

NYU . Steinhardt School of Culture, Education and Human Development  
 Department of Nutrition, Food Studies and Public Health

E33.2191 Food and Culture

Thursdays, 4:55 P.M. - 6:35 P.M. + H.A.

194 Mercer Street, Room 207

Jennifer Schiff Berg

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### Course Description and Objectives

In Food and Culture we will determine how people use food to define themselves as individuals, groups or whole societies. We will identify the meaning and significance of food in different cultures by exploring the way that ethnicity, gender, socioeconomic status and religion influence our food choices or preferences. Additionally, we will examine how culture is transmitted and preserved through food. Through reading scholarly articles, personal essays, book excerpts, newspaper articles and cookbooks we will explore the intricate relationship that people have with food.

We will look critically at the following questions: how can food have different meanings and uses for different people? How does food function both to foster community feeling and drive wedges among people? What are some prevailing academic theories that help us identify and understand more subtle meanings of food?

### Required Readings

#### **Books:**

Counihan, C. and Esterik, P.V. (Eds.), Food and Culture: A Reader (Routledge, 1997) **(F&C)**

Counihan, C. Food in the USA: A Reader (Routledge, 2002) **(USA)**

Schwabe, Calvin, W., Unmentionable Cuisine. Virginia: (University Press of Virginia, 1979)  
**(SCH)**

Belasco, W. and Scranton, P. Food Nations: Selling Taste in Consumer Societies.  
 (Routledge, 2002) **(FN)**

#### **Course packet:**

To be purchased at Unique Copy, 252 Greene Street **(RP)**. **I will TRY to post all of the articles on Blackboard, in lieu of purchasing the packet from Unique.**

#### **Handouts:** To be given out in class **(HO)**

\*\*\* All assigned readings are due on the day they appear on the syllabus. You are expected to read all articles, and be prepared to discuss them critically.

**Course Schedule****September 6****Course Introduction**

How do individuals define themselves?  
 General thoughts on food, ethnicity and culture

**September 13****NO CLASS - ROSH HASHANAH****September 20****Theories of Food: Mentalism and Structuralism****Readings:**

Levi-Strauss, Claude, "The Culinary Triangle" (**F&C**, 28-35)  
 Douglas, Mary, "Deciphering a Meal" (**F&C**, 36-54)  
 Paz, Octavio, "Eroticism and Gastrosophy," Daedalus 101 (Fall 1972):  
 (67-85) (**RP**)  
 Soler, Jean, "The Semiotics of Food in the Bible," (**F&C**, 55-66)

**September 27****Theories of Food: Materialism****Readings:**

Harris, Marvin, The Abominable Pig (**F&C**, 67-79)  
 Long, Lucy, "Culinary Tourism," Journal of Southern Folklore (1998)  
 (**RP**), 55 (3) (1998), p 181-204.

**October 4****Food and Ethnicity: Acculturation and Resistance**

Mintz, Sidney, "Eating American" (**USA**, 23-33)  
 Gabaccia, Donna, "What Do We Eat?" (**USA**, 35-40).  
 Levenstein, Harvey, "The American Response to Italian Food, 1880-  
 1930), (**USA**, 75-90).  
 Wilk, Richard, "Food and Nationalism: The Origins of 'Belizean Food'"  
 (**FN**, 67-91)  
 Pilcher, Jeffrey, "Industrial Tortillas and Folkloric Pepsi: The  
 Nutritional Consequences of Hybrid Cuisines in Mexico, (**FN**,  
 222-237)

**October 11****Food and Gender****Readings:**

Allison, Anne, "Japanese Mothers and Obentos: The Lunch Box as  
 Ideological State Apparatus," (**F&C**, 296-314)  
 Beoku-Betts, Josephine, "'We Got Our Way of Cooking Things':  
 Women, Food, and Preservation of Cultural Identity Among the  
 Gullah" (**USA**, 277-294)  
 Counihan, Carole, "Food as Women's Voice in the San Luis Valley of

Colorado" (USA, 295-304)

Taggart, James M. "Food, Masculinity, and Place in the Hispanic Southwest" (USA, 305-314)

October 18

**Food and Religion and Race**

Readings:

Tuchman, Gaye and Levine, Harry, "New York Jews and Chinese Food: The Social Construction of an Ethnic Pattern", in Shortridge, B. & Shortridge, J., (Eds.) The Taste of American Place. Rowman & Littlefield, 1998, (163 - 186) (RP)

Poe, Tracey, "The Origins of Soul Food in Black Urban Identity: Chicago, 1915-1947 (USA, 91-108)

Bentley, Amy, "Islands of Serenity: Gender, Race, and Ordered Meals During World War II (USA, 171-192)

October 25

**Food and Socioeconomic Status**

Readings:

Fitchen, Janet, "Hunger, Malnutrition, and Poverty in the Contemporary United States," (F&C, 384-401)

Ellis, Rhian, "The Way to a Man's Heart: Food in the Violent Home." In Murcott, ed. The Sociology of Food and Eating, Gower, 1983, pp 164-171, (RP)

Deutsch, Tracey, "Untangling Alliances: Social Tensions Surrounding Independent Grocery Stores and the Rise of Mass Retailing" (FN, 156-174)

Nabhan, Gary Paul, "Diabetes, Diet, and Native American Foraging Traditions" (USA, 231-237)

Roseberry, William, "The Rise of Yuppie Coffees and the Reimagination of Class in the United States" (USA, 149-168)

November 1

**Food and Memory and Nostalgia**

Readings:

De Silva, Cara. ed. In Memory's Kitchen: A Legacy from the Women of Terezin (New York: Jason Aronson, 1996), ix-xvi, xxv-5.(RP)

Berzok, Linda Murray, "My Mother's Recipes: The Diary of a Swedish American Daughter and Mother," In Inness, ed. Pilaf, Pizole and Pad Thai: American Women and Ethnic Food, University of Mass Press, 2001, pp 84-101, (RP)

Siskind, Janet, "The Invention of Thanksgiving: A Ritual of American Nationality" (USA, 41-58)

November 8

**Culture Transmitted Through Cookbooks****Readings:**

Appadurai, Arjun, "How to Make a National Cuisine: Cookbooks in Contemporary India," Comparative Studies in Society and History 30, 1 (1988):3-24. (RP)

Schmidt, Paul, "As if a Cookbook Had Anything to Do With Writing." Prose 8 (Spring 1974), 179-203 (HO)

Ireland, Lynne, "The Compiled Cookbook as Foodways Autobiography in M.O. Jones, B.Giuliano, &R.Krell (Eds.), Foodways and eating habits: Directions for research (pp.107-114) (RP)

Leonardi, Susan J. "Recipes for Reading: Summer Pasta, Lobster a la Riseholme, and Key Lime Pie," PMLA 104, 3 (May 1989) : 340-347 (RP)

**\*\*\* 5 Page rough draft of final paper due \*\*\***

Try to make this draft as close to your final project as possible. Include a thesis, rough chronology of ideas and concluding remarks. Bring (2) copies of your draft - one to turn in to me, and one to share with a reading partner. We will spend 30 minutes in class, working in paired groups.

November 15

**Food and Identity and Food as Cultural Icon****Readings:**

Neustadt, Kathy, "Born among the Shells": The Quakers of Allen's Neck and Their Clambake." In Humphrey and Humphrey (Eds.) "We Gather Together" Food and Festival in American Life (pp.89-110) (RP)

Skillman, Amy E. ": No Smoke? No Fire: Contemporary Hamming the Ol' Fashioned Way" In Humphrey and Humphrey (Eds.) "We Gather Together" Food and Festival in American Life (pp.125-136) (RP)

Lewis, George, "The Maine lobster as regional icon: Competing images over time and social class," In B. Shortridge and J. Shortridge (Eds.) The taste of American Place. Rowman and Littlefield: New York.( Pp. 65-84)(RP)

Fischler, C. "Food, self and identity," Anthropology of food (27), 2 (1988): 275-292. (RP)

Penfold, Steve, "Eddie Shack was no Tim Horton': Donuts and the Folklore of Mass Culture in Canada" (FN, 48-66)

November 22

**NO CLASS Thanksgiving**

November 29

**Food and Global Politics**

Counihan, Carole, "Bread as World", (FC, 283-295)

Lappe, Francis Moore and Collins, Joseph, "Beyond the Myth of Hunger," (FC, 402-412)

Mintz, Sidney W. "Time, Sugar and Sweetness" (FC, 357-369)

Allen, Keith, "Berlin in the Belle *Epoque*: A Fast-Food History (FN, 240-267)

December 6

**Acceptable or Unacceptable Food: Food Avoidance and Food Aversion****Readings:**

Bynum, Caroline Walker, "Fast, Feast, and Flesh: The Significance of Food to Medieval Women," (F&amp;C, 138-158)

Bruch, Hilde, "Body Image and Self-Awareness,"(F&amp;C, 211-225)

Bordo, Susan, "Anorexia Nervosa: Psychopathy as the Crystallization of Culture." F&amp;C, 226-250)

Schwabe, Calvin, W., Unmentionable Cuisine. Virginia: University Press of Virginia, 1979. Introduction, Chapter 4, 5, 6, and 20. (pp.1-10, 149-178, 365-383) (SCH)

December 11

**Final Individual Presentations (This is a Tuesday- NO CLASS on Thursday, December 13)**

December 20

**Final Individual Presentations****\*\*\* Papers Due in class on Tuesday, December 11, 2007 \*\*\*****Research Paper and Presentations**

An independent 10-15 page research paper of your choice, accompanied by a 10-minute oral presentation is the culminating project for Food and Culture. You may choose a topic that we are exploring in class, or an area of personal or academic interest. A brief list of the **types** of topics appropriate are:

- . Exploring a particular ethnic group's foodways.
- . Specific religious practices and food
- . Wonder Bread as an American phenomenon
- . An in depth study of a food event or festival
- . An ethnographic study of a soup kitchen

- . A literary analysis of food related novels or films
- . The sociological movement of vegans
- . Cultural identity through street food
- . Power and chefs
- . Cultural significance of medieval fasts and feasts
- . A study of a Korean family's acculturation and resistance through food
- . Technology's role in "Americanizing" an ethnic cuisine
- . Masculine meat, and feminine field greens

These topics are merely meant to give you an idea of the vast possibilities. Whatever topic you select, it must be original. By this, I mean that you may not select a topic that you are using, or have previously used for another class. Try to select a topic as soon as possible, and make an appointment to meet with me and discuss your ideas.

### The Paper

Please type, double space and staple your 10-15 page paper. Please use either 10 or 12 point font only. It must have a title that accurately defines your paper. **You must have a clearly stated thesis, and focus the entire paper around it.** Provide specific examples to support this thesis. Select other studies, or scholarly articles to use as models. For example, if you are doing a study on female roles in Ethiopian festival cooking, look for studies that also focus on gender roles or festival food preparations. It is important that you incorporate other academic studies into your project. I am not however, just looking for a related literature review. You must not just cite these projects, but frame them, or compare them to your study in some way.

I suggest beginning with a thorough search in the library, for any and all material related to your topic of interest. You may use Bobcat, or other ONLINE searches. The reference librarians at Bobst are extremely helpful. Do not be afraid to use other libraries as well. The research library at the NYPL is perhaps the finest in the world. Explore the Internet, newspaper articles, journals, live interviews, participate in an actual event or situation, or consult archives. All information is helpful. You must use at least ten scholarly references (journals or books). Additionally, you may use newspapers, popular magazines, cookbooks, trade publications, films, surveys, pamphlets, labels, etc. Strong research papers combine both primary and secondary sources.

It is understood that the paper must be free of typographical and grammatical errors. I strongly urge even the most accomplished writers to seek advice from the Writing Center. Make your appointments early, as they book up quickly. **Check the rules of plagiarism.** Cite all original quotes and paraphrased information. Any academic style is acceptable. However, make sure that you consult a style manual for the exact way to

reference materials. Staple your paper (no binders please) and include a title page. You may use footnotes OR endnotes, but either way, your paper **MUST** have a separate bibliography. **The paper is due in class on Tuesday, December 11, 2007. Late papers will receive a drop in grade.**

A 5- page rough draft of your paper is due on November 8<sup>th</sup> in class. I am unable to accept drafts after November 8<sup>th</sup>.

### The Presentation

The presentation is your opportunity to share your research with the rest of the class. Use your 10 minutes of glory wisely. Remember that the class is unaware of your project or area of interest. You must successfully "teach" us your topic in 10 minutes. To achieve this you need to quickly summarize your project, and cite specific supporting examples. You obviously cannot share your entire project with the class, so choose your selections carefully.

Do not read your paper, or even read from an abridged version. Rather, use note cards to remind you of key points, and speak to us, not at us. A touch of humor, if appropriate is fine. Just make sure that your presentation is interesting. You selected a topic that you are passionate about. Share the passion with us.

Use any aids that might be helpful: slides, overheads, handouts, music, video, photographs, etc.

### Grading Criteria

Participation: discussion and attendance	40%
Research paper and presentation	<u>60%</u>
TOTAL	100%

Participation involves coming to class, completing all of the required readings and active participation in lecture and discussion. The richness of our discussions requires involvement from everyone. Your thoughts and opinions matter.

Jennifer Berg  
 E33.2191  
 Culture and Foods  
 Fall 2007

**Reading Packet**

1. Paz, Octavio, "Eroticism and Gastronomy," Daedalus 101 (Fall 1972): (67-85)
2. Long, Lucy, "Culinary Tourism: A Folkloristic Perspective on Eating and Otherness," Southern Folklore 55, 3 (1998) : 181-204
3. Tuchman, Gaye and Levine, Harry, (1998). "New York Jews and Chinese Food: The Social Construction of an Ethnic Pattern, The Taste of American Place in Shortridge, B. & Shortridge, J., (Eds.) Rowman & Littlefield: New York, (163 - 186)
4. De Silva, Cara. ed. In Memory's Kitchen: A Legacy from the Women of Terezin (New York: Jason Aronson, 1996), ix-xvi, xxv-5.
5. Ellis, Rhian, "The Way to a Man's Heart: Food in the Violent Home." In Murcott, ed. The Sociology of Food and Eating, Gower, 1983, pp 164-171.
6. Appadurai, Arjun, "How to Make a National Cuisine: Cookbooks in Contemporary India," Comparative Studies in Society and History 30, 1 (1988) :3-24.
7. Ireland, Lynne, "The Compiled Cookbook as Foodways Autobiography in M.O. Jones, B.Giuliano, & R.Krell (Eds.), Foodways and Eating Habits: Directions for Research (pp.107-114)
8. Leonardi, Susan J. "Recipes for Reading: Summer Pasta, Lobster a la Riseholme, and Key Lime Pie," PMLA 104, 3 (May 1989) : 340-347
9. Berzok, Linda Murray, "My Mother's Recipes: The Diary of a Swedish American Daughter and Mother," in Sherrie Inness ed. Pilaf, Pozole and Pad Thai: American Women and Ethnic Food, Univ of Mass Press, 2001, 84-101
10. Neustadt, Kathy, "Born among the Shells": The Quakers of Allen's Neck and Their Clambake." In Humphrey and Humphrey (Eds.) "We Gather Together" Food and Festival in American Life (pp.89-110)

11. Skillman, Amy E. ": No Smoke? No Fire: Contemporary Hamming the Ol' Fashioned Way" In Humphrey and Humphrey (Eds.) "We Gather Together" Food and Festival in American Life (pp.125-136)
12. Lewis, George, "The Maine lobster as regional icon: Competing images over time and social class," In B. Shortridge and J. Shortridge (Eds.) The taste of American Place. Rowman and Littlefield: New York.( Pp. 65-84)
13. Fischler, C. "Food, self and identity," Anthropology of food (27), 2 (1988) :275-292.