

# E JOURNAL USA

## U.S. SOCIETY & VALUES

JULY 2004

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# AMERICANS AT THE TABLE

## REFLECTIONS ON FOOD AND CULTURE

# ABOUT THIS ISSUE

“TELL ME WHAT YOU EAT, AND  
I WILL TELL YOU WHAT YOU ARE.”

JEAN ANTHELME BRILLAT-SAVARIN

**B**rillat-Savarin, the French lawyer, politician, and author of such classic writings on food as *The Physiology of Taste*, spent two years in the United States during the French Revolution. The contemporary version of his famous thought has become a popular expression in America: “You are what you eat” is a phrase open to a variety of interpretations. In the pages that follow we examine how Americans prepare and consume food and what these traditions reveal about our culture. In a sense we are parsing out the literal implications of Brillat-Savarin’s maxim – using food as a way to understand the deepest values of those living in the United States today.

One of the most striking things about any discussion of American culinary customs is how quickly the trail leads beyond the borders of this country. The United States is a rich and varied blend of races, religions, and ethnicities, and this diversity is reflected in our cuisine. Our eating habits have much to tell about our nation’s social, cultural, economic, and demographic history. While we have never developed a national cuisine in the same sense as some older nations, the early immigrants from England and Central Europe brought a meat and potato fare that is still found on millions of American tables every day. Pot roast, mashed potatoes, various incarnations of ground meat (including meatloaf, hamburger, sausages, and the quintessential American hot dog) and noodle dishes such as macaroni and cheese, as well as breads, bagels, pickles, and cabbage slaws, are all modern-day descendants of dishes that graced the tables of our German, Polish, and Jewish ancestors in middle Europe.

The pervasiveness of meat and potatoes on the American table, however, did not stop the emergence of distinct regional cuisines, which often combined unique (and sometimes new) regional ingredients with the particular culinary traditions of a dominant immigrant

group. French Acadians who immigrated to Louisiana used the crayfish in the bayous as a key ingredient in what came to be called “Cajun” cooking; German immigrants settling in the grain-rich farm country of Wisconsin established a beer and bratwurst culture in the upper Midwest; and plentiful blue crabs in Maryland, clams on Cape Cod, and lobster in Maine provided English settlers with victuals that are still popular nearly four centuries later.

Succeeding waves of immigrants, including those arriving on our shores today, have brought new culinary traditions and adapted them to the ingredients, kitchens, and customs they found in their new homeland—ever expanding what we call “American food.” The evolution of American food is very much like the continually changing face of America—a work in progress.

Regular readers of our electronic journals are aware that our usual approach is to provide information and context on U.S. government policies on many contemporary international issues. In early editorial discussions for this journal, we considered that approach – for example, articles on how America feeds its poor, U.S. food distribution programs around the world, the debate over genetically modified foods – but in the end we decided that these worthy topics should be the subject of a different journal at a different time. We believe that this journal will give readers some important and special insights into American life and values and, in doing so, perhaps touch a common chord with other cultures. As the late America food writer James A. Beard once put it, “Food is our common ground, a universal experience.”

In celebrating America’s amazing culinary diversity, we celebrate America’s diversity per se. In our opening essay, author David Rosengarten describes, using the examples of Italian and Chinese cuisine, how the United

States draws upon the traditional cooking of its many different immigrant groups to create a unique, vibrant, and ever-changing culinary scene. Next, three authors from widely different backgrounds provide insightful and nostalgic reflections on that most American of holidays, Thanksgiving, the celebration of which culminates around the dinner table. Other articles explore the origins and preparation of such uniquely American foods as barbecue, iced tea, and sandwiches—many of which have come to epitomize the character and personality of certain American cities and regions, and are sources of enormous pride to the people who prepare and consume them. We also include some information on how

Americans are coping with a problem related to our bounty—obesity. Finally, we include some light notes in the form of a glossary of American food idioms.

We hope that as you read these articles, you will be informed as well as amused. Most of all, however, we hope that through these pages you will gain new insights into the American character and a greater understanding of U.S. society and values as reflected in our culinary heritage.

*—The Editors*



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# U.S. SOCIETY & VALUES

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# WE ARE WHAT WE EAT: WE ARE A NATION OF IMMIGRANTS!

DAVID ROSENGARTEN

*Numerous influences have affected the development of cuisine in the United States. Native Americans are credited with making corn a major ingredient in the national diet. Early immigrants from China and Italy, as well as slaves from Africa, all contributed to the development of foods that Americans commonly eat today. The absence of royalty, a motivating force for culinary inventiveness in other countries, such as France and China, coupled with the "stoic, utilitarian sensibility" of the Puritan Ethic, may have hindered development of fine cuisine during the country's early decades, but adoption and adaptation of dishes brought by new waves of immigrants over the decades have sparked a richness and diversity in the fare on America's dinner tables and in its restaurants.*

*David Rosengarten is an authority on food, wine, and cooking, and the author of the award-winning cookbook, Taste. He is a frequent host on the Food Network, a cable channel shown around the world, and producer of the Rosengarten Report, a newsletter about food.*

American food has been woefully misunderstood around the world by those who view it from a distance only. "Americans eat hamburgers, no?" would be the typical perspective overseas on what Americans consume—and it wouldn't be wrong! We do love our hamburgers, and our hot dogs, and other simple, emblematic treats. However, we love many other things as well. And with ever-growing good reason. For the vast patchwork of comestibles that is "American" cooking today is one of the most vital cuisines in the world, owing its vitality, in large part, to the same element that built the strength of America in other ways—the arrival on these shores of immigrants from virtually all over the globe, immigrants who were able to combine the talents and perspectives they brought from other countries with the day-to-day realities and logistics of American life. Finally, today, food-savvy people everywhere are recognizing the high quality of what's now being cooked in America—but it took many years for that level of quality, and that recognition, to develop.

Why? Well, truth be told, the deck has historically been stacked against gastronomic America.

For starters, the Native Americans, the long-time inhabitants of this continent who established their American civilization well before the first Europeans arrived, were not ideally positioned to begin building a national cuisine. The very size of this country, and the spread-out nature of Native-American culture, militated against culinary progress, which is so dependent on the cross-fertilization of ideas. In old France, for example, a culinary idea could blow into Paris with the weekly mail from Lyon—but the likelihood of culinary ideas from the Seminoles in Florida and the Pueblos in the Rocky Mountains merging into something national was far more remote. The absence of great cities in the

landscape of the Native Americans also worked against gastronomic development—because time has proven that the rubbing of shoulders in a large urban environment is beneficial to the rise of great cooking.

Additionally, American cooking always lacked the motivating drive of royalty (which is part of our national charm!). Cuisines in France, in Italy, in Spain, in Persia, in northern India, in Thailand, in China were all heavily inspired by the necessity of creating "national" food for the royal court. This not only unified the cooking in those countries, but also boosted its complexities—as chefs attempted to outdo each other in pursuit of royal approval. Though the masses in 1788 certainly were not eating what Louis XVI ate (as his famous wife acknowledged in her most famous utterance), the cooking ideas and dishes that developed at Versailles and other royal venues over many centuries were later incorporated into what every Frenchman eats everywhere in France.

#### **PERVASIVENESS OF CORN**

Lacking such a galvanizing force, before the European arrivals American food never merged into a unified coast-to-coast phenomenon. Of course, the Native Americans made major ingredient contributions to what we eat today, particularly corn. It's fascinating to think that so many things that we do consider part of our national gastronomic life—such as corn on the cob, creamed corn, corn dogs, corn flakes, grits, tortilla chips, even our cheap American beer brewed from corn—are grounded in this ingredient preference of the early Native Americans. But did that preference lead to a "national cuisine?" By looking at neighboring Mexico—where it did lead to one—I think we can see that the answer is "no." The Spaniards who started arriving in Mexico in the 16th century didn't merely grab a good ingredient and do something else with it; they truly blended their ideas with the Native Mexican Indian ideas. Tacos al carbon? The Spaniards brought the pork; the Indians supplied the tacos. When you eat in Mexico today, you'll find every table laid with modern versions of Indian ingredients, and Indian culinary ideas for those ingredients. You cannot say the same about the modern American table.

Later in America, other factors, deeply grounded in the modern American spirit, further conspired to stall a national culinary growth. When the Europeans first arrived, the battle for sustenance of any kind was the motif that informed the kitchen, not the quest for creativity; you cannot be inventing a grand cuisine when you're worried about which tree bark might be edible so

that you can survive another day. Picture the French citizen in 1607 in Paris—grounded, entrenched, ready to inherit a cooking tradition and help it evolve. Now picture the Jamestown inhabitant, starting from scratch, permanently preoccupied with more elemental concerns.

Of course, as American civilization grew, the pioneer spirit played its own role in the delay of culinary refinement. "There's a ridge over there—we've got to see what's beyond it." And, indeed, there were many ridges between Virginia and California. Not all Americans were moving across the country in stage coaches during the 18th and 19th centuries—but the still-extant flavor of American restlessness, of American exploration, of a kind of life at odds with the "our family has been sitting near this hearth for 400 years" mentality of Europeans of the same day, once again cut against the set of values and interests that normally lead to the development of great cuisine.

#### **SOME QUIRKY ASPECTS**

It is this spirit, of course—an ethos of "eating to live" rather than "living to eat"—that has led to other quirky aspects of the traditional American food world. We have certainly led the planet in the development of "convenience" foods—both because we have had the technological ingenuity to do so, but also because we have so many citizens who "don't have time to cook." Let's face it—rice that cooks in a minute, or soup that only needs a minute in the microwave, is not going to play a role in the development of American haute cuisine.

Lastly, it has been the poor fortune of gastronomic America to have fallen under the sway, for so many years, of a mainstream American value system—the so-called Puritan Ethic. A great deal of industry and good has arisen from this set of values—but no one can ever accuse the Puritans and their descendants of fomenting the positive development of the arts, particularly the culinary arts. I remember older people in my youth—this breed is mostly gone now—who considered it grossly impolite to talk about food, even at the dinner table. You received your sustenance and you ingested it, so that you could live another day. Why would any right-thinking person discuss the way something tastes, other than for reasons of vanity? And so it played out, for hundreds of years, in New England and elsewhere—a stoic, utilitarian sensibility at the table, hardly conducive to the development of fine cuisine.

Had this nation stalled after the influx of the original Europeans in the 17th and 18th century, our culinary story may have stalled as well. However, shortly after this

period, other immigrants began to arrive—and it is to these groups that we owe the rescue of the American palate, as well as the honing of the American palate into one of the finest culinary instruments in the world today.

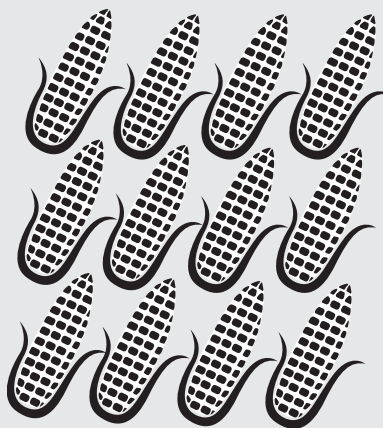
One of our greatest national disgraces ever was also the source of many of our nation's early gastronomic triumphs: the awful transformation of free African citizens into bound American slaves. From that tragedy, however, arose a strong sensibility that had a powerful influence on the development of American culture—not to mention American cuisine. The Africans brought intriguing ingredients with them to these shores—okra, yams, peanuts (which originated in Peru, then came to North America from Africa). They dined "low on the hog"—with the slave owners taking the best parts of the pig, and the slaves left to their ingenuity to make the leftover parts tasty. And, they had a natural camaraderie with slaves who arrived from the Caribbean—who brought to this country a whole new set of spices that added tremendous zest to American cooking. The slaves and former slaves were on the scene in Charleston, South Carolina, as that city became a major spice-trading port. They were there in New Orleans, aiding in the development of one of America's most distinct regional cuisines. And they manned barbecue—or BBQ—pits all over the South, helping to develop what I surely believe to be America's most significant contribution to world cuisine.

If all of that early gastronomic activity was generated by immigrants coming in through the Southeast, a parallel activity was occurring in the Southwest—where Mexican Indians and Spanish settlers

## The WORLD SUPERMARKET

In today's world economy, it may be hard to imagine that many staples in the international diet were once completely unknown on one side of the globe or another prior to the European discovery of the American continent in the late 15th century. For example, potatoes, first cultivated in the Andes Mountains in South America, were brought to Europe by Spanish explorers. Pineapples also originated in South America and were taken by Spanish and Portuguese explorers to tropical areas throughout the world, including Africa and Asia.

Food moved in the other direction as well. Lettuce and broccoli, which originated in Europe, are now grown extensively in the Americas, including the United States. The peanut, also called a groundnut, is a legume that moved in both directions. Peanuts were first cultivated in South America and brought to Europe and North Africa by Spanish and Portuguese traders. From there, it was later introduced to North America. Today, people worldwide regularly consume food items that originated in many different areas around the globe. Among other foods that originated in the Americas are: beans, cocoa, corn (maize), gourds, peppers, pumpkins, squash, strawberries, and tomatoes.



were bringing their flavors up through Mexico to Texas and New Mexico. What we ended up with in our own American Southwest was not very like what the original immigrants ate in Mexico, or in Spain—but it became a crucial element in our national dining picture, with enchiladas and fajitas as truly American as any other dish eaten every day across America.

### CHINESE AND ITALIAN DOMINANCE

By the latter half of the 19th century, the stage was set for the most important period of gastro-immigration in American history—when the Chinese immigrants and the Italian immigrants arrived. I call it supremely important, for if you go to any American city today, and open the phone book to check on the restaurants, you will find that Chinese restaurants and Italian restaurants, despite the rise in popularity of many other ethnic cuisines, still dominate the restaurant culture.

Chinese food in America, of course, has a secondary position behind Italian. It came to this country with the Chinese immigrants who arrived to work on the railroad in the West—or, rather, who came to feed those who were working on the railroad. The cooks didn't have much to work with, but they imaginatively threw together little bits of meat and vegetables in their large pans and gave it a name: chop suey. As this type of cooking hit the big cities, and spread across the country, a whole new cuisine emerged: Chinese-American, replete with Egg Rolls, Wonton Soup, Fried Rice, Chicken Chow Mein, and Spare Ribs. It never had quite the reach of the Italian-American food that was spawned a little bit later—because, though



most Americans ate this food, they didn't usually try to cook it at home. However, it did accomplish something extremely significant—it opened up the minds and palates of almost every 20th-century American to the exotic allure of Asian food, paving the way for the absorption of many Asian cuisines into our national eating habits.

A bit later came the big one: Italian-American food. Around 1880, the first wave began—immigrants from Naples, arriving at Ellis Island. Before long, they were living around Mulberry Street in Manhattan, where they desperately tried to reproduce the food of their homeland. They failed, because they could not obtain the ingredients that they used back in the old country. Through sheer ingenuity, however, they made do with what they had. So what if the new dishes used dried herbs instead of fresh, canned tomatoes instead of fresh, more sauce on the pasta than is traditional, and more meat in the diet? The Italian-American cuisine that they created was magnificent—though, if you were born after 1975, you'd never know it, because the best "Italian" chefs in America today eschew Italian-American cuisine, preferring to climb ever-higher mountains of radicchio, anointed with ever-older bottles of balsamic vinegar.

But the real triumph of the cuisine is in the American home—where pizza, lasagna, manicotti, meatballs, veal parmigiana, through frozen food, or delivery food, or home cookin', or routine items such as hot dogs and hamburgers play a tremendously vital role in the everyday fare of Americans. And, I daresay, what we learned from Italian-American food is extremely important—that food with origins in another country can not only become an interesting diversion here, but solidly part of our mainstream fare.

### **THE NEW IMMIGRATION**

This got proved again and again. The rest of the 20th century saw the arrival of multiple immigrant groups—and, with a national palate "softened up" by the twin triumphs of Chinese-American cuisine and Italian-American cuisine, the gradual acceptance of many ethnic

cuisines into our everyday lives. Though the immigration to America of such European groups as Greeks and French and Scandinavians, for example, was not in numbers approaching the Italian immigration, we still find gyro and souvlaki and shish kebab stands on many an urban corner, we still celebrate the French way of approaching food as a cornerstone of our American kitchen, and we still give Danish pastry a solid position in the world of the American breakfast.

Beyond Europe, foods from the rest of the world too have merged into the American menu. Has any restaurant type, after the pizza parlor, conquered our cities as the sushi bar has in recent years? Have you noticed, of late, the rapid rise of South American grilling restaurants, with Brazilian churrascarias and Argentine parrilladas paving the way? And what of the smaller-than-a-movement but bigger-than-a-quirk ethnic eateries of all descriptions that are mushrooming—from Afghan kebab houses to Korean BBQs, from Ethiopian injera joints to Cuban pork places, from Indian curry parlors to Thai noodle houses?

But that's not all, in gastronomic America. What's especially compelling about all of this gastronomic activity on these shores is the "melting pot" factor. Yes, at the neighborhood ethnic spots, Thai food doesn't fuse with Cuban, Polish cuisine doesn't get hitched to Philippine. But let an American take home from the Thai restaurant a taste for coconut milk in stews, and before long—helped by the extraordinary boom in grocery availability—she's combining Uncle George's Hungarian paprikash with Thai red curry. And at the higher levels of cooking, this kind of cross-fertilization goes on at an even more furious pace—with high-profile American chefs raiding the culinary stockpiles of scores of ethnic cuisines from around the world, creating, night after night, hybridized gastronomic flings that the world has never seen before. It is, in America, always a transformative process.....and what always comes out is always American food. ■

# CELEBRATIONS OF THANKSGIVING: LIFE ON A TURKEY FARM



NEIL KLOPFENSTEIN

*Growing up on a turkey farm instilled memories of hard work and happy times around the dinner table. In the years that have passed, recalling those memories has produced a deep appreciation for the value of good food and good family, and the recognition that not all persons around the world have been so blessed.*

*Neil Klopfenstein is a U.S. Foreign Service Officer currently serving as director of the Office of U.S. Society and Values in the Department of State. He has hosted Thanksgiving turkey dinners during assignments abroad in Brazil, Norway, and Thailand.*

I grew up on a turkey farm in Iowa. That's not the only thing we raised on the farm – we cultivated corn, oats, alfalfa and soybeans and kept a herd of beef cows and feed hogs. But it was turkeys that distinguished our farm, and the farms of my two uncles, from the other farms in the community. We were the only farmers in the area that raised turkeys.

My grandfather started raising these quintessentially American birds during the Great Depression of the 1930s. He was what one nowadays would call an “entrepreneur.” He was always looking for a new angle or new crop to make some money. Grandpa Klopfenstein, descended from the agriculturally astute Swiss Mennonites, was the first farmer in the northern part of Henry County to plant hybrid seed corn. When he read about how to raise turkeys in one of those farm journals like Wallace’s Farmer, he figured turkeys offered a profitable niche in an otherwise depressed farm market. He was right.

Raising turkeys is not for the faint-hearted or the less motivated. It’s a lot of work – especially when you are growing 4,000 of them as we did on our farm. The turkey

chicks arrived on the farm by truck from a commercial hatchery when they were just a few days old. That is the only time that turkeys are cute. When the young chicks were delivered in mid April in special cardboard boxes with holes on top and on the sides, we would carry them into a large brooder house and place them under gas heating stoves to keep them warm until they were large enough to generate their own body heat. When the chicks were about ten days old, we had to pick up each and every bird and clip half of its upper beak away. This bloody procedure prevented the turkeys from pecking at each other's backs.

The young turkeys were kept in the brooder house until they were about six weeks old, when once again we gave each bird some personal attention. This time we would shoo them into a small pen, and my dad and uncle would give each turkey a shot of medicine to protect them from turkey cholera and encephalitis. After the shots, the turkeys were transported by wagon to a fresh June field of alfalfa. Here, the turkeys grew strong on the free range and simultaneously fertilized the field with their droppings. Every two weeks we would move the 4,000 turkeys and their outdoor huts, feeders, and water tanks 30 yards down the field to fresh fodder. By the late fall, the alfalfa was gone and the whole field well manured.

### **ROUNDUP TIME**

Two big trucks with small cages would arrive early in the morning in late October, about a month before Thanksgiving. My dad, brother, uncles, cousins, and I, as well as a couple of strong high school kids we hired, would be at the turkey field to meet the trucks. This was "turkey catching" day – the day we sent the turkeys to market. The younger kids and grandpa would round up the turkeys in bunches and herd them into a pen. Then, the most strapping of the high schoolers would enter the pen and grab the now 25-pound birds by their two legs and hoist them to the men standing on the side of the truck. It was important to get a hold of both legs before handing over the bird to the men on the truck. A loose leg meant an uncontrolled turkey and a sharp flap of the wing in the face. Once the turkeys were passed to the men on the truck, they were stuffed eight to a cage until the truck was fully loaded. "Turkey catching" took about three hours and was followed by a hearty breakfast served by grandma, aunts, and mom.

We would always reserve a couple dozen turkeys for our own use – to grace our table and those of friends and neighbors. About a week after we had sent the other turkeys to market, we would dress the remaining birds. (This was another bloody procedure not recommended for

the faint-hearted). My family's Thanksgiving turkey was always one of those birds.

Thanksgiving celebrations around my house were always pretty much the same – same time, same guests, same table, same menu, and same rituals. We held Thanksgiving dinner at midday, which was always when the big meal of the day—dinner—was served in the farm states of the Midwest. Usually, dinner was on the table at noon, but because of the extra preparations of food and the unpredictable time of cooking the turkey, the actual sit-down-at-the-table time slipped to about one o'clock.

Even though I grew up with all of my cousins, aunts, and uncles on my dad's side of the family within a two-miles radius of home, Thanksgiving was an intimate family affair. My mother's parents would drive up from their farm forty miles away and join my brother, mother, father, and me – making for a table of six. Grandma and Grandpa Sander would always come a couple hours before dinnertime, bringing their contributions to the meal and offering to help in the kitchen.

### **SETTING THE TABLE**

We usually ate our meals in the kitchen, but Thanksgiving, along with other holidays and birthdays, merited eating at the "nice" dining table in the living room. My father and I would pull out the table from the wall, add a leaf, and then drape a freshly ironed tablecloth on the extended surface. (A tablecloth was special – we usually just ate with our plates on place mats). The table was always set the same, with the Japanese china my father sent from Okinawa to his soon-to-be bride when he was an Army corporal in the Korean War; with silver my father's parents gave the newlyweds in 1953, and with crystal given to my folks by mother's brother's father-in-law (an Italian Catholic immigrant glass cutter from New Jersey who married a Russian Jew from Boston and moved to California in the 1920's). Gracing the table was always a centerpiece with gourds, bittersweet ( a North American woody vine, bearing orange or yellowish fruits, often used as decoration), and some caricature (ceramic or wax) of a turkey (after all, we were turkey farmers).

The big holiday menu was also a constant. Of course, the center of the meal was the homegrown turkey – usually a 20 pounder. The most important side dish was bread stuffing, which we called dressing (and was never stuffed in the turkey because my mother had read somewhere that one could get food poisoning from undercooked stuffing). The other sides were mashed potatoes, giblet gravy, sweet potatoes, green bean casserole, corn (harvested from the field, blanched and

frozen the summer before), and an odd cranberry concoction of mashed cranberries, orange rind, walnuts, and jello (a favorite of my mother's, but no one else). The meal was always followed by grandmother's homemade (and I mean completely homemade – crust, filling, everything) pies. She served two kinds: pumpkin and pecan.

The table ritual was also always the same. My mother sat at the end of the table next to the kitchen. Father sat opposite to her. I sat on the side next to my grandmother (I was grandma's boy) and my brother sat next to grandpa. We gathered around the table and Mother would ask one of us boys to say the blessing; my brother usually did it. Then, my father would cut the turkey and we would pass our plates and load up on the side dishes. My mother and grandma would talk about her old neighbors and friends back in her hometown and the two farmers, grandpa and dad, would talk mostly about agricultural stuff. My brother and I would vie for the adults' attention. Occasionally, the table topics would turn to the events of the day: the Civil Rights Movement, the Vietnam War, inflation; but mostly the talk was local.

#### **APPRECIATING THE BLESSINGS**

I never thought much about the significance of Thanksgiving when I was a kid. I guess I knew that it was about good food and good family and being thankful for both. It wasn't until I was much older and left the turkey farm that I realized one should not take good food and good family for granted. Such things are not as prevalent as I thought, and one should appreciate such blessings.

It has been many years since I have spent Thanksgiving on the turkey farm. Many things have changed, and loved ones have passed on. But, Thanksgiving is still the holiday for which I am always most homesick. So, when I cannot be with my good family, I at least make sure I have good food. Of course, I can't go out to the field and fetch a turkey for the table, but I can insist that the pumpkin pie be made from scratch. That's because I make it myself, from a recipe I inherited from my grandmother. ■

#### **GRANDMA SANDER'S PUMPKIN PIE RECIPE**

(Quantity: two eight-inch diameter pies)  
(Measures: 1 cup= 237 milliliters; 1 inch= 2.5 centimeters)

##### **Pie Crust**

3 cups flour  
1 teaspoon salt  
1 cup lard (or shortening or butter or combination)  
1 beaten egg  
1 teaspoon vinegar  
5 tablespoons water

Mix flour, salt, and lard together with fingers until crumbly. Add egg, vinegar, and water. Mix together. Divide dough in half and roll into two balls. Wrap each ball in flour-dusted plastic wrap. After dough has hardened (30 minutes or so), place ball on flour-dusted surface and roll out crust. If dough is too sticky to roll, add more flour. Move rolled-out crust into an eight-inch pie pan. Flute the edge of the crust. Repeat with second ball of dough.

##### **Pie Filling**

3 cups of steamed, mashed pumpkin  
1 1/2 cups brown sugar  
2 teaspoons cinnamon  
1 teaspoon ginger (fresh or powdered)  
1 teaspoon salt  
4 eggs  
3 cups milk  
1 cup light cream

Stir sugar, spices, and salt into pumpkin. Beat eggs slightly and mix with milk and cream. Blend two mixtures together well and pour into two prepared (unbaked) crusts (see recipe above). Bake in hot (400 degree Fahrenheit) oven until pumpkin custard is firm (about 45 minutes).

Cool pies before serving. Garnish with whipped cream.

# CELEBRATIONS OF THANKSGIVING: CUBAN SEASONINGS



Photo Courtesy of CubanFoodMarket.com

ANA MENÉNDEZ

*Roast pork, not turkey, was the centerpiece of the annual Thanksgiving meal celebrated by a Cuban immigrant family “bound by common memories and hopes.” As years passed, the gatherings became smaller, culinary tastes changed, and turkey nudged the pig off the table.*

Photo above: A variety of mojo sauces can be found at the grocery, but our author says homemade is best.

*Ana Menéndez, a Cuban-American writer of fiction, is the author of a 2001 collection of short stories, In Cuba I Was a German Shepherd, and a novel, Loving Che, published in 2004. Before turning to fiction, she spent six years as a journalist for the Miami Herald and the Orange County (California) Register.*

We called it “Tansgibin” and to celebrate, we filled our plates with food that was strenuously – almost comically – Cuban: black beans and rice, fried plantains, yucca. Back then we didn’t know enough to know we were being ethnic, much less trendy. This was simply the kind of food we ate, secure in our culinary superiority, and heirs to a long kitchen tradition that expressed everything from annoyance (“You’re making my life a yogurt”) to ubiquity (“Like parsley, he’s in all the sauces”) in terms of food. Thanksgiving, in our own small context, seemed the perfect holiday. And if we were a bit embarrassed at not having invented it ourselves, we went about transforming it with the religious zeal of people finding themselves suddenly, woefully, far from home.

At the center of the party was, of course, the pig. In the early years, when my parents still dreamt of returning to their island, Tansgibin was celebrated, as were all major holidays in Cuba, with roasted pork. This was a time when the family was closest and largest, still bound by common memories and hopes, and a 50-pound pig roasting in the backyard seemed perfectly natural.

## PREPARING THE PIG

The day before, the men would drive out to Homestead (a medium-sized city in southern Florida approximately 20 miles south of Miami) to pick out a live pig for slaughter.

The pig was then cleaned, split down its rib cage (a process I never witnessed), and laid out over newspapers and a large tray in the kitchen to marinate. The marinade, the *mojo*, was the most important part of the equation and families lived and died by their *mojo* recipes. Today you can buy a strange chemical syrup in bottles labeled "mojo" – of which the best one can say about it is that it's another sad example of the banality of exile.

*Mojo* is not complicated to make, at any rate. And it makes up in exuberance for whatever it lacks in subtlety. First, several heads of garlic are peeled and then mashed with a little salt (to keep them from jumping) in a large mortar. If one is marinating pork, and therefore large quantities are called for, the garlic goes into a blender along with fresh sour orange juice. Cumin might be added, perhaps dried oregano. This is blended well and the whole thing poured over the pig. In the years before concern over food poisoning, the pig was covered and left on the table all night. As a girl, I was so addicted to the salty *mojo* that I often would sneak down to the kitchen and scoop up dripping fingerfuls of the stuff from the wells of the pig's open ribs.

The following day, the men would dig a hole in the backyard, light a fire, and set the pig to roasting over a grill, covered with banana leaves, and later foil. It had every aspect of ritual, as well as dress rehearsal – for come Christmas Eve the whole thing would be repeated with far more ceremony and purpose. These were long, warm days in Miami. The men -- shirtless and drinking beer as they told jokes and reminisced -- tended to the roasting from morning until evening. The rest of the meal was up to the women and the day was a whirlwind of pots and rice makers and sizzling *sazón* (seasonings) and smells and the "hish hish" of the pressure cooker hurrying along its charge of black beans, and then of yucca. It was a happy, bantering gathering, as I remember all women's efforts in the kitchen; and perhaps I'm one of the few women of my generation who does not consider the kitchen a chore or an affront to my independence, but rather a place of warmth and sustenance.

### INEVITABILITY OF CHANGE

Those were happy days, colored as they were by the brief honeyed hour of childhood, and when I look back on them now I have a strange sense of them having taken place not in America, but in the Cuba of my parents' memories. But change, always inevitable and irrevocable, came gradually. As usual, it was prefigured by food. One year someone brought a pumpkin pie from Publix (a chain of supermarkets). It was pronounced inedible. But a wall had been breached. Cranberry sauce followed. I myself

introduced a stuffing recipe (albeit composed of figs and prosciutto) that to my current dismay became a classic. Soon began the rumblings about pork being unhealthy. And besides, the family was shrinking: first through sicknesses and then death, and finally through misunderstandings and the pressures of a life that became more hurried and graceless by the day. A whole pig seemed suddenly an embarrassing extravagance, a desperate and futile grasping after the old days.

And so came the turkey. I don't remember when exactly. I do recall that at the time, I had been mildly relieved. I had already begun to develop an annoyance with my family's narrow culinary tastes – which to me signaled a more generalized lack of curiosity about the wider world. I had not yet discovered MFK Fisher (Editor's note: Mary Frances Kennedy Fisher, 1908-1992, was an American writer, many of whose writings celebrated the joys of cooking and eating well), and at any rate, I wasn't old enough to understand that a hungry man has no reason to play games with his palate. I remember that soon after that first turkey appeared, there was much confusion over how to cook this new beast. The problem was eventually resolved by treating the bird exactly as if it were a pig. In went the garlic and the sour orange, the night-long *mojo* bath. When this didn't seem quite enough to rid the poor turkey of its inherent blandness, someone came up with the idea of poking small incisions right into the meat and stuffing them with slivered garlic. Disaster, in this way, was mostly averted. And to compliment the cook one said, "This tastes just like roast pork."

I moved away from Miami almost 10 years ago. I've only been back for one or two Christmas Eve celebrations. But somehow I've always found myself in the city on Thanksgiving. My sister still claims it as her favorite holiday, even if the past few years she's used the occasion to leave town. The celebrations wax and wane. Occasionally we can still muster large crowds, though we haven't had pork for years now. Sometimes it is another occasion to see the larger family, and also to witness the ravages. It was on one such Thanksgiving that I overheard my father's mother ask him, "Tell me, have we been in this country a long time?" I was in the library of my parents' home, writing what would become my first book, and I immediately put the line into a story. None of us knew it then, but she had already begun the long decline into the forgetting illness that would eventually finish tearing apart the family as she babbled quietly in a corner, "Is this Tia Cuca's house? I have to return home, my mother is expecting me in Cardenas..."

### A SMALL GATHERING

This last Thanksgiving was the smallest on record. We gathered, for the first time in memory, not at a massive folding table in the porch, but around the regular dining room table at my parent's home. It was just me, my parents, my mother's mother, and her sister. My husband was in Iraq, covering the war. My sister was in Aruba with her boyfriend. My grandmother's husband was dead, as was her sister's. And my other grandmother had been temporarily shut in a nursing home, a final act of forgetting which my father could not stomach on Tansgibin.

When it came time to say grace, my father refused. "You have nothing to be thankful for?" my mother asked, angrily. "Plenty," my father said through clenched teeth. The old women eyed each other nervously. In the silence, the one agnostic among us began to pray. Probably I expressed an ironic thanks for family and asked that there be peace in the world. I've forgotten the smirking details. I do remember that the rest of the meal passed in awkward silence. There was war within and war without and there is a lot about that Thanksgiving that I wish could have been different. But the turkey was delicious. I realized, with a pang of nostalgia that surprises me still, that it tasted just like roast pork. ■

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### RECIPE FOR MOJO

(Measure: 1 cup= 237 milliliters)

Two whole heads of garlic, separated into cloves and peeled

1 tablespoon salt

4 cups sour orange juice (or a 50-50 mix of lime juice and orange juice)

1/2 cup olive oil (my own family skips the oil, but it's good for warming the spices)

1 teaspoon whole cumin seeds

2 teaspoons dried oregano (2 bay leaves or a few rosemary sprigs, while not traditional, can be substituted)

Toast the cumin seeds in a dry skillet. Pound the seeds in a mortar and pestle and stir into the olive oil along with the bay leaves or rosemary, if using. In the same mortar and pestle pound the garlic and salt into a smooth paste; depending on the size of your mortar, you may have to work in batches. In a saucepan, heat the oil with the spices until fragrant. Do not let it boil. Let cool, pull out the bay leaves or rosemary sprigs, if using, and then pour the oil into a blender along with the sour orange juice and the garlic paste. Blend well. Makes 4 1/2 cups, enough to marinate a whole turkey. Or a small pig.

# CELEBRATIONS OF THANKSGIVING: A MARRIAGE OF CONTRASTING TRADITIONS



Photo Credit: Courtesy: W. Ailee Burpee

APRIL REYNOLDS

*The author longed for the familiar tastes and traditions of her Southern upbringing when she went north to live and study in New York City. Her attempt to replicate them with her group of international friends led to compromise and adaptation, and eventually to new culinary practices after she married and adopted some of the traditions of her Italian in-laws.*

Photo above: Collard greens are high in calcium and a mainstay of cuisine in the southern United States.

*April Reynolds teaches creative writing at Sarah Lawrence College in Bronxville, New York. She is the author of *Knee-Deep in Wonder*, published in 2003, which won the 2004 *Beyond Margins Award* from the PEN American Center. Her first novel, it traces several generations in the life of an African-American family in the U.S. South*

Thanksgiving was the one day of the year my father prayed. My memories of him looming over our dinner table are as fresh as paint, and I recall his big hands clasped together as he searched our family's collective past year for things to be thankful for. "Lord, this year..." his voice dwindled as he thought of something appropriate, and we watched him squirm. Our house was literally falling down around us; the plumbing didn't work; you couldn't turn on the vacuum and television at the same time; there were holes in the floor and ceiling because our home couldn't stand up to Texas weather. Too poor (according to him) or too cheap (according to my mother), my father hadn't hired someone to come in and fix everything that ailed our crumbling house. But every year at Thanksgiving, my dad was determined to tell the Lord that he and his were thankful for something. "Lord, I thank you for my children," he prayed, but we all knew we were a mixed blessing. We were five mouths to feed and clothe and house, and my parents were fond of telling us we were more



trouble than we were worth.

What finally saved my father's yearly obligatory prayer were the small children and hungry relatives gathered around the dining room table. Starved and ready to eat, they would show their united impatience with overly loud coughs that always suspiciously sounded like, "Hurry up, man." Embarrassed by the silence, my father would inevitably state the obvious, "Lord, Lord, I want to thank you for the bounty on this table," recognizing that what a poor Southern family of seven could be grateful for lay right before him.

### **A JOB WELL DONE**

This holiday, in some ways, was like the Cadillac sitting in our driveway—a physical manifestation of my father's financial success. A black man who picked cotton during his childhood, who had not one but both parents die before he was 15, who didn't even complete the seventh grade, was able to provide enough food for as many as 20 uncles, aunts, and cousins. Though my father swore he never went into debt, clearly he spent at least two of his paychecks in order to provide such a bounty. In my family, Thanksgiving was a time to show your wealth, even if you didn't have very much of it. In essence, every year we gathered around the table to congratulate my father on a job well done and not succumbing to welfare.

And what a feast we had. The necessary turkey that over the course of the years had undergone a plethora of cooking techniques—from browned to the point of charred to a pale, almost translucent skin—that resisted the culinary advice my relatives gave my mother (cook it in a brown paper bag, it'll seal in the juice; blast it at five hundred degrees for an hour and then turn it down) was the table's centerpiece. It was surrounded by ham, chitterlings smothered in tomato gravy and hot sauce, collard greens with ham hocks, and the secret Reynolds ingredient: dill pickle juice. Then there were turnip greens, candied yams, Jiffy cornbread dressing, mashed potatoes, macaroni and cheese, and creamed spinach. For dessert: banana bread pudding, sweet potato pie, coconut cream pie, chocolate cake, cheesecake, and sometimes as many as seven pecan pies. I always skipped dessert, but how I loved the food. The family conversation, watching the intricacies of putting together a menu—my mother literally spent weeks thinking about food preparation—made it my favorite holiday. Without the responsibility of gift giving that Christmas and birthdays brought, the only thing my sisters and I had to worry about was how much would be left over after the meal and making sly bets about which cousin, despite being as full as a tick, would go back for a third helping of corn bread dressing.

When I left for college in New York, it was Thanksgiving that I missed the most. Too poor to travel back to home, I spent the short holiday in Brooklyn with friends. At the time, I chalked up their version of Thanksgiving to youthful ignorance. The only thing on the table I recognized was the mashed potatoes. None of my friends had heard of dressing and chitterlings. Gone was the giblet gravy and ham. Instead, David, my friend from California, Alicyn from Greece, and Penelope from France had cooked up vats of couscous and curried red lentils, yellow pepper and goat cheese tarts. We ate roasted capon in lieu of turkey. I'm no fool; capon is an old chicken. And to make matters worse, my sisters called me from Texas, spoon-feeding me family gossip and news on how the year's turkey turned out. I missed the familiarity of my family's food. Did moving to New York mean eating platters of tabouli and green falafel every Thanksgiving? Suddenly, I longed for my cacophonous relatives. What was Thanksgiving if my aunt Gladys wasn't there to yank off her wig and scratch her head, her personal signal that she loved the turkey? I decided I should make my own Thanksgiving. Maybe I couldn't have the numerous Reynolds clan, but certainly I was deserving of the once a year treat of giblet gravy.

### **FROM GUEST TO HOST**

It was a leap into adulthood, creating my own Thanksgiving meal. Suddenly, I had made the move from guest to responsible host all because of my favorite holiday. We invited friends and co-workers whose families were too far away. No more moussaka for me; I called my parents, taking copious notes on how to create moist dressing and my mother's world famous chitterlings. Everything was going to be wonderful, a true Southern Thanksgiving in East Harlem. There was only one problem: my husband.

Well, he's not really a problem, but he's certainly Italian. It seems I wasn't the only one aching for reminders of home during Thanksgiving. We weren't inviting enough people to justify every dish we agreed was essential for a proper Thanksgiving, nor did we have space to prepare so much food. Our Thanksgiving holiday, even now, is a complicated compromise, a negotiation of Northern taste buds, Southern desires, and Italian expectations. And so while we don't have chitterlings or spaghetti with red gravy, we did agree that without a rendition of Kenneth's grandmother's towering antipasti, Thanksgiving just wasn't Thanksgiving.

Capicola, mortadella, prosciutto, sopressatta, Genoa salami—all sliced paper thin—are piled up to a dizzying height along with endive, tomatoes, roasted bell peppers, capers, and Italian tuna fish. This appetizer is so important, according to my husband, that the women gather around this cold antipasto and have their picture taken just before

they all sit down to eat.

We don't take pictures of the antipasti in my house, but every year I faithfully follow Grandma Edith's recipe. And though I miss some of the dishes my family prepared, like my father, I'm grateful and happy with the bounty on the table. This marriage of mine, a coming together of home cooking and celebration, of Italian and black Southern cuisine eaten by my many Northern friends, is distinctly American. And trust me, next year I'll get to make my chitterlings. ■

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### **RECIPE FOR COLLARD GREENS**

(Measures: 1 pound= .45 kilograms; 1 cup= 237 milliliters)

Collard Greens

Collard greens as well as their sister turnip greens are a staple in most Southern homes. Like almost every Southern dish, preparation requires patience, but it is well worth the time.

3 pounds collard greens, chopped or hand torn  
6 cups water  
2 smoked ham hocks or 1 smoked shin  
1 medium sized onion, coarsely chopped  
Salt to taste  
Pepper to taste  
2 tablespoons Dill pickle juice

In a large stockpot or Dutch oven pot, add water and ham hocks. Under high heat bring to a boil. Reduce heat to low, uncover, and simmer for two hours or until water is reduced by three quarters and ham hock meat falls away from the bone. Add onions and cleaned collards. Allow collards to wilt. Cover pot and simmer for 45 minutes, until, collards are tender. Add pickle juice just before serving.

Serves six to eight persons.

# THE TASTE SETTERS

MICHAEL BANDLER & STEVEN LAUTERBACH

*Through writings and broadcasts, many chefs have gained renown in the United States for their trend-setting philosophies and approaches to food preparation. Here are profiles of seven individuals who have helped—and are helping—to define American cuisine.*

## BROADCAST PIONEER

There is perhaps no one who has been more influential in the development of American cuisine than *James Beard*, who is often referred to as “The Father of American Cooking.” Born in 1903 in the state of Oregon in America’s Pacific Northwest, he became interested in food as a child while helping his mother run a boarding house in his native city of Portland. He spent summers fishing, gathering shellfish, picking wild fruits and berries, and preparing meals with the ingredients he had collected.



Beard became a culinary professional more by necessity than by design, however, when his persistent efforts to break into show business as a singer and an actor were not bringing him a sufficient income. He drew upon his childhood love of food by starting a catering business in New York in 1935. The business specialized in cocktail food—appetizers often served before or in lieu of a sit-down meal—and quickly revolutionized the cocktail catering business by offering more substantial and high-quality fare than had previously been available. His success in this business led him to open a small food shop, called *Hors d’oeuvre, Inc.*, in 1937, and to publish his first book, *Hors D’Oeuvres and Canapés*, in 1940.

From there his culinary interests continued to expand and prosper. He opened The James Beard Cooking School in

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New York in 1955, and then another cooking school in his native Oregon. He served as the food and menu consultant for New York’s famous Four Seasons restaurant, and opened his own restaurant in the chic seaside resort town of Nantucket, Massachusetts. He appeared on television’s first cooking show, called *I Love To Cook*, on the NBC network in 1946, when television was in its infancy, and continued to appear regularly on radio and television over the following decades.

Most importantly, he produced dozens of cookbooks on all types of foods, many of which have become classics and which are often said to embody and define American cuisine. Throughout his life he was a tireless traveler and advocate of fine food, prepared with fresh, wholesome, American ingredients. Beard himself summarized his culinary philosophy shortly before his death in 1985 when he told *Newsweek* magazine, “I don’t like ‘gourmet’ cooking or ‘this’ cooking or ‘that’ cooking. I like good cooking.”

The legacy of James Beard lives on today in the James Beard Foundation, which grants national and regional awards in the culinary arts and strives to promote and celebrate the best in American cuisine.

## THE FRENCH CHEF

Mention the name *Julia Child* to almost any American above the age of 30 and unmistakable impressions come to mind. It might be the sound of the voice—deep, cultured, elegant, with a bemused lilt. It might be the facial appearance—warm and embracing, with eyebrows raised in curiosity, and surrounded by a corona of soft curls. It

might even be the rangy woman's bearing—erect, commanding, yet exuberant, bustling as she pursues the task confronting her.

Julia Child, also known universally as “the French chef,” is 92. In the glowing afternoon of life, she looks back on a career in which, virtually single-handedly, she brought neophytes and the hapless into the kitchen and introduced them to elegant cuisine and the means of preparing it. She accomplished this through decades of daily programs on America's public television network, through a series of books and personal appearances, and through an endless string of newspaper and magazine columns and interviews.

The title of her best-known book, *Mastering the Art of French Cooking*, which she coauthored with Simone Beck and Louisette Bertholle, says it all. Thousands upon thousands of people around the world met that challenge under Child's patient, genial, effervescent, and intelligent guidance.

The early phase of her life held few hints of the lofty status she would reach in a very demanding and relatively exclusive world. A California native, she was a graduate of Smith College and served with the Office of Strategic



Services during World War II in East Asia. She married U.S. diplomat Paul Child after the war and moved with him to Paris for a six-year posting. There she decided to attend the Cordon Bleu cooking school. The rest, as they say, is history. As she herself once observed, “I was 32 when I started cooking; up until then, I just ate.”

Her classic volume appeared in 1961, when Child was 49. Within two years, she had her own television program, *The French Chef* (which still appears here and there on U.S. stations in syndication). Other series—including *Julia Child and Company* and *Dinner at Julia's*—followed over the years, accompanied, inevitably, by a wide range of cookbooks.

In 2003, she attained an enviable new measure of fame when her television kitchen—direct from the set in Boston—was placed in the Smithsonian Institution's National Museum of American History in Washington, D.C., joining such other icons of American popular culture as Judy Garland's slippers from *The Wizard of Oz*, baseball legend Babe Ruth's bat, inaugural gowns of presidential wives, and various forms of consumer paraphernalia.

Lest her menu items—the crême brulees, the quenelles, and the like—appear to place her, and her style and substance, on a lofty pedestal, she evinced a gracious,

down-to-earth perspective on cooking, eating, and life itself.

“The meals don't need to be anything elaborate,” she once observed, soothingly, to her followers looking on, “just something simple to share with your family.”

## SOUTHERN SEASONS

African-Americans have had an enormous influence on every aspect of American culture, society, and history, and cuisine is no exception. No one has done more than *Edna Lewis* to acquaint the general public with traditional Southern cooking, and to bring it the recognition and respect that it deserves.

In many ways, Edna Lewis's life is typical of African-Americans of her generation. She was born on April 13, 1916, in Freetown, Virginia, an isolated community founded after the emancipation of 1865 by freed slaves, one of whom was Ms. Lewis's grandfather. She grew up there in an extended family that included three sisters, two brothers, and various cousins and other relatives.

It was in this setting that Edna Lewis first learned to cook by watching her mother and other relatives, and by teaching herself. It was also here that she learned the principles that were later to guide her as a professional chef; namely, cooking in the Southern tradition, with fresh ingredients, homegrown produce, and natural flavors and seasonings. Among the ingredients that Ms. Lewis believes are essential to Southern cooking are hominy (hulled and dried kernels of maize which are prepared for food by boiling), lard (pork fat), sugar, and butter.

In the 1930s Ms. Lewis left Freetown for New York City. She worked at a variety of jobs there before opening her first restaurant, Café Nicholson, in 1948. The menu included such traditional Southern dishes as pork chops with cranberries, roast chicken, and “Sunday night sheet cake” (a cake baked in a large, shallow, rectangular-shaped pan). The restaurant soon had a devoted clientele that



included celebrities, show business figures, and politicians as well as ordinary New Yorkers from all walks of life. She went on to found a catering business and to serve as executive chef at several other restaurants in the southern United States as well as in New York.

It was only after breaking her leg and going to the hospital in 1969, however, that Ms. Lewis began jotting down her recipes. This launched what has been perhaps her most successful pursuit, writing

cookbooks. Her first cookbook, *The Taste of Country Cooking*, was published in 1976 and was an immediate success. Organized by the seasons of the year, it celebrated the traditions of her childhood and youth, introducing a wide audience to the joys of authentic Southern cuisine. Several other equally successful cookbooks followed in the 1980s.

In the 1990s, Ms. Lewis moved to Georgia to continue to promote Southern cuisine. There she met a young chef named Scott Peacock, the owner of the Horseradish Grill in Atlanta. Mr. Peacock was, like Ms. Lewis, a fervent advocate of traditional Southern cuisine. He and Ms. Lewis became good friends and collaborated on another best-selling cookbook, entitled *The Gift of Southern Cooking: Recipes and Revelations From Two Great Southern Cooks*.

The popularity of Ms. Lewis's cookbooks among people from all classes and races is ample proof that the love of good food can truly bring people of different backgrounds together.

#### HEALTHY ARTIST

A generation ago, most Americans were not overly concerned with what they ate. Having lived through the Great Depression and World War II, many believed that rich, abundant, and relatively inexpensive food was a normal byproduct of the post-war "good life," and indulged themselves accordingly. But that began to change in the early 1970s, when *Mollie Katzen*, and others like her, began to promote the idea of healthy eating. This not only changed the way that many Americans eat, but also raised awareness of health and environmental issues and their relation to the production and consumption of food.

Katzen's approach is defined in her basic philosophy regarding food, which includes aesthetic, environmental, dietary, and psychological considerations in addition to purely culinary ones. "I want people to realize they can have it all," she has explained, "good, nutritious food in their daily lives, without sacrificing on flavor." It is that blending of enjoyable eating with healthy choices that has made this cookbook author, television personality, artist, and musician so popular on the contemporary American scene.

"Food is full of contradictions for many people," she observes. "I want to help people cut themselves some slack, to allow themselves some generosity, while still eating well. Most people associate a healthy diet with restrictions. I want to help people rediscover our great capacity for loving genuine, good food that not only tastes

great, but also increases our well-being and vitality."

As for the preaching that too often accompanies discussions of food on television or in books, she says, "Lecturing people about what they should do just makes them feel inadequate. People's lives are already so pressured and stressed. I'm much more interested in meeting them where they live."

Katzen, the mother of two children, was born in Rochester, New York. Her father was an attorney and her mother a social worker. She began cooking before she was in her teens, but first discovered the pleasures to be found in fresh vegetables while pursuing a degree in art at Cornell University in Ithaca, New York. She spent part of her time during college learning about different types of cuisine while working in a variety of restaurants.

Soon after graduation, at the age of 23, she and other aspiring restaurateurs formed a cooperative in Ithaca called



the Moosewood Restaurant, which became known for its vegetarian dishes. Its popularity boomed, and Katzen, at the request of many patrons, assembled a 78-page cookbook from a sheaf of recipes. *The Moosewood Cookbook*, assembled and illustrated whimsically by Katzen, was first published commercially in 1977 and

has since become one of the 10 best-selling cookbooks of all time.

In 1998, Katzen revised and expanded her successful volume. She reengineered the recipes to make them lower in cholesterol and sodium, and she used more standard measures and added directions to make the book more accessible to novice cooks.

In 1995, she inaugurated a cooking program on U.S. public television that gave rise to another cookbook, *Vegetable Heaven*, as well as a collection of "amazing recipes for cooks ages eight and up," such as the one titled *Honest Pretzels: and 64 Other Amazing Recipes for Cooks Ages 8 & Up*. It was her second children's book, after *Pretend Soup*. In all, there are more than four million Katzen books in print.

Most recently, she tackled breakfast with *Mollie Katzen's Sunlight Café*, a collection of 350 recipes for everything from raspberry-drenched rhubarb to coconut-rice flour crepes. Urging her followers to understand how fulfilling morning eating can be, she does so fully cognizant of people's time restrictions during those early hours.

Katzen's work, a *New York Times* reviewer said, "is the exemplar of a healthful cooking style that has no dogma

and offers no apologies.” As far as her inventiveness with recipes, wrote a *Washington Post* critic, “We are all eating better for it.”

### THE ACCIDENTAL COOK

Mexico and the United States have always been linked in many ways: historically, culturally, economically, and demographically. The two nations are also closely linked gastronomically, as the story of chef *Zarela Martínez* illustrates.

Ms. Martínez was born in Sonora, in northern Mexico. She came from a family of cattle ranchers and frequently traveled to the United States. As a young woman she immigrated to the United States and worked as a social worker in El Paso, Texas, for several years. Her entry into the restaurant business was, as she describes it, more or



less accidental. She married a widower with several children and began a second career as a restaurant chef to earn more money.

In 1981 Martínez met renowned American chef Paul Prudhomme, who has made Cajun-style cuisine from Louisiana popular throughout the United States and the world. Prudhomme became her mentor and encouraged her to specialize in her native Mexican cuisine. She and Paul Prudhomme gained even more renown in 1983 when they were chosen, along with two other chefs, to prepare the first-ever regional American buffet for seven heads of state, including U.S. President Ronald Reagan, at the G-8 Economic Summit in Williamsburg, Virginia. In that same year, encouraged by her success, she moved to New York City where she became the menu-designer and later executive chef for the Café Marimba, one of the first restaurants in New York to make a serious attempt to prepare and serve authentic Mexican cuisine.

Since then, Martínez's career has expanded and diversified even more. In 1987 she opened her own restaurant in New York, *Zarela*, which has become a culinary landmark in the city. She has also become a best-selling author of cookbooks celebrating the different cuisines of Mexico, including the Mediterranean and African-accented cooking of the state of Veracruz, and the unique cuisine of Oaxaca, which is the product of a rich fusion of Spanish and Native American influences.

She has also become a familiar face on television. She hosted a 13 part series for the Public Broadcasting System

called *Zarela! La Cocina Veracruzana*. She also appears frequently as a guest on many cooking programs.

Martínez says that she believes that her greatest accomplishment has been to help Mexican cuisine gain greater recognition and appreciation throughout the United States and the world. She pointed out that when she first began her career as a professional chef, she was discouraged by reading well-known restaurant guidebooks that disparaged Mexican cuisine. At that time, according to Martínez, Mexican food was considered to consist of little more than a limited range of adapted, bland dishes. Today, with the help of skilled professionals such as Martínez, Mexican cuisine in the United States is fully appreciated in all its delicious diversity and authenticity.

### IN UNDER THIRTY

She is self-effacing about her talent and her depth of knowledge of food and cooking. “I’m way too beer-out-of-the-bottle,” she says, brushing off those who would refer to her in champagne terms.

Yet over the past five years or so, *Rachael Ray* has zoomed into the U.S. popular culture spotlight in more ways than one, thanks to her personality, her television presence, and – not the least of it – the inventiveness with which she’s carved out a niche for herself.

The niche – or gimmick, if you like – is the 30-minute meal.

Almost everyone faces that urgent need – for one reason or another – to prepare something quickly, often unexpectedly. What works? What doesn’t?

That’s where Ray, a fixture on America’s 11-year-old, cable-based Food Network, comes to the rescue.

When the network’s executives – looking for something offbeat that would cater to the average person, rather than to the gourmet or connoisseur – came to Ray, she was skeptical. “I really don’t belong here,” she said, citing names of famous cooks who she thought did.

“Food is for everyone,” countered network president Judy Girard. “No matter who you are or where you’re from, you have a relationship to it. Everyone eats.”

And most people, as a rule, seek simplicity and speed. Primavera orzo, for example, takes 10 minutes to prepare (and 15 minutes to cook). Sorbet eggs take another 10 minutes. That repast comes in under the 30-minute preparation limit that Ray has set as her goal.

Her perspective is eclectic and global – ranging from fish

tacos in lettuce wraps to tomatoes stuffed with tabbouleh salad. Her selections can border on haute cuisine (smoked trout canapés with crème-fraiche and herb sauce) or be decidedly down to earth (double-dipped spicy chicken). Personally, she might lean to a basic minestra – beans and greens with garlic in broth, one of her grandfather’s favorites. “I could live on this soup all winter and never tire



of it,” she said recently in an interview.

Thirty-minute meals aren’t the equivalent of what’s familiarly known as fast food. As she has noted and reiterated, on television and in the growing number of cookbooks she has written, her approach runs counter to fast food, in that she offers balanced menus; she demonstrates how to move swiftly from one preparation to another to accomplish the entire meal preparation in a half-hour.

Ray is a product of a family rooted in cooking, from her maternal grandfather, who grew and prepared whatever he needed for his family of 12, to her father’s family, which emerged from the food-rich Creole culture of Louisiana. Her parents owned a family restaurant on Cape Cod, in Massachusetts, and later relocated to New York, where her mother supervised food preparation for a chain of restaurants in the Adirondack region upstate.

Ray began her career in a New York City department store, Macy’s, first at the candy counter and later managing the fresh foods section. From Macy’s she went on to a job managing and buying for a gourmet marketplace before returning to the Adirondacks to manage pubs and restaurants. Hired away to be a food buyer and chef at a gourmet market in Albany, the state capital, she began a series of cooking classes to boost grocery sales during holiday seasons.

The classes were labeled “30-Minute Meals,” and their popularity sparked local media coverage, which led to a weekly segment on an evening news broadcast. Next came a cookbook, which sold 10,000 copies in the area alone. Before long, Ray’s success spread, and her name and her niche became known nationwide.

Despite her newfound fame, Ray insists that she be seen as someone who is no different than her viewers and readers – in her words, “a busy person with no extra time and a good appetite for those who belong to the same category in life.”

## EAST MEETS WEST

One of the Food Network’s best-known personalities is *Ming Tsai*. Young, personable, and handsome, Tsai (whose last name is pronounced “sigh”) was born in Newport Beach, California, and grew up in Dayton, Ohio. He became interested in food and cooking at an early age when his mother (who, like his father, was born in China), opened a Chinese restaurant in Dayton. By the age of 14, Tsai was already preparing meals at his mother’s restaurant. He studied engineering at Yale University, as his father had done, but his real love was always cooking. Consequently, he spent two summers in France studying at the famous Le Cordon Bleu cooking school, and then pursued a graduate degree in hotel management at Cornell University.



After working at several different restaurants, including Natacha in Paris and a sushi restaurant in Osaka, Japan, Tsai signed on as the executive chef at Santacafe in Santa Fe, New Mexico. When the Food Network’s *Dining Around* program featured Santacafe, Tsai made his television debut. After this, he appeared on many other Food Network programs, including *Ready, Set, Cook* and *Chef du Jour*. In 1998, Tsai was given his own program on the Food Network, entitled *East Meets West* with Ming Tsai. This program, one of the first to feature Asian cuisine, was an immediate critical and popular success, winning a Daytime Emmy (an award of the Academy of Television Arts & Sciences) in 1999.

Tsai’s cuisine, featured on television and in his cookbooks, and at the Boston restaurant that he owns and operates, the Blue Ginger, is sometimes called “fusion cuisine.” Fusion cooking combines Asian and Western ingredients in innovative and exotic dishes. Tsai prefers the term “East-West” cuisine, which seems appropriate given his Asian heritage, American upbringing, and European culinary training. No matter what it is called, Tsai’s cuisine exemplifies how a wide range of rich and diverse influences have shaped the contemporary American culinary scene. ■

# LONG JOURNEY OVER OPEN COALS

SYLVIA LOVEGREN

*A method of cooking meat very slowly over coals was adopted by the early European settlers in North America and called barbecue. When it is done, the tender meat is chopped or shredded, topped with sauce that varies from region to region, and often made into a sandwich with a soft roll and some cole slaw. As with so many cooking methods, there is great debate among purists over what constitutes real barbecue, but none over its stature as a delicious and uniquely American dish.*

There's a certain deliciously American dish that takes hours to prepare, with specialized cooking equipment and fuel, and by a master chef who has trained for years to make it taste just right. It's beloved of U.S. presidents and governors, writers and ranchers, and many regular folk besides; you'll find people traveling hundreds of miles just for one delectable taste. But this is one American food you probably can't find in Paris or London or Hong Kong or Istanbul, or in any of the "best" restaurants anywhere in the world. Instead, you'll have to travel to places like Fayetteville, Arkansas, Wilson, North Carolina, or Waxahatchee, Texas.

And just what is this most American of dishes, so hard to come by outside the United States, yet so deliciously available within its borders?

That dish is barbecue...

No! no! no! the cry goes up. Everyone has barbecue! Look at Armenian grilled lamb, or Cantonese barbecued duck, or shrimp on the "barbie" in Australia. Nearly every culture around the world that uses fire has barbecue, you say. And you'd be almost right.

## **SOMETHING SPECIAL**

We're talking about a special kind of barbecue here—an arcane method of cooking meat very slowly over coals, the roots of which go far back into the American past. It is a cooking method so unusual that when the first Europeans in the New World saw it, they couldn't quite believe it.

As one Frenchman put it in 1564: "A Caribbee has been known, on returning home from fishing fatigued and pressed with hunger, to have the patience to wait the roasting of a fish on a wooden grate fixed two feet above the ground, over a fire so small as sometimes to require the

*Sylvia Lovegren, a filmographer and writer, is the author of Fashionable Food: Seven Decades of Food Fads (Hungry Minds, 1995)*



whole day to dress it.” The natives called their wooden grate a “babracot,” referring to the wooden framework used to cook meat, which the conquering Spanish turned into “barbacoa.”

### **DELICIOUSLY ADDICTIVE**

That long, slow cooking process—12-16 hours is not unusual—renders the toughest cut of meat falling-off-the-bone tender while imbuing it through and through with the tantalizing flavor and aroma of hardwood smoke. It is a food so deliciously addictive that no one who has tasted it would be surprised to hear about the elderly man in Lexington, North Carolina, who has been ordering the same dinner at his favorite “barbecue joint” every night, six days a week (the restaurant is closed on Sunday), week in and week out, for the past 15 years.

The early European settlers took to this odd style of meat cookery very quickly. By the time George Washington became the first U.S. president, barbecue parties were old hat. But the first president was not the last to enjoy this mode of entertainment, an ideally American way to socialize and conduct politics at the same time: President Lyndon Baines Johnson was famous for his Texas barbecues in the mid-1960s, where food and “business” were served up in equal portions. And still today, through large swaths of the South, Midwest, and West, barbecue and politics go together like ... smoke and coals.

The barbecue that George Washington was eating in the 1700s was probably the same kind of barbecue that is cooked along the southeastern seaboard of the United States today. In this traditional style a whole hog is split and gutted, splayed out over a barbecue “pit” (either a hole dug in the ground covered with a grill, or a large brick or metal container covered with a grill) and cooked 12 hours or more over hardwood coals that are continuously shoveled under the meat. A few cooks might baste the cooking meat with some spices and oil, but in general the long journey over the open coals and a little salt provide the only seasoning. When it is done, the tender meat is chopped or shredded (never sliced), topped with a simple sharp hot sauce made from vinegar and red peppers, and often made into a sandwich with a soft roll and some cole slaw.

### **ARGUMENTS ABOUT EVERYTHING**

Many barbecue purists will insist that this ancient style is the only “real” barbecue. But nearly all barbecue fans are purists of one sort or another, and nearly all of them think their own favorite barbecue is the best. A pit master (an experienced barbecue chef) from the eastern seaboard who cooks “whole hog” will scoff at those who cook pork shoulders in western North Carolina, who in turn will turn up their noses at those who cook pork ribs in Tennessee, who in turn are shocked by the mutton barbecuers of Kentucky, who are in turn appalled by the smoky beef barbecue in Texas. Sniffs one North Carolina pork shoulder-cooking gentleman when asked about Texas barbecue: “It might taste good, but it’s not what we’d call real barbecue.” Of course, his exquisitely barbecued pork shoulders are dismissed by an eastern pit master who says, “If you don’t use the whole hog, it’s not barbecue.”

But then barbecue aficionados can get into some pretty stiff arguments about pretty much everything having to do with their art. After deciding on the kind and cut of meat to be cooked, the next question is: What kind of wood should be burned? In the Southeast, it’s often hickory, but others swear by oak. In Texas it’s likely to be mesquite. And when you get to the people who don’t use wood at all, but use cooking gas (known as “gassers” by the “log burners”), well, “might as well put the meat in the kitchen oven and make a nice pork roast out of it. It sure as hell ain’t what I’d call barbecue!” says Smokey Pitts, of the Society for the Preservation of Traditional Southern Barbecue.

Then there’s the issue of whether the cooking pit should be open to the air (“open pit barbecue”) or covered to retain the smoke (“closed pit barbecue”). Closed pit partisans like the extra smoky taste their method gives and point with pride to the reddish “smoke ring” that forms in meat as a result of a chemical reaction between the smoke and the protein. But not everyone thinks that’s a good thing. According to barbecue expert Bob Garner, meat that is barbecued to perfection “is delicately flavored by smoke – not overcome by it like something dragged from a burning house.” Closed pit tends to be the popular style in the cowboy Western range of barbecue cookery – Texas, Kansas, and Missouri, while open pit is the style in the southeastern United States and among traditionalists.

And then there’s the issue of the barbecue sauce. Supermarket barbecue sauce tends to be of the thick, spicy, tomato ketchup-based variety, and that style is indeed popular in Kansas and other areas of the Midwest. But

most North Carolina sauces are thin and vinegary, spiced only with red pepper. South Carolina is famous for its mustard-based sauces. And some hard-core Texas beef barbecue joints serve no sauce at all with their smokey 'cue...and sneer at any outsiders innocent enough to ask for it.

### **A MAN'S JOB**

Two other things are unique about barbecue in the American food scene: First of all, it is a cooking style practiced almost entirely by men. Part of the reason for this is that old-fashioned barbecue is just plain backbreaking work, dirty and tiring. Logs have to be cut, split, and hauled; coals have to be shoveled; large cuts of meat have to be tended over smoking coals for hours. But the real reason men tend to be the barbecue experts may be much simpler: "Barbecue is just one of those things that men like to do to stay up all night and drink," claims Bob Garner.

The other interesting fact about American barbecue is that while most pit masters are men, they are just as likely to be African-American men as European-Americans. African slaves were probably cooking the barbecue that George Washington enjoyed in the 1700s, and their descendants carried barbecue cookery with them as they

migrated west in the 1800s, and then up into the Northern and Western states. In places like North Carolina and Texas, a strong European-American barbecue tradition has flourished.

In recent years, barbecue has gone competitive. From around the country contestants gather in wildly popular barbecue "cook-offs" in Kansas City, or Owensboro, Kentucky, or Memphis, Tennessee. They come—with their own highly complicated portable pits and secret recipes for barbecue sauce—to cook, socialize, watch other pit masters, compete for cash prizes and prestigious awards – and to talk and eat barbecue.

Authentic American barbecue may be hard to find outside the United States. And within it there may be arguments about what constitutes real barbecue. But whether it's delicately smoky "whole hawg" from North Carolina; or smoky ribs sticky with sauce from Georgia; or deeply flavored mutton from Kentucky; or spicy "burnt ends" (the crispy parts of barbecued steak) from Kansas City; or the heavily smoked beef brisket from Texas—it's all uniquely American, and it sure does taste good. One barbecue enthusiast summed it up when he said, "The best barbecue? It's the one that's sitting in front of me right now." ■

# INCLUDE ME OUT A REFLECTION ON “ICE TEA”



Photo Courtesy of Lipton Tea

FRED CHAPPELL

*The author, though a native of the American South, disdains the region's signature liquid refreshment, iced tea. He sees perversity behind the popularity of the highly sweetened drink, which he calls an "insipid banality," but that doesn't stop him from offering the reader guidance on how to prepare it.*

*Fred Chappell is a professor of English at the University of North Carolina at Greensboro, and is North Carolina's Poet Laureate. He has written numerous books of poetry and fiction, including First and Last Words, Midquest, More Shapes than One, Brighten the Corner Where You Are, and I Am One of You Forever.*

REPRINT CREDIT  
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There are people who eat cold pasta salad. They enjoy despoiling their greenery with gummy, tasteless squiggles of tough, damp bread dough that are usually made palatable only when heavily disguised with hot tomato sauce and a stiff mask of Parmesan cheese. This salad does have the virtue of economy. Wednesday leftovers can be marketed to Thursday customers of perverse taste.

It is probably perversity also that accounts for the prevalence of ice tea in our American south. It was Edgar Allan Poe who first diagnosed this immitigable contrariness of human nature in his short story, *The Imp of the Perverse*, and he undoubtedly saw it as a normal trait of Dixie character. But please include me out. I am one southerner who detests that dirty water the color of oak-leaf tannin and its insipid banality. When I am offered ice tea by one of our charming southern hostesses, I know I'm in for a long afternoon of hearing about Cousin Mary Alice's new babe and its genius antics in the playpen.

Hot tea makes sense. It can relax as well as stimulate and in fact may be sipped as a soporific. It can offer a bouquet

pungent or delicate and causes us to understand why the Chinese designated certain strains of flowers as “tea roses.” It can be a topic of conversation, too, as southerners revive the traditional English debate as to whether the boiling water should be brought to the pot or the pot fetched to the water. Such palaver reassures us that all traces of civilization have not disappeared under the onslaughts of video games and e-mail.

But if you ice the stuff down it cannot matter in the least whether the water or the pot has journeyed. Any trace of the tea’s bouquet is slaughtered and only additives can give this tarnished liquid any aroma at all. There is, of course, plenty of discussion about these added condiments. Even the mildest of southern ladies may bristle and lapse into demotic speech when they consider that a glass of ice tea has been improperly prepared.

Notice that we say, “ice tea.” Anyone who pronounces the successive dentals of “iced tea” is regarded as pretentious. And if you say “Coca-Cola” you will be seen as putting on airs, just as obviously as if you employed “you” as a collective pronoun. Down here we say “you-all,” “CoCola,” and “ice tea” and collect monetary fines from strangers who misspeak. Ignorance before the law is no excuse.

In recent years some enterprising women have seen the futility of the pot/water controversy and have begun making “sun tea,” a beverage that is never acquainted with either stove or teapot. They simply fill a gallon jug with water, drop in a flock of tea bags, and set the collocation out on the back porch to brew in the broiling August sunshine. If this method does not make the kitchen more cheerful, it does at least lessen the hypocritical chatter about proper procedure. Ice cannot harm sun tea; it is created beyond the reach of harm or help.

Now as to the recipe for ice tea: Lemons are essential and should be of the big thick-skinned variety, cut into sixths. They are never – repeat: never – squeezed but only plumped into the pitcher, four or five slices. Extra slices are offered on a cut-glass plate six inches in diameter. Mint may be added, but it is always submerged in the pitcher and never put into a glass where it would glue to the interior side like a Harley-Davidson decal.

And sweetening is the soul of this potation. The sugar bowl passes from hand to hand at a pace so dizzying it is like watching the rotating label on an old 78-rpm record. Southerners demand sweetness. The truly thoughtful hostess shall have already sweetened the tea for her guests with a simple sugar syrup that excludes the possibility of unpleasant graininess from bowl sugar. Sugar syrup for ice

tea is concocted by adding one pound of Dixie Crystal sugar to a tablespoon of water.

In the south sweetened ice tea is taken for granted, like the idea that stock car racing is our national pastime and that the Southern Baptist church is a legitimate arm of the Republican Party. If you order ice tea in a restaurant it will arrive pre-sweetened. If you want it unsweetened you must ask for it. Actually, you must demand it with pistol drawn and cocked. And you will have to repeat your demand several times, because tea unsweetened is as abstruse a proposition to most servers as a theorem of Boolean algebra. Even then you can’t be sure. My wife Susan once ordered unsweetened, but it arrived as sweet as honey. The waitress pleaded for understanding. “We couldn’t figure out how to get the sugar out,” she said.

Why southerners are so sugar-fixated may be a mystery, but it is an indisputable fact. We are a breed who makes marmalades of zucchini, tomatoes, onions, and even watermelon rinds. Our famous pecan pie (“puhKAWN pah”) is a stiff but sticky paste of boiled Karo corn syrup studded with nuts. Since this is not sweet enough, it will likely be served with a gob of bourbon whipped cream dusted with cocoa powder and decorated with vegetable-peeler curls of milk chocolate.

“Do you want ice tea with that?”

“Oh yes. Sweetened, please.”

Well, I’ll confess that, though born in North Carolina, I make a poor example of a southerner. I don’t even capitalize the name of the region. I’m a Democrat, a non-Baptist, and don’t care what kind of car I drive. To me, adding broiled marshmallows to yams is like putting raspberry jam on porterhouse. I once spotted a recipe in the magazine *Southern Living* for CoCola cake and had to fight down a surge of nausea. I flee as if pursued from fatback, spoon bread, barbecue, grits, and – ice tea.

Susan tells me I need sweetening. ■

# KNIVES & FORKS

FRANCINE PROSE

*A son's question about formal tableside etiquette sets the author to reflecting on various modes of eating. She concludes that "anything that dislodges us from the narrow prison of our own cultural assumptions ... awakens us to the possibility that others have different manners and mores, and it excites our curiosity about subjects which we have never before bothered to investigate." It also leaves a question as to "why certain modes of eating seem so perfectly suited to certain cuisines."*

*Francine Prose is the author of more than a dozen volumes of literature, including novels, short fiction, non-fiction, and children's stories. The recipient of Guggenheim and Fulbright grants, among others, she is a contributing editor at Harper's magazine and a regular contributor to the Wall Street Journal on art. She has taught at a number of venues, including the Iowa Writers' Workshop and The Johns Hopkins University.*

Not long ago, at dinner, I overheard my 21 year old son asking a family friend one of those eternal, existential questions: How do you know which fork to use first at a formal dinner party? I was startled, for several reasons. First by this reminder that my child had turned into an adult who might find himself, without me, at the sort of event at which he might be required to know this. When had he gone to such a dinner? How foolish of me to have assumed that his education in cutlery stopped when his father and I taught him that the proper use of a spoon did not include employing it as a catapult with which to fling his baby food across the room! I was startled to realize that it had never occurred to me to teach him this basic (or, to be more accurate, advanced) fact of etiquette. And finally, his question seemed like a reminder of how much we take for granted, and of how much information the simplest acts – for example, the means by which we transport food from our plates to our mouths – reveal about our culture, our class, our history, the way we live.

If, as we used to say in the 1960s, you are what you eat, it must also be true that you are how you eat. Though I've always been fascinated by highly specialized kitchen and table implements – serrated grapefruit spoons, lobster crackers, those tiny ears of corn with prongs that you're meant to stick into your corn to keep the melted butter off your fingers – I tend to buy such things at garage sales, and then swiftly relegate them to the basement. Even on special occasions, the rhythms of our domestic life never seemed to include the time and the energy for elaborate table settings. A knife, a fork, a spoon – and the occasional soup spoon – pretty much defined the limits of our cutlery ambitions.

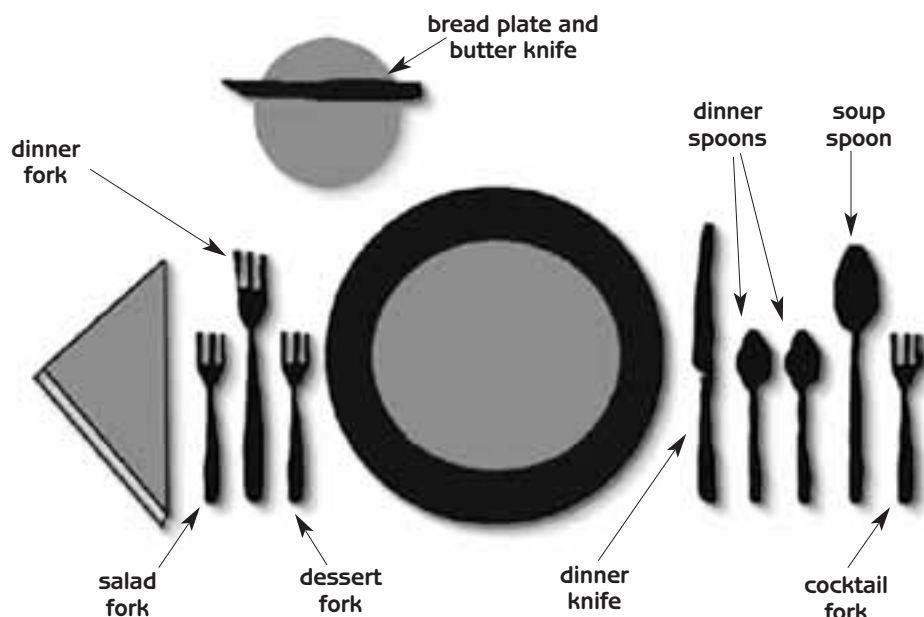
## ADEPT WITH CHOPSTICKS

What does it say about our family that, though my son is only now inquiring into the mysteries of the salad fork and

the dessertspoon, I can't remember a time when either of my sons didn't know how to use chopsticks? They're experts, deftly pinching and picking up those slippery cubes of bean curd, those elusive slivers of eggplant, performing those extreme feats of confidence and hand-eye coordination that even I, a moderately proficient chopstick-user, find daunting. By contrast, their 88-year-old grandmother has never mastered the art, which (like driving) is probably best learned young, though she almost succeeded when the thoughtful waitress at our local Japanese restaurant tried to teach her by rigging up a sort of low-tech contraption: chopsticks bound together with a rubber band and a piece of cardboard – a device, the waitress explained, that Japanese parents employ to help their small children learn to use chopsticks. The difference across generations between my mother and my children would certainly seem to imply that, as a culture, we are becoming more multicultural; it's the same sort of progress

that I see in the fact that both my kids (unlike their monolingual parents) can speak Spanish with more or less fluency and ease.

One of the rewards of travel, and of experiencing other cultures, is that it frees us from the sort of cutlery chauvinism that might cause us to think that our way is the only way, or even the right way, of eating. When I was in my early 20s, I spent a year in India, and I still recall my confusion – and then my surprise and delight – when I wandered into one of those marvelous South Indian vegetarian store-front restaurants in which the food was served on banana leaves and all the patrons were eating it with their hands. Like learning to use chopsticks, the technique (massaging the rice and vegetables into a ball, picking it up with the ends of your fingers, using your thumb to pop it into your mouth) required some practice, and provided a simultaneously humbling, broadening, and useful form of cultural education. The humiliation of



#### WHY DO THEY EAT THAT WAY?

Visitors to the United States from Europe and other areas of the world are sometimes puzzled by the way in which Americans use their knives and forks, particularly in formal settings. Most Americans use what is sometimes called the zigzag method, based on rules of etiquette developed many decades ago, perhaps as far back as the 19th century. This means that one cuts the food with the knife in the right hand and the fork in the left, then places the knife on the plate and shifts the fork from the left hand to the right to continue eating. The left hand is placed on the lap, out of sight, until needed for the next cut. A left hand or arm—or—heaven forbid!—elbow idly lingering on the table marks one as improperly trained, or worse. (This process assumes, of course, that the person in question is right-handed. A left-handed person would start with the knife in the left hand and the fork in the right).

By contrast, the efficient "European method" involves keeping the fork in the left hand after finishing cutting the food. In another minor variation, most Americans keep their forks facing upward while placing food in their mouths; Europeans generally keep them facing down, sometimes with their index fingers extended. Theories as to why these differences developed vary, but one theory is that since the fork came relatively late to America, when it did arrive it was used more like its predecessor, the spoon; in other words, more like a scoop than a spear. As with many other cultural variations, neither method is right or wrong, but only different.

learning under the curious eyes of the waiters and busboys who routinely gathered to watch my early unsuccessful attempts made me, by necessity, a fast learner.

I took to this new way of eating so enthusiastically that, when I returned home to the United States, I was determined to keep eating with my hands. It seemed to me a far superior and more direct way of savoring and enjoying my food, and it brought promise that I would never again have to worry about the fact that, at least in our household, cutlery seems to disappear as mysteriously, steadily, and inevitably as socks in the laundry. But my passion for hands-on eating lasted only until the first time I looked around the Indian restaurant in which I was having dinner and noticed, on the faces of the Indian patrons, the same look of consternation and mild disapproval that I see now, on my mother's face, when she hears that lofts on the Lower East Side, where she spent her childhood, are now selling for millions of dollars. Why would millionaires flock to a neighborhood she had left? Why would I be eating, in public, in a way that my assimilated Indian-American fellow diners had consciously left behind when they immigrated to this country?

#### **DIFFERENT MANNERS AND MORES**

Any experience of that sort – anything that dislodges us from the narrow prison of our own cultural assumptions – is one to be thankful for. It awakens us to the possibility that others have different manners and mores, and it excites our curiosity about subjects which we have never before bothered to investigate. The realization that the use of knives and forks is not in fact a universal custom might inspire us to discover that not only are they not employed everywhere, but – even in Western society – they were not in use forever, and are, in fact, relatively recent modifications of older notions of table manners.

The ancient Greeks used the full range of tableware, but by the time of the Romans, knives and forks had fallen out of fashion, and even the most elegant diners used only spoons. Things were further simplified during the Middle Ages, when most people ate with their fingers, or scooped food up with rusks of stale bread, or speared especially tasty morsels on the points of their knives. Men were expected to bring their own knives to dinner, not to use them as weapons, and to gallantly cut the meat course for their female companions. During this period, the Byzantine Empire was far in advance of the West. At the Byzantine court, forks were commonly employed, and in the 11th

century, Thomas Coryat attempted to introduce the fork (which he had observed in use at Italian tables) to his native England, but he was mocked as an effeminate poseur.

On the shores of my own country, Governor Winthrop brought a fork along to the Massachusetts Bay Colony, but it was quite a rarity, perhaps the only one in the colonies – a fact that necessarily alters our image of the first Thanksgiving dinner, at which the Pilgrims must have been obliged to eat their turkey on the points of their knives, aided by the occasional spoon. It wasn't until the early 19th century that forks were a common item in American households. Since then, of course, the advent of stainless steel in the 1920s liberated the American householder from the chore of polishing all that Victorian silver, while in recent years disposable plastic cutlery has (for better or worse) facilitated party-giving, airplane cuisine, and fast food dining.

#### **UNANSWERED QUESTIONS**

It all makes perfect sense, yet still, mysteries remain – most notably, the question of why certain modes of eating seem so perfectly suited to certain cuisines. Why does Chinese food taste so much better when we eat it with chopsticks? Why do plastic knives and forks make everything taste so much worse? Why does Mexican cuisine demand to be rolled inside a fresh tortilla, and picked up with our hands? And isn't part of the allure of street food, all over the world, the fact that it's meant to be eaten on the go, not only without cutlery, but without plates? Indeed, one of the best meals I ever had was a dish of tacos al pastor, served on a thin piece of paper in a market in Mexico City.

Recalling that meal, I can't help being struck by the wide range of approaches to the (one might think) simple act of eating, of the distance that separates that lively market stand from the elegant meal I was served not long ago at a Manhattan apartment, at which the table was set with multiple forks, spoons, and knives, and at which a different wine glass appeared for the different wines designed to accompany each course.

Which brings me back full circle to my son's question about how to proceed at the formal dinner. "It's easy," said our family friend. "You work from the outside in." My son burst into a radiant smile, wishing – I would imagine – that all of his questions had answers that seemed so simple, so obvious, so reasonable, so blessedly easy to remember. ■

# SANDWICH PRIDE



ED LEVINE

*Americans can argue long and hard over the relative merits of the sandwiches created in their hometowns. The one unarguable point is the broad diversity of these creations. Chicago is known for its Italian beef sandwiches, Milwaukee for bratwurst, Philadelphia for its cheesesteak, and Los Angeles for the French dip, which, according to legend, was created by accident. None, it is safe to say, were created for the calorie-conscious diner.*

**G**o to any city in America, large or small, talk to residents there, and I am sure you will find two things to be true. One, they have a sandwich that they'll tell you they invented that has no equal in America, and, two, they're willing to argue for hours with their friends and neighbors about who makes the best version of that sandwich.

All over this country there are sandwiches that have come to be identified with each city as much or more than their sports teams.

## EXCESSIVE BUT DELICIOUS

The Italian Beef Sandwich has been a Chicago staple for 66 years. Chicagoans consume millions of Italian beef sandwiches and argue about the relative merits of different restaurants featuring these sandwiches. At places like Mr. Beef and Al's, they take thin slices of slow-cooked roast beef sopped in pan juices loaded up with garlic, pile them into an oblong sandwich roll, and garnish them with either sweet peppers or giardinera, a hot pickle relish. Many Windy City residents add a length of sweet Italian sausage to their Italian beef sandwiches, creating what Chicagoans call a combo. It sounds excessive, and it might very well be, but it sure is delicious.

Ask any gas station attendant in Sheboygan or Milwaukee – two cities north of Chicago in the state of Wisconsin – what to eat for lunch, and I guarantee nine out of ten of them will say a “brat” (pronounced “brot”) or bratwurst sandwich. The best ones are grilled over charcoal until their casings are about to burst forth with sausage drippings, and then inserted into a not so hard roll.

In Des Moines, Iowa, where they raise a whole lot of hogs, the pork tenderloin sandwich is the lunch of choice at a place like Smitty's out by the airport. It's pork tenderloin

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that's been pounded, flattened, and deep-fried. It looks like an oddly shaped, oversized frisbee that overwhelms the hamburger bun it's sheathed in, especially when it's topped with lettuce, tomato, and slathered with mayo and/or mustard.

Four hours away from Des Moines, in Kansas City, smoked beef brisket sandwiches rule the roost. Slices of the lovely, smoky, tender meat are piled high between two slices of commercial white bread. A great smoked beef brisket sandwich needs no sauce in my humble opinion, but Kansas Citians will debate the merits of both the brisket and the barbecue sauce at places like Gate's, LC's, and Oklahoma Joe's.

In New York, people will argue about who makes the best pastrami or corned beef sandwich for hours, even days, without resolution. Devotees of the Carnegie Deli will never concede that Katz's is better. This is not just a recent phenomenon, however. Ever since Jewish immigrants started selling smoked and cured meats out of butcher shops on the city's Lower East Side at the turn of the last century, I am certain that heated discussions took place trying to determine who makes the best. These days the arguments revolve around Katz's (just about the last deli

left on the Lower East Side), the Carnegie Deli, the Second Avenue Deli in the East Village, the Stage Deli, or Artie's on the Upper West Side.

### THE FRIED CLAM

In Boston, the city folks have appropriated the fried clam roll from the neighboring town of Essex. For the fried clam roll, sweet, full-bellied clams are dipped in batter and thrown into the deep fryer. A few minutes later they're laid into a top-loaded hot dog bun with some tartar sauce and a slice of lemon on the side. Though the fried clam was purportedly invented by Lawrence Dexter Woodman in Essex, Massachusetts, on July 3, 1916, restaurants in Boston like Summer Shack and Kingfisher's definitely do this fabulous sandwich justice.

In Philadelphia the sandwich arguments revolve around the cheesesteak. Slices of top round so thin you can see through them are cooked on a very hot grill. At the very end of a very short cooking process (less than two minutes) cheese is added to the meat, either American, provolone, or for the most tradition-minded, Cheese Whiz. This lovely, unholy mess is then inserted into a hero roll that should be

## SANDWICHES



crunchy and crispy enough to absorb the meat juices and cheesy goop without falling apart, and topped with grilled onions. Gino's, Jim's, Pat's, and Tony Luke's all make the claim of cheesesteak superiority. In the name of research, I have sampled all four of them in a single outing. Alas, I am still on the fence as to who makes the best.

In North Carolina pork is king, cooked and smoked in a pit over low heat for hours until the sweet, tender meat can either be pulled apart into porcine shards without the benefit of a knife, or chopped fine with bits of golden brown pig skin thrown in for good measure. In the eastern part of the state, the coastal plain, in small cities like Wilson, they cook the whole hog (preferably using only wood as the fuel) at places like Mitchell's, chop it up, and serve it on a hamburger bun with finely diced cole slaw. The barbecue sauce served in eastern North Carolina is tomato-based. In the western half of the state, the Piedmont, in cities like Lexington, such as at Lexington Barbecue No. 1, they cook only the shoulder (again over wood), chop it up, and serve it on those same hamburger buns with cole slaw. Here the sauce is vinegar-based. Asking a North Carolinian from either side of the state about the barbecue served on the other side will surely generate a derisive snort. Me, I'm an equal-opportunity North Carolina barbecue lover.

In Miami, home to hundreds of thousands of Cuban-Americans, the Cuban sandwich reigns supreme. Slices of ham, roast pork, and swiss cheese are put in a cottony hero roll along with slices of pickle, mustard, and garlic sauce. Then the concoction is placed in a sandwich press until the cheese is melted and the roll is all toasty and crisp. Go anywhere in Miami, from trendy South Beach to Calle Ocho (Eighth Street), the heart of the Cuban community there, and you'll find dozens of places like Versailles serving this staple.

### Feeding Strikers

In New Orleans the po-boy and the muffaletta battle for sandwich supremacy.

According to John T. Edge in *Southern Belly*, his definitive guide to Southern food, the po-boy as we know it was born when sandwich shop owners Bennie and Clovis

Martin fed striking local streetcar workers sandwiches for free, hailing each one, "Here comes another poor boy." As Edge notes, they were probably not the first people to serve slices of roast beef or ham stuffed inside a loaf of French bread, but they were the most likely to coin the name. Nowadays, New Orleans po-boy makers put everything from oysters, shrimp, soft-shell crabs, and duck inside their creations at estimable places like Casamento's, Uglesich's, Parasol's, Mandina's, and Mother's.

The muffaletta is another story entirely. It gets its name from a round, seeded Sicilian loaf of bread, which is stuffed with ham, salami, mortadella, provolone, and olives laden with enough garlic to ward off evil spirits for decades. It's still served where it was invented around 1906, at the Central Grocery on the edge of the French Quarter, as well as its Decatur Street neighbor, The Progress Grocery. Which is better? Get half a muffaletta from each and conduct your own taste test. If you insist on sitting down to eat your muffaletta, head to the Napoleon House.

In Louisville, Kentucky, you can enjoy a hot brown sandwich where it was invented, at the Brown Hotel's J. Graham's Restaurant. According to an oral history of the hotel, sometime in the late 1920's the chef at the hotel, Fred K. Schmidt, came up with an idea for a turkey sandwich with Mornay sauce, bacon, and pimentos that he would put under a broiler. The result is a divine molten combination that's so good any city would be proud to call its own.

In Los Angeles, a downtown Los Angeles sandwich shop, Phillippe's, claims to have invented the French dip sandwich. According to Jane and Michael Stern, authors of *Roadfood*, a guide to some 500 eateries across the United States, a counterman accidentally dropped a sliced roll into beef gravy while making a sandwich for a customer in a hurry. Not wanting to wait for the carver to make another sandwich, said customer took the sandwich "wet."

These days Phillippe's makes "wet" sandwiches with your choice of beef, lamb, ham, pork, or turkey. They'll even double-dip the sandwiches if you ask. That way you're guaranteed a moist sandwich and a cholesterol count worthy of a visit to a cardiologist. ■

# THE FAT OF THE LAND: AMERICA CONFRONTS ITS WEIGHT PROBLEM

MICHAEL JAY FRIEDMAN

*The easy availability of affordable food coupled with a sedentary lifestyle is expanding the collective waistline of America. Fully two-thirds of adult Americans are considered to be overweight or, even worse, obese. Medical treatments of resulting health problems now cost in excess of one hundred million (\$100,000,000) dollars annually. Recognition of the problem is increasing, with millions being spent on diet products, emphasis placed on physical exercise, and low-calorie fare offered on restaurant menus.*

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Americans are blessed with an unprecedented abundance and variety of food. Surrounded by convenient, appealing, and affordable meals, often high in calories, many Americans overindulge. A lifestyle of eating more and exercising less has led to a sharp rise in obesity. The health consequences are profound, and the social burdens substantial. Increasing numbers of Americans are recognizing that plentiful food requires intelligent choices.

For most of their six million years, human beings were hunter-gatherers who hunted, fished, and foraged for their food. Since the source of one's next meal could be highly uncertain, Homo sapiens evolved to survive a scarcity of food. Our bodies store excess calories as fat, and then convert that fat into energy when food is unavailable. This finely tuned metabolic system serves us well, but it is not designed to process steady overeating. Simply put, the body will continue to store surplus energy as fat, even when the resulting extra weight is harmful.

## LIFESTYLE CHANGES

Modern agriculture ended food scarcity in America, but only in the past few years have diet and lifestyle changes produced widespread obesity. One change is that Americans consume more processed foods. These can be both tasty and convenient, and they typically are cheaper per calorie than whole fruits and vegetables. But processing often adds flavoring ingredients like sugar (11 percent of U.S. caloric intake in 1970, 16 percent today), oils, and starches.

Another change is that Americans are more likely to eat at restaurants, and especially at fast food

restaurants. Americans “eat out” twice as often today as they did in 1970, spending more than 40 cents of every food dollar at restaurants. We have become especially partial to fast food. Sales have increased 200 percent over the past 20 years, to the point where one American in four eats in a fast food establishment on any given day. With the cost-per-calorie so low, Americans have grown accustomed to larger portions: on average, today’s hamburgers are 23 percent and soft drink servings 52 percent larger than they were 20 years ago.

Changes in diet are related to changes in lifestyle. Americans often live alone, or in families where both husband and wife work. With less time available for meal planning and food preparation, processed foods provide attractive alternatives. A microwave oven can heat a frozen meal in minutes. Fast food restaurants feature “drive-thru” windows where a parent returning home from work can purchase dinner for a hungry family without even leaving his or her car! These meals may feature more “empty calories” (those devoid of nutrients) than a traditional home-cooked meal, but for time-pressed Americans, the tradeoff is often acceptable.

Other lifestyle changes affect the second half of the obesity equation—exercise. Physically active people burn off the calories they consume. However, Americans increasingly live in communities where both shopping and work are inaccessible except by car or public transportation. In the past 25 years, travel by foot and bicycle

### DIETS: A BEWILDERING VARIETY

Americans are seemingly obsessed with dieting, and their reasons for following a specific diet vary widely.

Most dieters are motivated by a desire to lose weight and, in so doing, to improve their health and appearance, but there are many other reasons. Among them are religious beliefs that proscribe certain foods; ethical rationales, such as an aversion to killing animals, a common motivation for vegetarianism; a desire to help preserve the environment by avoiding certain foods whose production is perceived as environmentally destructive, or as part of a broader philosophy of life.

An amazing variety of diets are available in books, in magazines, and on the Internet. They vary widely in terms of the foods they prescribe or forbid; the emphases they place on such things as calories, fats, carbohydrates, and exercise; and on their methodologies.

This plethora of choices ensures that if one diet fails to bring about the desired result, there is always another that can be tried. Here are some of the most popular diets that Americans are following today:

#### ATKINS DIET

- Popularized by the late Dr. Robert Atkins
- Severely restricts refined carbohydrates, such as sugar and white flour
- Allows a wide variety of other foods, such as meat
- Few restrictions on fat or calories
- Has four phases: Induction, Ongoing Weight Loss, Pre-Maintenance, and Lifetime Maintenance

#### BEVERLY HILLS DIET

- Popularized by Judy Mazel, dietician and author
- Recommends eating fruit by itself
- Prohibits protein being eaten with carbohydrates
- Begins with a 35-day plan that gives specific items to be eaten at each meal

has declined by 40 percent. Meanwhile, the nature of work has changed. Fewer Americans engage in strenuous industrial activity. Instead, they are often sitting before a computer screen manipulating data. At home, pastimes such as television viewing and Internet surfing contribute to the general decline in physical activity, making it all the harder to shed calories and pounds. Tellingly, obesity is less of a problem in New York City, where travel by foot – to work, shopping, and entertainment is more common than in almost all other U.S. communities.

### WAISTLINE EXPANSION

The result has been a rapid and unhealthy expansion of the American waistline. The number of overweight or obese Americans has increased by 74 percent since 1991. Fully two-thirds of adult Americans fall into one of these categories. (The National Centers for Chronic Disease Prevention and Health Promotion in Atlanta, Georgia, has developed a formula – known as the body mass index, or BMI – for calculating body fat in relation to lean body mass. Anyone with a BMI of 25 to 29.9 is considered to be overweight, and anyone with a BMI of 30 or above is considered to be obese. See <http://www.cdc.gov/nccd/php/dnpa/obesity/defining.htm>).

The health consequences have been profound. Medical treatments of resulting health problems now cost in excess of one hundred million (\$100,000,000) dollars annually. It is estimated that at least 300,000 Americans die each year from obesity-related conditions

like diabetes and heart disease; obesity may now be the leading contributor to premature death among Americans. Serious as these statistics are, they do not depict how excess weight can deprive one of the ability to engage in and enjoy a variety of activities common in everyday life.

Widespread obesity is a recent phenomenon, but many Americans now recognize the importance of careful attention to diet and lifestyle. Consumers pay some \$34 million on diet products each year. Their results vary, as proper weight control typically requires healthful habits rather than a "quick fix." Encouraging signs include the introduction of healthier yet equally

#### SCARSDALE DIET

- Popularized by the late cardiologist Dr. Herman Tarnower
- Sets forth a seven to 14-day plan
- Outlines types of foods that can and cannot be eaten
- Emphasizes fruits, vegetables, and lean sources of protein
- Snacking forbidden

#### SOUTH BEACH DIET

- Popularized by cardiologist Dr. Arthur Agatston
- Organized in three phases
- Allows normal portions of lean proteins like fish and chicken
- Forbids the intake of bread, rice, pasta, a sugar, or baked goods in Phase 1, which lasts 14 days
- Allows unlimited amounts of certain vegetables but not high glycemic ones like beets, carrots, corn, and sweet potatoes

#### WEIGHT WATCHERS (registered trademark)

- Emphasizes a comprehensive lifestyle program including regular meetings in which dieters encourage each other
- Emphasizes lifestyle changes; for example, activities to reduce boredom eating
- All foods are assigned a point value based on fat, fiber, and calorie content
- No list of forbidden foods, but maximum point values should not be exceeded

#### FIT FOR LIFE

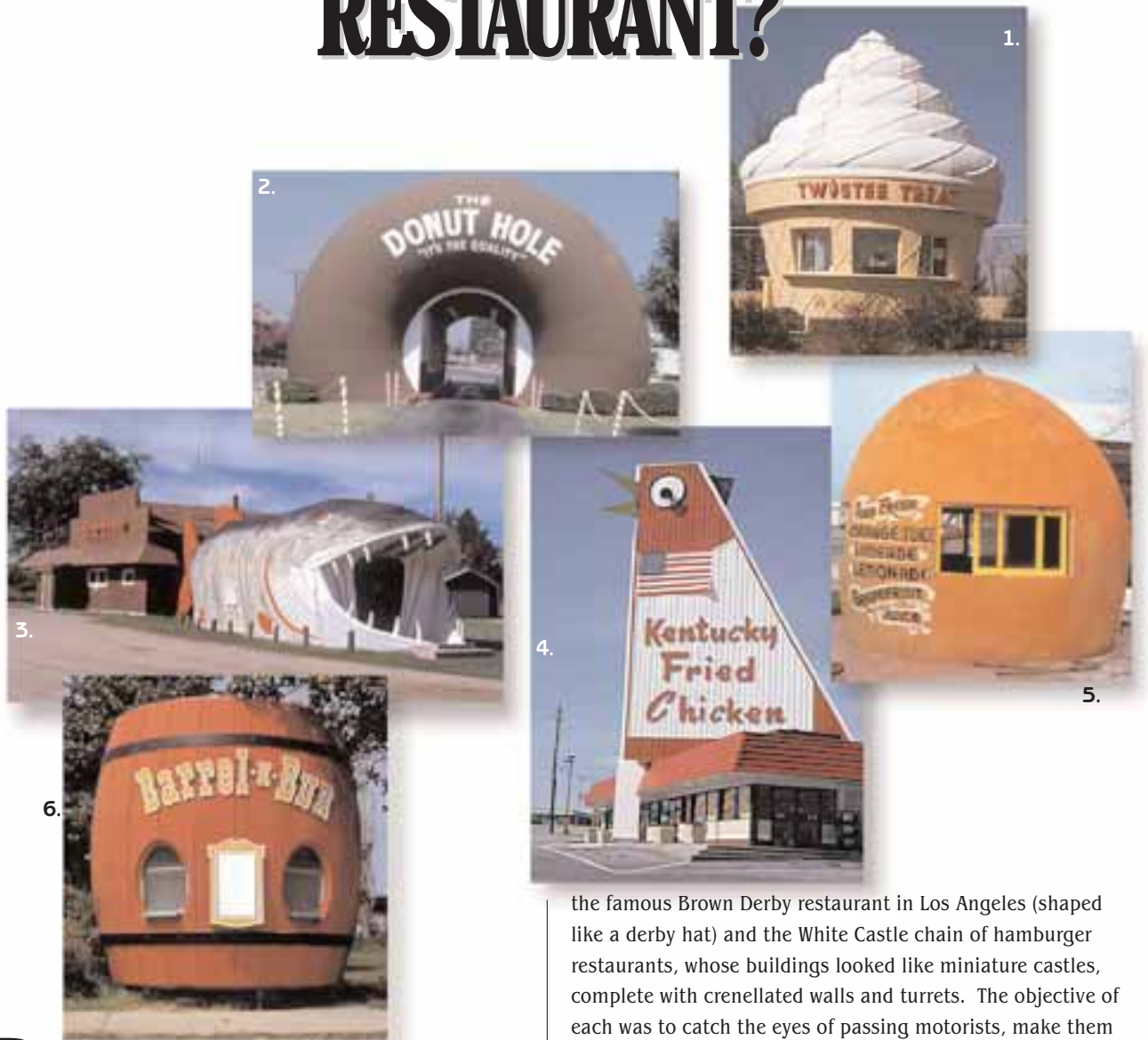
- Popularized by nutritionist Harvey Diamond
- Relies heavily on fruits and vegetables
- Severely restricts dairy products and meats
- Attempts to teach dieters to eat in accordance with what are described as "natural digestive cycles"

#### VEGAN DIET

- Strict vegetarian diet that proscribes meat and all other animal products, including cheese and milk

convenient snack foods and greater availability of diet-friendly entrées. Even the fast food industry reports a 16percent increase in sales of main-dish salads over the past year. To shed weight and remain healthy, individuals will have to consider carefully what they eat and how they go about their daily routines. Increasingly, Americans are learning that they cannot indulge without limits in what can seem to be an unlimited bounty. Among positive steps that Americans are taking in this direction are better food labeling, more nutritious and better-balanced school lunches, public awareness campaigns, and greater availability of low-calorie options at restaurants. ■

# IS THAT REALLY A RESTAURANT?



Beginning in the 1930s, intense competition in the restaurant industry and Americans' increasing reliance on the automobile led to a trend in restaurant design sometimes referred to as "programmatic" architecture. Owners and builders began to create restaurants in odd and distinctive shapes, often reflecting the type of food featured inside. For example, restaurants were created in the shape of soup bowls, coffee pots, milk bottles, doughnuts, sandwiches, and giant fruits, as well as various types of birds and animals. Other noteworthy examples were

the famous Brown Derby restaurant in Los Angeles (shaped like a derby hat) and the White Castle chain of hamburger restaurants, whose buildings looked like miniature castles, complete with crenellated walls and turrets. The objective of each was to catch the eyes of passing motorists, make them smile or laugh at the bizarrely shaped structure, and, hopefully, cause them to stop and come inside for something to eat. While this type of restaurant architecture began to die out in the 1950s, examples of the genre remain today, with some of the buildings still functioning as restaurants, others as nostalgic landmarks of a bygone era. ■

1. Twistee Treat Ice Cream Stand, St. Joseph, Missouri / 2. Donut Hole, La Puente, California / 3. Big Fish Supper Club, Bena, Minnesota / 4. Ross Diner, Quechee, Vermont / 5. Orange Juice Stand, Turlock, California / 6. Barrel and Bun, Buckroe Beach, Virginia  
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# AS AMERICAN AS... APPLE PIE

***Apple pie is the quintessential American dessert. Every family has its favorite recipe. Here is an excellent one, courtesy of Cook's Illustrated magazine:***

2 1/2 pounds (1 kilo) of Granny Smith apples, peeled, quartered, cored, and cut into 3/8-inch (1 cm) slices—approximately 5 to 6 cups (1.2 to 1.4 liters)

3/4 cup (177 milliliters) sugar, plus 2 teaspoons for sprinkling on dough top

2 tablespoons all-purpose flour

1/2 teaspoon ground cinnamon

Pinch of salt

The Best Pie Dough (see below) for a double-crust, 8-inch or 9-inch (20 or 23 cm) diameter pie

2 tablespoons unsalted butter, cut into small pieces

Toss apples and next four ingredients in large bowl; let stand until apples soften and shrink a bit, no longer than 10 to 15 minutes.

Adjust oven rack to low position and heat oven to 400 degrees Fahrenheit (204 Celsius). Roll larger dough disk on a lightly floured surface into a 12-inch (30.5 cm) circle, about 1/8 inch (30 mm) thick. Transfer dough to 9-inch (22.8 cm) Pyrex pie pan, leaving dough that overhangs lip of pan in place. Turn apple mixture, including juices, into shell; scatter butter pieces over apples.

Roll smaller dough disk on a lightly floured surface into a 10-inch (25 cm) circle. Lay it over top of pie. Trim top and bottom dough edges to 1/4 inch (6 mm) beyond pan lip. Tuck this rim of dough underneath itself so that folded edge is flush with pan lip. Flute dough or press with fork tines to seal. Cut 4 slits at right angles on dough top to allow steam to escape; sprinkle with remaining sugar.

Set pie on a rimmed baking sheet; bake until light brown, about 30 minutes. Reduce oven temperature to 350 degrees (177 Celsius) and continue baking until crust is a rich golden brown and apples can be easily pierced with a knife, about 30 minutes longer. If pie browns before it bakes through, cover top with foil and continue baking.

Transfer pie to a wire rack; cool for at least one hour before serving. Serve warm with vanilla ice cream.

## THE BEST PIE DOUGH

For an 8- or 9-inch (20 or 23cm) single pie shell

To cut the butter into small bits, halve the stick of butter lengthwise with a large knife, rotate the stick ninety degrees, and cut again. Then cut the stick, crosswise into one-quarter-inch pieces. Dough should be rolled about one-eighth-inch thick.

1 1/4 cups all-purpose flour

1/2 teaspoon salt

1 tablespoon sugar

6 tablespoons chilled unsalted butter, cut into 1/4-inch (6mm) squares

4 tablespoons chilled all-vegetable shortening

3-4 tablespoons ice water

1. Mix flour, salt, and sugar in food processor fitted with steel blade until mixture resembles coarse cornmeal with butter bits no larger than small peas, about four more one-second pulses. Turn mixture into medium bowl.

2. Sprinkle 3 tablespoons of ice water over mixture. With blade of rubber spatula, use folding motion to mix. Press down on dough with broad side of spatula until dough sticks together adding up to one tablespoon more ice water if dough will not come together. Shape dough into ball with your hands, then flatten into four-inch (10cm) wide disc. Dust lightly with flour, wrap in plastic, and refrigerate for 30 minutes before rolling.

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# FOOD TALK

**Food has provided many idioms to the English language.  
Here are just a few examples.**

**From soup to nuts** – everything imaginable

“The bridal shop has *everything from soup to nuts* when it comes to weddings.”

**To be a peach!** – to be great!

“My friend Susan was a peach to lend me ten dollars when I found I didn’t have enough money for lunch.”

**Peachy keen** – fantastic

“All the kids agreed that the movie was *peachy keen*.”

**To separate the wheat from the chaff** – to separate the good from the bad, or the useable from the useless

“The revised evaluation process was designed to *separate the wheat from the chaff*.”

**To work for peanuts** – to have a low salary

“Tired of *working for peanuts*, Tom applied for and obtained a better job.”

**Sour grapes** – resentment and jealousy

“Some people reacted negatively to Maureen’s promotion, but she thought that it was just *sour grapes*.”

**A lemon** – an automobile that is always breaking down because of poor workmanship

“Convinced that his car was a *lemon* when it broke down for the third time in a month, Bill decided to return it to the dealer from whom he bought it.”

**To have your cake and eat it, too** – a desire to have something both ways at once

“Margaret, who enjoyed the convenience of living with her parents but longed for the independence of living in her own apartment, finally accepted the fact that she could not *have her cake and eat it, too*.”

**Crying over spilled milk** – pointless regret over something that cannot be changed

“Nicholas was upset that he had overslept and missed his job interview, but he decided that it was pointless to *cry over spilled milk*.”

**To spill the beans** – to unwittingly reveal information

“Tiffany had planned a surprise party for her husband’s birthday, but her sister *spilled the beans* by mentioning it to him when she saw him at the market.”

**To bring home the bacon** – to support one’s family adequately

“One of the reasons why Anne’s parents approved of her new husband was the fact that he really *brought home the bacon*.”

**Apple of one’s eye** – a source of enormous pride

“Her new baby is the *apple of Marion’s eye*.”

**As easy as pie** – very easy

“Nicholas had expected to have great difficulty in learning the rules of American football, but he was surprised to find that it was *as easy as pie*.”

**Cream of the crop** – the best

“These puppies are the *cream of the crop*,” said the breeder.

**Cool as a cucumber** – maintaining calm in difficult circumstances

“Debbie was nervous when the examination began, but her friend Sarah was *as cool as a cucumber*.”

**Cup of tea** – something that appeals to one’s personal taste

“Peter declined the invitation to play cards, saying that it just wasn’t his *cup of tea*.”

**To use your noodle** – to use your brain, i.e., think

“It wouldn’t seem so hard if you would just *use your noodle*,” the teacher told the student.

**To butter up** – to flatter

“When Sylvia constantly praised her supervisor, some of her co-workers thought that she was just trying to *butter him up*.”

**To go bananas** – to lose one’s composure

“Tony was worried that his parents would *go bananas* when they found out that he had put a dent in their car.”

**Like taking candy from a baby** – an easy task

“The dishonest salesman was so good at cheating customers that it was almost *like taking candy from a baby*.”

**To bear fruit** – to succeed

“The Wright brothers worked diligently on their aeronautical research for years, confident that their hard work would eventually *bear fruit*.”

**Two peas in a pod** – exactly alike

“Barry and his brother Gary looked so much alike that people often told them they were *like two peas in a pod*.”

**To eat humble pie** – to admit a mistake

“The arrogant scientist had to *eat humble pie* when his efforts to invent a better rocket fuel caused an explosion.”

**In a nutshell** – briefly summarize

“*In a nutshell*, the overall position of the company has improved greatly in the past year,” said the company president as he began his speech to the board of directors.

**In the soup** – in trouble

“Rachel knew that if she did not finish her project on time, she would be *in the soup*.”

**In a pickle** – in a difficult situation

“Bob was *in a pickle* when his car broke down in a pouring rainstorm.”

**Big enchilada** – an important person

“Elizabeth’s election as president of her sorority confirmed the opinion of her friends that she was a *big enchilada*.”

**Flat as a pancake** – very flat

“The Great Plains are often described *as flat as a pancake*.”

**Nutty as a fruitcake** – very eccentric or bizarre

“The elderly man’s behavior became so unusual that some of his neighbors considered him to be *as nutty as a fruitcake*.”



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# INTERNET RESOURCES

*Online options for finding just about anything you would like to know about food, cooking, and dining in America*

## CHEFS

James Beard Foundation  
<http://www.jamesbeard.org/>

Julia Child: Lessons with Master Chefs  
<http://www.pbs.org/juliachild/>

Mollie Katzen  
<http://www.molliekatzen.com/>

Edna Lewis  
[http://eat.epicurious.com/holiday/black\\_history/index.ssf/?/holiday/black\\_history/lewis.html](http://eat.epicurious.com/holiday/black_history/index.ssf/?/holiday/black_history/lewis.html)

Zarela Martínez  
<http://www.zarela.com>

Rachel Ray  
[http://www.foodnetwork.com/food/rachael\\_ray/0,1974,FOOD\\_9928,00.html](http://www.foodnetwork.com/food/rachael_ray/0,1974,FOOD_9928,00.html)

Star Chefs  
<http://www.star chefs.com/chefs/html/index.shtml>

Ming Tsai  
<http://www.ming.com>

Yahoo: Search Directory – Chefs  
[http://dir.yahoo.com/Society\\_and\\_Culture/Food\\_and\\_Drink/Chefs/](http://dir.yahoo.com/Society_and_Culture/Food_and_Drink/Chefs/)

## PERIODICALS

Amber Waves: The Economics of Food, Farming, Natural Resources, and Rural America  
<http://www.ers.usda.gov/AmberWaves/>

Bon Appétit  
<http://eat.epicurious.com/bonappetit/>

Cook's Illustrated  
<http://www.cooksillustrated.com>

Cooking Light  
<http://www.cookinglight.com/cooking>

Cuisine at Home  
<http://www.cuisinemag.com/>

Diabetic Gourmet  
<http://diabeticgourmet.com/>

Eating Well: The Magazine of Food and Health  
<http://www.eatingwell.com/>  
Everyday Food  
<http://www.marthastewart.com/page.jhtml?type=learn-cat&id=cat17922>

Food and Wine  
<http://www.foodandwine.com/>

Gastronomica: The Journal of Food and Culture  
<http://www.gastronomica.org/>

Gourmet: The Magazine of Good Living  
<http://eat.epicurious.com/gourmet/>

Simple Cooking  
<http://www.outlawcook.com/>

Southern Living  
<http://www.southernliving.com/>

Taste of Home  
<http://www.tasteofhome.com/>

Vegetarian Times  
<http://www.vegetariantimes.com/>

## WEB PAGES

The A&W American Recipe Collection  
<http://www.governorsrecipes.com/>  
Sponsored by A&W Root Beer, this site features dishes from each of the 50 states, as submitted by their governors. Access is provided through a clickable map, a drop-down menu, and a downloadable recipe book containing additional recipes using root beer.

America the Bountiful: Classic American Food from Antiquity to the Space Age  
<http://www.lib.ucdavis.edu/exhibits/food/>  
This exhibit from the University of California, Davis, chronicles the use of "10 classic American food groups including: beef, chicken, turkey, pork, potatoes, corn, greens, wheat, beans, and apples" that have played a role in American culture.

America's Test Kitchen  
<http://www.americastestkitchen.com/>  
This companion site to a public television series sponsored by *Cook's Illustrated* magazine provides all of the recipes from the series as well as related information on equipment, food ratings, and food science.

American Diner Museum  
<http://www.dinermuseum.org/>  
Dedicated to "celebrating and preserving the cultural and historical significance of the American diner," the American Diner Museum site offers news, features, events, tours, a registry of diners, and other resources.

Bon Appétit! Julia Child's Kitchen at the Smithsonian  
<http://americanhistory.si.edu/juliachild/default.asp>  
Designed to accompany an exhibition at the National Museum of American History, this Web site includes an audio interview with Julia Child, a timeline with related stories, a dynamic exploration of the exhibition, and detailed information about the objects that

are included. A companion site, "What's Cooking? Julia Child's Kitchen at the Smithsonian," <http://americanhistory.si.edu/kitchen/>, tells the story of the development of the exhibition.

#### Culinary Institute of America

<http://www.ciachef.edu/>  
Founded in 1946, this private, not-for-profit college offers bachelor's degrees, associate degrees, and continuing education programs in the food service industry. Information on the site is designed for professionals, alumni, educators, and cooking enthusiasts.

#### Epicurious: The World's Greatest Recipe Collection

<http://eat.epicurious.com/>  
This site contains thousands of recipes as well as articles and other features from *Bon Appétit* and *Gourmet* magazines. Links to information about food, wine, shopping, and travel are also provided.

#### Fast Food Facts – Interactive Food Finder

[http://www.olen.com/food/](http://www olen.com/food/)  
Based on the book *Fast Food Facts* by the Minnesota Attorney General's Office, this interactive site allows you to determine the number of calories, grams of fat, sodium, and cholesterol in fast food, so you can create a menu based on your nutritional profile.

#### Feeding America: The Historic American Cookbook Project

<http://digital.lib.msu.edu/cookbooks/>  
The Michigan State University and the MSU museum collaborated on this online collection of the "most important and influential 19th and early 20th century American cookbooks." The site includes a glossary of cookery terms, essays by culinary historian Jan Longone, biographies of the cookbook authors, and multidimensional images of antique cooking implements from the collections of the MSU Museum."

#### Food and Nutrition Information Center (FNIC)

<http://www.nal.usda.gov/fnic/>  
The National Agricultural Library's FNIC's Web site provides a directory to resources for consumers, nutrition and health professionals, educators, and government officials. Sections of the site include extensive resource lists of educational materials, government reports, and research papers; searchable databases; dietary supplements; food composition; dietary guidelines; the Food Guide Pyramid, and a "Consumer Corner."

#### The Food Museum Online

<http://www.foodmuseum.com/>  
This site provides a "virtual tour of the world's foods, based on artifacts from the museum's collections. The site answers food questions, relates food news, reviews books, and describes the museum's programs." Of interest is the exhibits section, which includes food lists and foods that originated in the Western Hemisphere.

#### Food Network

<http://www.foodnetwork.com/>  
A commercial cable television network, the Food Network explores "new, different, and interesting ways to approach food – through pop culture, adventure, travel" – in addition to its many cooking shows. Besides television schedules, recipes, and cooking tips, the Web site presents information about entertainment, travel, and shopping.

#### The Food Timeline

<http://www.gti.net/mocolib1/kid/food.html>  
This timeline from the Morris County Library, New Jersey, "illustrates the human experience of technological advancement,

social history, and creative ingenuity" through food from prehistory to modern times. The companion site, "Culinary History Timeline: Social History, Manners and Menus," <http://www.gti.net/mocolib1/kid/food1.html>, provides links to American and international culinary customs and traditions.

#### The Great American Potluck

<http://memory.loc.gov/ammem/ndlpedu/features/immig/ckbk/index.html>

This interactive site from the American Memory Project of the Library of Congress highlights the immigrant experience through recipes that are searchable by title, category, and region.

#### Key Ingredients: America by Food

[http://www.museumonmainstreet.org/exhibs\\_key/key.htm](http://www.museumonmainstreet.org/exhibs_key/key.htm)  
An online educational companion to the Smithsonian Institution's traveling exhibition, "Key Ingredients: America by Food" explores regional traditions and international influences in American cuisine. Divided into three segments, the exhibition includes "500 Years of American Food," "The American Cookbook Project," and "Eating from Coast to Coast," where Americans recommend local restaurants, festivals, and markets.

#### Leite's Culinaria

<http://www.leitesculinaria.com>  
Articles, recipes, food history, a newsletter, and other useful resources are contained in this site maintained by food writer David Leite. See especially the article, "Dining Through the Decades: 100 Years of Glorious American Food," which first appeared in the *Chicago Sun Times*, 29 December 1999: <http://www.leitesculinaria.com/features/dining.html>.

#### NativeTech: Food & Recipes

<http://www.nativetech.org/food/index.php>  
This is an extensive collection of Native American recipes, browsable by type of dish or region and tribe. NativeTech also provides a Food & Recipes bibliography, which links to a list of Native American cookbooks: <http://www.nativetech.org/food/foodrefs.html>.

#### Not by Bread Alone: America's Culinary Heritage

<http://rmc.library.cornell.edu/food/>  
From the Division of Rare and Manuscript Collections at the Cornell University Library, this exhibition "explores the influences and inventions that have shaped American food habits over the past 200 years." It highlights rare books, photographs, menus, and other early documents that trace the history of gastronomy in America.

#### Nutrition and Your Health: Dietary Guidelines for Americans

<http://www.health.gov/dietaryguidelines/>  
Published jointly every five years by the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) and the Department of Agriculture (USDA), the guidelines provide authoritative advice on healthier living, based on exercise, moderate eating, and a balanced diet. Links to reports and other government sites are also provided. For more information on diet and nutrition, see the Web page of the Center for Nutrition Policy and Promotion, U.S. Dept. of Agriculture: <http://www.usda.gov/cnpp/>.

#### Nutrition.gov

<http://www.nutrition.gov/home/index.php3>  
This is a portal page, providing access to accurate scientific information on nutrition, healthy eating, physical activity, and food safety from over a dozen government Web sites. It addresses the prevention of food-related diseases, such as diabetes, cancer, heart disease, and obesity; the food pyramid; food labels; health management; recipes; and other topics. The page also links to information about nutrition and food

assistance programs, federally supported research, and funding opportunities in the federal government.

#### Overweight and Obesity

<http://www.cdc.gov/nccdphp/dnpa/obesity/index.htm>

From the Centers of Disease Control's Division of Nutrition and Physical Activity, this site focuses on all aspects of overweight and obesity from contributing factors to health and economic consequences. Recommendations are offered, state-based programs are detailed, and a list of useful resources is provided.

#### Thanksgiving in American Memory

<http://memory.loc.gov/ammem/ndlpedu/features/thanks/thanks.html>

This learning resource from the American Memory Project of the Library of Congress includes a Thanksgiving timeline as well as sections on reminiscences and celebrations. Links to additional teaching resources and to the historical collections at the library are provided as well.

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