recipes. By William A. McKenzie. (St. Paul: Minnesota Historical Society Press, 1990. Pp. 164; $9.75 paper.)
McKenzie explores the history of the Northern Pacific Railways, examining the evolution of the Northern Pacific Railway's practices and customs in regards to the dining services as well as the variety of food and beverages that were offered to traveling passengers. This text fully examines the birth and life of the NP Railways across the American continent and offers a picture window to show how the advancement of technology created the train, replacing the horse and buggy in travel. The NP Railways further expanded America's exploration westward by way of the northern route. McKenzie juxtaposes important strides the NP Railways made in travel with the important strides NP Railway's dining cars made serving food to passengers traveling across America. The quality as well as the variety of food on the NP Railway's dining cars were carefully scrutinized to provide the highest quality to passengers and to make them feel at home. McKenzie also explores the lives of the Pullman, waiters, and cooks who worked behind the scenes, and examines the high standards that management of the NP Railways promoted. McKenzie presents the processes of food preparation, selection, and origin as well as the amenities that went into providing service over the years to the passengers who rode the NP Railways. One hundred and fifty authentic recipes are provided to show the variety of rich foods that marked the reputation of the NP Railways service.

Food in Russian History and Culture. Edited by Musya Glants and Joyce Toomre. (Indiana-Michigan Series in Russian & East European Studies. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1997. 280 pages, 24 b&w photos, acknowledgments, introduction, contributors, index; $17.95 paper; $39.95 cloth).
This collection of essays aims to "interpret the moral and spiritual role of food in Russian culture." Drawing from a number of disciplines and sources (literature, paintings, folktales, material culture, cookbooks, diaries, even police records), the essays demonstrate the complexity, not only of Russian culture, but of food. Food can be a window into a culture, but understanding what is seen is a matter of interpretation. These essays offer interpretive perspectives that can be usefully applied to other cultures. Addressing subjects ranging from "stovelore" and peasant diets to state cafeterias, the book suggests insightful ways to "read" food.

Food on the Frontier: Minnesota Cooking from 1850 to 1900 with Selected Recipes. By Marjorie Kreidberg. (St. Paul: Minnesota Historical Society Press, 1975. Pp. viii + 314, illustrations, acknowledgments, contents, reference notes, general index, recipe index, the illustrations; $10.95 paper.)
While this book includes recipes, it is by no means just a cookbook, and the recipes are not the standard romanticized re-workings of an imagined heritage. Kreidberg selected recipes from cookbooks published in the 19th century and combined these with newspapers, letters, diaries and other materials from historical archives to write a fascinating account of foodways on the Minnesota frontier from 1850 and 1900. A strength of the book is its attention to all aspects of foodways, including procurement and preservation methods, the material culture associated with food, developments in agriculture and factory processing, as well as insights into the role of foodways in women's lives on the frontier. This last aspect is frequently told through the letters and diaries of individuals, adding a personal and human element to the history. The recipes are quoted from the original sources and in themselves are fascinating to read. For example," pigs in blankets" are oysters wrapped in bacon; squirrels "may be cooked in any way suitable for rabbits." Some have been tested and adapted to modern kitchens and smaller households.

The Hungry Self: Women, Eating, and Identity. By Kim Chernin. (New York: HarperPerennial, 1994 [1985]. Pp. xxv + 214, foreword, preface, notes, acknowledgments; $12.00 paper.)
Chenin is a psychologist, novelist, and poet. Perhaps most importantly, she is a woman, and brings her own experiences and those of the numerous women she has helped heal (her clients) to bear on her exploration of women's eating disorders. Approaching hunger as a metaphorical searching for self, identity, and sense of emotional fulfillment, she writes not so much about food as about the psychological plight of women in our society, suggesting that if women understand what food means to them, then they will be able to overcome the obsessions with food that are expressed through eating disorders.

Digest

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