

Digest

Vol. 19

1999

AN INTERDISCIPLINARY STUDY OF FOOD AND FOODWAYS



EATING ACROSS THE CURRICULUM

Eating in School: Food and Multicultural Education

Use of Food Practices as Self-Identity -- Exploring Why We Eat as We Do

Women, Sensuality, and Stigma

**Food, Film, and Television:
Media Representations, Public Selections, and Domestic Patterns**

Food and Foodways in Teaching Writing

Foodways: Using Food to Teach Folklore Theories and Methods

Franchise Restaurants: Using the Internet to Study Location

What About A Pizza?: Taste, Genre, and Critical Analysis

**Food Demonstrations in the Classroom: Practicing Ethnography and the
Complexities of Identity with Tamales in Northwest Ohio**

Digest

Eating Across the Curriculum

Letter From the Editor

DIGEST: volume 19 (1999)

Anyone who teaches knows the heuristic value of food. It can be used as a teaching tool in all manners of ways — to teach content, methodology, presentation style, critical thinking, reading, and writing skills. Look at how many major thinkers have used food to illustrate their theories and philosophies — Aristotle, R. Barthes, Levi-Straus, Bakhtin, de Certeau, Bourdieu, Derrida, etc.

This volume of the Digest offers some concrete suggestions for using food to teach specific concepts within selected disciplines. The focus is on the humanities — those disciplines studying the ways in which humans have addressed the fundamental significance and meaning(s) of existence — but we also attempt to bridge the divide between the humanities and sciences by including fields focused on dietetics and body image. This volume does not deal with all the humanities disciplines; it is more of a sampling of what some individuals are currently doing. As the title, “eating across the curriculum,” suggests, the goal is to inspire scholars, teachers, food practitioners, and consumers (basically, all of us!) to think more systematically about the usefulness of food for thinking and learning.

We also need to carefully critique the ways in which we have used food in the past. Is it a subject that we toss out to our students lightly, implying that it lacks complexity or subtlety? After all, we all eat and presumably think about eating; therefore, can it be subjected to sophisticated and rigorous analysis? Those of us in food studies believe so, but there is still the tendency in some circles to dismiss food and food studies as too mundane, too domestic, too practical, or too lacking in intellectual depth to be treated seriously. These essays are a call, then, to think about teaching with food as more than just “fun” or “easy.”

This volume grew out of a project funded by the National Endowment for the Humanities on “Food as Entry and Entrée in the Humanities.” (The title was later officially changed to “Food Traditions”.) The project involved a series of faculty seminars and guest speakers, each addressing the role of food in their discipline and the approaches to food their discipline had historically taken. The goal was to develop a broader perspective on food as a humanities topic that offers a unique context in which humans have endeavored to render meaning to their actions and productions.

Most of the essays in this volume were written by participants in the NEH project, including Chris Haar, Cynthia Baron, Mary Kreuger, Marilyn Motz, and myself. Lynne Hamer and Barbara Shortridge frequently lent suggestions and directions for study. Most participants have gone on to develop either courses or assignments focusing on food. The final essay is co-written by an individual who has been a guest community scholar for a number of my classes at BGSU. Knowledgeable in her own traditions, Bernice Aguilar demonstrated the art and experience of tamale

making and cheerfully allowed students to practice interview methods on her.

Readers who would like more materials on food and education should see the Spring 2004 issue of *Food, Culture, & Society: An International Journal of Multidisciplinary Research*. Also see the website C.A.R.T.S. (Cultural Arts Resources for Teachers).

Please keep sending articles, field reports of work in progress, photo essays. We would also like to include reviews of exhibits, museum programs, and films as well as books. Course syllabi are also welcome. My thanks to the Department of Popular Culture, specifically Angela Nelson and Marilyn Motz, and to Tim Lloyd, executive director of the American Folklore Society for the support of the Digest.

And as a final thought, perhaps one of the most pervasive uses of food in educational settings has been as a reward to motivate good behavior and grades. Pizza parties for the high achievers, a special breakfast with the principal for deserving students, ice cream for a well-behaved class are all frequent ways in which food is essentially a bribe rather than a teaching tool. We use food similarly in our personal lives. How many of us allow ourselves that second cup of coffee (or cookie, or piece of sushi) only after we’ve completed reading an article or writing another paragraph? I bring this up as a reminder that in our theorizing about food, we should not lose touch with one of the basic facts of food — it can bring great pleasure and joy. And, on that note, I’m off to meet friends for lunch...

Lucy Long, Editor
Rebekah Shultz Colby, Assistant Editor

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Cover Photo: Students in Foods Culture Class, BGSU, 2005
Photographs: Lucy Long and Richard Colby

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EDUCATION

EATING IN SCHOOL:

FOOD AND MULTICULTURAL EDUCATION

LYNNE HAMER

(University of Toledo)

Recognizing that kids love — and need — to eat, teachers from preschool to high school regularly include food in their classrooms. Younger students cover construction paper with chocolate and vanilla pudding as finger paint, or use toothpicks to “excavate” chocolate chips from cookies in order to understand the work of paleontologists. Older students turn in homework and maintain discipline in order to earn monthly ice cream parties. Some teachers, knowing that many of their students don’t have breakfast or lunch, buy bags of bread and buckets of peanut butter and jelly to keep in their supply cabinets, allowing students to make themselves sandwiches as needed. In some schools, educating the palette is part of the curriculum: school cooks broaden their offerings beyond pre-prepared French fries and chicken nuggets to pilafs and black beans, and though students might not be required to eat everything, they are encouraged to try it.

Food in schools can thus be seen as part of a hidden curriculum, or that which is learned as part of the overall experience of schooling but is not part of the intended or explicit curriculum, or alternatively it can be intentionally included as part of the curriculum, perhaps to educate for change (Bennett de Marrais and LeCompte 1999). As part of a hidden curriculum, the “hot” lunches served in most public schools can be seen as serving to assimilate students’ tastes to the dominant, mass-mediated, profit-oriented culture, as documented in *Fast Food Nation* (discussed below). Similarly part of the hidden curriculum are the jeering comments some students, throughout the history of schooling, have made — and gotten away with — as a way of cruelly socializing students into conformity with dominant culture standards. For instance, in public schools government-subsidized “free lunches”

are a right for many students and are served as the standard meal, which any student may buy using a purchased meal ticket and which those qualifying for assistance may get with the same meal ticket, therefore without creating stigma. However, in some schools any student opting for such a meal is suspected of being poor, and therefore many students who could use the food opt to go hungry or spend their money on the vending machines and, thus, try to fit into the middle-class norm rather than accept the lunch and the stigma. Such socialization, to deny poverty and to consume junk, is part of the hidden curriculum of schooling.

In contrast, food can be included in schooling intentionally as part of a multicultural curriculum. Sleeter and Grant (1989) provide a standard, widely used classification system for approaches to multicultural education. They identify five, with the strong implication that these progress from the simplest and somewhat unsatisfactory, to the most complex and important for educating for social change and equity.

Five Approaches to Multicultural Education

The first approach named by Sleeter and Grant (1993), “teaching the exceptional and culturally different students,” focuses most on assimilation of students into the school culture, “enabl[ing] students to succeed and to adapt to the requirements of the traditional classroom” (12). The peanut butter sandwiches mentioned above are an example of this: the sandwiches are not intended to be educational in themselves, but rather to allow disadvantaged students to succeed in class by having their most basic need — hunger — addressed. This approach, while likely significant for student achievement, raises no real possibility for interesting inclusion of food in curricula.

The second approach, “human relations” or “intergroup education,” emphasizes respect for oneself and others, positive relationships, and elimination of stereotypes (Grant & Sleeter 1989, 76-77). Serving food from “other lands” or from each student’s own “heritage” is a prime example of this approach, and is exactly the sort of “weak” multicultural education that contemporary multiculturalists (Cochran-Smith 1995) dismiss as inadequate. While developing positive hu-

man relations is an essential first step, a human relations approach by itself is problematic in that it is very limited, at best addressing only personal prejudices based on the assumption that if one likes another’s food, one may be predisposed to like the other as well.

The third approach, “single group studies,” attempts to change the contents of school curricula from including only the views and accomplishments of white, upper-class, English-speaking males to including the views and accomplishments of people of color, women, and persons from lower socioeconomic classes (Sleeter & Grant 1993, 110). Again, food from “other lands” or “others’ cultures” — the Mexican meal in second grade or the Southern cuisine for Black History Month — are not uncommon instances of this approach. Clearly problematic for single group stud-



ies is the reification of the “other.” With the “ethnic meal” approach, an ethnic group is identified as monolithic: this is what *they* eat. And ethnic culture is relegated to a special instance of culture: not American since it is given a day or a

month. Useful correctives to this practice surface occasionally. For instance, one of the many websites offering descriptions of New Year’s celebrations and foods around the world states, “In the U.S., people eat black-eyed peas.” This sort of statement is useful for prompting U.S. students, many of whom have never heard of eating the peas for the New Year, to be critical of similar generalizing statements about other groups.

The fourth approach, “multicultural education,” seeks to integrate the first three approaches in order to promote equal opportunities based on the ideal of cultural pluralism:

Cultural pluralism means that there is no one best way to be American. . . . Cultural pluralism is not

separatism. Rather, it includes a sharing and blending of different ethnic cultures that constitute the shared mainstream American culture, but it also supports ethnic groups as they enjoy and continue to develop distinctive group cultures. Americans should not have to give up their family’s identity, sense of group solidarity, or cultural beliefs and traditions to be accepted as American or to participate fully in American society. (Grant and Sleeter 1989, 144)

Including food in schools is an excellent way to promote this approach to multicultural education. A popular foodways assignment (see, for example, Michigan State University 1991 and the appended sample assignment) is for students to “collect” a recipe, interview the family or community expert on that recipe, and bring the recipe, an essay, and a photo for inclusion in a class or school cookbook. This can be expanded to include staff — from principal to “lunch lady” — as experts, interviewing them and including their recipes. This sort of project reveals the diversity within a class — diversity which is often invisible, ignored, or even devalued. It also “portrays the contributions and perspectives of a variety of American cultural groups and both sexes . . . in a nonstereotypic manner” (Grant & Sleeter 1989, 144): it shows the principal has a family, and it shows the “lunch lady,” often a faceless, disregarded member of the school community, has an identity and contributes to society beyond the cafeteria.

Finally, the fifth approach, “multicultural social reconstructionism,” emphasizes a commitment to cultural pluralism plus an element of social action, based on “the belief that schools in a democracy can and should prepare future citizens to work actively and collectively on problems facing society” (Grant and Sleeter 1989, 212). This approach involves students in identifying social problems and working with others to address them. Food production and consumption provides a high interest, and highly significant, case study of social change and its effect on groups. On the local level, folklorists sometimes have emphasized the economic side of foodways. Writing about the folklore of New York state, Beck (1985) notes:

Foodways are good indicators to historic, eco-

nomic, social, and regional variations. The Lake Champlain Valley has an excellent climate in which to grow apples. . . . Originally almost every farm had at least half a dozen apple trees, and picking the fruit would be a family affair. Today apple orchards are big business. . . . These orchards are specialized and often outside groups, like the Jamaicans, are brought in to pick the crop. (18-19)

This attention to local food production, and its relationship to everyday life, to macroeconomics, and to social justice, can move a multicultural lesson on the order of the recipe book described above, into the realm of recognizing the need for protecting local rights to economic and cultural freedoms.

Explicitly contextualizing such folkloristic investigations in an exploration of the hegemony of national culture would move this lesson toward a social reconstructionist approach. Eric Schlosser's (2001) widely popular *Fast Food Nation* is an excellent text for use as excerpts in middle school through the whole text in college, and provides such a critique:

Over the past three decades, an industry that began with a handful of hot dog and hamburger stands in southern California has spread to almost every corner of the globe. Fast food is now served at restaurants, stadiums, airports, zoos, schools and universities, on cruise ships, trains and aeroplanes, at supermarkets, petrol stations and even in hospital cafeterias. Americans now spend more money on fast food — \$110 billion last year — than they do on higher education. . . . What people eat (or don't eat) has always been determined by a complex interplay of social, economic, and technological forces. . . . During a relatively brief period of time, the fast food industry has helped transform not only our diet, but also the landscape, economy, workforce, and popular cul-

ture. . . . Hundreds of millions of people buy fast food every day without giving it much thought, unaware of the subtle and not so subtle ramifications of their purchases. They rarely consider where this food came from, how it was made, and what it is doing to the community around them.



Schlosser's (2001) *Fast Food Nation* thus provides extensive documentation and accessible analysis and interpretation of the problems of fast

food as representative of more widespread social and cultural changes and is an excellent spring board for students to investigate, plan, and take action on the local level.

Critical Emancipatory Multiculturalism

Cameron McCarthy (1994) takes multicultural social reconstructionism a step further, combining it more explicitly with concerns for cultural pluralism, and describes "ventilating" the curriculum by incorporating heterogeneous styles into the curriculum, thereby creating a "critical emancipatory multiculturalism" (CEM). As discussed in more detail elsewhere (Hamer 2000), CEM emphasizes that "no one group has a monopoly on intelligence or beauty," "the school curriculum for minority and majority youth should have an organic link to other experiences and struggles within the society[,] . . . radically diverse cultural knowledge(s) rooted in the social bases and experiences of oppressed groups should be introduced into the school curriculum[,] . . . contributions of working people, women, and minorities . . . [should provide] students with their own cultural capital[,] . . . [and] teachers and students are producers, not simply consumers of knowledge" (McCarthy 1994, 83, 95). Including food in the curriculum provides a way to "ventilate" by bringing in everyday culture as produced by all people — known, local, family "artists" whose skills are taken for granted or even discounted — as relevant, com-

plex, and key to understanding larger social and political processes. Starting from Schlosser's (2001) *Fast Food Nation*, cafeteria workers could be interviewed about what they think of the pizza rolls and chicken sandwiches they serve and how this contrasts to lunches and dinners they might make at home. Wigginton's (1992) famous Foxfire approach for having students conduct "cultural journalism" includes the useful notion of an "ethical yardstick" developed by students for assessing the ethical goodness of the traditions they document — be they folk or dominant. Working with students to develop such a tool can facilitate the critical emancipatory approach of valuing local knowledge while at the same time being critical of both it and national culture. Anthropologists Moll et al. (1992) characterize a similar approach, but one in which teachers rather than students conduct the primary research into local and home culture, as a "funds of knowledge" approach in which teachers purposefully build on the cultural knowledge prevalent in students' homes in order to teach advanced critical thinking and problem solving, as well as other core skills and knowledge.

Conclusion

Including foodways in classrooms increasingly driven away from local and regional culture, toward national culture by the standards-based education movement is challenging but not impossible. For one thing, using a critical emancipatory approach, as described above, can help students critique the dominance of national, dominant culture and assert the rights and values of local culture. If this was done first with food, teachers could then guide students to consider other aspects of culture — like testing!

However, with the passage of No Child Left Behind and the rush to develop high-stakes standardized tests throughout the levels of K-12 education, teachers have been forced to focus their curricula on skills and bits of knowledge that will be on the tests — and foodways seldom make it. Several folklorists, however, have worked with standards-based education and their work provides helpful guidelines for developing food units for classrooms. Most comprehensive is Sidener's (1997) *Standards for Folklife Education: Integrating Language Arts, Social*

Studies, Arts, and Science through Student Traditions and Culture. Though developed for the State of Pennsylvania, this handbook provides a good starting point for work in any state.

More specifically, Bowman (2003) reports on high school French students in Lafayette, Louisiana documenting the "boudin trail," producing a bilingual tourist brochure and video of French students interviewing their elders in French about the "Cajun sausage made and sold in small family-owned markets all over southern Louisiana." In this article, Bowman invites schools to document their own communities' food trails and to submit them to the C.A.R.T.S. website. The C.A.R.T.S. (Cultural Arts Resources for Teachers and Students) website is in general a good resource for specialists in folk culture, including foodways, to see how others have worked to include their specialties in the K-12 curriculum.

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APPENDIX I: SAMPLE RECIPE ASSIGNMENT

Foodways Assignment

Making and sharing food is a way people throughout time and place have made connections with each other. Foodways, therefore, are folklore. The way we make and share food has aesthetic features. The food itself has texture and color, pattern, and even sound. The way the food is presented — in particular dishes, on particular tables, and with particular ceremonies — is full of aesthetic choices. Although we often take food — and the people who prepare it — for granted, food is perhaps the most common way we experience the humanities daily.

You are asked to collect:

- a recipe — with a notation from whom you got it and, if possible, from whom they got it or how they learned it;
- a photo of the person or the dish — or both;
- a story (250-750 words), based on an interview with the person;
- a paragraph describing how you feel about the recipe and/or your experience with the recipe, or what you learned from collecting the recipe and talking to the person;
- optional: a signed consent form, if you and your interviewee want the recipe, photo, story, and paragraph included in the Libbey Humanities Club Cookbook.

How to do it:

Think about a food you eat with your family, your friends, or in any community you belong to. You might think about everyday food as well as food for holidays or other special occasions. Or, talk to your friends, neighbors, parents, grandparents, or other relatives about what foods are important to them and whether they have any traditional recipes handed down from one person to another. When you find someone who has a traditional recipe, ask if you can get a copy of the recipe and can interview them about the recipe.

You might ask if you can make the recipe with them. Set a time a place for copying the recipe, doing the interview, and possibly cooking.

Recipe. Please follow this format:

Your Name

Date: month & year

Name of Recipe

Name of Person sharing recipe with you & relationship to you (e.g., Friend, Friend of Family, Minister, Grandfather, Mother, etc.)

Cultural origin of recipe (ethnic group, region, family, etc.)

Ingredients

Procedure (How do you make it? The steps and methods used.)

The Story of the Recipe. You may want to tape-record the interview. If you don't, please be ready to take as many notes as fast as you can while they're talking. Try to capture their exact (verbatim) words. You can ask whatever questions you like, but here are some ideas:

- What is the earliest memory you have of eating this recipe?
- Where did the recipe come from?
- Who makes or made it best?
- Do you know how to make this recipe? If so, how did you learn? Who taught you?
- When did you learn to make it and why? What's easy or difficult about making it?
- When is the recipe served? Is it prepared for certain events or holidays, or for certain people?
- How is the recipe served? Are particular other foods served with it?
- Why is this a recipe you like?
- Anything else I should ask?

Photo. If possible, take a picture of the person telling

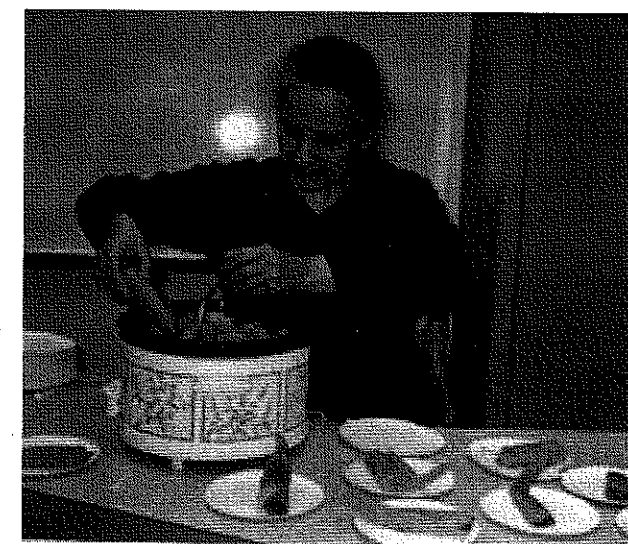
kitchen or some other location associated with the recipe. Or, if you are making the recipe, you could take several photos — at least one of them making it, and one with the finished product.

Paragraph. This project is about you as well as about your interviewee and their recipe. Write a paragraph about how you felt or feel about your project. Some ideas:

- Why did you choose to collect this recipe from this person?
- Why is this recipe or the event it's served at important to you?
- What do you understand differently now, having done the project, than you did before you did the project?

To have your assignment included in a *Class Recipe Book*, you may:

- obtain a signed consent form — this will be discussed at the meeting, and
- bring a copy of your project on disk or email it to _____
- optional — photos may be sent digitally or turned in to be scanned.



DIETETICS/NUTRITION

USE OF FOOD PRACTICES AS SELF-IDENTITY —

EXPLORING WHY WE EAT AS WE DO

CHRIS HAAR
(BOWLING GREEN STATE UNIVERSITY)

Resources:

Bisogni, C. A., M. Connors, C. M. Devine, and J. Sobol. 2002. "Who We Are and How We Eat: A Qualitative Study of Identities in Food Choice." *Journal of Nutrition Education and Behavior* 34: 128.

Fries, E., and R. T. Croyle. 1993. "Stereotypes Associated with a Low-fat Diet and their Relevance to Nutrition Education." *Journal of American Diet Association* 93: 551-555.

Sadalla, E., and J. Burroughs. 1981. "Profiles in Eating: Sexy Vegetarians and Other Diet-based Social Stereotypes." *Psychology Today* 5.10: 51-57.

Objectives:

- Students will identify influences on food choice.
- Students will identify phrases that describe eating patterns or stereotypes.
- Students will answer open-ended questions to determine if their food practices are a source of self-identity.

Introduction:

Use of food has long been recognized as a way that a person assigns identity to himself/herself and others by what is considered edible, types of foods, likes and dislikes, and methods of preparation. In Western societies, the body has become a marker for personal and social identity, with a healthy and fit body equated with self-control, self-denial, and willpower.

Sadalla and Burrough (1981) reported a consensus among college students regarding personality traits associated with a peer's dietary preferences — fast food eaters were perceived as patriotic, while vegetarians were perceived as pacifists and hypochondriacs.

Fries and Croyle (1993) determined whether students stereotyped persons who eat either a low-fat or a high-fat diet. High-fat diet consumers were perceived as more easygoing and more likely to attend parties. Low-fat diet consumers were perceived as more attractive, practical, physically fit, and politically active. Female consumers of high-fat diets were more negatively perceived than male consumers of high-fat diets.

The American Dietetics Association Nutrition Trends Survey 2000 found that nutrition is personally important to 85% of consumers. Despite this, only 28% have made significant changes to achieve a healthful diet. Surveys show that taste is more important than nutrient content or cost to consumers.

Presenting the lesson:

Certain foods may be used to generate discussion regarding stereotypes and food identity — i.e. quiche (as in real men don't eat quiche), salads, hamburger, French fries, milk shake, granola bars, tofu. Bring in actual foods when practical or pictures. Consider including regional foods also.

Discussion:

1. Ask students to identify what factors influence their food choices. Where does nutrition fit in? Do students believe that nutrition should be an important consideration in choosing foods?
2. Use foods or pictures of foods to generate discussion about how they can convey personality or identity.
3. Ask students to identify personality traits associated with particular diets — high fat, low fat, vegetarian.

4. Ask students to identify kinds or types of eaters (junk food junkie, health food nut, meat and potatoes man, tofu and granola eater).
5. The following questions were included in Bisogni et al's (2002) research: "How would you describe the kind of eater you are? How



would the people closest to you describe the kind of eater you are? What kind of eater would your mother say you were? Have you always been this kind of eater? How have you changed? What kind of eater would you like to be? Is there a kind of eater that you could never be?" These questions can be used either for group discussion, as an assignment prior to the lesson, or for a writing assignment after the lesson.

GENDER STUDIES

WOMEN, SENSUALITY AND STIGMA

MARY KRUEGER

(Bowling Green State University)

Objectives:

Students will identify at least two euphemisms (each) for:

- women who act on their sexuality;
- women who resist sex;
- women who indulge their food appetites;
- women who limit their eating.

Students will identify at least two ways in which "sexual stigma" parallels "food stigma" for women in western cultures.

Steps:

1. Ask students to brainstorm a list of euphemisms/commonly-used terms to describe women who enjoy sex and act on their sexuality. Then ask students to create a list of terms describing women who are sexually chaste. Write lists on the board or overhead, or ask a student to keep notes of terms mentioned.

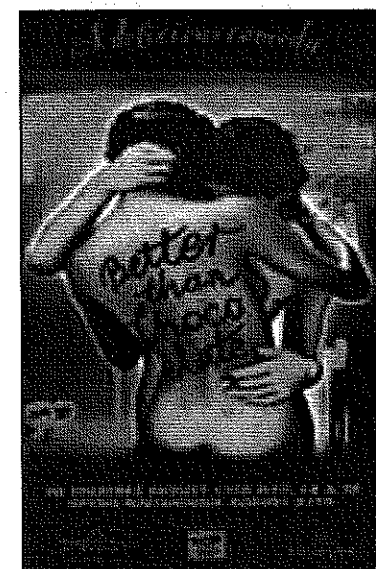
2. Discuss: *For which category were there the most terms? Was one list easier to develop than the other? If so, why? Are there differences between the lists regarding the terms' positive or negative connotations? Would the terms on the list have been different if the gender being described were changed from female to male? Why or why not?*

3. Ask students to brainstorm a list of euphemisms/commonly-used terms to describe women who eat heartily and openly. Then ask students to create a list of terms describing women who control their appetite and/or eat sparingly. Write lists on the board or overhead, or ask a student to keep notes of the terms mentioned.

4. Discuss, using questions similar to those in Step 2.

5. Ask students to identify similarities between the lists about sexual behavior and those about eating behavior and to postulate about the source of or reasons for those similarities (see instructor notes). Discuss: *How are women on whom such labels are imposed affected by those terms, either positively or negatively? Do women alter their sexual or eating behaviors in response to the use of differential terms reflecting either approval or stigma? Should they?*

6. Encourage students to recognize the contextuality of attitudes regarding women's sensual expression. Discuss: *Have attitudes toward women's sexual or eating behaviors been different at other points in history? Are they currently different in non-*



westernized" cultures? Does ethnicity, religion, age, or personal history affect either gender roles regarding women's sensual indulgence or an individual woman's

adherence to those roles? If so, in what ways?

7. Assignment: To test the intensity of gender norms regarding food, have female students stage a public display of enthusiastic eating. [Male students or female students who are uncomfortable with this assignment should ask a female confederate to assist them.] The woman should consume a "large" meal of hearty foods (especially steak, burgers, or other foods associated with "male eating"), in a public place (restaurant, student union, etc). The reaction of others should be assessed by asking them a standard set of questions regarding attitudes toward women who indulge their appetites. Students can report their findings in a future class session.

INSTRUCTOR NOTES

Step 1:

For women who act on their sexuality: slut, whore, tramp, nympho, harlot, hussy, floozy, loose woman, pig, sexpot, hot . . .

For women who are sexually chaste: good girl, proper, virgin, pure, innocent . . .

Step 3:

For women who eat heartily: pig, slob, gross, over-eater, compulsive eater, binger, no self-control . . .

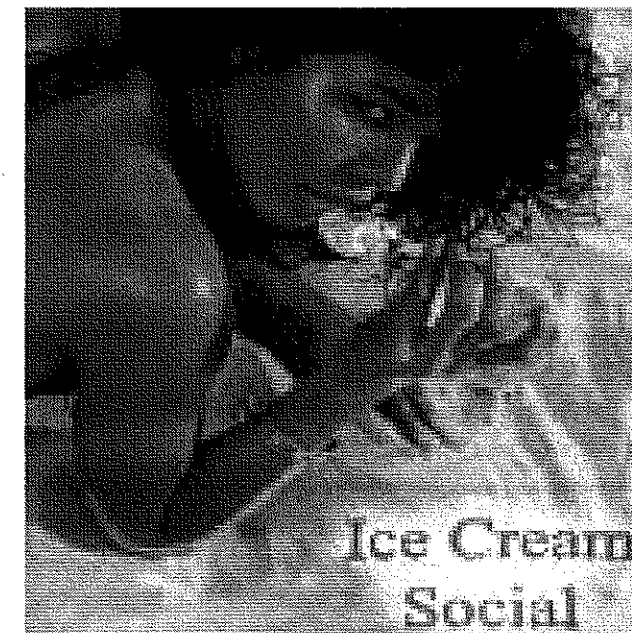
For women who restrict eating: pretty, dainty, ladylike, girly, anorexic, in control . . .

Step 5:

Both sexual behavior and eating involve the indulging of sensual appetites.

Both sexual behavior and eating are related, technically, to survival of the species—and yet in most instances, the motivation for having sex or eating food is pleasure, not survival.

With regard to both sex and eating, women in "westernized" cultures are stigmatized for indulgence, and praised for abstinence. Such gender-proscriptions are rarely imposed on men, except perhaps in the "opposite" way (male sensual indulgence is approved of, while abstinence may be considered "unmanly").



Film Studies

FOOD, FILM, AND TELEVISION:

MEDIA REPRESENTATIONS, PUBLIC SELECTIONS, AND DOMESTIC PATTERNS

CYNTHIA BARON
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In film studies courses, instructors' attention to food symbolism and characters' food behaviors can greatly enhance students' understanding of meaning and significance in individual films. Images of food and representations of food behaviors have the potential to convey important information about a character's inner experience, a story's defining social circumstances, and a film's underlying mood or point of view. Teachers' attention to a film's very specific presentation of food and food behaviors can also help students better understand how the film's collaborators orchestrated aspects of its narrative and audiovisual design to shape audience impressions and interpretations. Additionally, faculty members who explore connections between food and film viewing

can enhance students' insights into society and individual choices about food and film consumption. Film and media scholars are currently studying the extensive connections

between food and moviegoing. A film seen in a theater "bears some resemblance to a meal served at a restaurant" and, as film scholar Ina Rae Hark (2002) observes, that "may explain why eating itself is an important corollary to moviegoing" (14). Summarizing developments in theater concessions, fast-food movie tie-ins, and dinner-and-a-movie dating patterns, Hark

points out that "the food-movie linkage is so strong that most video stores sell popcorn (in the microwave format) and candy" (15).

In an introductory film course, an assignment that asks undergraduates to study and then describe a film's representation of food and eating allows them to focus their attention on a delimited group of visual and narrative details. An assignment that asks them to do an informal self-study of their movie theater food choices and their television food habits gives them a concrete and often amusing way to reflect on their relationship to media and mass culture. Textual studies of food in film and ethnographic studies of food behavior, moviegoing, and television viewing can sharpen students' observational skills. As a result, food and film assignments can even contribute to courses in screenwriting, acting, and directing. For graduate students in film and cultural studies, assignments that develop their ability to do ethnographic work on food and moviegoing practices and on activities surrounding food and television viewing help them engage in research that will make a valuable contribution to reception studies and our understanding of film/media audiences.

Despite the fact that most undergraduates have seen hundreds of mainstream movies and spent thousands of hours watching broadcast and cable television, students in academic film courses often cling to their belief that film and media images simply capture and reflect "reality." Even if they later come to believe that film narratives and television programs are shaped by aesthetic decisions, political circumstances, and economic forces, it is difficult for students to analyze the effect formulas and conventions have on film representations or reckon with the impact television advertising has on viewers' choices in the marketplace. Students rarely notice that some areas of life are consistently *not* represented in film and television narratives. They are uncomfortable with and feel challenged by questions that ask: What does a particular moment in a film tell us about its target audience? Given the type of scenes in a film, who seems to be included and who seems to be left out of the conversation between the film and its audience? How does a particular television program lead

audiences to care about some characters but not others?

By exploring the network of activities that comprise what Don Yoder (2000) termed *foodways*, scholars in various disciplines have shown how food, eating, and meals are woven into our personal "artistic expression, social interaction, identity construction, and the display and even imposition of power" (143). With that in mind, I have developed a number of film studies assignments in which the study of food enhances students' understanding of "the beliefs, aesthetics, economics, and politics involved in food behaviors" (144) and helps to clarify the beliefs, aesthetics, economics, and politics that shape film/media representations and audience encounters with film and television.

I have given film and media students assignments that ask them to study food and film behaviors that range from procurement methods and preservation to rituals surrounding the preparation, presentation, consumption, and cleanup of meals. (See Lucy M. Long's essay in this issue for an outline of foodway elements.) Responses to the assignments indicate that they give students tangible and accessible entry points into specific films and individual food behaviors related to film and television viewing. That entry is significant, for, while almost all college students enjoy movies and TV and often define themselves by their film/media tastes, they rarely reflect on their preferences and are often resistant to assignments that ask them to analyze their evaluations. Yet assignments

that ask undergraduates to study a film by tracing the connotations of characters' choices about drinks, the meaning that emerges from characters' interactions during scenes of family meals and so on allow students to see the benefit of studying symbolism and cinematic narration — even when they hold fast to their belief that "movies are just entertainment." Assignments that invite students to describe their personal preferences when it comes to food and moviegoing, or food and television viewing, give them a non-threatening way to approach self-studies of their media consumption — perhaps especially when they are concerned that their film professor will not understand or approve of their film and television viewing choices.

As a scholar who teaches film and media courses, I have discovered that the conceptual framework of foodways gives students a vocabulary for analyzing food on screen and off. In addition, when students use foodways as a touchstone in textual analyses, it can also facilitate coherent readings of individual films and increase students' understanding of cinematic strategies and conventions. Integrating food study into film study can increase students' insights into specific television programs and episodes. It can also enhance students' awareness of connections between advertising and programming in broadcast and cable television. Finally, when students explore foodways in ethnographic studies of film/television audiences, it can greatly enhance their understanding of the moviegoing experience and the place of film and television in contemporary domestic life.

ASSIGNMENT I:

TEXTUAL STUDIES — FOOD IN FILM AND TELEVISION

One way to introduce students to the study of food and film is to show excerpts of memorable food moments in film. Scores of marvelous food scenes can be found in early comedies. There are, for example, humorous food-in-film moments in shorts such as Max Linder's *The Grass Widower* (1907), which contains a series of scenes that show the increasingly befuddled husband attempt to manage on his own in the kitchen. *The Gold Rush* (1925) has a number of scenes in which food plays a part. In the most memorable, Charlie Chaplin is an impromptu food-



puppeteer when he casually sticks a fork into a dinner roll and another fork into a second roll, then proceeds to create a table-top, soft-shuffle dance by transforming the forks and rolls in a hooper's legs and feet. Laurel and Hardy's *Battle of the Century* (1927), which features "the most spectacular pie fight in film history," is "widely regarded by connoisseurs as the apotheosis of the [slapstick comedy] genre" (Morgan and Christie 2004). Moving from custard pies to donuts and from slapstick to screwball comedy, in *It Happened One Night* (1934), screenwriter Robert Riskin and director Frank Capra reveal that the spoiled runaway heiress (Claudette Colbert) is actually a good sport when she happily takes lessons in dunking donuts from the working-class newspaperman (Clark Gable). For a chronological list of selected films with memorable food scenes, see APPENDIX I.

An overview of the activities and practices that have been studied under the rubric of foodways is, of course, a vital part of any introduction to the study of food and film. The various aspects of foodways can be presented through a variety of methods that could include handouts, lectures, reading assignments, directed discussions, and short written reflections on personal food choices and behaviors. Initial presentations and assignments can be followed by group discussions, mock quiz shows, and individual creative projects.

To re-establish the connection between food



and film, and to show how representations of foodways have been woven into film narratives, teachers might want to show excerpts from films such as *Tampopo* (1986) or *Babette's Feast* (1987),

which place food preparation and presentation at the heart of the film narrative. Instructors can contrast scenes from films such as *Tess* (1979) and *Bagdad Café* (1988), which employ food symbolism in markedly different ways: *Tess* uses food imagery to naturalize Alec's thoughtless and arrogant taking of Tess's virginity, while *Bagdad Café* uses food imagery to convey information about Jasmin's experiences and evolving sense of selfhood. For food and film resources, and for a selected list of films in which food plays an integral part in the narrative, see APPENDIX II. For a selected list of exploitation films that involve eating, cooking, and often cannibalism, see APPENDIX III.

Instructors should work with students to help them see distinctions between "food films," which make food preparation, presentation, consumption, and so on integral to the story, and most other films, which use tangential food images and food behaviors as "realistic" details and plausible background elements. Efforts to locate differences between the two types of food-in-film examples will help students better understand the implications of food behaviors and the complex design of film narratives. Finding and describing distinctions between the two types of films makes it possible for students to see the belief systems implicit in characters' food behaviors. It also makes it possible for students to understand that film narratives are designed in very specific ways, and that audience impressions are shaped by (1) the order of scenes, (2) the time given to individual characters and story elements, (3) the number of times an element of the story is touched upon, (4) the character who takes audiences through the story and provides the most obvious voice or literal point of view, and (5) the characters, circumstances, or landscapes that tacitly present audiences with the film's unresolved ethical dilemma, its figurative point of view, and its underlying mood (Genette 1980, 1988; Bal 1997).

Instructors also need to work with students to help them find and describe differences between scenes in which food carries a symbolic meaning and scenes in which food has little more than a decorative role. Instructors should assist students in their efforts to find examples of food symbolism that depend on structured

parallels and oppositions. For example, in John Woo's film *The Killer* (1989), audiences learn that there are real connections between the killer and the detective because the film intercuts scenes of the two men smoking a cigarette in the same contemplative way. Students should also be encouraged to distinguish between types of food symbolism. Sometimes, food is used to convey general impressions of wealth or poverty. On other occasions, food behaviors provide insight into a character's psychological or emotional state. In other instances, characters' food selections give audiences information about their social circumstances and ethnic, regional, or national identities (Barthes 1974, 1977).

Instructors can move students toward a better understand of foodways and film aesthetics if they challenge them to describe how food and food



behaviors figure into a film's audiovisual design. To begin understanding how a specific food item or food behavior is presented, students need to recognize that framing choices and camera movements affect viewers' interpretations — a slow track-in to a close-up of a sumptuous piece of chocolate cake creates a very different impression than a shot in which that same piece of cake is a dot in the background of the frame. Editing choices shape audience impressions about food and food behaviors — Nicolas Roeg's film *Walkabout*

(1970) establishes an integral connection between "civilized" and "uncivilized" people by intercutting shots of a white Australian butcher chopping apart a rack of lamb ribs with shots of an Aboriginal youth chopping off the leg of a kangaroo he has just speared. Mise-en-scène elements (color design, lighting design, set design, costumes, props, makeup, actors' appearances and performance styles) also play a crucial role in determining audience interpretations. Dialogue, music, and sound design are equally important (Corrigan and White 2004).

As students develop a better understanding of film aesthetics, they will be able to analyze their food-in-film examples more effectively. Their close attention to cinematic and narrative details should enhance their attention to food imagery and character interactions that involve food. Students' analyses of food and film will, of course, also become more polished as they develop a vocabulary for discussing cuisine choices, food etiquette, recipe design, eating protocols, shopping strategies, cleanup policies, and more.

Part I:

Ask students to locate one or more food-in-film examples. Have them be clear about their example: Is food integral to the story or is it tangential to the scene/story? Ask them to consider the effect of the film's narrative design (its order of scenes, etc.). Second, have students determine if their example is one in which food carries a symbolic meaning or simply serves a decorative function. Ask them to describe what kind of cultural knowledge is required to notice and understand the food symbolism. Third, ask students to discuss how food and foodways are presented in a particular scene or sequence. Ask them to describe how choices of framing, editing, lighting, sound effects, and so on shape audience interpretations of specific food items and food behaviors.

It is often useful for students to share an illustrative film clip with classmates. It is always useful for them to write down a description of a specific scene or sequence. Sharing findings with classmates, with a clip or through a description, allows students to see patterns in film narratives and in representations of food

behavior and food symbolism. Discussions about what students have found also allow the instructor to ask students to consider the sort of things that are often not shown in mainstream film representations of foodways.

Instructors can also explore connections and distinctions between film and television by having student look at representations of food in television. Food and television examples can be found in shows like *Everybody Loves Raymond*, which are often set in the kitchen, and sitcoms such as *Frasier* in which scenes set in cafes often illustrate the characters' absurd snobbery. It is also useful to show commercials for fast food and diet pills to develop additional areas to consider in the study of food and television.

Part II:

Next, ask students to locate one or more examples of food in television. They can share segments of recorded television programming or write descriptions of their findings. Here again, it is useful for students to discuss what they have found. Instructors can help students clarify connections or contradictions between a television show's representation of food and the representation of food in the stream of commercials that air before, during, and after the program.

Part III:

Next, ask students to synthesize the information about food in film and television that has been generated by the class as a whole. Students should be able to build on class discussions to describe connections between representations of food and cultural norms. Teachers can ask students to explain how film/media representations depict relationships between food, identity, and community. Students can discuss patterns in film/television representations that link specific food items or behaviors with characters defined by their wealth or poverty, their physical perfection or aberration, or their rationality or emotionality. Instructors can vary the assignment's length, degree of sophistication, and level of research according to the type of course they are teaching.

ASSIGNMENT II:

ETHNOGRAPHIC STUDIES: FOOD, MOVIEGOING, AND TELEVISION VIEWING

Even students' informal self-studies of media activities indicate significant relationships between moviegoing, television viewing, food behaviors, and individuals' experience of "nourishment." Undergraduates' media logs reveal that the films students choose to see at a movie theater and the timing of their decision to see any given film at a theater is directly related to the size and timing of a film's television ad campaign. Students' media logs also indicate that, for many undergraduates, watching certain television programs is a necessary part of their day — when they miss certain staples of their viewing day, they experience a sense of loss, discomfort, and undernourishment. Their logs also suggest that the food students choose to eat and the time they choose to eat is often determined by television programming — some undergraduates select food that is easily consumed while watching television, and many feel most satisfied when they eat meals, alone or with roommates, while watching television.



One way to introduce students to the ethnographic study of food and film is to show an excerpt from a film such as Jon Bokenkamp's *After Sunset: The Life and Times of the Drive-in Theater* (1996). One of the drive-in theaters featured in the film is the Skyview in La Mesa, Texas. The film's segment on the Skyview Drive-In Theater shows scenes of children enjoying the drive-in's restored playground and images of adults visiting with each other

as they lean against their cars in the late afternoon sun and wait for sunset and the movie. Interviews with the proprietor and various patrons provide a brief history of the "chihuahua," invented in 1951 and today one of the Skyview's main draws. The Skyview's signature sandwich has chili, cabbage, and a secret-recipe pimento cheese spread sandwiched between two flat, fried corn tortillas. The "really messy, really good" sandwiches are topped with a jalapeno pepper and served in a special "chihuahua sack."

A review of ideas and questions surrounding foodways could be useful for students who will be reflecting on their own food behavior at movie theaters. They might also benefit from an overview of approaches to ethnographic studies. Offices that coordinate the work of human subject review boards can provide guidelines for even informal human subject studies.

Part I:

Ask students to write about and/or keep a log of their visits to movie theaters during a selected period of time. Have them consider the part food played in their moviegoing experience. Ask them to describe the aesthetic, economic, social, and/or political logic for their food choices. Ask them to consider ways that food did or did not figure into the meaningfulness of their moviegoing experience.

Ask students to explain their food selections. Ask them if or how specific food choices were influenced by the other people attending the movie. Ask them to describe their favorite movie food when they went to the movies with their family as a child. Ask them to compare that choice with their current preferences. Ask them to write about what they eat at the movies when they go with roommates, casual friends, a steady boy/girl friend, or a new date.

Instructors can also ask students to explain if or how changes in their financial situation affect their movie food choices, if or how the type of film they are seeing affects their choices, and if or how the type of theater they are attending determines their food selection. Class discussion of students' observations can be extremely valuable. When students share their experiences, it becomes possible for them to see that

food is an integral component of the moviegoing experience and that their individual food and movie choices are often part of larger patterns in moviegoing and food behavior.

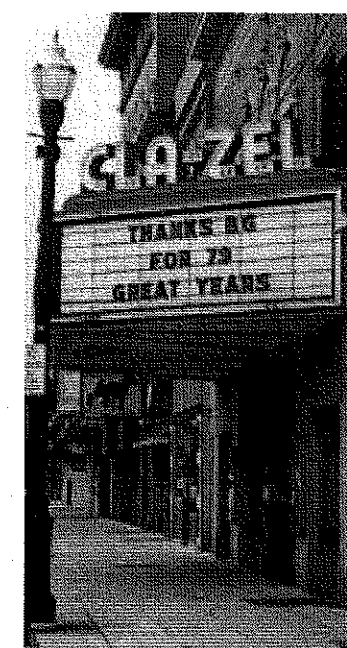
Part II:

Next, ask students to write about or keep a log of their domestic food and television habits. Ask students to examine ways that food has been integrated into their television viewing choices and ways that television viewing has figured into their food choices and experiences. Students should attempt to articulate the logic for their food choices and the inter-relationships between meals and television programming.

Students should be encouraged to study or reflect on their behavior. Are there differences in their food-television behaviors when they are with certain family members, close friends, roommates, or steady boy/girl friends? Are there changes when a casual friend comes by or when they are entertaining a new boy/girl friend? Instructors can ask students to describe any other factors that influence their food-television viewing practices. Here again, it is useful and always amusing for students to share their accounts with the class.

Part III:

Given the increasing importance of home theater as a mass media venue, teachers should next ask students to write about or keep a log of their domestic home theater experiences and the way food is integrated into those, more or less formal, events. Ask students to describe their media collections, the equipment in their home media center, and any patterns that have developed in getting films to view in their home theater. Building on that information, students



can explore relationships between food and home theater viewing. Ask students to consider ways in which their food and home theater practices might be affected by their relationship to the other viewers. Do they behave differently in their parents' home theater setting and the media center in their own place? What is different about their food and home theater choices when they are alone, with roommates, close friends, steady boy/girl friends, classmates, or a new date? What are the main factors that determine food and viewing choices in their home theater setting? When students compare accounts of these experiences, it helps them see that individuals interact with mass media in myriad ways.

Part IV:

Next, ask students to write about distinctions and connections between food behavior in the context of moviegoing, television viewing, and home theater experiences. It might be useful for students to look back at their essays on food in film and television to see if there are points of contact between media representations of food and individuals' food and film/media viewing behaviors. Instructors can vary the assignment's length, degree of sophistication, and level of research according to the type of course they are teaching.

CONCLUDING OBSERVATIONS

After working with students on assignments such as these, I have found that linking the study of film to the study of food helps undergraduates see that media representations are structured according to social conventions rather than natural relations. It facilitates their awareness of the complex and continually shifting conventions that shape public food selection and film viewing behavior. Integrating the study of food and film makes it possible for graduate and undergraduate students to see the conventional aspects of even private food and media consumption, and it illuminates the degree to which mass media can affect domestic habits and the rhythms of daily life.

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- For a selected list of books and articles on "Food in the Movies" see <<http://www.lib.berkeley.edu/MRC/foodbib.html>>.
- For journal articles and book chapters on food and film, search research databases such as the MLA International Bibliography using search terms such as food and film, film and eating, eating, cooking, cannibalism, etc.
- For information on current food and film venues (e.g. cinema pubs, movie theatres with restaurants, etc) search google or yahoo using key words such as food and film.



APPENDIX I: SELECTED LIST OF FILMS WITH MEMORABLE FOOD SCENES

- Portrait of a Rarebit Fiend* (1906) film shows hallucinatory effects of over-consumption;
- A Corner in Wheat* (1909) series of scenes contrast food consumption by rich and poor;
- Battleship Potemkin* (1925) early scene shows that maggots in ship's food cause mutiny;
- Battle of the Century* (1927) spectacular custard-pie fight at end of film;
- Public Enemy* (1931) scene of James Cagney shoving a grapefruit into Mae Clark's face;
- Freaks* (1932) dramatic sequence of dinner celebration with disparate carnival figures;
- Dinner at Eight* (1933) series of scenes showing emotional crises at society dinner party;
- Gone With the Wind* (1939) Vivien Leigh declares she will never be hungry again;
- Citizen Kane* (1941) montage of Charles and Emily at breakfast, as marriage deteriorates;
- Tom Jones* (1963) scene midway shows a meal as foreplay to sexual adventure;

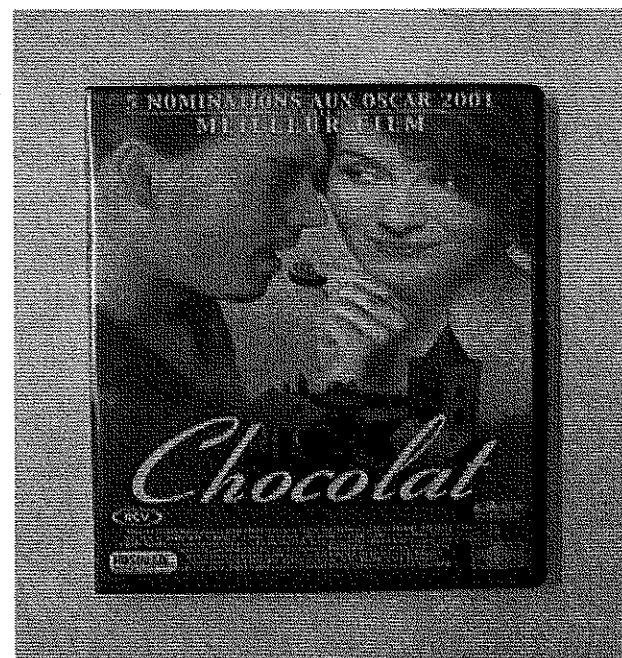
Mary Poppins (1964) Mary shows how a spoonful of sugar helps the medicine go down;
The Graduate (1967) early scenes of Ben at his graduation party/parents' cocktail party;
Women in Love (1969) Rupert's pronouncements on fig eating inflicts pain on Hermione;
M.A.S.H. (1970) sequence with Trapper John and Hawkeye re-enacting the Last Supper;
Phantom of Liberty (1974) surreal scene of bourgeois couples at table seated on toilets;
Picnic at Hanging Rock (1975) sequence of girls at picnic establishes their delicate state;
Jeanne Dielman (1975) scenes of cooking and housework in agonizing real time;
Tess (1979) scene of picking strawberries is a metaphor for Alec's arrogant rape of Tess;
King of Comedy (1983) dinner date between Sandra Bernhard and kidnapped Jerry Lewis;
Life is Sweet (1990) bulimic girl makes her boyfriend cover her with chocolate during sex;
Bedevil (1993) faux documentary sequence of white-tablecloth, Aboriginal-bush cooking;
Pulp Fiction (1994) food scenes include gangsters discussing terms for fast food.

For a list of "Food Films" that includes early or classic films see: <http://www.londonfoodfilmfiesta.co.uk/Filmma~1/Foodfi~1.htm>.

APPENDIX II: SELECTED LIST OF RECENT FOOD FILMS (eating/cooking is pertinent to the story)

Au Petit Margeury (1995)
Babette's Feast (1988)
Bagdad Café (1988)
Big Night (1996)
The Blue Diner (2000)
Bolivia (2001)
La Cena (1998)
A Chef in Love (1996)
Chinese Feast (1995)
Chocolate (2000)
The Comedy of God (1995)
The Cook, the Thief, His Wife, and Her Lover (1989)
Delicatessen (1990)

Diner (1982)
Le Diner (2001)
Dinner Rush (2001)
Dirty Rice (1997)
Discrete Charm of the Bourgeoisie (1972)
Distant Thunder (1973)
Do the Right Thing (1989)
Eat Drink Man Woman (1994)
Eat Your Heart Out (1997)
Eating (1990)
Eating and Weeping (2002)
Eating L.A. (1999)
Eating Raoul (1982)
A Feast at Midnight (1994)
Felicia's Journey (1999)
Festen (1998)
Fried Green Tomatoes (1992)
Le Grand Bouffle (1973)
Heavy (1973)
Hotel Spendide (1999)
How Tasty Was My Little Frenchman (1970)
The Joy Luck Club (1993)
Kitchen (1997)



Kitchen Stories (2003)
The Last Supper (1995)
Like Water for Chocolate (1993)
Mostly Martha (2001)

My Dinner with Andre (1981)
Mystic Pizza (1988)
Red Sorghum (1987)
The Road to Wellville (1994)
Silence of the Lambs (1991)
Simply Irresistible (1999)
Soul Food
Soylent Green (1973)
Tampopo (1985)
Tortilla Soup (2001)
The Wedding Banquet (1993)
What's Cooking (2000)
What's Eating Gilbert Grape (1993)
Who Is Killing the Great Chefs of Europe? (1978)

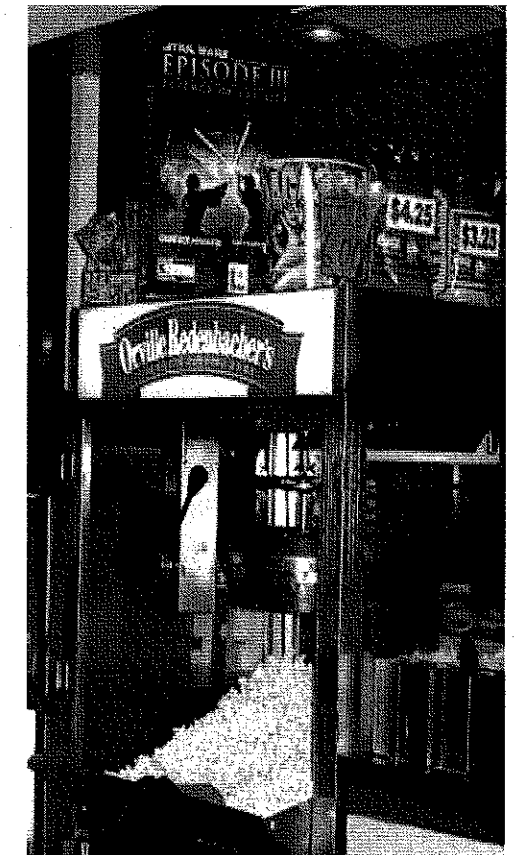
Willy Wonka & the Chocolate Factory (1971)
Woman on Top (2000)
 For a brief list of "Food Films," see <http://www.eat-online.net/english/artistic/movies.htm>.

For a list of "Food Films" that includes many contemporary films see <http://www.londonfoodfilmfiesta.co.uk/Filmma~1/Foodfi~1.htm>.

For a list of recent independent food films, see <http://www.slowfoodonfilm.it/eng/annoxanno.lasso?cod=2004>.

APPENDIX III: SELECTED LIST OF FOOD-RELATED EXPLOITATION FILMS

Attack of the Killer Tomatoes (1978)
Blood Diner (1987)
Blood Feast (1963)
Death Row Diner (1988)
Flesh Eating Mothers (1989)
Little Shop of Horrors (1960)
Motel Hell (1980)
Night of the Living Dead (1968)



Rhetoric / Writing

FOOD AND FOODWAYS

IN TEACHING WRITING

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To those of us who consider M&Ms as necessary to the act of composing as pen or keyboard, it is obvious that food and writing are linked. This relationship is comically pictured in an undated *New Yorker* cartoon one of my colleagues has on her office door. The "Writer's Food Pyramid" shows a base of "The Caffeines," upon which sit "The Nicotines," then "The Alcohols," and finally "Pizza" on top. To those of us who teach writing, writing about food can provide myriad ways to link personal experience, curiosity, and emotional connections with many of the ways of knowing and modes of inquiry valued in the academy. Whether used to provoke emotionally powerful, detailed memories, explore issues of identity and social relations, or research and examine social practices, the intersection of food and writing is full of potential, almost regardless of the specific theories and curricular contexts that shape our teaching.

I take as my starting point that there is some truth to the old adage to "write what you know." Certainly food is a topic with which everyone has first-hand experience and about which many have powerful emotional memories and associations — and it is a topic of interest to students. In the first-year writing program at our university, for example, the most popular set of readings with students currently is titled "Weight Debate," in the textbook *Writing and Reading across the Curriculum*. In this essay I trace the presence of food in student writing and suggest that a more systematic, considered attention to food as a topic for writing is warranted. Toward this end, I discuss several ways writing teachers can use food and foodways as topics for student writing and provide several activities to illustrate how to do so.

I draw on the model of foodways conceived by Don Yoder and articulated by Lucy Long in her essay in this issue.¹ As Long argues, the concept of

foodways can be used generatively and analytically, as both theory and method — particularly to reflect on aspects of "food" that may be so familiar as to be invisible, seemingly hidden from memory and from analysis. The foodways model can also be used to explore the cultural meanings surrounding particular aspects of food, thus making it particularly helpful in isolating details that are significant and in leading students from memory to observation to analysis of how meaning is constructed. It is this broad conception of foodways that informs my discussion of how those of us who teach writing might draw upon food simultaneously as a topic for student writing and a vehicle for teaching a variety of writing abilities.

FOODWAYS IN STUDENT WRITING

In composition studies scholarship, food has been directly addressed as a vehicle for teaching writing somewhat rarely. Some of us may remember Peter Elbow's metaphor of "cooking" in *Writing without Teachers* to describe the process of composing, particularly how ideas can deepen with time and through sharing with others (1973, 48-75). Similarly, we may also remember Ira Shor's discussion in his 1980 *Critical Teaching and Everyday Life* of how he uses "the hamburger" to promote critical reflection by his students about ordinary objects they encounter in their daily lives (162-163), an exercise I will return to later. The relative absence of attention to food in composition scholarship, however, contrasts with its presence in student writing. Aside from anecdotal experiences many teachers have with students who have chosen to write about food and foodways, evidence of student interest in these topics is amply demonstrated among published collections of student writing.

During the mid-1980s and 1990s, St. Martin's Press and Bedford Books, national publishers of college-level writing textbooks, began to publish anthologies of student essays from college writing classes.² The St. Martin's series continues, with the fifth edition having been released in 2004. As well, in 1985, Heath published *What Makes Writing Good*, a collection of "best" pieces of student writing selected by writing teachers from across the country. These

collections include several essays that address aspect of foodways, whether as significant details that characterize memories or stereotypes or as guiding ideas for a whole essay.³ As might be expected, foodways make their way into particular types of writing, most especially reminiscences about people and profiles about places and events.

Memoirs about people are prominent in these collections, and the presence of foodways varies from encounters with cultural "others" to associations of familiar foodways with caregivers. *What Makes Writing Good* contains an observation about a Cambodian family in Boston, "At Home in America," that recounts the unfamiliar but delicious spicy aromas in the family apartment, the meal eaten with chopsticks. Bedford/St. Martin's *Student Writers at Work* contains two reminiscences of grandmothers, one a young woman's reflection on how her Grandma wasn't the type to feed "everyone chocolate chip cookies that she has baked herself" (45); the other has a memory of a kitchen where "The Teapot Whistles" (52). The second edition of the St. Martin's series contains a reminiscence of "Gail," a dance teacher who, each Christmas, baked her students "toe-shoe cookies" with "pink icing where the satin and ribbons went," made with her own hand-crafted cookie cutter (33). The third edition of the St. Martin's series includes "Candles," in which the author recalls his father's attempt to bake a cake for his fifth birthday because his mother had been jailed for taking part in a protest at a nuclear power plant.

When students write about places or events, they occasionally select topics that invoke foodways, whether as a central focus of the paper, as a significant detail of the narrative, or as a setting. *What Makes Writing Good* includes a narrative set on a tram at Disney World where a young girl is curious about a "gypsy" who holds a "large, flat, circular lollipop with a smiling Mickey Mouse face on both sides"; the narrative ends with the tram pulling in to the station and the "gypsy" handing her the lollipop (276-278). The same volume contains "Two Descriptions" of the Airliner Bar in Iowa City (53-54), as well as details about the poor quality of Air Force food in "A Great Way of Life" (167). The second edition of the St.

Martin's series takes its title, *The Great American Bologna Festival*, from a student essay on a festival in Yale, Michigan. This edition also contains "Good Food, Good People," a profile of the Grand Forks Food Co-Op (135-137). The third edition contains "Our Daily Bread," an observation of a soup kitchen. And the title essay for this edition, "Free Falling," tells of a young man's last conversation with his mother before leaving for college, set in a restaurant, where she advises him that "The food won't make you gain weight; the beer will" (14).

Only a few food-related writings in these collections stem from more research-oriented or expository assignments. Two essays from different editions of St. Martin's address a central foodways concept, what different cultures consider to be edible. The second edition contains the researched essay "Cannibalism: It Still Exists," a discussion of how various world cultures and individuals have practiced cannibalism, whether for cultural/dietary or religious/ritual purposes, or in order to survive where other "food" is unavailable (67-70). A researched essay in the third edition argues that Vietnamese-Americans are being targeted by a California law that is "Creating a Criminal" through criminalizing the selling of "pets" as food sources. The student writer adeptly identifies the cultural relativism in the concept of "pet" as well as the arbitrariness of a law that prohibits the raising and eating of dogs while permitting the raising and eating of rabbits (95-97). A third essay, "WSU Dining Facilities" in the second edition of St. Martin's, is about an aspect of foodways ubiquitous in colleges and universities, student complaints about cafeteria food (107-112). Interestingly, the writer focuses his review not on food quality in Wright State University's dining facilities but on the failings of its third-party contractor, identifying the proper means by which students can make their complaints known.

From my own experience teaching writing, foodways topics are sometimes selected — both by teachers and students — for evaluation assignments. Often such an assignment serves as a bridge between personal and research writing, linking the evaluation of a familiar or readily observed material object or situation to the evaluation of published sources in more

academically-oriented assignments. *Writing in a Visual Age*, a 2006 composition textbook, for example, opens its chapter on evaluation with a full-page color image of an ice cream sundae and a quote from a *Consumer Reports* article rating premium ice creams. The article is reprinted as an example evaluation, and two of the remaining six published examples are restaurant reviews.⁴

Taken as a whole, these student writings show traces of foodways while simultaneously demonstrating a variety of types of writing assignments and academic writing abilities. Many assignments call on students to produce detailed writings that include reflection about the significance or meaning of what is recounted. Some require drawing upon memories, others require conducting observations and/or interviews and reporting the data collected, and still others require traditional library research and critique and/or synthesis. The writing abilities valued in such assignments may include the generation of vivid details that appeal to the senses and that allow readers to imagine scenes and people unknown to them; the selection of details appropriate to the guiding focus/purpose of an essay; a clear sense of the significance to the writer — and to readers — of the person or scene selected; how to “hook” a reader with significant details and/or telling anecdotes that support or develop the overall focus or purpose; and, particularly for expository or researched writing, how to learn about an unfamiliar subject in order to develop an informed opinion that is based upon sources wider than one’s personal experience. In such a range of types of writing, food and foodways can provide topics that stimulate student interest and bridge personal experience and research assignments. Particularly with regard to assignments that teach research skills from observation to library and online research, foodways scholarship and popular nonfiction and journalism about foodways present resources to extend students’ personal interest with wider, researched perspectives. And, to invoke the many richly textured images of food in these student essays as a whole, foodways can be a vehicle for examining how the sensual aspects of food shape our memories, perceptions, identities, and cultures — matters important to many of us who teach writing. As I hope I’ve demonstrated with this survey, based on

student interest alone, there is warrant for a more considered look at how we can draw on foodways in order to promote thoughtful observation and reflection consonant with our overall goals in teaching both personal experience and academically-oriented, researched writing.

FOODWAYS IN COMPOSITION STUDIES

In *Critical Teaching and Everyday Life*, Ira Shor recounts his “teaching experiments” at CUNY in the 1970s to prompt his students first to observe an aspect of their everyday experiences and then to reflect on it, using the everyday as a means for an analysis and restructuring of social relations. Shor describes a three-step sequence to lead students through a process of reflection and analysis, beginning with writing a detailed observation of a concrete, everyday object, particularly focusing upon gathering detail drawn from observation and sensory experience. As Shor explains it, making students slow down and experience the sensory is a crucial step in the process of observation. The second phase of the sequence expands upon the observation by placing the object described into the realm of social relations. Shor prompts discussion of questions such as “What is its human context? Who benefits how from it? What are its social roots and consequences?” (158). Such questions allow teacher and students to identify social problems surrounding the object, leading from the sensory realm of immediate, personal experience to the social worlds we inhabit. The final phase leads students to think creatively and proactively about how to resolve one or more of the social problems identified in their analysis, a process that frames observation and analysis as productive, as leading to action and change.

While Shor’s extended discussion involves the desk (156-162), he also discusses how he and his students explored an everyday object familiar to his students, as well as an intimate part of their lives: the hamburger (162-163; 181-182).⁵ As Shor explains it, the idea of using the hamburger as an object of analysis came from “the hot grease smell of frying burgers” as he walked through the campus cafeteria and on a hunch brought one to class. Thus students begin with a burger fresh from the grill, one that, on observation looks much

less appetizing than they initially had thought. They move on to recognize the burger as the source of employment for many of them, and from there they consider such socio-cultural perspectives as the growth in fast food franchises in the US, the suburbanization of this country, and our resulting dependence on automobiles:

The burger is the nexus of so many daily realities. It’s not only the king of fast foods, the lunch/snack/dinner quickie meal, but it’s also the source of wages for many students who work in the burger chains. In addition, the spread of fast food franchises ties into the suburban dispersal of the American city. This dispersal is further connected to the automobilization of American life. The car, the suburbs, and the burger thus connect central themes of everyday life. So, I was able to hold in my hand a weighty interstice of mass experience. 162

Eventually, Shor recounts, students “recreate the entire production and distribution process which delivered a burger to a consumer” (163). It is intriguing that Shor’s model of analysis, when applied to an everyday food, leads students to explore so many aspects of foodways — product, procurement, preparation, presentation, consumption, context, and performance, for example. It is also intriguing that Shor’s goal as a writing teacher was precisely to lead students to do such analysis.

Of particular note to those of us who teach research-based writing, Shor in these exercises from the 1970s leads students from their experiences and observations about a material — and in this case edible — aspect of everyday life and draws them toward a variety of analyses that can be researched — as amply illustrated for the hamburger and fast food generally in Eric Schlosser’s 2001 *Fast Food Nation*. Extending Shor’s example of the hamburger, we can think of teaching writing as helping students to observe and generate rich, vivid sensory details about food and to use those observations and details to prolong, extend, deepen, or add texture to their exploration. That is, we can teach students to observe everyday foodways in ways that generate new questions and new lines for reflection and analysis. And most particularly, we can

use foodways to extend Shor’s use of a familiar food item as a means to involve students in attending to the visual and the sensory in order to initiate a process of exploration and analysis. That is, might we use a familiar food to prompt students to explore *foodways*, and in the process, engage them in the sorts of exploration, research, and analysis of identity, social relations, and culture that Shor and others have advocated in the teaching of writing?⁶

TEACHING STRATEGIES FOR WRITING ABOUT FOOD AND FOODWAYS

As shown in the survey of student essays above, a common writing assignment asks students to write about a person, place, or event that is significant in their lives. Such an assignment can focus specifically on food-related memories, events, and places. With such a focus, teachers can draw on the foodways model to help students generate memories with vivid details and identify significant details for further reflection, analysis, and revision. Such an assignment could be supplemented at several points with published examples of food writing, particularly those that highlight the sensory aspects of food, in order to assist students in translating their sensory impressions into written discourse, as well as in selecting from among myriad details those that are carriers of significant meanings.

Of particular relevance for teaching academically-oriented writing, this assignment can be used as a way of generating foodways topics to be explored through subsequent assignments that involve research. That is, the familiar assignment to write a profile about a person, event, or place could be shaped as a way to move students from observation and personal experience toward synthesizing these with research, perhaps both interviews and library research. To illustrate, a food-related reminiscence might be followed by a research-based profile of a food that is part of the reminiscence. A reminiscence involving a family meal might lead to a subsequent profile of matzo ball soup, fried chicken, soy burgers, or oatmeal cookies. Indeed, profiles can be written about any food item that students are familiar with or interested in learning about. Students and teachers alike can find a wealth of such types of writing in food studies

finished, students should freewrite for several minutes, to capture on paper the ideas, associations, feelings, and details that they pictured in their minds. Guided imagery can be used for a variety of purposes, but it is particularly effective for leading students to remember things they have experienced, to imagine the experience of something they know about only from reading, or to imagine how they might respond in a situation they have never encountered.

The script below begins with a concrete food item that is used as a basis for remembering and asking questions to prompt students' memories. The script begins with a particular food item, and students are prompted to think of significant food items from their own experience. This guided imagery begins with the teacher providing students with small portions of a food — in this case cornbread — telling them to refrain from eating until they are prompted to do so, and asking them to close their eyes and listen, until they are prompted to open their eyes again. They should keep pen and paper close by.

As you know, we are learning about how important food memories and food traditions are to us and about how our foodways reflect our values and lifestyles. To help all of us understand these concepts more concretely, I've brought in cornbread, which has been a significant part of my family's life and our values. Each of you has a piece of cornbread, and in the next few minutes, I'd like you to listen to me talk about cornbread, while you listen, imagine, and think of foods or foodways that are important to you and/or to your family.

Open your eyes now, and take a couple of minutes to look at your cornbread. Smell it, touch it, pick it up, and hold it in your hand. When you hold it and look at it, what does it remind you of? Have you eaten cornbread before? Often, or only a few times? . . . Now, if you would like to, take a small bite, a *small* bite, of the cornbread. Don't take a big bite or eat too fast, or you'll get crumbs caught in your throat and cough. As you chew

it slowly, think about the way it feels as you chew. Is it crunchy, doughy, crumbly? Think about how it tastes. Does this cornbread taste like cornbread that you've eaten before, or not? As you think about these questions, close your eyes again. You may continue to eat your cornbread as I continue talking.

My mother serves cornbread at dinner just about every day, always a fresh pan brought to the table piping hot from the oven. I still remember her mother, my grandmother, running from the hot oven to the dinner table, skillet in hand, to serve the cornbread while it was still hot. My mother and her sisters always say that "Daddy liked his cornbread HOT!" Our cornbread is always served out of the same cast iron skillet it bakes in, to keep it hot enough to melt the butter or jam some like to slather on it. Whether dinner is a pot of homemade vegetable soup, roast beef and the trimmings, chicken and dumplings, or just an assortment of fresh vegetables like okra, turnip greens, and field peas, cornbread is on the table, too. Can you recall any foods that are equally important in your family? To your parents, grandparents, your neighbors, your friends, or to others you know who are from an older generation? When people in your life talk about memories that are important to them, what foods, or holiday meals or traditions, do they talk about? When you think back on your life, what food-related memories stand out as important for you? What smells, sights, and tastes come to mind?

My mother — and my father too — talk about taking cornbread to school for lunch when they were children. Growing up during the Great Depression, they both recall that day-old cornbread would be crumbled into a pail, topped off with fresh buttermilk, and carried to school. My mother still occasionally makes herself a glass of cornbread and buttermilk. Her experience seems very alien to me, but I have come to appreciate the symbolic meaning for her of drinking that glass of buttermilk and

cornbread. Do you eat any foods that are unfamiliar to your friends, or that they might think of as unappetizing? Do your family members, particularly those from older generations, eat foods unfamiliar or unappetizing to you? Why are these foods important to you or to them? Are there any foods or meals that you or your family turn to when the food budget is tight? Are you or your family believers in using up leftovers? How do you do this? And why — to save money, to prevent waste, or for other reasons?

I bake cornbread the way my mother does, and the way her mother did. You start with a well-seasoned cast iron skillet and buttermilk. If you don't have either of these, there's really no point in continuing. In fact, I think that the women in my family cooked pan-fried chicken so often just so their cornbread wouldn't stick to the skillet. My mother always uses a prepared cornbread mix, by Martha White. I prefer White Lilly myself, and I expect that my grandmother most often mixed the cornmeal, baking powder, and salt herself. You can follow recipe on the back of the bag, but the best way is to glance at it, stir in the egg, and pour in buttermilk until the batter looks right — liquid enough to pour into the pan, but not too thin. You have to develop a feel for it. Have you ever watched someone cook who doesn't use a recipe? Do you ever cook this way yourself? Are there any activities where you have developed a "feel" for how to do something?

At this point, I'd like you to open your eyes, take a few moments for them to focus, and jot down some of the ideas you thought of while I was talking. What foods are important to you or to your family? What smells, sights, and tastes do you remember? What feelings do you remember that are associated with meals or with particular foods?

Elaborating on the Significance of Details and Context.

Once students have done some initial drafting, they can use the foodways model as a heuristic for identifying the areas where they need to expand on the significance or meanings of food-related memories, experiences, or observations. Students should be instructed to include in their drafts a description of a concrete food or dish — the *product*, to draw on the foodways model. Working in small groups, students should read their descriptions aloud to one another, one at a time, and give feedback to one another. Initially, students should focus on the material and the sensory: Can you picture the food in your mind? What does it look like? Smell like? How does it feel if you touch it? How does it taste? What does it remind you of? What details might the writer add to help you picture the food more vividly?

Then students should focus on the *context* and *performance* surrounding the food, to draw on two other aspects of foodways. When and where is this food or dish eaten? Who eats it? How does it fit into the meal system of those who eat it? That is, is it usually a breakfast item, a snack, a quick lunch, and so on? What attitudes or beliefs do people — and specifically the writer — hold about the food? What details in the description help readers appreciate or understand these attitudes and beliefs?

Following this session, students can be instructed to add to their drafts additional details that would help readers both to picture the food being described and additional discussion to help readers form the sorts of emotional associations with it or attitudes toward it that the writer wants to impart. They can also be instructed to add one or two paragraphs that discuss the meanings of this food or dish for the writer or for a particular social group, as well as associations and beliefs that are related to it.

Asking Questions, Developing Frames.

Once students have written a draft, they can be encouraged to use the foodways model to ask new questions about their food topics in order to generate new perspectives. These might be new perspectives

to add to their drafts, new perspectives to use in framing an introduction and conclusion, or new perspectives to develop a tighter focus for the paper. In short, the foodways model can be used as a heuristic for revision.

Have students work in pairs or small groups to workshop one another's drafts. Each student should be provided with a worksheet that lists the nine aspects of foodways, provides a thumbnail definition of each aspect, and provides blank space that students can use to fill in their comments. Students should share their drafts with one another, whether these are read orally or hard copies are read silently. Students should then discuss the drafts one by one. For each draft, they should identify:

- what aspects of foodways are addressed and in what part of the paper,
- the one or two aspects that are focused upon the most; brainstorm questions about other aspects of foodways that the paper doesn't address,
- what might be added to the paper if a different aspect of foodways were focused on; and
- a concrete suggestion for how to begin and/or end the paper by focusing upon a specific aspect of foodways.

Alternatively, students might be instructed to use this peer discussion in order to generate one or more areas for research in subsequent assignments.

Notes

¹ To reiterate, the nine components of foodways are product, procurement, presentation, preparation, presentation, consumption, clean-up, context, and performance.

² The St. Martin's series is still in publication, with the fifth edition having been released in 2004.

³ While the assignments that generated these student writings are not always provided in these collections, it is my impression that the food and foodways topics were selected by students and not assigned by their teachers.

⁴ Skimming current composition textbooks focused on the visual such as this one reveals a noticeable number of visual images that portray aspects of foodways. *Picturing Texts* by Faigley et al. (2004) contains about two dozen food-related images, from art images such as Edward Hopper's "Nighthawks" and Bosch's "The Garden of Delights" to photos of birthday parties and diners with neon signs, even a series of menu covers.

⁵ A particularly teachable synthesis of Shor's exercises is provided in Virginia Perdue's (1990) "The Politics of Teaching Detail."

⁶ Of particular relevance, given composition studies explorations of the intersections of culture, power, and discourse/writing instruction, folklore and food studies scholarship offers a wealth of analyses of the intersections of food, culture, and power. Mintz's (1996) *Tasting Food, Tasting Freedom* is one such example.

⁷ I am indebted to Stephen Zemelman and Harvey Daniels (1988) for introducing me to guided imagery as a prompt for prewriting. In *A Community of Writers*, they devote an entire chapter to this topic and provide several sample scripts (147-163).

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Folklore / Anthropology

FOODWAYS:

USING FOOD TO TEACH FOLKLORE THEORIES AND METHODS

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The cultural domains of food and folklore share many things.¹ Both are frequently considered trivial, innocuous, domestic, feminine, simple, mundane and everyday, unworthy of intellectual scrutiny. Whether this is a legacy of Plato's disdain for "things of the body," the Puritan's distrust of "pleasures of the flesh," or the association of food with women's work, scholarly pursuit of either subject has had to fight its way into the academy. Be that as it may, both the two subjects and the two disciplines "feed" into each other in numerous ways. The intersection is seen most obviously with folk foods — foods that circulate in oral and imitative tradition within a geographically and historically bounded group — or in the traditional lore surrounding food — beliefs, customs, proverbs, anecdotes, etc, but the possible connections between the two are vast. I explore in this essay some ways in which folklore contributes to the study of food and offer an assignment that illustrates some key concepts fundamental to both fields.

I. FOLKLORE SCHOLARSHIP

Folklore as a scholarly pursuit began in the late 1700s/early 1800s, drawing upon German romantic nationalism and English collectors of "popular antiquities." Historically, folklorists studied the traditions of self-contained, relatively isolated groups whose culture was mostly conservative, transmitted through oral, imitative, and informal media. Contemporary folklore continues to study that subject matter but has expanded to encompass materials and behaviors traditional of any group of people sharing commonalities of any type, including those living in the post-modern, mass-mediated, technologically-based world. Furthermore, in the 1970s, the discipline shifted in focus from product to process and performance, from culture as a constraint and determiner of behavior to culture as gen-

erative, a resource for individual creativity. This shift was encapsulated by Dan Ben-Amos' (1971) definition of folklore as "artistic communication in small groups." Drawing heavily upon sociolinguistic theory, much of the work of folklorists today addresses the meanings of traditions for the individuals participating in them, asking why people continue activities and customs from the past, how they adapt them to meet new circumstances and needs, how they express, construct and challenge identity and relationships through them.² Piecing together my own understanding of the subject matter of the scholarly discipline of Folklore (or Folkloristics³), I offer my students a working definition of folklore as being the products and processes by which individuals meaningfully connect with a past, place, and people. Looking for such "meaningful connections" allows students to get past the stereotype of folklore as the quaint and somewhat petrified artifacts of isolated, backwards groups of people.

Food has long been a research subject in folklore scholarship. In folklife ethnographies of traditional cultures and communities, it has been treated as a major aspect of both everyday life and communal celebrations. As early as 1895, John Gregory Bourke explored the folk foods of the Rio Grande, describing the foods that were traditional showed historical and geographic continuity to the area. Folklore scholars have continued Bennett's focus, looking at other regional and ethnic foods of the US (see Kaplan, et. al. 1986). Beginning in the 1960s, food was recognized as a cultural and social construction. Scholars addressed food as artistic expression, as individual innovation, as communicative tool, as the basis for community and the construction of identity — not only for traditional groups, but for contemporary, emerging, mass-mediated cultural and social groups as well (see Neustadt 1992; Lockwood and Lockwood 1998, 2000). Going back to the definition of folklore as "meaningful connections," food easily demonstrates the idea of connection. It is an obvious subject around which people reminisce, recognize associations, and explore meaning. It is also a particularly useful subject to illuminate a number of key concepts in the study of folklore.

II. FOODWAYS

One of the most useful ideas offered by folklore for the study of food is the concept of foodways. Folklorist Don Yoder introduced it in the early 1970s. Borrowing the term from anthropology and adapting it to European ethnological models for studying the whole range of activities and expressive forms within a group ("folklife" rather than "folklore"), Yoder (1972) suggested "foodways" to include not only what people eat, but when, where, why, how and with whom. Yoder's work coincided with the paradigm shift in American folkloristics that drew from linguistic and structuralist theories to re-define folklore as cultural process rather than sets of artifacts, and it has been a foundational premise for most folkloristic research on food traditions ever since. The term has become common parlance outside of folklore, frequently overlapping with food habits, food culture, foodlore, and food traditions.

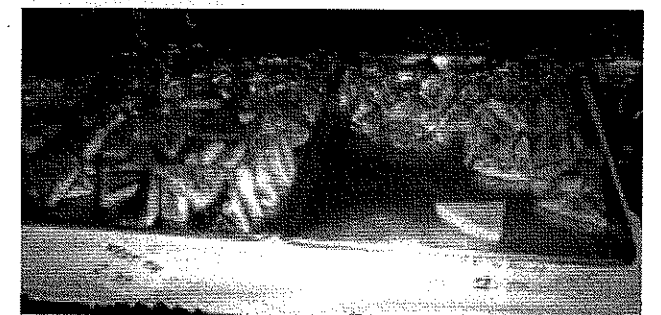
The concept of foodways is both a method and a theory. As method, it offers a model for systematically identifying and describing food traditions. I categorize the various activities of those traditions as nine components: product, procurement, preservation, preparation, presentation, consumption, clean-up, context (meal system), and performance (conceptualization, symbolism).⁴

Foodways as a methodology can be applied on a number of levels — from a macro level of a culture to smaller groups to single individuals to particular meals, dishes, or even ingredients. The assignment given here focuses on a single meal.

As theory, foodways posits an interpretive lens for the multifaceted and multi-vocal nature of food. First, in identifying the range of activities connected to food and eating, it demonstrates that food is integrated into our everyday and celebratory lives — oftentimes in ways of which we are unaware. We frequently do not notice an ingredient's significance until it is missing, as demonstrated in the folktale about the king's daughter comparing him to salt. He is offended and throws her out of the palace; she finds work as a scullery maid in his kitchen and is able to prove the worth of salt by leaving it out of a banquet. Secondly, the foodways model recognizes the interconnectedness

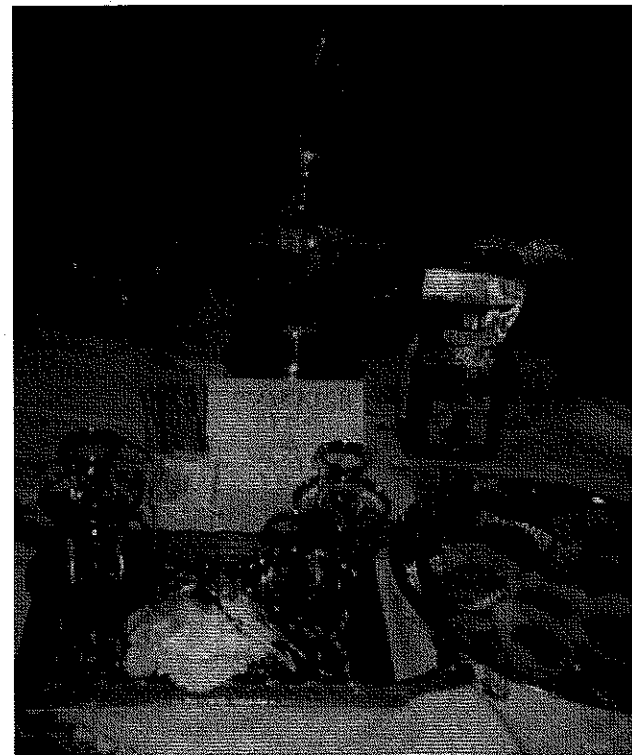
of these activities. Each part of the network shapes, informs, and influences the other. For example, the size of refrigerator available for preservation affects the amount or even types of food purchased, which then affects the choices one has for a meal. When I rented a house for a year in Northern Ireland in the early 1990s, I found that the small refrigerator meant that feeding a family of five required daily trips to the grocer and baker as well as daily visits from the milkman. I soon discovered that I was enmeshed in a larger community of both food producers and consumers whose lives were shaped by the daily acquisition of food — all due to the limited capacity of my refrigerator. Similarly, my university students tell me that they would probably eat more nutritious foods if such foods were more easily available, and they could procure them conveniently and inexpensively.

Thirdly, foodways recognizes food as a carrier and construction of meaning for individuals and groups. Cultural symbolism as well as personal meaning or "meaningfulness" can be attached to a food anywhere within this framework. For example, a particular dish may be symbolic on a cultural level, such as chocolates representing romance, but, because of its procurement, such as buying in bulk at a food store, actually carries



a different meaning. Similarly, food products can carry meaning for an individual because of meaningful associations elsewhere in the foodways system. For example, the ground beef in chili con carne might come from home-raised cattle rather than the local supermarket. It is the same item, but the association for that eater would be different. In the first case, it is part of "Bessie" the cow; in the second, it is simply beef or commodity. We tend to think of significant foods as those that have a public, even an iconic status,

such as turkey for thanksgiving or grits for southern heritage, but meaning is frequently unintentionally and unconsciously attached to a food through the other activities surrounding it. Foodways offers a way to identify where the meaning of a food lies for a given individual. Similarly, an individual can and may insert his or her inventiveness, artistry, or creativity into any part of the system without noticeably changing the final product. Soup served in a handmade mug might be the same soup that is served on fine China, but the two methods of presentation represent two different



occasions, socio-economic levels, personalities, or simply, moods of the server. The same bowl of rice may be consumed with chopsticks or with a fork; the tool and style of consumption may then reflect the consumer's ethnic identity — or the context in which he or she is eating such as a Chinese restaurant as opposed to home. Personal meanings of food are fluid and dynamic, and individuals can express and construct them in subtle and even subversive ways by manipulating their foodways.

III. EXPLANATION OF ASSIGNMENT: FOODWAYS OF A MEAL OR DISH

The assignment has students focus on either a single meal or a single dish within that meal. Although they can reconstruct a meal from memory or solicit someone else's memories, it is better for them to observe an actual meal. For example, I tell them to use this assignment as an excuse to take a break from studies and spend some time socializing! A holiday meal can work well for this since the menus for such meals are often intentionally and self-consciously symbolic carriers of identity and memory. Food in such meals is often a conversation piece, used to stir remembrance, to affirm social relationships, or to ensure the continuity of the group. In such contexts, food is frequently emotionally laden, containing layers of personal history and experience. On the other hand, analysis of a representative everyday meal often reveals identity in startling ways. Commonplace, seemingly insignificant foods or foodways activities, are crucial to the everyday, mundane routines of eating. Because of their everydayness, we tend not to recognize their distinctiveness, their artistry, or their ability to carry identity or signify relationships.

IV. ASSIGNMENT: FOODWAYS OF A MEAL

- Select a meal
- Apply the foodways framework to that meal. Ask the following questions of each foodways component: Who, where, what, when, why, how.

1. Context: Meal System

What is this meal called? What time do you usually eat this meal?

2. Performance-symbolism. Meanings, associations, beliefs: Are these common dishes? Are they distinctive in any way? Did any foods hold special meanings for you? Were some dishes associated with specific holidays or specific people? Were there any beliefs connecting this food to notions of health, physical attractiveness, general well-being?

3. Product: (dishes, recipes, ingredients)

Describe each of the foods in the meal. Are there any variations in this particular meal from the usual pattern?

4. Procurement: (source, producer, expense)

How did you get your food? Where did you shop? Did you grow any of your own food?

5. Preservation: (methods and techniques, physical structures and presentations, locations)

How (smoking, canning, salting, etc.) and where (cellars, pantries, etc.) did you store food? Who is usually responsible for preserving the food?

6. Preparation: (techniques/styles, tools and equipment)

Who prepared the food? Did they use cookbooks and written recipes? Were there special techniques used? Was cooking equipment different from what you have now? If you learned to cook, did you learn from your parents, from school, or by teaching yourself?

7. Presentation: (physical appearance, tablesetting, location)

How was the food usually served? Were there special plates for special occasions? Did you sit down with your family to eat? Were there any special rules for eating together? Did you say a prayer before eating?

8. Consumption: (techniques/styles, tools and equipment, manners)

How did you usually eat (forks and spoons, chopsticks, etc.)? Do you remember being taught rules for polite eating?

9. Clean-up: (techniques/styles, tools and equipment)

Who usually washed the dishes and cleaned the kitchen? Did your family have a dishwasher? What was done with the left-overs and table scraps?

NOTES

¹ I (2004) discussed more of these similarities in a similar article published in a special issue on Food Voice. See "Learning to Listen to the Food Voice: Recipes as Expressions of Identity and Carriers of Memory," *Food, Culture, and Society* 7(1): 118-122. I give a similar foodways exercise in that article; however, I have refined the components of foodways in the present article.

² Richard Bauman's (1984) *Verbal Art as Performance* is one of the basic texts for performance theory. Barre Toelken (1996) gives an excellent introduction and summary of these trends in folklore scholarship as well as an example of how they illuminate a variety of ethnographic materials. His introduction and bibliographic notes are particularly useful. For other introductions to folklore scholarship, see Oring (1986), Brunvand (1998), Georges and Jones (1995), and Schoemaker (1990).

³ The term seems to have first emerged in the early 1990s. Bruce Jackson (1995) used it in his article, "Folkloristics," *Journal of American Folklore* 98: 95-101, and Georges and Jones (1995) used the term for the title of their introductory textbook.

⁴ This list of components and the terminology used for them is my own, but it is drawn from Yoder and other scholars.

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CULTURAL GEOGRAPHY

FRANCHISE RESTAURANTS:

USING THE INTERNET TO STUDY LOCATION

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Students are fascinated by the restaurant business because it is their most common window into the world of commercial food. They routinely collect eating experiences on their travels and then use this information as cultural capital among peers. Since most students have limited resources, their knowledge base is usually restricted to franchise establishments rather than the up-scale, chef-oriented venues at the other end of the spectrum. Some have even expressed an interest in "being in the business" to me, mentioning the possibility of managing a franchise restaurant or creating their own, profitable concept.

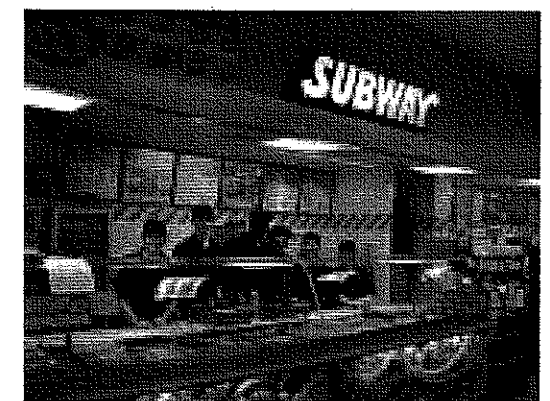


In my junior-senior-graduate course on the geography of American foodways, I have incorporated this student interest in restaurants into one of several projects they are required to do in addition to a term paper. For the class unit on eating out, they each must research a newer franchise restaurant, bakery, or ice cream store and then report on their findings. These are ten-minute oral presentations accompanied by a 200-word synopsis of their findings that are later distributed to class members.

Having them write in this concise style gives variety to the semester's tasks and forces sloppy writers

to be more attentive to word choice. I insist that they hit 200 words almost exactly, similar to what might be expected for an encyclopedia entry.

I simplify the universe of franchises for this assignment primarily by omitting the corporate giants. Operationally, such mega operations are defined as those discussed in *Fast Food: Roadside Restaurants in the Automobile Age*, one of the assigned books in the course. I provide the students a list of possibilities, but they may, in turn, suggest others to me. The list, updated yearly, is derived primarily from



franchiserestaurant.com, a website devoted to information about franchise opportunities, with some regional ones added for interest.

The oral presentation includes the following topics:

1. Origin of franchise — person and place
2. Category of restaurant and the kind of retail space it needs
3. Concept — what makes it different from others?
4. How long has it been around?
5. Where are the franchises now?
6. Any information you can uncover on success

7. How much it would cost you to become a franchisee?

8. Examples of menu items

I tell students that they can introduce additional facts and concepts as well, but to remember the limited time frame for oral presentations. The place of original establishment and current location of franchises are important topics for me because this is a geography course, and diffusion is a common theme in the discipline. The distribution of Steak 'n' Shake or Cold Stone Creamery stores, for example, provokes many questions about business strategy and location theory.

I intend for this to be an online project and suggest that they start with google.com or some other search engine. Often homepages for restaurant groups have franchise histories, sample menus, and maps of outlets. Other franchises, however, require more extensive investigation. This additional research usually proves to be no problem since earlier in the semester we discuss how to access the business literature through sources such as ABI Inform or LexisNexis Academic Universe and online newspapers, some archived and referenced as is *The New York Times*, for food information. Presentations often include downloaded graphics and maps.



Students commonly select a franchise that they have patronized in the past. Their casual observations

about decor and atmosphere contribute greatly to our understanding and amusement. There is nothing quite like a description of Hot Dog on a Stick to wake up a class. Although such tidbits are not strictly ethnographic data because they are based on memory, the extra information so provided indicates the importance of concept, level of hospitality, and entertainment value as critical factors in designing restaurants, at least for this age cohort. Eating out in the United States is not just about the food tasting good. After learning about the up-front costs and real estate requirements of restaurants, everyone in the class, to a person, concluded that they had no interest in being a franchisee.

Although the concept of doing an in-depth analysis of a business is not a unique class project, the synergy that came from having structured presentations followed by comparisons among different establishments produced a good learning project. Class discussion was much more animated for this project than for others because it allowed them to be critical about something important to them for which they already had an informal database.

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POPULAR CULTURE

WHAT ABOUT A PIZZA?:

TASTE, GENRE AND CRITICAL ANALYSIS

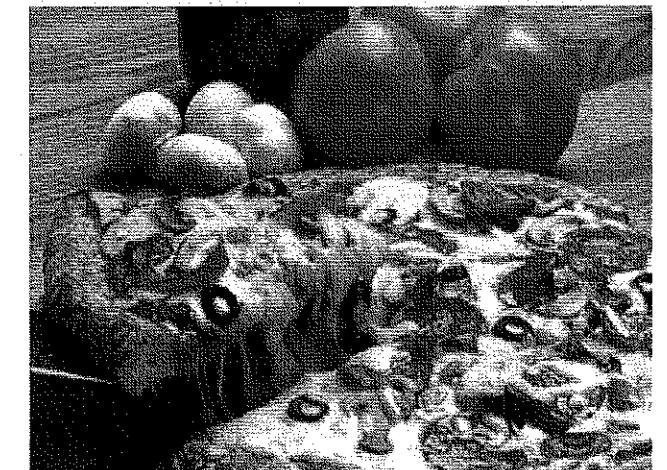
MARILYN MOTZ

(Bowling Green State University)

One of our first experiences with cultural categories, differences, and tastes comes in the form of food. As young children we learn that the "hot dog" a friend's mother serves us is similar to, and yet different from, the "hot dog" we eat at home. Is the sausage boiled, fried or grilled? Is it whole, slit in half, or cut in small pieces? Is it large or small? In a bun or stirred into baked beans? Is it made of pork, beef, or vegetable protein? We notice that some people actually like their hot dogs with mustard and onions instead of catsup. Understanding the range of possibilities included in the category of "hot dog" allows the child to answer the deceptively simple question: "Would you like a hot dog?" When we can envision what the food will be like before we actually see it and taste it, we can make choices and communicate them. We begin to align our own sensory experiences and preferences with those of other people. We also begin to place specific, concrete items, like an apple and a banana on our kitchen windowsill, into abstract, generalized, overlapping categories such as fruit, snack, or dessert.

Since we learn about food in the same way, and at about the same time, that we learn a first language, the system of food seems as natural and commonsense to us as our native tongue. As we learn to recognize and make the sounds of our home language, and then to combine those sounds into words and those words into sentences long before we are taught the rules of grammar that govern their combination, we learn what is eaten in our culture and how those items are manipulated and combined in different situations. These principles for distinguishing, relating, adapting and combining elements of a cultural system provide a template for later experiences with unfamiliar cultural forms.

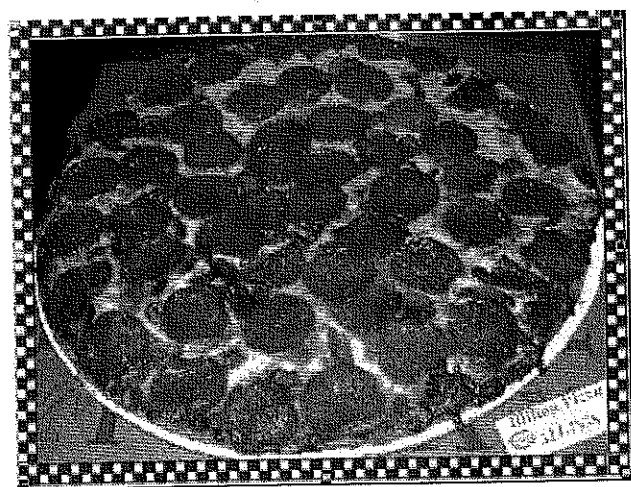
We can build on students' existing competence in evaluating, categorizing and analyzing food to help them translate that competence into the skills in critical analysis that are used in the humanities. Examining a familiar food like pizza can help students understand critical concepts and practices they often find difficult. They can learn how to move from identifying a personal preference for one particular item to articulating the critical standards that define their preference and explaining how various aspects of the item meet or fail to meet those standards. This exercise encourages students to consider how their own preferences intersect with the preferences of others within their community and how the negotiation of those tastes affects and is affected by the products available to them. The assignment can also help students learn to relate a specific item to other examples — to place it in the context of a tradition of similar items (a genre) as well as the context of other cultural practices which it influences or is influenced by.



This model is especially appropriate in the current climate of humanities scholarship, when cultural categories and practices are seen as fluid and context-dependent rather than fixed and absolute. It is relatively easy for students to memorize sets of characteristics of different genres so they can match an individual example to its genre. It is harder to understand the evolving artistic standards and forms developed by particular groups of people in certain times and places in order to examine how specific artistic works operate in those contexts. The concept of genre developed to

study forms of artistic expression as aspects of popular culture provides a tool for examining the production, circulation, consumption, and evaluation of cultural products in a diverse capitalist society. This concept of popular genre allows us to discuss groups of similar works as a whole while recognizing the existence of variation over time and across cultural boundaries. It also provides a context and frame of reference within which to evaluate a single work in terms of the skills, taste, choices and viewpoints of individual producers and consumers.

In *Adventure, Mystery, and Romance*, John Cawelti (1976) suggests the usefulness of the concept of popular genre for the study of popular literature



and movies. According to Cawelti, authors and filmmakers often imitate a successful original work with the assumption that they can please the audience by following the same formula (8). They do not duplicate the original work entirely, but adapt the formula by varying the details of setting, characters, plot, etc. while maintaining the essential features that led to the success of the original work.

These shared characteristics, which Cawelti calls "conventions," make formulaic works efficient to create and market. Producers can predict which features will please the audience, and advertisers can sell a new work by associating it with similar successful products. Consumers can predict that a new work will meet their expectations if it follows a formula they have found enjoyable in the past. Over time, the

audience and the creators come to recognize the body of work following a particular formula as comprising a category of similar items or, in Cawelti's terms, a popular genre. As a genre develops over time, and audiences becomes familiar with it, the genre creates its own field of reference. The audience can find pleasure in recognizing traditional aspects of the formula and understanding references to previous examples of the genre. They can also appreciate the unique style and details of the way the creator tells a familiar story. These innovative twists, which Cawelti calls "inventions," add an element of excitement and novelty to a safely predictable narrative. In order to be successful, Cawelti argues, inventions should intensify and enhance the experience the audience expects without threatening the spirit of the genre (8-10). Cawelti argues that the balance of conventions and inventions in popular narratives allows the audience to explore the boundaries of socially acceptable behavior, as gradual changes in popular formulas introduce new ideas, bridge cultural groups, and facilitate social change (35-36).

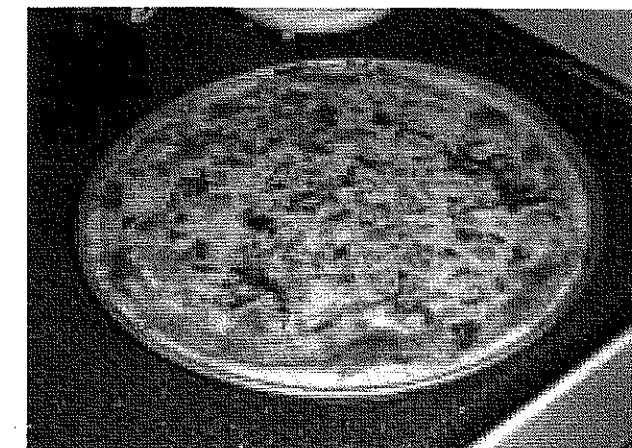
As a genre develops, creators test its limits with increasingly novel inventions. Works that introduce more novelty than audiences are willing to accept as part of the genre will be rejected or may spin off to form a new genre. An established genre develops what Cawelti calls a set of "artistic limitations and potentials" that can be used for "defining and evaluating the unique qualities of individual works." In other words, the audience or critic can evaluate how well a particular work fulfills the potential of the genre and assess how successfully it stretches or transcends the limits of the genre without compromising the experience the audience expects (7).

Janice Radway (1984) studied a group of readers of romance fiction to investigate "the generative matrix of the genre as the readers understand it" (120). In *Reading the Romance: Women, Patriarchy, and Popular Literature*, Radway explores how readers interpret and evaluate individual works in the context of their concept of the genre. She found that the private experience and social practice of reading was at least as important to the readers she studied as the content of the books they read. They described the

circumstances in which they read, the way the books made them feel, and how the act of reading evoked memories of past experiences (196-210). Successful authors developed and followed "a recipe that dictates the essential ingredients to be included in each new version of the form" (29). Publishers could sell new books by promising to duplicate previous positive reading experiences, and readers learned how to select the books most likely to meet their expectations (29-30).

In *Metaculture: How Culture Moves through the World*, anthropologist Greg Urban (2001) argues that the conditions of a pluralistic, capitalistic, modern society place a premium on newness as a valued quality in cultural products (243). Genres play an essential role in helping audiences select, interpret and evaluate these unique but similar objects and narratives. According to Urban, a genre provides a "device for linking cultural objects to their past" without the need to reference "specific prior works on which a current cultural expression is based or to which it is related" (202). In other words, in the midst of a plethora of cultural products, it is easier to understand a specific example by looking at its place in the context of the evolution of a genre than to compare it to a number of similar individual works. Knowledge of the common features and the boundaries of a genre enables us to recognize traditional aspects of a new cultural product, to identify innovative elements, and to evaluate the contribution made by the new item. Urban observes that a metaculture of evaluation and discussion surrounds cultural products and guides their consumption and interpretation. (202) Critics, reviewers, and competition judges may identify new products as examples of evolving genres with shared characteristics or may point out how a new item stretches the boundaries of a genre.

While any food could be used to illustrate the concept of popular genre, pizza is a practical choice. First, it is familiar to most students. According to pizza industry data, 94% of the U.S. population in 2005 eats pizza, which accounts for 10% of all food purchases (Shriver 2005). Most students have tried several varieties of pizza and are able to see both



common features and a range of variation among them. Second, pizza represents an example of negotiation between producer and consumer. Pizza that is sold by national corporations is standardized, but each individual pizza is produced locally and is adapted to meet the customer's specifications. Although the consumer is able to customize a pizza to suit his or her individual preferences, the range of available options is relatively limited. Furthermore, since a pizza is usually shared with friends or family, consumers must negotiate with one another or anticipate the preferences of guests to determine what kind of pizza will be acceptable. Finally, students have some experience in evaluating the quality of a specific pizza and discussing their evaluation with other people. Pizza illustrates the concept of popular genre (as well as examples of tradition, innovation, intertextuality, context, pleasure, negotiation, agency, and hegemony) and provides a familiar model with which to practice critical analysis and evaluation.

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The Assignments

The following two assignments, a questionnaire and a review essay, can be used together or separately. The questionnaire is designed to be filled out by students as the basis for discussion or as a pre-writing exercise. It is loosely based on the type of questions Janice Radway developed to determine the "generative matrix of the genre as the [romance novel] readers understand it." (120) The questionnaire elicits the students' generative matrix for pizza: their understanding of the conventions, boundaries, and potential for innovation. It also helps students think about the social context of pizza and its relation to other cultural forms. It guides students in defining criteria for evaluating pizza and applying those criteria to a specific example. Students can write individual answer to the questions or answer them in small groups. Comparing the answers that all the students give in response to a particular question or set of questions can suggest the extent of consensus and the range of variation in their concepts of pizza as a category and in their personal experiences and preferences.

Questions 1 through 4 establish the contours of pizza as a genre, while questions 5 through 8 explore the potential of the genre for variation and innovation. The first question asks students to name the essential components of a pizza. These defining features may include components such as dough, but they may also include aspects such as how the components are organized, how the pizza is cooked, or how the food is eaten. The second questions asks students to name a few expected elements, or conventions. The third and fourth questions locate the boundaries of the genre by determining what is beyond the limits of a pizza and what is just inside those limits. Question 5 lets students apply their understanding of the generative matrix of pizza to suggest an innovative topping. Question 6 asks for their concept of the most traditional form of

pizza, while questions 7 and 8 ask them to think about subgenres of pizza as well as pizzas that borrow from or refer to other food types or food cultures.

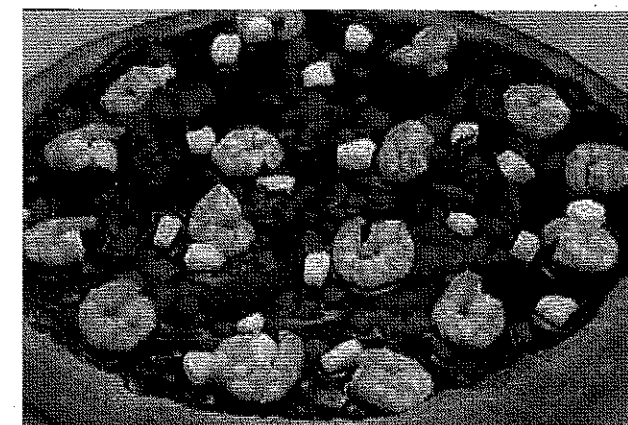
Questions 9 through 13 ask students about their own taste preferences in pizza. Questions 9 and 10 refer to the most liked and least liked pizza toppings or ingredients. Questions 11 and 12 ask about other qualities that are important in distinguishing a good pizza from a bad pizza. These might include factors such as the quality, proportions or combination of ingredients, the seasoning or flavor, the texture or consistency, whether the pizza is undercooked or overcooked, or the extent of innovation. Question 13 considers how these evaluative criteria might be applied to imagine an ideal pizza.

Questions 14 through 18 explore students' experiences in eating pizza, and questions 19 through 22 concern their everyday practices of pizza consumption. Questions 14 and 15 ask about the social contexts in which pizza is eaten, while questions 16 through 18 elicit the memories and feelings students associate with eating pizza. Questions 19 to 21 involve how often, when, where, and with whom the student eats pizza. Question 22, about the kind of pizza the student usually eats and why the student eats that kind of pizza, raises the issue of constraints on consumers' ability to eat the type of pizza they prefer. Their choices are often limited by financial constraints, available options, the competence of the pizza producer, the need to compromise with others sharing the pizza, or the lack of authority to determine the pizza selection.

Questions 23 through 25 look at other cultural products that represent or refer to pizza. Question 23 can be used to generate discussion about representations of pizza production or consumption in books and movies, including how these images depict the social context of pizza, whether they reflect or influence the meanings attached to pizza, and whether the companies producing these images have corporate ties with pizza producers. Questions 24 and 25 can lead to a discussion of intertextuality by looking at other foods that reference pizza, such as pizza soup, pizza-flavored pretzels, or pizza-shaped appetizers covered with cream cheese and fresh veggies, as well as

refrigerator magnets and other inedible objects made to look like pizza. These discussions could also be extended to other topics such as gourmet pizzas created by chefs in upscale restaurants or representations of pizza consumption in ads.

The review essay builds on students' responses to the questionnaire. The assignment asks students to evaluate one pizza in the context of pizza as a genre. They will describe the pizza and identify its conventional and innovative features. They will then analyze the pizza by describing each of its components and discussing how these elements work together. This description and analysis will lead the students to evaluate the pizza by measuring it against critical standards based on expectations for the genre. The final part of the assignment frames this analysis and evaluation in terms of the students' own experience



and response in relation to an imagined reader who is a potential pizza consumer.

Pizza Questionnaire

1. What are the essential components found in every pizza?
2. What are three food items you would expect to find as pizza toppings?
3. What are three food items that don't belong on a pizza?
4. What is the most unusual pizza you have ever seen?

5. What is one food item you think might be good on a pizza but haven't seen there?
6. What kind of pizza is most authentic or classic?
7. Have you ever seen a pizza that was influenced by other types of food, such as ethnic food or regional favorites? How did the pizza include those elements?
8. Do you know any distinct forms of pizza with different shapes, dough, etc.?
9. What are three food items you prefer on your pizza?
10. What are three food items that are often found on a pizza but that you don't like?
11. Aside from choice of toppings, what are three qualities that make a pizza good?
12. Aside from choice of toppings, what are three qualities you like least in a pizza?
13. What is your idea of an ideal pizza?
14. What are three situations when it is appropriate to serve or eat pizza?
15. What are three situations when pizza is not an appropriate food to serve or eat?
16. What is your earliest memory of eating pizza?
17. What is your most memorable experience of eating pizza?
18. What feelings, moods, or emotions do you associate with eating pizza?
19. When did you most recently eat pizza?
20. In an average month, how many times do you eat pizza?

21. When, where, and with whom do you often eat pizza?
22. What kind of pizza do you most often eat? Why?
23. Can you name a book, movie, game, toy, song, etc. that shows or describes pizza?
24. What other food have you seen that includes pizza flavors, ingredients, or style?
25. What food or non-food items have you seen that were made to look like a pizza?

To determine the consensus of a group or class about what features are essential in a pizza, what qualities distinguish a good pizza from a bad pizza, which toppings are popular or unpopular, etc., compare the answers all students gave to the relevant question. Note all of the identical or similar responses to the question that appear on more than one questionnaire, and keep track of how many students gave that response to the question. Certain features or qualities may emerge as important to many students. To examine the extent of variation in preferences, see which items or qualities are listed as liked by some students but disliked by others and which questions evoke a wide range of different responses.

Pizza Review

For this assignment, you will examine and evaluate one specific pizza or slice of pizza. (If you are not able to eat pizza or have dietary restrictions that limit the kinds of pizza you can eat, check with your instructor about how to adapt this assignment.)

Before you eat the pizza, observe and take notes on the aspects of the pizza you can see and smell. As you eat the pizza, or soon afterwards, note down the relevant aspects of taste and texture, as well as your personal response to the experience. If you have completed the pizza questionnaire, you may find it helpful to refer to it.

Write a review of your pizza following the guidelines provided below for describing, analyzing, and evaluating it within the context of pizza as a genre. Conclude the review with a discussion of your personal experience with this pizza and your recommendation to other future pizza consumers.

Description

Identify the type of pizza, the company that produced it, and the time and place at which it was made.

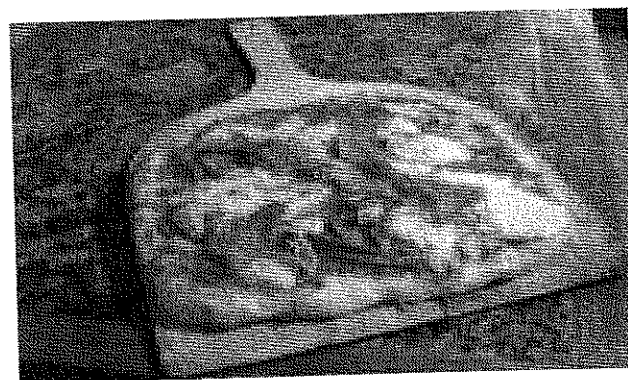
Describe the pizza as a whole in terms of its shape, size, color, texture, flavor, temperature, aroma, and presentation or packaging. You should include enough details to enable the reader to envision your pizza, but stick to qualities that affect the pizza as a whole.

Explain how this particular pizza fits into the range of variation among types of pizzas. Does it represent a distinct style of pizza, such as deep dish pizza? How traditional is it? How typical is it? How unusual is it? What features make it traditional, typical, or unusual?

Analysis

Mentally divide the pizza into its component parts, such as crust, sauce, toppings, and cheese.

Describe each of the component parts in turn. For each component, you should start by identifying the general type of crust, sauce, toppings, etc. for a reader who has not seen your pizza. After you have established the general nature of each component, for example a thick tomato sauce or a topping of pepperoni slices, you should inform the reader about the unique details of that component as it exists in this specific pizza. For example, what words best convey the consistency, color, seasonings, sweetness, or saltiness



of the tomato sauce on this slice of pizza? At this point, you should focus on describing each component as clearly as possible rather than expressing your opinion of it.

After you have described each component individually, you should explain how the component parts work together to create the overall effect of this slice of pizza. What does each component contribute to the pizza as a whole? What are the proportions of the various components relative to one another? How are they layered or intermingled?

Evaluation

Consider what qualities you think a good pizza should have and explain how this particular pizza measures up to those standards. These qualities might include the customized combination of options you, or someone, ordered on this pizza. They might also include the selection of toppings, sauce, dough, or specialty pizzas offered by the producer. Is this pizza too unusual or too ordinary? If so, in what way? If it has the right degree of novelty and predictability, explain how it achieves that balance.

Success can be affected by the type and quality of ingredients and the cooking method and equipment used, such as grilling over a wood fire, baking in a commercial gas oven, or reheating in a kitchen microwave oven. The outcome of an individual pizza is also determined by the competence and performance of the person who assembled and cooked that particular pizza. Is the dough undercooked or burned? Is it too thick or too thin? Is the sauce pleasing in consistency and flavor? Are the right amounts of the most appropriate herbs used to season the pizza? Is the pizza too salty or greasy? Are the components put together in the correct proportions, or is there too much or too little of some ingredient?

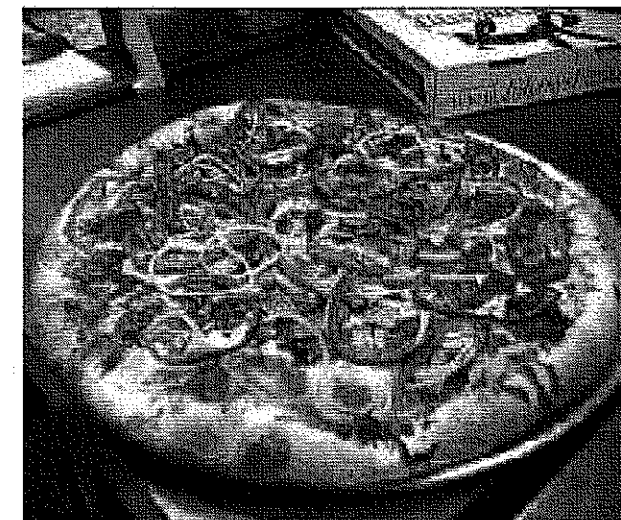
How successful is the overall texture and flavor? Is there any aspect of this pizza you would want to change? What alternatives or solutions would you suggest? If your preference in pizzas is unusual, how do you think most people would have evaluated this pizza?

Personal Experience

Describe your experience as a consumer of this pizza. What was the situation in which you ordered, received, and consumed this pizza?

How did you respond to the experience of eating this pizza? How did it compare to other experiences you have had with pizza? How did this pizza make you feel?

In what kinds of situations would this type of pizza be a good choice? Would you recommend it to other people? Why?



POPULAR CULTURE

FOOD DEMONSTRATIONS IN THE CLASSROOM: PRACTICING

ETHNOGRAPHY AND THE COMPLEXITIES OF IDENTITY WITH TAMALES IN NORTHWEST OHIO
BERNICE AGUILAR AND LUCY LONG
(Bowling Green State University)

(regular type by Lucy; italics by Bernice)

Food demonstrations in classroom settings are a popular teaching tool, not only in food-related subject areas but also as a way to vary pedagogical techniques, to offer a respite from the usual routine, and to "build community" among the students. Oftentimes, however, such demonstrations are seen as "fluff" — neither scholarly nor intellectually rigorous — by students and other faculty members who often think that if it is fun, it can not be a valuable learning experience.

In this essay, I briefly discuss some ways in which I have used food demonstrations to teach not only the theories and methodologies of particular disciplines but also to further the understanding of the complex nature of food. I also collaborate here with an individual who has given demonstrations of tamales in my classes, Ms. Bernice Aguilar, who is of Mexican heritage but born and raised in Toledo, Ohio. She has done this regularly enough to have developed her own system of demonstration as well as opinions about the students' reactions. For these demonstrations, she brings in selected ingredients needed to make tamales — those that are transportable and non-perishable — along with enough pre-prepared and cooked tamales in a crock pot for every student in the class to taste. These samples are brought from her own larder of home-made tamales left over from family gatherings. The students prepare for her visit by reading several articles and are expected to ask questions based on that reading. For example, I usually assign an article on the role of tamales in a divorce case between a Mexican-American couple; that leads the students to ask questions about gender roles and the significance

of tamales in social relationships. Similarly, an article on the mainstreaming of Mexican food leads them to ask about her opinions and experiences of Anglicized, commercialized Mexican fast-food. Her autobiography follows this introduction.

Food is an important pedagogical tool since, as we all know, food is a multi-sensory phenomenon. To teach about it without tasting, smelling, and feeling it acknowledges only our cognitive experiences of it and is somewhat akin to teaching about music without ever playing any. Students can learn about food, but they won't necessarily understand the emotional, social, and cultural implications it has for individuals. Furthermore, observing, or, even better, experiencing first-hand the processes behind the preparation of a food allows students to better understand how experience, skill, and artistry can make a difference in the final rendering of a food. Since so much of the act of making/cooking tamales is done by "feel" rather than by measuring exact amounts, demonstrating this helps clarify the point. Similarly, students can see rather than hear how the amount of filling put in the tamale has to be measured against the size and length of the cornhusk. By actually rolling the tamale themselves, they appreciate the skills needed.

Food demonstrations offer an opportunity to discuss research methods. Ethnography — the observation, description, and analysis of a tradition



from the perspective of the participants — is a fundamental methodology in most disciplines studying culture. This emic perspective tells us how those individuals perceive an event or situation and their possible range of reactions. Since people act upon their perceptions rather

than upon an objective reality, ethnography gives insights into why people are acting a particular way and why particular meanings have emerged. In the class demonstration, then, I encourage the students to ask Bernice about her experiences, her interpretations, and her opinions. She is not there as "The Mexican Food Expert" which is much to her relief, but as the expert of her own experiencing of Mexican food. What culinary choices did she have in her own life? What are her memories and emotional associations of tamales? What are her own personal tastes, and how does her personality and circumstances play into her continuation of an ethnic food tradition? Do tamales play any role in her family or community relationships?

Drawing upon Bernice's emic perspective of the meanings of tamales, the class demonstration clarifies some theoretical concepts about the nature of ethnicity, the fluidity of identity, and the construction of social communities. Bernice usually comes to my undergraduate "food and culture" class during the section on food and ethnicity. The students have read about Mexican food, and they are highlighting Bernice's representativeness of Mexican-American-NW Ohioan identity. Bernice, however, makes the point to them that when she thinks of tamales, she thinks first of a positive sensory experience, second, of family, and only peripherally, of ethnicity.

She states: "I'm an American who happens to have Mexican heritage." She approaches her tamale making in the same way — it happens to have a Mexican heritage, but it is now part of her American experience. At the same time, demonstrating this food, makes her think more about how both she and the food do represent an ethnic identity whether they intend to or not. I stress to my students that an ethnography allows the individual to emphasize which identities are meaningful/significant to him or her.

On the surface, Bernice's approach to her tamale tradition is a conservative one; she uses a recipe that has been handed down orally and imitatively over several generations on her mother's side. When I asked her if she ever experimented with the recipe, like varying the filling to be fruit or cheese, her response emphasized

economic realities rather than a romanticization of the past:

We've never experimented, and I think it's maybe because we grew up poor. We just made ends meet, and so I think the practicality comes in there — we buy all these ingredients, we know what we're going to make. If we experiment, we may make something we don't want to eat!

And, finally, Bernice's description of the ways in which her family uses tamales demonstrates how food can be a tool for constructing, affirming, even challenging social relationships. She describes — often tearfully — gathering with her grandmother, mother, and aunts to make tamales and how, even now, those are the primary associations she has with the food. She had grown up helping make them, but it was "more



about going to Grandma's than tamales." Also, although she was familiar with tamale preparation, she did not become serious about it until she started working at a university and wanted

something to share with her colleagues at Christmastime. Her mother was making tamales anyway.

Bernice has always been more than happy to give this classroom demonstration for me. Because the university does not reimburse her for the supplies she uses, I was hesitant to ask her yet again this past semester. Her response was that it was worth it to her to teach people about a tradition that means so much

to her. She hopes that from her demonstration, students will:

have a better understanding that tamales is a delicious food; the preparation is time-consuming and not just a slap-dash of ingredients, but you have to make determinations about how ... to make it acceptable by family, co-workers, friends ...



and yes, its time consuming, but its very rewarding knowing that you can make them and that people enjoy them.

Readings for class:

Bentley, Amy. 2004. "From Culinary Other to Mainstream America: Meanings and Uses of Southwestern Cuisine." In *Culinary Tourism*, edited by Lucy Long, 209-225. Lexington, KY: Univ Press of Kentucky.

Williams, Brett. 1999. "Why Migrant Women Feed Their Husbands Tamales." In *Ethnic and Regional Foodways in the United States: The Performance of Group Identity*, edited by Linda Brown and Kay Mussell, 113-126. Knoxville, TN: University of Tennessee Press.

BERNICE'S STORY

Tamales. This food immediately creates for me a flurry of thoughts and evokes very pleasant memories of my childhood.

Yet, how do I share a bit of my family history to make other people understand how tamales in one aspect are intertwined with my family and family gatherings during my youth?

I was born and raised in Northwest Ohio. My parents were born in Texas, but they came to Ohio as migrant workers during the late 1940s. My parents were born in Texas but came separately to Ohio and they met in one of the many fields as they worked picking crops in Northwest Ohio.

Before the razz-matazz of super-powered farm equipment, farmers depended highly on migrant workers who were hired to weed or pick crops. Tomatoes, cabbage, potatoes, cucumbers are the kind of crops my grandparents and parents typically picked for farmers in Northwest Ohio.

My mother was one of the older sisters — total of nine brothers and sisters — my younger aunts were not married and lived at home.

While growing up, I remember during the holidays where my mother and I would visit my grandmother on my mother's side during the Christmas holidays, and we would make tamales. As a child, I waited with anticipation for the moment to eat a freshly made tamale. In the meantime, I would watch my grandmother, mother, and aunts prepare the masa harina (dough and

spices), prepare the pork filling, select the moist corn husks, and then gather the necessary kitchen tools, pots, and pans, and begin the process of making tamales. As I became older, I would take on more duties in making tamales, which consisted of removing dirty dishes or pans and washing them, whereas "the adults" would continue the process of making tamales.

As I got older, I was able to join in using a spoon to spread the masa harina on to a corn husk, pork filling, and fold the corn husk to make tamales and have "my" tamales join the other tamales that my grandmother, mother, and aunts made.

As a typical teenager and then young adult, whenever the holidays would arrive, I would still await with anticipation of eating freshly made tamales, but with an attitude of "oh, please! I don't want any connection at all in the process of making tamales!" Of course looking back now, I regret my youthful outlook of not showing any interest in learning to make tamales or just enjoying those female family gatherings to make tamales.

These past ten plus years, I have actively been engaged in learning the recipe from my mother. At first, I would purchase all the ingredients and then help my mother. In recent years, I've taken on most of the steps in the preparation, as well as mixing the masa harina, pork filling, etc. Have I yet to write down our family recipe? Not really. These past years during Christmas time, I am learning the recipe from my mother's memory, which had been passed to her from my grandmother's memory — like other family recipes.

Most of the preparation has taken place by the time my parents arrive at my place. A typical day of making tamales starts around 8:30 a.m. My mother and I are busily making tamales by 10 a.m. Then about lunchtime, we are about halfway to three-quarters finished in making tamales, but we take a few minutes to eat lunch — which is a light lunch because we know in a short time a pot of tamales will be steam-cooked, and we can eat a

few tamales. Some pots are full of tamales and steam-cooking. A little bit later, if you can imagine a small assembly line, we are still finishing what remain of the last few tamales. Then, around three o'clock the first pots of tamales have been thoroughly steam-cooked; then, we take the steam-cooked tamales aside and put on remaining pots of tamales on the stove top to steam-cook. Of course, my parents and I "taste test" a few tamales.

While the remaining cooking pots full of tamales are being steam-cooked, my mother and I proceed to clear up the dirty dishes; begin to set aside any unused corn husks to air dry and then be used in the future; and we also approximate the total number of tamales made in one batch of masa harina. The total number can range from 18 to 20 dozen of tamales. The day is almost finished.

The actual count is made when the tamales are set aside to cool off, and then placed into plastic freezer bags.

Dinnertime arrives; again, my parents and I eat a few more tamales. Then around six or seven o'clock, with several dozens of tamales in freezer bags, my parents leave.

It's been a busy and productive day but rewarding in making then eating tamales, plus enjoying the time spent with my parents — yes, it's been a very good day!

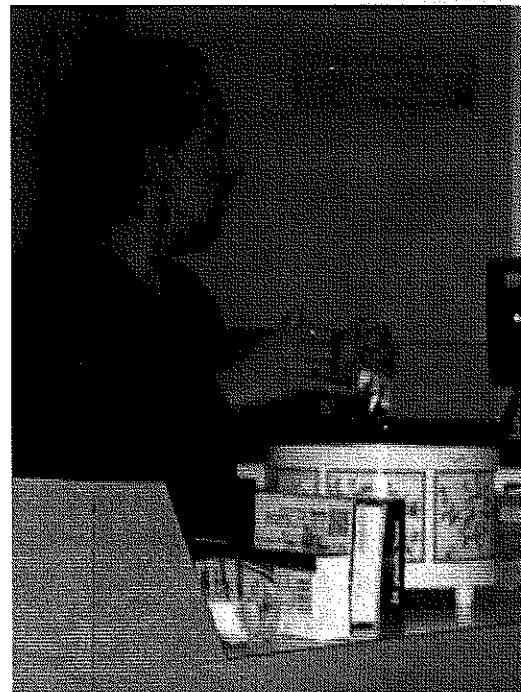
remaining which do not fit into 4-quart pot, *do not* stack on top of other tamales in pot; use another pot to accommodate those remaining uncooked tamales.

Pork stock:

*Put some pork stock into a measuring cup. Carefully *avoid* pouring stock directly into the tamales.

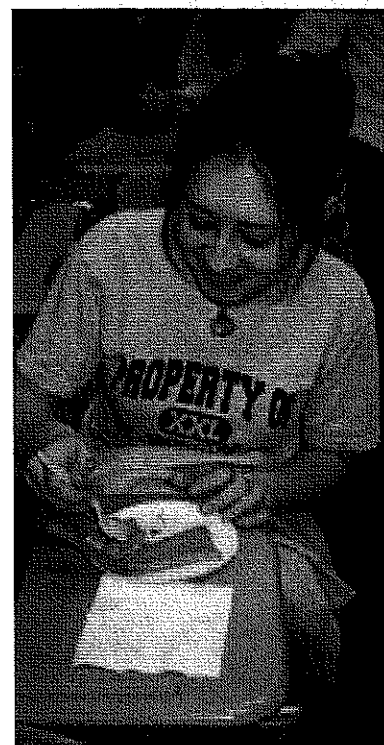
*Along the inside edge of pot, pour stock into pot until $\frac{5}{8}$ to $\frac{3}{4}$ full. (Stock allows tamales to steam cook.) The top — $\frac{3}{8}$ to $\frac{1}{4}$ — of the tamales should remain free of stock and prevent the stock from bubbling into tamale. (If stock is poured to completely cover tamales, tamales may be mushy and/or not thoroughly cooked.)

*Cover pot. Cook tamales on stove top at very low heat (simmer) for approximately 1 to 1-1/2 hours. (At end of an hour, check one tamale to see if completely cooked. If completed cooked, tamale will easily roll off corn husk.) In addition, the masa harina will have a solid texture rather than a mushy, uncooked texture.) On average, this recipe can vary in amount of tamales; sometimes



one batch can make from approximately 8-10 to 12-15 dozen of tamales.

*As tamales are cooking, most of the stock will be absorbed into the tamales.



Once cooked, tamales can be eaten immediately. Tamales can be refrigerated up to 3-4 days or frozen for approximately 4-6 weeks. If frozen longer, the tamales begin to lose their flavor. *Suggestion:* In freezing tamales, freeze in sets of dozen.

Reheating Tamales:

In microwave: tamales, of course, can be re-heated. However, the texture of the tamales will have a subtle change. Microwave ovens were not in vogue while I was growing up. So, I am uncomfortable suggesting the use of the microwave.

In conventional oven: preheat oven at 300°. Completely cover or wrap tamales in foil so that oven heat will not absorb the moisture from the tamales. Depending on how cold the tamales are — refrigerated, thawed, or slightly at room temperature — heat at 300° for approximately 30 minutes to one hour or until you smell the aroma of tamales.

Digest

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