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# Food: A Cultural Culinary History

## Course Guidebook

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Professor Ken Albala is Professor of History at the University of the Pacific in Stockton, California, where he has been teaching food history and the history of early modern Europe for the past 20 years. In 2009, he won the Faye and Alex G. Spanos Distinguished Teaching Award at the University of the Pacific. He is also a Visiting Professor at Boston University, where he teaches an advanced food history course in the gastronomy program. He has a B.A. in European Studies from The George Washington University, an M.A. in History from Yale University, and a Ph.D. in History from Columbia University.

Professor Albala is the author or editor of 16 books on food, including *Eating Right in the Renaissance*; *Food in Early Modern Europe*; *Cooking in Europe, 1250–1650*; *The Banquet: Dining in the Great Courts of Late Renaissance Europe*; *Beans: A History* (winner of the 2008 International Association of Culinary Professionals Jane Grigson Award); and *Pancake: A Global History*. He also has coedited *The Business of Food: Encyclopedia of the Food and Drink Industries, Human Cuisine,* and two other collections: *Food and Faith in Christian Culture* and *A Cultural History of Food in the Renaissance*.

Professor Albala was editor of three food series for Greenwood Press with 30 volumes in print, and his four-volume *Food Cultures of the World Encyclopedia* was published in 2011. He is also coeditor of the journal *Food, Culture & Society* and general editor of the series AltaMira Studies in Food and Gastronomy, for which he has written a textbook entitled *Three World Cuisines: Italian, Mexican, Chinese*, which won the 2013 Gourmand World Cookbook Award for Best Foreign Cuisine Book in the World.

Professor Albala is currently researching a history of theological controversies surrounding fasting in the Reformation era. Recently, he

coauthored a cookbook, *The Lost Art of Real Cooking,* and its sequel, *The Lost Arts of Hearth and Home,* a handbook of kitchen and home projects. ■

# Table of Contents

# Table of Contents

# Table of Contents

# Table of Contents

## SUPPLEMENTAL MATERIAL

# Food: A Cultural Culinary History

**Scope:**

This course explores the history of how humans have produced, cooked, and consumed food—from the earliest hunting-and-gathering societies to the present. This course examines how civilizations and their foodways have been shaped by geography, native flora and fauna, and technological innovations. Feeding people has always been the primary concern of our species, and more than any other factor, finding, growing, and trading food products has been the prime catalyst in human history. Think, for example, how the desire for spices in the Middle Ages led directly to the discovery of the New World.

The scope of this course is global, covering civilizations of Asia, America, Africa, and Europe and how cultures in each of these continents domesticated unique staples that literally enabled these civilizations to expand and flourish. The course also covers marginalized and colonized cultures that were dominated largely to feed or entice the palates of the great. A major theme of the course is the process of globalization, imperialism, and the growth of capitalist enterprise at the cost of indigenous cultures and traditional farming practices and how these processes were shaped by trade in food.

Beyond the larger economic and social issues, the course will also cover the culture of food, why humans made the food choices they have, and what their food practices tell us about them and their world. In other words, food practices will be used as a window for viewing culture as a whole—just as one might study painting or literature. Foodways reveal much more because not only must all humans eat, but they also all make conscious choices about food within a cultural milieu. These choices not only reveal who they are and where they fit in socially, but also often their political, religious, and philosophical bend. By exploring what humans have thought and written about food, you will hopefully be able to experience human history as it becomes alive and direct in a way that the stories of great kings and epic battles sometimes cannot.

This course will examine in detail cookbooks, culinary literature, and dietary and religious texts—all of which reveal the preoccupations and predilections of the past. The course will also examine why different people make different food choices, why they sometimes go to extraordinary lengths to find rare or exotic items while refusing to eat foods that are cheap and plentiful, why individuals from certain social classes will avoid or esteem particular foods, and in general how food is the most important factor of self-definition. In other words, food helps define who the individual is; where he or she fits in society; and how the culture, nationality, or ethnicity he or she espouses expresses itself through food and cuisine. Of course, what a particular food or dish may mean differs dramatically from place to place and time to time, from generation to generation, and even in the mind of one individual depending on the context. This course will help you see not only how and why other cultures shape what people eat, but also how your choices are ultimately determined by our culture and are often equally bizarre and arbitrary to outsiders, especially when it comes to food taboos.

Because this is a history course, it will examine the way that the interaction, destruction, transformation, and assimilation of cultures are all hastened by the human drive to feed and titillate the gullet. For example, the demand for sugar and spices in the late Middle Ages was not only the impetus for discovering the New World, but it also transformed the economy of both the Old World and the New World and involved massive migrations, the spread of human pathogens, and the biological interaction of flora, fauna, and humans among several continents. All of this changed the world—so that Europeans could have sugar in their tea.

The entire course is also accompanied by hands-on activities so that you can not only read about food in the past in the lecture guides, but you can also have some fun in the kitchen exploring the past and even tasting it if you so desire. The activities are designed to bring the lectures alive—not only by having you experience the physical act of cooking as it was done in the past, but also by having you understand directly the taste preferences of our forebears. Of course, using equipment that would have been used in the past helps you get much closer, as does using exactly the ingredients they would have used, but there is no reason not to try these activities in your modern kitchen as well. Some of these activities involve recipes that were

taken directly from historic cookbooks. Reconstructions are given when recipes were not available or have never been translated. Others are simply culinary exercises or tastings. They are all designed to expand your palate, to explore the past—just as you might a new, exotic cuisine you have recently discovered. All recipes have either been adapted from the original or are direct translations from the original languages. ■

# Hunting, Gathering, and Stone Age Cooking

## Lecture 1

Throughout this course, you will analyze what people ate and why, how they made the best of their material resources, which technologies they used to transform food, and most importantly, what ideas they had about food. By the end of the course, your relationship to the food you eat—and to human history as a whole—may be quite different and, hopefully, far richer. This lecture begins at the very beginning, even before human history, with a discussion of food in prehistoric times.

**Prehistoric Diets**

- Looking at the diet of prehistoric people raises fundamental questions about what we were meant to eat according to nature. This is a question that most civilizations at one point or another address: Are we primarily sharp-toothed carnivores or benign vegetarians?

- It had long been assumed that our prehistoric forebears were primarily hunters, judging from archaeological remains of animal bones and arrow tips and pictures of game depicted on cave walls. However, from the emergence of *Homo sapiens* about 200,000 years ago to only about 10,000 years ago—the vast majority of our time on this planet—humans got their food by gathering and hunting.

- Humans are omnivores—and always have been. Sophisticated methods of analyzing tissue remains and fossilized bits of food are now giving us a more complete image of the prehistoric diet, and the surprise is that prehistoric humans were well fed; they ate everything and anything that offered nutritional value, including meat of animals large and small, insects, fish, wild greens, nuts, berries, and seeds.

- Other evidence is provided by plant and animal remains left at archaeological sites, including bits of bones, heaps of shells, and

traces of bug exoskeletons. When you find a huge pile of bones of a particular species that are burned, broken, and discarded in a heap, it's good evidence that it was a regular part of the diet and that hunters brought back their kill to a central place to butcher it and probably shared it communally.

- Wall paintings, such as those in Lascaux in France and Altamira in Spain, reveal which species were hunted—some of which are now extinct, including woolly mammoths, or no longer live in the region because they were overhunted, or the climate changed so dramatically that they couldn't survive or feed themselves.

- Anthropologists also infer information about prehistoric diets and cooking methods by comparing modern-day peoples still living in traditional ways, including Amazonian tribes and aboriginal Australians, and drawing inferences about prehistoric peoples from them.

**Human Evolution**

- There have been a lot of recent discoveries in paleontology regarding human evolution. The story of how we became human is all about food: hunting, processing ingredients, and cooking. The story of human evolution itself is largely a story of changes triggered by different modes of food processing.

- The last common ancestor of humans and apes seems to have lived between 5 and 10 million years ago. Both were omnivores, but a parting of the ways in the quest for food, in a sense, made us what we are. *Ardipithecus ramidus*, discovered in 1994, is the oldest hominid. *Ardipithecus ramidus* lived about 5 million years ago, was about four feet tall, walked upright, and lived in forests.

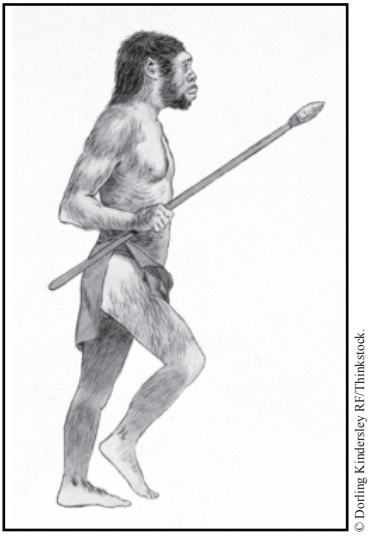
- Bipedalism, the fact that hominids walk on two feet, is thought to be the result of the need to move faster and see farther when hominids began to move onto the plains and catch larger animals or escape from predators. In other words, how we ate (on the plains) directly drove evolution. Shorter hominids that walked with their

knuckles on the ground couldn't compete and, therefore, died off. Meanwhile, apes stayed in forests.

- The first cultural changes related to food appeared about 2.5 to 1.5 million years ago with *Homo habilis*, or "handy man." He was found with tools around him, such as flaked stones for cutting. *Homo habilis* had a bigger brain, and the Broca's area of the brain was larger, so he probably could speak a bit, too.

- *Homo habilis* probably made the transition from a diet comprised primarily of unprocessed plant foods to a greater amount of meat in the Pleistocene era, about 1.5 million years ago. Meat was acquired just as often by scavenging as hunting.

- *Homo erectus* lived from 1.8 million to 300,000 years ago and is found outside Africa and in Europe. *Homo erectus* were probably better walkers than we are; our pelvises are much wider to allow for the birth of infants with big brains. About 700,000 years ago, there's direct evidence of hunting. Most importantly, *Homo erectus* probably used fire.



***Homo erectus* is perhaps an ancestor of modern humans.**



- Recently, Richard Wrangham has made the argument that *Homo erectus* also cooked food, and this made available many more nutrients, which allowed us to spend less energy digesting raw food and more energy developing greater brain capacity. In other words, we evolved because we cooked food.

- Archaic forms of *Homo sapiens* first appeared about 500,000 years ago. For example, Neanderthals lived from 320,000 to 30,000 years ago. They are closely related to us—so close that we could produce offspring with them.

- The brains of Neanderthals were a little bigger than ours. They were stout but short (about 5' 6'') with a solid build, and they adapted to living in colder climate of the last major ice age. They used a wide variety of tools and weapons. They were hunters of big game, and most importantly, Neanderthals cooked their food—from about 250,000 years ago—and show the oldest undeniable evidence of widespread cooking of food, which is about 125,000 years old.

- *Homo sapiens sapiens* only appeared 120,000 years ago; we lived at the same time as Neanderthals. About 40,000 years ago, Cro-Magnon man was making tools for sewing clothes, sculpting, decorating beads and ivory carvings, clay figures, instruments, and cave paintings. It's only here that there's evidence of sophisticated hunting strategies. They also took on dangerous animals, such as wild boar and woolly mammoths.

- When we get to 30,000 B.C., or the Paleolithic Period (Old Stone Age), we are the only hominid left. Presumably, our advanced organizational skills gave us a distinct advantage over the Neanderthals, and it may have been partly the advantage of sophisticated cooking and socializing.

**Hunting-Gathering Life**

- Ninety percent of humans who have ever lived were gatherers and hunters. Although hunter-gatherers were more closely tied to the larger ecosystem along with other animals, it would be wrong to assume that they lived in some kind of primeval harmony with nature. They destroyed fields through burning, hunted animals to extinction, and caused pollution.

- Given the extremely low population density, however, they didn't do that much damage. About a million years ago, there were about

half a million hominids in existence; by 30,000 years ago, there were about three million. Despite the smaller populations, hunter-gatherers were on the whole better nourished, had fewer diseases, and probably had a lot more spare time than their agricultural-pastoral descendants.

- Regarding free time, a hunting-gathering economy provides about 10,000 to 15,000 calories per hour of labor. Subsistence farmers, growing mostly grain, get between 3,000 and 5,000. You have to work much harder when farming—and you have to eat a lot more vegetables to be properly nourished.

- To capture or kill an animal requires a high level of sophistication. Making such tools as bows and arrows are skills that are passed down from generation to generation. Presumably, these skills give some peoples an evolutionary advantage over others, and this may be why we replaced Neanderthals. Sophisticated toolmakers survive and pass on their genes at a greater rate.

- It is generally believed that there was a gender-specific division of labor among these people—as there often is among nomadic hunter-gatherers today. Men went out to hunt while women did the gathering because they were also involved with child rearing.

- Cooking was essential to our becoming human and was the first major food revolution. Cooking involves the development of ritual, and a more complex social organization results from regular cooking with fire. Many foods, including meat, starches, and wild grasses, were made more digestible (or digestible for the first time) with the advent of cooking with fire. Cooking also kills pathogens in food, so those who cooked survived at greater rates than those who didn't—a real evolutionary advantage over all other animals.

- In fact, even before pottery and metallurgy, a core repertoire of cooking methods had already come into use.
  - Roasting.

- Using a hot stone as a griddle.
- Filling a pit with stones and covering it with leaves and earth.
- Filling a basket with water and hot stones.
- Stretching skin with water over a fire.
- Filling a stone-lined pit (below the water table) with water and hot rocks or smeared with clay and fired.
- Stuffing entrails with other foods.
- Placing food on a wooden rack over hot coals in a pit (barbequing).

- What was eaten depends entirely on the region, but there are some generalizations that can be made. The first major distinction is between those living near water and those inland in open grasslands, where there are animals in herds. The inland people generally have to move farther and more frequently than the coastal people.

- Another generalization is that colder arctic and more northern regions tend to have a narrower diet, like Eskimos on seals and fish. In more tropical regions, the diet is much more varied with a greater mix of vegetables, fruits, and meats.

- Bigger jaws holding bigger muscles suggest rougher and rawer food; smaller jaws of more recent humans suggest softer and cooked food. There are more cavities, too, with the agriculturalist's diet of starches and sugars. Hunter-gatherers have more worn front teeth and canines; agriculturalists' molars wear down more quickly.

- For more than 100,000 years, virtually everything humans ate was wild. The animal species they ate were leaner, and the roots and vegetables were stronger tasting, with all the fiber and roughage intact. They also ate a lot of nuts and berries, which many people today claim are very good for your health.

## Suggested Reading

Anderson, *Everyone Eats.*

Fraser, *Empires of Food.*

Higman, *How Food Made History.*

Jones, *Feast.*

Montanari, *Food Is Culture*.

Wrangham, *Catching Fire.*

## Culinary Activity

**Boiling Water in a Paper Bag**

Here's an interesting exercise that simply shows how one can cook in an animal skin. Take a large paper shopping bag, and cut out an eight-by-eight-inch square with no seams. (Seams would cause it to leak.) Fold it in half diagonally once into a triangle, and then fold it again in half into a smaller triangle. Open it up so that you have a cone, and tape or staple the ends so that it doesn't unfold. Notice that one side will be thicker than the other; that's fine, it will hold water. Next, fill the cone halfway up with water, and place it immediately over a burning candle. In a few minutes, the water inside will boil, and the paper will not burn. This replicates the technique of cooking in an open skin stretched over a fire. If you have the patience, try cooking a carrot in the boiling water.

**Pit Cooking**

To get a sense of how people cooked in prehistoric times, first find an open spot with soil soft enough to dig, at least 20 feet from any trees or buildings. Dig a circular hole about three feet deep. Line the perimeter of the pit with large stones for safety purposes and so that you can balance sticks across the pit. Make a fire inside the pit, starting with small kindling and building up to larger logs. When they have burned down to coals, you can start cooking. This is the original way to barbecue, incidentally.

You want to cook long and slow, but because this is before the discovery of metallurgy, you need to make a lattice using fresh green sticks. Lay them across the pit in one direction, and then lay more in the other direction so that you have a kind of primitive grill. They should be far enough away from the hot coals so that they don't burn, but they probably will char a little. Place on top of the sticks any meat you prefer: a few split chickens, large cuts of pork shoulder, or even a fish wrapped in sturdy leaves. Your seasoning should be minimal—whatever herbs you can find and salt. Because you are using a very gentle fire, expect larger pieces of meat to cook for at least an hour or so. If you have a flare-up, you can always sprinkle a little water on the fire to prevent the meat from burning. It will smoke a lot, which is good. Smoke is unquestionably a major flavor category that we have learned to enjoy in the millennia of cooking in this way.

# What Early Agriculturalists Ate

## Lecture 2

The agricultural revolution is probably the single most important event in human history. In fact, there were several agricultural revolutions at different times around the globe, and it was not one event, but a long and gradual process wherein people made the shift from the nomadic hunting-gathering way of life to the sedentary agricultural—and civilized—way of life. In this lecture, you will learn how ancient peoples figured out a way to support their growing population by moving toward an agricultural-based society.

**The Beginning of the Agricultural Revolution**

- Late-18th-century philosopher and economist Thomas Malthus believed that like all animals, human populations are subject to the availability of resources. A population can only grow as fast as the resources can feed the new mouths. If it gets too large, many will naturally die off, and if resources are abundant, then the population will naturally grow faster.

- In prehistoric times, even if a new technology like agriculture is invented, the population will rise dramatically but still be limited by whatever that new technology can produce. Malthus noted that agriculture can only be increased arithmetically while population increases exponentially.

- Even if population pressure forced some people to find new ways of getting food, it did not free them from the recurrent crises, food shortages, and famines. In fact, in certain respects, it made those worse because they were now depending on far fewer plants: If a crop failure ruined one single species, there could be a major devastating famine whereas before, no one species was depended on, so if one thing was missing, they gathered or hunted something else.

- Apart from population pressure being a possible catalyst, resources they had been depending on suddenly become scarce. This is probably the initial catalyst. It may seem odd, but in those hunting and gathering days, the Earth was also in the tail end of the last major ice age, which meant that humans were relatively confined to the warmer parts of the Earth and closer to the tropics, but so were the animals they hunted and the plants they depended on.

- When the Earth began to get warmer—from about 60 degrees in summer to about 80 or more—there was more food and more fields. What used to be great frozen glaciers became lush prairies. The animal populations were no longer contained. Because the vegetation grew more easily, the gathering was much better for humans, too, so their populations also grow.

- However, suddenly, they are out of balance. Hunting is harder, and gathering is easier. More mouths to feed means greater pressure to increase yield. Historians guess that plants were domesticated, which means to actively change a species to accentuate certain desired traits until that species no longer resembles the plant that grew in the wild.

- Dogs were probably the first animals to be domesticated, by accident, following around human camps for scraps and providing some watch from other predators. Not only can these animals be trained to stay in herds, but they also are ruminants, which is important because they can be fed grass (which humans can't eat) instead of other animals.

**The Spread of the Agricultural Revolution**

- About 10,000 years ago, the first place the agricultural revolution hit was the region called the Fertile Crescent, an arc covering what is today Iraq, Syria, eastern Turkey, Lebanon, and Israel. This region just happened to luck out by having a lot of easily domesticated plants and animals, including goats, sheep, and cows, which offer meat, wool, hides, milk, and cheese. These types of animals provide insurance, traction, transport, and manure (fertilizer).



**Wheat, one of the most important cereal crops, can be grown in a wide variety of climates and soils.**

- In addition, there is the wild ancestor of wheat all over the Fertile Crescent. Einkorn, spelt, and emmer have a relatively high protein content, so they can become staple crops. They contain about 8 to 14 percent protein, not nearly as much as meat, but people can live on it as the base of their diet. It can also be stored. Without wheat, civilization as we know it would never have developed in the Fertile Crescent—or, for that matter, anywhere.

- Rice in Asia, corn in Mesoamerica, potatoes and quinoa in South America, sorghum in Africa, and teff in Ethiopia were all staple starches that allowed the population to grow and caused a need for further organizational rigor. Where there was no such staple, the population invariably remained small, limited by what could be gathered, and more advanced civilizations never appeared.

- In the many places where agriculture never arose in ancient times—including Australia, the Amazon, and the Kalahari desert—it was not that these people were somehow less intelligent or savages,

but rather, they either did not need agriculture or there just weren't the right plants and animals that could be domesticated. Usually, they were cut off from outside influences, so those plants couldn't be introduced.

- By 7000 B.C., agriculture had reached Greece. By 6000 B.C., it had reached Italy, eastern Spain, and central Germany, and by 5000 B.C., it had reached southern Britain. Some crops, such as olives, couldn't make it, but wheat definitely did. A north-south axis makes transmission much more difficult—such as from North America to South America—because there are too many climate zones to cross.

- Growing plants and keeping animals not only led to a more sedentary life, but also to agriculture, settled villages, or towns, ultimately leading to civilization. More people living close together led to more agreed ways of doing things, including formal laws. It also led to trade, and where there's trade, there's some need to regulate it.

- This leads to rulers and the development of a social structure, including classes. Then, soldiers emerge to keep the rulers in power, collect taxes, protect the group from outside threats, or seize booty or even territory from neighbors. In this case, it's an advantage to have a big population so that you have more soldiers to conquer your neighbors.

- Then, priests enter the picture to legitimate the ruler, create rituals to appease the God, and support the priestly class. Rituals serve to define behavior by socializing members of the group, bringing them under the authority of those in power and creating cohesion among the group. Priests also tend to be the ones who develop writing systems to keep religious texts and dogma, and they record official laws for the state. In most of the early states, priests also act as bureaucrats.

- Once an upper class is established, a specialized profession of people (artists) provides luxury goods, adorning palaces, temples,

and cooking for the elite. This is the first time that there was anything like a professional chef.

- At this point, the population really explodes. A more steady, even if less nutritious, diet means less amenorrhea for women of child-bearing age and more babies surviving infancy. In addition, there's great incentive to have larger families because that means more hands to grow food.

- Large populations with lots of cool stuff to steal leads to war, which involves much bigger engagements, rather than small-time raids, and chance encounters of nomadic peoples. Agricultural and pastoral people—and even more so, the civilized—have a secret weapon that gives them an advantage over others: disease.

- A disease that is very nasty when it first arrives gradually becomes less virulent in a population that has lived with it for many generations. This means that when civilized peoples with long contact with the disease meet the comparatively uncivilized and isolated (hunter-gatherers), they wipe them out—sometimes completely, because they have had no previous contact.

**What Did the First Civilizations Eat?**

- The first civilizations ate wheat and its relatives; barley, chickpeas, and lentils all provided the staple base. Such foods are relatively high in protein but are composed mostly of starch, and you have to eat more of it just to stay fuelled. The first civilizations also ate cabbages, lettuces, and a small amount of animal protein from goats, sheep, cows, and pigs, which were all eventually domesticated.

- Dairy products were almost totally new in the human diet. It is pretty certain that human beings did not evolve an ability to digest milk past infancy because in many places that don't regularly drink milk, there is still lactose intolerance, which is the inability to break down lactose in milk. Only in places where they have depended on milk for many centuries does this intolerance become less pronounced.

- Cheese is a product of bacteria, and next to the few new domesticated species, the most important new foods invented by the earliest civilizations are the product of things going bad—or, rather, being colonized by benign bacteria. By controlling the conditions under which the good bacteria proliferate, civilized humans invented a whole series of new foods, including bread, wine and beer, cheese, and pickled or cured vegetables and fruits.

- The ability to store large quantities of food has an important effect: You don't have to eat everything you can and move on, as hunters and gatherers did. All these things can be kept from season to season and stored long term in case of crop failure, drought, or invasion. Although they may have a less varied diet, it's a more regular and predictable diet.

- Another consequence of food storage is that much more land is going to have to be altered to grow crops. Even in the best of situations, the same crops grown over and over caused soil depletion, prompting people to move elsewhere—usually to invade their neighbors.

- Fats—especially olive oil and nut oils—are an important class of foods that altered society. Not only do these provide a storable source of extra calories, but also a new cooking medium: frying and sautéing.

- Wild fowl were eaten for millennia, but domesticating chickens as well as ducks and geese is very important. This led to a ready supply of eggs at a relatively small cost, and you could eat the fowl when it was done producing eggs.

- Fish remained primarily caught wild until modern times, but shellfish farming hasn't changed much since ancient times. It's not exactly domestication, but it is a very efficient way of farming.

## Suggested Reading

Bottéro, *The Oldest Cuisine in the World*.

Brothwell, *Food in Antiquity.*

McGovern, *Uncorking the Past.*

## Culinary Activity

**Making Neolithic Flatbread**

This is a simple flatbread such as would have been eaten before ovens came into common use. It is something like pita bread, but chewier and with a lot more flavor. If you can find freshly ground whole wheat, or even grind it yourself, all the better. Any whole wheat flour will work well. Begin by fermenting half of a cup of the flour by mixing it with water until a thick batter is formed. Leave this out on the counter, uncovered. The next morning, add another half of a cup each of flour and water. Continue every morning for about one week, at which time the mixture will be bubbling and smell sour. You have just captured and nurtured wild yeast and lactobacilli. Remove half of this starter to another bowl, and add another cup of water and enough flour—and a good pinch of salt—to make a stiff dough. Knead this well, and set aside for several hours until risen. This will happen quickly in the summer and slowly in the winter. Keep the rest of the starter to make another batch or for risen bread.

Divide the dough into fist-sized balls, and pat out into flat rounds with your hands. Stretch each one until thin, but not so thin that they break. If you have an outdoor fire, these can be cooked on a flat stone set over hot coals, but indoors is just as good. Heat a pan, and simply throw in one flatbread. Count to 30, and turn over. Count to 30 again, and then move the bread directly to an open burner (assuming that you have a gas stove) or a barbecue. With tongs, flip repeatedly until lightly charred on each side. Then, put into a covered plate or casserole and continue with the rest of the flatbreads. They will stay warm for a long time. Serve with a dip like hummus or baba ganoush, made of charred eggplant. These are also the Neolithic ancestors of pizza and can be topped with a fresh cheese to wonderful effect.

**Akkadian Recipe**

Three surviving cuneiform tablets from ancient Mesopotamia constitute the earliest recorded recipes on Earth. They are quite cryptic, largely because the ingredients have not all been identified. The following recipe is an adaptation of the original recipe that fills in the procedural details. It gives an approximation of what cooking would have been like 35 centuries ago. The meat, which is domestic lamb, probably indicates that this is a dish for the wealthy—or perhaps intended for a special occasion. Beer was the common drink of all classes and was used widely in cooking as well. Consider how all of these ingredients would have been comparatively uncommon before the advent of agriculture.

***Tuh'u* Beet Broth**

**(adapted from Jean Bottéro's *The Oldest Cuisine in the World*, p. 28)**

Start with one pound of lamb shoulder cut into walnut-sized chunks or lamb stew meat. Remove any visible fat, and dice finely. Fill a medium pot halfway with water, and add the fat and the lamb. Add a teaspoon of salt; 12 ounces of beer; a finely chopped onion; a handful of arugula, finely chopped; ground coriander seed; and ground cumin. Bring the pot to a boil, and simmer for about one hour. Add in three peeled and quartered beets. Then, make a paste of one clove of garlic and the white part of one leek by pounding them in a mortar or reducing them to a fine paste in a food processor. Add to the pot. Let simmer until the beets are tender, about 30 minutes longer. Sprinkle the soup with chopped fresh coriander before serving. Notice how all of the ingredients would have been cultivated, though other dishes that use wild game and birds were also recorded on these tablets. Also notice how similar this dish is to Middle Eastern cooking today.

# Egypt and the Gift of the Nile

## Lecture 3

The first proper civilization is generally referred to as Sumer, which encompassed a few dozen cities, including Lagash, Umma, Uruk, and Ur—all of which are in modern-day Iraq. These people practiced year-round agriculture, created complex irrigation systems, and practiced monoculture, which involves growing single crops intensively. The first recorded recipes were found in these cities, which began to flourish around 4000 to 3500 B.C. In this lecture, you will learn that a civilization blessed with great fertility and natural boundaries, combined with court patronage from the top, is bound to develop a complex cuisine that will last for millennia.

**Ancient Egypt**

- Egypt is the first place to have a fully developed, socially stratified civilization outside the Fertile Crescent. The agricultural revolution was imported there, and it's the first place that we have full documentary as well as archaeological evidence of agriculture, domestication, cuisine, and medicine.

- There is evidence of extensive writings as well as paintings of foodstuffs; therefore, we can talk about the history of food there. We also have tons of physical evidence courtesy of the hundreds of preserved Egyptians—mummies—with whom there was often entombed jars of food.

- Egypt was ruled almost continuously by the same people from about 3100 B.C. to about 525 B.C., when the Persians and then the Greeks came in. Egypt has a very long and stable history of about 2.5 millennia—perhaps the longest continual civilization on Earth, with the exception of China.

- Egypt had long stretches of peaceful and prosperous dynasties, unlike Sumerians, whose cities were constantly fighting among themselves. Egypt, in contrast, is a big stable empire with a well-



**Food and wine priestesses are often depicted in ancient Egyptian wall paintings.**

developed court culture surrounding the pharaoh, which means highly developed artistic traditions, including the culinary arts, although there are no actual recipes from pharaonic times.

- The geography of Egypt makes a nice contrast to Mesopotamia. The Tigris and Euphrates are unpredictable rivers. Water was channeled and used to irrigate Sumer, but after many centuries, the soil became increasingly salinized, which made the land less fertile over the years and eventually caused the whole civilization to fall apart—the first ecological disaster in human history.

- In contrast, the Nile floods very predictably each year from upper to lower Egypt and into the delta, bringing tons of silt and rich soil with it, which means that Egypt remains extremely fertile along the flood plain.

- Egyptians didn't have a standing army for most of their history, partly because of their extremely rigid and hierarchical social

structure with the pharaoh as not only an absolute ruler, but also as a semidivine being descended from the gods. This is the first culture in which there is a distinct elite cuisine as well as an explicit nutritional theory.

- Egypt had extensive trade networks, but none of the things they imported were necessities. Egypt was pretty much self-sufficient; they only imported luxury items, primarily for the wealthy to consume.

- Most Egyptologists agree that all Egyptians were relatively well fed. The only direct evidence of malnutrition comes from frequent reference to intestinal worms and schistosomiasis, which prevents absorption of nutrients. There is even forensic evidence among mummies that many people overate, and there is some evidence of alcoholism.

- Egyptians loved animals. They kept them as pets, mummified them, worshipped them as gods, used them as symbols in their writing system, and loved to eat them. Animals were often sacrificed to the gods as well, which is a little confusing because it seems that if an animal was sacred to a god, sometimes it had to be protected, and other times, it had to be sacrificed to that god.

- The Egyptians didn't have any rigid food prohibitions set down in a law like the Hebrews or Hindus, but for many kinds of people, such as priests or members of a specific cult to a particular deity, certain foods might be prohibited. However, these were rarely universal or unchanging over time.

**The Egyptian Diet**

- Every visitor in classical times remarked how fertile Egypt was and how much grain they had. The state stored massive amounts of grain to prevent famine in lean years, as in the story of Joseph. They often imported grain from Syria or demanded it in tribute from subject states. The state usually distributed this grain as a kind of welfare system administered by the priests, who perhaps

first offered it to the gods and then redistributed it. There is also evidence that grain could be used for taxation purposes.

- Barley also figured prominently in Egyptian myths about resurrection. Because the plant dies and the seed goes dormant and then sprouts up into a new plant, it was a kind of symbol of the afterlife, and mummies were often buried with barley necklaces.

- The Egyptians ate many different kinds of bread. It was made from barley or spelt for the lower classes and more finely ground and bolted wheat for the upper classes. They also leavened their bread with yeast. Many different kinds of breads have been found buried with the dead to feed them in the afterlife. Bread was the staple food for Egyptians.

- The Egyptians ate a lot of wild game—including ibex, gazelle, and antelopes—and hunting was a favorite pastime. Above all, the Egyptians loved beef. Large-scale cattle industry developed in the north, where there are broad, flat plains. Although there are numerous illustrations of butcher's shops and cut-up pieces of beef, we don't really know how they cooked it, although we might assume that they boiled it.

- We know that the Egyptians kept dairy cows because there are frequent depictions of milkmaids. Priests also kept sacred bulls, which had special marks that denoted that they were incarnations of the god Apis. The Egyptians also used beef by-products in many medicines.

- Egyptians definitely kept pigs in an earlier period of time, but like the Hebrews, they seem to have avoided it later. There is no evidence of an explicit taboo, but there are practically no remains or depictions of pigs, and they were forbidden to be used as sacrifices.

- Sheep and goats were also domesticated. They were introduced from Asia along with ibex—a kind of Nubian mountain goat—which is

## Amursanu-Pigeon Broth

Most Sumerian recipes were simple in preparation but quite complex in the range of ingredients. For example, a broth would be made by adding a piece of meat to a pot with water, fat, salt, flavorings—such as onion, cumin, coriander, and leeks—and sometimes bread crumbs for thickness, or even blood.

*Split the pigeon in two; other meat is also used. Prepare water and add fat, salt to taste, bread crumbs, onion, samidu, leek, and garlic. Before using, soak these herbs in milk. It is ready to serve.*

African. Sheep were mostly kept for wool, which priests weren't allowed to wear, and wealthy people seem to have avoided it.

- Egyptians loved fowl, including geese, ducks, cranes, pigeons, and quails. All were hieroglyphic symbols, and all were also worshipped. Egyptians didn't eat falcons, but they used them for capturing other birds as an elite sport. They also hunted bigger birds with a bow and arrow. Waterfowl that were used for food were usually wild and caught using big nets. Ducks and geese were captured and fattened in pens but were not technically domesticated.

- Fowl were also used for temple offerings. In fact, cooked geese were often included in funerary offerings and buried with the deceased. Ibis were also sacred. They were associated with Thoth and were forbidden as food; they're extinct now in Egypt. Falcons and vultures were also associated with specific gods that were forbidden. Domestic chickens don't seem to appear until very late and were probably not used regularly until Ptolemaic or Roman times.

- Egyptians loved fish. They fished for sport with spears, with a hook and line, or commercially with nets and traps. It is very difficult

to precisely identify the species that they ate from Egyptian words or paintings, and there aren't remains as with other animals. They did have elaborate ways of preparing and preserving fish, which are obviously very perishable. There are depictions of fish, presumably dried and salted, being carried in baskets or being stacked for sale. Egyptians also ate salted dried fish roe. They sometimes ate crocodile, but this was also a sacred animal.

- Like wheat, grapes were introduced into Egypt, and vineyards were owned only by the wealthiest people. Frequently, harvesting scenes were painted on tombs. Egyptians became connoisseurs of wine, too. Wine jars were buried in tombs, such as King Tut's, and sometimes the jars contained information like the estate, winemaker, and year of vintage. There is pretty good evidence that there was a luxury trade in wine—or at least that pharaohs could expect to drink the best wine in the afterlife.

- The milky sap of older varieties of lettuce was suggestive of semen to the Egyptians, which is why they used it as a fertility offering to the gods. They also had celery, cabbage, gourds, and cucumbers.

- The only beans that the Egyptians could've had were fava beans, black-eyed peas, or chickpeas. They also had lentils and vetches. Priests were supposed to avoid beans. Beans were as important then as they are today.

- The young shoots of papyrus can be peeled and steamed, but papyrus was much more useful for paper. Other plants that were familiar to Egyptians were sedge (a kind of small starchy tuber), lotus, and water lily.

- The spices that were common to Egyptians include cumin, anise, coriander, fenugreek, mustard, and juniper. All were used in cuisine, medicine, and mummification. In addition, garlic and onions were very important; they were apparently fed to slaves building the pyramids.

- Many fruits—including figs, date palm, apples, plums, carob, and pomegranate—were cultivated. Peaches, cherries, pears, and other grafted trees came in Greco-Roman times. Olive oil was for the most part imported, but in late dynastic Egypt, it was also grown to a certain extent. Sesame oil and sesame paste (tahini) was also important for cooking from about the 3rd century B.C.

- The Egyptians mostly used animal fats for cooking. Some nuts and radish or lettuce seeds were pressed into oil. However, there is no concrete evidence for frying foods. They didn't have cheese or butter, but they did use milk. In addition, salt and natron (which was especially used for mummifying) were very important.

## Suggested Reading

Darby, *Food*.

Mehdawy, *The Pharaoh's Kitchen*.

Rivera, *The Pharaoh's Feast*.

## Culinary Activity

**Egyptian Beer**

Sophisticated archaeological techniques that have been developed in the past few decades have allowed researchers not only to identify vessels that stored beer in ancient times, but they also can identify exact ingredients as well. Patrick McGovern at the University of Pennsylvania is the best-known biomolecular archaeologist of ancient drinks, and he has even worked with breweries to develop modern versions. Although they taste quite good, they use modern strains of yeast and brewing protocols that are very different from ancient practice. These are the dictates of modern regulations and the demands of commerce—but at home, you can brew exactly as the ancients did, using wild yeast and simple pottery vessels. Be prepared, though, it will not taste like your standard fizzy lager.

First, you will need barley, which must be whole, fresh, and not pearled, which kills the seed. You are going to germinate the grains by sprinkling on

some water, leaving it in a sunny spot, and waiting until they just begin to sprout. Turn them around every now and then, drain off the liquid, and replace it if it begins to smell a bit. They should stay moist during germination. This should only take a few days. Once you see them sprout, dry them off, and place them in the sun to dry completely. If you want a darker brew, toast a few of the grains gently and add to the rest. Then, break everything up in a large mortar. You want small pieces, but not powder.

Next, heat the grain in water at about 140 degrees, and maintain that temperature for an hour. Strain this into another pot, and pour some more hot water over just to release the last bit of sugars in the mash. Now is the fun part. Cover the pot with a cheesecloth, and let it ferment at room temperature. Wild yeasts will invade, and it will start to bubble in a few days. Taste it periodically; it will probably be a little sour, thick, and of course still room temperature. That's ancient beer—fairly low in alcohol but refreshing. If you insist, strain it again, funnel into bottles, and refrigerate.

# Ancient Judea—From Eden to Kosher Laws

## Lecture 4

More than any other civilization, the ancient Hebrews defined their relationship to God in terms of what they ate, what was considered clean and unclean, and what they sacrificed to their God. The succession of different dietary codes given to the Hebrews through their history in a certain metaphorical/mythological sense replicates actual dietary changes experienced by humans. That is, the Old Testament is a good source of history—not literal history, but stories recounted in Genesis reflect real historical events as interpreted over generations. In this lecture, you will learn about those stories in light of their relevance to food history.

**Adam, Eve, Cain, and Abel**

- A myth is a story that explains to people why things are the way they are. It can explain natural phenomenon or social practices. It explains why people do what they do—why they are different from other people—and it also gets them to behave. More than anything, it justifies the status quo.

- In the beginning, God created the Earth. He created seed-bearing plants and fruit trees. Then, he made animals and, finally, Adam, who is given stewardship over the animals and gets to name them. Animals are not intended as food; instead, Adam and Eve eat seeds and fruits. They are not exactly vegetarians, but fruitarians. They don't kill anything—not even plants. They are in a state of complete and utter innocence, totally guilt-free.

- This part of the story reminds the Hebrews that according to God's original plan, all killing was wrong, and in a sense, it still is and always will be. If this a mythological version of real events, what would Eden be—that time when hominids ate vegetables?

- Significantly, the hunting and gathering stage of human history has been edited out, or at least the myth ignores what the Hebrews all

probably knew: that their ancestors hunted. The story needed a fall from perfection; it had to show that evil is the fault of humans and not in God's original plan. Evil comes from our disobedience.

- The fall is an act of eating: Eve eats the fruit, which may have been a pomegranate because they probably didn't have apples in ancient Judea. Eves gives the fruit to Adam, and he eats it, too. As a consequence of eating the fruit, Adam and Eve are kicked out of Eden, and their punishment is labor. In other words, they have experienced the agricultural revolution; they have gone from being leisured, innocent gatherers to agriculturalists.

- For the Hebrews, this story is a way to explain, justify, and reinforce the settled way of life. It would be very dangerous to the survival of this society if men wandered off into the brush. This keeps them at home and teaches them their duty. It also explains to them why their neighbors are sometimes not nice to them. There exists evil now, and it's our fault. Don't blame God if something rotten happens.

- Adam and Eve's children, Cain and Abel, are a farmer and a shepherd, respectively. Abel brings God some fat as an offering, and Cain brings some produce of the soil—which, for some reason, God rejects. This tells the Hebrews that you can't bribe God. Sometimes he favors what you do and sometimes not, but ultimately, what he does is inscrutable to us lowly mortals.

- Humans mess up again. Cain kills Abel. Significantly, Cain's punishment is that the ground will not produce food for him anymore, and he is made to wander the Earth and he is given a strange mark so that people stay away from him and don't kill him. He's a nomadic shepherd—someone different from the Hebrews, who are settled agriculturalists. This explains why Hebrews are different from those around them and why they have to keep apart from them.

**The Great Flood and Noah's Ark**

- There is a cataclysmic flood. Everyone and everything drowns—except for Noah. When it's all over, Noah takes some ritually clean beasts and birds and burns them whole on the altar, and the Lord smelled the soothing odor. Above everything, God wants justice, and killing, no matter who does it, demands punishment.

- To right things in the universe, someone or something has to be punished whenever someone or something is killed. God doesn't really care who is punished, strangely enough, so when you do something wrong, you can substitute a goat—a scapegoat—who is sacrificed in place of you.

- What's odd is that God hasn't explained this whole system of justice yet, and presumably, it's later Hebrews putting this sacrifice in the story to show that Noah is pious and good. However, it doesn't really make sense yet.

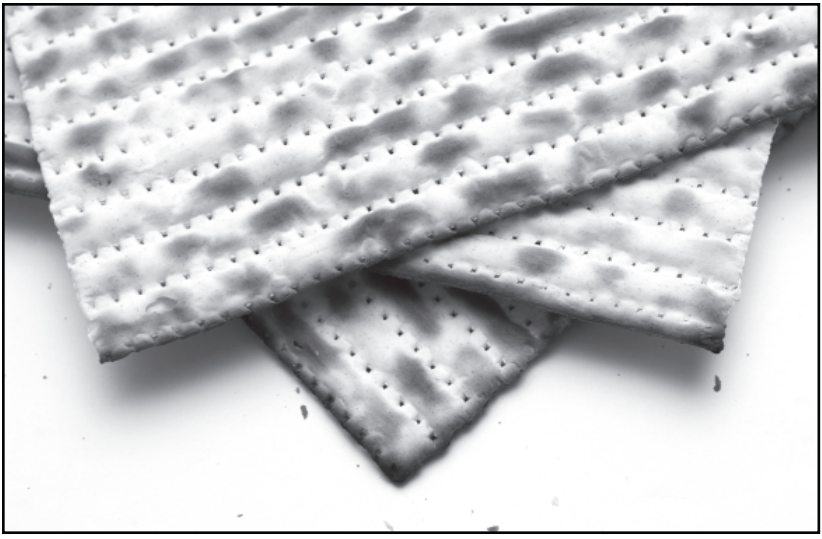
- God also changes the human diet. Humans can't be expected to live as vegetarians anymore because they're killers, so God lets them kill animals and eat meat. This is an admission by God that humans are faulty.

- As a way to enforce justice in the universe, God states that murder of all kinds is forbidden: If you kill a man, then someone must be punished with death, and if you kill an animal, then God wants satisfaction in the form of sacrifice.

- There's actually only one dietary restriction at this stage: Humans can't eat blood. It seems that the Hebrews thought that blood contained the "life" of the creature, and all life belongs to God. The blood prohibition is still in effect among Jews; animals have to be slaughtered painlessly and the blood completely drained to be kosher.

**Moses and the Seder Plate**

- Israelites are enslaved in Egypt, and Moses is trying to get them set free. The last of the nasty plagues is that the first-born son of





**Matzo, unleavened bread, is eaten by Jews during Passover, or Pesach.**

every household would die, and the way Moses signals to the angel of death to avoid the Hebrew households is by having them smear blood on the doors.

- It's from this episode that one of the central food rituals in Judaism is first enacted—what we call Passover, or in Hebrew, the Seder. The Hebrews are told to do all sorts of unusual things on that day (and for seven days) and eat odd foods. They can't eat leavened bread (only matzo), supposedly to remember having to escape quickly before the bread had time to rise in the morning. All of the things on the Seder plate are meant to remind the participants of some affliction or another.

- The Hebrews escape from Egypt, and they have to wander through the desert. They're fed manna, which some people say is a sticky excretion of bugs left on trees, not unlike honey. However, the Israelites long for the fish, cucumbers, and garlic they ate in Egypt. Finally, they get nearer to the promised land. Moses goes up

Mount Sinai and is given the law. This is a whole new epoch in dietary history and, in fact, a new relationship between God and the Israelites.

**Food Prohibitions and Practices**

- According to God, Hebrews can eat anything with a cloven hoof and that chews its cud—which means ruminants like goats, sheep, and cows—but not animals that have only one or the other, like the camel that chews its cud but has toes, nor the pig that has cloven hooves but doesn't chew its cud.

- There has been more debate over this question than probably any other food taboo in history. It was once suggested that the Hebrews avoided pork because they somehow knew about trichinosis, so they forbid pigs, which are filthy anyway. In fact, they knew nothing about trichinosis, which is killed by cooking, and other animals carry other diseases, such as salmonella or anthrax.

- Other historians have suggested that the Hebrews made the prohibition so that they could be kept separate from their neighbors, who ate pigs. However, many of the other Semitic people living around the Hebrews also avoided pork.

- Jean Soler explains food prohibitions as a problem of categorization. Soler argues that it's still a matter of murder: The only animals allowed to be eaten are vegetarians—ones whose sins don't have to be expiated. Carnivores and omnivores, who will commit murder, are ritually unclean, so they can't be eaten. A few animals got prohibited by mistake, such as hares, or because priests determined that they were unclean, such as snails, shellfish, and fish without scales.

- The prohibition of boiling a kid in its mother's milk is a culinary form of putting together two things that don't belong together—a kind of culinary adultery. Among people who keep kosher, it has come to be interpreted as meaning that you can never mix any milk and meat products in the same meal.

- Fasting is another food practice that is first set down in Leviticus, and it's one that has enormous importance to Judaism, Christianity, and Islam. In the case of the Hebrews, it's for the Day of Atonement, Yom Kippur—a day when people are not supposed to work or have fun. They just sit around and think about all the bad things they've done and promise not to do them in the coming year. It's the most sacred holiday in the Jewish calendar.

- The other thing instituted is the Sabbath. The Bible claims that the Sabbath has roots going all the way back to the creation—to God's resting on the seventh day. It's explicitly commanded that you aren't allowed to work on the Sabbath. Leviticus also institutes tithes—1/10 of all produce—to support the priests, a practice that survives in Christianity, too.

- Hanukkah commemorates an episode during the Greek occupation, when the Maccabees held an uprising. The significance of the eight days of Hanukkah is that the temple oil miraculously lasted eight days during a siege. Hanukkah has its own food rituals, particularly frying in oil.

- Around the time of Jesus, there was intense political turmoil. After the Romans dispersed the Jews during the Diaspora, the ritual sacrifices in the temple ceased. Among Jews, worship was now in synagogues—sort of Greek-influenced schools, more places of learning than holy temples. It's also then that the home rituals that focus so much on food take on much greater importance.

## Suggested Reading

Cooper, *Eat and Be Satisfied.*

Douglas, *Purity and Danger.*

Greenspoon, *Food and Judaism*.

Harris, *Cows, Pigs, Wars, and Witches.*

Simoons, *Eat Not This Flesh*.

## Culinary Activity

**Passover Seder**

Passover, or Pesach, is the most ritualized meal in the Jewish faith. Readings from the book of Exodus dominate, along with Talmudic commentary, but certain foods are also part of the liturgy. Matzo, or unleavened bread, is absolutely essential and replaces risen bread entirely for the entire seven- or eight-day festival. The Seder is the traditional meal, during which four glasses of wine are consumed; people eat reclining, dip bitter herbs in salt water, and eat only unleavened bread. These peculiarities are recorded in the "Four Questions," which are sung or read by the youngest member of the family. The exact order of the Seder is prescribed in the Haggadah, a small book used through the service. Apart from foods that are eaten merely traditionally, such as matzo ball soup or gefilte fish, a Seder plate contains these ritually prescribed foods, each of which commemorates the story of being freed from bondage in Egypt. The *maror* are bitter herbs, such as horseradish; *charoset* is a thick paste of fruits and nuts to recall the mortar used by slaves; *karpas* is another vegetable, usually parsley dipped into salt water to commemorate tears; *z'roa* is a roasted lamb bone commemorating ritual sacrifice in the Temple; and *beitzah* is a roasted egg, a symbol of mourning. If you are lucky enough to be invited to a Passover dinner, this may help to make sense of the ritual. Otherwise, try making your own gefilte fish. The stuff that is sold in jars is pretty vile, so it's worth making it yourself.

**Gefilte Fish**

Use freshwater white fish, such as pike or carp—but any white fish will do. Remove the fillets, and save the bones and heads. Discard innards and gills if the fish hasn't been cleaned. Put the bones and head into a pot, cover with water, and add chopped carrot, celery, onion, fresh dill and parsley, and a little salt. Simmer gently for 30 minutes and strain, pressing on solids. Return strained liquid to the pot. This is your poaching liquid, or court bouillon.

Next, pound or process the fillets into a fine paste. Add a little salt and matzo meal as a binder and an egg. With two spoons, form large torpedo shapes, or quenelles, and drop gently into the simmering poaching liquid. Repeat until all of the fish is used, removing the fish quenelles after about five to

seven minutes, when they should be light, fluffy, and cooked through. Next, return all of your quenelles to the cooled poaching liquid, and put them into the refrigerator for at least several hours, until they are completely cold. Serve cold with freshly grated horseradish on the side and a sprig of dill. Aficionados will also want some of the jelled poaching liquid; if you've used enough bones, it will have congealed.

# Classical Greece—Wine, Olive Oil, and Trade

## Lecture 5

In this lecture, you will learn that the food culture of ancient Greece is largely the result of its unique geography. Greece is an extremely mountainous appendage hanging off the end of Europe and dipping into the Mediterranean. Easy access to the sea means a lot of fish, but they don't have a lot of arable farmland, which means that with any sizeable population, the Greeks have difficulty providing grain. They have to seek out flat plains elsewhere and colonize them. This is key to understanding why Athens became a mercantile state and why wealth was distributed fairly evenly through the population.

**The Geography of Greece**

- Being a society heavily dependent on trade, it's not surprising that the Greeks invented money. The Lydians were first after about 625 B.C., but most city-states coined their own money soon thereafter—and money clearly fosters trade. All of the new colonies that the Greeks set up were allowed to figure out how to govern themselves. There's a great deal of political experimentation. Like the United States, they started with a relatively clean slate.

- Most of the colonies keep in close contact with the mother cities, even if they become politically independent, so they remain closely tied into Greece's economy, supplying some products and serving as a market for others—especially manufactured goods like pottery.

- What Greece can grow, if not huge quantities of grain, are plants that are better suited to hillsides, such as olives, grape vines, and fruit trees. They experience long, hot summers and wet winters ideal for these crops. These, apart from providing food for the people, are excellent articles of trade. They can be preserved and stored in amphorae, and olive oil and wine can be shipped anywhere. In addition, Mount Hymettus, covered in wild thyme, still makes some of the best honey in the world.

- Trade makes some private citizens very rich—something we haven't really encountered elsewhere. Vibrant Greek culture is also the product of wealth being spread out among a good percentage of the population. It's for very good reason that the Greeks produced the very first cookbook, by Archestratus. Many people were interested in gastronomy.

- Because all the parts of Greece are relatively isolated, it will be very hard to unite the whole peninsula under one ruler, so Greece will be politically fragmented (unlike Egypt). There is no single all-powerful ruler; rather, there are lots of little city-states, each with its own form of government.

- As a result, there won't be a grand court culture radically separate from the food of the masses. In fact, most people ate relatively simple foods—the stereotypical Mediterranean diet of bread, wine, olives, cheese, some vegetables, and a bit of meat.

- The geographical dispersion also meant that although it's relatively easy to invade one part of Greece, it's nearly impossible to hold onto anything or engulf it in an empire, as the Persians tried to do.

**Archaic Greece**

- The earliest record of Greek food habits is the description of what Greek kings of the heroic age ate as described by Homer in the *Iliad* and *Odyssey*, which were written in about 800 B.C. but describe a Mycenaean culture that existed a few centuries before.

- We also have many clues about early food culture in Greece from an author writing shortly after Homer, Hesiod, whose *Works and Days* tells about ordinary people's lives. What is really fascinating about Hesiod is that many of his stories parallel the biblical ones. Just as in the Bible, there is a procession of different historical epochs.

- Hesiod's *Works and Days* also gives a full picture of what the average Greek farmer had to do day in and out and season to

season: bring in the wine grapes, fatten the lambs, and knead the bread dough. The food is simple, fairly monotonous, and basic.

- Another feature of ancient Greek culture, from this early time through classical times, is the public festival. These were organized by the state and were basically a way to distribute meat to the populace—a big communal barbecue, but also a sacrifice.

- There were a lot of different cults in Greece; different cities had different protector gods, such as Athena for Athens. There were also many different kinds of worship, such as the Eleusinian Mysteries, which has to do with the cult of Demeter and the sprouting and rebirth of grain in the spring. This cult also involves hallucinogenic drugs like opium and some odd eating rituals.

- Another figure of archaic Greece is Pythagoras, who is sort of the counterculture guru of this era. Even though we have no writings by him, he was renowned for starting a sort of philosophical commune in southern Italy, and he's the first person in the West to espouse vegetarianism. He is famous for his Pythagorean theorem, which is very important to mathematics.

**Classical Greece**

- In classical Greece (about 490 to 330 B.C.), the most interesting food custom is the symposium, which was usually a time set aside for after the main meal of the day (*deipnon*) in the evening, when men laid around on couches drinking and discussing things.

- Unlike Plato's symposium, a true symposium involved performers, naked flute girls, and people telling dirty stories. Most importantly, they drink a lot of wine. Greeks mixed their wine with water, probably because it was fairly thick, sweet, and highly alcoholic.

- Plato merely appropriated this drinking-party form to present a discussion. His particular brand of rationalism was meant to counteract the wild, irrational rituals of the early Greeks. In fact,

Plato has a certain attitude toward food that influences Western thought even in present times.

- Plato thought that things of this world, material objects, were less real and important than things that exist in the world of ideal forms. In other words, if you are thinking about chairs, a concrete object is a chair, and so are all the others, and they're all a little different, so none can be the absolutely true chair—or the concept of "chair" that's equally applicable to all chairs at all times. However, you can think of the ideal form of "chair," of which these are only inferior reflections.

- If ideas are purer than objects, then activities that involve thought are more highly valued than physical and manual activities. In *Phaedo*, Plato expressed the idea that being a philosopher or poet is more noble and worthwhile than being a builder or chef. Pleasures of the body are distracting and demeaning, and just as the soul is more valuable and eternal than the body, intellectual pursuits are more important than physical pleasures. This attitude, a kind of secular food guilt, reverberates throughout Western civilization.

- There is another dialogue by Plato, *Gorgias*, in which he compares cooking, a menial task that only serves to stimulate the senses, with medicine, which tells people what to eat and preserves health and is, thus, the nobler of the two. There certainly were many Greeks who were intensely interested in gastronomic pleasure, which is probably why Plato denounced it so fiercely.

- The Greeks produced the very first cookbook. Actually, there were several, but only a fragment of one of them survives, and it was written by Archestratus in about 330 B.C. Most of what survives are the sections on fish. It's written in verse, so it was probably meant to be read aloud at a symposium.

- Archestratus is a connoisseur. He knows where the best fish comes from and has the ability to get it in the proper season. He knows how to prepare food without disguising its natural flavor and

texture. His cooking is light and elegant, presumably intended to counteract what must have been before him—a cuisine based on abundance and variety. This cooking is more refined because it takes discernment and knowledge, not just a lot of money.

**What Did Ordinary Greeks Eat?**

- Hunting is no longer important. The main species that are domesticated are sheep, pigs, and goats. Sheep and goats were mainly used for dairy, but young kids and lambs were eaten and were considered a seasonal delicacy. Pork is the most commonly eaten meat. In general, beef is very rare. All of these animals could be sacrificial victims.



**Olive oil is a natural fat that has been used by humans for ages.**

- Greeks did eat wild hare and also puppies. Sometimes, they ate wild ass. They also ate lots of snails, even though physicians thought that they were dangerous. Wild birds were also part of Greek cuisine.

- Greeks domesticated chickens, geese, and quails. Eggs were very important in Greek cuisine. They didn't use butter, which doesn't keep in hot weather, or drink fresh milk, which they associated with wild barbarians. However, they did eat a kind of yogurt that was later called *oxygala*. Cheese is very important. Greeks usually ate fresh goat or sheep cheeses, which were sometimes brined to preserve them.

- Fish are also extremely important—from huge tuna, sturgeon, sharks, bluefish, mullet, and pike to tiny anchovies. Shellfish, too, abound in the Aegean Sea, including octopus and squid, oysters,

crabs and shrimp, and sea anemone. Few important cities are very far from the water. Greeks also invented a fish sauce, which will be important in Roman times.

- In terms of fruit, olives and grapes were the most important. Domesticated fruits include apples and quinces, plums, sour cherries, watermelon, and cucumbers. All of these were served with meals, but sweet fruits and nuts—such as figs, pears, pomegranate, myrtle berries, and mulberries—were also served after a meal. Dates were well known but were imported. Raisins were also important. Almonds were the most popular type of nut, but the Greeks also ate walnuts, hazelnuts, chestnuts, and pine nuts.

- The Greeks also enjoyed a lot of vegetables, including lettuce and cabbages, beets, asparagus, cardoons (which later become artichokes), celery, onions, garlic, and hyacinth bulbs. They ate tons of wild herbs, including oregano, thyme, basil, mint, coriander, cumin, and wormwood. Sesame seeds were an important garnish along with poppy. The Greeks ate legumes, such as peas, lentils, and chickpeas. Grains like barley were important alongside wheat. The Greeks baked bread and cakes.

## Suggested Reading

Archestratus, *The Life of Luxury*.

Dalby, *Siren Feasts*.

Davidson, *Courtesans and Fishcakes*.

## Culinary Activity

**Archestratus's Shark Recipe**

Archestratus, who lived in about 330 B.C. near the Greek colony of Gela in Sicily, was renowned for his knowledge of where the best ingredients came from throughout the Greek world. He was a connoisseur, in both ancient and modern senses. Most of the surviving fragments from his cookbook are about fish. He doesn't offer recipes per se, but, rather, gastronomic commentary

about foods and how to prepare them. The following is a reconstructed recipe based on his commentary about *karcharia*, probably a kind of small shark.

**From Archestratus's *The Life of Luxury*, translated by John Wilkins and Shaun Hill, p. 59–60**

Take two shark steaks and place them in a ceramic casserole with a handful of basil leaves, sprinkle them with ground cumin and salt, and drizzle on a generous amount of olive oil. Bake these in a 350-degree oven for 40 minutes. Serve topped with a dollop of "pounded sauce," which is an ancestor of pesto. Make the sauce by taking a handful of basil, a small garlic clove, a drizzle of olive oil, and a pinch of salt, and pound in a mortar until smooth and fine. Serve on top of the shark steak. Because the description only says to use "fragrant leaves," feel free to substitute another herb such as parsley or sage, but because basil comes from the Greek word *basileus*, meaning "king," it seems appropriate. If you are so inclined, eat this with your fingers while reclining on a couch. Serve with a fragrant retsina, a white wine flavored with mastic resin.

# The Alexandrian Exchange and the Four Humors

## Lecture 6

In Hellenistic civilization, there were many different ways to think about food, including using it to show off wealth, maintain health, or strike a philosophical position. It was this wealth of attitudes that the Romans adopted when they conquered Greece. In this lecture, you will learn how the foodways and cuisine of Greece changed dramatically in the wake of the vast empire of Alexander the Great. It can be argued that the Greeks also changed the rest of the world in terms of food.

**Hellenistic Civilization**

- Alexander the Great was a Macedonian and, therefore, was considered to be a semibarbarian by other Greeks. He incorporated not only the entire peninsula of Greece into his empire, but also conquered Palestine, Egypt, and the vast Persian empire, with lands stretching all the way to modern Afghanistan and India. He founded cities in all of these places—most called Alexandria.

- Greek culture was imported to these places. Even though politically it didn't hold up as a unified empire, the successor states continued to be ruled by Greek dynasties. Greek culture not only engulfed all of these others, but Greek culture also became enriched by them. All of these far-flung places become Greek-like, too—hence the term "Hellenistic," which dates from around 323 to 250 B.C., until the Romans eventually sweep in and take over everything (and also become Hellenized in the process).

- This is the first major period after the agricultural revolution of eight millennia before, in which there is a major exchange of animal and vegetable species from East to West—all the way across the Eurasian continent and also from Africa to Europe and Asia.

- During this Alexandrian, or Hellenistic, exchange, not only do species and diseases travel back and forth, but whole civilizations

also interact and influence each other. If the trend toward globalism—connecting far-flung regions together by means of trade—is one of the most important events in human history, then food is once again the catalyst.

- In classical times, the Greek diet was simple, including bread, wine, cheese, olives, vegetables, and some meat. The Greeks traded these items across the Mediterranean, but the foods are pretty much the same from one end to another. When Alexander's empire expands, there were suddenly standard units of money across a much greater space, a lingua franca (Greek) so that everyone can communicate, and another vast trade network that included India and even China.

- Gradually, people in the West start getting things from India like pepper and ginger. In addition, other Indian spices like nigella, spikenard, and asafetida were imported in Hellenistic times. There are also accounts that suggest that sugar first entered into the West in this manner as a medicinal curiosity, but honey is still far more important.

- Probably the most fascinating spice, certainly with the longest journey, was cinnamon (also cassia), which the Hellenistic Greeks used as a flavoring. As articles of conspicuous consumption, spices confer distinction on the wealthy because only the wealthiest can afford them.

- Beyond spices, there is also rice, which was new in the West. Rice was not eaten in great quantities because it was so expensive. It was never grown in classical times; it was always imported. Rice was used more as a medicine than a food.

- Apart from exotic imported items, there were also a number of plants introduced that could be grown in Europe. In fact, Alexander's expeditions brought botanists along to identify viable species. Also, the Greek administrations in the East wanted familiar Greek foods, so the exchange went both ways. Possibly the most important thing to travel from East to West was citrus fruit.

## Myma

The following is a recipe for a meat dish from the cookbook of Epaenetus. This dish is savory because of the meat and liver, spicy because of the cumin and coriander, sour because of the vinegar, sweet because of the raisins and honey, and aromatic because of the hyssop, thyme, and silphium.

*A myma of any sacrificial animal, or chicken, is to be made by chopping the lean meat finely, mincing the liver and offal with the blood, and flavoring with vinegar, melted cheese, silphium, cumin, thyme leaf, thyme seed, Roman hyssop, coriander leaf, coriander seed, geteion (maybe a spring onion), peeled fried onion, raisins or honey, and the seeds of a sour pomegranate.*

- Hellenistic civilization, compared with classical Greece, was much more luxurious, extravagant, and even opulent. Ancient writers seem to think that this was a result of the influence of Persia.

- The opulence is most obvious in the art of the period, which became really decadent—even pornographic at times. There was also an unctuousness that was evident in the culinary arts. For all the discernment and knowledge Archestratus had, his recipes were still pretty simple. However, all of that changes in the Hellenistic period.

- All of this opulence was the result of increased trade, migration, spread of merchants and specialized agriculture, and slave trade. All sorts of previously unconnected cultures mixed, and new luxuries were used in cooking in new ways.

**Humoral Physiology**

- Along with all of the luxury, the Hellenistic period was also a golden age for dietary writing. With all of these people indulging, they needed doctors to tell them how to get well. The genre of

dietary regimens begins with the Hippocratic writers in the 4th and 5th centuries B.C., which is classical Greece. There was a historical figure named Hippocrates, but there was also a slew of other authors—often referred to as Hippocratic authors—before and after him whose writings were later ascribed to him.

- The Hippocratic authors who lived in Hellenistic times were often physicians working for kings as patrons. None of these authors were as important as Galen of Pergamum, who was a Greek physician who went to work for the Roman emperor Marcus Aurelius and his successors. Galen wrote more than any of his predecessors; in fact, there are more surviving works by Galen and more pages written by him than any other writer of classical antiquity.

- Galen's importance is also that the theories he came up with were adopted by many later civilizations: Byzantine, Islamic, and European cultures into the 18th century. He was the medical authority for almost 2,000 years.

- Elaborating on Hippocrates, Galen pretty much invented the theoretical system known as humoral physiology. This entire system is based on the already widespread idea that the whole universe is made up of four basic building blocks, or elements: fire, water, air, and earth. Each of these can be described with qualitative terms like hot and dry (fire), cold and moist (water), hot and moist (air), and cold and dry (earth).

- The actual fire, water, air, and earth that we see are actually made up of several elements; they're not the pure element or essence. Just as the universe is made up of elements, so are our bodies. The human body is also regulated by four basic fluids, or humors, that correspond to the elements: blood, phlegm, yellow bile (or choler), and black bile (or melancholy).

- Health was defined as the proportional balance of these four fluids, though all humans are born with a predominance of one particular humor—or at least a tendency for that humor to be

produced in excess. This meant that individuals could be classified as sanguine (in which case blood dominates), phlegmatic, choleric, or melancholic.

- An individual's humoral makeup, or complexion, determined the diseases they would be subject to, their character and emotional state, and, most importantly, what diet they should follow. Thus, unlike modern nutritional theory, there could be no universal set of prescribed nutritional guidelines or even an idea of good foods or bad foods that would apply to all people. Therefore, an accurate diagnosis and a tailor-made regimen for each individual were considered crucial in this system.

- Another central idea in this system was that each humor has its own qualitative properties that can be described just like the elements as hot and moist (blood), cold and moist (phlegm), hot and dry (choler), and cold and dry (melancholy). These properties are not so much actual tactile measurements of temperature and humidity as they are the effect each humor has on the body. This system is defined as allopathic; it corrects ailments by applying remedies opposite to the patient's distemperature or imbalance.

- Matching the proper foods to the individual was the key to this entire system. Hot and moist people needed cold and dry foods when imbalanced; cold and moist people needed hot and dry foods. The assumption is that few people are ever well balanced and usually need some form of correction. Theoretically, however, healthy people should maintain their particular humor by eating foods similar in qualities to their own humoral makeup.

- Another crucial consideration when determining the ideal diet for a person was the texture and consistency of a given food. How quickly something would pass through the body and how easily it could be digested was just as important as its humoral qualities.

- We still use these humoral terms to describe mood and character types: A sanguine person is cheery and optimistic, phlegmatics are

lazy and slothful, cholerics are prone to violent outbursts of anger, and melancholics are sad.

**New Philosophical Schools**

- There are a few new philosophical schools that pop up in the Hellenistic period and remain influential in Roman times that also have interesting attitudes toward food. The first of these are the Stoics, people who think that you don't show your emotions because it makes you weak and that you shouldn't get too attached to things that are ephemeral. It is a strange philosophy—but also one that called for austerity, simplicity, and denial of luxuries.

- Another school is the Epicureans. The word "epicurean" later came to be associated with luxury and gluttony, but in fact, Epicurus espoused exactly the opposite. Epicurus had the audacity to suggest that everything we do should be directed toward maximizing our pleasures and minimizing our pain. However, some things, though very pleasurable in the short term, cause greater pain in the long term. Ironically, Epicurus espouses a doctrine of simplicity—in the attempt to maximize pleasure.

## Suggested Reading

Athenaeus, *Deipnosophists*.

Dalby, *Dangerous Tastes*.

Galen, *Galen: On the Properties of Food*.

## Culinary Activity

**Galenic Meal**

Just as today, there is no way of knowing if the ancient Greeks followed their physicians' instructions when it came to eating a healthy diet, but Galen of Pergamum's writings became so popular—and dominated medical thought for 15 centuries following his death—that it is safe to assume that people knew a great deal about what was considered best to eat. While Galen doesn't offer recipes, his comments about specific ingredients are so

detailed that it is possible to reconstruct a healthy meal using the system of humoral physiology, or balancing the hot, cold, moist, and dry humors in a single dish.

**From Galen's *On the Properties of Foodstuffs*, p. 61**

Chickpeas, Galen notices, are made into soups in the country, sometimes using chickpea flour cooked with milk. He thinks that chickpeas are less prone to cause flatulence than other beans, are more nutritious, and even serve as an aphrodisiac, but there is also the skeleton of a recipe that he says is common among us. The following is a reconstructed recipe. The combination, apart from being delicious, fits into his definition of a healthy meal, as it does ours.

Take two cups of chickpeas, and soak them overnight. Then, simmer gently in fresh water for about an hour. When the chickpeas begin to get tender, add a teaspoon of salt, a dash of olive oil, and some oregano. Continue cooking until completely cooked through. Then, take a dry cheese, such as Greek *kefalotiri* or *kashkaval*, and pound it or process it finely until it resembles flour. Sprinkle this on the chickpeas and serve. Feta cheese crumbled on top of the chickpeas is also very good, and because Galen doesn't specify the type of cheese, feel free to use what you like best.

**When to Eat Peaches**

Peaches were first imported to the West in antiquity—hence the name *persika*, meaning that they come from Persia, but they are actually from the Far East. Galen warns us, despite the lovely taste, that the juice and flesh of peaches easily corrupts and, therefore, should not be eaten at the end of the meal because the peaches float on the surface of the stomach, where they corrupt. However, before a meal, they serve as a lubricant, helping other foods down the digestive tract. As an experiment, try eating peaches at the end of a meal and then, next time, at the start. Is there any difference? Were you psychosomatically influenced by Galen's suggestion, or is his model of digestion completely outdated?

# Ancient India—Sacred Cows and Ayurveda

## Lecture 7

Because of the logical structure, cooking methods, ingredients, texture of dishes, and way of eating, Indian cuisine will be one of the great culinary traditions spread around the world—especially the places to which Indians emigrate in the 19th century, including the Caribbean, east Africa, and Britain. This lecture will cover a few thousand years of ancient Indian history, from a few thousand B.C. to about 1200 A.D, and you will learn that ancient India had many different cultures with hundreds of languages and many different food customs.

**Early Indian Civilizations**

- The earliest civilizations in India were settled around the Indus River valley in northwestern India from about 2500 to 1800 B.C. They built cities like Harappa and Mohenjo Daro that were as sophisticated, well populated, and wealthy as those in Sumer and Egypt at the same time. In other words, the same exact pattern of agriculture and animal domestication, population growth, urban concentration, and eventually kingdoms arose in these cities as it did in other ancient civilizations.

- Also as in Egypt and the earliest Greek civilizations (Mycenaeans), there was a period of turmoil and invasion at about 1500 B.C., a kind of Dark Ages, that for some reason happens everywhere. We don't know quite as much about the earliest civilizations in India because no one can read their language, so all we have is archaeological evidence.

- Germans were one people descended from a group we know as Proto-Indo-Europeans. We know practically nothing about these people, but linguistic evidence suggests that they existed. For example, the language of the Aryans who invaded India is called Sanskrit, and it has certain words and grammatical structure in common with Archaic Greek and even with ancient Celtic (Irish).

- This suggests that all of these languages and people descended from a common stock—distinct from the Semitic peoples, Ugaritic Sumerians, or the Egyptians. The Indo-Europeans are, thus, ancestors of those speaking Greek, Romance languages, Slavic, Germanic, Celtic, Persian, and Hindi. The Aryans specifically were the ancestors of the latter.

- When the Aryans arrived, they were not farmers like the older inhabitants. They were warriors who used chariots drawn by horses, and they wrought havoc on the local population. The Aryans also raised cattle for their sustenance and sacrificed them to their gods. Being heroes, just like the Greek heroes of the *Iliad*, they ate beef in prodigious quantities, milked their cattle, and made butter.

- How these people went from being cow eaters to cow worshippers is one of the most hotly debated issues in food history. They were not always strict avoiders of beef; there are periods when they allowed it and others when they didn't.

- The religion introduced by these people forms the basis for what eventually became Hinduism, based on the *Rigveda*, which was composed about 1000 B.C. or earlier (making it one of the oldest religious texts in existence) in Sanskrit.

- Hinduism is a polytheistic religion, but all of the gods are manifestations of one primordial principle, or essence, or even soul that existed at the start of time: atman. In fact, everything in the universe is a subdivided offspring of the original atman, which means that everything is made of divine substance. We're not all lesser inferior created beings, as in the biblical tradition, and through meditation, fasting, and in some traditions taking up a yoga pose and reciting a mantra, you can reconnect with the greater cosmos.

- Because all creation is equal manifestations of atman, theoretically, you should not kill anything. Murder is the same no matter what the creature. This means that, technically, the Brahmans, or priestly

class, should logically be strict vegetarians. In fact, they still sacrificed cows and ate meat at this point.

- Aryans also introduced something else crucial to understanding their ideas about food, and that is a caste system. Whatever caste you were born into, you were stuck in forever. The ultimate result was many different ways of eating from region to region and, importantly, from caste to caste.

- In 600 B.C., there was a period of great social unrest; there were widespread famine, drought, and wars throughout India. It seemed to people that the Aryan gods were failing, and the Brahmans began to be the object of suspicion and anger. According to one theory, the Brahmans decided to reinvent themselves to survive, so they began to add new sacred writings that explained food prohibitions in detail—particularly to denote who could eat with whom, but also to forbid cow eating. They came forward as ascetic, celibate, and vegetarian.

- The most important part of their reform effort was to make cows sacred and inviolable. In the *Upanishad* (about 800 B.C.), a clear idea of the transmigration of souls develops so that all beings are reincarnated according to their actions on Earth—whether they have good or bad karma. The Brahman priests decided that cows are the highest creature you can come back as; as a result, eating cows or even mistreating them is forbidden.

- Some of the other food prohibitions are recorded in the *Dharma-sutra*, which was cast into written form in the 6th century B.C. There are all sorts of prohibitions against accepting food from people of a different caste, prohibitions against meat from specific types of animals, and prohibitions against certain vegetables (such as garlic, leeks, onions, mushrooms, and turnips).

- These dietary ideals are only for the Brahmans. People of lower castes only observe these rules during certain holidays or are allowed to eat some meats. People of the lowest caste, the

untouchables, are pretty much allowed to do whatever they want. Diet is determined almost entirely by caste.

**Vegetarianism and Ayurvedic Medicine**

- At around the same time as they are codifying all of these food regulations, a young man named Siddhartha Gautama (later Buddha), noticed all the suffering in the world and decided to go wandering on a spiritual quest to find the truth—something not uncommon in these days. It involved yogic concentration and severe asceticism, trying presumably to recognize the atman, or world soul.

- During his travels, it occurred to him that the fact that everyone is always trying so hard to be successful—so vehemently attached to the self and their own prosperity—only creates more suffering because you never really get what you want. Instead, why not just stop caring about what you eat? Don't starve yourself, and don't stuff yourself. Eating enough to live is a concept called the Middle Way.

- Most importantly, the key to relieving yourself and others from suffering is by agreeing not to engage in any violence whatsoever. The truly enlightened will "break the chain of causation"—in other words, break the chain of reincarnation. They will achieve nothingness, or nirvana. Therefore, Buddhists become strict vegetarians.

- Another vegetarian religion that appears about the same time as Buddhism, Jainism, has survived in India. The Jains are people who avoid even the accidental killing of bugs. The Hindu Brahmans also adopted vegetarianism and later introduced it through missionaries to southern India, which is still for the most part vegetarian to this day.

- Ayurvedic medicine, which is the science or knowledge of longevity, arose probably sometime A.D. but claims to be based on much older traditions, such as the *Caraka-samhita* medical text.

Caraka supposedly lived about 800 or 1000 B.C., but some authors date the text as old as 1500 B.C.

- The dietetic system that arises in this tradition is still practiced in India today, and it makes a nice comparison with the humoral physiology of the West. There are also elements in the Ayurvedic system, but there are five of them: air, fire, water, earth, and space. Each of these combined with another creates what is called a *dosha*, which is a basic force that governs physiologic functions—not exactly a humor, but an energy principle.

- Having too much or too little of each of these forces causes illness. The key is a balance. As in the West, individuals are born with a certain predilection toward one *dosha* being too strong—sort of like their complexion, or prakriti. Just as in the Western system, foods



**Ayurvedic medicine involves the use of herbal medicines and preparations.**

or medicines can increase or decrease the power of any one of the *doshas*.

**Indian Cuisine**

- Indian cuisine is perhaps one of the most interesting, intricate cuisines on Earth. The Indian food that people are most familiar with is for the most part northern Indian and is heavily influenced by Islamic cultures and the Mughal invaders who ruled the north. When you think of kebabs and tandoori, with aromatic spice mixes, those are more recent introductions from the Middle East. The emphasis on lamb is a Persian influence.

- Rice is the staple in the fertile plains that are well irrigated; it's probably one of the few foods that all Indians eat. Legumes are probably more important here than anywhere else—maybe with the exception of soy in China. The importance of legumes is to supply protein for vegetarians and others on a largely vegetable-based diet. Dairy products are also important everywhere.

- The use of spices is probably the most distinctive thing about Indian cuisine. Spice mixtures are usually toasted and ground fresh. Sometimes, these mixtures contain wet ingredients, too. Pepper, cardamom, and ginger grow in India, but many of the other spices, including cinnamon and cumin, have to be imported.

- Pickles or chutneys are also important, but they're usually made fresh from fruits like mangos or limes or from vegetables like eggplant. Though native to New Guinea, sugar was first cultivated and processed by India. Indian cuisine might be responsible for the global sweet tooth of modern times.

## Suggested Reading

Achaya, *A Historical Dictionary of Indian Food*.

Ferrières, *Sacred Cow*.

Harris, *Cows, Pigs, Wars, and Witches*.

## Culinary Activity

**Making Ghee**

Among the explicit food taboos in ancient India, there were a few substances considered absolutely pure. Ghee, a kind of clarified butter, is one of those. It was used in sacrifice, and because it is made from cows' milk, it is considered among the most nourishing substances on Earth. There are also very practical reasons why ghee is used in India; it is practically imperishable, even in intense heat. You can even fry in it.

Take a pound of butter, and place it in a pot on the lowest possible heat—or even in the oven at about 200 degrees. Let it slowly simmer without disturbing. After foaming up briefly, the excess water will evaporate, and the milk solids will come together and eventually will precipitate to the bottom of the pot. Unlike clarified butter, this gives the ghee a deep, nutty flavor. Simply pour off the clear fat, and store in a jar. Discard solids.

**A Recipe Using Ghee**

Unlike in the West, spices in the East are always gently toasted before cooking, which brings out the flavor, and then ground fresh. This recipe is vegetarian and could be eaten by any caste, as long as it was prepared by someone of the same caste.

In a small iron skillet, dry toast spices, including coriander, cumin, cinnamon, and pepper. Be careful not to let them burn. Transfer to a mortar or spice grinder, and reduce to a powder. Add to this ground turmeric and fenugreek. This is a simple spice mix, and every family has their own; these mixes are often extremely complex, which is not surprising because may of these spices are native. Next, cut up an eggplant, leaving the skin intact. Heat some ghee in a pot, and add the spice mixture and the eggplant pieces. Leave to stew very gently until the eggplant has cooked through and is tender. For observant Brahmans, onions would be left out, but they are actually a very tasty addition.

# Yin and Yang of Classical Chinese Cuisine

## Lecture 8

Some cultures have strong, complex culinary traditions, and others don't. There are two underlying factors that help establish culinary traditions, but are not absolutely essential: a variety of ingredients, either grown or imported and marketed, that can be obtained by a good proportion of the population; and long, stable kingdoms or relative peace and prosperity over a long period, during which culinary techniques can develop and become perfected. In this lecture, you will learn why China has one of the longest and most complex culinary traditions on Earth.

**Chinese Dynasties and the Development of Culinary Art**

- You need at least one of the following three conditions for culinary art to develop:
    - You need a strong tradition of the family and household as the basic unit of production—ideally, an extended household in which members of many generations live together and pass down cooking techniques from generation to generation. In China, the family, filial piety, obedience to parents, respect for the elderly, and even ancestor worship mean that food customs and cooking techniques got passed down for centuries, and respect for old ways meant that they changed little over time but could be perfected.

    - Another possibility is a vibrant court culture, involving a concentration of wealth, usually involving autocratic rule by an emperor or king, patronage networks, and a certain degree of social mobility. Other wealthy people would imitate the court, and its customs would circulate. In China, an extensive court culture and access to it as a state employee, priest, or soldier spread the imperial cuisine—even if it could never be as elaborate and grand.

- In lieu of the other two conditions, the other possibility is a thriving restaurant culture. With many people who can eat out often, there is competition among professionals to attract customers. This is key to 19th-century France and arguably the modern-day United States, in which there isn't a strong extended family anymore and there never was a court.

- China—with the first and second conditions, with a wealth of ingredients native and imported, and with an extraordinary series of stable dynasties—has the potential to be the most varied, complex, and sophisticated cuisine on Earth. Few other traditions even come close.

- The earliest Chinese civilization we know a lot about is the Hsia period, which is after the advent of agriculture, domestication of animals, and pottery—all of which happens just slightly after it did in the Fertile Crescent.

- By the Hsia period, there were many flourishing city-states, advanced civilizations with large populations, that were contemporaneous with the Indus River valley, with Dynastic Egypt, and with Cretan and Mycenaean Greece.

- Then, around 1500 B.C., just like elsewhere, these civilizations were invaded from the outside by less "civilized" peoples—in this case, the Shang, who were much like the Aryans in that they were pastoralist, warlike nomads who fought on chariots and used bronze weapons.

- The Shang came to stay, absorbed the earlier culture, and eventually developed laws, money, a system of markets, and more sophisticated pottery. They also began to build walls to keep out other barbarians. The Shang dynasty developed a pictographic system of writing that is the ancestor of modern Chinese script. During this time, they started using huge bronze cooking vessels, raising silk for clothes, using cracked bones for divination, and practicing ancestor worship.

- The Shang were ruled by kings and began to hold the kings responsible for the welfare of the people and the fertility of the crops. Rituals and proper sacrifices had to be made to ensure the future crop, so the kings took on a religious function. The Shang grew millets, wheat, and some rice.

- The Shang ruled with a series of loyal vassals, a kind of feudal system to govern the outlying regions. The Shang also had some kind of slavery, but there's a lot of disagreement over it. They also practiced sacrifice, including of humans.

- Another set of invaders, the Chou, arrived from the West around 1000 B.C., perhaps of Turkic origin. The Chou took over all of the former kingdom and extended it and strengthened the system of vassalage. The feudal aristocracy had virtual control in their own region and just owed allegiance, taxes, and men for building projects or for war to the king. Increasingly, the Chou centralized their kingdom, claiming that the king was a kind of semidivine being.

- The Chou also apparently introduced the domesticated soybean to China—or at least popularized it. More importantly, they introduced cast iron, which can be made into very strong farm tools, weapons, and cooking vessels.

- The most important thing about this dynasty is the earliest development of a professional bureaucracy of scholars running this increasingly centralized government. After about 700 B.C., these *shi* became the crucial transmitters of culture from the top down. They kept records, issued proclamations, and served as advisors. They organized huge irrigation projects and extended rice cultivation, and the population grew tremendously.

- From about 500 B.C., Chinese civilization really blossomed under the Chou, and this is regarded as the classical age of ancient Chinese culture. Poetry and scholarship flourished, in addition to science, technology, and a detailed understanding of the stars.

- Probably more important than anything, one thinker in particular is central to Chinese thought: Confucius. Briefly, Confucius thought that proper behavior, understanding where you are in the social hierarchy, and always obeying your superiors—whether they are parents or political rulers—not only fosters social harmony, but also reflects and influences cosmic harmony. In other words, if the family or state is in discord, so are the heavens.



**Confucius (551–479 B.C.E) was an influential Chinese philosopher.**

- Confucian thought becomes the ruling principle of Chinese politics, and the bureaucrats, or *shi*, become the crucial functionaries of the state. The individual, individual desires, and individual rights are subordinated to the good of the whole and maintaining harmony. The significance of this for food history is that ritualization of daily life, including eating, becomes the rule—manners especially.

- Another thinker of this period, Laozi (also 6th century B.C.), is the father of Daoism. The major principle governing Daoist thought is that individuals should live in harmony with nature and not try to do things unsuited to their nature or beyond their limitations. It's a matter of accepting who you are and what you're good at and not trying to be what you're not. This is basically a philosophy of inaction, unlike Confucianism.

- The importance of Daoism to food history is the emphasis on simplicity and closeness to nature. Daoist sages promote a simple lifestyle that will be held as an ideal in Chinese culture and will stand in opposition to luxuriant, ritualized, and artificial court culture. These sages also promote longevity regimes and medicines that will be very important in the Chinese pharmacopoeia.

- The next dynasty, Qin (from where we get the word "China"), was very brief but decisive for history because of the use of cavalry and the crossbow and bringing freed peasants into the army. This was the first true Chinese empire, replacing local warlords with bureaucrats, which is a crucial feature of Chinese cuisine. The Qin dynasty lasted only from 221 to 207 B.C., but it introduced a form of government that lasted until the 20th century.

- The most important ruler of this period was Shihuangdi. During this period, 1,400 miles' worth of scattered, old defensive walls were linked up to form the Great Wall, the only manmade structure visible from space. A huge palace complex was built with 700,000 workers forced into labor; weights, measures, and coinage were all standardized; and many roads and canals were built. All of this tends to unify China in one culinary culture, despite regional differences.

- The Qin dynasty collapsed just a few years after Shihuangdi's death, but the Han dynasty (from about 202 B.C. to 220 A.D., with one interruption) adopted many of his principles and extended the empire. The Han dynasty was a period of long-lasting peace, roughly coterminous with the Pax Romana. Confucian doctrine became state policy.

- China on the whole was probably the most urbanized civilization on Earth by this time, which meant that an extraordinary level of organization was required to feed these cities. The state adopted a rigorous agricultural policy and what has been called the world's first green revolution, which involved intense agriculture and increased yields.

- The technological advances of this era are staggering. In terms of material culture, the Chinese had the most advanced arts of the ancient world, including the art of cookery. There were new food technology (including the production of fermented soy products), new pickling techniques, new noodle technology, and improved brewing techniques.

**Chinese Medicine**

- Chinese medicine reaches its high point during the Han dynasty. There are actually state-salaried physicians, colleges, and examination boards—the first regulated and professionalized medical system in the world. The theories formulated in this period are still practiced today, making this the oldest living medical system on Earth.

- *The Yellow Emperor's Esoteric Classic* was supposedly written by a semimythical figure, one of the celestial emperors of ancient times, but it was actually composed during the Han dynasty. The central governing principle is the opposition of two basic universal forces, yin and yang. Yin is female, dark, cold, soft, empty, night; yang is male, light, warm, firm, full, and day. There needs to be a universal harmony, and the physical world depends on a balance of these two forces.

- There are also five phases or processes of transformation in nature (not exactly elements): earth, fire, wood, metal and water. All physiological functions can be described in terms of these transformations. Specific foods or drugs aid a particular process, build up good chi, or promote its flow through the body (which acupuncture also does).

- This is a holistic medicine that takes into account exercise, air quality, sleep patterns, sexual activity, and diet—to keep the yin and yang forces in balance, the chi flowing, and the physiological transformations in good order. An extremely complex pharmacopoeia goes along with it.

- After the collapse of the Han dynasty, there is a period of warring states for several hundred years—precisely the same time as the barbarian incursions in the West and the fall of Rome.

## Suggested Reading

Anderson, *The Food of China*.

Chang, *Food in Chinese Culture*.

Schaefer, *Golden Peaches of Samarkand*.

Simoons, *Food in China.*

Swislocki, *Culinary Nostalgia*.

## Culinary Activity

**Seasoning a New Wok**

Although you can purchase preseasoned and even nonstick woks nowadays, it is really best to buy a rounded-bottom steel wok and season it yourself. It will become virtually nonstick because the fat transforms with heat into a polymer and literally becomes one with the metal surface. This is something you must do outdoors.

Over an open flame, either wood or a barbecue grill, heat your new wok for an hour on a high flame until glowing red. Put on sturdy oven mitts. Then, take a fist-sized lump of pork fat (or any animal fat), and with a pair of tongs, swirl it around the interior of the work and quickly remove it. This will create a lot of smoke, so be prepared to step back. Repeat over and over again until you have a dark, shiny, slick surface inside the wok. Never use soap on this surface. After stir-frying, simply put the wok in the sink while still hot, and swirl around a sponge or cloth with a pair of tongs and hot water. Dry thoroughly, and wipe on some oil to prevent rusting. You will be amazed how wonderfully food will cook on this surface without sticking, even though the technology is centuries old.

**Using Your Wok**

We usually think of a wok in terms of stir-frying, but it is actually used to braise, boil, steam, deep-fry, and practically perform any procedure in the Chinese canon. Stir-frying is still classic, but it demands just a little practice and know-how. First of all, the wok should be heated, over a very high flame. Ideally, you will have a burner that will steady the rounded bottom or

a wok ring. A flat-bottomed wok is a waste of time; you might as well just use a pan. All of your ingredients should be cut up ahead of time, into thin pieces that will cook very quickly. The actual cooking should only take a few minutes, which means not only less fuel used but, in a professional kitchen, rapid service.

If using meat, marinate it first in soy sauce, rice wine, ginger, garlic, sesame oil, and cornstarch—or whatever you like. The cornstarch will not only act as a thickener in the end, but will also seal the surface of the meat when it goes into the hot wok. Keep your cut-up vegetables separate. You can use bok choy, mushrooms, bean sprouts, and carrots—again, whatever strikes your fancy.

When your wok is red hot (it will smoke a little), pour in oil—peanut or neutral vegetable oil is best—and immediately add your meat so that it sears. Wait a minute before you begin to toss. This should be done with a Chinese spatula, which has a metal end and a long shaft ending in a wooden handle. One hand should be on the handle of the wok (use a dish towel if it's a short, ring-type handle) and the other on your spatula. The idea is to tilt the wok slightly and toss the ingredients up. When browned lightly, remove the meat to a bowl, and add vegetables to the wok, using the same procedure. Add a little more oil if necessary. You want to sear these quickly, which won't happen if you overcrowd the surface of the wok. Then, add the meat back in again, and finish with a little soy sauce, perhaps rice wine, and some broth. These are usually kept in little bowls next to the wok and added with a ladle. When the ingredients all come together, move them to a bowl and immediately rinse out and scour your wok with hot water and return to the fire to start another dish, or dry and set aside if you're done. Serve the dish with white rice.

# Dining in Republican and Imperial Rome

## Lecture 9

In this lecture, you will learn about ancient Roman dining habits and how they changed over time—as did the Roman people themselves. You will start by learning about the simple warlike Romans in the Republican period; then, you will trace the expansion of the Roman Empire and how food came to be a marker of social class, especially when only the wealthiest of Romans could afford exotic luxuries. Finally, you will examine a cookbook written specifically for those who wanted to flaunt their wealth and sophistication.

**Republican Frugality**

- The early Romans were an austere, self-sufficient, and warlike people whose food consisted primarily of staples associated with the Mediterranean diet: wheat and barley eaten as *pulmentum* (that is, the original version of polenta), cheese, olive oil, vegetables, and a little meat. There was little social differentiation based on diet; most people ate pretty much the same basic, simple, and locally grown foods.

- We get a good example of what Romans in the Republican period were like from an agricultural manual written by Marcus Porcius Cato, otherwise known as Cato the Elder. Cato is infamous in Roman history as the official censor of the state, who—even after two crushing victories against the Carthaginians, their dire enemy—insisted that the Carthaginians be completely obliterated. In fact, Carthage was destroyed in the Third Punic War by sowing salt into the soil so that nothing would ever grow again.

- Why would a Roman statesman write a book about agriculture? It is partly because the Romans fought seasonally, returning to their farms for sowing and harvesting. Being a patrician, people of Cato's social class would often inherit large sums of money or might earn a pension after retiring from military service. For the early Romans,

the safest investment was in land, and Cato's manual describes how to plant vineyards, olive groves, and fruit trees and how to grow crops that could easily be transported to cities for profit. However, the foods are simple, uncomplicated staples.

- The few recipes he offers are for sacrificial cakes. One in particular is called placenta, which comes from the Greek word *plakounta*, which just means a flat cake. Cato's placenta is essentially sheets of dough layered with fresh cheese and soaked in honey.

- Rich and poor in the Republican period ate basically the same frugal diet. They had an inordinate fondness for cabbage as food and medicine. For the early Romans, food was basically just fuel. No particular foods were associated with social class, and there were few luxuries by which people could flaunt their wealth.

**Social Climbers and the Old Elite of Imperial Rome**

- As the Roman Empire expanded, and especially after conquering Greece and much of the eastern Mediterranean, these simple people came in contact with cultures not only much older and more sophisticated, but also much wealthier. These older cultures had also been long addicted to luxuries and spices imported from Asia.

- For the first time, the Romans were connected to ancient trade routes that brought them pepper and cinnamon from India and even products from the Far East like citron, ginger, and cloves. Because these were expensive imports, they were excellent markers of social status—only the wealthiest people could afford them. However, in the minds of many Romans, contact with the East had made this once-fierce people soft.

- Naturally, as Rome grew, its administration expanded, its cities swelled to enormous proportions, and most importantly, its armies teemed with fresh recruits to protect the borders of the vast empire. Huge plantations, or latifundia, worked by slave labor, provided the wheat, which was milled on a massive scale. It was eaten in the form of risen bread, which was doled out by the state as a form of welfare.

- With such great demand for food and extensive trade, there was also widespread speculation in foodstuffs. This included both basic staples as well as luxuries, such as the infamous fish sauce that went into most Roman dishes called *garum*, which is not unlike nuoc mam, a fish sauce still made in Southeast Asia.

- They also planted vineyards and made wine of such quality that it could be kept for decades. In a boom economy like this, great fortunes could be easily made and lost. There was a remarkable degree of social mobility as well, with examples of people even starting as slaves, buying their freedom, and eventually becoming wealthy in trade.

- When people suddenly make a lot of money and are able to rise socially, they naturally try to imitate their superiors. They begin to dress like them, learn to speak properly, buy expensive villas, and most importantly, eat the same foods as the wealthy do—because only the richest of people can afford exotic luxuries and expert cooks to prepare them. Food is an unmistakable marker of social class.

- For the ancient Romans, throwing dinner parties was the most important social function, where they made contacts, cut business deals, and discussed politics. Of utmost importance were who was invited, what was served, and how rare and expensive the ingredients were. The Romans had very precise dining rituals as well.

**A Cookbook for Imperial Extravagance**

- The most famous cookbook of classical antiquity is *De re Coquinaria* by Apicius, whose identity has been a matter of speculation for centuries. There was an actual person named Marcus Gavius Apicius who lived in the first century A.D. and was known for his exquisite taste and for the extravagant sums he spent on food. Whether a real figure or not, Apicius's name was universally associated with magnificent dining, extravagance, and profligacy—if not outright gluttony.

- The recipes in the cookbook, though gathered several centuries after the historical Apicius lived, nonetheless bear witness to this reputation for lavishness. There are directions for making boiled ostrich served in a sauce of pepper, mint, cumin, celery seeds, dates, honey vinegar, raisin wine, garum, and oil and thickened with starch. This recipe has a wild juxtaposition of flavors, with sweet, sour, savory, spicy, and salty flavors all competing for attention in one dish. The ingredients also come from the far-flung corners of the Roman Empire and beyond: African ostrich, Indian pepper, dates from the Middle East, and garum from Spain.

- What could this odd flavor combination possibly mean, apart from revealing the seriously jaded palates of Roman diners? Foremost, it is designed to impress with wealth and sophistication. As a cookbook, it also teaches how to cook dishes that are unfamiliar. In other words, this cookbook seems designed precisely to appeal to social aspirants who want to get it all right at their next dinner party. Someone who owned the cookbook would presumably dictate precise directions for these dishes to their cooks, who were probably illiterate.

- Recipes include stuffed dormice, sow's womb, and flamingo tongues—things perhaps appreciated precisely for their gross-out factor as well as their rarity. The vast majority of recipes also feature the ingenuity of the cook in transforming ingredients into something completely new. One of the most shocking recipes is for a rose patina made of pounded brains and rose petals steamed with eggs in a shallow custard-like tart.

- There are also pretty ordinary ingredients and simple recipes in Apicius's cookbook. Nonetheless, it seems like the appearance of the oddities suggests an audience eager to try out strange recipes to impress dinner guests—social aspirants who will be judged by the food they serve. Thus, they must choose foods that clearly denote status. Rare and unusual ingredients and complex cooking methods serve as ingenious tricks to titillate guests.

- The following is an example of a recipe, which even bears the name of Apicius, that will give you a good sense of Roman elite taste. It's called *minutal Apicianum*, or Apician stew. It starts with a list of ingredients that go into a pot: *oleum*, *liquamen*, *vinum*, *porrum capitatum, mentam*, *pisciculos*, *esiciola minuta*, *testiculos caponum*, *glandulas porcellinas*, which translates as "oil, garum, wine, leeks, mint, small fish, capon's testicles, suckling pig sweetbreads."

- The translated recipe continues: "Cook all this together. Pound pepper, lovage, cilantro, or coriander seed, moisten with garum, add a bit of honey, and some of its own broth, temper with wine and honey. Heat it up, and break in *tracta* to thicken, stir it up and sprinkle on pepper and serve."

- The *tracta* are a kind of ancestor of pasta, except the thin sheets of dough are baked and then crumbled into the stew to thicken it—enough so that it holds together. To analyze a recipe like this, you have to consider what diners would have thought about it. In modern times, we have explicit associations with certain foods, and the Romans would have had similar associations. Some may be comfort foods while others are reserved for holidays and celebrations. Some foods we associate with romantic dinners and others with specific places.

- Many of us cringe when we think of eating rooster testicles, but if we look at what Romans wrote about them, we find that they did not think testicles were strange at all. In fact, the physician Galen says that rooster testicles are the best in every respect, especially from grain-fed roosters.

- The ingredients in this recipe were anything but weird. Suckling pig sweetbreads may also sound odd, but it is actually very mild and delicate. Likewise, the small fish were considered very elegant. When sauced with herbs and spices, wine, honey, and fish sauce, the dish actually becomes a very interesting mélange of flavors and textures, similar to something you might find in a Chinese restaurant today. Most importantly, it's sophisticated and complex—and very

different from what ordinary Roman plebeians would be eating. It is a marker of distinction.

## Suggested Reading


Adamson and Segan, eds., *Entertaining*.

Aelius Lampridius, *Life of Heliogabalus*.

Apicius, *De re Coquinaria*.

Bober, *Art, Culture, and Cuisine*.

Cato, *On Farming*.

Fass, *Around the Roman Table*.

Juvenal, *Satires*.

Martial, *Epigrams*.

Petronius, *Satyricon*.


## Culinary Activity

***Minutal* of Apricots**

This dish captures the wide range of flavors that were popular in ancient Rome—what we might call sweet and sour, though it is actually even more complex than that. The ingredients aren't particularly rare or exotic, but the dish would have been considered very fashionable and elegant. *Tracta* are perhaps the ancestor of pasta, a kind of flat cracker that was crumbled into stews as a thickener. They are also called *laganae*, which is etymologically related to lasagna. Today, you can use plain crackers, crumbled up. For *garum*, you can use Southeast Asian fish sauce, such as nuoc mam or nam pla. For the raisin wine, Marsala is okay (or any sweet, fortified wine). To "temper" means to balance the flavors and consistency. Obviously, because there are no measurements, all of the ingredients should be added at your discretion.

*Add in a pot oil, garum, wine, chopped scallions, cooked pork shoulder cut into cubes. When all is cooked pound pepper, cumin, dried mint, dill, and drizzle in honey, garum, raisin wine, vinegar, and a little pork broth, temper it, then add pitted fresh apricots, let it simmer until they are cooked through. Break up a tracta to thicken it, sprinkle with pepper and serve it up.*

# Early Christianity—Food Rituals and Asceticism

## Lecture 10

Just as the vast Roman Empire swept over most of the ancient world, it also conquered the Holy Land and incorporated it as a province called Palestine. The Jews were still performing ritual sacrifices, but they were now very much Hellenized and were even speaking Greek or Aramaic. In this lecture, you will learn how certain practices of the Jewish faith started to change, making the Romans uneasy, and how Jesus tried to revitalize the Jewish religion, getting into some trouble in the process.

**Jews in the Roman Empire**

- The Jews held a tenuous position within the Roman Empire. On the one hand, they were allowed relative autonomy; they had their own king (Herod, in this case), who was a puppet of the governor (Pontius Pilate, in this case). They were granted autonomy partly because they had vast mercantile links across the Mediterranean and because Jews made up a good proportion of the entire empire. On the other hand, the Jews were monotheistic, and they would not participate in the official Roman rites, which recognized the emperor as a semidivine being.

- Jewish practice had changed a great deal since the days of the kingdoms. For example, many Jews lived nowhere near the temple, so a new kind of worship arose that centered on the synagogue (a Greek term that basically means school), in which Jewish scholars (rabbis) study the Torah and the newer commentaries on the Bible called the Talmud. Sacrifices still take place in Jerusalem, but a different kind of worship happens elsewhere.

- Another important point is that these synagogues also developed different forms of Judaism, groups who wanted to escape what they considered the corruption of the Pharisees (the orthodox priests running the temple) and return to the original intentions of God. One of these groups was the Essenes, who were bound by mutual

respect and love, not by a physical building where they sacrifice animals. In other words, the rituals seem to have become empty now. They also studied the Bible intensely, and the Dead Sea Scrolls are from one of these desert communes—the Qumran sect.

- Jewish practice was changing, and there was a great deal of intellectual and religious ferment that was really making the Romans edgy. It is into this milieu that Joshua ben Joseph (Jesus) appears and basically has yet another plan for revitalizing the Jewish religion by scrapping the legalistic practice of the Pharisees and replacing it with simple rules that people can follow and that will actually make them better people, and he told neat little parables that they could understand.

- Jesus's parables were often about food or about agricultural tasks so that the people he was preaching to—simple shepherds, farmers, and fishermen—are familiar with the situations. There's the story of the landowner hiring workers for his vineyard, and everyone gets paid the same amount, even the people who show up late. This is a parable that preaches that people should not begrudge what other people get.

- There was another Jewish tradition that Jesus eventually came to be associated with: that one day a *moshiach*, or messiah, would come to initiate a new era in human history. In the Jewish tradition, he would be a person sent to teach and change ritual practice once again—like another Moses, a messenger from God.

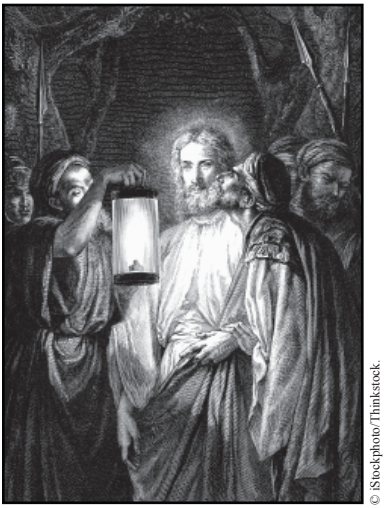
- The other side of Jesus's career is a little harder to explain. Apart from the stories, Jesus was also a faith healer and miracle worker, and most of his miracles either involve healing the sick or feeding people, which makes him a great candidate for the downtrodden and oppressed Jews.

- Everything that Jesus is saying is very socially subversive; it's not the sort of thing the authorities want to hear (neither the Jewish priests nor the Romans). However, at no point did Jesus ever

propose breaking away completely and forming an entirely new religion. He never claimed to be divine, either. He was called "son of man," which is basically another name for "messiah." Explaining that he was the son of God was the work of his disciples. He was a Jewish reformer, preaching to Jews. Only later, with Paul, was the religion even opened up for gentiles to join.

**Dietary Changes after Jesus**

- Jesus makes his way to Jerusalem with his 12 disciples and causes a row in the temple by chasing out the moneylenders. He gets in all sorts of trouble, and he happens to be there during a holy week. The head priest Caiaphas doesn't want any trouble with the authorities, so he bribes one of Jesus's followers, Judas Iscariot, to point out which one is Jesus so they can arrest him.



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**Judas, one of Jesus's disciples, betrayed Jesus.**

- That night, the whole crew is celebrating Passover. Jesus stops in the middle of the Seder and says to his disciples that the bread they are eating could be his body, and the wine could be his blood, so when he is gone, remember him when they eat and drink. This event turns out to be the central ritual or sacrament of the new religion—the communion, or Eucharist (the Greek word for it). In all the early churches, they began to perform this ritual of eating and drinking, but it wasn't entirely clear yet what was happening during it.

- Meanwhile, the disciples are all drunk, lying around in a garden. Judas betrays Jesus, and Jesus won't answer the high priest's

questions. At this point, Jesus is being called "king of the Jews," so they hand him over to the Roman governor Pontius Pilate, and he asks the assembled crowd whether he should let Jesus, now a prisoner, go because it is custom to sometimes do so during the holidays. The crowd, thinking that Pontius Pilate really doesn't want to let him go and not wanting to upset the Romans, says that Jesus should be crucified.

- For later Christians, this act of crucifixion completely replaces the ritual sacrifice in the temple. Jesus was called the "lamb of God," and his self-sacrifice replaces the sacrifice of the scapegoat—but it serves exactly the same function. People do bad things, and someone has to be punished. In this case, Jesus gets punished for everyone else's sins.

- All of the other laws of the Old Testament, including the bizarre dietary laws, are now changed. Before, the Jews needed all of those specific laws, but because they were now following the letter of the law instead of its spirit, it is time to do away with them all. What God wants is morality, not a kosher kitchen. Now, it's okay to eat anything, and all of the other laws are transformed, too.

- This religion caught on like wildfire in the Roman Empire. Eventually, they had to figure out a way to organize these new communities. They started in secret, and they were actively persecuted, but they did begin to organize in physical buildings, or *ecclesia*, overseen by a bishop, or *episcopus*.

- This is the slow development of the institution of the church as a religious authority, with priests acting as mediators between ordinary people and God and, eventually, a father or pope—the bishop of Rome—as the spiritual head of the church, at least in the West. In the East, they had patriarchs. Persecutions became more intense; often, people willingly accepted martyrdom. However, more and more people joined despite the persecution.

**Food Rituals in the Early Church**

- The most important food ritual that develops in the early church is the fast. Judaism had fasts, but in Christianity, they become a lot more important. The idea behind it is that the body is really not important; it's just a temporary dwelling place for the much more important, and immortal, soul. In fact, the body is a distraction, so if you can mortify the flesh by denying the body its physical urges—such as eating, sex, and sleeping regularly—then you can make the soul all the more strong.

- From an early date, Christianity begins to stress asceticism, something foreign to Judaism. Among the early Christians, there were heroic ascetics, people who went out into the desert and fasted (like Saint Anthony) and stayed there for years.

- According to the sayings of the church fathers, the early ascetics tended to live alone, but gradually, larger communities, or monasteries, develop. These orders entailed communal living, celibacy, strict obedience, and sometimes vows of silence. Mostly, they pray, but they also stay up all night and eat very little food. They go out of their way to suffer, and they vent their pent-up anger and frustration on themselves. This is sadistic self-torture for people who have nothing else to control in life.

- Gluttony becomes one of the seven deadly sins, and it will imperil your mortal soul. Gluttons are perpetually stuffed until they burst and then become whole again, and it repeats for an eternity. Food has now become sin. There's also now an explicit idea of a devil or demons tempting people to commit sin.

- Although these acts of ascetic heroism are exceptional, several ritual fasts eventually became ingrained in the Christian calendar, most importantly during the period of Lent (from Ash Wednesday to Easter). Fasting did not actually mean total abstinence from food; in fact, it rarely does. It meant abstaining from animal food (with the exception of fish) or any animal product, including milk, eggs, and butter.

## Suggested Reading

Chadwick, *Western Asceticism*.

Feeley-Harnik, *The Lord's Table*.

Grimm, *From Feasting to Fasting*.

Hill, *Eating to Excess*.

Shaw, *Burden of the Flesh*.

## Culinary Activity

**Fasting Exercise**

This is an odd thing to try at home, but trying it can have very interesting results. If you fast for very long periods, you will feel lightheaded and may even hallucinate. This may very well be the source of some early ascetic's visions. Even a short fast can be a challenge as well as a way to expand your sensory perception. In many respects, our taste buds, like all of our senses, are dulled by overstimulation. Think of this as a temporary deprivation chamber to reawaken your taste buds. As a purely gastronomic exercise, go an entire 24 hours without any food or water. Prepare a food you normally eat for dinner, and consume it slowly and mindfully. Did you appreciate the taste more than you normally would? Does it taste different—perhaps more intense? Which particular flavors do you notice as standing out?

# Europe's Dark Ages and Charlemagne

## Lecture 11

The term "Dark Ages" has fallen out of favor with most historians, or at least its use has been restricted to a much more narrow chronological period, spanning roughly from about the 450s to the 800s and the time of Charlemagne. However, in this lecture, the Dark Ages apply to the entire early Middle Ages—from the fall of Rome to about 1000 A.D.—because Europe is pretty bleak economically, agriculturally, and scientifically during this time. In this lecture, you will learn that in most endeavors, including cuisine and food culture, this period is pretty dark.

**Germanic Tribes**

- The Roman Empire was showing signs of internal weakness long before 410 A.D., but that's when barbarian armies—the Visigoths, under their leader, Alaric—actually sack the city. Roman weakness was due to many complex factors, but it mostly had to do with overextending the empire and using barbarian tribes along the frontier to protect Roman territory. That meant that they learned Roman fighting tactics and military technology and could eventually use it against the Romans themselves.

- These barbaric tribes also became Romanized. When these semibarbarians on the edges themselves were threatened from outside invaders, such as the Huns, it made perfect sense for them to turn to Rome for help, which was denied. Being basically forced onto Roman soil, they liked what they found there and decided to take it, which created a moment of extreme weakness, during which all sorts of other tribes came pouring in.

- The entire Roman Empire was subsumed by Germanic tribes, who are basically in a state of culture comparable to other warrior-pastoralists—such as the Aryans, Shang, and Mycenaeans—but were 2,000 years later. However, these Germanic tribes were

not nomadic. They did practice agriculture. Their culture values strength, courage, and success in battle above anything else.

- The Goths were divided into two groups: the Visigoths, who settled eventually in Spain, and the Ostrogoths, who ruled Italy for a while. The Vandals established themselves northern Africa. The Franks carved out a kingdom over what is today France and Germany. The Angles and Saxons invaded Britain. The Lombards established themselves in northern Italy. All of these tribes mixed with the earlier Roman populations in the provinces, who were themselves of mixed blood, so in terms of blood and ethnicity, as well as culture, Germanic is mixed with Roman/Christian.

- These tribes all had kings, but as far as any consistent control over the countryside goes, they were very haphazard administrations. For all practical purposes, there was near anarchy in most of Europe; everyone who had weapons basically had to fend for himself or herself. As the infrastructure of the empire fell apart, so did trade, agriculture, and the entire marketing system. The 5th century A.D. was also a period of widespread famine, a major plague, and a remarkable decline in the population.

- It's not that there was consistent famine for centuries, but when a crop failure hit, there was absolutely no backup. There were no grain reserves kept by the state and no trade to supply grain from other regions. People had to become more resourceful at finding food in the forests and swamps. During this time, there is a dramatic increase in the number of wild species of plants and animals consumed, especially as the countryside became deserted. People moved onto only the best land to cultivate and abandoned the hillsides and more difficult terrain, most of which returned to wilderness.

- In every way that the Greeks and Romans valued civilized cities surrounded by miles of well-tilled farms, orchards, and stockyards, the barbarians valued the wild forest, hunting, fishing, gathering

wild fruits, and letting their herds of pigs forage for themselves in the forests on acorns or beechnuts.

- Above all else, for the Germanic tribes, meat was the central element in the diet rather than bread and grain. They didn't even have a major staple grain crop. Instead of wine, they drank cider from fermented apples, mead from honey, or beer (for which they did grow barley). Drinking beer was not just a matter of refreshment or relaxation; it was the central social ritual among the Germans.

- Instead of oil, they used butter from their cattle or lard. This has a lot to do with geography and climate, but also with major cultural differences. There was this perception among early medieval writers that the barbarians not only ate more wild food, but they also ate more uncooked, raw meats and uncooked foods—or rough foods that were difficult to digest, like turnips and leeks.

**The Mixture of Christian and Germanic Ideals**

- Grain, wine, and oil had to be grown for sacramental purposes in Christianity, and it was usually the monasteries that maintained vineyards left over from classical times. Monks at these monasteries are the only people preserving even the last shreds of classical medicine, which has also now been mixed with Germanic folk remedies. They are also among the few people who still know how to graft fruit trees and cultivate wine grapes.

- The culture of wine did not replace that of beer overnight, especially because the Germans also used beer as a sacrifice. The Christians had a hard time getting these newly converted Germans to give up their eating and drinking habits. This is especially the case—and, in fact, a sticking point until the 16th century—when they institute a compulsory fast for Lent (which means no animal or dairy products).

- The early Christians only had voluntary fasts. Apostles fasted on Friday to commemorate the death of Jesus on the day, but there were no universal fasting periods across all of Christendom until

the 4th century. The fasts are not that burdensome for southern European Christians, who can easily get vegetables and fish to eat, but it was both culturally and economically burdensome for the Germans in the north to fast.

- The idea of Lent, Friday fast, and all of the other fast days meant that the whole idea of moderation, balanced diet, and seasonal adjustment according to weather and exercise that existed among Greco-Roman culture now gave way to a culture of fast and feast. Periods of want set by the church contrasted with periods of gross overindulgence. However, in stark contrast, the idea of competitive feasting is built into Germanic society.

- There are basically three opposed ideals: the quasi-ascetic Christians, the meat-eating Germanic tribes, and the classical ideal of moderation—all of which become an integral part of the culture. The fast/feast mentality is introduced among the Germanic Christian kingdoms, and it extends throughout the social hierarchy.

- Another interesting feature of this mix of cultures is that wheat cultivation was maintained where it was feasible in Italy and Spain, but beyond that, only the wealthiest people could afford it, and fine white bread became a kind of status symbol (along with drinking wine). However, the rest of the Germanic populace ate rye, which was practically unknown to the Romans but thrives in the colder northern climate. Rye alone—or mixed with spelt—makes really dark, dense bread. From this point on, the color of bread will be a matter of social distinction.

**Charlemagne's Influence on Food**

- Charlemagne is the most interesting ruler of the early Middle Ages. The Franks emerged as the dominant tribe, then eventually a kingdom, and finally an empire for various reasons—among the most important is that most of the other Germanic kingdoms collapsed. Only the Franks built a large state, beginning with Clovis in the late 400s and the Merovingian dynasty, which descended from him.

- The system of rule they initiated was the ancestor of feudalism and had lots of semi-independent dukedoms that involve fealty as well as "counties." Rather than the large slave-run latifundia of Roman times, the model that emerges is called serfdom, which involves very small holdings farmed by people legally bound to the soil, who have to work a certain amount of time on their lord's demesne and pay various taxes to the lord.



**Charlemagne (747–814) was Holy Roman emperor from year 800 until his death.**

- Charlemagne is important to the history of food because he issued orders to his leading vassals to plant various foods throughout his empire, presumably so that he could be supplied on his campaigns. In fact, certain vegetables were directly reintroduced to Europe through his sponsorship, as well as fruits that are harder to maintain and take time.

- Charlemagne also sponsored setting up fish ponds that could be stocked with fish like carp and trout and ordered that all of his farms keep 100 hens and 30 geese so that he could have fresh eggs on his campaigns. He also tried to regulate the food trades.

- Charlemagne almost hated his doctors because they told him to eat less roast meat. He customarily had four courses as well as the roasts, which the hunters brought in on long spits. We also know that they used big cauldrons to boil food, which leads to the assumption that they made pretty simple fare: boiled pulses or grains, bread, wine or beer, stews, and some vegetables.

- The fare had to be simple because there were no trade routes, which meant no more spices. There was also no time to develop

a sophisticated cuisine. There was a very small group of nobles, and everyone else were serfs. There was no social mobility at all. In addition, the wealthiest people were usually out on campaigns fighting.

- Charlemagne's court is really just one bright spot on an otherwise totally bleak several hundred years. After his death, the empire was divided up among heirs, with each smaller kingdom struggling but never as powerful. Recurrent famines, continued depopulation, and more invasions by a new set of barbarians (Vikings) meant that Europe didn't even begin to get back on its feet until around the year 1000, which is when things begin to change.

## Suggested Reading

Anthimus, *De Observatione Ciborum*.

Camporesi, *Bread of Dreams*.

Montanari, *The Culture of Food*.

## Culinary Activity

**Service à la Middle Ages: Eating with Your Hands**

Evidently, many people think that eating with your hands is inherently more pleasurable than distancing yourself from your food with a fork and knife—if you consider the popularity of foods like hamburgers, hot dogs, and pizza. However, these foods shield us from getting very messy with buns or a crust to hold onto. Imagine eating truly messy food without cutlery. This exercise is designed to help you appreciate the tactile qualities of food directly, exactly as they would have in the Middle Ages. It is messy, but it need not be barbaric. In fact, eating barbecued ribs comes very close. For this experiment, try grilling something that would normally need to be cut with a sharp knife—a steak or thick pork chop, or a joint of mutton would be perfect. Plop it down on a thin slice of bread set directly on the table. Pick it up with your hands, and chomp away. There is a strange satisfaction, perhaps primal in a Freudian sense, of eating flesh this way. Can it be that because we evolved eating with our hands and teeth that there really is something hard-

wired in us to enjoy eating this way? Or have we become so acculturated by cutlery that it is hard to enjoy food this way? To answer this question, consider the following: Did you try this experiment alone, or with others?

# Islam—A Thousand and One Nights of Cooking

## Lecture 12

While Europe was languishing in the so-called Dark Ages, there arose a new religion—Islam—in what is now Saudi Arabia that would spread faster than any religion before it and that would bring a whole new way of thinking about food, and a whole new culinary style, to a huge expanse of land that would eventually stretch from Spain to India and even beyond to southeastern Asia. In this lecture, you will learn how the culture of Islam became so dazzling despite its humble origins.

**The Expansion of Islam**

- Islam arose among nomadic peoples, the Bedouin, of the deserts of Arabia. These desert regions—which are essentially endless drifts of sand with practically no water or vegetation and, of course, intense heat—are completely different than any of the agriculturally fertile regions. There's also no state, per se; there are only tribal leaders, or sheikhs.

- These nomadic peoples had such a rugged way of life that they really didn't even have private property; the herds that they migrated with were owned communally by the tribe. Because there is so little pasture, they have to continually move from oasis to oasis, where there were usually small towns that they could trade with or steal from. This was also a warrior society, and power and prestige depended on how much you could steal from passing caravan routes.

- Between these vast deserts there were, however, a few cities on the periphery. They usually existed only because there was water, and many grew into sizeable settlements, often containing a holy shrine. They were also incidentally good places to do trade because they served as sanctuaries, where rival tribes weren't allowed to fight. It was in one of these—Mecca—that Islam arose.

- Unlike the founders of most religions, we actually know a great deal about the life of the prophet Muhammad, who was a merchant that was often found wandering out in the hills, where he began to have visions and started to realize that he is the messenger of God and that there is only one God.

- This society was pagan and polytheistic at this time, but there were Jewish and Christian populations in Mecca, and his ideas were very deeply influenced by theirs. In fact, Islam considers them earlier prophecies of the same God, Allah. Islam is just the last and most complete religion. Most importantly, Islam is monotheistic.

- Muhammad started to get followers—a lot of them in Mecca. Starting on September 24, 622 (the first day of the Islamic calendar in the Western calendar), everything he said was written down and became the Koran. Islam spread like wildfire throughout the peninsula, and the armies of Islam converted the peoples it conquered through force. This was not a religion of peace, but many people willingly joined.

- Islam has an explicit vision of the pleasures that await the faithful in paradise. Judaism doesn't have that at all, and Christianity only vaguely has that. The Muslim paradise is laden with fragrant flowers, running streams, and cushions to rest on while you much on exotic fruits and sweets. Every sense is stimulated. Unlike so many other religions, there is no stigma against sensual pleasure—because that's what heaven is all about.

- There is no ascetic tradition in Islam, with the exception of a few mystical sects. For the most part, this is a religion that encourages the arts (with the exception of depictions of God, which is idolatry), architecture, music, and especially complex cooking—which is raised to a fine art.

**Islamic Food Prohibitions and Customs**

- Islam has some food prohibitions that are like the Jewish ones in certain respects, but Islamic food prohibitions are much less

complicated. Pork is forbidden in Islam as in Judaism, but no other meats, except birds of prey and carnivorous animals, are forbidden. Food sacrificed to pagan idols is also forbidden, as it is in Christianity. There is also the blood taboo: Animals must be ritually slaughtered, painlessly, as a prayer is said over them, basically thanking the animal for giving its life to sustain humans.

- What is unique, however, is the prohibition against alcohol. The prohibition is hard to explain, but presumably, it's difficult to focus on prayer when you're tipsy. Not all Muslim countries strictly observe this, though. In some regions, they still grew grapes for wine, so there was no strict enforcement by destroying vineyards, but devout Muslims were supposed to abstain.

- There are also fasts in Islam that are a bit more rigorous than fasts in Judaism. Islamic fasts are not just periods of abstention from meat, as in Christianity. The devout Muslim abstains from all food and drink during daylight hours during the entire month of Ramadan,



**During the month of Ramadan, devout Muslims fast from sunrise to sunset each day.**

the ninth month on a lunar calendar. In many places, they prepare very elaborate meals during that time, so you can actually gain weight during Ramadan, but it is nonetheless considered a hardship to fast during the day.

- Muslim customs, rather than law, also dictate that people eat sitting on the floor for the evening meal in Ramadan with a tray in front of them containing food, from which they eat using three fingers of the right hand that have been washed. There are no utensils, apart from spoons to drink soups and such. In most of the Islamic world, food would be accompanied by a flat bread used to scoop up or grab food, so it's not unrefined at all. In fact, there's a kind of immediate tactile sensuality and connection to the food when eating with your hands rather than cold metal utensils.

- In the Islamic world, there is also something that seems to be an inheritance of the Berber custom of sharing food with any stranger who appears at your door—a kind of necessity in the desert, but it translated into a kind of effusive hospitality. There's also an implication of equality because everyone is seated around a low table (with no one at the head of the table) with round plates of appetizers, or meze.

- Most Muslims can eat with whomever they like, or sometimes only with people of the book, but there are some sects who would only eat with other Muslims and would only be served food prepared by Muslims.

- Some foods take on a kind of semisacred status. The date is one of these, probably because it formed a major part of the diet in Arabia, but it's used in all sorts of rituals and festivities. There is also great attention paid to mutton, which is probably the most important meat. Fat from the mutton tail was considered a delicacy, as was camel's hump and camel's milk. Long after Muslims had spread out of the Arabian peninsula, these remained elite foods—associated with Arabia and the prophet and actively sought out by the aristocracy or people who wanted to eat like them.

**Persian Culture and Cuisine**

- As Islam expanded, it took over regions that were part of the Byzantine Empire, whose people were the direct heirs to Greco-Roman civilization. The Muslims adopted their science, medicine, technology, and literature; translated everything into Arabic; and became an extraordinarily learned civilization.

- The Muslims added to Greek science in particular, and they were reading Aristotle centuries before anyone in Europe could read it, so for the first time, there was a real expansion of Greek ideas. Muslims not only tolerated Jews and Christians in their realms, but there was also a fruitful interchange of ideas, especially in medicine and literature.

- The other civilization they rolled over were the Persians, at this point ruled by the Sassanid dynasty, who had been fighting with the Byzantines for decades. Both were pretty much exhausted, which is partly why Islam spread so easily into these regions. Islam also absorbed Persian culture, which had its own long and rich culinary traditions.

- The dominant style of cooking in the Islamic world is also that of the Abbasid caliphate in Baghdad. We don't really know much about the earlier Sassanid cuisine, but there's extensive documents from Islamic times, so it's hard to say how much of it goes back earlier.

- Distinctive Persian cuisine of this period favors young meats—like lamb, kid, and veal— much more than mature ones. These were usually roasted or fried in butter or oil and cut into small pieces that you could scoop up. Meat was also often cooked with sugar or some kind of syrup. The idea of marinating meats in sour sauces with a lot of spices is also prominent in Persian cuisine. Chicken is probably the most frequently eaten kind of fowl.

- Perhaps the two most important foods that are spread from one end to another are rice, cultivated in Spain for the first time, and

spinach. Eggplant is also very common. Fruit, such as apricots, peaches, and grapes dried into raisins, is used in cooking. There's also extensive use of crushed nuts in cooking, especially almonds and pine nuts, to make dishes creamy.

- Persian cuisine excels at sweets. For example, they invented marzipan, which is made from almond paste and sugar and can be molded into little shapes. The Persians also invented iced fruit drinks, such as sherbet, as well as the ancestors of ice creams.

- The Muslims also initiated what can undoubtedly be called an agricultural great leap forward—if not an agricultural revolution. They used new irrigation practices and new ways of intensively cultivating fruits and vegetables—practices they wouldn't start using in Europe for hundreds of years.

- This cuisine has all of the prerequisites for the development of a complex culinary culture. The strength of this cuisine is to a great extent due to the attention paid to the senses—to the aroma and texture of food.

- Muslims were also fond of coloring dishes yellow with saffron, red with sandalwood, or green with mint, for example. In addition, food was made creamy with nuts but was garnished with raisins or pistachios, so the consistency was a combination of smooth punctuated by crunchy bits.

- This is foremost the cooking of the elite. Among poor people, there is a great deal of diversity from place to place in terms of what is cooked and consumed.

## Suggested Reading

Zouali, *Medieval Cuisine of the Islamic World.*

Zubaida, *Taste of Thyme*.

## Culinary Activity

**Baghdadi Recipe**

This recipe is an adaptation of one appearing in the *Kitab al-Tabikh* ("Book of Dishes") by Muhammad b. al-Hasan b. Muhammad b. al-Karim, translated by Charles Perry as *A Baghdad Cookery Book* (p. 98). It dates to the 13th century. It is what we would today call taffy. Keep in mind when making this that we inherited our sweet tooth directly from medieval Islam.

***Halwa Yabisa***

Start with sugar dissolved in water and boiled until it thickens. This should be at what is called the "hard ball" stage, which you can determine by dropping a little bit of the dissolved sugar from a spoon into ice water. (Don't touch it with your fingers until after it's in the water.) A firm but still malleable ball should form. If you have a candy thermometer, it should be about 260 degrees Fahrenheit. Pour the thick syrup onto a marble counter or a smooth platter. Drive a large nail into the wall, and when cool enough to touch, fold the taffy over the nail and pull. Repeat until it is shiny, white, and opaque. Knead into it pistachios (or crushed almonds or sesame seeds). Cut it up into strips or triangles. It can also be colored with saffron or cinnabar, though the latter is toxic because it contains mercury. Red food coloring would be better than historic authenticity in this case.

# Carnival in the High Middle Ages

## Lecture 13

After the Dark Ages, Europe was pretty much in ruins, with the sole exception of Spain under the rule of the Ummayad caliph of Córdoba, which was a dazzling civilization with a sophisticated Mediterranean cuisine linked firmly to the Middle East. The rest of Europe was not only still suffering devastating famines, weak kings, and general economic dislocation, but also a new wave of Germanic invasions in the 9th and 10th centuries by a people from the north known as the Vikings. In this lecture, you will learn how these invasions seriously disrupted Europe and introduced a new foodway to the region.

**Culinary Changes in Europe**

- The Vikings invaded and conquered the British Isles and Normandy in northern France, and the Normans in turn invaded England in 1066. Vikings also conquered Sicily, displacing the Arab rulers there. Another group called the Rus settled in Russia and traded as far as Constantinople and Baghdad. It is odd to think of Viking and Persian cultures coming in contact, but even in the earliest European cookbooks, there definitely was an influence.

- Returning to the Middle Ages, in the year 1000, everything changed. The Vikings settled down, regular trade began to pick up and intensify, and the population began to rise dramatically. Cities began to grow again, sometimes right over the rubble of Roman cities.

- One of the most compelling reasons for this dramatic change is a serious shift in climate. Evidence proved that Europe was getting significantly warmer. Sudden grain surpluses suggested a longer growing season, which led to people cultivating more land, reclaiming it from the wild, and moving up mountainsides. This growth in resources naturally stimulated population growth.

- In addition, there was a series of inventions that some historians like to call the second agricultural revolution. The Mouldboard plow gradually replaced the wheeled *aratus* used in southern Europe, and because of the expense of owning and feeding a plow team, usually a whole village will farm cooperatively—called open-field farming. Another crucial invention is the horse collar, which rests on the shoulder blades of the horse and allows it to be used as a plow animal.

- There were also all kinds of land reclamation projects, including building dikes in the Netherlands and moving up mountainsides to plant vineyards. The use of the waterwheel to grind grain allows milling to become a very profitable business. Risen and baked bread become far more widely used as opposed to gruel. The diet once again becomes more sedentary and grain based.

- Increasingly, wild animals are enclosed in parks and become the private reserves of nobles and kings. Stealing wild animals, or poaching, becomes a serious crime. As a result, game like venison, wild boar, and even large ocean animals (such as dolphin, whale, and sturgeon) become firmly associated with nobility.

- Though not exactly the crude meat feasts of the early Middle Ages, the noble banquet was still a visual expression of the inequality and interdependency of the feudal nobility. For the most part, nobles have lost their military function once relative peace has returned to Europe. Hunting and hawking replicate warfare, and there are a few nice wars to keep people busy.

- Nobles have a lot of wealth, but there's really not much to spend it on. Europe does not manufacture luxury goods, but the Muslim world and Asia do. It occurs to these nobles that all the raping and pillaging they're used to doing is impossible now that kings are making laws against that sort of thing, so they extend their energies outward.

- During the Crusades, Europeans conquered Jerusalem and neighboring principalities, built castles there, and stayed for about a century. They even plundered Constantinople in one crusade (a Christian empire). At the same time, the Spanish knights, from their tiny kingdoms in the north of Spain had their own kind of crusade, the Reconquista, in which they pushed the Moors out, a process that took several centuries but was mostly complete by the 13th century. Both of these events are crucial to the dramatic change in European cuisine.

**Medieval Cooking**

- In the Holy Land, in Spain, and also in formerly Muslim-ruled Sicily, Europeans came in contact with a civilization far more sophisticated and wealthy than their own. For the first time, they were in direct contact with Islamic civilization, the inheritors of classical culture.

- Europeans began to learn about Greek science, medicine, and mathematics indirectly through Arabic translations made into Latin. They learned agricultural techniques, philosophy, and Muslim cooking. Specifically, they learned about spices, which hadn't come to Europe in about 500 years. The trade routes open again, and now there are many more spices than even the ancients knew—including not only pepper and cloves, but also spikenard and galangal.



**Spices were used abundantly in medieval cooking.**

- With spices come dried fruits and nuts and sugar, which was almost completely unknown in ancient times. Only the wealthy could afford these things; they were exotic luxury items brought from far away. Medieval cooking was much closer to Indian cuisine

## Chicken Pie

*One should take a shell of dough and put into it a hen, cut into pieces; and add bacon, diced the size of peas; pepper; cumin; and egg yolks beaten with saffron. Then, take the shell and bake it in an oven.*

than to what we eat today. This was a period of great ingenuity and invention in European cuisine.

- As for medieval cooking, they made much greater use of herbs than we do today. Like spices, herbs were considered quasi-medicinal, used to correct an individual's humoral imbalance, but also to correct certain dishes that were themselves humorally imbalanced. Many of the culinary combinations have a kind of medicinal logic to them.

- There are dozens of sauces based on pounded herbs, bread crumbs, and vinegar—sort of like a pesto or mint sauce. Many combined herbs and spices or sweet and sour flavors. In terms of culinary techniques, pounding, straining, and coloring foods were the rage. There was also a penchant for disguised foods, or foods that were presented so they look like something else.

- The earliest medieval cookbook, called *Libellus de Arte Coquinaria*, dates from about the 12th century and has Latin recipe titles. The original has been lost, but it's known through a handful of copies made toward the end of the 13th century in odd languages.

- This book tells us that cooking was mostly done over a charcoal fire or on a grill. Food was often cooked in pots, cut up into smaller bits, and pounded and sieved into a smooth puree. The recipes are almost entirely for meat, chicken, and a few fish—but practically none were for vegetables or fruit. However, most recipes do include spices, which is pretty decent evidence that the trade networks have opened up again and extend all the way to Scandinavia.

**Carnival and Lent**

- Christianity in the early Middle Ages instituted a series of fasts throughout the calendar during which time most people were not allowed to eat meat or meat products. The most important of the fasts was the 40-day period from Ash Wednesday to Easter, which was meant to commemorate Jesus's fast in the desert. Far more interesting is the feast that preceded it, Carnival, whose name is derived from *carne*, or meat, and was celebrated on Shrove Tuesday, or Mardi Gras (Fat Tuesday).

- Carnival was the celebration in which any remaining meat had to be consumed prior to the 40-day fast of Lent. Typically, this was the one time of the year when all the normal rules of order could be subverted. In other words, the world turned upside down. This was also a time to indulge in pleasures of the flesh.

- Historians have explained Carnival as a ritual that served as a safety valve for a community that normally holds in their pent-up frustrations against those in power. During this one celebration, they need not bow in deference to the lord of the manor or the village priest.

- Returning to the normal order of society the day after the celebrations also reinforced the fact that this is an unusual and one-time occasion; during the rest of the year, everyone has to obey their superiors and show due deference. In the end, Carnival actually strengthens the social order and usual patterns of subordination.

- There were also minor fasts and feasts scattered throughout the Christian calendar as well as fasts every Saturday (beginning Friday evening) and, in some places, on Wednesdays as well. In total, about 150 days of the year were set aside as fasting days. People were allowed to eat fish if they could afford it. Beans were firmly associated with Lent and periods of fasting, but vegetables and starchy staples really formed the bulk of the Lenten diet for most people.

- What began to rankle many people was the widespread sale of dispensations, which could be bought from the church and allowed an individual—or even a whole city—to ignore a particular detail of the fast. Not everyone was happy with the Lenten restrictions, and not many people could afford the dispensations, though often priests could. It's a course of contention through the Middle Ages.

- Another interesting feature of medieval food culture is stories and folktales, which circulated orally and were increasingly written down. The most interesting story is one that is set in the land of Cockaigne, a magical place where no one has to work and food flies into people's mouths whenever they want it. The basic story line serves as a moral warning against gluttons and people who think of nothing but eating and drinking all day.

## Suggested Reading


Bell, *Holy Anorexia*.

Burke, *Popular Culture in Early Modern Europe*.

Bynum, *Holy Feast*.

Camporesi, *Bread of Dreams*.

Flandrin, *Arranging the Meal*.

Grewe and Heiatt, eds., *Libellus de Arte Coquinaria.*

Henisch, *Fast and Feast*.

McAvoy, *Consuming Narratives*.

Pleij, *Dreaming of Cockaigne.*


## Culinary Activity

***Libellus de Arte Coquinaria*: Making Walnut Oil**

This is the very first recipe in the manuscript owned by the Royal Library of Copenhagen. The language, if you look carefully, is very similar to Old English, and if you read it aloud, it is almost intelligible. More interesting

is to make the oil. You'll need fresh raw walnuts for this. It is easiest to heat the mixture first, and then pound or process, and then wring them out in a good, sturdy dish towel. This oil is fabulous on a salad or drizzled onto bread. This is the original and a very literal translation, so you can see the cognate words.

*Man skal takae en dysk maeth nutae kyaernae, oc en aeggy skalae full maeth salt, oc latae them samaen i en heet mortel oc stampae thaet wael, oc writhae gomaen et klaethae, that warthaer thaet oly.*

"Man shall take a dish with nut kernels, and an egg shell full with salt, and let them together in a hot mortar and stamp that well, and wring through a cloth, that will be oil."

**Anthropological Exercise: Participant Observation**

Attend a festival such as carnival in New Orleans or a local food festival, state fair, or similar event. Ideally, this should be one where people can drink, get a little rowdy, and perhaps listen to loud music. Join in, but take note of how people behave differently than on other occasions. Have strangers approached you or talked to you without prompting? Are people closer than they would be normally? Are they speaking more loudly or wearing clothes they wouldn't ordinarily? Note any unusual behavior. After the event, consider what function the festival served. Did it bring people together in ways beyond physical proximity? Was there a communal bond created and, if so, on what basis? Did anyone "perform" his or her identity through food—perhaps a particular dish or ethnic cuisine? Now consider ways these insights might heighten your interpretation of festivals in the past.

# International Gothic Cuisine

## Lecture 14

In general, late medieval or Gothic cuisine was international and appealed to a wide variety of social classes, all of whom tried to get spices when they could as both a flavoring and a mark of status. Above all, this cuisine involved a very artificial style of cooking that loved colors, disguised food, and sharp contrasts of flavor. In this lecture, you will see how the efflorescence of the medieval economy, the reconnection of Eastern trade routes, and the increasing stratification of society all led to a resplendent cuisine that not only dominated the courts of kings and barons, but also was increasingly imitated by those below them.

**The Plague in Europe**

- Around the year 1300, Europe was once again bursting at the seams. It had reached the critical threshold of population density and, given the technology available to provide food, was bound—according to Malthus—to suffer some kind of major catastrophe to rebalance people and resources.

- The first major catastrophe came in the early 14th century, around 1315 to 1317, in the form of successive years of crop failure. This meant that any reserves were eaten up. One year's failure is not so devastating, and happens naturally every 10 or 12 years, but if this happens several years in a row, chronic malnutrition causes a sharp and immediate population drop.

- The famines of the early 14th century are absolutely nothing compared with a contagious disease that makes its appearance in southern Europe in 1348. How it gets there is the most fascinating part of the story. In the preceding century, Genghis Khan and his Mongol hordes had conquered China, all of central Asia, and most importantly Persia—bringing the Abbasid dynasty to an end. However, it also, by coincidence, was the same time that Europe

had become once again hooked up to the trade routes extending to the Middle East to get spices and luxury items.

- The Mongols traversed part of central Asia, where this virus was endemic among a population of black rats. The pathogen is *Yersinia pestis*, a bacillus (rod-shaped) bacterium that had thrived among these rats for many generations and had learned to live with their rat hosts rather than killing them off. However, the bacteria had not yet learned to live with humans. Instead, if an infected flea (that had bitten an infected rat) bit a human, the human would be killed off very quickly.

- When the plague first hits Europe in 1348, it is absolutely devastating. There were probably several varieties of the plague at work, but the most important one was the bubonic plague, named for the buboes, or large black swellings that occur in the armpits, groin, and lymph nodes. The bubonic plague usually kills a human within a few days.

- In the course of the Reconquista, Spain and Portugal were gradually pushing out the Moors. By 1291, that process was largely complete, with the exception of Granada. The straits of Gibraltar were now controlled by Christians, which meant that ships could get from the Mediterranean out into the Atlantic and up to northern Europe. It was trade that facilitated the rapid spread of the plague; infected rats stowed away on ships with their fleas. There is always a price to be paid for progress, civilization, and luxury items.

- About a third of all Europeans perished in this first outbreak of the plague. Some towns were completely depopulated. About 35 million people died, which completely dislocated the economy at first, but in the long run, the survivors inherited the spoils. The price of labor and wages rise while the price of land plummets because landlords are desperate to get tenants. In other words, serfdom falls apart, and peasants are in a position to dictate terms.

## Seymé of Chicken or Veal from *Le Ménagier de Paris*

(barbecued chicken put in a stew
with onions, spices, wine, and bread crumbs)

*Gravé or seymé is a winter pottage. Peel onions and cook them all cut up; then, fry them in a pot. Now you should have your chicken split down the back and browned on the grill over a charcoal fire, and the same if it is veal. Then, you must cut the meat into pieces if it is veal, or in quarters if it is chicken, and put it into the pot with the onions. Then, take white bread browned on the grill and soaked in broth made from other meat. Then, crush ginger, cloves, grains of paradise, and long pepper; moisten them through with verjuice and wine without straining this; and set aside. Then, crush the bread and put it through a sieve and add it to the brouet, strain everything, and boil, then serve.*

- The lot of the average peasant, ironically, improves dramatically. Most food historians are in agreement that the average peasant ate more meat, consumed more alcohol, and were generally much better fed after 1350 than before. Their diet was more varied and included more calories. Most importantly, they could often begin to afford more luxury items. In other words, the wealth was now spread about more evenly among all classes of society, and because there were fewer people around, everyone got a bigger slice of the pie.

- As a result of the plague, more people had increased buying power, and despite the overall shrinking of the economy, there were more people able to imitate their superiors. There was developing a so-called middle class of urban professionals and wealthy rural peasants, who could afford luxuries, prepare elaborate and fashionable dishes, and buy cookbooks.

- Having a thriving court culture and people able to imitate it is one reason culinary arts thrive. Before, we certainly had a court culture and a handful of nobles who could imitate it or were invited to noble banquets themselves, but that was such a small percentage of the society. Now, many more people can afford a roast on Sunday, a few spices to liven up their food, and some decent wine.

- Ironically, the people providing these luxuries grow fabulously wealthy. It's a few regions that flourish, but they become obscenely wealthy in the late Middle Ages because of a brisk trade in both basic foods and luxury items. In these regions, late medieval cuisine flourishes—as it also does in the wealthy capitals of emerging nation-states like London and Paris.

**Medieval Cookbooks**

- The medieval cookbooks that have survived were prepared usually for noble or royal households. Only a few were designed for bourgeois families. Medieval elite cuisine is very international. Rulers wanted to eat like their fellow rulers in other countries, so we see the same kinds of recipes all across Europe.

- The most important medieval cookbook was *The Viandier of Taillevent*, which is actually a collection of recipes probably from as early as the 13th century that were gathered and adapted by Guillaume Tirel, nicknamed Taillevent, who was chef to King Charles V of France. This cookbook influenced several generations of chefs who wanted to imitate the renowned culinary exploits of the chef, who was reputed to be the most refined gourmand in Europe.

- The second great cookbook of this period is called *Le Ménagier de Paris*, which was written in the late 1300s for a wealthy bourgeois household. It takes the form of a book of advice written by a mature if not elderly man for his new young bride. The book is pretty concrete proof that culinary techniques are trickling down the social ladder—he borrows and adapts many recipes from Taillevent—and are also being passed from generation to generation.

## Vegetable-Cheese Tart from *Le Ménagier de Paris*

(a kind of quiche)

*To make a tart, take four handfuls of chard, two handfuls of parsley, a handful of chervil, a sprig of fennel, and two handfuls of spinach; trim them and wash in cold water; then chop very fine. Then, crush two kinds of cheese, soft and medium, and mix in eggs, yolks and whites, and beat into the cheese. Then, put the herbs in a mortar and pound everything together, and put in some fine powder (spices) … Take it to the oven, have a tart made, and eat it hot.*

- The third great French cookbook dates from 1420 and actually comes from a region that is now part of Italy, the dukedom of Savoy. Duke Amadeus VIII got his personal chef, Master Chiquart Amiczo, to write down all of his best recipes and how to throw a banquet, obviously to make the chef and his patron famous. It is actually written in French and is titled *Du Fait de Cuisine* ("On Doing Cookery"). It is also written for professionals and has been called the first true cookbook of the Middles Ages.

- Interestingly, the most common thickening agent was bread—finely pounded or grated stale bread. This is a very good idea because you don't waste anything, and it does break down and become thick. In medieval times, sauces almost always contrast with the main dish. They are sour or sweet (or both) and spicy. Most of the time, they are used as dipping sauces, or they are ground up and baked within a pie.

- In terms of cooking procedures, they still did a good deal of roasting and still enjoyed game, but there is also heavy emphasis on domestic meats. They usually roasted meats that were considered humorally moist, such as pork or lamb, and that would dry the meat out and make it more balanced and healthy. They boiled meats

that were considered humorally dry. There's also a good deal of emphasis on frying, specifically in lard. The technique is picked up from Muslim world, though not the cooking medium.

- People in the late Middle Ages were particularly fond of "subtleties," which were sometimes edible little vignettes—such as castles or coats of arms—made out of sugar or fanciful monstrosities to dazzle and titillate guests. They also made these bizarre multicolored gelatin dishes.

## Suggested Reading


Adamson, *Food in Medieval Times.*

Adamson, *Regional Cuisines of Medieval Europe.*

Albala, *Cooking in Europe.*

Austin, *Two Fifteenth Century Cookery-Books.*

Brears, *Cooking and Dining.*

Forster, *Food and Drink.*

Freedman, *Out of the East.*

Greco, ed., *The Good Wife's Guide.*

Heiatt and Butler, eds., *Curye on Inglysch.*

Heiatt, *Pleyn Delit.*

Henisch, *The Medieval Cook.*

Keay, *Spice Route.*

Pouncy, tr., *The Domostroy.*

Redon, *The Medieval Kitchen.*

Santanach, ed., *The Book of Sent Soví.*

Santich, *The Original Mediterranean Cuisine.*

Scully, *Art of Cooking.*

Scully, *Early French Cookery*.

Scully, ed., *The Viandier of Taillevent*.

Turner, *Spice.*

Van Winter, *Spices and Comfits.*

Woolgar, *The Great Household*.

## Culinary Activity

**Taillevent—Cinnamon *Brouet***

Although the name *brouet* in this dish is cognate with broth, this is more of a thick stew. The flavors are absolutely typical of the Middle Ages, as is the technique of cooking twice. For a comparison of the four surviving manuscripts of this cookbook, see Terence Scully, ed., *The Viandier of Taillevent*, p. 55–56. The following translation combines the four manuscripts for the greatest sense and ease of cooking. Grains of paradise, or melegueta pepper, can be found online or in some specialty shops. It comes from the west coast of Africa and is similar to pepper, though much fruitier and more closely related to cardamom. Do not substitute what is referred to as *malaguetta* in South America, which is a chili pepper. Also, *verjus* is the juice of unripe grapes; any tart grape juice will work fine.

*Cook your chicken in wine or in water. Or use whatever meat you like. Cut it into quarters and fry in lard. Then take dry unskinned almonds and toast them and mix with a great deal of cinnamon, pound them and mix with hot beef broth and strain. Let this boil with the meat, with a little verjus, and add ginger, cloves, grains of paradise. It will be nice and thick.*

# A Renaissance in the Kitchen

## Lecture 15

The dominant style of early 16th-century Italy, both in the arts and cuisine, favored elaborate, sophisticated presentations offering as many different ingredients as possible and cooked in as many ways as possible. In cookbooks, many foods received increased emphasis than in any medieval cookbook. Dairy products and cheeses received much greater coverage as did organ meats and fish prepared dozens of different ways with countless sauces. In this lecture, you will learn that although 16th-century Italian cooking inherited many features from the Middle Ages, the wealth, variety, and copiousness of presentation made it something quite new.

**The Renaissance**

- The setting for the Renaissance is the wealthy cities of late medieval Italy that were actually city-states because they governed the surrounding *contado*, or countryside, running their own affairs and getting extraordinarily rich by supplying the rest of Europe with luxury items and spices.

- Renaissance means "rebirth." First and foremost, this is an intellectual movement that sought to revive the culture of classical antiquity by imitating its arts and literature, by building structures that looked like ancient Greek and Roman buildings, and by depicting naked bodies in marble—like the ancients.

- It even extends into government. Politicians read ancient histories and political tracts and used them didactically to govern their own states. What they sought was to equal, if not surpass, the greatness of ancient Greece and Rome. This imitation was made possible partly through archaeology—digging up old statues and restoring ruined buildings—but more importantly, by recovering ancient texts.

- Europe received Greek and Roman works on science and agriculture, for example, via translations from Arabic into Latin,

but they tended to be corrupt, garbled, or usually incomplete. Now, scholars hunted down good copies in the original languages, and most importantly, they learned to read Greek, especially after Constantinople fell to the Turks in 1453 and Greek scholars escaped to the West with books.

- They also went into old monasteries and long-discarded libraries and began to find and read classical texts copied hundreds of years before. A perfect example of this is the text of the Roman cookbook attributed to Apicius, which was first written in about 400 in ancient Rome and was eventually published in the 1400s.

- This brings us to what is probably the single most important invention in this story: the printing press. No longer does a text have to be copied by hand—something only the wealthiest of people could afford to have done. It can now be printed by the hundreds, and even in a cheap format. This almost immediately stimulates a rise in literacy as well as a vast literature of how-to books.

- The overall effect of the printing press is that it speeds up the pace of change. Information can reach more people faster, and knowledge can be standardized and codified. Not only was classical literature printed, but also new books on every imaginable topic, including such food-related topics as cooking, diet, agriculture, herbs, and manners.

- Another term will explain why writers shifted their attention from topics that preoccupied medieval writers to more practical concerns like cooking and diet. This classical revival movement is often called humanism, which in this context means a focus on practical human affairs. It involved topics that they believed would improve the human condition: ethics rather than abstract theology, rhetoric rather than logic, and poetry and art rather than canon law.

- In other words, this was a major shift in the curriculum that sought to make people well-rounded citizens rather than just professionals trained as theologians or lawyers. This focus on humans (rather than

on the heavens and the afterlife) meant that everyday topics such as maintaining a household, cooking a healthy meal, and throwing a banquet became serious topics worthy of study.

**Platina's Cookbook**

- The first printed cookbook, *De Honesta Voluptate* by Bartolomeo Platina (originally Bartolomeo Sacchi), first appeared around 1470 in Rome. It is actually two books uncomfortably stuffed together. The recipes are borrowed from Martino of Como, who was a professional chef for Cardinal Trevisan, who wrote a cookbook that circulated in manuscript in the early 15th century.

- The cookbook is about natural history (what we would now consider biology) and dietary medicine. Platina offers a way for readers to enjoy themselves at the table and observe some dietary rules and stay healthy. Thus, he recommends the classical ideal of moderation, or the balance of pleasure and health. He also offers guidelines on how to strike the balance and maintain it year round.

- Martino's cookbook, which is really a late medieval cookbook, features the use of sugar and spices and sweet-and-sour sauces, but Martino was innovative in several ways. There is also the tendency to present individual ingredients whole rather than pounded up and disguised, as medieval cooks were so fond of doing. Probably most important is the heavy emphasis on vegetables, which he treats as dishes in their own right and offers all sorts of interesting recipes.

- For Platina's entries, he typically quotes Pliny or some Roman agricultural writer and offers a bit on how they were valued in ancient times. The cookbook is primarily a piece of humanist scholarship, so Platina also tells you about each food's medicinal properties, how easily it's digested, and what kinds of humors it may provoke.

**Ficino's Cookbook**

- In Florence, the birthplace of humanism, there was a particular thinker named Marsilio Ficino who represented a late phase of Renaissance humanism. He was about the same age as Platina,

maybe a decade younger, but their two books could not possibly be more different. Ficino was a scholar specializing in Plato.

- Ficino wrote a book called *De Vita* ("On Life"), which is mostly a diet book about things that scholars should eat to help them stay healthy, have clear and rational thoughts, and live—as Ficino says—in harmony with the stars.

- *De Vita* is on the one hand based on standard Galenic principles—hot and cold food and humoral balance—but it also has an admixture of astrology and magic, including what foods you can eat to harness the unseen forces of the universe and how to avoid what he considered the most dangerous disease of scholars: melancholy.

- An idea that underlies much of his thought is called the doctrine of signatures, which basically means that the power of a given substance will be revealed by its outward form—its shape or color. It is for this reason that Ficino often recommends bright-colored foods like saffron, golden-hued wines, or even gold. They have a certain sympathetic affinity with the Sun, which has the power of light, knowledge, clarity, and understanding.

- Apart from many bizarre recipes, there is also a great deal of what we would now call aromatherapy as well as all sorts of advice on sleeping, sex, and when to work and rest. It is a very interesting book, but it is not representative of mainstream dietary thought in the least. Most Florentines, surprisingly, were still eating much the same medieval diet.

**Messisbugo's Cookbook**

- *Banchetti* by Cristoforo di Messisbugo was a cookbook that was written to describe the banquets thrown in the court of Duke Ercole d'Este in Ferrara. Messisbugo's banquets are a perfect match for the style of art flourishing at the time, called mannerism, which can be described as a self-consciously elaborate and sophisticated style that sought to venture beyond the balanced and rational compositions of the Renaissance by depicting figures in twisted positions sometimes

## Puff-Pastry Pizzas

The following recipe from Messisbugo's cookbook is particularly interesting not only because of the bizarre method of making a puff pastry, but also because it is called "pizza." It bears practically no relation to what we now know by that name. The puffs, incidentally, were one of the more common tidbits placed on the credenza before guests arrived and were, thus, eaten as a starter. Presumably, his audience knows exactly what these were supposed to look like, because he merely instructs: "make your puff pizzas." This also where butter appears and plays a major role in the cuisine.

To make 10 puff-pastry pizzas (notice there's a total of six-and-a-half pounds of butter):

*Pull the soft interior out of four white breads and soak it in tepid water. Take three pounds of the finest wheat flour, ten egg yolks and a pound of fresh butter, three ounces of rose water, and seven ounces of sugar. Mix everything together with the bread, making a dough. Roll it out into a sheet as you would a lasagna dough, and make it as light as you can. Then, take a pound and a half of fresh butter, heated, and pour it over the sheet. Let it cool. Then, roll a spiral pastry cutter the length of the sheet and cut it into 10 pieces. Next, make your puff pizzas. Have a pan ready with four pounds of fresh butter, and fry your puff pizzas in it. When they are fried, sprinkle a half pound of sugar over them.*

placed into illogical settings. This style influenced the cutlery, table settings, and presentation of food, and it affected how and what foods were prepared.

- Although the basic outlines of Italian cuisine at the start of the 16th century were inherited from the middles ages—there is still

the heavy use of spices, sugar, and sauces based on vinegar—something began to change noticeably. Messisbugo's description of banquets reveals a diversity of dishes bordering on perversity, spectacles and surprises, and ingenious novelties—all of which show that mannerist esthetics were at play.

- A typical banquet, some with as many as a dozen separate courses, included salads, soups, vegetables, pastries and pies, sweets—especially little allegorical scenes made of sugar called *trionfi*—as well as fish and meats in nearly every single course. Rather than presenting an orderly procession of dishes, the diner was meant to be overwhelmed by the variety and elegance of each successive presentation.

- Some of Messisbugo's recipes contain crushed coral or pearls, deemed to be restorative, but they would certainly have been impressive for the cost alone. The sugar, spices, and rose water that flavor so many of the dishes would have been considered just as luxurious. There are also a lot of foreign dishes—including German, Spanish, Turkish, French, and Hungarian—showing that these were adventurous eaters eager to taste the new and exotic. However, not all the recipes were so outlandish.

## Suggested Reading

Bourdieu, *Distinction*.

Capatti, *Italian Cuisine*.

David, *Harvest of the Cold Months*.

Jeanneret, *Feast of Words*.

Martino of Como, *The Art of Cooking*.

Platina, *On Right Pleasure and Health*.

Riley, *Italian Food*.

Serventi, *Pasta*.

Unger, *Beer in the Middle Ages and Renaissance*.

## Culinary Activity

**Christoforo di Messisbugo, *Banchetti* (1549): To Make Ten Plates of Maccheroni p. 52**

In the Renaissance, macaroni was a generic name for all kinds of pasta—either what we would today call gnocchi, tubular pasta, or even noodles. This version is more of a dumpling but was still labor intensive enough to be considered elegant and worthy of noble tables. Of course, it does not yet contain potato, though those were known to botanists in this century. Bread crumbs serve the same purpose. Notice also the intriguing flavorings, which are actually delicious. Feel free to cut down the recipe in any way you like. Messisbugo gives us measurements, so that is possible, but do note that a pound at this time was 12 ounces rather than 16.

*Take five pounds of white flour and two of grated white bread, and mix well with the flour, and then take boiling water and three eggs to make the dough, which should be neither too tough nor too light. Let it cool a little. Then cut into pieces about the size of a chestnut, and roll your macaroni across the holes of a grater and put them into boiling water to cook. When they're cooked, add a little salt, then take two and a half pounds of grated hard cheese with an ounce and a half of ground pepper mixed in, then toss so the cheese is above and below, along with a pound and a half of butter on top, then cover with another plate, placing it in a hot place until you're ready to bring it to the table, and sprinkle if you like with a little sugar and cinnamon on top and it will be better.*

# Aztecs and the Roots of Mexican Cooking

## Lecture 16

Before venturing into the modern era, you will learn about Mexico at the time of the Aztecs, immediately before the encounter with Europeans after 1492. The Aztecs were not, of course, the first great New World civilization; there were many earlier peoples living in what is today Mexico—including the Olmec, Toltec, Maya, and Teotihuacán—before the Aztecs arrived. However, this lecture will focus on the Aztecs because they absorbed and ruled over most of these peoples or their descendants. As a result, they adopted many cultural and culinary traits from these peoples.

**Agriculture before the Aztecs**

- Before the development of agriculture, the early peoples of Mexico lived mostly by hunting, fishing, and gathering as elsewhere. In contrast to the general pattern on the Eurasian continent, most of the large animals were extinct before 7000 B.C. The native peoples came to rely increasingly on plants like mesquite, nopal cactus, maguey, and wild teosinte—the ancestor of corn—which first began to be domesticated about 4000 B.C., though recent evidence suggests it was long before this.

- They supplemented this with hunting smaller animals and fishing, but they didn't have any large domesticated cattle. They ate mostly small mammals, lizards, insects, and grubs. This seems to have provided them with a decent diet, because there were several regions of fairly dense population.

- As these peoples became more sedentary and dependent on agriculture, they came to depend more heavily on a few domesticated species, including maize (which is a plant selectively bred for large and numerous grains), squash, beans, tomatoes, chilis, amaranth, cactus, and many fruits—especially the avocado and guava. These are the staples of early Mexican diet, as they will

be of the Aztec, and all of them still form a basic core of Mexican cuisine. All were being cultivated before the Aztecs showed up.

- When the Aztecs arrived in around 1325, they were a small tribe of about 10,000 people that settled on the shores of Lake Texcoco in central Mexico, already a fairly densely populated area—but one that had no ruling, dominant power after the collapse of the Toltec state (around 1150).

- The area was much like medieval Europe in that there were many small autonomous regions whose ruling elites married each other. Sometimes, they fought wars, but there was no nation-state. Aztecs just happened to be fiercer warriors than anyone else and were hired as mercenaries. They even moved about a lot as their alliances with various tribes shifted.

- The Aztecs had a legend that when they saw an eagle perched on a cactus with a snake in its mouth (the symbol on the Mexican flag), that's the place they should settle down. That's where they founded their city Tenochtitlán. From there, they started to conquer their neighbors—a warrior elite of marauders, just like in Europe. By the 15th century, they dominated the whole region.

**Ingredients of World Importance**

- In early Mexican societies, maize was a staple that took on a deeply religious significance. The Maya word for it is *kana*, which means "our mother." On its own, it is very nutritious, but it lacks some essential amino acids like lysine, isoleucine, and tryptophan. However, in combination with beans, it provides a more complete protein package that you can live on.

- Processed maize was typically ground on a saddle-shaped metate and made into a dough now called a masa, flattened into disks, and cooked on a comal (originally made of clay, but now a flat metal cooking surface). Masa could also be popped, steamed in a corn husk to make tamales, or made into a drink called atole.



**Genetically modified corn is a form of corn that has been engineered to have traits that are agronomically desirable.**

- There are also several important root vegetables, including jicama, yuca, malanga, and—probably one of the most important foods affecting world eating habits later—sweet potatoes (*Ipomoea batatas*, which is where we get the name "potato," but sweet potatoes and potatoes are not related). Sweet potatoes also shouldn't be confused with true yams, which come from Africa.

- There are two forms of manioc root: a sweet version and a more prevalent bitter version that contains hydrocyanic acid and is thoroughly poisonous. Somehow, people figured out how to grate, soak, and strain it to remove the poison. It's one of the most important food crops in the world, at least in the humid tropics. In the West, it's only used as tapioca.

- There's a great deal of confusion over which beans came from the Old World and which came from the New World. In any case, all the beans you're most familiar with—including navy beans, pinto beans, red beans, and string beans—are all New World plants.

- One of the more interesting foods eaten in central Mexico is spirulina, a kind of algae collected from lakes. It is high in protein and minerals. Lakes were also very important to Aztec agriculture because they actually farmed on them. They built floating islands anchored to the lake bed and covered with dirt (called *chinampas*) that were kept watered all year round and could produce four crops of maize per year.

- They had remarkably sophisticated systems of terracing and irrigation. They also knew how to plant crops in complementary combinations, called intercropping. They planted beans between the rows of maize; one takes out nitrogen, and the other puts it back in.

- Mexicans domesticated rabbits, dogs, and turkeys as well as a kind of guinea pig, and they hunted all sorts of wild animals, including ducks, capybara, coati, and armadillo.

**Aztec Cuisine**

- Aztec cuisine was quite complex, featuring all sorts of extremely spicy stews. Chili peppers were a main ingredient in Aztec cuisine, and they were also used to make smoke bombs. Chilies (*Capsicum annum*) are native to Mexico, and the Aztecs apparently ate nothing without them. Chilies would be soaked, ground up, and used as the base of sauces—exactly as they are today.

- Just as in Europe, there is evidence that the Aztecs had a kind of middle class that was trying to imitate the customs of the nobles and emperor. What is striking, though, is that in accounts of Aztec meals, the observers noted that the participants ate moderately. They didn't indulge themselves, and balance and moderation are apparently running themes through all Aztec thought.

- When the Aztecs were introduced pork, beef, and other forms of alcohol, they attributed the rapid population decline to indulgence in these. In fact, however, it was smallpox and measles. The Christian traditions of fast and feast, asceticism and indulgence, were very foreign to Aztec attitudes toward food and did not blend very easily.

- What else we know about Aztec cuisine is from inference from colonial cooking after. The foods that seem to be almost completely native rather than imported are the sauces: pounded sauces like *ahuaca-mulli*, the ancestor of guacamole, made with avocados, new world onions, and tomatoes—it's probably the food we recognize that has changed the least since Aztec times.

- Tomatoes are actually native to South America and were brought north. They were mashed with chilies (and epazote, not oregano or cilantro) into the ancestors of what we now know as salsa, a chunky sauce that is very foreign to European cooking and actually isn't adopted there for several centuries. What is similar, just by coincidence, is the way sauces are used; they are presented in a little bowl, and food is dipped into them with the fingers.

- Aztecs also had fermented drinks, the most important of which, pulque, was fermented from the maguey or agave plant—kind of like an undistilled tequila. Apparently, the Aztecs were very strict about not allowing public drunkenness, and pulque was supposed to be drunk only by the upper classes and priests, but it was not a strictly enforced rule. *Pozol* was also a kind of fermented maize drink that was probably similar to undistilled bourbon, which is made from sour mash corn.

- Aztecs also drank *chocolatl*, another drink especially reserved for nobles and priests. It came as a tribute from the South and was even apparently used as money. They had no sugar, so typically it was flavored with chili peppers and an orchid species: vanilla.

- Cacao was used earlier by the Maya, who buried their dead with chocolate in pots. They probably got it from the Olmec, and the Aztecs got it from the Maya. They typically drank it hot and frothed up with a device that is a stick with wooden rings around it—a *molinillo*. Unlike the Maya, they added honey to sweeten it and typically drank it after a meal.

- Cochineal was a very important food-coloring and dye plant. It came from a parasitic bug that lived on cacti and produced a bright red (edible) dye when crushed. It replaced alkermes and became a major world export item. Another food coloring is achiote, a red-yellow seed that is used to color food like saffron does.

- Tobacco was known throughout Mexico and certainly was not an innovation of the Aztecs, but the Aztecs smoked it out of tubes. At religious festivities, men ate small black mushrooms that made some people sing and others laugh—and eventually would cause hallucinations, which they believed foretold the future. Then, they made an offering to the gods, and a banquet followed with flowers and smoking. What they were describing was probably a type of psilocybin, and it is interesting to note how many different religions make use of the ecstatic drug-induced state.

## Suggested Reading

Coe, *America's First Cuisines*.

Coe, *True History of Chocolate*.

McNeil, *Chocolate in Mesoamerica*.

Norton, *Sacred Gifts, Profane Pleasures*.

Ortiz de Montellano, *Aztec Medicine, Health, and Nutrition.*

## Culinary Activity

**Cooking a Pre-Columbian Recipe**

Just as it is fun to imagine what Italian food, for example, would have been like before the introduction of tomatoes, peppers, or corn, imagining pre-Columbian cooking is equally instructive for food history. There could be no wheat, beef, pork, or even chicken. Herbs and seasonings would be restricted to native plants—so no oregano or cumin—and a whole range of vegetables would be missing. On the other hand, there are so many ingredients you can use. This is a simple corn-and-bean dish, and of course, versions are still made today, but it captures the spirit of Aztec cooking rather nicely.

Start by soaking a pot of beans overnight. Use any *Phaseolus* species, such as pinto, navy, kidney, or even black beans; these are all from the New World. The next day, pour off the water and add fresh water just to cover by an inch or two. Use a clay pot if you can; it does improve the flavor. Add a pinch of epazote, which is said to reduce flatulence. It tastes good, too. Add to the pot a good handful of *pozole*, which consists of corn kernels soaked in lime and swollen. You can use dried or canned hominy. Keep on a very low simmer without boiling vigorously. Once the beans are nearly tender, add salt. Continue cooking until the beans are soft. Then, add chopped *nopalitos*, or cactus paddles. They are best fresh. Cut off the spines along the edge, and then cut off the other spines along the flat sides of the paddle, being careful not to get pricked. Then, slice them into long, thin strips; rinse well; and put into the pot with the beans and corn. It will thicken it up and create a slightly mucilaginous texture, which is delightful. You can also use jarred *nopalitos* if you like. This is a complete vegetarian meal, offering a balanced package of proteins.

# 1492—Globalization and Fusion Cuisines

## Lecture 17

This lecture is partly about exploration and the expansion of the economy, but it is mostly about how the desire for spices and other luxury items connects the entire globe. This lecture is also about how plants, animals, and diseases were, for the first time in human history, transported across continents—not just from the Americas to Europe, but also from Asia, Africa, and Europe to everywhere. In this lecture, you will learn that the globalization of the food supply was probably the most important event in human history since the discovery of agriculture.

**The Venetian Spice Trade Monopoly**

- In the mid-15th century, the Venetians had pretty much monopolized the spice trade. They picked up spices and luxury goods like silks, gold, drugs, and dyestuff in the eastern Mediterranean and brought it to the rest of Europe. The Venetians used galleys—which are big, rowed, flat-bottomed ships that can hold a lot of cargo—to hold onto their monopoly. Spices and silks don't take up much room, so the Venetians armed these ships and filled them with guns to protect their trade.

- The Venetians captured a long stretch of land extending down the Dalmatian coast all the way to Corfu in Greece, Crete, and Cyprus for a while to serve as stopping off points and to provide friendly harbors in case they're chased by pirates or hostile Turks. The Venetian state supported these enterprises. They built themselves a maritime empire with colonies that were basically military garrisons.

- The importance of this model is that it was imitated by the Portuguese. Portugal faces the Atlantic, in which galleys are not of much use, which meant that they were forced to develop a different kind of sea-worthy vessel—and they did. They also had to develop methods of navigation that were more sophisticated than those used in the Mediterranean.

- The Portuguese had a king in the early 15th century—King Henry the Navigator—who founded a school for navigation and personally sponsored voyages. The assumption was that any profit made by merchants is wealth coming into the country, and if you resell what you bring in to other countries, that brings money in. The whole idea is to reexport, but not buy from other nations, which causes money to flow out.

- The Portuguese were going down the west coast of Africa, where they found gold, ivory, rare woods, melegueta pepper, and slaves. The slaves were mostly used as household servants by nobles, but they were just beginning to be used on sugar plantations on islands like Madeira, Cape Verde, and the Azores.

- The Portuguese kept heading south down the coast of Africa. Bartholomew Dias rounded the Cape of Good Hope in 1488, so they then knew where Africa ended. It then began to occur to them that if they could go up the other side of Africa and across the Indian Ocean, they could completely cut out the Venetian middlemen and even the Arab tradesmen in the Middle East. In other words, they could go directly to the source—to India and Indonesia—for spices.

- It takes them about 10 years to finally follow up on this idea. They sent Vasco da Gama with a flotilla of four ships to try it, and he succeeded, making it all the way to Calicut on the west coast, where he came in contact with Asian ships from Malacca.

- Europe is also now connected with Asia directly. Within a decade, the Portuguese had conquered Calicut, destroyed rival Muslim fleets under Alfonso de Albuquerque, and set up a military post in India. They would soon thereafter take Goa, too, which remained a port colony until this century.

- The Portuguese took over Malacca on the Malay Peninsula and Macao in China, and they had a foothold in Japan for a while. Most importantly, they set up posts in Java, Sumatra, and throughout Indonesia—which is where the spices come from.

- On one of these voyages in 1500 under Cabral, heading out into the Atlantic to reach South Africa, they actually bumped into South America, which is basically why Brazil becomes a Portuguese possession, too.

- The result is that Lisbon became the largest and wealthiest port in Europe, and the Portuguese successfully cut out the Venetians, bringing not only more spices to Europe, but also in such great quantities that eventually the price will go down. In the long run, by the 17th century, spices are no longer such a prestigious item. They go out of fashion in elite cooking because everyone could afford them.

- Throughout the 15th century, the Portuguese were getting going, and their neighbors, the Spanish, were casting a jealous eye over the border. In fact, they were pretty preoccupied themselves. The ruling couple, Ferdinand and Isabella, decided that they wanted their new joint kingdom (Castile and Aragon) to be completely Catholic. To that end, they sought to complete the Reconquista by conquering the very last Muslim province on the Iberian Peninsula (Granada) and to expel all Jews from the kingdom.

- While they're busy with these plans, a Genoese merchant shows up with a great idea: to sail westward around the globe to reach Asia and pick up the same spices that the Portuguese were about to get. Columbus's plan didn't appeal to the Portuguese, to the English King Henry VII, or to the French. Finally, he went to Spain and presented his ideas to Queen Isabella, who felt threatened by the news of Diaz rounding the Cape of Good Hope.

**The Discovery of the New World**

- In 1492, Columbus he set off with three dinky ships and landed on a small island in the Caribbean—either San Salvador or Watlings Island. Columbus was convinced, until his dying day, that he had discovered islands immediately adjacent to Japan and China. It is clear from Columbus's logbook that he was desperate to find spices,

but he was nonetheless the first European to taste corn, tomatoes, chilies and sweet potatoes and to smoke tobacco.

- In 1494, Spain and Portugal decide that rather than squabble over who would take what, they get the Spanish Pope Alex VI to preside over a treaty at Tordesillas, which essentially divides the entire globe between the two powers. Within a few years, the Spanish start settling in the New World—a pattern of colonization quite different from the Portuguese outposts.

- In the Caribbean (where Columbus first landed) and Brazil, without native populations to support the economy—eventually, there were laws passed prohibiting enslaving Native Americans—the colonists got the idea of importing African slaves to work the plantations in the New World. As a result, Africa and the Americas were linked, and they were primarily growing sugar.

- By the early 16th century, the Spanish had discovered the mainland. Credit for this goes to Amerigo Vespucci of Florence basically because he lied about an early voyage in 1504. Columbus was actually the first to land on the mainland.

- Under Hernán Cortés, the Spanish conquered the great Aztec empire of Mexico, and by mid-century, Francisco Pizarro conquered the Inca empire in Peru. The Spanish eventually went across the Pacific and took the Philippines, which leads to the entire world being linked economically. Only North America and Australia weren't firmly linked yet.

**The Globalization of Food**

- The Spanish introduced European plants and animals to the Americas, including cattle, horses, pigs, chickens, wheat, and all of the European fruits and vegetables—many of which went rampant and completely displaced the native fauna. The people conquered, and so did the germs, but the plants and animals also completely upset the local ecosystems, making many species go extinct.



**Native to tropical America, sweet potatoes are widely grown in warmer climates.**

- The Columbian exchange went both ways. For the first time in human history, plants native to all five separate continents were suddenly jumbled together, transplanted, and mixed up, and it completely changed eating habits practically everywhere on Earth.

- For example, the sweet potato was introduced to the Philippines by the Spanish in the 16th century. There was a famine in China in 1593, and commissioners were sent to Luzon in the Philippines for help, and they came back with sweet potatoes, which were very easy to plant and grew rapidly. According to some historians, the rapid and economically disastrous population growth of China after that date can be attributed to sweet potatoes. Resources cause the population to rise too much.

- What is ironic, though, is that Europeans were usually the slowest to adopt new foods. For example, for poor people from the Middle East to China (and Africa), chili peppers became a replacement for expensive spices. They were adopted and became basics in

the cuisine in all of these places. However, the first printed recipe involving chili peppers is from the late 17th century. They were clearly food for the poor.

- In addition, it was the combination of not knowing what to do with it and being told not to eat it that caused the tomato not to be used in Europe for a few hundred years after its discovery. In 1690, the earliest recipes involving tomato salsa arose.

- When they get to Europe, almost all New World foods are used in completely different ways than among the Aztecs or Inca. Maize is the perfect example of this. It was planted in Spain and Northern Italy. Maize is easy to grow and filled a niche formerly taken by other grains, like barley and millet. That is, it was ground up and made into polenta and was adopted almost everywhere polenta was eaten.

- However, Europeans never soaked the corn with lime and never ground it and baked it into tortillas. As a rule, they never combined it with beans. The result was serious vitamin B deficiency and pellagra. The globalization of food has all sorts of unexpected consequences.

## Suggested Reading


Albala, *Beans*.

Crosby, *Ecological Imperialism*.

Crosby, *The Columbian Exchange*.

Diamond, *Guns, Germs, and Steel*.

Fussell, *Corn*.

Kiple, *Moveable Feast*.

Kurlansky, *Cod*.

Norton, *Sacred Gifts*.

Sokolov, *Why We Eat What We Eat*.

## Culinary Activity

**Chocolate Tasting Exercise**

When Europeans first encountered chocolate among the Aztecs, it was drank and remained a drink for several centuries—but the Aztec beverage was very different. It could contain chili peppers and flavorings like *güeynacaztle* (flor de oreja, or *Cymbopetalum penduliflorum*), *mecasuchil* (flor de cordel, or *Piper sanctum*), *tlixóchil* (vanilla), and achiote (a yellow coloring agent, *Bixa orellana*), which turned it deep red. Oddly, chefs are experimenting with these flavors in chocolate bars today. When Europeans tasted it, they wanted to sweeten it with sugar for both gastronomic and medicinal reasons. They also added cinnamon, anise, and almonds or hazelnuts. One might consider this the first fusion food, and the type of drinking chocolate still used in Mexico is relatively unchanged. It is certainly nothing like what is commonly drank as hot chocolate, made with milk.

As an experiment, buy a range of chocolate bars, running the gamut from very sweet milk chocolate to dark bittersweet with a high percentage of cacao. They are processed to be eaten directly at room temperature, but they can all still be made into a drink. Simply dissolve each into a cup of moderately hot water, stir vigorously, and arrange from lightest to darkest. Starting with the lightest, notice how the water brings out the flavor defects. Sweetness overwhelms everything else. Notice, too, how different the high-cacao chocolate tastes when dissolved. The bitterness becomes rounded, in ways not unlike coffee. If you like, experiment with flavorings, especially cinnamon next to ground chili. Perhaps the original Spanish settlers were onto something when they combined Eastern spices with American chocolate.

# 16th-Century Manners and Reformation Diets

## Lecture 18

In the 16th century, some major changes occurred in Europe that had very interesting effects on food culture. The biggest and most important series of events was the globalization of the economy and the exchange of foods across continents, but in this lecture, you will learn about the other important changes that occurred in the early modern period—starting with the fact that favorable economic times in the wake of the plague triggered Europe's population to bounce back within a century and a half.

**Changes in the Early Modern Period**

- By 1500, there was once again a serious baby boom in Europe. The effect this had on the economy was that lots of people were scrambling for jobs, and the price of labor (wages) went down. A scarcity of food meant that the cost of living went up because of inflation—some of the most dramatic price surges in history—and, once again, land was at a premium.

- Feudalism had pretty much fallen apart, and serfs had become peasants renting land (tenants). If they were lucky enough to have good leases, or if they were freeholders and owned the land themselves, they were in an excellent position because they could supply the growing market with food and reap a good profit because prices were so high. This led to an industrious class of farmers who were middle-class yeomen and upper-middle gentry.

- Because the demand and price of land was so high, the nobles—large landholders and investors in trade, colonization projects, or industries—also did very well. However, the nobles were no longer allowed to run amok, raping and pillaging. In Europe, unless they join a royal army, they have essentially lost their original military function. The result is that they become domesticated; they go from being warriors to being courtiers. Revealingly, there is a whole literature devoted just to telling them how to behave.

- Another important factor in this increasingly court-dominated society is that the general trend in most of the European powers is for the monarchy to grow in power at the expense of the nobility. In the 16th century, there is not only centralization, but also growth of the physical territory of the crown; there is no longer a maze of independent powers, but a true nation-state.

- Anyone who wants power now has to go through the king. He becomes the font of patronage, the person who appoints government positions as well as church positions. Therefore, more than ever, kings set fashions. The result is a dazzling court culture that trickles down from nobles to gentry to wealthy bourgeois businessmen and professionals—and even to wealthy yeoman farmers.

- Almost immediately, we see the level of material culture take a great leap forward. People with expendable income want to show off their wealth—flaunt it a bit—and now there's some great stuff to buy.

- One way to look at the plight of the poor, starving masses might be to consider that for all the wealth that's accumulating at the upper end of the social scale, someone else is going hungry. Lots of people, low wages, and high prices mean that the diet of the average European becomes dramatically worse, and it becomes glaringly obvious that eating customs come to be increasingly associated with class.

**The Reformations**

- There's another very important series of events that has a profound effect on eating habits across Europe: the Protestant, Catholic, and Radical Reformations. All of these were very important for understanding attitudes toward food in the modern era.

- At the start of the early modern period, there was mounting a considerable reaction to what were considered abuses of the medieval church. Most of all, it was wealth and profligacy, but it was also the failure of priests to live up to their vows of chastity,

the sale of church offices, clerical ignorance, and a general failure of the church to meet the spiritual needs of the people, who were largely alienated by rituals in Latin.

- It did not help that a number of questionable individuals occupied the papal throne, including the fun-loving bon vivant Leo X and the warrior pope Julius II. They may have been great patrons of the arts, but as spiritual leaders, they were considered failures.

- Humanist scholars were also concerned that the church had lost sight of the original intentions of Jesus and his followers, which was moral reform, and had instead begun to focus on the hollow rituals and the letter of the law. This rift in the church is essential for understanding the history of food because along with criticism of the dogma and rituals of the church, its food strictures also came under attack.

- Starting with Martin Luther, the Protestant Reformation was first and foremost an attempt to return to the original doctrines of Paul, which stated that an individual can in no way earn his own salvation. Justification is by "faith alone," and despite our own failings, grace is given to the worst of sinners if there is true faith. These ideas were articulated by Martin Luther in his 95 theses, which were basically topics posted on the door of the cathedral at Wittenberg University for discussion among theology students.



**Martin Luther (1483–1546) was a German theologian and religious reformer.**

- Luther had taken holy orders and had found the ascetic rigors he underwent extremely frustrating because he could never be sure when God might be satisfied and when he had done enough to merit salvation. Paul's doctrines offered him comfort because they assured him that without any merit on his part, he could be saved by

faith alone. It was this single idea that hastened the permanent rift in Western Christendom.

- Ultimately, Luther came under the protection of German rulers, which meant that the Reformation would be carried out by the state. German Lutheran states broke away from the Roman Catholic Church and abolished monasticism and clerical celibacy. The mass was also held in German, and the congregation was encouraged to participate directly by singing hymns, many of which Luther composed. However, the church government and its rituals remained relatively unchanged.

- In the wake of Luther's first decisive break with Rome, a number of other Reformation movements sprang up. One of the most important of these occurred in Zurich, Switzerland. The Swiss Reformation, which provides a model for many other reform movements, resulted in the idea that if people decide to fast as individuals, then it should be complete abstinence from all food, or if people decide to fast collectively to appease God's wrath, then it should be a real fast with no food and serious penitence.

- In the Reformed traditions—which include the Dutch, the Scots, French Huguenots, the English, and New England Puritans—fasting doesn't disappear, but it changes entirely into a communal event for emergent occasions. Equally important is that no food is ever forbidden. This has culinary consequences as well: Whereas before there was a separation of milk, butter, and dairy products (and of course meat) from fish and vegetables seasonally, they can now be combined at any time of year.

- The most influential thinker in the Reformed tradition was John Calvin, who practically governed the town of Geneva. His importance is primarily the formulation of a system of church government known as Presbyterianism, in which the hierarchical structure of Rome is replaced with a more democratic system of elders who decide on doctrine at synods, or councils of church elders.

- Calvin's attitude toward food is equally interesting and quite similar to Stoicism. The Calvinists favored austerity and a rigorously guilt-ridden attitude toward pleasures of the flesh. It is also significant that while asceticism of the sort practiced by medieval monastics disappeared in countries that espoused Calvin's ideas, a new kind of personal simplicity and basic distrust of elegant food flourished among the populace at large.

- Arguably, puritanical thought more than any other factor quelled the spread of culinary refinement in Calvinist countries. It has also been argued that the doctrine of predestination, the idea that only some people are destined to be saved, goaded people into looking for signs of their election, which meant material prosperity—hence, the Protestant work ethic and investing money rather than squandering it.

- Calvinist countries reinstated public fasting as a way to atone for sins. Despite the return of the fast, the Carnival celebrations that preceded it were definitively banned in the course of the 16th and 17th centuries. The cycle of feast and fast was definitively broken as ordinary people were expected to maintain simple habits throughout the year and austere ones on certain occasions.

- Beneath these official or "magisterial" reform movements implemented by temporal rulers, there were also a broad variety of popular movements, most of whom are called Anabaptists—a term of abuse meaning "rebaptizer" because they only baptized adults.

- It was not until the mid-16th century that the Catholic Church mounted and concerted their own major reform movement, primarily through the Council of Trent, which decided that instead of abandoning the ritual aspects of Christianity, they would strengthen them.

- Among Catholic Reformation thinkers, there is also a new attitude toward food, one that can be gleaned indirectly through the writings of Saint Francis of Sales. In his *Introduction to a Devout*

*Life*, although actually discussing sex, Saint Francis tell us how we should approach food. First, he acknowledges that eating is necessary to maintain life and, therefore, is a duty. It also serves a social function and, thus, like reproduction, is a virtuous act. Eating only to satisfy our appetite is tolerated, but is not in itself praiseworthy, and eating to excess is dangerous.

- The greatest effect of the Catholic Reformation on the eating habits of ordinary people was that the periods of fasting were rigorously maintained. Monastic orders flourished in southern Europe, and a slew of new miracle-working saints, some still performing incredible feats of self-denial, suddenly appeared. On the other hand, the church retained its fabulous wealth and high-ranking churchmen, and wealthy monasteries remained significant patrons of the arts and refined cuisine.

## Suggested Reading


Albala, *Eating Right in the Renaissance*.

Elias, *The Civilizing Process*.

Holt, *Alcohol*.

Martin, *Alcohol, Violence, and Disorder*.

Mintz, *Sweetness and Power*.

Paston-Williams, *Art of Dining*.

Visser, *Much Depends on Dinner*.


## Culinary Activity

**Food in Art Exercise**

Begin by focusing on 16th- and 17th-century still-life paintings, which are extremely rich on the topic of food. Campi, Aertsen, Claesz van Heda, Beuckelaer, and Cotan are all excellent. Look for markets; kitchen scenes; and composite food heads, like those of Archimboldo. You'll be able to find these easily online, especially on the Web Gallery of Art. What do these

paintings reveal about the ingredients available? When and why are New World foods depicted? Are these foods always symbolic—reminders of the passing of time or death, or harbingers of rebirth as are often found in depictions of Mary and the baby Jesus? Or are some artists simply interested in the beauty of fruits, vegetables, and dead animals?

Who purchased these paintings, and why? Why are there lumpy peasants in village scenes in paintings by Breughel? Are they satirical or gently condescending? What is the intention of raucous *Twelfth Night* scenes with people clearly drinking to excess and cavorting with each other, while animals run around and children are unattended? When opulent ingredients are shown, we might assume that this is to flaunt wealth and sophistication, with beautiful vessels and exotic foods, then why do many Dutch still lifes depict simple cheese, herring, and beer?

Finally, what do the kitchen scenes tell us about the experience of cooks in the past? Who is doing which tasks? Why are some done by women and others by men? What kinds of vessels are being used, and how do you think the cooking technology influenced both the time spent in the kitchen and the flavor of the food? Was it necessarily much more labor intensive than today? Also notice what is not depicted. Obviously, there is no refrigeration; how would this have influenced the way people shopped and cooked? Paintings can be a great resource for food history, and you are encouraged to undertake similar exercises for other periods throughout the course as well.

# Papal Rome and the Spanish Golden Age

## Lecture 19

European cuisine blossomed in the 16th century and early 17th century. Big changes in the 16th century—such as how the economy changed with population growth and inflation—prompted culinary innovation. In many cases, factors like a flourishing printing industry and increased literacy rates merely meant the trickling down of practices that were once exclusively noble, but now can be afforded by others. It also meant a great deal of innovation and, most importantly, the development of regional cuisines, which also come to be thought of as national cuisines. This lecture focuses on 16th-century Italy and 17th-century Spain.

**Scappi's Cookbook**

- The cooking of Renaissance Italy, in the great courts of Ferrara and Florence, involved wild, lavish banquets. Italy did not become a nation-state until 1860, and in fact, it became the primary battleground for other nation-states (France and Spain) for the entire first half of the 16th century. Italian fashions and cooking get spread around the rest of Europe. It's most noticeable in the arts.

- Henry II of France marries Catherine de Medici, which was long held to be the way Italian cooking got to France, including the craze for things like artichokes and melons and drinking iced wine. Italian cooking didn't in fact influence the French that much. Apart from some new vegetables, the French clung persistently to their own habits.

- Written at about the same time as the Council of Trent and first published in 1570 is the major monument of Italian culinary art: Bartolomeo Scappi's *Opera*, which is arguably the grandest achievement of Italian culinary literature, written by a man who was chef to two popes and several cardinals.

## Polpettoni

(Meat Rolls Roman Style)

The procedure for making Scappi's *polpettoni* involves pressing and marinating the meat and then making a gravy based on the meat juices itself. Scappi's common spice mixture includes 4 ounces of cinnamon, 2 ounces of cloves, 1 ounce of ginger, 1 ounce of mace, 1/2 ounce of grains of paradise [melegueta pepper], 1/2 ounce of saffron, and 1 ounce of sugar. The finished effect—with sweet, sour, and spicy flavors—would not be unlike a good barbecue sauce.

*Take the leanest part of the loin, without bone, skin, or sinews, and cut it across in large pieces of 6 ounces each. Sprinkle them with salt, fennel flowers, or a condiment of pounded common spices. Place four slices of fat-streaked prosciutto for each piece and let it stay pressed down with this composition and a bit of rose vinegar and sapa [concentrated grape juice] for three hours. Then, skewer them with a slice of bacon between one and another piece with a sage leaf or bay. Let it cook over a moderate fire. When cooked, serve hot with a sauce over them made from whatever drippings fall from them mixed with the left over from the pressing, which will give the sauce a bit of body, and give it the color of saffron.*

- Scappi's *Opera* is an encyclopedic tome, the largest and most detailed cookbook ever written at the time. The recipes are precise and clearly worded; the procedures described are detailed and easy to follow. It is almost scientific in its organization and presentation. There's also an excellent translation in English now.

- Scappi was willing to go very far afield for novel recipes. One of his most interesting is an extraordinarily detailed description of how to make couscous, or as he calls it *succussu*, which comes from North Africa. It is essentially semolina flour formed into tiny

grain-like bits of pasta, dried and then steamed over a pot of rich broth. The ingredients are not rare or costly; what impresses here is the technical mastery of the chef.

- Although Scappi's work is in many ways the culmination of culinary practices originating in the Middle Ages, the precision and thoroughness with which he treats ingredients and procedures mark this perhaps as the first modern cookbook. There is nothing produced anywhere in Europe that matches Scappi's encyclopedic and detailed cooking directions—and there won't be for another century.

**Granado's Cookbook**

- The nation of Spain first emerged with the marriage of Ferdinand of Aragon and Isabella of Castile. They were still very much separate countries, but with their grandson Charles V on the throne, they were finally politically united as well as religiously unified. The Jews were expelled, and the Moors were conquered.

- However, the Spanish were still particularly paranoid about outsiders—especially all of the Jews who had converted to Christianity to save their necks but may have been secretly practicing Judaism at home. This was an extremely urgent problem for the church because although they had no authority over someone who was an openly professing Jew, they do over converts, and any backsliding would be considered heresy.

- The church took it as their responsibility to hunt down and punish new Christians secretly practicing Judaism as part of the Inquisition. Even if they couldn't catch you by offering you some sausage or ham and seeing whether you would eat it, the Inquisition hired secret informants to report if someone was lighting Sabbath candles or if a person was cooking meals on Friday before sundown to be eaten the next day.

- Religion for the Spanish provided perhaps the strongest defining elements of national identity, as did their national cuisine and especially the ways that it was different from the Jews and Moors,

who they were still hunting down. Some of the most obvious differences were pork, rabbit, and shellfish—none of which are kosher, but are fixated on by the Spanish.

- The first major early modern cookbook was Diego Granado's *Libro del Arte de Cozina* ("Book on the Art of Cooking"). It is no coincidence that it's published right at the start of the new reign of Philip III in 1599. (There were none published during the reign of Philip II.) Unfortunately, almost all of it is pirated directly from Scappi, without attribution, so it's not really a Spanish cookbook.

- The era of Don Quixote, in the 17th century, explains partly why Spain sets the culinary fashion throughout Europe. Despite the fact that Spain now had an enormous empire stretching around the world, it also had serious economic problems. This was partly because of financing expensive wars—trying to hold onto the Netherlands, for example—but it was also because the American colonies grew financially independent.

- Oddly, Spain was also comparatively depopulated, which made it quite different from the rest of Europe. Aside from emigration to the New World and expulsions, the economy was to a great extent controlled by powerful Castilian nobles who preferred to live in leisure, buying paintings and sipping chocolate, rather than investing their savings or innovating. This meant that agriculture stagnated, and Spain was even forced to import grain.

- Ironically, despite economic disaster, the Spanish court blithely went about the business of entertaining itself in grand style and, for a brief time, was at the forefront in matters artistic and gastronomic. In the reigns of Philip III and IV, great artists and poets were patronized, and Spanish fashions were imitated everywhere. For a while, Spain had the most dazzling court in Europe.

**Maceras's Cookbook**

- The first cookbook of the Golden Age was actually not written for the court, but for a college dining hall: Domingo Hernández de

Maceras's *Libro del Arte de Cozina* of 1607. Maceras worked as a college chef for the Colegio Mayor de San Salvador de Oviedo in the University of Salamanca for 40 years.

- Although the students seem to have been well fed, his recipes are distinct from courtly cuisine and more closely reflect ordinary eating habits. Oddly, it was written in a period of severe food shortage and runaway inflation. It is possible that this cookbook reflects the chef's dreams rather than the daily fare he hashed up for the students.

- Internationally, Spain was most associated with complex stews. One of the most renowned dishes that was enjoyed all across Europe was the olla podrida, which literally translates as "rotten pot," but signified an earthenware pot, or olla, filled with diverse ingredients. Maceras's recipe basically includes whatever is at hand—lamb, beef, salt pork and pig's feet, sausages, tongue, pigeon, hare, chickpeas, garlic and turnips—all cooked in one pot and served with a mustard made of grape must.

**Montiño's Cookbook**

- The major monument of Baroque Spanish cooking is called *Arte de Cocina, Pastelería, Vizcochería, y Conservería* ("Art of Cooking, Making Pastry, Biscuits, and Conserves") by Francisco Martínez Montiño in 1611. Montiño was chef to King Philip III and arguably had greater resources at his disposal than any other chef in Europe, yet his recipes show no obscene profusion of ingredients and no bizarre juxtapositions of flavor or wildly extravagant imports.

- The vast majority of Montiño's recipes are for elegant pies, pastries, little meatballs, and other foods that can be easily picked up and eaten by hand. He also has an intense affection for stuffing meats and vegetables like eggplants and onions. One can easily imagine choosing freely from a series of simple and elegant little dishes appearing on a table—something like the ancestor of tapas.

## Pork Chorizos

Montiño's recipe for pork chorizos seems not only typically Spanish, but also direct, austere, and served without fuss or garnish. It is a recipe that can easily stand on its own.

*Take pork meat that is more lean than fat, and put it in a marinade of just wine with a touch of vinegar. The meat should be cut into little radish-sized knobs and the marinade should be sparing, no more than to cover. Season with spices and salt and let it sit for 24 hours. Fill up the chorizos. They should be a bit plump. Cook them in water. These can be kept all year. Eating them cooked, there should be so little vinegar that you can't sense it before eating them.*

- Like other Spanish cookbooks, Montiño offers a variety of dishes based on fish, spinach, garbanzo beans, and squash. These were especially important for fast days. There are also dozens of egg dishes, many of which use fresh cheese, and recipes for roast lamb, kid, rabbit, and game. A few basic procedures are used for all available foods.

## Suggested Reading

Albala, *The Banquet*.

Braudel, *Mediterranean*.

Scappi, *Opera*.

## Culinary Activity

**Brisavoli**

The descendant of this recipe still survives in Italy and among Italian Americans, but the flavor combinations speak of centuries past—when sweetness was still in vogue with meat, as were a wide range of spices and

other exotic flavorings. Light-colored veal was by far the preferred flesh, and what Scappi calls for in the earlier recipe, *polpette*, are very thin slices, about the size of your hand (or as we would call them today, *scallopine*). As usual, Scappi offers many options for techniques, but grilling really does work wonderfully. Scappi used both liquefied lard and *lardo*, an unsmoked but cured pork fat. The orange juice he would have used was the sour Seville rather than a sweet orange. A combination of orange and lime juice will work well. The pressing technique aids the marination, and you can accomplish this by putting some plastic wrap and a book on top of the slices of meat and then piling heavy objects on top.

**Barolomeo Scappi, *Opera*, p. 29**
*To Make Brisavoli of lean Veal meat, fried and cooked on the grill. When you have cut the brisavoli in the same way that you cut veal for polette, and have beaten with the side of a knife on one side and the other, sprinkle with a little vinegar, Greek wine, in which you've soaked some crushed garlic, along with fennel pollen, or crushed coriander, pepper, and salt sprinkled on, then let it sit under a press, one on top of the other, for an hour. Then if you like fry in lard or unsmoked bacon fat, first having floured with very fine flour, and fry just until you give it a little color, so it remains tender. Serve hot with sugar, cinnamon, and orange juice over, or with a sauce made of vinegar, sugar, cinnamon, cloves and nutmeg.*

*But if you want to use the grill, after it has been seasoned, and pressed, place it on the grill with a slice of lardo for each, so the brisavoli remain more tender, letting them cook over a low fire and turning them often. The smoke that comes from the fat dripping into the grill gives them the most perfect aroma and best taste. When cooked, they should be served with one of the sauces mentioned above, which were served with these when fried.*

*These brisavoli in place of putting them on a grill, you can cook them in a casserole, moistened with lard with the same slices of lardo above, and serve with a sauce, and orange juice.*

***Conejo en Escabeche* (p. 655)**
Escabeche is a very typical Spanish dish made normally with fish or fowl, but it also works wonderfully with rabbit. This recipe comes from a

manuscript written by Juan Valles entitled *Regalo de la Vida Humana*, which was composed in the middle of the century. It shows how spices were still common. Compare it to the recipe that follows—from Spain in the next century. Incidentally, escabeche is meant to be kept out at room temperature for about a week, but if you are squeamish, feel free to use a refrigerator.

*Roast the rabbits very well and then cut them in pieces and place in a new pot or in a similar glazed earthenware vase, placing between the pieces of rabbit laurel leaves and a bit of chopped sage, and then make the escabeche and put it on each in a way so the pieces are well covered with the escabeche, and make the escabeche in this way: Take two parts of good white wine and one of strong vinegar, but in this you must take consideration if the vinegar is strong or weak, because if it is weak it will be necessary to add more, and add enough lemons cut, and grind cloves, pepper and ginger and a little nutmeg and let it boil, salt to taste and put over the rabbits, but be advised that the rabbits must be cold when you add the escabeche. Some add a little oil in this escabeche and for rabbits it works but not for partridges or other birds.*

Consider how this use of spices is related to that in medieval Persia and in ancient India.

**Pork Chorizo**
**(from Francisco Martinéz Montiño, *Arte de Cocina, Pastelería, Vizcochería, y Conservería* of 1611, p. 202)**

Try to make these sausages yourself. You don't need any equipment at all; you just need some sausage casings, which can be bought online or from a butcher. Use beef middles, which are about the size used for thick bratwurst. The only concession that you should make to modernity is using a pinch of potassium nitrite (pink salt) to prevent botulism. It also brings out the bright red color and flavor of the pork. Cut the pork, preferably shoulder with about 20 percent fat, by hand with a cleaver; stuff it into the casings by hand; and tie it off with string. Prick the sausages with a pin a few times to prevent bursting when you poach them, very gently. Notice the restrained hand in flavoring and seasoning, which is characteristic of the court of Felipe III of Spain. The most obvious ingredient missing is chili powder, which was not

yet used in Spain—at least not at court, though it had been discovered in the New World a century before.

*Take pork meat that is more lean than fat, and put it in a marinade of just wine with a touch of vinegar. The meat should be cut into little radish-sized knobs and the marinade should be sparing, no more than to cover. Season with spices and salt and let it sit for 24 hours. Fill up the chorizos. They should be a bit plump. Cook them in water. These can be kept all year. Eating them cooked, there should be so little vinegar that that you barely sense it before eating them.*

# The Birth of French Haute Cuisine

## Lecture 20

Just as Italy passed the culinary leadership to Spain in the early 17th century, France took the lead in the mid-17th century. Beyond the sheer number of cookbooks that were produced, the French took the lead in the ways that they innovated—either by creating new recipes and techniques or by creating new fashions that were imitated everywhere. Everyone in Europe imitated French fashion, architecture, language, diplomacy, and, indisputably, cooking. This lecture will sample from cookbooks by four of the giants responsible for the creation of early French haute cuisine.

**France as a Culinary Model**

- France is perhaps the model of how nation-states are constructed in the early modern period. It becomes territorially intact. The power of the king becomes greater than any of the nobles under his jurisdiction. It has a national army paid for by taxes. France is, therefore, one of the first countries to have a monopoly on violence. Noble warriors have become courtiers, which probably explains why manners appear in Europe.

- Like in Spain, there is a class of people in France with a lot of money to spend, but there is also a middle class of wealthy merchants, townsmen, and wealthy farmers providing vegetables, cheeses, or wine to the cities. This class will be especially important in the 18th century and in the French Revolution.

- The reason that France had a bourgeoisie while Spain didn't has to do with government policy. Spain spent a fortune fighting wars—mostly over religion. They also thought that because they had silver coming from the New World, they could spend as much as they wanted and never run out. They were mistaken and eventually ran out of cash, which was combined with a bad tax policy, depopulation, rights granted to nobles, and incompetent kings who were very poorly advised by greedy ministers.

- France did none of these. Wars were fought only for profit, and they won those that they got involved in. They had a series of excellent kings with brilliant ministers, and the state consciously sponsored trade, industry, crafts, and agriculture. They fully realized that if the wealth doesn't get spread around, it's like blood, and it clots. It gets stuck in one organ when it needs to circulate to be useful to the entire body politic.

- Why the efflorescence of France occurs only in the 17th century has largely to do with a series of disastrous civil wars in the late 16th century, mostly over religion. Thus, in the period when Italy and Spain are flourishing artistically, the French court was stagnating. There were practically no cookbooks written, and what we know of French fashion and cookery is that it was still pretty much medieval.

- The only account we have of dining in the latter 16th century describes the court of Henry III and is really bizarre. It's a satire called *Description of the Isle of Hermaphrodites* because apparently Henry liked to wear makeup and dress like a woman. Most interestingly, it says that everything was designed to shock and surprise, and the effeminate courtiers actually used forks.

- All that changes when we get to the 17th century. First, the civil wars come to an end with the reign of Henry IV, who converted to Catholicism and declared religious toleration. He was succeeded by Louis XIII, whose prime minister was Cardinal Richelieu, who effectively increased the power of the crown at the expense of the nobles.

- Louis XIV, the Sun King, ruled from 1643 to 1715. More than any preceding ruler, Louis knew that to rule absolutely, he had to bring nobles directly under his watchful eye, and he did this by building the grandest palace Europe had ever seen—Versailles—and forcing all the leading dignitaries, officials, churchmen, and nobles to live there with him.

- Versailles was not just a palace; it was an entire city staffed by thousands of chefs, servants, suppliers, gardeners of the royal orchards and vegetable beds, and an entire army. Practically every daily occurrence at court was governed by a complex, formalized, and public ritual, especially eating. This was a fantastic place for the arts to flourish—especially cooking.

- This period is so important in the history of cuisine because it was here that what we call modern French classical, or haute, cuisine was born, although it wouldn't be called haute cuisine until much later. Cookbook authors defined what elegant cooking should be like and how to do it. In codifying cuisine and making rules, it becomes something totally different and something uniquely French.

**La Varenne's Cookbook**

- The first cookbook to make the decisive break from culinary history is *Le Cuisinier François* by François-Pierre de La Varenne. It was published in 1651, with a translation into English only two years later. The essence of this new cuisine lies in the fact that foods are increasingly cooked in a way that accentuated and intensified the flavor of the main ingredient rather than contrasting with it, as the sugar, spices, and vinegar of older cookbooks had.

- Sauces were more often bound with a roux of flour and fat rather than bread crumbs and sharp flavorings. Also, an increasing number of sauces are based on butter. Herbs are used to add a subtle flavor to a sauce. A consommé is clarified with egg whites. Equally important is the procedural logic of La Varenne's recipes. A few basic preparations, such as a rich stock, can be kept on hand and reduced (that is, boiled quickly to evaporate away some of the water) to make a variety of sauces to accompany many different foods.

- Many of the older standbys, such as exotic birds, game, large fish, and whale, disappear. Although it would take some time, spices were increasingly banished to desserts, where we still find them today. Fresh herbs and aromatics, such as onions and mushrooms,

## Veal Epigramme (Braised Lamb)

(legs or knuckles of veal)

According to La Varenne's cookbook, a whitening procedure, blanching or soaking, was done in cold water to remove any blood or impurities from the meat.

*After they are well whitened in fresh water, flowre them and pass them in the pan with melted Lard* (drippings from bacon) *or fresh Seam* (rendered pork fat). *Then, break them and put them in a pot well seasoned with Salt, Pepper, Cloves, and a bundle of Herbs. Put an onion with it, a little Broth and a few Capers, then flowre them with some paste, and smother them with the Pot lid; seeth them leasurely thus covered for the space of three houres, after which you shall uncover them, and shall reduce your Sauce untill all be the better thereby. Put some Mushrums to it, if you have any, then serve.*

often took their place. This new culinary aesthetic stressed subtlety, simplicity of preparation, and a logical order to the foods served.

- Naturally, it took many years to totally break from ingrained culinary habits. In La Varenne's cookbook, there are as many medieval recipes lingering as there are new ideas. However, the procedures have changed. Salt and pepper (as well as cloves) are used to season, along with aromatics. The meat is floured and seared, and the sauce is reduced. The eventual impact of La Varenne's new approach to French cuisine would stretch across Europe.

**Other French Cookbooks**

- *Le Cuisinier,* by Pierre de Lune, appeared in 1656, shortly after La Varenne's cookbook. De Lune is credited with introducing several further technical innovations: making regular use of the modern bouquet garni—a bundle of herbs used for flavoring stocks and stews—and offering one of the earliest sets of directions for making

a roux with flour, which he called "fried flour." De Lune was chef to the duke of Rohan, so his recipes reflect the best that money could buy, which now meant refinement and elegant procedures rather than rare and exotic ingredients, variety, and abundance.

- Among late-17th-century French cookbooks, *L'Art de Bien Traiter* of 1674 was the largest, most innovative, and important. Its author was also a professional chef working for the noblest of patrons. However, apart from his initials, L. S. R., we know practically nothing about him. He is usually remembered today for his scathing remarks about the vulgarity of earlier cookbooks.

- Far more interesting, though, are the ways that L. S. R. anticipates developments in haute cuisine yet to come, including his detailed interest in sensory perceptions—the way food looks and feels in the mouth and the subtle perfumes evoked by perfect cooking. His aim was delicacy, refinement, and discernment, and L. S. R. instructed his readers exactly how to achieve the effects desired.

- The refinement of L. S. R.'s cookbook was achieved in large measure by distancing himself from the culinary fashions of the common rabble and especially from those of previous generations.

- The most popular cookbook of the latter 17th century was François Massialot's *Le Cuisinier Roïal et Bourgeois* of 1691. Massialot probably worked as a freelance caterer for the royal household, and for whoever could pay for his services, and his connections at court and the descriptions of meals served there made his cookbook a continual success. Its popularity probably also has a lot to do with the broad audience it addressed.

- In terms of technique, several features of classical haute cuisine also come into full light. There is extensive use of reduced stocks, bound with a liaison of butter, cream, or eggs and garnished with expensive ingredients like truffles or foie gras. The focus is on concentrating flavors and reducing them to an essence, but one

## Crayfish Soup

De Lune's recipe for crayfish soup is a good example of how chefs sought to intensify and concentrate the flavor of the main ingredient and garnish it with other foods that complement it as well as decorate the plate.

*Wash the crayfish well, cook them in water with a bundle of herbs, a bit of salt and butter. Then, draw out the tails and the legs, and pound the shells, which you strain with the crayfish bouillon, and place in a pot. Then, you put the tail and leg meat in a pan with a bit of butter and fine herbs, well chopped, and you place them in a pot or plate with the bouillon, the reddest you can strain. After, simmer bread crusts with the bouillon, three or four finely chopped mushrooms, arrange your crayfish and garnish the soup with roe and mushrooms, lemon juice, and mushroom juice.*

also finds humble ingredients and simple cuts of meat treated with respect and cooked in ways that are straightforward.

- In fact, when planning an entire dinner, several fonds, or flavor bases, would have been prepared ahead by a large kitchen staff. The flavor bases could then be used in dozens of different sauces, braises, or ragouts. This is one of the most important organizing principles of French cuisine from this period to the present.

## Suggested Reading

Arndt, *Culinary Biographies*.

Glanville, *Elegant Eating*.

Kaplan, *Bakers of Paris*.

Mennell, *All Manners of Food*.

Watts, *Meat Matters*.

Wheaton, *Savoring the Past*.

Young, *Apples of Gold*.

## Culinary Activity

The following recipe should be made with what are known as "baby" artichokes—although they are not actually younger. They are merely small flower buds and are much more tender. This is a good example of how recipes have changed in late-17th-century France: The flavor of the main ingredient is accentuated rather than hidden and stands largely on its own. The use of alcohol in the batter is quite ingenious as well. It's not merely for flavor; it evaporates quickly, drawing out moisture and leaving the fried batter very crisp. A large pot of oil is the most practical way to do this today, but it is also incomparably delicious fried in rendered lard.

**Fried Artichokes**
**(from L. S. R.'s *L'Art de Bien Traiter* of 1674, p. 86)**
*Choose the youngest, trim down the leaves and remove the choke; let them soak some time so as to lose their bitterness. When you have drained them, flour them or batter them in a mixture made of flour, fine salt, white wine or milk, some egg yolks, all mixed and beaten together, and make this as thin as you can. Dip your artichokes in, and when covered, fry them in lard or butter or very hot oil, when they are properly cooked, so they have become dry, golden and crispy, remove them so they can drain, and meanwhile fry some parsley, which you have dried, the greenest possible, as the garnish, and laden your artichokes, on which you sprinkle some fine salt and a little good vinegar, however your guests desire.*

# Elizabethan England, Puritans, Country Food

## Lecture 21

In this lecture, you will learn that England has had a very rich and varied culinary past—one in which there was a constant battle between native and continental fashions and country and courtly cooking. This had a lot to do with their religious situation, being Protestant but with both Puritan and Catholic minorities, and their political development as a constitutional monarchy with a powerful landed nobility and gentry. At times, courtly and continental fashions dominated, and at others, simple country tastes prevailed. Sometimes, narrow nationalism made them shun the strange and foreign, and at other times, they went mad for imported oddities.

**England in the 16th Century**

- England in the 16th century was also one of the new powerful nation-states with a strong solvent monarchy. It, too, had a Reformation, but unlike the bloody civil wars in France, England under Henry VIII broke away from Rome peacefully. The Reformation in England took place in Parliament, which gave that body a measure of power unlike the rest of Europe. The nature of shared power made England's culinary heritage unique because patronage and power was not centered only at court.

- One perhaps unexpected outcome of the Reformation was the dissolution of the monasteries, so many of their functions—such as keeping bees for wax, growing grapes for sacramental wine, and tending herb gardens—came to an end. Those monastic properties were sold to private individuals, people with their own independent power.

- We know something about the cuisine of Henry's reign partly through the accounts of banquets thrown by his principal minister, Cardinal Wolsey. These lavish affairs were often set up in "banquetting houses," and the food was still thoroughly medieval, involving huge wild animals served with spicy sauces.

## To Make a Dyschefull of Snowe

In addition to appearing in *A Proper Newe Booke of Cokerye*, the following recipe is found in Scappi's cookbook and other continental cookbooks and was apparently very popular across Europe.

*Take a pottell of swete thycke creame and the whytes of eyghte egges, and beate them together wyth a spone, then putte them in youre creame and a saucerfull of Rosewater, and a dyshe full of Suger wyth all, then take a styke and make it cleane, and than cutte it in the end foure square, and therwith beate all the aforesayde thynges together, and ever as it ryseth take it of and put it into a Collaunder, this done take one apple and set it in the myddes of it, and a thycke bush of Rosemary, and set it in the myddes of the platter, then cast your snowe uppon the Rosemarye and fyll your platter therwith. and yf you have wafers caste some in wyth all and thus seve them forthe.*

- There are a few cookbooks from this period. As early as 1500, a small anonymous book titled *This Is the Boke of Cokery* appeared, and in 1508, a carving manual called *Here Begynneth the Boke of Kervynge* appeared. Both are still pretty much medieval.

- About 1545, at the end of Henry's reign, there appeared another anonymous cookbook: *A Proper Newe Booke of Cokerye*, which begins to depart from earlier medieval texts, particularly in the appearance of fruit tarts and other pies with crusts that were meant to be eaten. There is also evidence of continental influence.

- When Henry died in 1547 and his young and sickly son Edward took the throne, his advisors initiated a full and thorough Protestant reform throughout the country. Theologically, England joined the Swiss (Calvinist) tradition. In addition, a Puritanical spirit was unleashed, one that looked with derision upon the supposedly

sacred festivals that dotted the Christian calendar and took a harsh attitude toward food and pleasures of the body.

- When young Edward died, the nation without hesitation proclaimed Mary Queen of England—even though she was Catholic. England reverted to full obedience to the Pope and the Catholic Church for several years, and then they switched just as quickly back to Protestantism under Elizabeth.

- The importance of this is that England maintained both Catholic and Puritan minorities—the former attracted to the continent aesthetically, and the latter tending toward simple, native tastes. There are many other factors involved, but this makes England sort of schizophrenic gastronomically. England was nonetheless dazzling in the reign of Elizabeth.

- In the 1580s and 1590s, a spate of cookbooks was published. The first of these was *The Good Huswifes Handmaide for the Kitchen*, which appeared in 1588. It is addressed to a woman cooking for or managing a household, presumably a wealthy one located in the country because many of the recipes call for wild game.

- The next important cookbook produced in England first appeared in 1596: Thomas Dawson's *The Good Huswifes Jewell*. Like *The Good Huswifes Handmaide*, it reflects new ideas in cookery. It contains, for example, the first recipe for sweet potatoes. It also includes directions for making various marzipan figures. Although many of the recipes call for boiling ingredients, they also show a fairly simple and direct way of dealing with them.

**England in the Early 17th Century**

- Cookery in the early 17th century did not differ that much from that of the previous century. There was a new king on the throne—the Scotsman James I, who was not quite as popular as Elizabeth.

- Gervase Markham was one of the most prolific author/compilers of this generation, writing about a variety of topics that would appeal

to the owner or steward and housekeeper of a typical country house. With titles covering agriculture, husbandry, medicine for people and animals, and cooking, he provided readers, probably landed gentry, with practically everything they would need to know.

- *The English Housewife* of 1615 (which then appeared in expanded editions for the next two decades) is his foray into cookery, but it also contains sections on distillation, brewing beer, baking bread, making cloth, curing ailments, and even the virtues requisite for the ideal housewife. It is clear from some of his recipes that the household was wealthy enough to afford fashionable and exotic Mediterranean ingredients worthy of royal tables.

- When James I died, his son Charles I inherited the throne. Immediately, people began to notice changes at court. There was a new style of clothes and architecture, modeled closely on continental fashions, which seemed foreign to Englishmen. After a series of political blunders, a civil war erupted that succeeded not only in removing Charles's head and abolishing the monarchy, but also in instituting a godly republic led by Oliver Cromwell and a host of puritanically minded parliamentarians.

- The significance of this episode for the history of food is that the pleasures of the palate became suspect. All sensory indulgence was deemed sinful. The theaters were closed, and the village festivals were banned. Anything redolent of paganism was purified, following strict biblical authority.

- Without a royal court, one might think the arts of the table languished; in fact, they didn't, and Cromwell kept a very nice wine cellar. However, most of the great chefs seem to have just gone into hiding because a magnificent court reemerged as if overnight with the restoration of Charles II in 1660 as king.

- For the rest of the 17th century, the full splendor of the royal court returned, but the power of parliament also remained strong, leaving England with a constitutional monarchy. England, in contrast to

the continent, developed its dining traditions closely tied to the stately manor and its produce. Cookbooks reflect this difference; the ingredients and procedures are simpler, and the dishes tend to be more traditional.

- England was still profoundly influenced by dining customs abroad, but the constant pull between native and foreign, simple and complex, royal and bourgeois would continue to give English cookery two different faces. The fact that many cookbooks address a middle-class audience also makes them quite different from other European works.

**England in the Late 17th Century**

- The first crop of cookbooks published after the Restoration was thoroughly courtly. The first of these, *The Accomplisht Cook* by Robert May, is one of the longest and most detailed of 17th-century

## To Make a Potato Pie

From William Rabisha's *The Whole Body of Cookery Dissected* of 1661, the following recipe is a good example of how new ingredients were appropriated in traditional recipes and garnished with a strange mixture of local and exotic items. The effect is very much Baroque.

*Boyl your Spanish Potatoes (not overmuch) cut them forth in slices as thick as your thumb, season them with Nutmeg, Cinamon, Ginger, and Sugar; your Coffin being ready, put them in, over the bottom; add to them the Marrow of about three Marrow-bones, seasoned as aforesaid, a handful of stoned Raisons of the Sun, some quartered Dates, Orangado, Cittern (citron), with Ringo-roots sliced, put butter over it, and bake them: let their lear be a little Vinegar, Sack and Sugar, beaten up with the yolk of an Egg, and a little drawn butter; when your pie is enough, pour it in, shake it together, scrape on Sugar, garnish it, and serve it up.*

cookbooks. May was a professional cook, working for several Catholic noble households. The work was first published in 1660 immediately after the king returned.

- May's cooking procedures and ingredients are traditionally English, but they also reflect the latest continental fashions and Baroque taste. Like his patrons, he looked to Catholic Europe for aesthetic inspiration, but he still remained thoroughly English. This can be seen throughout his recipes.

**England in the 18th Century**

- In contrast to the Baroque cooking of late-17th-century England, there was an entirely different side of English cooking that was based on the country house with cookbooks addressed to women. Authors of these types of cookbooks included Hannah Woolley, E. Smith Twiddy, and Hannah Glasse.

- There are dozens of this type of cookbook in the 18th century, all of which stole from each other. These country estate cookbooks support the notion that there are two very different sides to English cookery, and one might argue down to the present that there is still the relatively simple, local, and traditional versus the exotic, continental, and innovative.

- It is also no surprise that these books appealed to the American colonists as well, especially those who had their own country estates. E. Smith Twiddy's cookbook was the first cookbook published in the colonies, in Williamsburg.

## Suggested Reading

Bennet, *Ale, Beer, and Brewsters.*

Dawson, *The Good Huswifes Jewell*.

Glasse, *Art of Cookery*.

*The Good Huswifes Handmaide for the Kitchen*.

Hess, *Martha Washington's Book of Cookery*.

Lehmann, *British Housewife*.

Markham, *English Housewife*.

May, *The Compleat Cook*.

Mennell, *All Manners of Food*.

Sim, *Food and Feast*.

Smith, *Compleat Housewife*.

Thirsk, *Food in Early Modern England*.

## Culinary Activity

Chicken pot pie is a direct descendant of the following recipe, but notice how much the contents have changed. Also consider how, though it is directed toward housewives (meaning relatively small households), it still contains a very large presentation dish. Could you infer from this that housewives were expected on occasion to entertain large numbers of guests? Or is this perhaps merely aspirational—much like a person today reading a recipe or entertaining instructions or even watching it on television but never actually intending to cook the meal? The historian can only guess, but it is an enticing pie nonetheless, and it can certainly be made on a smaller scale for your friends or family, as the opening lines suggest. Don't be tempted to skimp on the sugar; it is delectable. This is before sugar was banished from savory dishes, and it also reflects the serious Elizabethan sweet tooth.

**To Make a Chickin Pye**
**(from *Good Hous-wives Treasurie*, 1588)**
*If you will make one so bigge, take nine or ten Chickins of a moneth olde, trusse them round and breake their bones, take to season them withall a quarter of cloves and Mace, a litte Pepper and Salte, as much as you think will season your Pye two or three Orenge peeles small shread, take the marow of a shorte marow bone cleave it long waies and take out the marowe as whole as you can, then cut it in foure or five peeces and put it in your pie take halfe a pounde of Currans, a food hand full of Prunes, eight Dates, fower cut in halfe and fower shred, a pounde of Suger with that in your*

*crust and all, half a dossen spoonefuls of Rosewater, so heate your Oven reasonablye, and let it stand in two howers and a halfe or three howers, a quarter of an hower before you draw it take three yolkes of egges, fower or five spoonefulles of Rosewater, beat them together and let them boyle a waume stir it still till you take it off, when it is somewhat coole put in three or foure spoon full of Vergis and a little suger, and put it into your pye quish your cover and so serve it in.*

# Dutch Treat—Coffee, Tea, Sugar, Tobacco

## Lecture 22

In this lecture, you will learn about the economy, agriculture, and colonization in the 17th and 18th centuries—the age of mercantilism—with a focus on the few foods that become major export items in global trade. These foods are almost always expensive luxury items to start with, but are eventually grown on a much larger scale and are consumed by everyone across Europe, rich and poor alike. The general pattern that will emerge is that colonies grow the crops either through the plantation system that uses slave labor or by exploiting native labor and forcing them to produce the crop for export by the imperial power.

**Mercantilism**

- A few items—sugar, coffee, tea, tobacco, and spices—completely change the focus of the global economy. What is ironic is that they are all entirely superfluous. They have no nutritional value and, at best, supply a jolt of sweetness, caffeine, nicotine, or flavor to the consumer.

- The sad part is that consumers begin to buy these luxury items instead of nutritious food, and people are being sold into slavery or become pawns of the imperial trading companies, just so Europeans can have these goods.

- The Portuguese and Spanish were the first in the colonization business, but in this era, they are muscled out by the new economic powerhouses: England, the Netherlands, and France. In many cases, it is not the countries themselves but powerful trading companies like the Dutch East India Company that form these colonies solely for profit, and they are usually granted monopolies by their governments, so they become perversely wealthy.

- The idea of a monopoly offends the capitalist free market mind, but economic theories of the day, known as mercantilism, were

operating with some very different assumptions: 17th- and 18th-century governments very strictly controlled their national economies and heavily restricted imports by putting heavy duties on them.

- Mercantilist states also fix wages, fix prices, and encourage exports—especially of locally manufactured goods. The idea is that this will bring into the country money, which rulers can tax so that they can build up their treasuries and wage war. They also assume that there is a fixed volume of trade in the world, so the only way to gain wealth is to muscle in on the trade of another nation. Hence, there was a whole series of mercantilist wars over trade routes and colonies.

**The Netherlands**

- The Dutch—or the Dutch East India Company, which governs these colonies—are the most successful mercantilist country. Realizing that the Portuguese have had a monopoly on the spice trade for the past century, the Dutch declare war and, one by one, steal nearly every Portuguese colony or trading post in Asia. They burned plantations on all but a few of their islands and strictly limited production to keep prices high.

- Although this technically was not slavery because they didn't buy and sell the local inhabitants, for all practical purposes, it was because they forced the native peoples to work on their plantations. In most cases, people who had been growing food for themselves—called subsistence agriculture—were now producing luxury goods for export, being paid money, and then having to buy food from the Dutch suppliers, which creates a situation of total dependency.

- The Dutch also made inroads into the China trade, which is in tea, silk, and porcelain—all luxury items. They also got exclusive rights to trade with Japan from an enclosed island near the city of Nagasaki. That situation remained in place until the mid-19th century and explains why Japan, longer than any other Asian nation, remained uninfluenced by the West.

- For the time being, the Dutch colonies made the Dutch the wealthiest nation on Earth. What also makes them unique is that they don't have a king or powerful nobility. When they fought to free themselves from Spanish rule in the 16th century, they were determined not to have a king, so they set up a republic, which remained until the 19th century. As a result, there is a lot of wealth that is spread across a large mercantile class, and they spend it.

- These people were Calvinists, so they were supposed to be strict, frugal, and sober and not spend a lot of money on finery and food. Therefore, they invest much of their great wealth, but they also spend money on nice but relatively somber things.

- Dutch cooking tends to be very simple. They eat at a lot of fish, beer, bread, butter, and cheese. There is one important Dutch cookbook of this period called *De Verstandige Kock* ("The Sensible Cook"). The cooking is really very plain, but there are a couple of things they specialized in that came into American cooking via the Dutch: pancakes, waffles, and cookies (all Dutch words). They're also crazy about pies.

**England and France**

- The next great mercantile power was England. Just like the Netherlands, England tried to muscle in on world trade. They also had their own East and West India companies, monopolies granted specifically to compete with the Dutch. Like the Dutch, they began their involvement in world trade by preying on Spanish shipping during the war with Spain in the late 16th century.

- The very first efforts to colonize the New World were in what is now Virginia in the 1580s, and they were disastrous. The English really only get going with colonization in the early 17th century; they set up Jamestown in 1607. There's a mad scramble to set up colonies that would provide raw materials or foods to the mother country and also provide markets for manufactured goods made back in Europe.

- The Southern colonies end up focusing on tobacco, cotton, rice in the Carolinas. To work these huge plantations, they eventually begin importing African slaves. Tobacco becomes all the rage in Europe from the late 16th and early 17th centuries, and Virginia has a virtual monopoly on the product for centuries.

- Just as important are the British possessions in the Caribbean. In the 1650s, they steal Jamaica from the Spanish. The native population, having been completely wiped out by European diseases, is replaced with African slaves, who are put to work on English sugar plantations. Sugar—as well as a by-product of the manufacturing process, rum—now becomes a major article of trade for the English. Down the road, they end up with many more possessions, including Barbados, the Virgin Islands, and Bermuda.

- There's also the ragtag colony of New England, which in the 1630s begins to fill up with all sorts of bizarre religious exiles. In the 17th century, these colonies are pretty much left to themselves; they have their own governments, issue their own money, and tax their own citizens. They're cut off from England politically, but economically, they're still closely tied. It's only when the British try to draw them more closely into the empire that there's trouble.

- The French get some of their own Caribbean colonies, including Martinique and a few others, but they also obtain Quebec and a huge swathe of North America that stretches down the Mississippi river all the way to Louisiana (named after Louis XIV). Economically, this is quite different from many of the other colonies because it is mostly fur trappers that settle here.

**Colonial Products**

- Sugar started out being an exclusive luxury item that was consumed only by the wealthiest of people, and even after it began to be produced in the New World, there were still elite people using it for sugar sculptures and in their foods. Around the mid-17th century, that all begins to change. Once the Spanish-Portuguese monopoly was broken, there were British and Dutch manufacturers importing

their own sugar, and they developed a new manufacturing process that replaced the old Mediterranean press.

- Because sugar was arriving in Europe in vast quantities, the price plummets. However, that doesn't matter in the least because it is being marketed to a new consumer. It is now fobbed off on ordinary people, and the demand for sugar becomes so great that the industry just grows and grows. Europeans—and North Americans, of course—become sugar addicts.

- There are other colonial products that are even more convincingly addictive. Tobacco is not just something that might make you fat or give you cavities—it kills you. There were both social and medical warnings against smoking, but business, trade, and wealth overrode them, just as they often do today.



**Coffee is one of the most consumed beverages in the world.**

- There were a few other colonial monoculture crops. Chocolate, which was drunk by the Aztecs and taken up enthusiastically by the Spanish nobles, was the perfect drink for lazy courtiers whose ideal in life was not to be great businessmen, but to inherit wealth, live off rents, and never lift a finger. Chocolate relaxes you and makes you fat, so it is maybe not a surprise that it became the drink of choice in Spain.

- However, in Protestant Northern Europe, where making money is the name of the game, you have to be alert, wired, and able to stay awake for long hours to watch after your investments. It's maybe not surprising that coffee dominates there. In the 17th century, coffeehouses opened across Europe, especially in London. These were places where people went to socialize, hash out business deals, and draw up contracts.

- Why tea replaced coffee in England is just a matter of politics. The English had been buying tea in China and wanted to protect the trade of the East India Company, so they lowered the tariff on tea to practically nothing and raised it on coffee. The English didn't have coffee plantations, so they promoted tea. Later, the British figured out that they could grow tea in India, which then became the major supplier to the empire of fermented black teas.

## Suggested Reading

Cowan, *Social Life of Coffee*.

Gold, *Danish Cookbooks*.

Norton, *Sacred Gifts, Profane Pleasures*.

Pendergast, *Uncommon Grounds*.

Schivelbusch, *Tastes of Paradise*.

## Culinary Activity

Though Dutch cooking in the 17th century was fairly simple, the following dish includes expensive imported spices. Its direct descendant, introduced into what was then the colony of New Amsterdam, we know now as doughnuts.

***Verstandige Cok Olie-koecken***
**(adapted from *The Sensible Cook*, ed. Peter Rose, p. 78)**
Take six cups of flour, and add two cups of raisins that have been soaked in warm water. Add six peeled, cored, and chopped apples; two cups of chopped almonds; and a teaspoon each of ground cinnamon, ginger, and cloves. Add a small bowl of melted butter and a packet of instant yeast. Add enough milk to make a very thick batter, and let it rise for about an hour. Then, heat a pot of oil (to about 360 to 375 degrees), and with two spoons, drop balls of the batter into the oil. Turn over when browned on one side, and remove when puffy and golden brown. Let cool on a rack. Sprinkle with powdered sugar if you like. The original recipe does not include sugar in the batter, but you may use some—up to a cup, depending on your preference.

# African and Aboriginal Cuisines

## Lecture 23

Thus far, you have been learning about large-scale global forces that have rich, sophisticated cuisines based on ingredients from all over the world. However, a cuisine does not have to be powerful and wealthy to be sophisticated and interesting in its own right. To try to balance the European narrative, this lecture will touch on a few other indigenous traditions—sub-Saharan Africa and aboriginal Australia—just before the point when they start to succumb to global forces. In this lecture, you will be presented with some of the basic ingredients and techniques that are prevalent through much of the continent of Africa.

**African Cuisine**

- At the heart of most African cuisines is a starchy porridge that can be made of nearly any grain, tuber, or starchy fruit. Typically, it is pounded, cooked in a common pot, and eaten with the hands; it is rolled into little balls and used as a vehicle for other foods. In west Africa, it is called *fufu*.

- Many of the ingredients used to make the starch bases were introduced since the globalization of the 16th century. African cuisine very easily adapts to new ingredients out of practical necessity, but the same basic structure of the meal and way of eating remains intact—at least up until recently.

- Throughout history, Africa gave the world watermelons (and probably other melons as well), beans, okra, cola nuts, tamarind, palms for palm oil, and, perhaps the most important, finger millet and sorghum, which were domesticated in Africa. They also introduced New World species like chilies, tomatoes, and peanuts.

- Practically all of these ingredients—vegetables, meats, beans, and flavorings—go into a soupy stew that is eaten with the starch base. Cooking technology doesn't get much beyond a stewpot

placed over a fire or on a rack for grilling. Cooking usually takes place outside.

- Much of the continent still lives at the subsistence level; people still grow most of the food they consume, or it is bought and sold at a local level. Famines are still frequent there, and even where there's not true famine, malnutrition is a very serious problem—not to mention all sorts of nasty diseases, including elephantiasis, shistosomiasis, and AIDS.

- Africa is among the poorest places on Earth, but the simplicity of the cuisine doesn't just have to do with poverty. In Africa, there has always traditionally been only one class. Everyone makes a living the same way, and the few individuals who may stick out either because they're rulers, tribal elders, or medicine men don't constitute a separate class. The result is that everyone eats the same foods, and eating habits are very slow to change.

- Another important factor in African cuisine is that many people remained in a hunting-and-gathering economy far longer than in most places. They made the transition to agriculture very slowly, and in most places, it wasn't complete until modern times. From about 9,000 years ago, most Africans were seminomadic and practiced a combination of hunting, gathering, and agriculture.

**Indigenous Crops**

- Of the crops that are indigenous to Africa, the most important is the yam. The flesh of a yam is pure white and more like a turnip than a soft sweet potato. Yams are useful because you can plant them, forget about them, and come back months later. Africans ate yams by cooking them until soft and mashing them into a starchy mass to make *fufu*, which forms the bulk of the diet.

- Another native crop is sorghum, which looks a lot like a small cornstalk, but the seeds grow on the top in a big, bushy head. The seeds are tiny but very nutritious; they contain more calories by weight than corn and have less fat and more protein. Another food



**Sorghum is grown as one of Africa's major cereal grains.**

Africa gave the rest of the world is millet, which is used just like yam and sorghum—cooked into a solid mush that you can pick up with your fingers.

- The black-eyed pea is another African crop, and it was introduced to Europe in classical times. It was the standard bean there before New World varieties. All of these legumes and vegetables along with meat are thrown into a stew—whatever you have at hand, basically, cooked one way. As a cooking medium, Africa also has palm oil, red and white. It's used in stews (or nowadays to deep-fry). There's also palm butter. Palm trees can be tapped and apparently yield a few gallons of juice in a day.

- In terms of seasonings, melegueta pepper comes from the west coast of Africa. Africans also made salt from wood ashes. Tamarinds, now spread throughout South America and Asia, are native to Africa. Kola nuts were typically sliced into thin wedges

and chewed for hours. Kola nuts are supposedly quite bitter, but they have an enormous amount of caffeine.

- There aren't many African native domesticated animals, except for guinea fowl, which were common everywhere in the Old World until they were replaced by turkey.

**Changes in African Cuisine**

- African food doesn't really change; it's really only a matter of new ingredients being used the same way. The most important connection for east Africa was with the Middle East and, eventually, with Persia at the time that Islam was introduced. The most important food they introduced was rice, which joined yams as a major staple. However, rice can only be grown in places with enough water, so it didn't replace millet and sorghum.

- Limes and other citrus fruits were also introduced from Asia. They are still very important and are grown all over the place. Coconuts, tropical fruits, ginger, and typical Middle Eastern spices and flavorings, like cumin and garlic, were also introduced. All of these products were introduced basically because east Africa was now linked up with the trade routes traveling across the Indian Ocean, linking the Middle East to India and East Asia.

- The next major transformation came via the Portuguese, who started exporting slaves from Africa to the New World. They also brought New World foods to Africa. Some of these, including corn, were immediately adopted. Corn has the advantage of being safe from birds, unlike millet and sorghum. Even more important is cassava, which they ground, fermented, and roasted, making *gari* flour—which is still a major staple throughout Africa. Yams were not entirely displaced, but they were to a large extent.

- There are also important flavorings introduced from America. The most typical is peanuts, which are ground up into a kind of peanut butter and thrown into stews. The same is true of tomatoes. It might seem an odd combination, but tomatoes and peanuts in a

soup or stew is one of the most typical flavor combinations, along with chilis.

- There really aren't any African recipes—just a few basic techniques used for a handful of ingredients. There's a very interesting account of African cooking written by a slave named Olauda Equiano in the West Indies in the 18th century. The food he described is very simple: goat meat or poultry, pepper, plantains, yams, beans, and corn.

- Equiano also mentions some interesting customs, including the fact that the head of the household eats alone, and the wives and slaves eat afterward. It is still customary for men and women to eat separately. He also mentions that a bit of stew is always poured on the ground to feed the ancestors. Equiano also stresses the importance of hand washing.

- In general, Africans don't eat off individual plates; instead, there's a common bowl (or sets of bowls), and everyone takes from it with their hands. Oddly, they don't usually drink during a meal, but there is alcohol, including various kinds of beer fermented from grains and fruits.

- Africans don't have many food avoidances. Apparently, they once would not eat primates, but there's a huge trade in smoked monkeys now. In fact, several species are threatened with extinction. Many African peoples don't eat eggs, and in Ethiopia and southward, fish are taboo.

**Aboriginal Australia**

- Aboriginal Australia provides an interesting point of contrast with other cultures, primarily because its encounter with the West happens so late and so tumultuously, and such an entirely different cuisine comes with a completely transplanted culture that the two really don't mix. That is, the English cuisine that arrives in the 19th century does not adopt local plants and animals, and the indigenous foodways are maintained—at least for a while—though they're almost completely abandoned today.

- Before that point of contact, aboriginal cuisine relied exclusively on indigenous plants and animals. There are a wide variety of tubers, vegetables like bush tomatoes and finger limes, wattle seeds, fruits like the quandong, bunya nuts, and macadamia nuts. Witchetty grubs and honey ants, fish and eels in streams, kangaroos and wallabies, emus, bandicoots, bush-tailed possum, goanna (lizards), and snakes could all be hunted with spears or a boomerang.

- Cooking methods are very simple. Cooking involves making a fire and throwing in the meat or digging a hole, putting leaves over hot coals, and wrapping foods in leaves or bark so they don't burn. Alternatively, a wooden trough can be filled with water, and hot rocks can be thrown in to cook food. Resourcefulness is essential because they didn't have pottery or meat implements.

- Practically none of Australian indigenous food is eaten anywhere, even in Australia. Perhaps even more amazing is that an entire cuisine could be transplanted in its entirety from England. That's not to say that Australian cooking hasn't also been influenced by Asian cooking or the immigration of Greeks, Syrians, Germans, and other groups. Of course, there are many foods that have been invented in the past two centuries.

## Suggested Reading

Carney, *In the Shadow of Slavery*.

Harris, *High on the Hog*.

Opie, *Hogs and Hominy*.

## Culinary Activity

***Matooke* and *Luwombo***

These two dishes are common in Uganda and go together so beautifully that it is well worth trying. *Matooke* is simply a small starchy banana that is steamed and mashed. You can substitute plantains, but a closer approximation can be found in African or even Southeast Asian groceries.

For the *luwombo*, you will need to find banana leaves, which are sold frozen in Asian groceries. They serve as the steaming container as well as the plate. You can make this with any kind of meat, but goat is the richest. Cut up the goat meat into large chunks, and season with salt and pepper. Crush a few handfuls of peanuts into a fine powder, and toss with the meat. Sprinkle with some chili flakes, some chopped onion, grated ginger, and a few chopped tomatoes. Place two or three banana leaves facing different directions down on the table, and put in a pile of the meat on top and then fold in the leaves to enclose. Tie securely with string. Make several bundles, one for each person. Then, make a fire, and surround with three bricks. Place a pot on the bricks over the fire, add a little water, and put in the banana leaf bundles. The wood fire and smoke really does make a difference to the flavor. Add water as needed, making sure the bundles don't burn. Steam for at least two hours. Cut open the bundles from the top, folding down the leaves to create a kind of plate, and eat directly from the leaf with some *matooke* on the side. Naturally, you use your fingers, of the right hand only.

# Edo, Japan—Samurai Dining and Zen Aesthetics

## Lecture 24

Japan's cuisine development does not have to do with exotic ingredients, complicated procedures, or fantastically impossible presentations of food. Instead, it is a refinement based on simplicity, austere aesthetic presentation, freshness of ingredients, and minimal processing. In this lecture, which focuses on traditional Japan in the Edo era, you will learn about a cuisine that developed entirely in its own unique direction, cut off from the process of globalization—not because of geographical isolation but, rather, as a result of an intentional shutting out of the West.

**Japanese Cuisine**

- Many of Japan's cultural and culinary traditions come from China and Korea. Probably the most important of them is rice, which only arrived in Japan at the end of the Neolithic period, about 2,400 years ago, with immigrants from the mainland. Asiatic peoples came from the continent with rice and metal tools, and the population suddenly rose—just like elsewhere in Asia.

- The variety of rice introduced was short-grained, sticky, and relatively sweet. To this day, the Japanese don't eat long-grain rice. Much of their cuisine is based on the tactile quality of the rice they use and the fact that it sticks together and that you can pick it up with a chopstick. It is nearly impossible to eat long-grain loose rice with chopsticks.

- Their respect and reverence for rice is so great that it is never flavored or seasoned with spices or sauces. It is always pure white and boiled. Other foods can go on top of it, but the rice should be pure and bland to start with.

- One of the only preparations that alters rice dramatically is *mochi*, which is little rice cakes made by pounding steamed glutinous rice. Neither *mochi* nor sake are thought of as a corruption of

rice, but raising it to a finer and more spiritual level. *Mochi* is consumed during the New Year period while sake plays a very important role in religious festivals.

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***Mochi* is a Japanese rice cake that is pounded into a paste and then shaped.**

- Rice is the indisputable central staple of Japan. Rice is even made into noodles, using a technology that was introduced from China in the 8th century. Only later were noodles made from flour introduced, called *udon*, which were popular in western Japan. Ramen are a more recent invention. Starch, usually rice or noodles, form the substructure of Japanese cuisine.

- In its long history, Japan has had many prohibitions on meat eating. The first, from 675, prohibited eating cattle, horses, dogs, monkeys, and chickens. The Japanese seem to have taken the Buddhist prohibition against killing more seriously than any other Buddhist peoples, especially in the 8th and 9th centuries, when eating any and all mammals was forbidden. Occasionally, some people hunted birds or game, but as a rule, animals were not raised for meat as elsewhere in the world.

- The Japanese ate lots of fish. Only strict Buddhist monks avoided fish. Japan is surrounded by water, so the ideal was fish as fresh as could be found. Raw fish in thin slices (*namasu*) has always been eaten in Japan, but the practice of dipping sashimi in soy sauce with wasabi only became popular in the 17th century. Soy sauce sometimes masks the pure flavors, especially of more delicate fish.

- Sushi, in its original form (*nare-zushi*), was very different from what it is today. It started out as a way to preserve fish for several years. A bite-sized piece would be salted and rolled in rice flavored with vinegar and then left to cure. After it was preserved, the

soured, decomposed rice would be wiped off, and the fish could be eaten. In the 18th century, the hand-rolled *nigirizushi* was invented and served at restaurants, basically as a kind of fast food.

- In terms of vegetables, there are several different kinds of seaweed that are eaten either as a side dish (*hijiki*) or as an ingredient in dashi, which is basically a stock central to Japanese cooking. It's made with dried bonito shavings and kombu, which is a giant sea kelp, and water. Seaweed is also used as a condiment. Daikon radish is another popular vegetable in Japanese cuisine.

- Soybeans are also central to Japanese cuisine. They are eaten lightly boiled and cold (edamame); they are also made into tofu, which is of great use to Buddhist monks. Soy is also made into miso paste, which is a fermented and storable seasoning for boiled dishes and soup. There are dozens of different types of miso, and the Japanese appreciate the subtle differences the way Europeans obsess over wine.

- Shoyu, or soy sauce, is a relative newcomer to Japan. In the 16th century, it began to be made on a commercial level. Today, soy sauce is the most important seasoning. Another basic flavoring is mirin, and all sorts of sauces are made with soy, vinegar, or citrus (ponzu). Other important vegetables are gourds, which are dried and cut into long strips, and mushrooms. Shiitake mushrooms are a unique Japanese cultivar.

**Japanese Table Manners**

- The Japanese ate with their fingers before the 7th century. From China, along with Buddhism, the chopstick was introduced. Food is typically cut into mouth-sized bits, or sometimes larger; the Japanese like to get an entire mouthful at a time. For some strange reason, spoons did not catch on, and the Japanese usually sipped directly from the bowl, which forces you to concentrate on the contents. It's a much more focused activity than slurping liquid off of a spoon.

- Every individual has his or her own set of chopsticks, and separate ones are used for serving. The same focus on manners and etiquette developed here at roughly the same time, if not earlier, than it did in the West, but obviously with very different results. There is a similar avoidance of polluting common serving dishes with one's saliva, having to do with ideas of pollution and cleanliness in Shintoism.

- The other unique feature is that the Japanese used no chairs. They sat directly on a tatami mat or on the wooden floor, and like drinking out of a bowl, it forces the person to do everything slowly and more methodically. They usually bring the bowl close to their lips and move the food with the chopsticks. Food is set on little wooden tables, and typically everything is brought out at once.

- Very formalized and ritualized manners developed in the 16th and 17th centuries among the samurai class, and for probably the very same reasons, they developed among nobles in the West—at exactly the same time. This type of manners prevents misunderstandings and possible violent outbursts. Everyone is armed, but at the table, there's a ritualized truce.

- Probably the most ritualized ceremony involves taking tea (*cha dou*). Tea itself came with Buddhists from China, but for some reason, it fell from favor and became popular again in the Middle Ages. The ceremony was developed in the 16th century and was meant to reflect Zen philosophy in that it sought to create an entire aesthetic experience of art, architecture, gardening, crafts, and food. There is a formal feast that goes with the ceremony, called *kaiseki-ryori*, with very strict order of courses.

**The Presentation of Food**

- Although they ruled politically, the mercantile class is economically the important class in this period. These people had money, ate out often, and lived in cities, such as Edo, Osaka, and Kyoto. They invented Japanese haute cuisine, which is the basis of most traditional Japanese cooking today. It is these restaurants in the Edo

period that placed so much emphasis on presentation and on the philosophy that stresses the natural, unaffected, and haphazard.

- Japanese cuisine is also probably the cuisine that pays more attention to the size, shape, and color of the bowls food is served on. In Japanese cuisine, the bowls or serving containers are chosen very carefully to heighten the tactile and sensory quality of the food, and it's perfectly fine for them to be different shapes and sizes—unlike in Western culture. In addition, handmade objects are revered.

- Food is meticulously arranged on a plate to heighten attention to the different senses. Visual appeal is perhaps more important than in any other cuisine. There is careful attention to the color, but also to the shape of the food and how it sits on the plate. There is careful attention to the overall design, but also to the texture of the food in your mouth and to the aroma as it enters your nostrils.

- Unlike Western cuisines—or even other Asian ones—the Japanese seem to appreciate single ingredients on their own rather than complex combinations of flavor and texture. There is something very minimalistic about this mindset, which is why this cooking (and art, for that matter) has been appealing to Westerners.

- Cooking techniques are also very simple. If cooked at all, food is cooked for a precise length of time and usually over a stove top. There's very little baking or roasting. In addition, food is cut in small pieces so that it cooks quicker and more evenly and so that you never need a sharp object at the table. Almost all foods are either fried, grilled, or steamed.

- Bento boxes are the quintessential Japanese food. It's a whole elegant, miniature lunch in a box. Rice is the core but the box also contains grilled fish, shrimp, little pickles, and cold salads of gobo root arranged on little *shiso* leaves. The box also contains fruit. Every item is presented artfully in its own little compartment so that the foods don't get mixed up. It's meant to be eaten on the go.

## Suggested Reading

Cwiertka, *Modern Japanese Cuisine*.

Ishige, *History and Culture of Japanese Food*.

Rath, *Food and Fantasy in Early Modern Japan*.

## Culinary Activity

**Tasting Experiment**

A traditional Edo-era restaurant was designed to stimulate all of the senses, evoke memories, and capture the essence of certain seasons. It essentially treated the gastronomic experience like poetry. The next time you order Japanese food to bring home—or, better yet, make yourself—think carefully about the entire setting. That is, choose traditional music that fits the cuisine (perhaps shakuhachi flute music or the shamisen). Put up images that are evocative, and carefully arrange plants or fragrant flowers. Use tableware that will demand careful consideration, such as bowls you can sip from and Japanese chopsticks. If you have reed mats, eat sitting on the floor with the food on a low table. Think about how the setting changed your awareness of the food. Did you eat more slowly? Did you taste flavors and notice textures that normally would have been lost? Consider what would happen gastronomically if we paid this much attention to the setting in all of our meals. Would we become more mindful of food in general?

# Colonial Cookery in North America

## Lecture 25

People often tend to think of colonial America as relatively homogenous, or they think that all the English settlers were basically the same culturally, ethnically, and socially. However, apart from the major economic differences between the North and South, practically every colony was founded for different reasons, and different kinds of people settled them. Each group, in one way or another, influenced American eating habits down the road. In this lecture, you will learn how the 13 original colonies that were established on the east coast of North America in the 18th century developed, interacted, and invented their own unique culinary traditions.

**Virginia**

- After several failed attempts, the first colony to succeed in North America was founded in Jamestown, Virginia, in 1607. The settlers of Virginia were by and large wealthy gentry and lesser nobility who intended to live as they had in England—if not better. They tried to eat the same way, and they printed the exact same cookbooks that were being printed in England, those that were written for landed gentry women managing country estates.

- At the social level, Virginia is the place that most closely replicates the English country aristocracy and its way of life, but there are several important differences. Instead of living off the proceeds of renting tenants, the lord of the manor (in everything but title) lived off the labor of slaves. These were mostly plantations producing major crops or textile plants for export. The African slaves brought in and sold to these plantation owners also brought their own food traditions, including okra, black-eyed peas, and also certain African cooking techniques.

- The other ethnic group that influenced this colony was the Native Americans. When the English arrived, they were settled and practiced extensive agriculture, hunting, and fishing. The Native

Americans introduced the English to corn, tomatoes, and pumpkins. Unlike their English cousins, the Virginia settlers adopted these foods immediately. In the long run, most of the natives disappeared, were pushed out, or died of disease, but their crops were enthusiastically adopted and became staples among the colonists.

- The other factor affecting Virginian cooking is that there was a large number of poorer Englishmen—or sometimes Scots or Scots-Irish—who came to Virginia either as indentured servants or to start small subsistence farms or to work in cities. Necessity forced these people to make use of anything they could grow, and it seems like they were the first people to meld all of the disparate traditions, which eventually become standard among all levels of society.

- The most prevalent meat eaten in the south is not beef or lamb or any kind of expensive meat eaten fresh—it's pork. This has something to do with the abundance of corn used as feed for hogs. Rice also becomes very important to the South in general because it grows well in the marshy Carolinas. The English settlers had no idea how to grow it, but the African slaves did (and had been doing so for centuries).

- Virginia is part of a large empire that by the 18th century includes footholds in India, the Caribbean, and the Mediterranean. The English own Gibraltar and control much of the trade, so we find lemons, anchovies, and currants in Virginia, pineapples and allspice from Jamaica, sugarloaves from Barbados, pepper and cinnamon from Ceylon, and ketchup from Indonesia.

- The combination of all these disparate ingredients with some very sturdy English foods—including smoked hams and bacon, chickens, beef and mutton—becomes matter of course, as it still is in this country. There are also native ingredients, including oysters, crabs, fish, deer, rabbit, beaver, ducks, geese, and turkeys. Virginian cuisine becomes as complex and rich as English cuisine and uses many of the same imports, but they put them together in very unique ways, given the odd mix of peoples.

- What these people drank is equally as interesting. They drank wine if they could afford to import it. They drank port and sherry especially after the English placed trade restrictions on French wine and lowered taxes on Spanish and Portuguese wines. Beer was made, but it spoiled very easily in the summer heat, and the yeast died in the cold winters, so it wasn't the most popular drink.

- Vast quantities of rum were imported from the Caribbean, and it was put into all sorts of bizarre punch and toddy concoctions. There was also a unique American invention, sour mash whiskey, which is distilled from corn. Today, the best sour mash whiskey is called bourbon from Kentucky. They also distilled whiskey from rye, and as you move northward into the mid-Atlantic states, distilled apple cider, or applejack, was the drink of choice—but it was also distilled in the South. The reason hard alcohol caught on to such an extent has to do with transport; it was easier to carry into the hinterland than beer or wine and into stores much more easily.

**New England**

- Virginia kept in close economic and intellectual contact with England, and the wealthiest plantation owners threw elaborate feasts on the same scale as their European counterparts. Pretty much the opposite is the case with New England. The people who came were socially very different; they were to a large extent middle-class mercantile-oriented people from East Anglia. They were also highly literate and had a long tradition of religious nonconformity. In other words, they didn't suddenly become Puritans overnight.

- There were some noblemen among the New Englanders, but in general, nearly everyone engaged in commerce, trade, farming, or fishing to supply the market. What that means is the wealth is distributed much more evenly among New Englanders. Their tastes are comparatively simple and austere, given their Puritan heritage, but they nonetheless grow very wealthy. New Englanders also tend to be very reserved and take themselves very seriously.



**Clam chowder, a hearty soup, is a specialty of New England.**

- New Englanders were extremely prolific—which is what happens with abundant natural resources, hard-working people, and lots of land—but it's still not very crowded, so there aren't major epidemics like in Europe. Longer life spans and lower infant mortality rates cause the population to boom. Most people lived on small farms, so there were no real extremes of wealth.

- Their food was very simple and based for the most part on local ingredients. There was a cornmeal bread called johnnycake or hoecake. Codfish went into chowders, along with clams. Lobsters were so plentiful that they were considered a poor man's food. Meats like beef or mutton tended to be boiled or made into a Yankee pot roast. There was also substantial dairying, especially to make butter and cheese. Baked pumpkins and apples and a whole slew of vegetables could be stored in a root cellar. New Englanders were also inordinately fond of pies.

- New England simplicity changed into the mid-18th century for a few reasons. First, the region became a major mercantile hub, a large shipbuilding industry, and a large rum-distilling industry connected them to the triangular trade route, linking them to Africa and the Caribbean. Foods from all over the empire—including tea, coffee, and spices—passed through New England ports. Some people grew very wealthy, but their eating habits didn't seem to change that much, except that they became much more closely connected culturally to England.

**The Mid-Atlantic Region**

- It's difficult to generalize about the mid-Atlantic region because there are several different colonies that were founded for different reasons. The Dutch in New Amsterdam and up the Hudson Valley essentially transplanted Dutch culture and large estates (patroonships) into the New World. They set up what are basically feudal estates and rented out the land in parcels to tenants—a practice that is relatively rare in the Netherlands, where most farmers own their own land that is intensively cultivated or used for dairy. Perhaps the investors saw this as a way to attract settlers and make a lot of money.

- The Dutch handed over New Netherlands to the English in 1667 after a mercantile war, but the Dutch settlers remained, even though the colony became New York and East Jersey. Many Dutch cooking traditions remained, including waffles and cookies.

- In the southern part of New Jersey—and, more importantly, into Pennsylvania—there settled an entirely different group of Englishmen: the Quakers, who are not only radical Protestants, but also pacifists. These people were also religious exiles and were lead by William Penn. Incidentally, they're a lot like the Anabaptists, who were invited to join them in the 18th century, so there's this massive influx of Mennonites and Amish from Germany.

- In terms of foodways, the Quakers don't seem to be that different from other English settlers—except that they often wouldn't eat

sugar because it was made by slaves, and they tended to avoid spices because they felt it adulterated foods and was an unnecessary ornament. They also wear plain black clothes and broad-brimmed hats. They have very simple tastes.

- The German settlers, on the other hand, introduced things like sauerkraut, dill pickles, and German sausages. They also introduced pretzels, which are very different from English baked goods because they're boiled first and then baked. They also introduced cast-iron stoves, which Ben Franklin adapted and improved, and cast-iron pots with lids, which are called Dutch ovens.

- Pennsylvania also became cosmopolitan because they were one of the few colonies to allow religious freedom, so Jews, free Africans, and Swedes settled there. By the 18th century, it was also the second largest English-speaking city in the world, so it wasn't a coincidence that it was chosen as the first capital.

## Suggested Reading


Carney, *Black Rice*.

Eden, *Early American Table*.

Haber, *Hardtack to Homefries*.

Levenstein, *Revolution at Table*.

Oliver, *Food in Colonial and Federal America*.

Randolf, *Virginia Housewife*.

Simmons, *American Cookery.*


## Culinary Activity

Although English cookbooks had been printed in the colonies in the 18th century, the first truly American cookbook, using native ingredients, was Amelia Simmons's *American Cookery*, published in Hartford in 1796. She offers three different versions of the following recipe, which by this time

was very popular in New England but today is a real rarity. It is worth reviving, and each version is quite different. The last technique is by far the best and offers a simple but deep and utterly delicious flavor. As she suggests, any kind of vessel will work, as long as it is sealed tight and can be boiled. Boiling puddings in a buttered cloth tied tightly with string were also common, but they are now completely extinct in the United States. It was the original way of making "peas porridge" as well. Do account for expansion of the cornmeal, whatever vessel you use.

**A Nice Indian Pudding**

*No. 1. 3 pints scalded milk, 7 spoons fine Indian meal, stir well together while hot, let stand till cooled; add 7 eggs, half pound of raisins, 4 ounces butter, spice and sugar, bake one and half hour.*

*No. 2. 3 pints scalded milk to one pint meal salted cook, add 2 eggs, 4 ounces butter, sugar or molasses and spice q. s. it will require two and half hours baking.*

*No. 3. Salt a pint meal, wet with one quart milk, sweeten and put into a strong cloth, brass or bell metal vessel, stone or earthen pot, secure from wet and boil 12 hours.*

# Eating in the Early Industrial Revolution

## Lecture 26

This lecture begins by focusing on Britain in the late 18th and early 19th centuries and a series of events that marks what most food historians contend is the second major revolution in human eating habits in the history of our species. The first occurred about 10,000 years ago with the Neolithic Revolution, a time when humans went from being hunters and gatherers to farmers. The second revolution involves a switch from the vast majority of people growing food for a living to most people working in factories and having food provided by a small number of industrially organized and financed food producers.

**The Rise of Food Manufacturing**

- In the late 18th and early 19th centuries, food production becomes a business separate from most people's daily lives. This is a process that takes a good century to develop and takes even longer to spread around the world, but it begins in Great Britain with two interconnected world-changing events: a second agricultural revolution and the Industrial Revolution.

- In the midst of these events was an individual named Adam Smith—probably among the most influential thinkers of all time—who heralded the modern era in many ways. Smith's *Wealth of Nations*, published in 1776, predicted the way the economy would work in the age of capitalism. He predicted a new form of organization for labor. From day to day, the average worker or farmer constantly switches jobs, which means that he or she never really gets efficient at any of them.

- Smith suggested that if each stage of a process could be handled by separate people that specialized in their particular task, then they could be more efficient and make more products. He called it division of labor, and the key to it is mass manufacture rather than small-scale cottage crafts.

- Smith also wondered what would happen if all the ways governments control the economy—by import duties, monopolies, fixing prices and wages, and all the things mercantilist theorists said should be done—were taken away. With a total laissez-faire economy, he predicted that everyone would get wealthier and that the wealth of the nation as a whole would be greater because businesses would be freely competing, and only the best would survive.

- Why Smith's predictions could even be conceivable has to do with changes in the organization of agriculture first. The techniques were actually not entirely new, but the British applied them on a massive scale—so great that it actually changes the shape of their society entirely.

- The new capitalist farmer did a few important things. New three-field crop rotation systems were introduced, which meant that land never had to stay fallow. New crops were put in one cycle—usually clover or alfalfa, which could be eaten by cattle—if the farmer had a large herd.

- There was also a massive effort made at selective breeding. Improving plant varieties causes them to yield more grains per plant, and this is partly possible with more manure from bigger herds as well as improved cattle breeding. They don't have genetics yet, but choosing animals and plants with certain characteristics to breed over several generations makes them little food factories.

- There are also the first agricultural machines. The most famous of them is Jethro Tull's seed drill, which plants neat, even rows rather than broadcast seeds. These inventions result in much more food at cheaper prices. Your average small farmer has disappeared in favor of large capital-intensive farms. As a result, Britain is the first place to completely eradicate subsistence crises, famines, and even minor setbacks in food production—leading to a major population explosion that doesn't begin to halt until the late 20$^{th}$ century.

- Britain has an excess of labor, which drives the cost of labor way down, leading to lots of people looking for jobs and having to settle for dirt wages. This teeming mass of cheap labor means that manufacturing—which was formerly done on a small scale, producing mostly luxury goods—begins to produce cheaper goods on a much larger scale that are marketed to anyone who can afford them. The general trend from the early 19th century to the present is mass production, standardization, and craftsmen and farmers changing into wage-paid workers.

- The most important early new source of energy is James Watt's steam engine. This new technology is not only important in stepping up production and making factories themselves possible, but also the existence of steamships and railroads means that goods can be moved faster, farther, and cheaper to more customers.

**Society and the Industrial Revolution**

- Society changed in a major way as a result of the Industrial Revolution. Workers no longer made their own food and household items for their own consumption, and they didn't even buy them from the local craftsman anymore. In the industrial age, the manufacturer basically has to guess what the consumer wants or spend a fortune convincing the consumer that he or she wants it, even though it may not be in the consumer's best interest to buy it.

- Other negative effects of the Industrial Revolution include the iron smelting and slag heaps that are waste products and the pollution from burning coal. In fact, many environmental historians contend that since the 18th century, we have entered into a new geological epoch called the Anthropocene, in which humans have an unavoidably large effect on the environment.

- The industrial revolution produced enormous amounts of wealth for the privileged bourgeoisie, but the workers never felt like the product was theirs or that they had a stake in it or pride that it was being used by someone they knew. The industrial process takes all of the pride and creativity out of making things, and that capacity

to enjoy working and become satisfied with our accomplishments is uniquely human.

**The Importance of Bread and Potatoes**

- Bread was a gritty affair made with stone-ground flour. Yeasts were unpredictable and often sour, and wood-burning ovens made odd, misshapen loaves sometimes with crusty, dark exteriors. Bread went stale after a day or two. Maybe most importantly, it differed from place to place and even from one baker to another.

- In the industrial era, a new flour-milling technique was developed that could squash the grains under intense pressure between two metal rollers. The flour got heated up a bit, and some nutrients were lost, but it became cheaper.

- In most people's minds, whiter meant better, and it had always been only the wealthy who could afford pure white bread. The incentive to produce more bread quicker meant that manufacturers had great



**Bread is one of the most basic foods in many different cultures.**

incentive to use the flour quickly rather than let it mature, which gives it better flavor and lift in baking.

- Bread manufacturers were in a hurry, so they began to search for artificial ways to make bread lighter and fluffier with chemicals. A variety of them were used, but what they eventually settled on was bleaching the flour with bromates, which makes it whiter (and destroys vitamin E), and conditioners so it will stay bouncier and last on the shelf longer. In the 20th century, white breads have to have vitamins and minerals added back in—in an attempt to make up for what's been removed.

- Nevertheless, the industrialization of bread making continued apace, along with new chemical leavening agents. The very first United States patent went to Samuel Hopkins in 1790 for potash, which is used as a fertilizer and chemical leavener in quick breads (like biscuits) and is an ancestor of baking powder.

- In 1835, the English also began selling chemicals for use in baking. The result was that home baking tended to concentrate more on quick muffins, scones, and pancakes. This in itself is not such a bad thing, but the chemicals might be, and it's bad if you end up living on such things.

- The diet of the average British family dramatically declined in terms of overall calories, percentage of protein, and most dramatically, reduction of vitamins due to lack of fresh vegetables. Living on bread, potatoes, scraps of bacon, and sweetened tea just doesn't offer a decent diet. The result was severe outbreaks of scurvy, a vitamin C deficiency, and widespread rickets, which is a vitamin D deficiency.

- In the 1830s, potatoes were considerably cheaper than bread, so they increasingly became the more economical option, with any leftover money spent on tea and sugar. Potatoes are good for you, except with the increased demand and planting nothing but potatoes—especially in places like Ireland—disaster was bound to strike, and it did, beginning in 1845 and lasting in Ireland until 1852.

- Absolute disaster and deadly famine struck when the potato blight hit. About one million Irish died, and about the same number emigrated to America and England. The British government at first tried to help them with shipment of cornmeal, but a change in government a year later that brought in politicians who favored free trade thought it would hurt growers if food was just sent to people for nothing. The British government pretty much let the Irish perish as a necessary casualty of the market. Conversely, food exports from Ireland did not stop, even at the height of the famine.

- The only people who apparently wanted to help were Quakers and relief societies, who cared more about human beings than the market. There was only so much they could do, but they did force on the government what was called the Soup Kitchen Act in 1847 that provided some food in cities. However, in the end, about one-fifth of the population was gone. This is a great example of how a single food can completely change the course of history. Ireland would be a different place thereafter.

## Suggested Reading


Atkins, *Food and the City in Europe Since 1800*.

Beeton, *Mrs. Beeton's Book of Household Management*.

Burnett, *Plenty and Want*.

Clarkson, *Feast and Famine*.

Drummond, *Englishman's Food*.

Fisher, *American Cookbook*.

Floyd, *Recipe Reader*.

Francatelli, *Plain Cookery*.

Gentilcore, *Pomodoro*.

Griffith, *Born Again Bodies*.

Harrison, *Drink and the Victorians*.

Humble, *Culinary Pleasures*.

Reader, *Potato*.

Salaman, *History and Social Influence of the Potato*.

Smith, *Eating History*.

Soyer, *A Shilling Cookery*.

Zuckerman, *Potato*.

## Culinary Activity

**Simple Industrial-Age Dinner**

Contrary to the image we have of the wealthy in the mid-19th century being completely uncaring toward the poor, starving working classes, a number of people took up charitable causes, including Alexis Soyer and a chef who worked for Queen Victoria named Charles Elmé Francatelli, whose *A Plain Cookery Book for the Working Classes* was designed to offer cheap and nutritious meals. Equally interesting is his assumption that this generation of working women had no idea how to cook very basic food. Presumably working in factories since a young age, they never had the opportunity to learn basic skills. This is a very typical British dish and a technique very different from that common in the United States when dealing with bacon. For this recipe, you should use a whole slab of cured, smoked pork belly, not sliced American bacon or cut English rashers. It is, incidentally, as Francatelli claims, excellent.

**Boiled Bacon and Cabbages**

*Put a piece of bacon in a pot capable of containing two gallons; let it boil up, and skim it well; then put in some well-washed split cabbages, a few carrots and parsnips also split, and a few peppercorns, and when the whole has boiled gently for about an hour and a-half, throw in a dozen peeled potatoes, and by the time that these are done, the dinner will be ready. And this is the way in which to make the most of this excellent and economical dinner. First, take up the bacon, and having placed it on its dish, garnish it round with the cabbages, carrots, parsnips, and potatoes, and then add some pieces of crust, or thin slices of bread, to the liquor in which the bacon-dinner has been cooked, and this will furnish you with a good wholesome soup with which to satisfy the first peremptory call of your healthy appetites.*

# Romantics, Vegetarians, Utopians

## Lecture 27

Not everyone was happy with the new situation of industrialized food production, and in this lecture, you will learn about the first counterculture food movements and the reaction that some people—including Romantics, vegetarians, health gurus, and utopians—had against progress. These people are vaguely recognized as the ancestors of the modern health-food movement. They represent a real 19th-century counterculture food movement, and like the modern movement, they are also subsumed by the food industry. In other words, they sell out and go mainstream.

**Counterculture Food Movements**

- There are a number of preconditions to the first counterculture food movements. One important factor is the almost complete breakdown of the basic humoral principles of nutrition in the 18th century. It began to be replaced or amended during the scientific revolution, when new chemical ways of thinking about digestion and new mechanical investigations in physiology made the whole Galenic system obsolete.

- Without a uniform dietary theory that all physicians subscribe to, there were dozens of different competing theories floating around in the 18th century, each with their own bizarre conceptions of what people need to eat to stay healthy. Some said eat meat and drink wine; others said eat vegetables and avoid wine.

- In the midst of this wild speculation, there appear the first scientifically defended vegetarian diets. With this wild speculation in dietetics, and without any one solid set of empirical facts that everyone could agree on, there was rampant quackery. Almost anything that sounded remotely scientific could pass. Directly connected to this are diets that were both scientific and religious.

- The counterculture diets of the 19th century, like those of the previous century, tended to appeal to wealthy, overweight, middle- and upper-class women, who mostly wanted to eat a simple diet as a way to lose weight and become spiritually purified. That's actually true of most food ideologies: They promise that if you eat a certain way, you will be healthy, moral, politically correct, a better person. They're a lot like religions in that way; they require a conversion and complete commitment.

- The 18th-century weight-loss, spiritual-renewal diets have a direct impact on the 19th-century health-food movements because they see industrial society not only as unhealthy, but also as morally corrupt. Another thing often connected with these is temperance. Alcohol became very inexpensive and, therefore, became the preferred drink among many poor people. Food reformers often mixed teetotaling with a simpler, more natural diet with spiritual revivalism.

**The Romantic Movement**

- The roots of the Romantic movement, which began with a philosopher by the name of Jean-Jacques Rousseau, are in the 18th century as well. Among all of his contemporaries, including French and English philosophers, there was an intense faith in progress—one of scientific advancement and economic improvement.

- Rousseau can be indirectly credited with devising an entirely new attitude toward food that had long-lasting consequences up to the present. Rousseau's brand of nature worship inverted the traditional value placed on manmade and improved products of nature, giving a negative spin on the term "artificial."

- Indirectly, Rousseau spawned what we now know as the health-food movement. Simpler, unprocessed, unrefined foods were considered preferable. Rousseau thought that most people ate deplorable things, including sugar, pastries, and junk food. Rousseau also has a decided leaning toward vegetable foods, believing that eating meat makes humans more cruel and ferocious. Rousseau's ideas were especially influential on Romantics of the 19th century.

- The Vegetarian Society was officially founded in 1847, which is when the word "vegetarian" was coined. Vegetarians at this time supported their position with the latest scientific findings and with religion. Justus von Liebig—probably the first person we could call a nutritional scientist in the modern sense of the term—discovered through his research that animal protein is not fundamentally different from vegetable. (In fact, animal proteins have the complete range of amino acids, and plants don't.)

- They also had support from a Swedish Christian philosopher and mystic Emmanuel Swedenborg, who among his pantheistic ideas believed that meat eating is the most visible symbol of our corruption and fall from grace and is the source of evil in the world. Giving up these foods, and alcohol, was a kind of gradual spiritual cleansing.

**Utopian Socialism**

- Mixed into this bizarre melee of ideas was another strand of thought that is usually called utopian socialism. Food reform had always been a major part of utopian thought. The utopians ate communally, consuming simply prepared, nutritious meals. They all took two-year turns at farming. They did eat meat, but they made criminals butcher any meat. More believed that getting used to killing animals would desensitize a person to killing in general, so only the degenerate people do it.

- In the 19th century, utopian socialists tried to create real societies based on utopian principles. There were real utopian experiments. They set up communes in which all of the inhabitants would have the same amount of wealth, would live communally, and share all tasks equally.

- Robert Owen built a small community called New Lanarck, which was basically a textile mill—except that it was set in a beautiful, rural place and kept meticulously clean. The workers in the factories had control over how much and what they made. Owen's assumption was that if you put people in decent surroundings and treat them well, they would work hard, succeed, and turn out to be good people.

- Owen's community was also supposed to be self-sufficient, so they grew their own food and in his original plans it was to be vegetarian. His food reform ideas influenced a whole generation of people who thought that the only way to improve society is to escape. Instead, change the nature of work, destroy the inequality between humans, and stop the oppression of animals.

- There were a slew of utopian socialist experiments in the mid-19th century. What all of these experiments had in common is that they gave up private property and lived and ate communally. They grew their own food and were often so industrious that they could sell much of their produce or the things they made.

- Some of these groups were also explicitly or quasi-religious in nature. For example, the Shakers lived in these communes starting in upstate New York and New England, but they spread throughout the Ohio valley and south into Kentucky. By the mid-19th century, there were about 5,000 members in a dozen communities. The only reason these communities were bound to disappear eventually is that they were also celibate.

- All of these movements are a reaction against the mainstream food culture—as well as its ideology of oppression and inequality. Their diet is just one facet of a much larger set of ideas for reform, and their emphasis on purity of food is in part directly stimulated by reports about all of the food adulteration. Many of these groups gave up coffee and tea because of the oppression involved in growing them. Many also began to eat more raw foods that were less processed as a conscious reaction



**Vegetables can have healing effects on the body.**

against mass-manufactured food that they believed harms your body and costs more.

- Vegetarianism began to spread, along with the idea that dramatically restricting your diet could improve your health, cleanse your system, and cure all sorts of new and fashionable diseases that were brought on by, ironically, eating too much.

- This first antimodern society health-food movement began to appeal to wealthy women and men as a kind of curative regimen to counteract the rich and heavily meat-and-alcohol-laden diet that they normally enjoyed. In other words, they would take vacations to elite spas, eat vegetables and drink mineral water for a few weeks, and get enemas and massages.

- Perhaps the most famous, or infamous, of these religiously inspired food-reform leaders was Dr. John Harvey Kellogg, whose sanitarium in Battle Creek, Michigan, offered curative retreats for sick and stressed Seventh-day Adventists. Kellogg was up on the latest science, and it was just at this time that people were beginning to understand the role of intestinal flora in digestion. There are actually bacteria in your gut that help you digest food. You can kill them accidentally (with strong antibiotics), but you can also promote them with foods like yogurt with live lactobacillus cultures.

- Kellogg said that people eat too much meat and not enough vegetables, which have roughage and promote intestinal flora. He had visitors to the sanitarium eat very plain vegetables and no spices, alcohol, or stimulants. They were usually patients suffering from stress-related disorders, and the assumption was that all of these food tightened the body and increased stress while plain food relaxed the sinews. In 1877, he came up with a cereal he called granula, but he was sued and was forced to change the name to granola.

- Kellogg's brother Will Keith marketed granola and another product he had developed, called cornflakes, in neat packages, advertised them well, and basically sold them to the entire nation. What

began as a wacko religious-scientific health-food cure—because of keen business sense and the fact that they are very convenient—completely changed what Americans eat for breakfast.

- Kellogg only had one serious competitor in those days: another quack running a sanitarium, Charles W. Post, who invented a cereal called grape nuts, which was advertised as steadying the nerves and making the blood red. Apparently because the barley malt used in it converts the starch into glucose—or grape sugar as they then called it—he settled on the name.

- In the end, of all strange ironies, health foods were subsumed as industrial foods, mass produced, and marketed widely. They became the very things they were designed to combat.

## Suggested Reading

Guerrini, *Obesity and Depression*.

Preece, *Sins of the Flesh*.

Spenser, *The Heretics Feast*.

Stuart, *Bloodless Revolution*.

## Culinary Activity

The idea of what constitutes a natural diet changes from era to era. For some, it might be a vegetarian meal or foods that are unprocessed; for others, it could be raw food or *paleo* food. Every era constructs what is "natural" based on its own preoccupations and anxieties. All make the claim that one will feel better immediately. Put this claim to the test with the following experiment. In academic circles, this is called an autoethnography. Choose a modern diet that claims to be natural. Follow it strictly for three days, or for a whole week if you have the patience. Record all of your experiences. Have you noticed any changes in your body—with your digestion, energy level, or sleep patterns? Did you learn anything about yourself and your regular diet in the course of this experiment? Do you think that the experiment might

change the way you eat on some level? Most importantly, how did others react to your diet? Did friends and family members help to accommodate you? Did you have trouble eating out? Consider the experience of others who diet or have restricted diets for medical reasons or allergies, or even religious prohibition. Do you think this affects the way they negotiate social relations? What have you learned about people with dietary restrictions in general?

# First Restaurants, Chefs, and Gastronomy

## Lecture 28

In this lecture, you will learn about another important set of revolutions in consumption that are contemporaneous to those of the Romantic movement. You will learn about what became of French courtly haute cuisine in the 19th century, focusing on a few interconnected developments: the development of the restaurant, celebrity chefs, and gastronomy. As you will learn, in the 19th century, there is a burgeoning food industry—along with a series of food critics—plus a new way of dining in style.

**The Development of the Restaurant**

- In the late 18th century, there were professional chefs who cooked for wealthy aristocrats all across Europe. In order to get such a job, you had to train in an aristocratic kitchen. There were also taverns and inns that mostly served travelers or people who didn't have cooking facilities. There were also professional caterers who cooked for parties and weddings.

- There really was no such thing as a restaurant, in which you could sit down, choose from a menu with specified prices, and receive a meal composed of several courses that were cooked to order. There was also really no such thing as formal training for a chef, apart from apprenticing with another chef and working your way up the ranks within the kitchen hierarchy.

- True restaurants that accepted customers as they arrived, seated them at a private table, and offered a wide choice of cooked dishes at fixed prices only appeared in the mid-18th century. The very first was opened by a tavern keeper named Boulanger in 1765 at his Champ d'Oiseau Tavern in Paris and served various soups meant to be "restorative," which is the origin of the term "restaurant."

- In 1782, the first true restaurant, La Grande Taverne de Londres, was opened by Antoine Beauvilliers and served a wide variety

of dishes, especially exotic dishes. Their specialty was still the restorative medicinal soup, but they also had impeccably dressed waiters and a wine cellar. Beauvilliers charged a fortune at his restaurant, and he set the tone for restaurants to come.

- In 1789, at the time of the French Revolution, scores of aristocrats fled the nation or had their heads removed with a guillotine, including King Louis XVI and Marie Antoinette. Suddenly, all of the professional chefs working for aristocrats were out of work. While this is not the origin of the restaurant, it certainly added to the number of restaurants.

- The French Revolution abolished the guild system, meaning that anyone could practice in any trade he or she wanted—which is very nearly free trade. People could now open an establishment serving whatever they wanted to whomever they wanted, and that's exactly what chefs did.

- In the very late 18th century and early 19th century, the restaurant as we know it was invented in Paris. Why the restaurants succeeded has a lot to do with the affluent bourgeois class, the people who now have political enfranchisement and are doing very well in business. These factory owners, merchants, and bankers suddenly have a lot of money to spend. They are the perfect customers for this new establishment because they're busy, and just as in Japan a century or so earlier, there's a thriving, inventive restaurant culture that springs up to serve them.

- These establishments also serve food in distinct courses. Traditional aristocratic dining (called service à la Française), which involved bringing everything out at once, isn't really possible in a restaurant, where people come in and are seated at different times and order different things. Instead, the pattern of service that emerges (called service à la Russe) is that the variety of dishes comes out in a strict order.

- In the full version of service à la Russe, there are supposed to be 15 courses. The important thing about the order of courses is that it's ritualized. What we saw at first only at the courts of powerful people has now descended to ordinary people, along with manners.

- Another thing that changes, although very gradually through the early modern period and into the 19th century, is meal times. In the 16th century, there were two standard meals: dinner at around 11 in the morning and then supper, the smaller meal (usually of soup), at 5 or 6. Some people ate a small breakfast first thing in the morning, and late at night, some ate a small snack called a collation, but two meals were fairly standard.

- By the time we get to the 19th century, meal patterns begin to change, but only among the wealthy. Poor people, factory workers, and people in the north of England hold onto the older patterns well into the late 20th century. Among the wealthy and especially in cities, the meal pattern began to have dinner pushed later and later—finally to around 6 or 7, where it is today.

- Between the two main meals fell two other new meals: nuncheon (at noon), or luncheon, a small social gathering that involved sharing a small meal; and then tea around 4 or 5 in the evening, which was involved tea, sandwiches, and pastries. The three-meal pattern we are familiar with only developed in the 19th century; the only major difference is that in the United States, we've done away with tea as a meal.

**Celebrity Chefs**

- Working within these new restaurants and for noble or royal patrons were also what we might call the first celebrity chefs, men who considered their work to be an art, were paid very well, and attracted numerous customers for their establishments. Most of them also wrote cookbooks.

- The restaurants were huge, ornate structures with paintings on the walls, chandeliers, elegant furniture, and linens. Some pulled

it off well and charged their customers a fortune, and others were less extravagant and had to lower their standards to attract more customers. In the smaller restaurants, the number of courses was fewer, and the quantity of food was less—the general trend up to the present—but the structure of the meal stayed the same across restaurants: from light foods to heavy in the middle and back to light at the end.

- The first and most important celebrity chef is Marie Antonin Carême, who served as chef to Prime Minister Talleyrand and Baron Rothschild, Emperor Alexander of Russia, and King George IV. Carême is generally recognized as the founder of grande cuisine, which is the height of classic French cooking. Carême is also credited with inventing the classic chef's jacket and toque, or "toque blanche," which is a uniform that only trained chefs are entitled to wear—indicative of the professionalization of this business.

- Another celebrity chef was Alexis Soyer, who eventually became chef for the Reform Club in London. Through his popularity, Soyer did many positive things. He was sent to Ireland to open soup kitchens during the potato blight, and he worked with people like Florence Nightingale in the Crimean War by providing food for the troops. It was Soyer's *A Shilling Cookery for the People*, which explained how to make meals on a limited budget, that really won people's respect.

- Chearles Elmé Francatelli was another mid-19th-century celebrity, who eventually worked for Queen Victoria. He also published one of the more popular cookbooks of the era, *The Modern Cook*, in 1845, but the most remarkable thing he wrote was a pamphlet called *A Plain Cookery Book for The Working Classes* (1861), which tells how to set up a kitchen and how to cook basic but nutritious foods economically. It was presumably written for women who had never learned how to cook from their mothers.

- Toward the end of the century is the last of these celebrities, Auguste Escoffier, who made his fame in the restaurants of the

finest luxury hotels in Europe. Escoffier's *Guide Culinaire* is still the professional chef's bible on classic French dishes. It contains 2,984 recipes, all meticulously cross-referenced and indexed. Escoffier also essentially invented how modern kitchen staffs are organized—with a rigorous hierarchy and chain of command and into separate departments.

**Gastronomy**

- Gastronomy, the science and art of eating well, also develops in the 19th century. The most prominent gastronomes were a combination of scientists researching the physiology of taste, restaurant critics, and food writers expounding on the art of fine eating. These people become arbiters of taste—precisely in the way that court chefs used to be—but they're writing for popular audiences, for anyone with enough money to patronize restaurants or buy ingredients and have them cooked well.

- Grimod de La Reyniere, who wrote *Almanach des Gourmands*, is the father of the modern restaurant review. Probably the most well-known gastronome was Jean-Anthelme Brillat-Savarin, who wrote a book called *Physiologie du Gout* in 1825 that was not just about taste in the chemical or physical sense, but also about what constitutes good taste, how best to enjoy food, and why it should be a serious concern.

- What makes Brillat-Savarin's work so timeless is that he has an excellent sense for what the French call *le terroir*, which involves the nature of the soil, the climate, the local produce, when ingredients come into season, and how to serve them without spoiling them. In other words, he's not a food snob; he's a gastronome, someone trying to analyze the nature of taste and why things taste good.

- His best-known saying is in the aphorisms that open his book and is probably among the most often misquoted things anyone has written: "Tell me what you eat: I will tell you what you are." He means that you can tell someone's personality from what they eat. Are they conservative or adventurous? Do they want bland food, or

food that is rich and spicy? Do they want food that is familiar and native, or exotic?

## Suggested Reading


Arndt, *Culinary Biographies*.

Brillat-Savarin, *The Physiology of Taste*.

Escoffier, *Memories*.

Ferguson, *Accounting for Taste*.

Gigante, *Gusto*.

Gigante, *Taste*.

Jacobs, *Eating Out*.

Kelly, *Cooking for Kings*.

Korsmeyer, *Making Sense of Taste*.

Spang, *The Invention of the Restaurant*.

Trubek, *How the French Invented the Culinary Profession*.

Willan, *Great Cooks*.


## Culinary Activity

The next time you go out to a fancy restaurant, take particular notice of the dining protocols. How are you seated, and by whom? Are you helped into your seat? Does anyone unfold a napkin and place it on your lap? This sometimes still happens and was once commonplace. Are there separate staff members for pouring water, suggesting wine, or removing dishes? Try to keep track of the entire staff serving you. How does the waiter or waitress approach you, and where does he or she physically stay? Is it out of the way unobtrusively, or hovering nearby? How many tables does each server manage? You will notice that, normally, the more expensive the restaurant, the greater the proliferation of servers (which stands to reason), but also the greater the ritualization of behavior. Is this simply because much more money is involved, or do people enjoy playacting in restaurants in order

to feel important, wealthy, or sophisticated? Why do people seem to enjoy this kind of formality, and when is it inappropriate? When do restaurants or patrons miscommunicate about the level of formality—that is, not only getting the dress code wrong or not understanding which fork to use, but also seriously misreading the drama that unfolds in the course of a meal? Analyze whether your restaurant and server matched the expectations of the diners well. Also consider how restaurant manners change over time—especially recently, as restaurants are becoming increasingly less snooty and more casual. Why is this happening lately?

# Big Business and the Homogenization of Food

## Lecture 29

In the late 19th and early 20th centuries, a wave of new technology arrives, and food habits are changed drastically. This lecture focuses on the seizure of what we can now call the food industry in late-19th-century Europe and America by big business. In fact, the process of food production is taken from smaller hands forcefully at nearly every stage—from the farmers in the field to processing plants, to marketing and advertising, to transport and retailing, and even down to the way it's prepared in the home with new labor-saving devices. In other words, food itself becomes big business.

**Innovation in the Food Industry**

- Before the 19th century, European and American food had depended on a lot of interconnected businesses working in cooperation. In the late 19th century, big businesses increasingly figure out how to own everything, including the fields and the processing plants. What had previously been a synergistic community of businesses becomes a single very large business.

- There are two very important developments in the late 19th century that make all of this possible, and they are absolutely indispensable to understanding how and why food undergoes fundamental changes. First is what has been called a second industrial revolution, which is really just a continuation of the first a century or so later, but this one happened quicker, involved more advanced science, and did much more to change what gets called food—and not always for the better. The other thing happening at this time is a second wave of imperialism.

- Probably the most important discoveries and inventions involve using new forms of energy. In the mid-19th century, coal, gas, and oil were the main forms of energy. The big change comes with the use of electricity. Within a few years after its invention, New York

City had been electrified with streetlights, which means that people can now shop into the night.

- Most importantly, electricity came into people's homes, and almost immediately, manufacturers came out with a slew of devices that they claimed would be labor-saving and would free the drudge of a housewife from her daily chores. In 1910, advertisements for electric toasters pummel people from every direction. Then, in 1926, they came out with the new and improved pop-up toaster.

- Just keeping up with the standard level of material culture increasingly means more of the average family's income gets spent on gadgets, often superfluous, that change the relationship to food. In the end, these gadgets wear out and get dumped in a trash heap. This trend starts out slowly and reaches its apogee in the mid-20th century, but the push to create more and more so-called labor-saving devices begins in the late 19th century and is almost completely contingent upon electricity.

- The dishwasher was invented in 1886 in Shelbyville, Illinois, by Josephine Cochrane. The first people to buy a dishwasher didn't do it to save labor (because they had servants); it was supposed to prevent breakage at the hands of clumsy servants. Eventually, a small model was produced for middle-class homes and was advertised as the miracle labor-saving device that could spare the tired housewife hours of drudgery at the sink every night.

- With the advent of gasoline-burning engines, trucking extended the range of where goods could be delivered and sold—far beyond the end of a railroad track—and these new engines were also put into steel-hulled ships that move very quickly and could even get fruits and vegetables to the Northern Hemisphere from the south out of season. The types of food people ate completely changed thanks to international shipping.

- In the mid-19th century, after many years of experimentation, the first commercial refrigerators are invented, so meat no longer has

to be driven on the hoof to market. It can be slaughtered in one central place—usually Chicago—packed into refrigerated cars, and shipped everywhere. The fridge doesn't come into domestic use until the 20th century. Eventually, people are able to shop for more foods at once and store them relatively dependably in an icebox, or fridge.

- In the 1880s, the process of freezing food really takes off. Clarence Birdseye is the pioneer in this business, and his singular stroke of genius was that if he bought directly from the growers and did all the processing, packaging, distribution, and marketing himself, he could sell it everywhere—which is of course exactly what happened.

- This led to everyone across the country eating the same frozen peas instead of fresh ones, which is not necessarily a bad thing, because you can now get them year round. This affected both the producer and the consumer: They're not connected in any way now, and the growers have to produce to strict specifications set down by Mr. Birdseye—not what his customers ask for or what may be traditional in each region. In other words, foods and taste are becoming homogenized.

- The other technology that completely transforms the food industry is canning, which was dependent on Louis Pasteur, who, in the course of his research into beer yeast strains, not only discovered the role of bacteria as human pathogens, but also figured out that if you heat up foods to a certain temperature to kill all the bacteria and then hermetically seal it off, food doesn't spoil.

- Pasteurization has made a lot of foods safer than they were before it was discovered in 1862. However, the U.S. government went a little overboard, and big business had a suspiciously large role in getting legislation passed that made pasteurization mandatory.

- A few years ago, lobbyists came very close to getting all unpasteurized cheeses banned in the United States. However, such

a ban may be unnecessary. People in Europe aren't dropping dead left and right from eating unpasteurized cheese; in fact, they have been eating these cheeses for centuries. This is only one example of what can happen when big business takes over food production.

- Another invention is steel, which is much cheaper in the long run to make than iron, and much stronger. Machines themselves can be made from it, with replaceable parts. In the kitchen, stainless steel—an alloy of steel and nickel and enough chromium to form a protective surface—is developed after the turn of the century. Food-processing equipment can now be built on an enormous scale.

- There are also communications breakthroughs, including telephones, radios, and phonographs. These inventions lead not only to advertising, but also to a quicker pace of business—the ability to organize businesses on a much larger and international scale. There's also photography and eventually moving pictures, which will revolutionize the way things are sold to people, and because they're expensive to mass-produce, it will tend to be only the biggest companies that can do it, pushing out all the others.

**From Peanuts to Peanut Butter**

- Into the 19th century, most people just ate peanuts as a snack food, roasted. Growers were small and independent. Distributors who shipped and sold them remained small scale, and most importantly, the vendors were small, privately owned operations.

- At the time that John Harvey Kellogg, following a vegetarian diet, promoted nut butters as a healthy meat substitute, peanut butter was made at home. This process was time consuming, laborious, messy, and difficult. Like other health-food products, peanut butter began to go mainstream. In 1901, the first recipe for peanut butter with jelly was published.

- Technology, big business, and mass manufacturing all combine to make peanut butter cheap. Soon, sugar is added, and it's marketed



**Peanut butter, although high in calories, is a very nutritious, protein-filled food.**

to children, and the role it plays in the American diet—who eats it and why—completely changes.

- At first, there were just a handful of small factories selling peanut butter. The equipment was relatively cheap, the raw materials were cheap, and with relatively little labor, you could manufacture and sell peanut butter to local grocers. However, peanut butter is not a very stable product. The oil tends to separate, it goes rancid fairly quickly when that happens, and sometimes the salt recrystallizes. As a result, the operations remain small around the turn of the century.

- The popularity of peanut butter grew, and two companies began to dominate the market: the Beech-Nut company and Heinz. These companies made other products, too, so they had bigger operations, more capital to invest, and larger marketing networks. They could afford machinery that produced a more consistent product

that wouldn't go rancid in the jar. More importantly, they could afford advertising.

- In 1922, Joseph L Rosefield of the Rosefield Packing company in Alameda, California, takes the newly discovered technology of turning unsaturated fats into saturated ones by hydrogenating them and applies it to the oil in peanut butter—which is normally liquid at room temperature, but is now solid, so it never separates. He also added a lot of sugar so that it would taste even better. The name he eventually settled on for his new product was Skippy.

- An advertising blitz results, followed by market takeover. The only real competitor to survive was Peter Pan, which had a comparable product. The result is that a product controlled locally and prepared fresh becomes a more stable but less healthy food, claims to be "convenient," and becomes a staple.

- Almost the same thing happens to the peanut-processing industry. Two Italian immigrants, Obici and Peruzzi, began frying peanuts in their small operation in Wilkes-Barre, Pennsylvania, which they called Planters Peanuts. What separated them from all other processors is that they moved their plant to the South, where they could buy the peanuts and process them immediately. They eventually took over the entire industry and turned peanuts into a major article of consumption around the country.

- By the late 19th century, practically all of the processed snack and junk foods we are familiar with—including animal crackers, chewing gum, and soda—were being mass produced and marketed nationwide.

## Suggested Reading

Burnett, *Liquid Pleasures*.

Burnett, *Plenty and Want*.

Laszlo, *Citrus*.

Levenstein, *Paradox of Plenty*.

Murray, *Moveable Feasts*.

Siegers, *Exploring the Food Chain*.

Wilson, *Swindled*.

Woloson, *Refined Tastes*.

## Culinary Activity

Think of the ways new mass-manufactured products have been used in recipes, sometimes in the end becoming classics like green bean casserole and Rice Krispies treats. We now take for granted that cans and boxes will have recipes on them or that manufacturers will produce their own recipe booklets. In this exercise, think of a brand-name, industrially manufactured product. See how quickly you can find a recipe online that incorporates that product. Simply type in the product name and the word recipe. How and why did food manufacturers get in the business of writing recipes? How and why did these become traditional? Think of as many brand-name products as you can that are used in now-classic recipes. Chocolate-chip cookies are a good example. Now choose one of these classics and try to cook it using entirely fresh ingredients. For example, the recipe for a green bean casserole might be as follows.

Trim the ends off two pounds of string beans, cut them in half lengthwise, and blanch them in boiling water for 30 seconds. Then, immediately plunge them into cold water. Meanwhile, sauté sliced mushrooms in butter with a little salt and a tablespoon of flour, and stir. Then, add milk and chicken stock, and continue stirring until slightly thickened. Drain the string beans, put them in a casserole dish, pour the mushroom mixture on top, and stir well to coat the string beans. Then, thinly slice two onions, and toss lightly with seasoned flour. Fill a pan halfway with oil, and heat to about 350 degrees. Fry the onion slices in small batches, and place on top of the casserole. Then, bake it for 40 minutes in a 325-degree oven. Serve.

# Food Imperialism around the World

## Lecture 30

From the late 19th century up to World War I, industrial food production began to have impacts on a global scale. In this lecture, you will learn how regions outside of Europe and America were linked to the global economy and were increasingly controlled by the interests and desires of affluent consumers in the wealthier countries of the world. You will learn how modern industrial processing affected the rest of the world, which was apparently just waiting to be modern.

**Industrialized Nations and Their Colonies**

- Manufacturers in the industrialized nations—England, France, Belgium, Germany, northern Italy, and the United States, and soon to catch up, Japan—want two things: new markets in which to sell their mass-produced goods (including processed foods) and raw materials (including food) that unconquered regions might provide.

- Often, they promote colonization without even knowing what they might find in these places, but under the assumption that there may be something there and that they might as well gobble it up before some other country does. They were also thinking that given the climate (most of these regions are tropical or subtropical), they could at least create plantations to grow food, which can now be shipped more efficiently in new steamships and refrigerated trains.

- Specifically, European powers scramble to carve up Africa and Asia between them and build themselves empires. The results of imperialism can be devastating to local inhabitants, even when Europeans brought with them the trappings of what they considered progress, advancement, and religion. In the process, they also destroyed indigenous cultures and ways of life, particularly traditional foodways. Perhaps more importantly, they made those people dependent on the colonial empires.

- Although the developed nations don't usually literally conquer other nations with military force anymore—at least not overtly—the powerful nations do still exercise a kind of economic imperialism over "Third World" nations by extending aid or credit in exchange for markets, investment opportunities, and trading privileges. There is still a relationship of dominance that has a direct bearing on food production, distribution, and who gets what to eat.

- Industrialized nations had a few key things: big populations and cheap labor. That meant a steady tax base and the ability to build large bureaucracies and big armies. Increasingly, these armies became mechanized armies with industrially produced weapons.

- England was the only nation that still had extensive colonies, and the nations that were industrialized began to look to Britain and wonder whether the colonies accounted for their success. You need colonies to provide raw materials and people overseas to buy mass-produced goods. There were also chauvinistic rivalries involved.

- European powers expected to find gold and diamond in these colonies, especially in South Africa. In the tropics, they thought of foods that could be grown on massive plantations—things that everyone now consumes in vast quantities, including sugar, coffee, tea, chocolate, spices, tropical fruits, rice, and rubber. All of these are monoculture cash crops.

- These countries had no qualms about pure exploitation of natural resources in the process of obtaining these cash crops. The investors justified this by assuring that their operations would provide jobs and that native peoples working for these big companies could now earn wages rather than scraping out an existence in subsistence agriculture. Native peoples may have only made a few cents a day and were no longer able to grow their own food, but now they could buy it. Scarcely anyone on the planet was able to escape the influence of this.

- The companies themselves aren't going out and conquering new territories, but they do get involved indirectly. Companies often provide campaign money for politicians, and if they are pro-empire, they will be supported. Politicians need big money to campaign, and companies need policies that work to their favor. This neat little partnership is forged and, indirectly, industry supports the enterprise of empire.

**The Plight of Farmers**

- Like most places on Earth, there was rapid population growth in these regions in the late 18th and early 19th centuries, but there was no outlet for their population in growing cities because there was no industry to buy up their cheap labor. As a result, all of these people remained in the countryside and became increasingly impoverished, on smaller and smaller plots of land. Without the latest agricultural advances—chemical fertilizers, machines, and hybrid plants—they were having an increasingly hard time being fed.

- The smart farmers realized that to survive, they would have to invest in new equipment, and they of course went into debt to buy machinery. Then, if the price for their crop dropped, they were forced to foreclose. Whereas once they might have been poor subsistence farmers, they have now become linked—and at the mercy of a huge global trading system.

- These farmers' lives are far more precarious than when food was supplied locally, and now they are prey to food speculators, who hoard grain and wait for the price to go up. The locals are now subject to market forces that are totally out of their control. It was the same story nearly everywhere: In the end, the vast monocultures supplying the international markets won.

- Before the 20th century, the French used to get through famines, but in the early 20th century, they were crushed by them. It was one country producing for the profit of another that caused the famines—not natural disaster.

- Sometimes getting people to work for the big companies was done with force, too. In the Amazon, Indians were driven off their plots and forced to carry rubber for a British company. In the Belgian Congo, they just burned the local villages so that the people were forced to come and work on newly cleared plot.

- Even more subtly, the imperial power could just tax the locals exorbitantly, which essentially is getting them to devote a portion of their land and labor to the imperial power for nothing. If the locals have no money (which was often the case), they would be invited to grow cash crops for export, which the colonizers would buy. Therefore, for example, Africans go from growing millet and sorghum for their own use to growing peanuts and cotton for export.

**Banana Republic**

- In 1870, the vast majority of Americans have never seen or eaten a banana, unless they went to the tropics or someone brought one back as a novelty. Captain Lorenzo Baker, a New England seaman, was in Jamaica and noticed people selling bananas, and he decided to give it a shot, so he bought 160 bunches and got them to Jersey City in 11 days. People went berserk over them. He was so successful that within a few years, he founded the Boston Fruit Company.

- At almost exactly the same time, another investor decided to approach the government of Costa Rica with a railroad-building scheme, and he was given both a land grant to build and ample acreage straddling the railroad. He then got the idea of lining the tracks with bananas, which could be harvested and shipped directly from all over the country. He also did very well.

- Over time, these two companies merged, creating a bigger operation, which became the United Fruit Company in 1899. These two men developed their own distribution system, built their own fleet of ships, went public on the New York Stock Exchange, set up a communications network via radio, and even carried mail to the United States. Essentially, they monopolized all transport and

communications networks from Costa Rica, Guatemala, Honduras, Panama, and Colombia.

- They succeeded by secretly arranging with leaders in local governments that the United Fruit Company, or sometimes even the United States government, would keep these people in power and protect them—even though some of them were dictators—as long as they helped the company maintain their monopoly. It worked to the mutual benefit of both parties, but not of course to the benefit of the workers, who were not allowed to organize or create unions.



**Banana plants grow bananas in bunches that hang downward.**

- In 1944, they changed the name of the brand to Chiquita and introduced this sexy cartoon Latina girl with fruit on her head as their logo. They also "branded" their produce by affixing little blue labels to every banana. Needless to say, they absolutely cornered the market, supplying 70 percent of the market worldwide.

- Until the mid-1990s, Chiquita controlled the whole market. All of a sudden, the European Union decided that it wasn't not fair that this one company held a virtual monopoly, and they knew that they could be growing bananas in their former colonies and supplying Europe. However, Chiquita, with their economy of scale and huge operation, always undersold them, so they decided to place a quota and tariff on South American bananas.

- This completely enraged Chiquita, and somehow they managed to convince Bill Clinton to strike back and place a 100 percent tariff on luxury goods from Europe. As a counterretaliation, Europe wouldn't buy U.S. beef raised on hormones, and a full-scale trade war developed.

- At the exact same time, Ecuador suddenly enters the market and starts selling bananas. By paying obscenely low wages and forbidding unions, they can sell really cheap bananas. Suddenly, there's a glut on the market, and the worldwide price drops dramatically. Chiquita went briefly into bankruptcy in 2002.

- The global food supply is subject to forces of international competition, sometimes with grave consequences for the people who actually grow these foods. Another perhaps unforeseen consequence of constructing these massive empires was that although the conquered peoples were not given citizenship, they were given the right to move anywhere within the empire. Frequently, these kinds of movements were encouraged or sponsored by the European powers to shift the labor force and send supplies of cheap labor to a place where it was needed.

## Suggested Reading

Clarkson, *Menus from History*.

Higman, *Jamaican Food*.

Koeppel, *Banana*.

Krondl, *Taste of Conquest*.

Pilcher, *Food in World History*.

Smith, *Peanuts*.

Vernon, *Hunger*.

## Culinary Activity

In the late 19th century, cookbooks incorporated exotic ingredients drawn from throughout the colonial world, in a sense boasting the imperial connections and technological achievements that could supply these new foods. Notice also how newly introduced ingredients appear in recipes—often in strange and random ways. Consider, for example, the following recipe for bananas that appeared in the 1896 edition of Fannie Farmer's *Boston Cooking School Cookbook*. We cannot recommend it.

**Banana Salad**

*Remove one section of skin from each of four bananas. Take out fruit, scrape, and cut fruit from one banana in thin slices, fruit from other three bananas in one-half inch cubes. Marinate cubes in French Dressing. Refill skins and garnish each with slices of banana. Stack around a mound of lettuce leaves.*

# Immigrant Cuisines and Ethnic Restaurants

## Lecture 31

In this lecture, you will learn about immigration and the proliferation of ethnic cuisines in the late 19th and 20th centuries. This lecture will examine not only the people who came to the United States and their cooking styles, but also how those cuisines went mainstream and became part of American cooking in general and, thereafter, became part of global cuisine. Specifically, you will discover that the narrowing of the menu, using familiar ingredients, and then marketing explain how Americans became such avid consumers of ethnic cuisines.

**Immigration's Effect on Food**

- In the course of the 19th century, the population of Europe more than doubled—from 188 million to about 432 million. The largest concentration of migration occurred between 1815 and 1932, when immigration quotas were imposed. About 60 million people left Europe and went to North and South America, Australia, and New Zealand. The population of North America (including Canada) went from 6 million to 81 million, largely due to immigration.

- In Europe, the population explosion led to increased pressure on land in terms of serious crowding. Usually, a generation after a sharp spike in population, the children born in these baby booms had no other recourse but to leave. The largest exodus was from precisely those places that were not yet industrialized, where there were no big factories and teeming cities in which to find work—or new colonies to find administrative jobs or running plantations.

- The sharpest rise in emigration from Europe also came at the very end of the 19th and early 20th centuries. This was partly due to climactic changes and crop failure. There was also a phylloxera epidemic in wine-growing regions. In addition, it was physically possible to travel long distances via steamship.

- Although most of the people who emigrated from Europe to America were from poor areas, they were generally not the poorest of the poor. It was usually the small peasant landowner or craftsman whose jobs were threatened by big landowners or cheap mass-manufactured goods. Most of the people who went were also young and unmarried or had young families. Interestingly, many people—perhaps as many as one in three—went back to Europe after a few years.

- As is often the case when one set of families blaze the trail, a slew of other family members or friends follow in their wake, and they tend to stick together in their own distinctive neighborhoods, which means that they didn't assimilate. The general pattern is that the first generation to emigrate rarely becomes fully assimilated, but their children—the second generation, who are born in the new land—want to assimilate. Ironically, it's the third generation that struggles to figure out who they are and where they came from and suddenly gets interested in the old language, culture, and recipes.

- The other very interesting thing about the influx of peoples is that although their own tastes may have changed from generation to generation and they may or may not have become assimilated, most of the cuisines of these peoples did survive. Sometimes they evolved, making use of ingredients available in the United States, or they may have toned down the flavors after a few generations.

- Even more fascinating is that most of these cuisines have, to some degree, been adopted by Americans on the whole. Some ethnic dishes go completely mainstream; others are at least known by most Americans or recognized as coming from a certain place. Many ethnic dishes get toned down or adapted to American tastes, especially in restaurants, but they survive in some form.

- Ironically, the obsession with maintaining traditions has created some very interesting fossils among immigrant populations. That is, they may prepare a dish or eat a certain food with meticulous care that it not be changed, but back in the mother country, the dish evolved or sometimes even disappeared entirely.

- Despite these culinary fossils, cuisines must change, or they become museum relics. Without the original ingredients, same cooking utensils and fuel source, or even the same social context, it's impossible and futile to even try to make authentic dishes.

- Another truly fascinating phenomenon is when an item becomes mainstream and is then reexported back to the home country in its new form. Sometimes, of course, it is the mass-manufactured or canned version that is exported—sometimes back home, but more often elsewhere.

**Italian Food**

- There is probably no single cuisine that has become more thoroughly adopted by Americans than Italian food. Many of the basic ingredients grown or raised in Italy are for the most part also grown in the United States and were introduced by Italian farmers. That's why Americans use the Italian name for these ingredients, including broccoli, zucchini, radicchio, and arugula.

- Other foods, that were not originally familiar to Americans, were soon introduced—including foods like olive oil and even wine. In addition, a whole slew of vegetables (artichokes, eggplant, tomatoes, peppers, and garlic) entered into the American diet after Italians settled in the United States. In fact, it's ironic that tomatoes had to be reintroduced to the Americas by Italians.

- Pizza changes in the United States because it's cooked in a commercial pizza oven—with more affluence—and people want to eat more ingredients, and they want meat on it. Pizzas are larger and cut in slices because America is a faster-paced society. The pizzeria selling by the slice is an American invention; Italy has it now, because Italians are now more like Americans.

- Italian food is very interesting because it really only catches on outside immigrant groups when it's marketed widely. Tomato sauce in a can, for example, is only made in the United States on a large scale once Americans get in a war with Italy and the supply of

imported sauce dries up. The new U.S. manufacturers think there's no reason not to sell tomato sauce to all Americans, and they do so very successfully. It's the same story with dry pasta, parmesan cheese, and macaroni and cheese.

- The fact that these foods become American is also ironic, considering that nutritionists did their best to change eating habits of Italian immigrants. They thought their cooking was too spicy, reeked too much of garlic, and was not well balanced because there were so many vegetables and people didn't consume enough meat and milk. Thankfully, they failed, and in a complete reversal of fate, everyone started eating Italian food. That's the result not only of restaurants, but especially of mass-manufactured Italian-American food.

**Jewish Food**

- Another example of an ethnic cuisine that has gone mainstream is Jewish food from eastern Europe. The cuisine of eastern European Jews is not terribly different from what their non-Jewish neighbors in Europe were eating—it was just adapted.

- Obviously, they didn't eat pork, but they could eat beef, which was made into a whole variety of cured products like corned beef, pastrami, and pickled tongue—all the things we associate today with a kosher deli, as well as dill pickles and knishes. Another thing that all of their neighbors ate was dumplings, but uniquely, the Jews made them out of matzo meal into matzo balls (*knaidlach*), which are eaten in chicken soup.

- Although there are many Jewish dishes that never went mainstream, the most fascinating one that did is the bagel, which is boiled and then baked, so it has a very hard, crunchy exterior and a soft inside. It is not a round bread with a hole, nor does it need to be toasted. The traditional way to eat them is with cream cheese and lox, and some people put a slice of onion on it.

- Apart from poor imitations, the bagel changed in the United States with a variety of flavors. Originally, bagels were plain or topped

with salt or maybe egg. Now, there are many types of bagels, including cinnamon raisin, chocolate, whole wheat, and all sorts of bizarre flavors.

**Mexican Food**

- The story of Mexican immigration is unique, partly because many of the people didn't immigrate. Instead, the United States swallowed a huge chunk of what was once part of Mexico: the entire Southwest, California, and Texas. There was later immigration also—partly in the form of migrant labor, but also in the form of a lot of people who came looking for jobs, not always permanently.

- The cuisine of Mexico is extremely varied and very different from what Americans think of as Mexican, which is largely the cuisine of the border regions, or even Tex-Mex. The remarkable thing about this cuisine is that it gained a wide following. Salsa, tortilla chips,



**Mexican cuisine drastically changed after it was introduced to the United States.**

nachos, tacos, burritos, and fajitas are all evolved forms of relatives back in Mexico.

- These types of foods all become well known among the general populace through mass-manufactured products like Doritos or in Mexican restaurants that serve what American diners expect. For the most part, there is a standard repertoire of dishes that are uniquely Mexican-American.

- Even though the range of flavors is significantly toned down, Mexican cuisine is exciting precisely because it's spicy, well seasoned, and offers a range of flavors and textures that are completely outside of what most people think of as standard American fare. However, at the same time, it's familiar and recognizable. The simplification is the key to its success.

**Chinese Food**

- Chinese cuisine is by and large Cantonese cooking that evolved from 19th-century mishmashes of whatever immigrants could find, given few of the same vegetables or cooking implements—or much of anything that would have been used in China. Almost all of the American Chinese dishes, such as fried rice, egg rolls, and sweet-and-sour pork, involve a stir-fried meat and vegetables with rice.

- Chinese cuisine has a very limited repertoire with a standard set of flavorings, including soy, ginger, garlic, and sesame oil—nothing that would surprise or alarm diners. It became mainstream because it became codified and predictable. Chinese restaurants proliferated everywhere, with takeout and delivery options.

## Suggested Reading

Denker, *The World on a Plate*.

Diner, *Hungering for America*.

Gabbacia, *We Are What We Eat*.

Mintz, *Tasting Food, Tasting Freedom*.

Pilcher, *Que Vivan los Tamales*.

Witt, *Black Hunger*.

Zeigelman, *97 Orchard*.

## Culinary Activity

**A New Way to Cook Vermicelli**

Antonia Isola was the pseudonym of Mabel Earl McGinnis, who wrote the first Italian cookbook published in the United States in 1912, entitled *Simple Italian Cookery*. She had spent time in Rome and purported to introduce mainstream Americans to authentic Italian food, a process that continues to this day. As one can see from the following unusual technique, Italian American food and Italian food had already begun to drift apart, and this recipe clearly reflects the latter.

**Timbale of Vermicelli with Tomatoes (Neapolitan Recipe)**

*Take ten medium-sized fresh tomatoes and cut them in two crosswise. Put a layer of these into a baking-dish with the liquid side touching the bottom of the dish. Now put another layer with the liquid side up, sprinkle on salt and pepper. Break the raw vermicelli the length of the baking-dish and put a layer of it on top of the tomatoes. Now add another layer of the tomatoes, with the skin side touching the vermicelli, a second layer with the liquid side up, salt and pepper, and another layer of the raw vermicelli, and so on, the top layer being of tomatoes with their liquid side touching the vermicelli. Heat three or four tablespoons of good lard (or butter), and when the lard boils pour it over the tomatoes and vermicelli; then put the dish into the oven.*

# War, Nutritionism, and the Great Depression

## Lecture 32

In this lecture, you will learn how World War I, along with later events of the early 20th century, changed how civilians ate. A precondition for the role of food in mechanized warfare was simply the expansion of agriculture and ranching, both of which had become big businesses. During that time, farming had become thoroughly mechanized, and the price of food dropped dramatically. In the early years of the century, Americans were extremely well fed—especially by comparison with the rest of the world—and it was largely this abundance that made the United States crucial to the war effort.

**World War I**

- When World War I broke out, the United States was isolationist and had no intention of getting involved in the conflict. Germany mobilized very quickly and invaded Belgium with the intention of sweeping down into France, and the two countries basically dug trenches and fought for several years on the Western Front.

- In the middle of it all, the Belgians, who were by this point largely dependent on imports for food, were completely cut off—until Herbert Hoover, who was living in London at the time, decided to mount a rescue operation entirely on his own volition and without any pay. He convinced the Germans that because the United States was neutral, he should be allowed to send food into Belgium.

- Hoover also had to convince the British, who were afraid that anything he sent would be eaten by German soldiers. A deal was finally arranged, and Hoover organized food relief—including the shipping, distribution, and cooking—for 10 million people every day. This worked for several years, until the United States entered the war and unrestricted submarine warfare hit many U.S. trading vessels and the *Lusitania*, carrying U.S. citizens.

- Woodrow Wilson appointed Hoover as the practical dictator of the government's wartime Food Administration. In 1917, Wilson passed through Congress the Lever Act, or the Food and Fuel Control Act, which basically gave the government complete control of prices, transport of food (to prevent hoarding and shortages), and careful control of all exports. Perhaps most importantly, Hoover was given control of a huge propaganda machine to convince people to eat less so that food could be sent to soldiers and allies abroad.

- When the war ended, Hoover insisted that the United States continue aid—even to the Germans, who he thought would never be allies in the future if they were allowed to perish. The allies prevented it, and of course, he was right. However, food did get to most of Europe, in so-called care packages.

- All of the food industries that had retooled to make quick, convenient, and shelf-stable foods for the war effort were not about to discontinue those lines, so after the war, they simply marketed them to civilians. Army rations in cans are a good example.

- The post-war period was also relatively prosperous. Brand-name, nationally distributed products flourished, mounting huge advertizing campaigns. They developed attractive packaging to sell products, and foods (often originally designed for war) were increasingly marketed with convenience in mind. Underlying all of these changes was the fact that more people were now living and working in cities, so there was a demand not only for more food, but also more diverse kinds of food that could be prepared quickly by busy people.

- By 1900, the food processing industry accounted for 20 percent of the nation's manufacturing. Increasingly, there were fewer and fewer food giants; instead, big corporations controlled the supply of food. By the 1920s, a few big companies—including Nabisco, Heinz, and General Foods—were dictating what people ate. At this time, food manufacturing was the largest industry in the country, surpassing even steel and textiles in the amount of money invested.

- Not only was much of the food people ate highly processed, but they also began to eat more. For maybe the first time in human history, a population on the whole, rather than just a few elites, was either very well fed or actually overfed. Food was cheap, and a stout body meant affluence.

- Newly arrived immigrants could afford more food than was ever possible back in their homeland. After 1924, when the big influx of immigrants stopped, and more children were born in the United States rather than abroad, slowly these populations began to become assimilated. They began to eat things like American breakfast cereals and processed and canned foods because these were cheap and marketed to them.

- Retailing also changed in this period. Before this time, most food was sold in small, privately owned shops. All that began to change as supermarkets bought out small operations. Supermarkets can buy produce and meat at much lower prices because they buy in huge quantities, and because they have their own distribution systems, they can buy food from much further afield and can consistently sell food at cheaper prices than small grocers.

**Developments Surrounding World War I**

- In 1912, the Great Atlantic & Pacific Tea Company (A&P) opened its first all-purpose grocery, as opposed to the teashops it had operated for half of a century. In 1916, Piggly Wiggly opened the first modern grocery store. It had aisles and shelves lined with prepackaged and prepriced items. Speed, efficiency, and low prices meant that big grocery chains pushed out the mom-and-pop stores.

- In 1931, refrigerators also finally became practical devices once their huge compressors that contained ammonia or sulfur dioxide, which sometimes explodes, were replaced with a chlorinated fluorocarbon (CFC) compound called Freon 12. As a result of refrigeration, fresh fruit, vegetables, and dairy products also became staples in ordinary households.

- Because everything was prepackaged with readily identifiable brand names, people could do larger shopping at one time, stocking up the pantry and refrigerator for an entire week or longer with a whole variety of foods that would last indefinitely. By the 1920s and 1930s, there were all kinds of junk foods and household convenience items like Pyrex dishes and KitchenAid mixers.

- Perhaps just as important were new cookbooks—*The Joy of Cooking* came out in 1931—along with all of the cookbooks made by the manufacturers that explained how to use all of these new products. There was also a slew of new ladies' magazines like *Ladies' Home Journal* and *Good Housekeeping*, which touted the wonderful benefits of food processing.

- The discovery of the calorie and the role of vitamins in nutrition were equally important. This was largely the result of research done in World War I on how to feed soldiers more efficiently. Nutritional scientists had already identified proteins, carbohydrates, and fats and how the body makes use of them. Wilbur Atwater figured out how many calories are used in various activities using a respiration calorimeter, a large airtight tank in which metabolism could accurately be measured.

- Alongside of this was the development of home economics as an academic discipline—one that was considered suitable for women to enter—which was partly about domestic science (cooking and household management), but was also increasingly about nutrition, food science, and chemistry. Even the organization of the kitchen became a serious topic.

- However, all of the nutritional science and scientific studies did not make quackery obsolete. Perhaps the strangest fad of the early 20th century was Fletcherizing, named after Horace Fletcher, who lived in Venice and had endorsements of all sorts of scientists. Fletcherizing meant to thoroughly chew food until it's completely broken down, which took about 100 chews per mouthful.

- As a result of nutritional science—quack or legitimate—food corporations began to advertise their products with explicit health claims. Probably the most ingenious was how spinach growers paid for not just ads, but also for a cartoon of Popeye the sailor, whose iron-enriched muscles bulged whenever he gulped down a can of spinach. Popeye was introduced in 1929, and in the 1930s, spinach consumption rose 33 percent, apparently saving the industry.



**Spinach contains a great deal of iron and vitamins A and C.**

**Prohibition and the Great Depression**

- Aligned with a new interest in health was probably one of the stranger experiments the United States has tried as a nation: Prohibition. The temperance movement was growing steadily since the latter 19th century with groups like the Woman's Christian Temperance Union, and lobbying pressure became so great that the Eighteenth Amendment made alcohol illegal—and it lasted for 13 years. Prohibition was intended to reduce crime and poverty and improve the nation's health.

- People began drinking more hard liquor because beer and wine were too difficult to transport. Liquor was smuggled in by gangs—and there were only 1,500 federal officers employed to stop it—so this actually led to increased crime. Crime in general rose because Prohibition destroyed jobs. Breweries, bars, and wineries closed, and the ones that survived had to either market malted milk or grape juice—but most couldn't survive.

- The prosperity and completely unregulated wild speculation of the 1920s simply could not last. Agriculture was actually hit hard even

before the stock market crash of 1929, and it had a lot to do with too much food on the market and low prices. Then, there was a series of terrible droughts, which led to people losing their farms, and the failure of the banks caused peoples' savings to be wiped out.

- The Great Depression affected workers, too; there was the highest unemployment in history. This disaster forced the government to become directly involved in the food supply in ways that it never had before. Roosevelt's New Deal was essentially a series of ad hoc emergency measures designed to deal with the crisis, but it also changed the role of government in regulating food policy permanently. For the first time, the government was forced to take control of the economy and especially of the supply of food. They began to tamper with supply-and-demand economics, bringing an end to the free market economy—a legacy that remains, both for good and ill, to this day.

## Suggested Reading


Bower, *Recipes for Reading*.

Colquohon, *Taste*.

DePuis, *Nature's Perfect Food*.

Freidberg, *Fresh*.

Gratzer, *Terrors of the Table*.

Hartog, *Food Technology*.

Helstosky, *Garlic and Oil*.

Kamminga, *Science and Culture of Nutrition*.

Levenstein, *Fear of Food*.

Marinetti, *Futurist Cookbook*.

Mudry, *Measured Meals*.

Oddy, *Rise of Obesity*.

Pilcher, *Great Sausage Rebellion*.

Pillsbury, *No Foreign Food*.

Sack, *White Bread Protestants*.

Schwartz, *Never Satisfied*.

Shapiro, *Perfection Salad*.

Stearns, *Fat History*.

Theophano, *Eat My Words*.

Valenze, *Milk*.

## Culinary Activity

The early 20th century has been described as the golden age of advertising. It certainly was the first time mass media was used extensively to sell products; in fact, entirely new products were marketed in ingenious ways. Breakfast cereals are merely one example. Chewing gum is another. Think of a food product that appeared in this era. Search for images of advertisements for this product. What tactics did the ads employ? Who were they targeting, in terms of demographics, gender, and social class? Where did these ads appear, and what was their primary appeal? In other words, was it rational or emotional? Were scare tactics used, or were the ads aspirational, selling a particular lifestyle? Deconstruct the text and images, and look for subliminal messages. For example, an ad for vitamin-fortified pasta might claim that children need to eat well to grow up healthy, and this brand of pasta is nutritious. The subtext, though, is that friends and neighbors will look at your scrawny children, and you will be ashamed for not feeding them well. This is intended to scare you into buying the product. In the end, what are these ads really selling—food or fantasy? Think how advertising today functions much the same way, playing on our fears and desires.

# World War II and the Advent of Fast Food

## Lecture 33

Every day, the equivalent of one in four adults in the United States visits a fast-food restaurant. In 1970, Americans spent six billion dollars on fast food. In 2000, Americans spent more than 110 billion, which is more than what is spent on higher education, computers, or even new cars. Currently, Americans spend about 240 billion dollars per annum, which is more than double what it was a decade ago. In this lecture, you will learn about fast food and its connections with World War II.

**The Rise of Fast Food**

- Like in World War I, adequate nutrition for soldiers and getting food to the front were major concerns for the U.S. government in World War II. The technology was in place to measure the calories and nutrients necessary for maintaining health for soldiers, but what went into average rations was surprising. The types of foods that were sent to soldiers became staples of the post-war kitchen, sold as being easy and convenient, or are what we would consider junk food.

- Designed by physiologist Ancel Keys in the early 1940s, K rations were intended for short-term use by paratroopers and airborne divisions. A K ration had to fit in a pocket and be edible cold. He also had to compromise with what soldiers actually wanted to eat, so it contained canned meat, crackers, chewing gum, cigarettes, and a candy bar—plus a fruit-flavored powdered drink or instant coffee and sugar. A standard C ration, which was for more regular use, had more canned foods, including meat stew and dessert.

- There were also broader effects of nutrition research during the war. Roosevelt had a special Food and Nutrition Board, which was organized to look into how food related to national defense, and in 1943, they came up with Recommended Daily Allowances (RDAs). It is impossible to assess the impact that RDAs had initially, but it

is clear that nutrition labeling, food served in public schools and institutions, as well as what was considered healthy by the general populace was directly influenced by decisions made politically.

- The war, and specifically rationing, had other immediate impacts. The government wanted to send meat, fats, sugar, and canned vegetables to the front, and in this war, they were rationed back at home. There was also a growing realization that milling techniques destroy nutrients in the white bread everyone was eating, so not to become weak and unable to fight in the war and on the home front, the government required that all bread be enriched with thiamine, niacin, riboflavin, iron and calcium—as it still is today.

- The other important technology that was developed during the war was dehydration, which meant that you could ship dried foods that were up to 99 percent lighter, so they sent to the front powdered milk, dried eggs and mashed potato flakes, instant coffee, and dried vegetables that could be part of instant soup mixes. Of course, all of this caught on like wildfire back home after the war, and products like these caused the culinary skills of most housewives to become almost nonexistent.

- Another thing that was developed in World War II was polyvinyl chloride and plastics, which would not only revolutionize domestic interior space with all sorts of cheap plastic goods, but also led to plastic packaging for food, Tupperware containers, and Saran wrap. Aluminum foil was also invented. In the post-war prosperity, food technologists capitalized on young Americans' latest addiction by creating TV dinners, which are perhaps the single saddest thing about the decay of our culture and the sociability of the meal as a ritual that cements families together.

- This phenomenon is, of course, linked to a dramatic rise in eating out, which is itself contingent on the fact that practically everyone now owns a car. They can drive anywhere they like to buy food or eat at a restaurant. Most of these new restaurants were chains—places that were familiar, whose name you knew—so that you

were less likely to be disappointed. Chain restaurants flourish for the same reason chain stores and name brands do: They can organize on a much larger scale, buy ingredients, and ship them more efficiently.

- Apart from being chains, many of these restaurants served fast food. The novelty was that you could either drive up and be served right in your car or go in and eat quickly and get back on the road. The earliest versions go back to 1919, but fast food is not a uniquely American phenomenon. Most cultures have a form of street food, but fast food is food meant to be driven to.

- Fast food does not necessarily taste bad. It is engineered to taste good, with enough fat, salt, and sugar—all of which we may have evolved to crave—along with flavor additives. It would not have sold so well if it tasted bad. Needless to say, fast food is now a global phenomenon.

**The McDonald's Empire**

- McDonald's really set the model for the modern fast-food sector. Richard and Maurice McDonald opened their first restaurant in Pasadena in 1937 and moved to San Bernardino a few years later. The whole idea was to serve the food quickly, have an enormous turnover, and keep the price as low as possible. Essentially, the principles of the assembly line applied to food preparation.

- The key to their success was doing away with waiters, or carhops used in drive-ins. They did away with busboys and dishwashers. Everything was self-service. With a dramatically reduced menu—with no substitutions allowed—they could just churn out food industrially, especially because the working space was streamlined and automated as much as possible.

- In the early 1950s, the McDonald brothers decided to start franchising the business, which means that you sell the name for a fee and build a restaurant, and a private investor operates it, but he or she has to buy the ingredients from the mother company. In

1954, they hired Ray Kroc to handle the franchising, and he built it into an empire. He eventually bought the whole company.

- The idea of using assembly lines and franchising caught on like wildfire. In the first few years of the 1950s, a whole slew of people went to check out the new McDonald's and imitated it. Burger King was founded in 1953, Wendy's appeared shortly thereafter, and other restaurants selling different kinds of foods followed the same model—including Taco Bell, Kentucky Fried Chicken, and Domino's Pizza.

- About 90 percent of all new jobs in the country are created by McDonald's Corporation. In fact, one in five people in the United States have worked at a McDonald's. Annually, McDonald's hires about one million people, which is more than any other corporation—public or private. In 1968, they had 1,000 restaurants, and now they have 31,000 worldwide and open about 2,000 new ones every year.

- McDonald's is also the nation's largest purchaser of beef, pork, and potatoes, which means that if you want to sell potatoes, you have to grow the kind that work in McDonald's fryers—Russet Burbanks, which are the same spuds you see in every supermarket.



**Fast-food hamburgers are often associated with the American way of life.**

- McDonald's is the largest owner of retail property in the world, and they make more money on rent than on selling food. They also spend more on advertising than any brand. A survey of American school children showed that 96

percent recognize Ronald McDonald. In fact, more people on Earth recognize the golden arches than the cross.

**Negative Consequences of Fast Food**

- Clearly, the popularity of fast food had a lot to do with convenience. It also has to do with more disposable income. People can afford to eat out more, and the whole baby boom generation was targeted and became addicted to fast food.

- An unforeseen by-product of the fast-food industry is waste. Because they don't want to spend time washing dishes and silverware, those things are replaced with disposable packaging. They've actually gotten better in recent years—perhaps out of concern for the environment or public pressure—but they once used Styrofoam containers for the hamburgers, which led to huge piles of Styrofoam that never biodegrade. Now, everything is wrapped in paper, but it is still an enormous waste.

- The biggest gripe against fast food has been the effect it has on health. People have even tried to sue fast-food companies because they became obese—as if they had no choice but to eat there or as if they didn't realize it was happening to them. People can look at the nutrition labeling, which is now by law available to customers. The people who eat this food seem to not be very concerned and are certainly not going to stop eating it because of what the labels say.

- Sometimes, positive good can result from the power fast-food chains wield. For example, demanding that their suppliers improve standards for raising chickens and abandon battery-raised farming (those tiny, stacked cages) changed the entire industry immediately.

- Another consequence of fast food is the way it is marketed specifically to children. Happy meals include toys based on movies that are released at the same time. It's a way for Hollywood to advertise and a way for the fast-food chain to attract kids. Ironically, even if a movie flops, it can make a fortune by selling toys through

McDonald's or Burger King. In fact, McDonald's is one of the nation's largest distributors of toys.

- Fast food also advertises during children's programming in an attempt to form brand loyalty—and even in public schools, which accept money to help pad their dwindling budgets. Fast food is also now finding other outlets, including at stadiums, airports, gas stations, Walmart, in zoos, on airplanes, and even apparently in hospitals.

## Suggested Reading


Belasco and Scranton, eds., *Food Nations.*

Bentley, *Eating for Victory*.

Bobrow-Strain, *White Bread*.

Collingham, *A Taste of War*.

Counihan, *Food in the USA*.

de la Peña, *Empty Pleasures*.

de Silva, *In Memory's Kitchen.*

Levenstein, *Paradox of Plenty*.

McFeeley, *Can She Bake a Cherry Pie?*

Mendelson, *Stand Facing the Stove*.

Rosenblum, *Olives*.

Shapiro, *Perfection Salad*.

Zweiniger-Bargielowska, *Food and War.*


## Culinary Activity

**Experiment: Is Fast Food Really So Fast? A Hamburger Race**
Find a partner to challenge in this race. Each of you should have 10 dollars and your own separate cars. Start the timer. Competitor one will go to the

closest fast-food outlet and come back with as many hamburgers as can be bought with 10 dollars. Competitor two will go to the nearest grocery store and will purchase ground beef, buns, ketchup, lettuce, and pickles. Then, come home and cook hamburgers as quickly as possible, either inside in a pan or outdoors on a grill. This is partly a competition to see which is faster, but also compare how many hamburgers you could get for 10 dollars. Compare the taste of the hamburgers, too. Which was the better option? Which involved more time, labor, and forethought? Which ultimately "cost" more, not merely in terms of money, but also in expenditure of labor? If the competition was fairly close, why do people rely so much on fast food? Is it merely good advertising and the idea of convenience?

# Counterculture—From Hippies to Foodies

## Lecture 34

In this lecture, you will learn about the various individuals and movements in the latter half of the 20th century that challenged the hegemony of the modern industrial food system from a wide variety of angles, including gastronomic, ethical, and environmental. You will also learn about farmers' markets, sustainable agriculture, rescuing traditional foods and production methods, and what is generally known as health food. The focus will be on the 1960s and 1970s and the odd and ironic way these movements actually became part of the industrial food system—when they became a marketing angle for new products.

**The Second Health-Food Movement**

- Much like the health-food movement of the early 19th century, there was a second health-food movement in the 1960s and 1970s, except this one did not originate among wealthy people visiting fashionable spas and sanatoriums, but was really one facet of a wider counterculture rebellion and went hand in hand with hippies, free love, psychedelic music, and antiwar protests. They were basically saying that everything about the way most Americans live is wrong—including and especially their food—and it often had a political angle as well.

- During this time, many people believed that what most Americans ate was unhealthy; that farming practices polluted the Earth; and that technologically enhanced, mass-produced food was aesthetically bankrupt. They looked to simpler foods, often ones that didn't exploit animals, and also sought to eat local foods grown sustainably, in season, and prepared by human hands and shared—sometimes communally. They also believed in the value of spending time preparing food for other people.

- The environmental concern specifically went mainstream in 1962 with the publication of Rachel Carson's *Silent Spring*, which made

people realize that a shiny red apple, simply because it looks good, doesn't necessarily mean it's good for you. In her book, Carson promoted the idea of returning to simpler ways of farming more in harmony with nature rather than torturing it to get what we want.

- This message resonated nicely with the health-food movement that wanted to turn back the clock and return to older, simpler, and what they thought were healthier ways of life—by growing and eating "natural" foods, which meant food grown without chemical fertilizers or pesticides, without artificial preservatives or additives, without artificial coloring, and with the minimum of processing possible.

- Macrobiotic diets, which involve eating only whole foods and a progressive narrowing of foods until you finally live mostly on brown rice, became trendy. Veganism, or using no animal products whatsoever because such products exploit animals for the use of man, was also something new.

- Another important book, *Diet for a Small Planet* by Frances Moore Lappé, made essentially the same argument that the ancient Roman Plutarch made but in more explicit terms: If the population continues to grow, which of course it does, then eating meat is a remarkably inefficient way of using land because you need several acres to support a cow, and that same land planted with grains provides many more calories. More people can be fed on a vegetable diet, which the author saw as a solution to feeding poverty-stricken people around the globe.

- Perhaps coincidentally, the health-food movement also looked to time-tested ancient eating practices of non-European peoples. The strange and ironic thing about health food is that people outside the very small counterculture became interested in it, and people began to shop at health-food stores. They did so for essentially the same reasons as the hippies: They were afraid of processed, artificial foods.

- Unfortunately, where there's money to be made, someone will move in with a big scheme and invest a lot of money, so the major food

manufacturers started selling their own (mass-produced) brands of pita bread, tofu, pure peanut butter, yogurt, and whole wheat bread. In other words, these foods went mainstream.

- Even the health-food stores changed. Instead of selling fresh produce and locally raised foods, things increasingly came in packages. Essentially, they became scarcely different than food-industry products, except that these were usually lower in fat, used only natural ingredients, or were specifically vegetarian. However, they were still highly processed and corporately controlled. As a result, the entire social consciousness side of the health-food movement fell by the wayside.

**A New Interest in Cooking**

- Just as the counterculture was promoting its own ideal way of eating, at the same time, there grew in this country a vibrant new interest in cooking. At first, it was French cooking that enthralled middle-class Americans—not the sort of fancy haute cuisine that was in the great restaurant kitchens of the 19th century but, rather, a more simple and rustic French cuisine based on the countryside.

- In her first cookbook, *Mastering the Art of French Cooking*, and then on TV from the 1960s until her death in 2004, Julia Child taught people basic cooking techniques that gave them the confidence to prepare good, honest meals from scratch. It was French food, but definitely not haute cuisine. There were also cooking magazines like *Gourmet* and *Bon Appétit*.

- Cooking and entertaining became something sophisticated, a leisure activity, and also something to enjoy rather than household drudgery. The interest in cooking from scratch was a direct affront to mass-produced food. There was also a renewed interest in eating out, at every level of the price spectrum.

- Along with a flood of cookbooks and television shows hitting the market, in the 1970s especially, there was a new interest in "ethnic" cuisines. American people on the whole began cooking things

and trying things that they would never have dreamed of eating in previous decades. All sorts of exotic new cuisines—including Indian, Japanese, Sichuan, Moroccan, and Thai—came into fashion.

- For the most part, these cuisines require fresh ingredients, so instead of using premade curry powders or chili powders, people wanted to be more authentic by making real garam masala or using fresh chilis. In other words, in an effort to be authentic and prepare these dishes as close as possible to the way they are made in restaurants or abroad, people were forced to discover new, fresh ingredients like cilantro, kaffir lime leaves, plantains, and guava.

- Related to these developments was a campaign for real beer and the emergence of microbreweries. People came to realize that the mass-produced beer was really lacking in character and bore little relation to those that began to be imported from Europe, which had deep, malty notes; bracing hops; yeasty notes; and real local flavor. Microbreweries started popping up, and people began to realize the subtle differences among types of beer and ale.

- All of that began to change when people saw huge profits looming on the horizon. Just as with the health-food movement, some companies sold out completely, either by changing their product so that it could be mass produced or by renting out space in larger breweries to increase scale. Even worse than selling out was that the huge brewers started selling their own cheap imitations, usually just their regular beer colored with brown syrup.

- A parallel development, analogous to what happened with beer, also took off in the world of cheese making. In reaction to mass-produced, rubbery, "pasteurized processed cheese food," a few small dairies started experimenting with new kinds of cheese. They started with goat cheese because it's very easy to make and inexpensive to keep goats. Soon, all sorts of other cheese makers started popping up, making excellent blue cheeses as well as aged cheddars.

- Unfortunately, the big companies and even state dairy boards that had a lot of money were able to capitalize on this interest. Nationwide, they lobbied to have the "real" sticker on anything that qualifies as cheese. The California Association launched an enormous campaign to compete with the Wisconsin giants. These cooperatives essentially force their suppliers to contribute to their advertising schemes. The cheese campaign labels ultimately confuse consumers so that they can't distinguish artisanal from industrial, so the former hold a tiny fraction of the market, are still expensive luxury items, and are hard to find.

**Organic Food and Farmers' Markets**

- The only labeling we have that passed legislation after a long, bitter battle is for organic produce. The difficulty with legislation was in defining exactly what "organic" means. Until recently, there was no legal definition, and you were not allowed to put it on a label, but even the laws that have been passed are confusing. "Organic"




**Fruits and vegetables that are certifiably organic do not contain chemically formulated fertilizers, growth stimulants, antibiotics, or pesticides.**

has become just another way to market products—a way to sell more food.

- Parallel to these developments is a movement called Slow Food, founded in 1989 by an Italian, Carlo Petrini, in reaction to the opening of a McDonald's at the foot of the Spanish steps in Rome. It began largely as a gastronomic movement—to get people to slow down and enjoy the pleasures of the table in good company and also to keep alive regional traditions in the face of globalization. More recently, they have begun to promote fair trade practices and environmental stewardship.

- Another very encouraging development is the growth of farmers' markets, which not only offer human contact with producers, but also put the profits directly in the hands of the person growing the food. This is the only way small farmers will survive and the only way consumers will have some control over what they buy.

- In recent years, what is known as locavorism—the idea that you should source food only within a certain mile radius (to cut down on transport costs and get fresher food)—is growing. Going local would mean returning to greater seasonality, and it might mean eating less of some kinds of food that won't grow in certain regions, including coffee, chocolate, and citrus. It would definitely cause changes in our diets, probably for the better in the long run.

## Suggested Reading

Belasco, *Appetite for Change*.

Innes, *Dinner Roles*.

Innes, *Kitchen Culture*.

Johnston, *Foodies*.

Kamp, *United States of Arugula*.

Kaufman, *Short History of the American Stomach*.

Oddy, *From Plain Fare to Fusion Food*.

Teuteberg, *European Food History*.

## Culinary Activity

The 1960s and 1970s witnessed a range of new ingredients, many of which derived from Asian cuisines but were incorporated in interesting, new ways in conventional American cuisine in the interest of health, vegetarianism, or simply novelty. The following is one worth keeping and is in line with counterculture values. It will taste better if eaten wearing sandals and a tie-dyed t-shirt—and listening to the Grateful Dead.

**Vegetarian Tofu Chili**

Take one block of extra-firm tofu, and crumble it up with your fingers, squeezing out any extra moisture. Heat a frying pan with a few tablespoons of olive oil, and fry the crumbled tofu on low temperature, stirring often, until lightly browned and crispy. Add to this a finely chopped onion, finely chopped green and red bell peppers, and a chopped serrano chili pepper. Season with salt, cumin, and oregano. Continue frying until vegetables are slightly browned and the spices are fragrant. Next, add some ground chili powder or paprika. To this, add some vegetable stock, either canned or made from carrot peelings, onions, celery leaves, and other vegetable scraps. Also add some chopped tomatoes. Continue cooking until the tomatoes have fallen apart and the chili has thickened. Serve with brown rice.

# Science of New Dishes and New Organisms

## Lecture 35

In the 20th century, new forms of energy and food science completely transformed the food most people ate on a daily basis, but it was not until the latter part of the century that science was systematically applied to gastronomy at the level of fine dining. Many of the techniques were borrowed from the food industry and were actually quite common. They had not, however, been applied to creating new foods that no one had ever seen before. This lecture focuses on the scientific side of our food supply—not only genetically modified food, but also other technologies, including those that have influenced gastronomy.

**Molecular Gastronomy and Scientifically Engineered Food**

- In the beginning of the 20th century, attempts to apply science to fine dining were largely pathetic. The whole idea was to embrace the era of the machine, speed, and violence, but in the end, most attempts to do this were laughably silly. It was not until toward the end of the century that science was successfully applied to creating new and actually edible foods at the level of fine dining.

- Ordinary food has been scientifically engineered for the past century. Manufacturers are not required to label foods that are genetically modified, so we are largely unaware of the extent to which our food supply has been changed. The U.S. government has decided that it would be better for us not to know, lest out of fear we reject these foods, as has happened in Europe.

- Genetically modified food is not in and of itself anything new. Humans have been altering the genes of plants through artificial selection for the past 10,000 years. Instead of nature calling the shots—through natural selection or sexual selection, allowing those adaptations that are best suited for a given environment to survive—we have been selecting them to get what we want.



**Genetically modified foods of the future might be packed with nutritional content—and taste great.**

- We have never been able to create new species; only nature has been able to do that over millions of years. The earliest forms of GMOs, or genetically modified organisms, were created in 1973 and involved taking a tiny gene, cutting off of a piece of DNA, and then slicing it onto a tiny chromosome (plasmid). Because this involves combining genes from one creature with another, it was called recombinant DNA.

- Today, there are two main ways to genetically modify organisms. One method involves taking an isolated gene plucked off the DNA that is known to confer some desirable trait, loading it in a gun, and shooting it into a cell—hoping the gene hits the right spot, becomes lodged in the cell, and changes the growing organism so that it expresses whatever the desirable trait may be.

- The other technology uses a vector, such as a bacteria or virus (often a pathogen), which invades the cell on its own and introduces

the new gene. It usually takes hundreds of trials to get one that successfully expresses the new gene. These modified organisms are generally unstable because in order to get the cell to accept the foreign gene, the organism's natural defenses have to be disarmed. That means that when this organism is placed in nature, it has an unusual ability to spontaneously mate with other kinds of foreign genes, which results in all sorts of new creatures that are created accidentally.

- This is especially dangerous with genetically modified bacteria because these extremely random mutants are often resistant to antibiotics, and some scientists are speculating that the rise in antibiotic-resistant strains of diseases is directly related to random couplings of GMOs. Moreover, these kinds of mutations are very different from selective breeding, which looked for similar kinds of attributes but was never able to use genes from other species.

- The only possible problem with cross-species exchange of genetic material is that we can often identify what a certain gene will do—make eyes green, cause pest resistance, increase height—but our understanding at this stage is still limited, and we don't fully understand all of the things any one gene does. With a new gene, we never really know what secondary, unexpected characteristics that organism may express.

- We do know, for example, that the pollen of genetically modified food can drift over into other non–genetically modified fields and spontaneously fertilize regular plants, so there are also combinations of genes that we have no control over and can't test for rigorously in a lab—even apart from the fact that the farmer growing the conventional crop may get all sorts of weird, unexpected hybrids.

- Moreover, because the modified organisms are patented, if some accidentally spill on the road and are growing in a farmer's plot, even if the farmer knows nothing about it, he or she can be sued by the company that owns the patent. These patents began to be issued in the 1980s so that certain companies had a virtual monopoly

on their development. Although the plants are legally considered virtually equivalent to conventional crops and therefore require no testing, they can nonetheless be patented.

- By using these genetically modified plants, farmers could actually use less pesticides and help the environment. Farmers were generally enthusiastic about these new crops because they don't have to spend so much money spraying, and their production costs went down dramatically. Of course, they had to buy the seeds from the manufacturers, but they benefited immensely.

- Another consideration is that if all of these genetically modified crops do well and increase yields even more, that might have an unforeseen impact on the soil—perhaps completely depleting its nutrients, which would demand more chemical fertilizers and irrigation. Just the same way that monocultures disrupt the natural ecosystem, we have no idea how these new organisms might affect insects, birds, animals, and humans as part of that ecosystem.

- Defenders of genetically modified foods say that if the population continues to rise, we are going to have to find ways to increase the food supply to meet the demand, so they are making a humanitarian claim that only with genetically modified foods will we be able to feed poor nations in the future. Assuming that the world population continues to rise, it means that we will have to continually find new ways to increase the food supply, and short of growing food in space or harvesting krill from the ocean floor, our resources are necessarily limited.

- Another factor is that the new technologies will have to be purchased from the advanced nations or, more specifically, from a few corporations that hold the patents. Diversifying agriculture around the world might be a much better way to supply necessary nutrients, and it also means that one blight wouldn't wipe out the single crop being grown everywhere.

- So far, genetically modified foods don't seem to offer the consumer any practical benefits. Most of the applications have been geared toward making profit for the food industry. For the most part, genetically modified crops don't increase yields and have not significantly cut down the use of pesticides.

**Other Food Technologies**

- Another technology that has garnered a lot of controversy in recent decades has been cloning. Its application for food would be to breed an optimal animal or plant and then simply clone it many times without the necessary combination of genes in sexual reproduction that would alter those desirable traits.

- The FDA approved this practice in 2006, and cloned beef, for example, requires no special labeling. Like GMOs, this is nothing new. We have been cloning plants for thousands of years; a graft or rooting a cutting is a clone. However, it's much more complicated with animals, like Dolly, the first sheep that was cloned in 1996 in Scotland.

- Cloning is not yet commercially viable, but it might be some day. The main problem in that cloning for food is like monoculture—if one disease kills one organism, then it will probably kill them all. Genetic diversity is nature's insurance policy, but cloned organisms are very precarious.

- Recently, there have been experiments to grow meat in a test tube. The idea is if we can get cells to divide and reproduce in a favorable medium, we can get a five-ounce piece of meat to grow to seven ounces. That would reduce the overall number of cattle grown, and the pressures they put on the environment, and increase the food supply. At present, it is still completely economically unfeasible, and it is uncertain what consumers will think of it—but it does remain a possibility. Ethically, it seems to make a lot of sense if you're thinking about animal welfare.

- Another technology that is now being used widely is hydroponic farming. Instead of using soil, plants are set into a medium and fed all the nutrients they need, and water is recycled. Moreover, you don't have to worry about insects or pests if plants are grown indoors in sealed greenhouses or even underground with artificial light. The problem, at least so far, is that foods like hydroponic tomatoes don't taste like anything, so soil might be essential to flavor.

- The most potentially promising food technologies of recent years are called neutraceuticals, foods that act pharmaceutically to fight off cancer, reduce weight, or even prevent diseases. For the most part, these have just been marketing ploys: ways to sell old foods in new ways, or incorporate them into processed foods. With increased knowledge of human health, we will hopefully be able to identify specifically what each individual should eat for optimal health rather than offering broad and fairly vague guidelines.

## Suggested Reading

McGee, *On Food and Cooking*.

Oddy, *From Plain Fare to Fusion Food*.

Pollan, *The Botany of Desire*.

Smith, *American Tuna.*

Smith, *Food Science*.

Smith, *Nutrition in Britain*.

This, *Molecular Gastronomy*.

Vega, et al., *The Kitchen as Laboratory*.

Vileisis, *Kitchen Literacy*.

## Culinary Activity

The microwave oven is perhaps the most important new cooking technology of the late 20th century. Many people contend that you can't cook in a microwave—that it is essentially just for defrosting, cooking popcorn, and making ready-made meals. The latter alone has assured the microwave a permanent place in the modern kitchen. However, there are a few foods that actually cook well in the microwave, especially vegetables. The following is not only quick and easy, but also really good.

**Eggplant Casserole**

Peel two large eggplants, and cut them into very thin slices. Pour a little olive oil into the bottom of the casserole, and season with a little salt, oregano, and basil. An excellent alternative is *za'atar*, a Middle Eastern spice mix with wild thyme, sumac, and sesame seeds. Lay on a layer of eggplant slices, season the same way, and add a drizzle of olive oil. Continue until the casserole is full. You can also add a little tomato sauce between each layer. Cover and microwave for 10 minutes or until softened. Remove the cover and pour off any excess accumulated liquid, and microwave again for five more minutes. Serve.

# The Past as Prologue?

## Lecture 36

This lecture will make some long-term predictions about food, where it comes from, who grows and processes it, how it gets to us, what we do with it, and how and why we eat what we do. Most importantly, it will suggest some ways that knowledge gained in this course might be used to enhance our appreciation of food—not only by knowing how we got to this point, but also by using the lessons learned to shape the future. Hopefully, this lecture will encourage you to learn more about the foods that have been discussed throughout the course and then use those as starting points for further exploration.

**Food Trends of the Future**

- Obviously, we have become a culture that is fairly obsessed with food, but it is not simply a matter of people in general knowing more about food or even enjoying it more. Our relationship to what we eat, how we eat it, and with whom have changed in many surprising ways.

- In terms of food writing, the Internet has had a major influence on the availability of recipes. Until recently, cookbook writers were afraid that the ubiquitous availability of recipes online would put them out of business. Online information is faster, more interactive—with more choices and ratings—and potentially better able to cater to specialized tastes.

- Strangely, the profusion of online information has given the authority, the connoisseur, even greater authority because even though it seems like we have more information, getting reliable information has become even more difficult. The last couple of decades have seen a profusion of high-quality food reference works written by authorities.

- Information about food will ultimately be easier to access, with workable recipes for a variety of tastes and dietary preferences provided by trusted authorities. Much the same is true of cookbook publishing. Despite the proliferation of celebrity chef cookbooks, there is also a greater number of excellent specialized cookbooks as well as basic instructional texts. Cookbooks have not and will not go away, if only because people still need authorities and decent instruction.

- The general trend of food on television is no longer the cook standing at the stove. Competitions and reality shows have largely replaced purely instructional cooking shows, and web-based instruction and specialized apps will probably eventually replace the traditional formats.

- There are other interesting gastronomic trends afoot. In the past few years, with the downturn of the economy, food has been getting a lot simpler. Comfort food is featured in magazines more often. Restaurants are becoming more casual and less expensive, or they are opening downscale bistros or even food trucks. Lavish extravagance and exotic rarities have given way to local, fresh, simple, homey cooking. This turn to simplicity is not just a current phenomenon, but it has happened many times in history.

- This new way of cooking is a new kind of sophistication because it is informed by ethical or environmental concerns or sometimes health. It serves as yet another way to "distinguish" oneself. In other words, if everyone can afford to eat at the latest molecular gastronomy restaurant, it just isn't that impressive any more, but if you can source your local, free-range heirloom pig and make home-cured bacon from it, that gives you a kind of savoir faire.

- The general trend in the past few decades, or even the past century, for home cooking has been toward convenience food—what the industry calls value-added food. Raw ingredients simply do not make as much profit as processed ones, so industry experts are continually finding ways to make life easier by coming up with products that require less and less home preparation.

- The result has been a general loss of basic cooking skills. Of course, there are always people out there who like to cook, and interestingly, men are doing a bigger share of the cooking at home than in the past—but people cook less in general. They also eat out more, especially at casual dining chains, and takeout is also on the rise.

- Of equal importance is that prefabricated food tends to be high in salt, sugar, and fat; the better it tastes, the more people buy, so it also contains so-called natural and artificial flavors. These are concentrated chemical additives (they are chemicals regardless of where they're sourced) that are designed to hit quickly with a burst and then fade quickly so that we're encouraged to eat more. Moreover, they make our palates jaded.

- If tax dollars went to subsidizing fruits and vegetables instead of corn and soy (which go into processed foods), there would be a period of displacement as farmers switched from corn to broccoli, and that transition could certainly be supported, but think of the result: more fresh, local vegetables and less oversupply of crops we don't need so much of.

**The Future of Agriculture**

- In the past century, the small family farm has been gradually disappearing, as huge industrial farms—corn, soy, beef, chicken, and tuna farms—producing food have become very big businesses. Farms have become huge and owned by fewer and fewer people.

- Not only is the cost of land very high—especially as cities sprawl into the countryside—on top of the cost of equipment, seeds or stock, and fertilizers and pesticides, but we have also seen manufacturing jobs and even service jobs exported. The long-term exporting of jobs is a trend that presumably will not soon reverse.

- It will probably happen to food as well. As people seek cheaper labor and land, our food supply will be largely imported. The so-called developing world is poised to start exporting basic foods that they will almost certainly be able to produce more cheaply than we can.

- Farming, where it survives, will provide the heirloom vegetables and fruits; perhaps organic, grass-fed beef; farmstead cheeses; wine and handcrafted beer; and all the other luxury items that we like to source locally and seasonally. Strangely, small-scale farming will probably see a revival. It will no longer involve cheap, bulk food because that will probably be produced elsewhere.



**Although it might change, agriculture is not likely to disappear in the future.**

- The farmers who remain in the United States will increasingly be college-educated, upwardly mobile people who find they can't find good-paying jobs and don't want to deal with long commutes. We are already seeing a burgeoning back to the land movement, but it will probably grow apace as more and more people turn away from the service-oriented economy.

- The farmers' market trend will assumedly continue to increase, but we will still need to buy other foods beyond produce. In general, supermarkets have replaced small grocers and butchers. More recently, there are large stores that sell in bulk or other stores that carry food so that you can do all of your shopping in one place—not only Walmart, but Target also carries food.

- Despite this, supermarkets, especially in crowded areas, will someday probably become obsolete. When it takes hours to get through traffic, fight crowds, or you have to take a bus because there is no supermarket nearby, it will become too much of a hassle if you live in certain cities. Just as bookstores have been largely replaced by Amazon and other online retailers, most of our regular food shopping will probably also happen online.

**The Latest Food Developments**

- Eating out is changing dramatically—not only in new types of restaurants and new modes of home delivery, but also in the proliferation of food trucks. These are not quite the traditional kind of mobile lunch wagon; they often involve very sophisticated, fusion, or artisan specialty foods. They are an excellent option because the setup is much cheaper than a brick-and-mortar establishment. Their real novelty, however, is the sophisticated way they use social media to advertize and announce their location through tweets.

- The same technology also supports the pop-up food event, a kind of spontaneous commando cooking. There is also the underground supper club, which is yet another way chefs and restaurateurs are getting around the myriad food regulations and high costs. Supper clubs meet in private houses and are unadvertised, and guests make a voluntary donation rather than pay a bill. There is a set menu, and you basically eat whatever the chef decides to make.

- All of these developments suggest that we are further stratifying into numerous more nuanced ways of eating and more varied dietary niches, and the market is supplying people with exactly what they want. Along with this increase in choice, typical food will probably become increasingly simplified and easy to eat—preferably by hand. Forks and knives will probably disappear because they are inconvenient. In this respect, although for completely different reasons, we might be going back to the pre-Renaissance.

- Even plates will become superfluous, because we will get used to eating things directly from the package, which will also be edible so as to cut down on waste. The flavors will become less complicated and easy to chew. Our aversion to eating recognizable animals will probably increase, meaning that foods will be disguised in other forms. Food will also come in more fun and interesting shapes and colors—another echo of medieval taste.

- Intrepid souls will still venture into the kitchen, especially on holidays or special occasions, but the kitchen as we know it may become increasingly obsolete, just as the burning hearth or the coal stove did. Maybe smart kitchens will take stock of our fridge contents, offer recipes, and even cook food for us.

- Perhaps the microwave will be the cooking implement of choice, but given our track record through history, we probably will find new fuel sources and harness them in ways that will once again transform cooking technology: perhaps in the form of more efficient solar ovens or by harnessing the power of thermal vents to heat our stoves. Food will be preserved much more efficiently as well, so maybe we'll do away with refrigerators altogether—or change how they are used.

## Suggested Reading

Albala, *Food Cultures of the World*.

Belasco, *Meals to Come*.

Pollan, *The Omnivore's Dilemma*.

Schlosser, *Fast Food Nation*.

Warde, *Consumption*.

Warman, *Corn and Capitalism*.

## Culinary Activity

Take a lesson you learned from this course and apply it to the preparation of a meal—whether using a new ingredient, a technique you've never tried, a recipe from some place we mentioned, or even a ritual we discussed. Wendell Berry said that knowing where your food comes from and even the history of a food increases your awareness and appreciation of the food; notice whether that's the case with the dish you try. Reflect not only on foods, unfamiliar as well as familiar, but also on your own habits and customs. How has the material in this course affected—and how might it further affect—the way you eat?

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**General Surveys**
There are several good general histories of food:

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Freedman, Paul, ed. *Food: The History of Taste*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2007. Excellent classroom-style survey of food history, written by active food historians incorporating the latest scholarship. Follows the same basic structure as this course.

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Though not as comprehensive, there are also relatively broad histories focused on cooking and dining that may be of interest, such as:

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Symonds, Michael. *History of Cooks and Cooking*. Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2000. Broad history of the profession told with grace. Relevant for all lectures.

**General Reference Works**

Several food reference works are also potentially worth having on hand because they are valuable across many topics:

Adamson, Melitta, and Francine Segan, eds. *Entertaining: From Ancient Rome to the Superbowl*. 2 vols. Westport, CT: Greenwood, 2008. A large encyclopedic overview of various forms of entertaining, formal and otherwise, in 120 entries. Relevant from Lecture 9 onward.

Albala, Ken. *Food Cultures of the World Encyclopedia*. 4 vols. Santa Barbara: Greenwood, 2011. Huge encyclopedia covering every place on Earth, discussing the history, cooking, and ideas about food, with sections of each chapter that point to the future.

Davidson, Alan. *The Oxford Companion to Food.* Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999. Massive, erudite, opinionated, and charming. A classic reference work decades in the making; requisite on every food lover's shelf.

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Smith, Andrew F. *Oxford Encyclopedia of Food and Drink in America.* Oxford University Press, 2004. An invaluable reference work to accompany Lectures 25–35.

**Suggested Readings and Primary Sources**

The following bibliography contains only works in English or translated into English, including any primary or secondary sources mentioned in the course. While not exhaustive, it does offer a good view of the depth and range of works in food history published in the past few decades. For example, there are now countless histories of individual foods, such as Bobrow-Strain on white bread, Coe and Coe on chocolate, David on ice cream, Fussell's pathbreaking *The Story of Corn* from 1992, and Salaman's 1949 history of the potato. There have also been a slew of small books (not in this bibliography) from Reaktion Press in their Edible series. Several publishers have dedicated food series that issue new titles every year, including Columbia University Press, University of California Press, Berg, Greenwood, AltaMira, as well as many titles from Oxford University Press and Routledge.

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Wheaton, Barbara Ketchum. *Savoring the Past: The French Kitchen and Table from 1300 to 1789*. New York: Simon and Schuster, 1983. A groundbreaking culinary history by one of the creators of the field.

Willan, Anne. *Great Cooks and Their Recipes*. London: Pavilion, 2000. Hands-on history of many chefs mentioned throughout the course.

Wilson, Bee. *Swindled: The Dark History of Food Fraud, from Poisoned Candy to Counterfeit Coffee*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2008. Gripping read about the crimes committed by the food industries.

Wilson, C. Anne. *Food and Drink in Britain: From the Stone Age to the 19th Century*. Chicago: Academy Chicago Publishers, 1991 [1973]. Detailed

study of English food from prehistory through the Victorian era. Relevant to all lectures about England.

Witt, Doris. *Black Hunger.* Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1999. Studies African American cuisine in the United States; highly theoretical and thought provoking.

Woloson, Wendy. *Refined Tastes*. Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins, 2002. Study of the candy industries.

Woolgar, C. M. *The Great Household in Late Medieval England*. New Haven, CT: Yale, 1999. Explains the food and function of elite dining.

Wrangham, Richard. *Catching Fire: How Cooking Made Us Human*. New York: Basic Books, 2009. Excellent study of the role cooking played in human evolution; still awaits archaeological evidence of cooking as early as the author claims.

Young, Carolin C. *Apples of Gold in Settings of Silver*. New York: Simon and Schuster, 2002. Food history with careful attention to tableware.

Zaouali, Lilia. *Medieval Cuisine of the Islamic World*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2007. Useful overview of Middle Eastern cooking's roots; however, redacted recipes are regrettable.

Ziegelman, Jane. *97 Orchard*. New York: HarperCollins, 2010. Account of several immigrant families' foodways while living in a New York tenement.

Zubaida, Sami, and Richard Tapper. *A Taste of Thyme*. London: Taurus Parke, 2000. Essays on food in the Middle East.

Zuckerman, Larry. *Potato*. New York: North Point 1998. Another nice potato book.

Zweiniger-Bargielowska, Ina, Rachel Duffett, and Alain Drouard, eds. *Food and War in Twentieth-Century Europe.* Farnham, Surrey, England: Ashgate,

2011. Comparative essays about military and civilian provisioning and how food changed during the world wars.

**Internet Resource**

FoodTimeline.org. http://www.foodtimeline.org/foodfaqindex.html. Offers a very thorough timeline that tracks both when each food came into use and years when specific dishes and recipes appeared, with hyperlinks to more detailed information about many of the entries also gathered together in an alphabetical "Food History A–Z."

# Notes