The Cheticamp rug hooking tradition is prized the world over, and its most celebrated artist is undoubtedly Élizabeth LeFort (1914-2005). LeFort’s remarkable talent for portraiture in wool resulted in purchases and commissions around the world; her portraits of world figures hang in Rideau Hall, Buckingham Palace, the White House and the Vatican.

La tradition du tapis «hooké» de Chéticamp est prise à la grandeur du monde et son artiste la plus célèbre est sans aucun doute Élizabeth LeFort (1914-2005). Le talent remarquable de Mme LeFort dans l’art du portrait en laine lui a assuré une clientèle partout au monde; ses portraits de grands personnages font partie du décor de Rideau Hall, du palais de Buckingham, de la Maison-Blanche et du Vatican.

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Recipe for Spanish Cream from Davis Dainty Dishes, ca. 1926. Image courtesy of Elizabeth Driver. Private collection.

See article page 22.

Front Cover of Davis Gelatine Company’s Davis Dainty Dishes, circa 1926. Image courtesy of Elizabeth Driver. Private collection.
Table of Contents / Table des matières

Editorial / Éditorial

Articles

Jessica Mudry
The Mindful Measurement of Food: Quantification, the Food Pyramid and Discourses of Taste

Nathalie Cooke
Cookbooklets and Canadian Kitchens

Charlene D. Elliott
Entertaining Eats: Children’s “Fun Food” and the Transformation of the Domestic Foodscape

Alan Nash
The Impact of Restaurant Delivery on Montreal’s Domestic Foodscapes, 1951-2009

Lucia Terrenghi
Computing Technologies in the Kitchen: The Living Cookbook as a Design for Mindful Cooking Experiences

David Sutton
The Mindful Kitchen, The Embodied Cook: Tools, Technology and Knowledge Transmission on a Greek Island

Rhona Richman Kenneally and Jordan L. LeBel
Childhood Memories of the Domestic Foodscape: The Home as a Site of Mindful Eating

Exhibition Review / Compte rendu d’exposition

Ioana Teodorescu
Karsh: Image Maker/Créateur d’images

Review Essay / Note Critique

David Szanto
Comestible/Edible : L’aliment comme matériau/Food as material
Book Reviews / Comptes rendus de livres

Anaïs Détolle
The Taste of Place: A Cultural Journey into Terroir

S. Holyck Hunchuck
The Donut: A Canadian History

Yves Laberge
Art : L’histoire de l’art en images

Marie-Ève Bonenfant
Cimetières, patrimoine pour les vivants

Contributors / Auteurs

92
94
95
96
99
The essays in this special issue are, with one exception, a selection taken from a 2008 workshop entitled Domestic Foodscapes: Towards Mindful Eating? held at Concordia University in Montreal. The aim of the workshop was to explore a conceptual Venn diagram consisting of three intersecting sets: the home; the culture of food; and the concept of mindfulness. Not surprisingly, the attendees represented a diverse cross-section of disciplines including anthropology, American studies, architecture, communication studies, design, English literature, history, geography, human-computer interaction, marketing, nutrition, psychology, religion, women’s studies, and, oh yes, research related to foodways, food science, and food and drink.

Indeed, at the heart of the event was the challenge to find ways to work collaboratively across fields that have differing sets of assumptions and methodologies. The Domestic Foodscapes workshop was conceived out of a misunderstanding arising from alternate definitions of the very word “domestic.” To Jordan LeBel, then a professor at Cornell University’s School of Hotel Administration, the term encompassed an array of domains including at the scale of the nation, as in Gross Domestic Product. It was not instinctive for Rhona Richman Kenneally, a professor in the Department of Design and Computation Arts at Concordia and with a background in architecture, to think in such terms; for her, domestic constitutes the zone of the household. Notwithstanding—perhaps even because of—this initial confusion, the workshop proved rewarding because of negotiations that subsequently took place regarding how to approach any data being addressed, how to analyze it, report the findings, even cite sources that were used. Not only did this exercise introduce each participant to new ways of doing and thinking about things, it made us question our own habits and tacit beliefs, and re-confirm—or modify—them. We hope this
collection continues to make opaque what is often rather transparent, namely the infrastructures of knowledge that belong to particular fields of scholarship, and the mediation that must inevitably take place when crossing from one’s own area(s) of expertise to new ones.

That being said, in setting up the collection for the reader, certain definitions seem required. “Domestic” will, in these essays, relate to the household and to the house, “our first universe, the real cosmos in every sense of the word” according to Gaston Bachelard (1994: 4). In that environment, food culture is transferred (or not) across generations and diverse audiences; rituals are created, observed or abandoned by virtue of a myriad of stimuli; and prescriptives about cooking and eating, not to mention convenience foods in various stages of preparation, enter the kitchen and are personalized and modified (or not) for the purposes of the household.

The genesis of the term “foodscape” likely emerges from Arjun Appadurai’s conceptualization of “scapes” as capturing dimensions of global cultural flow, inasmuch as he uses the suffix “to indicate first of all that these are not objectively given relations which look the same from every angle of vision, but rather ... are deeply perspectival constructs, inflected very much by the historical, linguistic and political situatedness of different sorts of actors” (1990: 296-97).

An early use of the “food” prefix can be found in a study by Lewis Holloway and Moya Kneafsey. They refer to the U.K. as a somewhat disembodied or “placeless foodscape” (2000: 286)—although one undergoing a sort of rehabilitation by virtue of the emergence of British Farmer’s Markets that feature locally grown or produced foodstuffs—as compared with countries whose food production was strongly rooted to a particular region. Over time, the geographic range of a foodscape becomes more focused in the hands of other researchers, for example on such cities as Glasgow and Bangkok. In her investigation of the latter, Gisèle Yasmeen takes the position that “like the concept of landscape, which is a view of space from a certain perspective, a foodscape can be thought of as a point of view on a given place”; the term thus emphasizes “a spatialization of foodways and the interconnections between people, food, and places” (2007: 525).

Jeffery Sobal and Brian Wansink (2007) narrow the confines even more in their exploration of “kitchenscapes, tablescapes, plateescapes and foodscapes,” built environments of varying scales that influence en raison des négociations qui y eurent lieu au sujet de la manière de considérer les données, de les analyser, de rapporter les découvertes, même de citer les sources utilisées. Non seulement cet exercice a-t-il permis à tous les participants de découvrir de nouvelles manières de faire et de penser, mais il les a également incités à interroger leurs habitudes et leurs croyances implicites, et à les confirmer – ou les modifier. Nous espérons que ce collectif contribuera à donner une certaine visibilité à ce qui est souvent transparent, à savoir les infrastructures du savoir relevant des différentes disciplines académiques, et la médiation qui doit nécessairement avoir lieu lorsque l’on franchit un champ d’expertise à de nouveaux champs.

Ceci dit, concernant ce rassemblement d’articles, certaines définitions paraissent nécessaires à l’intention du lecteur. Le terme « domestique », dans ces travaux, désignera la maisonnée et la maison, « notre univers premier, le véritable cosmos dans tous les sens du mot », selon Gaston Bachelard (1994 : 4). Dans cet environnement, la culture alimentaire se transmet (ou non) au fil des générations et à divers publics ; certains rituels se créent, s’observent, ou sont abandonnés en vertu d’une multitude de stimuli ; et les usages consacrés de la préparation des repas et de l’alimentation, sans même parler des aliments déjà préparés aux divers stades de leur préparation, entrent dans la cuisine et sont personnalisés et modifiés (ou non) à l’intention de la maisonnée.

La genèse du terme foodscape est à rechercher dans la conceptualisation de scape [radical de landscape, « paysage »] d’Arjun Appadurai, qui renferme certaines dimensions des flux culturels mondiaux, et le préfixe qu’il ajoute à ce terme sert « à indiquer avant tout qu’il ne s’agit pas de relations objectives, qui paraissent semblables vues de n’importe quel angle, mais qui sont plutôt… des constructions dans une perspective longue, fortement infléchies par la situation historique, linguistique et politique des différents types d’acteurs » (1990 : 296-97).

Le préfixe « food » se découvre très tôt dans une étude de Lewis Holloway et Moya Kneafsey, pour qui le Royaume-Uni est dépourvu de « foodscape », de paysage alimentaire, ou du moins que celui-ci est quelque peu désincarné (2000 : 286) – quoique sur la voie d’une forme de réhabilitation en vertu de l’émergence du marché fermier britannique, valorisant les produits alimentaires locaux – comparativement à d’autres pays où la production alimentaire s’enracine fortement dans.
both the type and amount of food consumed. For the purposes of this collection, however, the most comprehensive conceptualization of the term is articulated by Juan E. and Magda Campo in the syllabus for their course—Food, Religion and Culture in the Middle East—at the University of California Santa Barbara. For them, a foodscape is “a way to talk about the culinary culture(s) of a place as defined by the interactions of a variety of factors: geography, climate and environment; religion, language, and cultural practices; history; social organization, ethnicity, status and gender; science and technology.” An ever-dynamic environment, it is grounded in the actual tasks associated with food preparation and consumption, but “can also be represented in texts, art, architecture, and even ordinary objects connected with food production, cooking, serving, and eating or drinking.” In short, foodscape “interweave the body with society and culture, nature, and the world at large.”

The concept of mindfulness takes as its point of departure the study of mindless eating as made popular by Brian Wansink in his bestselling book of the same name. Subtitled Why We Eat More Than We Think, the monograph documents his findings as Director of the Cornell University Food and Brand Lab and underscores the degree to which problematic food habits such as overeating result from distractions that move attention away from the act of eating, or from “hidden persuaders” (in advertisements or packaging, for example) that tacitly manipulate the consumer.

However, mindfulness also brings up for consideration circumstances that might enable enriching culinary experiences for the eater, cook and other stakeholders implicated in food production and preparation. It centralizes opportunities to create community and commensality as a result of shared experiences as well as to enhance gustatory awareness, by encouraging a broader (cognitive, sensorial) appreciation of what one eats and where and how. It considers the transmission of gastronomic knowledge and experience as a way to ground both enhanced pleasure and personal responsibility. And it gauges the possibility of fostering more sustainable lifestyles by promoting a greater appreciation for ethical growing and harvesting practices. As Carlo Petrini (2001) writes with regard to Slow Food, mindful eating includes “giving the act of nourishing oneself the importance it deserves, learning to take pleasure in the diversity of recipes and flavors, recognizing the variety of places where food is produced and the people who

les particularisms régionaux. Avec le temps, la portée géographique des paysages alimentaires s’est étendue, de Glasgow à Bangkok, et davantage conceptualisée, dans les travaux d’autres chercheurs. Dans ses recherches sur Bangkok, Gisèle Yasmeen était d’avis que, « à l’instar du concept de paysage, qui est un point de vue sur l’espace en fonction d’une certaine perspective, le paysage alimentaire peut se conceptualiser comme un point de vue sur un lieu donné » ; ce terme souligne donc « une spatialisation des modes alimentaires et les interconnexion entre les personnes, la nourriture et les lieux » (2007 : 525). Jeffery Sobal et Brian Wansink (2007) délimitent encore plus étroitement l’emprise en explorant les « paysages de cuisines, de tables, d’assiettes et d’aliments », environnements construits d’échelles variables qui exercent une influence autant sur le type des aliments que sur la quantité qui en est consommée. Aux fins de ce recueil d’articles cependant, ce sont Juan E. Campo et Magda Campo qui articulent la conceptualisation la plus englobante de ce terme de « paysage » dans le syllabus de leurs cours portant sur « la nourriture, la religion et la culture au Moyen-Orient » à l’Université de Santa Barbara. Pour eux, un paysage alimentaire est « une manière de parler des cultures culinaires d’un lieu telles que les définissent les interactions d’une grande variété de facteurs : la géographie, le climat et l’environnement ; la religion, la langue et les pratiques culturelles ; l’histoire ; l’organisation sociale, l’ethicité, le statut et le genre ; et la science et la technologie ». En tant qu’environnement sans cesse dynamique, il se fonde sur les tâches concrètes que réclament la préparation et la consommation de nourriture, mais « il peut aussi être représenté dans des textes, dans des œuvres d’art, d’architecture, et même dans des objets ordinaires liés à la production de nourriture, à la préparation des aliments, au service, et à l’acte de manger ou de boire ». Bref, les paysages alimentaires « tissent les fils qui rélient le corps à la société et à la culture, à la nature et au monde en général ».

Le concept de conscience prend pour point de départ l’étude de l’alimentation « sans conscience » que Brian Wanskin a définie dans son best seller Mindless Eating. Sous-titrée Why We Eat More Than We Think [Pourquoi nous mangeons plus que nous ne le pensons], cette monographie documente les découvertes qu’il a faites en tant que directeur du Food and Brand Lab de l’Université Cornell, et indique à quel niveau surviennent les habitudes
produce it, and respecting the rhythm of the seasons and of human gatherings” (xvii).

However, whereas mindfulness is meant to be an overarching theme in this collection, the capability or consideration of the domestic foodscape as a potential site of mindful eating is framed in the interrogative. What evidence is there that a given domestic built environment accommodates mindful food culture? What conditions or variables work in favour of such a goal, and which mitigate against it? In what ways might it be possible or desirable to move towards mindful eating as a future objective?

Each contribution in this collection (briefly summarized below) takes a unique approach to these questions, and offers an account of varying degrees of mindful eating strategies in its respective analysis. Before proceeding to introduce them, however, it is necessary to address what the regular reader of the Material Culture Review/Revue de la culture matérielle will quickly note: this special issue has generated a break from the usual differentiation between articles and research reports, the latter usually consisting of shorter reflections of work in progress. Precisely because the wide range of methods and subject matter in these works might, in and of themselves, be seen to stretch the boundaries of what constitutes material culture studies, it was thought more useful to cluster them around points of thematic convergence that help establish a context, than to add an additional criterion of separation. Consequently, the two research reports (by Alan Nash and David Sutton) have been blended into the whole, and thus add to a more holistic presentation of key themes.

The first three studies of the “Domestic Foodscape” special issue constitute a background against which varying characteristics and means of achieving mindfulness are considered, by addressing the culturally constructed perceptions of food eaten in the home. Jessica Mudry’s essay interrogates the Food Pyramid and other vehicles through which information about food as nutrition is communicated to the public. Her argument casts light on a conceptual shift whereby the appreciation of taste, and, to a larger extent, the experience of pleasure, are undermined as desirable elements of our eating behaviour as a result of being supplanted by a scientific, quantified discourse privileging vitamins, carbohydrates, and other health-related characteristics of food. Nathalie Cooke further explores cultural prescriptive in her study of what she calls “cookbooklets,” short publications alimentaires problématiques, qui résultent souvent des distractions qui détourment l’attention de l’acte de manger, ou des « incitations cachées » (dans la publicité ou les emballages, par exemple) qui manipulent implicitement le consommateur. Cependant, la prise de conscience de l’alimentation amène à considérer les circonstances susceptibles d’enrichir les expériences culinaires de celui qui mange, de celui qui cuisine et des autres personnes impliquées dans la production et la préparation des aliments. Elle concentre les opportunités de créer le sentiment de communauté et de convivialité par le biais des expériences partagées, en même temps qu’elle augmente la conscience gustative, en incitant à mieux apprécier (sur les plans cognitif et sensoriel) ce que l’on mange, et où et comment. Elle envisage la transmission du savoir et de l’expérience gastronomique comme une manière de renforcer à la fois le plaisir et la responsabilité personnelle. Et elle évalue la possibilité d’entretenir des modes de vie plus durables en valorisant davantage les pratiques agricoles éthiques. Comme l’écrivait Carlo Petrini (2001) dans Slow Food, mouvement que l’on appelle en français écogastronomie, l’alimentation consciente consiste entre autres « à conférer à l’acte de se nourrir l’importance qu’il mérite, à apprendre à éprouver du plaisir devant la diversité des recettes et des saveurs, à reconnaître la diversité des lieux où sont produits les aliments et la diversité des personnes qui les produisent, et à respecter le rythme des saisons et des rassemblements humains » (xvii).

Cependant, si la « prise de conscience » se veut le thème d’ensemble de ce recueil, la possibilité que le paysage alimentaire domestique soit le lieu potentiel de l’alimentation consciente, ou le postulat qui le considère comme tel, sont ici abordés sur le mode interrogatif. Quelle preuve avons-nous qu’un environnement domestique donné puisse effectivement servir une culture alimentaire consciente? Quelles sont les conditions ou les variables qui favorisent cet objectif, et quelles sont celles qui lui sont contraires? De quelle manière est-il possible de progresser vers une alimentation consciente en tant qu’objectif d’avenir, et cet objectif est-il même souhaitable?

Chacune des contributions de ce recueil (que nous résumons brièvement ci-dessous) aborde ces questions par le biais d’une approche unique, et leurs analyses respectives font état de degrés divers de stratégies d’alimentation consciente. Avant de les présenter, cependant, il est nécessaire de mentionner ce que les lecteurs de Material Culture Review/
of recipes, created and disseminated by food companies as a means to promote their products. Through fine comparison, (commensurate with her expertise as a literary critic) of the trajectories some of these recipes take when adopted and modified in different geographic regions, Cooke evaluates the degree to which these collections serve as indicators of consolidation, rather than of difference, of particular domestic foodways practices. Finally, Charlene Elliott, using communications and marketing scholarship, brings the focus to children, and “fun foods,” a category of ready-made products that unambiguously targets this consumer cohort with direct claims or allusions to fun or play. These foods are not only changing the content of domestic pantries but shaping children’s representations of food and their eating behaviours as well. What we see from this first group of essays, then, are the complexities that have to be addressed when evaluating food habits, given the relationship between individual and communal readings of food as fuel, cultural datum or commodity.

Four subsequent articles offer more spatially-oriented approaches to the domestic foodscape, and consider how this site, as an interactive environment, modulates and negotiates the food-related signals (not to mention the physical artifacts) that are admitted into it. Alan Nash charts the evolution in Montreal, from the mid-20th century to 2004, of restaurant meals that were “ordered out” by consumers and delivered to the home as part of the transaction. He addresses two themes: the supplanting, in these orders, of “local” type foods (hotdogs, for example) by those that were internationally-inspired (such as Chinese or Italian), and the implications of this transformation of the domestic food environment, in tandem with the growing passion for ethnic cuisine which characterized popular culture of the time. Lucia Terrenghi considers the kitchen as a socio-technical environment, and the family as a “community of practice.” Specifically, she explores how digital technology, carefully planned and implemented, can contribute to the development of mindful eating by supporting the transmission and development of family culinary heritage. Anthropologist David Sutton considers recent transmission of food skills across generations on the island of Kalymnos in Greece, where concerns about the fate of traditional cuisine in light of available fast foods are balanced against new practices disseminated by Greek television cooking shows. Sutton brings attention to a domestic foodscape that habitually situates...
Guest Editors

Rhona Richman Kenneally and Jordan L. LeBel

Notes

1. He adds that these “landscapes … are the building blocks of what, extending Benedict Anderson, I would like to call ‘imagined worlds,’ that is, the multiple worlds which are constituted by the historically situated imaginations of persons and groups spread around the globe” (296-97).
5. The term “hidden persuader” alludes to Vance Packard’s (1957) groundbreaking study of 1950s consumer behaviour and media manipulation.
qui prolongent les techniques anciennes de préparation des aliments, telles que par exemple le fait de couper les aliments en les tenant d’une main tandis que l’on utilise le couteau de l’autre main, plutôt que de les couper sur une surface plate. Enfin, dans une rencontre des esprits interdisciplinaires, Richman Kenneally et LeBel partent de l’hypothèse que l’architecture et la culture matérielle de l’environnement bâti ont une profonde influence sur la construction des identités liées à la nourriture parmi les membres d’une même maisonniée. Afin de vérifier leur hypothèse, ils ont sollicité des souvenirs de paysages alimentaires domestiques de l’enfance, qu’ils ont interprétés pour explorer les corrélations entre les expériences alimentaires enfantines et les comportements alimentaires adultes. Ces quatre essais éclairent donc l’importance de développer une prise de conscience du paysage alimentaire domestique en tant que « lieu » de la pratique d’une alimentation consciente.

En tant que rédacteurs invités, nous remercions Gerald Pocius de nous avoir permis de poursuivre le processus de dialogue et d’échanges initié par l’atelier des Domestic Foodscapes, et nous sommes reconnaissants à Richard MacKinnon, rédacteur en chef, de nous avoir accueillis dans ce volume.

Nous remercions en particulier Marie MacSween pour les efforts qu’elle a consacrés à la réalisation de ce volume, et pour sa patience tout au long de ce projet. Nous espérons que ces essais sauront inspirer d’autres recherches et un dialogue entre les disciplines, sur cet important sujet.

Rhona Richman Kenneally et Jordan L. LeBel
Rédacteurs invités

Notes

1. Il ajoute que ces « paysages ... sont les blocs de construction de ce que, à la suite de Benedict Anderson, j’aimerais appeler les “mondes imaginés”, c’est-à-dire les multiples mondes qui se constituent du fait de l’imagination historiquement située des personnes et des groupes dispersés autour du globe » (296-297, traduction libre).

References

The Mindful Measurement of Food: Quantification, the Food Pyramid and Discourses of Taste

One would be hard-pressed to peer into their pantry and miss the enumerated health claims printed on food packages: No carb! Only 3 grams of fat per serving! Low Sodium! Properties such as calories, fat grams, portions and vitamins allow us to measure every morsel of food we eat. In the face of the quantification and scientization of food, mindful eating becomes an exercise in calculation, with the goal of enumerated eating being “health” as defined by federal agencies. In what follows I address the theoretical underpinnings of the quantification of food, and I argue that in the face of a discourse of quantification, other discourses and epistemologies are superseded. Such alternative discourses address the qualitative, esoteric and subjective aspects of food and are ostensibly absent from food and nutrition guidance. However, these discourses need to be recognized as legitimate and complementary to a quantitative, rational and objective approach to food. Yes, food is something consumed by the body for energy and sustenance, but it is also taken into the body for pleasure, sensuality and gustatory experience. To discuss food primarily in terms of quantities and scientific components is to encourage changes in discourses of the domestic foodscape. Quantification has made our kitchens more about numbers, and much less about history, geography, tradition and, perhaps, taste.

Enumerating Food—How and Why?

Discourses of science in general, and quantification in particular, have been around in a variety of forms for centuries. In order to impose order, to coerce or control a complex world, quantification provides surety, distinction, and ease of manipula-
tion of people, places and things. In the past, this order was established by systems of measurement for everything from grain to wool to arable land. Much of what is now calculated according to the universal system of weights was first measured using arbitrary and often anthropomorphic systems of quantification. The measurement of a hand of honey, or a pinch of powder, scarcely resembles today’s systems of measuring cups and level teaspoons (Kula 1986: 24), yet these systems demonstrated the capacity for abstract quantitative thinking, in which the amount of an ingredient became part of its qualitative property. Gold became synonymous with carats, workouts with calories and olive oil with grams of omega-3 fatty acids. Science relies on quantification to encourage and acknowledge certain sureties. For example, a calorie is universally recognized by the scientific community as the amount of heat needed to raise the temperature of one gram of water from 14.5°C to 15.5°C. Fixing this value allows scientists to speak in absolute terms about the amounts of heat given off by engines, supernovas, food and people.

The heart of quantification is its claim of objectivity. It claims to defy social and cultural constraints, and it claims immunity from sociological analysis or criticism (Bloor 1991; Ziman 1978; Porter 1995). We can measure two metric cups of orange juice, and see that this volume is more than one cup and less than three cups. With a standard measure like a cup (250 ml) emotion, subjectivity and personal taste do not change the size. As well, once we understand numeric relationships of more and less, buying, selling and drinking juice is an exercise in calculation. We can compare nutritional content by looking at numbers: How much vitamin C is in one juice over another? How much sugar does the juice have? How many calories? Moreover, numbers abet the quantification of the personal value of quality. A thirsty person may choose one orange juice over another because it costs less, is organic, because it contains a daily recommended intake of vitamin C or because it is fortified with calcium. The use of this measured language conflates and confuses qualities and quantities, and this is one of the most important consequences of the use of a discourse of quantification.

From my perspective, a discourse of quantification, as a social practice, is a form of persuasive communication. It exhorts certain actions and thoughts (intentionally or not), and forms the basis for particular epistemologies. It is a discourse that employs numbers, amounts, degrees or standards to create knowledge. These numbers outline a vocabulary that dictates how this discourse operates and upon whom it operates. When we communicate with quantities, there is a direction to our discourse that limits the choices available to us. To say that language figures food, eating and the eater is to suggest that a discourse of quantification does not mirror the world as it actually is, but that it invents a world within which certain statements are true or false, certain behaviours are beneficial or harmful, and certain courses of action are recommended or not.

Several critical arguments result from this perspective; three will be highlighted here. First, in the process of figuring food, language certifies a new reality. Here I am making an ontological argument. If we claim that one cup of orange juice is 150 calories we call a particular reality into existence. This reality did not exist prior to a scientist’s use of a calorimeter. Scientists, using techniques and technologies, can only describe the orange juice in such terms. In this case, the juice’s caloric content is real—more real than its colour, taste or smell. Because calories are a scientifically determined quantity, they are useful in certifying the superiority of one reality over others. No one can see, touch, taste or smell a calorie, but we all know that calories are real and an inherent property of the foods in our refrigerator or pantry. We can argue about the sweetness, freshness, smell or taste of the orange juice, but not its caloric content. The invention and use of a discourse of quantification, therefore, refigures food by authenticating new qualities of foods and suggesting that those qualities are the most important. The first major effect of a discourse of quantification is the invention and certification of a new reality; given this effect, food is no longer what it used to be.

Second, this new reality helps to generate a new epistemology. This epistemology is responsible for ordering, controlling and organizing the relationship between food, the people who consume food and their health. The new reality certified by a discourse of quantification lends itself to a quantitative epistemology. As more numbers are generated to describe food, those numbers are put into relationship with one another in order to develop a way of knowing what is best to eat, and why. The explanations offered by this new epistemology also countermand other types of knowledge claims. For example, since the construction of health is bound up in numbers and statistics, knowledge about calories and vitamins is more important than knowledge
about seasonality or taste. Knowing about this new reality becomes a method of dismissing other, less rational, less sophisticated, less esoteric or less “professional” knowledge claims.

Third, within this new ontology and epistemology the quality of the food becomes its quantities. Invariably, whether a food is “good” or “bad” becomes inextricably linked to the language of quantity. Thus, in a discussion of food, good and bad are calculated and calibrated, not seen, felt or tasted. Throughout the course of the 20th century, the invention of numeric markers sought to replace other available markers for determining whether or not a food was good (Mudry 2009). This is another way to purge taste, seasonality and culture from our kitchens. Discourses of taste, seasonality and culture cannot produce sufficient, rational evidence as to why a food might be good or bad. Nutritionists may nod their heads in approval when a person gets their daily vitamin C from a glass of orange juice. However, the scientist never asks the person if they are drinking the orange juice because of the vitamin C, or if they just like the taste.

Despite the fact that food is routinely quantified in discourses of public policy, diet books, magazines and advertising, there has been little published work exploring the alignment of discourses of food and numbers, or even discourses of food and science. Those who study food scientifically—nutritionists, public health policy officials, agricultural scientists and economists—use a discourse of quantification for everything from food calorie counts, obesity rates, body mass indices, levels of soil nitrogen and vitamin content of vegetables. It is common to read about popularized accounts of these studies in newspapers sections on health or science, on websites like Center for Science in the Public Interest or Yahoo Health, and in magazines like Self, Shape and Men’s Health. The quantitative research provides numeric justification for the claims printed on the packages in our pantries and refrigerators. However, scholars who do quantitative research on food do not reflect on the discursive framework they use to communicate their ideas. The esteemed objectivity of the language of numbers trumps any question of whether or not the language itself serves the “public” in the public policy, reduces the rates of obesity it calculates, makes people understand the intricacies of their body mass index or makes food more nutritious.1 Scholars in these fields see quantification as a panacea for dietary health problems. Dr. Susan Krebs-Smith, a nutritionist for the United States National Cancer Insitute, writes in the Journal of Nutrition that recommendations like eating sugar “in moderation” or consuming fats and added sugars “sparingly” need to be quantified to an exact amount. She recommends the adoption of the rule: “1 tsp (5 ml) of sugar for every 100 kcal (0.42 MJ) above 1000 kcal (4.18 MJ) rule” (2001: 534S). Krebs-Smith is representative of a field of research on food that even in its examinations of language like the example shown here, lacks introspection about how the language works in the context of food, and what other discourses are available to use either in its place, or alongside, a discourse of quantification. Terms like “moderation” or “sparingly” are too slippery for nutritionists, and are at the mercy of personal whims, spoon sizes or shaky hands.

Food studies scholars frequently align food and science by examining the social, political and cultural effects of biotechnology (Kneen 1999; Nestle 2004) factory farming (Magdoff, Foster and Buttel 2000; Mason and Singer 1990; Shiva 2000), obesity (Campos 2004; Critser 2003; Gard and Wright 2005) and food-borne illnesses (Nikiforuk 2008; Rhodes 1998; Leiss and Powell 2005). Each of these studies approach food differently than the aforementioned quantitative scholars whose discursive currency is numbers and statistics. At the very least, food studies scholars appreciate that science and quantification are themselves value-laden social constructs. Marion Nestle writes:

Discussions of food safety in the media and elsewhere tend to focus on the scientific aspects: the number of illnesses or deaths, the level of risk, or the probability that a food might cause harm. Such discussions overlook a central fact: food safety is a highly political issue. (2004: 1)

Nestle is right, and makes an interesting point, but she places the politics of the creation of the numbers and probabilities at the centre of her study and ignores the power of the language of these numbers to construct and demarcate food’s social and cultural boundaries.

In their study of mad cow disease in the United Kingdom in the 1990s, Leiss and Powell (2005) examine quantitative language in the context of risk communication, and the failure of a scientized language to assuage the public about the risks of food-borne illness. They address scientized and quantified language as being a divider of people. In their specific situation, the “scientific and statistical language of experts” is contrasted with the “intuitively grounded language of the public” (27). Leiss and Powell move toward reconciling
scientific language with food, but because risk communication is their field, their concern is good risk communication and delineating public and expert discourses, not good eating habits, finding a medium for communicating ideas about food or the perils of public health combined with discourses of quantification. Discourse, science and food are often discussed using the public/expert dichotomy (Cook, Pieri and Robbins 2004; O’Neill, Elias and Yassi 1997), but what is at stake in these studies is the autonomy of traditional foodways, or the creation of the space for cultural preservation and political resistance. These studies do not seek alternatives to a quantitative discourse, and are not concerned with the discourses of food that are edged out by the objectivity of numbers.

The issue at hand in this paper is more than simply the discourse of quantification and its ability to construct realities of food, eating and the eater. The issue must also be identifying what kinds of discourses are often ignored in the face of discourses of science, statistics and probabilities, and why they are ignored. These myriad discourses of pleasure, sensuality, history, geography and taste are incommensurate to discussions about food when the de facto discourse is enumerated. We cannot measure the pleasure a child feels tasting ice cream for the first time, there is no metric for the taste of the anniversary cake of a couple celebrating fifty years of marriage, and there is no computation for the experience of eating popcorn in a dark movie theatre on a first date. Understanding why the crunch of a McIntosh apple in the fall is satisfying or a sip of kosher wine at a Seder is familial is beyond a rational framework that only sees food for its caloric content, and sees the eater as a soulless machine whose function is to ingest, metabolize and excrete. This impoverished view of food, and the people who eat it, needs to be supplemented by discourses that remind us that food is to be enjoyed and eating is a sensual, pleasurable experience.

More Numbers Are Better: Food Labelling Laws and The Food Guide Pyramid in the 1990s

In the 1990s the American government began a new push for the quantification of foods in the hope of addressing the impending crisis resulting from the national diet. Obesity, type-II diabetes and diet-related heart disease were on a rapid rise. The thinking was that more scientific information about food was needed so that people could make informed choices about what to keep in their larders and what to put in their mouths.

In 1990 the US Food and Drug Administration (FDA) passed the Nutrition Labeling and Education Act (NLEA), which required that all packaged foods labelled on or after May 8, 1994, be printed with “nutrition facts.” These nutrition facts—contained within the small rectangular information panels on the various containers—indicate serving size, servings per container, calories, calories from fat, total fat, saturated fat, cholesterol, sodium, carbohydrate, sugar, fibre and protein content of the food contained in the package. The FDA also asked that in addition to packaged foods, retailers provide voluntary nutrition information for the twenty most frequently consumed fruits, vegetables, fish and the forty-five most popular cuts of meat. The goal was that the nutrition facts label give the consumer numeric insight into what was in the product that had been purchased. As well, the nutritionally literate could now stand in front of their refrigerator and make good food choices, thanks to the nutrition facts label. The FDA also hoped that nutrition facts could act as a basis for the development of numeric standards to allow the food industry to make certain health claims. It is the nutrition facts data and the FDA legislation that allows Frito Lay’s Smokin’ Cheddar BBQ flavoured Doritos, Cheetos and Cracker Jack to have stated on its packages these products have “0 grams of trans fats.” Nutrition data legislation also ensures that Kellogg’s may proclaim Yogos Bits (Berry-berry banana flavour) a “good source of calcium” and “100% daily value of Vitamin C,” notwithstanding that “sugar, sugar and partially hydrogenated palm kernel and palm oil” are the first ingredients identified on the label list according to the website for Kellogg’s.

In 1992, two years after the FDA legislated the nutrition facts label, the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) released the food guide pyramid, a new visual icon of healthy eating. The food guide compartmentalized food into “servings” and made explicit the number of servings from each food group Americans should eat per day. The pyramid helped codify a language of quantification of food as it touted its ability to distill the discourse of quantification into a simple diagram. The carbohydrate grouping of foods formed the base of the pyramid, where it was pointed out that Americans required 6-11 servings of bread, rice, cereal, grains and pasta daily. One level up from the broad base, in the fruit and vegetable category 3-5 servings of vegetables and 2-4 servings of fruit
were recommended. The last numerically quantified level above the fruit and vegetable category was the meat (or equivalents) and milk groups, where 2-3 servings of each per day were suggested. The USDA left the tip of the pyramid, “Fats, Oils and Sweets,” un-numerated, and counselled the eater to use sparingly, leaving the quantitative judgment of “sparingly” up to each individual. The guide provided a range of numbers of servings for each food group. To determine how much of each group one ought to be eating, it was necessary to categorize oneself. The guide encouraged the eater to determine “How many servings are right for me?” Choosing what was “right,” however, required little personal input. The correct number of servings per day was based on daily caloric intakes suggested by the National Academy of Sciences food consumption surveys (USDA 1992: 8).

The USDA’s 1992 guide treated populations as groups of calories. The food guide pyramid grouped Americans into three caloric categories: 1600 calories per day (sedentary women and older adults), 2200 calories per day (children, teenage girls, active women and sedentary men) and 2800 calories per day (teenage boys, active men and some very active women) (8). These caloric groups determined the number of servings of each food group one ought to eat.

If you are an active woman who needs about 2,200 calories a day, 9 servings of breads, cereals and rice, or pasta would be right for you. You’d also want to eat about 6 ounces of meat or alternates per day. Keep total fat (fat in the foods you choose as well as fat used in cooking or added at the table) to about 73 grams per day. (1992: 9)

To help one answer the individual and idiosyncratic question “How many servings are right for me?” the USDA generated three general, abstract types or categories within which individuals must fit. The invention of these categories facilitated the management and control of the American eater and eliminated personal, social and cultural differences among eaters. The three caloric categories created an equation for each eater, reifying the mathematics behind the pyramid.

Because the USDA had specified daily quantities of servings, they needed to provide exact measurements for what constituted each serving. The food pyramid booklet gives examples of servings for each of the pyramid food groups throughout. A serving from the carbohydrate or

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**Food Guide Pyramid**

*A Guide to Daily Food Choices*

**Key**

- Fat naturally occurring
- Sugars added and added

These symbols show that fat and added sugars come mostly from fats, oils and sweets, but can be part of or added to foods from the other food groups as well.

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*Source: USDA*
starch-based group is “1 slice of bread, 1 ounce of ready-to-eat cereal, or 1 cup of cooked cereal, rice or pasta.” From the “Meat, Poultry, Fish, Dry Beans, Eggs, and Nuts” group a serving is more difficult to measure, and so the pyramid states that its recommended 2-3 servings should be the equivalent to 5-7 ounces (142-199 grams) of cooked meat per day:

Counting to see if you have an equivalent of 5-7 ounces of cooked lean meat a day is tricky. Portion sizes vary with the type of food and the meal. For example, 6 ounces might come from: 1 egg (count as 1 oz of lean meat) for breakfast—2 oz. of sliced turkey in a sandwich for lunch; and—3 oz. cooked lean hamburger for dinner. (USDA 1992: 22)

These encouraged followers of the food guide to measure, weigh and count their foods. Before 1992, a USDA-approved meal meant one had to weigh their cereal, or scoop out their serving of rice with a measuring cup.

The invention of the serving by the USDA was important in organizing and ordering the relationship between the eater and their food. It served as the quantitative epistemological foundation of food choice and control and encouraged the use of food scales, measuring cups and spoons—items usually reserved for food preparation, not consumption. Just as the calorie had become an intrinsic numeric quality of food, the serving gave volumes of food certain quantitative qualities. In addition to choosing a food based on its numeric nutritional value, one could use the serving to guide how much of each food to eat.

The food guide pyramid gives an itemized list of foods that every household should have; good food choices that should be in every home to ensure that Americans eat according to the numbers. The guide provides a grocery list of staples for five days of pyramid-worthy meals, items that should be in your “pantry, refrigerator or freezer” (USDA 1998: 63). As well, the guide provides twenty-three recipes for foods that ensure the home cook is providing the family with a USDA approved healthy meal. Each recipe contains nutrition facts for one serving (providing the cook follows the recipe to the letter). The cook is also advised as to how many pyramid allotted servings of each food group the dish contains. The recipe for “Savory Sirloin” for example, makes four servings. The recipe then tells us “each serving provides 3 ounces [28.4 grams] from the meat group” (63). The dish uses one tablespoon (15 ml) of “plain lowfat yogurt” and one pound (454 grams) of “boneless sirloin steak, lean” and a paltry teaspoon of margarine (which, combined with the sirloin, likely provides the recipe’s 5 grams of total fat and 52 milligrams of cholesterol).

What is striking about the recipe for this “savoury” piece of meat, is that the sole concern of the recipe is not to entice the cook with a description of the flavour of the dish, or even to offer suggestions for accoutrements that may make the meal a pleasurable eating experience. Instead, the recipe reads like a scientific paper, with its numbered steps toward repeatability and results. As with the scientific paper, authorlessly written in the passive voice, the cook’s whims and personal taste, garnishes or familial serving style is written out of the recipe:

6. Garnish with parsley [The recipe called for 1 tablespoon, chopped.]
7. To serve, slice meat on diagonal into thin slices” (USDA 1998: 63)

In 2005, the USDA updated the food guide pyramid. The new food guide, called MyPyramid, hasn’t changed its shape or mission, but it has taken the discourse of quantification on-line, and further expanded the visuality of the discourse of quantification. The new pyramid still uses proportionately sized coloured blocks for the food groups, but it has added a stick figure running up a set of stairs on the side of the pyramid. This is meant to represent the physical activity that one should engage in for “at least 30 minutes most days of the week” (USDA 2009). The USDA has even allowed us to visualize “quality” food by making each food group a clickable link. We can then further navigate to specific foods in each food group, so that we can see what a proper serving looks like, using pictures of real food on a real plate. If one navigates to beef (which ought to be a “lean cut”) in the “meat and beans” group, a window opens showing a “Beef strip steak—5 ounces cooked weight.” This lonely piece of meat sits by itself on a white plate with no garnish, no horseradish or no accompanying potatoes. The plate sits in the middle of graph with x and y-axes. The axes measure the width of the plate at 10.5 inches (22.67 cm) and the width of the steak upon it at approximately 5 inches (12.70 cm).

Here, the discourse of quantification has really come home. We can see a quantifiably good meal, we know exactly how big a proper serving is, and we know how to measure the serving relative to the size of the plate. We even know how big the plate is. The new on-line food guide has pictures of hundreds of foods, in every food group, that allow
us to see this quantified goodness of a serving—4 inches (10.16 cm) of almonds, a 4 3/8 inch (11.13 cm) wide wedge of iceberg lettuce, 2 slices of Swiss cheese 3 inches (7.62 cm) by 3 ¼ inches (8.26 cm), a 2 ½ inch (6.35 cm) by 2 ½ inch (6.35 cm) by 1 ¼ inch (3.18 cm) high piece of cornbread. For the USDA, understanding the properties of a good meal requires a scale and a measuring tape, not a culture, a history or taste buds.

Discourses of quantification seem to provide a transparent and transposable way to talk about bodies, health and populations. One could, in fact, argue that these discourses are levelling and beneficial to society. Since its inception, the USDA has always relied on a discourse of quantification to discuss food. One of its founding scientists, Dr. Wilbur Atwater, a USDA chemist working at the Storrs, Connecticut, experiment station in the 1880s encouraged the Department of Agriculture to pursue this line of thinking. Early USDA publications saw men like Atwater tout the importance of learning about the scientific functions of foods, and the digestive and metabolic processes of the body. This knowledge could help scientists understand what Americans needed to eat to be healthy, economical and less wasteful. “Our task is to learn how our food builds up our bodies, repairs their wastes, yields heat and energy, and how we may select and use our food-materials to the best advantage of health and purse” writes Atwater (1887: 59-60).

When the health of a person, or a population, can be measured by what they eat, or the quantity of energy they expend, it becomes easy for government bodies to normalize populations and make broad stroke qualitative claims about “best advantage” or “good health.” At first glance, this manner of speaking and thinking may seem like a democratizing and rational approach to food and eating; a way to make every body a machine that has both an input and an output of energy—early USDA food guides did just this (cf. Mudry, 2009). This is, however, an impoverished epistemology of food, and not at all egalitarian, democratic or universal. A discourse of quantification is a silencing discourse. It allows only certain kinds of knowledge to be produced within its discursive framework, and rejects others as subjective, woolly or irrational. While the rationality of a scientific discourse may seem egalitarian, it is, in fact, just the opposite (Montgomery 1996). Those producing knowledge about food are the select few who use the discourse. Adjectives that may be useful around the dinner table like crispy, juicy or fresh, mean nothing in a discourse of quantification, because the value of those adjectives resides in people, not in numbers or laboratories. As Halliday and Martin state, scientific language (and I consider the discourse of quantification to be part of this language) eschews “compromises, contradictions and indeterminacies of all kinds” (1993: 6). Instead, our epistemological relationships become “organized around systems of technical concepts arranged in strict hierarchies of kinds and parts” (ibid). When food and eating guides speak only in terms of calories, fat grams, vitamins and minerals, making new knowledge about food must be in the same epistemological vein to be considered legitimate.

Consuming More Than Just Calories: Alternatives to a Discourse of Quantification

If one were to refer to the quantitative messages of the USDA food guide pyramid, a meal consisting of a filet mignon with a port wine glaze, creamed spinach, hand cut French fries and mayonnaise would be classified a bad meal (too many grams of saturated fat, among other things). Federal food guidance makes no distinction between eating that steak in ten minutes standing up at a restaurant bar, or eating that steak over the course of an hour with a bottle of wine and good conversation with friends and family. The USDA and FDA discourses
of quantification cannot address the “goodness” of the steak from the perspective of whether it had come from a neighbour’s farm, if the cow had been grass fed or if it was dry-aged. A discourse of quantification cannot speak to mayonnaise made from scratch with fresh eggs, extra-virgin olive oil and a hint of mustard. A discourse of quantification can construct a foodscape made up of fat grams, calories, vitamins and minerals, but the discourse falls short of addressing how a meal tastes, and cannot describe the experience of eating it.

The example of the USDA food guide pyramid reveals the government’s commitment to the notion that food is human fuel, and that food serves nutritional functions and avails itself and the domestic foodscape to measurement, normalization and standards. But as this discourse attempts to direct and change the eating patterns, other discourses of food exist and grow. These discourses form the foundation for alternative epistemologies of quality, other ways of understanding good food. These alternative discourses attempt to define quality using a subjective understanding of food.

Discourses of taste, ones in which our senses, history or geography are the arbiters of quality, empower eaters with the ability to judge a food based on their own experience of eating. These qualitative discourses draw their authority from perspectives other than science. A discourse of taste that issues from the authority of history might cast quality in terms of tradition or techniques for making food taste a particular way in order to preserve culture or ritual. A discourse of taste that issues from geography might attend to quality by highlighting the particularities of a region’s food, or a certain cook’s kitchen, the authority of which comes from difference and not normalization; everybody’s comfort food issues its authority from their own childhood domestic experiences. A discourse of taste that issues from personal experience is grounded in the pleasure of eating in particular ways, at particular times, in particular places and with particular people. These discourses supplement and complement a discourse of quantification and provide different authoritative grounds upon which to build an epistemology of quality.

The goal of elucidating these alternatives is manifold. These discourses can provide a set of tools with which to see the shortcomings of a discourse of quantification. The hope is that one may be able to use these discourses to examine or reflect upon some of the current problems with food and eating in America, toward the goal of mindful eating. It is not my desire to cast a discourse of quantification, science or its methods as villains. I wish only to acknowledge alternative ways of talking about food, and consider them in the context of enumerated food as possible epistemological alternatives. Discourses of taste deriving authority from history, place or personality are an alternative way of talking about food with radically different ends than is a discourse of quantification. Each of these discourses assumes an authoritative voice, but does not use science as the defining epistemological feature of qualitative judgments. The authority is the eater, the farmer, the cook or the gastronome.

These alternative discourses can be found in disparate places. The most common of which is in the home where history, memory, place, experience and taste often trump science when talking about food. This despite federal agencies attempts to control domestic discourses of food with science. Alternative discourses treat food as local, traditional, ritualistic and cultural, and attempt to pass down knowledge and qualitative understandings of food through techniques of preparation, timeliness, memory and menu selection. As Italian cookery author Marcella Hazan writes:

The taste they have been devised to achieve wants not to astonish, but to reassure. It issues from the cultural memory, the enduring world of generations of Italian cooks, each generation setting a place at table where the next one can feel at ease and at home. It is a pattern of cooking that can accommodate improvisations and fresh intuitions … as long as it continues to be a pattern we can recognize, as long as its evolving forms comfort us with that essential attribute of the civilized family life, familiarity. (2000: xi)

Examining Hazan’s treatment of a steak, for example, we see a radically different discourse, without numbers, measurements or portions. In her recipe for grilled T-bone steak, she begins by giving us a cultural and geographical context and by telling us the difference between two breeds of cattle typically used for steaks.

One of Italy’s two prized breeds of cattle for meat—Chianina beef—is native to Tuscany. Its only rival in the country is Piedmont’s Razza Piemontese. The latter is the tenderer of the two and sweet as cream, whereas Tuscan is firmer and tastier. Chianina grows rapidly to great size so that it is butchered when the steer is a grown calf, vitellone in Italian. (385)

The follower of the recipe is told they need pepper, salt and one T-bone steak 1 ½ inches (3.81 cm) thick
(Hazan gives us a thickness, not for caloric reasons, but to follow tradition). The steak is to be grilled “to the degree desired” and “to your taste” (385). Hazan also adds that one may put olive oil in the steak before cooking it, but “the scorched oil imparts a taste of tallow to the meat that I prefer to avoid” (386). To Hazan, the steak is not about calories, ounces or inches on a plate. The steak is not even about the “meat and beans” food group. To her, and this is just one example, the steak is about Tuscany or Piedmont, about breeds of pastured, farm-raised cattle and about the different tastes and textures of the flesh and the fat of the respective cows.

With Hazan’s description of the taste of the buttery Chianini steak we begin to understand that discourses of taste encourage us to explore our senses, to relive our experiences and to use our imagination. These kinds of discourses of taste aim to preserve language and make knowledge claims about quality through referencing what is common to all of us: our own pleasurable experiences and senses of tasting, eating and living food that we think is good. Often these discourses contrast the normalizing effects of a discourse of quantification because they point out the impossibility of making generalizations about food when a food’s qualities rely on, and embody, the place from which it comes. Our understanding of good food derives from particularities in soil, weather, location, company, communication, tradition and experience. Knowing the constitution of good food relies on partaking in discussions and sharing personal experiences of how a food tastes. Because tastes are individual, these discourses eschew the replacement of personal judgments with measurements and reject the objectivity of a quantitative discourse. In discourses of taste, food is good because it makes you feel good, and it nourishes the body in immeasurable and sensory ways. This discourse encourages the eater to articulate the experience of their food as something more than calories, energy or means to bodily function. A discourse of taste attends to human experience, makes the eater the sensory authority, and provides one with a space to articulate experiences and share them with others.

Notes

1. Indeed, even when people criticize the language of calculation in food and nutrition, they criticize the numbers themselves, not the actual quantification of food and human activity and often go on to produce more data to justify their criticisms. For an extended conversation about how criticisms of nutrition policy use the same discursive and quantitative framework as do the policies being critiqued—demonstrating how pervasive the discourse of quantification is in discussions of food—see Mudry (2009: 105-36).
3. In a bulletin entitled “A Little ‘Lite’ Reading,” the FDA introduced new federally quantified regulations that dictated what words food manufacturers could use to describe the qualities of their package contents. There were eleven core terms that the FDA defined: free, low, lean, extra lean, high, good source, reduced, less, light, fewer and more. For example, “light” or “lite” meant that the package contained “a nutritionally altered product that contained one-third fewer calories or half the fat of the reference food. If the food derives 50 per cent or more of its calories from fat, the reduction must be 50 percent of the fat.” Just as with the term “serving,” the government imbued these terms with quantitative meaning. But these terms also implied health benefits when referenced with the food guide pyramid. Because the food guide pyramid had disdain for fat, “fat-free” is a desirable quality of a food, as is “extra-lean.” Presumably, “a good source of fat” printed on the label would make consumers leery of the food, just as “reduced vitamins” or “nutrient-lite.” This regulation of the eleven core terms certified the quantitative nature of foods and provided an epistemological language for food talk. See http://www.fda.gov/Fdac/special/foodlabel/lite.html (accessed February 1, 2008).
5. Earlier USDA food guides were much more specific than the 1992 pyramid guide, specifying things like occupation, race and geographical location.
6. In the actual food guide publication, the meat and milk industry pressure that caused such controversy in the pre-empted 1991 release of the pyramid becomes ever more clear. While the meat industry lost the battle for a different visual icon to make them seem equally as important as the grains, fruits and vegetables, the food pyramid actually increased the recommended intake of meat from 4-6 ounces in the Basic Four guide to 5-7 ounces in the food guide pyramid. The Dietary Guidelines for Americans that are released every five years have increased their recommendation from 6 ounces of meat per day in 1990 to an upper limit to 9 ounces per day in the 5th edition of the Guidelines (2000).
References


Cookbooklets in Canadian Kitchens

Canadian culinary history, as perceived through the lens of Canadian cookbooks, can usefully be divided into five periods: contact and settlement, consolidation, affiliation, articulation and differentiation. This heuristic ends with the 1960s because the next significant paradigm shift occurs when cookbooks become the object of keen interest on the part of scholars. This, however, is not so much a development of culinary history as one of scholarly history.

Contact and Settlement
The first Canadian cookbooks emerged as guidebooks for newly arrived Canadians during the mid-19th century—the best known being Catharine Parr Traill’s Female Emigrant’s Guide (1854) and A.B. of Grimsby’s Frugal Housewife’s Manual (1840), as well as La cuisinière canadienne (1840) and La nouvelle cuisinière canadienne (1850-55).

Consolidation
During the last decades of the 19th century, cookbooks served to consolidate knowledge.
gleaned from various sources for Canadian home cooks—the best-known being The Home Cook Book (1877), Canadian Housewife’s Manual of Cookery (1861), Mrs. Clarke’s Cookery Book (1883, and published under various titles) and Directions diverses données par la Rev. Mère Caron (1878). The consolidation of culinary knowledge in this period was intended to serve the Canadian cook in her kitchen. But it was also the first step in a larger program of consolidation that would both give rise to a sense of a distinctly Canadian cuisine, and position cookbooks as a useful vehicle for the articulation of Canadian tastes and values. In some ways, then, the period of consolidation might be seen to extend to the latter half of the 20th century, reaching a crescendo in 1967.

Affiliation
At the turn of the 20th century, cookbooks emerged that were affiliated with institutions rather than individuals. Such corporate cookbooks as The Five Roses Cookbook/La cuisinière five roses (1913), as well as those by Purity and Ogilvie flour companies, became valued resources in Canadian homes, rather in the way that the Edmonds Company cookbook became ubiquitous in New Zealand homes. Further, single-author cookbooks gained credibility from their association with educational institutions. Nellie Lyle Pattinson, for example, developed the trusted Canadian Cook Book (1923) as a textbook for the cooking school of which she was director; and in French, Manuel de la cuisine raisonnée (1919) was used in homes and classrooms.

Articulation
As home economics was professionalized in Canada in 1939, and home economists took up positions as not only teachers and dieticians, but also as corporate and public spokespersons, cookbooks served as one conduit for the articulation of identity alongside radio and, later, television shows.

Canada had its own spokespersons, of course. Kate Aitken (fondly known as “Mrs. A” to her audiences), author of Kate Aitken’s Canadian Cook Book (1945), and Jehane Benoit, author of L’encyclopédie de la cuisine canadienne (1963) and The Canadienne Cook Book (1970), both illustrate the way in which cookbooks provide an opportunity for an individual to articulate, even construct, an emerging sense of shared identity.

Differentiation
At the same time as cookbooks articulated a shared sense of identity through explicit use of the word “Canadian” in the title, a tendency further encouraged by various initiatives of the centenary celebrations, the 1960s paradoxically ushered in a time of increasing differentiation as cookbooks focused on regional and cultural variation in foodways practices. These competing drives—towards consolidation and differentiation—are always at play to some degree, but their co-existence is most acutely visible in cookbooks of the 1960s and 1970s. Expo 67 can be seen as a moment in which Canada not only invited the world to its doors but also into its kitchens.

There are other paradoxes associated with the history of cookbooks in Canada. In addition to the competing drives towards consolidation and differentiation that reach a crescendo in the 1960s, one can identify simultaneous and contradictory impulses to evoke the timely and the timeless, and to advocate for the saving as well as the spending of time in the kitchen. The focus of this article, on the period of Affiliation, best allows me to illustrate all three paradoxes since this period witnessed a homogenization of North American cuisine as a result of a number of factors, including significant corporate penetration into the marketplace. One of the most effective corporate marketing strategies was the introduction of corporate spokescharacters—fictitious creations, such as Betty Crocker, who put a human and friendly face to a corporate identity and promoted the use of her (with the notable exception of Uncle Ben, human food spokescharacters were generally women) company’s products in homes across North America. Canada had its own spokescharacters, of course, but Canadians also welcomed a number of American corporate spokeswomen into their homes on a regular basis—via their products, radio and, later, television shows; newspaper columns and corporate ephemera. It is this last category that particularly interests me; many of the small corporate recipe booklets originated from companies outside Canada, but were revised to relate a different story of food and the kitchen for the Canadian and the Quebec markets. The precise nature of that revision—what was changed and why—provides clues to the corporate vision of uniquely Canadian food tastes and practices. More particularly still, a number of these corporate publications were produced in both English and French, the latter for Quebec. However, they were not all direct
translations; they often included recipes selected both to feature the company’s own products and to appeal to particular regional tastes. At a time when North America was experiencing a normalization of food practice, corporate ephemera provides evidence not only to suggest that the distinct nature of Canadian and Quebec society existed, but also that it was recognized in their various constructions of Canada’s—and Quebec’s—commercial “fictions.”

What is a Cookbooklet?

With food studies in their infancy, we understandably know far more about the sources for and influence of cookbooks with many pages and multiple editions than those with fewer pages or appearances. Notably, Elizabeth Driver’s recently published bibliography of Canadian cookbooks focuses on those of sixteen pages or more. My aim here is to open a discussion about these often-overlooked little cookbooklets, to explore their form and function while acknowledging the paradox of an ephemeral genre that provides lasting and wide-ranging interest. By way of illustrating how these little cookbooklets punch above their weight, I focus on the Knox (Figs. 1a-b) and Davis (Fig. 2) gelatine cookbooklets, which made their way to homes in at least five countries and in six languages, establishing culinary links between home kitchens around the globe.

Often known as an advertising booklet or, more generally “corporate ephemera,” product cookbooks are a subset of what is generally called ephemera. Cookbooklets are distinguished from their culinary cousins by virtue of their size and their explicit product affiliation—both primary characteristics. Like the short story in relation to the novel, they are notable for their brevity. Mary Barile explains that a booklet, although larger than a brochure, is made up of fewer than fifty pages, whereas “a brochure is only a few pages and is folded, not bound” (1994: 131). Secondly, but equally significant, cookbooklets are usually the result of a promotional initiative and thereby illustrate a particular affiliation to a corporation or lobby group as well as a strategic logic.

Cookbooklets tend to be produced irregularly (Burant 1995: 191), are intended as ephemeral documents and are usually distributed free of charge or for marginal cost and are lightweight and made of cheap materials. Ironically because of their need to engage an audience, they have immediate appeal (Barile 1994: 132). As a result, some examples of the form are surprisingly attractive and colourful (Fig. 3). Collectors prize the “die-cut designs” (135) or booklets with “moving parts” (137).

The cookbooklet can be distinguished by a series of secondary characteristics as well. As a corollary of the genre’s promotional purpose, those who produce cookbooklets assume readers need or can benefit from information they contained. Their appearance in the late 19th century coincided with socio-economic conditions in which housewives often found themselves living far from their culinary mentors and in a world where literacy rates...
were rising in inverse proportion to printing costs. Further, soft and hard technological innovations in a rapidly changing world meant that those of previous generations were unfamiliar with recent product innovations and cooking techniques. By mid-20th century, as more women found themselves working outside the home, they were additionally pressed to find more cost and time effective methods of food preparation than those of their mothers or grandmothers. Consequently, cookbooklets were highly prescriptive and presumed a reader who was less knowledgeable than the booklet’s author or principal spokescharacter.

As a result of the genre’s ephemeral nature and irregular production, cookbooklets assume the reader comes to each publication in the absence of context. They rarely show evidence of an expectation that readers are familiar with similar texts or their role in a series of ephemeral publications, and therefore articulate very clearly their product claims (Figs. 4a-d).

Until marketing regulations are enforced, acknowledgement of product and corporate affiliations appear only when advantageous.

Taken together, such characteristics suggest a relatively stable genre—much more stable, for example, than such loose forms as the novel or the lyric poem. Consequently, there seems to be a paradox when the corporate cookbooklet is seen in relation to the wider category, ephemera, of which it is a subset. While the cookbooklet is a highly contrived form of strategic discourse, self-consciously developed to promote a particular product or point of view, ephemera more generally is inconsistently mediated, produced cheaply and collected unsystematically.

In a 1995 article, archivist Jim Burant reflected on the role of ephemera in the context of archival theory and practice (189). Of the many issues raised, one with particular relevance for this paper was his question about how archivists should respond to an ephemeralist’s offer to donate a collection of items to the archive, asking “can or should these collections be accepted as is?” (1995: 196). The question emanates from Burant’s perspective that ephemeralists have amassed collections “which they consider to be, in Barbara Rusch’s words ‘a more reliable witness of social life than other more self-conscious records’” (196). With his statement that “[e]phemeral collections may have a place in archives, depending on the institutional approach (record-keeping versus documenting)” (196), Burant privileges the latter over the former and aligns himself with the professional archivist and a curatorial impulse rather than with the hobbyist or collector. Interestingly, he does acknowledge—in an almost confessional tone—that archivists are (read: “mere”) collectors.

As archivists, we must always remain aware of changing trends in the research and collecting communities. While most of us consider ephemera not worthy of our individual or collective attention, we are probably all ephemera collectors within our own institutions, and we have to come to grips with this fact. (Burant 1995: 190)

As collectors, one wonders, do archivists lose the distance required for critical scrutiny, for documenting rather than merely record keeping or gathering information? Certainly collectors like Mary Barile, author of *Cookbooks Worth Collecting*, would argue that collectors have an increasingly precise sense.
of critical analysis. Her comments on the possible organizational rationales for cookbook collections, including justifications for collection of cookbook ephemera and cookbook-related material, provide evidence of considerable self-consciousness and a keen sense of documentary potential (Barile 1994: 9-11).

Rather than associate cookbooklets with ephemera, however, I suggest that we consider corporate cookbooklets as a subset of the highly stylized and consciously mediated set constituted by cookery literature: derived from the oral transmission of information; dominated by prescriptive discourse and the imperative voice, as well as highly stylized and sequential organization of information; and governed by a series of inherent assumptions about the relationship between recipe donor and recipient that regulate the form and function of the specific textual interaction.

Paradoxes of the Genre

Ironically, these ephemeral cookbooklets have had remarkable staying power and are being read in the 21st century by readers never addressed, or possibly even anticipated, by the original authors. Today, 19th- and 20th-century cookbooklets appear in private and public archives, are prized possessions of collectors and have become the objects of critical scrutiny.

What is their appeal? For their contemporary audiences, it was surely their ease of use and accessibility, even the attractive illustrations and engaging text. For belated readers—as I call those of us who, rather than using them in the kitchen, scrutinize these cookbooklets long after their publication dates out of curiosity and, as New Zealand culinary historian Helen Leach describes it in an October 28, 2007, email message to this author “recognizing their documentary potential”—they are intriguing because of how they can provide a colourful snapshot of particular periods of social history and, because their “intentionality of discourse” (Bower 1997: 8), offer glimpses of some predominant strategies of influence.

What were and are those strategies of influence? One involves testimonials, from both cooking authorities and celebrities. From the 1920s through the 1960s, these testimonials often involved fictitious characters brought to life by corporations in order to put a human face on a corporate image or brand trademark. “Penny Powers” of Saskatchewan Power Corporation, “Marie Fraser” of Dairy Food Services Bureau, “Rita Martin” of Robin Hood

Part of the point of such testimonials is to prove the product’s efficacy and ease of use. Specialized knowledge during the consumer age was displaced from the home to the research and development centres of the corporations. Hence in corporate cookbooklets one often finds pages devoted to images of corporate factories and those individuals charged with product testing and development.

When Genesee Pure Food Company placed its first ads for Jell-O in Ladies’ Home Journal, for example, it showed a “fashionably dressed woman tossing away” her cookbook with one hand as she gripped the Jell-O box with the other (Wyman 2001: 14-15). Carolyn Wyman points out a striking irony: although the instructions were deemed unnecessary, there were more than fifty different Jell-O brand cookbooklets produced during the next twenty-five years! Clearly these cookbooklets were effective and necessary for the company and its marketing plan if not for the consumer.

The other predominant strategy of influence, and the one discussed here with reference to the Davis gelatine cookbooklets, involved their adoption of the personalized and localized rhetoric of the recipe. Colleen Cotter defines the recipe “as a text form that is ‘locally situated’ as a community practice, and as a text that embodies linguistic relationships and implies within these relationships a number of cultural assumptions and practices” (1997: 53). In other words, a recipe, like the foodways in which it is situated, has a specific sociocultural context. By looking at a recipe, one can make certain assumptions about time and place. For example, when one hears that the contents of one 1927 cookbooklet include recipes for “Paw Paw Dessert,” “Gooseberry Charlotte,” “Milk Jelly” and “Mint Jelly,” one might reasonably conclude an Australasian context, with hints of a British influence. While pawpaw points to an Australian context, the “Pavlova” recipe on page 11 seems to indicate a New Zealand locale, notes Helen Leach in the October 28, 2007, email message to me. Although all the Davis Dainty Dishes editions published during the 1920s are dated, the recipes themselves appear to provide clues beyond time and place. For example, the Pavlova recipe on page 11 in the sixth edition of Davis Gelatine cookbooklet signals a publication date after the Russian ballerina Anna Pavlova visited Australia in 1926. Indeed, as Leach observed in the 2007 email, the layered jelly pavlova recipe first appeared in the Australian fifth edition of Davis Dainty Dishes in 1926. The
1927 New Zealand sixth edition of *Davis Dainty Dishes* carries the same recipe, along with what Leach describes in her 2007 email message as the “Australian-sounding” recipes. She further contends that the New Zealand 1927 edition was prepared in Sydney, Australia. “There is nothing in the New Zealand 6th edition” she argues in email communication of May 22, 2008 “that could not be Australian in origin. Gooseberries grow well in Tasmania.” Consequently, although the recipes can help to date and place the cookbooklet, they also point to a certain blurring of national boundaries on the part of the Davis Gelatine company. “The inescapable conclusion,” laments Leach in that 2008 email, “is that in the 1920s, Davis thought that a book that suited Australian home cooks would do equally well for New Zealanders.”

The Canadian fifth edition of the same cookbooklet has some slight variations, as pointed out in email communications of July 25-27, 2006 between cookbook bibliographer Elizabeth Driver and Leach: more wine in the New Zealand version of wine jelly, for example, or the use of a cake tin mould for the “Carrington Mould.” Driver further notes in those July 2006 communications that the Canadian version, published in Toronto, substitutes some local ingredients for the pawpaw and passion fruit then unavailable—peaches, the combination of maple and walnut, raspberry, and rhubarb. I note that both Driver and Leach automatically, and quite rightly, equate New Zealand’s “milk jelly” with Canada’s “blancmange”—and without specific mention. The latter, although French, is a term cemented in North American usage by an explicit glossary of terms associated with the new technology of granulated gelatine by the American gelatine company Knox and outlined in its 1929 cookbooklet (Knox 1929: 47). The American version contains recipes affiliated explicitly with American locales, such as “Philadelphia Vanilla Ice Cream” (38), but also ones containing ingredients to which Canadians, by dint of the corporate brand name “Canada Dry,” now take proprietary interest: “Ginger Ale Fruit Salad,” for example appears in Canadian and American editions of the Knox and the Davis Gelatine cookbooklets (Knox 1929: 14; Knox 1943: 18; Davis 1926; Dainty 1932: 23).7 Such overlap of content suggests that there is collaboration as well as competition between the two gelatine manufacturers.

But it is the French-language versions of the Davis cookbooks, printed in Montreal ostensibly for a francophone audience, that allow more finely-
grained scrutiny of localization. Although McGill has a 1930s French-language version of the Knox cookbooklet (which also contains “crème glacée philadelphie vanillée” [Knox ca.1930s: 22]) the earliest confirmed French-language Davis cookbooklet available at McGill is a 1938 edition, Mets délicieux Davis (Fig. 5). The front matter tells us that it is a revised ninth edition (Fig. 6), subsequent to the first eight editions published between 1922 and 1928. Changes are apparent in this ninth edition (Fig. 7). At first glance, the period term “Dainty” of the earlier editions has been excised from this title, which points not only to a change in fashion but also to the company’s desire to highlight gelatine’s utility for the entire meal and possibly for the gender seldom associated with a taste for things dainty. It will be the 1960s before gelatine’s contribution to dieting take front stage with such titles as the Knox Eat and Reduce Plan (1960). Curiously, while the 1930s Knox version is addressed to those using “les réfrigérateurs mécaniques” the later Davis version adds many explanatory notes for those intending to set gelatine outside an ice box or refrigerator. “Si vous faites [sic] prendre la gelée en dehors du une [sic] glacière ou d’un réfrigérateur, employez un peu moins de liquide” explains the note appearing after “Crème Espagnole” (Mets délicieux Davis 1938: 28) (Fig. 8). More curiously still, the same caveat does not appear in the English version published six years prior (Fig. 9), even though adaptation to electricity was slow in many parts of the country, not only in Quebec. One cynical explanation would be to suggest that corporate headquarters shared a vision of Quebec kitchens as hopelessly provincial and behind the times. A more pragmatic explanation would note that an English readership in Canada would include those in all Canadian provinces, and in urban as well as rural settings. The French readership, by contrast, would include those living in rural areas in Quebec, and the francophone population of the one urban centre in Quebec, Montreal, itself a bilingual city. Although francophones currently outnumber anglophones in Montreal, in 1921, 73 per cent of the Montreal population would have been English speaking, and a full 75 per cent by 1941. Within the province of Quebec, however, only 21.6 per cent of the population was English-speaking in 1931 and 21.5 per cent in 1941 (Caldwell 1974: 30, 31). By way of providing additional context, in 1931, 59.1 per cent of the Quebec population lived in urban centres, and by 1941 a full 61.2 per cent lived in urban areas (McVey and Kalbach 1995;
The exodus from rural Quebec accelerated during the depression years when, as Paul-André Linteau explains:

The percentage of the Quebec population living on farms fell steadily. It declined from 27 per cent in 1931 to 25.2 percent in 1941 and then to 19.5 per cent in 1951. Similarly, the percentage of the labour force employed in agriculture, which stood at 22.5 per cent in 1931 and 20.8 per cent in 1941, was only 13.3 per cent in 1951. (Linteau: 1991: 16)

The 1938 Davis reveals further treasures. It boasts one of the anchor recipes of the Knox-Davis books: Spanish Cream (Fig. 10).

Dennis Taylor notes that Spanish Cream appears in American cookbooks by 1870, described either as “Spanish Cream” or “Gelatine Pudding” (2006: 136). Like Bavarian Cream, Spanish Cream is a cold custard dessert but, as Taylor points out, is the subject of considerable debate. Some prefer their Spanish Cream layered—with a clear jelly on the bottom and a top layer rendered lighter through the addition of whipped cream or egg whites. Others prefer it to be of a single layer and consistency. Whether it becomes one or the other depends on what Taylor calls the “science” of the dessert, the moment at which the egg whites or cream are added. In order to achieve the single-layered variety, the cook must allow for “sufficient cooling for the rapid setting required to hold the whipped egg whites in suspension” (Taylor 2006: 138). If the egg whites are added when the gelatine is insufficiently cool and set, then the mixture will separate. Similarly, if the egg mixture is not heated sufficiently for the custard to thicken, then the pudding will not set.

Many recipes are either vague about the desired effect, or unclear about the method of achieving it. The Davis Gelatine booklets reveal a series of different techniques and desired effects over the years. As Taylor notes, the 1920s booklets indicated that the custard should be removed from the fire before boiling (Fig. 11), the 1937 edition reminded cooks that the custard must boil in order for the cream to separate, and the mid-century booklets provided instructions for separation (to boil until it separates into curds and whey) and for avoiding separation (to refrain from boiling and add gelatine to cool mixture) (Taylor 2006: 140).

In the Knox cookbooklets, Spanish Cream is not quite as ubiquitous as Bavarian Cream, largely because Bavarian Cream comes in so many varieties; indeed, there are no less than seven listed in the Johnstown, New York, 1929 edition, with such creative names as “Bavarian Cream #1” or “Bavarian Cream #2.” Spanish Cream, by contrast, involved basic custard, to which was added beaten egg whites and flavouring—usually vanilla, but possibly lemon or coffee flavouring. This last, however, is such a

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**Figure 9**
Recipe for Spanish Cream from the 1932 Davis Dainty Dishes, page 32. Image courtesy of Elizabeth Driver. Private collection.

**Figure 10**
daring variation that it necessitates changing the name of the finished product. “Coffee Cream,” explains the Canadian English 1932 Davis Dainty Dishes, “is Spanish Cream flavoured with strong coffee” (32). (Note that the word “flavoured” is spelled in the Canadian spelling style with a “u,” in the Canadian edition (see Fig. 9). But this is not true of the earlier edition, published circa 1926; see Fig. 11.) The revised 1938 French-language edition, however, feels no inhibition about adding variety to this paradigmatic recipe although the same prohibition against changing the name seems to reappear. There is “Crème Espagnole” on page 28 (see Fig. 8), “Crème Espagnole (Méthode canadienne),” (Fig. 12) as well as “Crème Espagnole (Méthode anglaise)” on page 48. Nowhere in the titles or explanatory notes appear any signs of the peculiarly Spanish elements of the recipe. Taylor mischievously suggests that Spanish Cream may, in fact, just be a variation of Bavarian Cream. “Was it from the outset a ‘Bavarian Cream’ that had gone wrong and had to be called something else as a ‘cover up’? But why ‘Spanish’?” (2006: 141).

What distinguishes English from Canadian methods of preparation seems to be the moment at which the beaten egg whites are added to the custard mixture: in the Canadian version, they are added once the cooling custard mixture begins to take or “commence à prendre”; whereas in the English version, they are added as soon as the custard mixture is taken off the heat. Despite the waiting involved in the Canadian mode of preparation, a cautionary note is added: “Cette préparation ne tranchera pas (will not curdle), pourvu que la crème aux oeufs et les mélanges gelatines ne soient pas trop chauds quand on les mêle ensemble” (Mets délicieux Davis 1938: 48). The English qualification—“will not curdle”—is from the original. Similarly, the alternative recipe for an English mode of preparation also provides explanatory detail of how to cook rather than curdle a custard: “Se rappeler que la crème aux œufs doit jeter quelques bouillons pour être de la consistance voulue, mais on ne doit pas la laisser sur le feu plus longtemps” (Mets délicieux Davis 1938: 48). That “egg cream” or “crème aux œufs” is sometimes called “cossetard”—clearly a Galicized version of custard—in an early Canadian recipe book (as in La Nouvelle Cuisinière Canadienne 1850) certainly suggests that it is borrowed from the English tradition.

Why, one wonders, did this French-language text need to incorporate English translations for an ostensibly francophone audience? One possible answer is that custard was not a traditional dish; or it may have been one the authors of this cookbooklet felt was so familiar to readers that the...
method of preparation could be left unexplained. Another, more persuasive explanation, is that the cookbooklet assumed a bilingual audience. This conclusion is supported by the many anglicisms in the recipe titles (as in Crème Exeter, Egg Nogg en Gelée, Éponge aux Mûres (“ou aux Loganberries”), and Jack O’Lanterns), and within the introductory notes (as in the phrase “plusieurs autres courrées” instead of “plusieurs autres pays”). This is further supported by anglicizings of other words in La nouvelle cuisinière canadienne: pudding (in the 1865 edition) or pouding in the 1879 edition, for example. Cookbooklets for Cox Gelatine, sold in Canada since 1945, also contain a Poudings section in the French-language edition. The notion of a bilingual audience is also supported by the curious choice of terminology.

A third explanation is that the translator was having difficulty finding the precise word. Today, one would say that a custard has turned, or “a tourné,” a general phrase and one that can be used to describe food that has gone “off” as well as one that has “curdled.” There are other alternatives: like cailler, for example, a verb “mainly associated with dairy or with blood” and used to describe curdled milk in a 1919 French-Canada cooking textbook (Manuel de cuisine raisonné 1919: 112). Cailler is also the verb of choice in a French-English dictionary of the period, where curdle is translated as “se cailler” (Bellows 1924: 175) and “cailler” translated as “to curdle” or “to coagulate” (114). Alternatively, the writer might have used such simpler explanatory phrases as “Cette préparation ne se séparera pas” or “Cette préparation ne se défera pas.” There is certainly evidence that the translation is weak. The English version of 1938 (Fig. 10) seems to suggest that one wants the separation to occur. “Remember the custard must boil or it will not separate” (48) is very different from the French-language prohibition against allowing it to separate.

Such clues provide a tantalizing glimpse of how recipes originally conceived by Mrs. Rose Knox in her Johnstown New York kitchen as of 1915, as well as those conceived by the Davis Gelatine company, presumably in Woolston New Zealand in 1913 and then in the plant near Botany Bay, Australia as of 1921, translate across national boundaries, languages and cultures. They also both reinforce and undermine linguist Colleen Cotter’s notion of recipe as a context-specific discourse, with which I began this foray into gelatine cookbooklets. At first glance, of course, the various explanatory and cautionary notes seem to emphasize the way in which a particular cookbooklet, despite its origins in a multi-national food practice, is customized to speak to its particular national and cultural constituency. At closer inspection, however, the very necessity of such descriptive notation confirms these cookbooklets are not at all context-specific. Cotter’s comparison between corporate and community recipe genres is helpful here. While recipes from corporate cookbooks, she finds, contain a wealth of what she refers to as “orientation components,” they are unnecessary for a community cookbook in which the recipe writer is intimately familiar with the assumptions and culinary expertise of its recipient (1997: 60). Ironically, then, it is precisely the location-specific details that seem to ground these cookbooklets in a specific time and place that speak to the distance between their authors and the kitchens into which they enter through product packaging or front door mail slots. Rather than serving as indicators of differentiation in foodways practices, then, they serve as indicators of their consolidation.

Notes

1. An earlier version of this paper was presented at the Food History Conference hosted by the University of Otago, in Dunedin, New Zealand, in November 2007.
2. Barile (1994) explains that “[a]dvertising items also came in die-cut designs, that is, the booklet itself was shaped to resemble something else. Watch for these in the form of milk bottles, cans, bread loaves, shoes and other unusual designs; few modern advertisers use die-cut designs because of the printing costs. Another style to watch for is the mechanical, a book that has moving parts. Usually these consist of wheels which can be turned to give different types of information about a food or allow the user to change recipes quickly” (135, 137).
3. Mary F. Williamson’s private collection, for example, includes a number of late-19th-century cookbooklets including those from Cottolene, Diamond Dye, Strong’s Baking Powder, Jewel, Northrop-Lyman and Silico (email to the author, November 16, 2007).
4. Here Burant is quoting Rusch, president of the Ephemera Society of Canada, in her 1992 Message from the President.
5. Milk jelly or “blancmange” recipes appear in British cookbooks dating back to the 14th century.
6. Leach is a professor of anthropology and author of The Pavlova Story: A slice of New Zealand’s Culinary History.
7. The latter two are distinct, though confusingly-named publications.
8. My thanks to Michèle Rackham for this suggestion.
9. Selected recipes for use with Cox’s Instant Powdered Gelatine/recettes choisies Cox’s Instant Powdered Gelatine, dating from the 1920s. My thanks to Mary F. Williamson for sharing this insight in her email of November 16, 2007.
10. This insight emerged from a conversation on November 23, 2007 with Charlotte Sturgess of University Marc Bloch in Strasbourg, France, about French culinary vocabulary.

11. Interestingly, in the recipe for “Crème d’Espagne” on page 375, there is no mention of the possibility of curdling and no use of either “trancher” or “cailler.”

12. L’Université de Montréal’s bilingual The Canadian Dictionary: Concise Edition, also gives “(se) cailler” as “to curdle” when applied to milk and “to clot” for blood (Vinay 1962: 52). Curdle is translated as “cailler” for milk and also as “se figer” (487), an expression figuratively applied to blood. I am indebted to Caroline Durand for these insights in her email of October 27, 2007.

References


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In 1999, marketer James McNeal lamented that “good kids’ packaging is hard to find. On the A-K scale (adult to kid), the design of most packaging for kids’ products skew toward the A end” (1999: 88). Such packaging fails to serve the “end user” of the child, argued McNeal, and so he devoted an entire chapter of *The Kids Market* to careful instructions on how to “kidize” packaging.

Today, “kidized” packaging is commonplace. With corporations realizing the enormous market potential of child consumers (and child-targeted products), the balance on McNeal’s “A-K scale” is now tipping towards the “K.” This is particularly evident in the world of supermarket packaged foods. Edibles specifically targeted at children have gained prominence; in the grocery store, a vast selection of packaged “fun foods” vie for the attention of both parents and children. Such fun foods deliberately target children through the use of cartoon images, bright package colours and curious
product names, flavours and/or colours: fun food packages frequently reference “fun” or play and highlight the food’s entertainment or interactive qualities. Overall, these foods are marketed as eatertainment—they foreground foods’ play factor, artificiality and general distance from ordinary or “adult” food, while resting on the key themes that food is fun and eating is entertainment (Elliott 2008; 2008a). Black Diamond, for example, sells FunCheez in dinosaur, fish, moon and planet shapes. General Mills’ Lucky Charms instructs children to use “your favourite Lucky charm” marshmallows as game pieces for the game printed on the back of the cereal box. Kool-Aid’s Magic Switchin’ Secret crystals promise a secret flavour and also “magically” change colour when mixed.

Fun foods provide yet another instance of how childhood is being tapped by the commercial market. Children represent the largest and fastest growing market segment (Kapur 2005: 24), as well as being a powerful “influence” market on parental purchases (McNeal 1999: 12). Given this, it is not surprising that $15 billion is spent annually on marketing to children (Rose 2007: 23). Food marketing is particularly robust, with an estimated $33 billion spent annually on direct advertising (Schor and Ford 2007: 11). While data is not available on the sales of fun foods in Canadian supermarkets, market research indicates that sales of foods specifically aimed at American children (aged 3 to 11) surpassed US$15.1 billion in 2006—an increase of 8.5 per cent from 2005. These sales are projected to reach $27 billion by 2011 (Gates 2006: 39). Such staggering figures make it tempting to focus on fun foods as either a marketing coup (as the marketing or food industry might) or an exploitation of childhood (as would critical scholars and some policy analysts). The intent of this paper, however, is to explore what this new category of consumables suggests about the domestic foodscape. Specifically, I am interested in analyzing the symbolic messages embedded in fun food/food packaging in light of the domestic foodscape. To this end, I ask: What is the significance of these “entertaining eats” when brought into the home? How do these products reflect both the changing nature of domestic foodsapes and the extension of entertainment space into the heart of the kitchen? Finally, what does the rapidly expanding category of fun foods reveal about both child/parent perspectives on food and domestic preparation and consumption rituals? Starting from the perspective that food (and packaging) messages are highly symbolic, I suggest that a reading of fun food transforms our understanding of the domestic foodscape by drawing attention to three themes—entertainment, empowerment and experience—that have silently entered the home along with these products.

Fun Foods in Focus

Fun foods are important to the domestic foodscape for, like all supermarket goods, their first (if not final) destination is the home. But this is the most trivial reason for examining these child-oriented products, as will be addressed shortly. First, however, it is necessary to briefly profile the symbolic messages conveyed by fun foods—both in terms of packaging and the foods themselves.

When considering children’s food in the supermarket, many people first think of the cereal aisle, where cartoon characters grace boxes of colourful Froot Loops and the fun consists of watching the milk turn pink. But children’s food has moved beyond the cereal aisle, and the play is becoming much more elaborate. A recent study on the marketing of children’s food in Canadian supermarkets revealed that almost ninety per cent of fun foods coded fell outside of the breakfast foods category (Elliott 2008). Fun foods now populate the dairy, beverage, frozen foods and entire dry goods categories; they can be found in packaged meals, yogurts and cheeses, fruit snacks and boxed crackers. Beyond individual products, entire brands and sub-brands have recently emerged that insert “kids” right into the brand name: Loblaws’ Presidents Choice Mini Chefs line and Safeway’s Eating Right Kids stand as representative examples, as do the brands of BoboKids and Nature’s Path EnviroKidz.

Be it a brand in itself or individual products within a brand, fun foods attract children with more than colourful packages: the foods themselves are often strangely shaped, wildly coloured and may transform in terms of shape, size or hue. In the Canadian supermarket, children (and parents) do not merely select between Tony the Tiger and Toucan Sam, they are wooed by Secret Agent Stew, Banana Blast Milk 2 Go and “Kaboom” flavoured yogurt. They select from pink bug shaped noodles, smiley face fries, tattooed waffles and “gushing” fruit snacks. Even more, they encounter packages that stress “magical” themes or foreground interactive qualities. Quaker’s Dino Eggs Instant Oatmeal contains mini dinosaur eggs in the oatmeal that “hatch” into coloured sugar dinosaurs with the addition of boiling water. Betty Crocker’s Tongue
Talk Tattoo Fruit Roll-Ups have “tattoos” painted right on the fruit snack (that children can dye their tongues with), and Nabisco’s Ritz Dinosaurs frame crackers as the way to “get the kids entertained.” Even yogurt has entered the world of both magic and fun. Yoplait Tubes (marketed as Go-Gurt in the United States) are portable yogurt tubes that have camouflage designs or reveal secret access codes as the product is consumed. Yoplait’s Kosmo Koolberry tubes actually glow in the dark—the package instructs children to hold the tubes up to the light for two minutes and then go into the dark to watch the tubes glow.”

Entertaining Eats

Fun Pix waffles, tattooing fruit snacks and dino-hatching oatmeal: it is important to scrutinize these “regular” foods turned “fun” because the semiotics of fun foods—what the food communicates—has significant implications for the domestic foodscape.

In their recent analysis of children’s food marketing, Juliet B. Schor and Margaret Ford argue that contemporary marketing of children’s food pivots on the symbolic message of “cool,” which includes oppositional themes, anti-adult themes, or drug themes (2007: 16). The cool factor, they affirm, has been extended to children’s food. Respectfully, I disagree. Although children’s food is oppositional, it is the funning of food—the shift to playfulness, not to coolness—which makes kids food distinct. Without question, fun foods are explicitly coded as “fun” to children. Packages are brightly coloured, use cartoon graphics and fonts and frequently reference fun on the box. Sometimes the very names of the foods are fun—as with Mini Chefs Funshines Biscuits, Sun-Rype FunBites, Eggo’s Fun Pix (Fig. 1) or Black Diamond’s Fun Cheez. Unusual product names or flavours—Alphatots or Kaboom yogurt—equally reflect this shift to playfulness. Thematically and conceptually, fun is both constructed and implied through product names and flavours that rely heavily on onomatopoeia, unlikely juxtapositions and elements of transgression or rebellion—onomatopoeia such as chocolate Splat pudding, Strawberry Splash fruit gushers or Zap’ems three cheese pizza. Unusual juxtapositions such as Rainbow Rush “windable” fruit snacks, and yogurt tubes in the unlikely flavour of Volcanic Blueberry, Cyber Strawberry and Hip Hop Grape. Or even cheese strings that sound so much more fun due to their primary label as Cheddarific or Marbelicious. Suggestions of transgressiveness or rebellion in the product name also connote the notion of fun (as opposed to the staidness of the adult world)—such as Betty Crocker’s Tongue Talk Tattoo Fruit Roll-Ups (Fig. 2) or the variety of products that reference bugs or explosions.

What is the significance of bringing these entertaining eats into the home? First, a strict (decontextualized) reading of fun food suggests that family style dining and meals from scratch, as idealized in representations of the 1950s home, must truly be a relic of the past. Yet, in her social history of domestic science, Perfection Salad: Women and Cooking at the Turn of the Century, Laura Shapiro points out that women have long been encouraged to use packaged foods and “modern conveniences” in domestic food preparation (1986: 4). During the First World War, the...
“domestic science movement”—a push to apply the scientific method to the production and preparation of food—gained a stronghold as part of the war effort to conserve food (218). As Shapiro reveals, the movement had other aims as well: “scientific cookery” was not merely a means to nourish, but also helped to support the food industry and to standardize tastes (192). Domestic science helped to usher in and promote a range of processed convenience foods—Jell-O salad, ketchup and processed cheese all had their origins in the movement—and the advertising industry artfully promoted the use of these mass-market foods as the true mark of the “modern housewife” (191-92). By the postwar era, the expression “scientific cookery” had lost popularity, but the focus on convenience certainly had not.

The postwar food industry promoted instant food as the “housewife’s dream” (Shapiro 2004: 1-40), liberating her from the drudgery of cooking and saving valuable time. This era witnessed both the Can-Opener Cookbook and NBC’s new Home Show, where the “cook” Poppy Cannon, showed viewers how to make vichyssoise “with frozen mashed potatoes, one leek sautéed in butter, and a cream of chicken soup from Campbell’s” (2004: 4).

Shapiro argues that in the postwar era, “time became an obsession” (62) with advertisers seeking to promote their products. The resulting discourse was one that emphasized “high speed cookery”:

“If you’re a typical modern housewife, you want to do your cooking as fast as possible,” wrote a columnist at Household magazine who was promoting instant coffee and canned onion soup. Not even cold cereal got to the table fast enough. According to Kellogg, what mothers really liked about the new Corn Pops was that the cereal was presweetened, a boon they found to be a great time-saver...

“It’s just 1-2-3, and dinner’s on the table,” exclaimed a story in Better Homes & Gardens.

“That’s how speedy the fixing can be when the hub of your meal is delicious canned meat.” The five menus included several recipes of a type that would become legendary in the annals of packaged-food cuisine, including “Twenty Minute Roast”—wedges of Spam glazed with orange marmalade... (Shapiro 2004: 63)

Not all housewives, cooks or television shows embraced the “Jell-O, marshmallow and mayonnaise” approach to food preparation, and Shapiro clearly details the struggles between the champions of “real” cooking (embodied by the likes of James Beard) versus those of food assembly (promoted by Poppy Cannon). The incessant promoters of high-speed cookery had to carefully ensure that the homemaker, even as she sought to save precious moments, still felt that she meaningfully contributed to the dinner she served her family. The solution was to underscore the creativeness of package-food cuisine, positioning it as a means of nourishing the family, minus the drudgery.

Shapiro’s work draws attention to the fact that packaged foods have been part of the domestic foodscape for some time. Family meals have, for decades, regularly included processed convenience foods, even if it was simply the classic lime Jell-O and cabbage side dish or the tuna casseroles made with Campbell’s condensed mushroom soup. This notion of saving time by using such foods has become increasingly central to domestic meal preparation. Arlie Hochschild’s The Time Bind (1997) details how parents in the 1990s experience the encroachment of work hours on their family lives. Women are not merely spending more hours at the office, but paid work is silently taking over life at home as well. Packaged goods solve what the corporate world has made the working mother’s problem, Hochschild argues. Ready-to-serve lasagna combined with a freshly tossed salad and garlic bread, and the family meal is complete. Indeed, recent surveys on Canadian food habits and behaviours reveal that more than 70 per cent of Canadians identify “convenience” and “ease of preparation” as either significant or “very important” when it comes to choosing foods to eat (CCFN 2006: 48), suggesting that the focus on packaged convenience goods and time saving which started decades ago is very much a part of contemporary domestic food consumption.

What is different today, however, is the focus of contemporary packaged goods. Fun food, in particular, with its array of frozen Buzz Lightyear shaped chicken nuggets, and breaded nuggets stuffed with macaroni and cheese (not to mention contemporary “TV dinners” aimed specifically at children) is much different from the Spam and marmalade twenty minute roast featured in the 1950s Better Homes & Gardens article Shapiro (2004: 63) wrote about. Prepared food of previous decades focused on the family meal with some assembly required (i.e., marmalade-glazed Spam is clearly intended for the family); yet Bug-a-licious pasta is a prepared dinner for a child only. This suggests that dinner has, in fact, become fractured with children eating separate meals from their parents. Breakfasts, lunches and snacks, too, can conceiv-
ably be prepared solely with the offerings of fun food: a breakfast of Eggo Fun Pix waffles tattooed with images of Hannah Montana; a lunch of Heinz Bob the Builder pasta, with Dare Bear Paws cookies and Sponge Bob Squarepants Aqua Kids water or Kool-Aid Jammers; and snacks of Sun-Rype Funtibites, Madagascar-themed Dunkaroos or PC Mini Chefs Unshines Biscuits. The significance is not simply about fun (a point that will be addressed shortly) but about visibility: fun food makes the child present in the domestic foodscape in a way not seen before. A child embedded in a family community blends in—meals are consumed by all. But fun food separates the child from the family unit and creates a unique space where the symbolic value of consumption is markedly different. Eating becomes not ritual or a form of family communion (Barber 2007: 105), but entertainment for the child.

Edible Empowerment

This idea of separate meals for children raises the interesting question as to why parents would be willing to serve such products to their children while, in the process, forfeiting the logic that one meal/snack suits all. This is not because mothers have abandoned the notion of domestic cooking. Indeed, research indicates that women still consider cooking—particularly cooking dinner—as an act of caring for the family’s emotional and social well being (Bahr Bugge and Almas 2006: 211). However, fun food brings two standout offerings to the modern table. First, it validates the concept of the child as a unique cultural category. Second, it limits any possible parental/domestic guilt for not preparing meals from scratch. Each of these aspects will be dealt with in turn.

Validating the Cultural Category of Childhood

While the idea of the child as a unique cultural category can be traced back to mid-18th-century Europe (Aries 1962), it is only in the last decades of the 20th century that children became directly targeted as consumers (Kapur 2005). By the 1970s, children were recognized as a “primary market” (McNeal 1999: 16) with distinct needs and characteristics. McDonald’s Happy Meal was introduced in 1977, singling out an entirely new target market, while marketers in all product categories flock to the theme of empowerment to justify the new gate crashing that is going on.3 James McNeal’s Kids as Customers (1992) and The Kids Market (1999) affirm that the primary goal of targeting children directly is to “satisfy more kids” (1999: 11). Dan Acuff’s (1997) What Kids Buy and Why: The Psychology of Marketing to Kids equally insists that promoting products to children is a means of empowering them, since products can “contribute in some significant way toward an individual’s positive development” (18). Even marketing candy to children can be an empowering experience, according to Acuff, because such products give children the opportunity to learn “to make the right choices under the watchful and concerned guidance of informed parents and caretakers” (19). Such discourse plays on the agency of the child, acknowledging children not as adults-in-waiting, but as agents in their own right (O’Sullivan 2005: 371).

Some cultural critics observe that this form of empowerment is really a colonization of children’s play and imagination (Saunders 2006: 84). Others suggest that childhood itself is being effaced by these cultural developments. As we learn from the work of Ellen Seiter (1993), Chris Jenks (1996), David Buckingham (2000) and others, the social construction of childhood is always defined in opposition to adulthood. This is what Buckingham labels “the politics of exclusion”—because children “are defined principally in terms of what they are not, what they should not know and what they cannot do” (2000: 14).

What remains disturbing for so many adults is that one consequence of empowerment plays out in children crossing the line. This is a phenomenon Neil Postman (1994) expounds upon in his alarmist but engaging book, The Disappearance of Childhood. Postman’s core argument is that the contemporary media of late modernity, particularly television, has eroded the distance between childhood and adulthood. Children have entered the “adult world” in terms of their entertainment, their dress, their understanding of “adult secrets” such as sex—and this has occurred primarily because television is so easily accessible. One does not need any special knowledge or education to access television. And so, for Postman, childhood has disappeared—and this research is noteworthy because, in many ways, it represents the dawn of studies that suggest that childhood is somehow disappearing or transforming—from Chris Jenks’ article on the “strange death of childhood” (1996) and David Buckingham’s (2000) After the Death of Childhood to Jyotsna’s Kapur’s (2005) analysis of childhood’s radical transformation due to technology. Benjamin Barber’s (2007) Consumed, conversely suggests that the push comes from the other direction, with
adults becoming increasingly childlike in their tastes, preferences and behaviours. What we are left with, here, is a group of young people who are not unlike adults at all, in terms of knowledge, attitude, consumer preferences, technological savviness and worldly exposure. But I would suggest that as these distances between adulthood and childhood become crossed—whether through technology or other cultural processes—new distinctions are created to reinforce the difference between adult and child, which is precisely what we are witnessing in the world of children’s food.

Fun food works to clearly carve out the separate space for childhood that other cultural developments may have eroded. It validates the cultural category of childhood by affirming that certain foods are specifically for them, that adult fare does not fulfill children’s particular culinary needs. Perhaps children are simply small “empowered” consumers exposed to adult secrets—but the category of fun food stands to reaffirm that there is still a clear difference between adult and child tastes and consumables. Fun food is an instant identifier of children’s space and taste.

The Issue of Domestic Guilt

Beyond validating the specialness of childhood, fun food also assuages parental guilt over serving packaged goods. As earlier noted, women still view their efforts in the kitchen as “an important indicator” of motherliness, and regard cooking as an act of caring for the family (Bahr Bugge and Almas 2006: 11). Food manufacturers from the 1950s onward assured homemakers that convenience goods were still merely part of the domestic cooking scene—as such, glazing Spam with marmalade or adding extra ingredients to pre-packaged cake mix was still an expression of creativity in the kitchen. So how is it possible that packaged children’s foods become acceptable in domestic space? They are acceptable because it is not possible to make bug-a-licious pasta, glow-in-the-dark yogurt tubes or dinosaur-hatching oatmeal in the kitchen. The vibrant colours and magical qualities of fun food—which claim to reinforce what it means to be a child—are utterly un-creatable in the domestic kitchen. In purchasing fun food products, and thereby validating the unique culinary needs of the child, parents also relieve themselves of any possible guilt over not making the foods themselves—because they are simply unable to do so (Fig. 3).

The Fun Food Experience

Fun food offers entertainment and empowerment for children. Equally, it presents a novel experience which cannot be found in everyday or fast food consumption practices. Consider, first, the thematic of fun. Children’s foods stake claim to the fun of the consumption experience, manifest through the wild names, flavours and colours and direct appeals to fun on the package. PC Mini Chefs Zookies claim to “make snack time fun,” as do Pepperidge Farm’s rainbow coloured Goldfish crackers, Betty
Crocker’s Fruit Gushers and Nabisco’s Dinosaur Ritz. General Mills’ Fruit by the Foot rolls out three feet of tie-dyed entertainment, with a backing papered with games and jokes. The fun is premised both on the artificiality and interactivity of what is being consumed (which, again, makes these foods impossible to recreate in the domestic kitchen while distancing them from adult fare). The fun food experience, however, is premised on the concept of the video game or television screen.

Children’s culture is populated by video games with advanced graphics, high definition televisions, instant messaging, flashy websites and the like—so it is not surprising that children’s foods have assumed characteristics of the other communication that fills their lives. The little coloured “hatching eggs” in Dino-Eggs oatmeal (Fig. 4) is not merely a unique selling proposition and a way to distinguish between parity products, but is also a reflection of the interactivity and sense of play expected of children’s consumer goods. Here the entertainment is presented so as to be both played and consumed; the audience (in this case the child) can approach the table with the expectation of being amused. Ours is, after all, a society of entertainment, for adults as well as for children; perhaps food as entertainment is simply another indicator of the degree to which this ethos has informed every aspect of our existence. Fun food thus extends entertainment space into the heart of the kitchen, but without the use of the television. Making eating more enjoyable, vibrant and interactive, fun food offers precisely the two features—interactivity and a focus on content—that analysts claim to be of core interest to today’s generation of children (Lindstrom et al. 2003: 3).

A second aspect of the fun food experience is that as supermarket fare, it is intended to be brought into the home. Consider the distinction between fast food and fun food. Fast food has been labelled “the emblem of American style consumerism” (Barber 2007: 103); its essence “is not what it is but how it is: its speed, to which everything else … is linked” (103). The fast food experience typically occurs outside the home, and is much loved by children not merely for the tastes, but also for the informality of the eating process and the ways that rituals of dining are temporarily suspended (we can eat with our hands, off of paper wrappings and not plates, etc.). McDonald’s Happy Meal plays on this informality, even adding a toy to heighten the fun. Fun food similarly offers the suspension of dining rules and rituals. Informality, in fact, is a necessary corollary of (fun food) play; one cannot be made to use a spoon for yogurt when it comes packaged in a tube designed for squirting straight into the mouth! Thus, adult rules, manners and canons of behaviour surrounding food are bent, offering children a form of empowerment. Unlike fast food, however, fun food is not predicated on speed. With fun food the “Happy Meal” has essentially been brought into the home to be consumed leisurely, its accompanying “toy” bursting forth from the food itself. Perhaps the most revealing feature of fun food lies in its relationship with preparation and consumption rituals. With fast food, the food is prepared quickly and consumed quickly. Speed in preparation is acceptable for a meal consumed outside the home, while on the go. Fun food is equally quick to prepare (it is packaged food, after all)—but it is consumed in domestic space, where more leisurely food rituals previously dominated. In the case of fun food, as the preparation becomes more succinct, the consumption becomes more elaborate. Play takes time; it is not to be hurried. This is far removed from Brian Wansink’s Mindless Eating (2006), which warns adults of distracted eating patterns such as eating in front of the computer or while watching television. On the contrary, fun food urges children to pay

Fig. 4
attention to eating. The whole point is mindfulness, but mindfulness based on play.

Still, this raises the question of why parents would be willing to embrace the idea of fun food—certainly there have always been strategies to make children eat, but there is a pointed difference between creating “ants on a log” by topping celery sticks with peanut butter and then raisins, and serving up pink bug-a-licious pasta and beverages that “magically” change colour. The difference, I suggest, is between ornamentation versus artificiality. Stuffing celery with peanut butter and raisins is a form of ornamentation—it takes natural, identifiable ingredients and combines them to create something more elaborate. Serving colour-changing beverages, dino-hatching oatmeal or fruit snacks that magically dye your tongue unnatural shades of blue is premised, instead, on artificiality and the entertainment that such artificiality (strangely) promises.

In an era that has witnessed the rapid growth of organics, the slow food movement and “buy local” campaigns, as well as consumer wariness around genetically modified foods, trans fats and additives, how is it that the extreme artificiality of children’s food—even if framed as a mindful entertainment experience—has managed to thrive and gain acceptance by parents? The answer is complex, and most certainly reflects (as earlier discussed) the recognition of the child as a distinct consumer requiring special, targeted goods. Fun food also reflects the ways that the child has come to stake out an increasingly centralized place in the family unit—the everything-for-the-child sensibility, which means, along with the purchasing of numerous toys and designer clothing, the selection of special foods and child oriented meals. Parents accept this, perhaps, when they work long hours and do not have the time (or the inclination) to create and sit down with a home cooked meal. Perhaps children’s foods provide another way for parents to deal with the guilt of work days that are too long and that leave limited time for play—because the play can occur during the eating experience, and under the watchful eye of mom or dad. Fun food is a means of providing enjoyment that requires little exertion from the parents.

Entertainment, Empowerment, Experience: The Kitchen as Playroom and a New Mindful Eating

The cultural significance of food, including its role in identity creation, status formation and boundary marking, has been explored from a range of scholarly perspectives. Food is a symbol, not merely sustenance; it “always has a social dimension of the utmost importance” (Douglas 1982: 124). Food’s symbolic dimension, furthermore, receives an extra configuration when brought into the home, into private, domestic space. I have argued that the symbolic value of fun food resides in its promotion as entertainment, empowerment and experience for children. Fun food carves out a space which affirms the unique preferences and tastes of children while establishing their symbolic distance from the world of adult foods. That these are supermarket foods matters, since their first (if not final) destination is the home. Bringing fun food into the domestic foodscape shifts the essence of the meal or snack. It creates a bubble for children’s own (transgressive) food rituals, whether they’re eating alone or seated with adults, and transforms the kitchen table into a tasty playroom. While adults may be repelled by the types of edibles characterizing fun food—green yogurt, blue fries, purple ketchup, pasta bugs—fun food fosters in children a very different kind of mindful eating. It is eating, not while distracted, rather as distraction itself. A paradox arises because there is a mindfulness demanded by fun food, but it is a mindfulness far removed from appreciating food’s origins. (Appreciating origins is an adult concern.) Instead, fun food encourages children to be mindful of consumption because it promises an extension of play.

Within the domestic foodscape, then, fun food becomes a vector for play, an assertion of the sensory “difference” of childhood and a recognition that entertainment should extend to even the most mundane of activities. The taste for fun food is not merely literal, but visceral. Indeed, it is an artificial, interactive and edible experience, which extends childlike pleasure into the heart of the domestic foodscape.
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1. Aspects of this paragraph are drawn from Elliott (2008a).
2. As found in PC’s Mini Chefs “Mac-a-cheezie” breaded crispy nuggets filled with macaroni and cheese.
3. Previously, marketers targeted child-oriented products to parents (primarily mothers), as the gatekeepers to children.

In marketing circles, targeting children directly is referred to as gatecrashing.

4. In this way, fun food is not unlike kets, the British term used for rubbish which also refers to confectionary products, particularly the cheaper ones popular with children. Allison James, observes that kets "belong to the public, social world of children" (1998: 396). Unlike sweets like truffles or peppermint creams, which are enjoyed by adults, “kets” are “impossible to reproduce in the kitchen” (399).

Notes

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References


“Mindful Eating” in a “Domestic Foodscape”

The work reported in this paper is an outgrowth of my research on the evolution of restaurants in Montreal. It began initially as speculations about how the changing world of restaurants may have affected the domestic foodscape.

Since 1951, Montreal has experienced considerable growth in the number of restaurants that serve the city. The growth has been accompanied by a significant increase in both the number and variety of establishments offering menus of an international flavour. Often called “ethnic restaurants,” the cause of their proliferation has been debated, but it is clear that the opportunity to experience the cuisines of the world in one locale allows for local foodways to be exposed to global influences. Should they find foods or menus from elsewhere more appealing or believe them to offer a healthier alternative to their current diet, Montrealers now enjoy greater variety in their restaurant eating experiences (Nash 2009: 9-16). The extent to which having what one scholar called the “the world on a plate” (Denker 2003) in the city’s restaurants translates into more mindful eating practices, either in the public realm or in the domestic foodscape, remains to be investigated.

The relationship between dining in a public restaurant and eating in the privacy of the home might not initially be clear; nor might it be immediately obvious how changes in one of these two spheres would necessarily lead to changes in the other. On further reflection, however, I suggest three main reasons that would lead one to expect some connections between restaurants and the domestic foodscape. First, because many North Americans eat both inside and outside the home at different times during any given week, it would make sense that habits and tastes acquired in a restaurant milieu would influence menus, eating behaviour and even perhaps the interior decor of those individuals’ domestic foodsapes. Certainly, evidence shows that the home environment influences the world of the restaurant. Hurley’s fascinating account of the North American diner after the Second World War, for instance, documents how what was once an essentially male-dominated place to feed workers became (through relocation of establishments, changes in cuisine and interior design) more home-like so as to attract a more middle class clientele, and particularly one that included women and children (Hurley 1997: 1287-93).

Second, it could be argued that a reliance on restaurant eating (and its greater availability in urban centres) has been one factor enabling the shrinkage of kitchen space in the design of city housing: trends that are themselves mutually reinforcing since a more restricted domestic environment for eating and cooking itself can act as a further impetus to eating outside the home (Levenstein 2003: 163).

Third, it could be suggested that the ever-increasing number of hours spent by many North Americans in the paid labour force has gradually eroded the time available for the preparation and consumption of meals at home and has encouraged a greater reliance on restaurant dining (or the purchase of ready-made meals from outside the home, either as “takeout” or as meals delivered from the restaurant to the home) in the interest of saving time for other weekly activities (Morgan and Goungetas 1986: 94-95).

It is inevitable, therefore, to expect connections between the public restaurant setting and the private domestic foodscape. Fortunately, mindful eating not only provides the key to the influences of one on the other at a general level, but also articulates
their connection at the specific level of the case study chosen here: that of the delivery of meals from restaurants to the home (or “delivery,” for short).

The term mindful eating is used by food psychologist Brian Wansink to describe a set of more conscious and reflective eating behaviours encountered in his research into American eating habits: behaviours that contrast with the alternative that he describes, to use the title of his influential book on the topic, as “mindless eating.” He argues that one of the greatest challenges individuals confront “are the hidden persuaders that lead us to overeat” (Wansink 2007: 10). These persuaders form a list that “is almost as endless as it’s invisible”: “endless” because, as research in his food laboratory has concluded, the average individual makes more than 200 food-related decisions a day; “invisible” because something as simple as the size of the dinner plate, larger-sized food packets or the exotic names used in restaurant menus all have an impact on what is consumed. These hidden cues in what Wansink refers to as an “eating script,” are responded to in unreflective ways that result in consuming food that we neither needed nor were even aware we had eaten (Wansink 2007: 1, 27, 57-60, 98).

Hidden persuaders are embedded in our surroundings. Whether part of the restaurant or domestic foodscape, they are likely to be different depending on where we eat. Wansink indicates a direct relationship between television viewing and weight. “It’s a scripted, conditioned ritual—we turn on the TV, we sit down in our favorite [sic] spot, we salivate, and we go get a snack” (103), he writes. He further notes, “And because our stomachs can’t count, the more we focus on what we’re watching, the more we end up forgetting how much we’ve eaten” (ibid.). On average, however, people tend to consume smaller amounts if eating at home: having “the whole family around the table at home,” according to Wansink, provides a “standardized rhythm to one’s dining patterns [that] means fewer cues to overeat” (239). Nevertheless, the fact that the size of both dinner plates and the packages of food ingredients sold in supermarkets has increased over the last fifty years makes it largely impossible for someone eating in the home environment to be fully aware of the amounts they are eating (60-68). More obvious, perhaps, is that by moving from the structured, habitual environment of the domestic foodscape to a restaurant situation, the eater is exposed to a variety of hidden cues for unreflective eating—the apparently harmless basket of bread placed on the table before the meal begins, a range of dishes that are usually larger than those found at home and the possibilities of the “all you can eat” buffet.

Hidden cues and eating scripts not only contribute to mindless eating, they are also a primary cause of the obesity crisis affecting North America (Arkowitz and Lilienfeld 2009). The inevitable result of allowing ourselves to daily eat an amount that exceeds our bodies’ physiological needs is that over the years we will slowly but surely add unnecessary weight to our bodies (Trivedi 2009: 32). Most diet regimens do little for that problem in that they do not address the root causes of mindless eating. Diets pay little heed—or none at all—to the environmental persuaders that shape our eating behaviour. In what they refer to as the “ecology of eating,” Rozin et al. (2003: 450, 454) point to a host of environmental factors that inform one’s attitude toward food and that contribute to overeating. As Wansink points out, “[e]veryone—every single one of us—eats how much we eat largely because of what’s around us” (2007:1).

This awareness can become a path to change, although perhaps not in the direct way that we might at first expect. In itself, simply trying to be mindful about what we eat is a reflective practice that likely cannot be sustained: sooner or later, such new behaviours will themselves become mindless and thereby lose their efficacy. Rather, what Wansink proposes is that the act of mindful eating be seen as a transitional tool—one that if used strategically can be used to shift the eater from one level of mindless eating to another, hopefully less harmful, level of mindless eating—one in which we have used our knowledge of how the food environment functions to write a new eating script for ourselves. He argues:

> We can reengineer our personal food environment to help us and our families eat better. We can turn the food in our life from being a temptation or a regret to something we guiltlessly enjoy. We can move from mindless overeating to mindless better eating. (Wansink 2007: 209)

Clearly, there are many ways of achieving mindless better eating, but eating in a restaurant would not seem be one of them. Fast-food restaurants are in the business of making money from selling meals; it is not surprising that the well-known question “Do you want fries with that?” and other inducements (Schlosser 2001) might be designed to encourage us to eat more rather than to eat less. The practice of eating “fast” tends to encourage over-eating
since—in Wansink’s words—“by the time we start to feel full, we’ve already overeaten” (106). Sadly, perhaps, more traditional types of restaurants are no less problematic. As Wansink observes, the “atmosphere of a restaurant can cause you to overeat if it gets you to stay longer,” because we “linger long enough to consider an unplanned dessert or an extra drink (106). Lastly, the behaviour and expectations of customers themselves, once liberated from the constraints of home, can easily lead to mindless eating. Indeed, nutritionists have noted the connection between meals eaten outside the home and less thoughtful eating habits (Ji, Huet and Dubé 2008: 1). Further, a major survey of British eating habits reports:

The dramatic performance of eating out is complicated, as detailed ethnographic scrutiny reveals. Having decided to eat out often results in relaxing disciplinary rules: our respondents reported themselves likely to eat more than normal and to pay less attention to health when away from home. (Warde and Martens 1998: 143)

The role of restaurants and eating outside the home is more nuanced than these studies suggest. Restaurant eating can be unhealthy, but it does not always have to be. Thus, for example, at least one comprehensive survey of North Americans eating outside the home concluded that “persons consumed foods in a rational way and that where and when foods were consumed had very little impact on their nutritional status” (Morgan and Goungetas 1986: 123). Moreover, restaurant food—if it can be used as part of the mindful transition from mindless overeating to the more reflective mindless regimen discussed above—is surely to be applauded as an end that justifies the means. Restaurants meals may offer a healthier alternative to eating “junk food” at home when there is little time to prepare a meal. By providing an introduction to new cuisines (such as may be found across a range of ethnic restaurants) restaurant meals may also foster within consumers a greater awareness of what they are eating. As Wansink suggests: “[t]he key is to use fast-food restaurants, buffets and warehouse clubs to help you mindlessly eat better while still saving time and spending less” (237).

Similarly, the “eating scripts” of people who dine in restaurants need not always encourage overeating, particularly if some of the characteristics of family dining in the home is adopted in the restaurant setting. For example, in their comparative study of the ecology of eating in France and North America, Rozin (2003: 450) and his co-authors found that food portions in France are smaller than in North America. Consequently, restaurant diners in France eat less than diners in North American restaurants. They also found it is the custom in France to take more time than do North Americans to eat a meal—meaning that despite smaller portions, the French have more food experience while eating less (451). The eating scripts of the French appear to have created, in the words of Rozin et al. “a friendlier environment oriented toward moderation” (454). The adoption of these two eating scripts, even just the latter—lingering over a meal, perhaps in the company of friends with good conversation—may trigger for diners an awareness of satiation before being tempted to eat too much. As Wansink reminds us “[m]any research studies show that it takes up to 20 minutes for our body and brain to signal satiation...” (46).

Therefore, even restaurant dining can provide for mindful eating practices if first, we are more aware of what we are eating and, second, we recast our foodscapes in ways that incorporate enduring change. With respect to the first condition, modern cultural geographers and food studies scholars have pointed to the frisson, that momentary thrill or sense of excitement and pleasure often experienced by diners in restaurants as evidence that this is a transformative type of space that lies at the boundaries of private and public space—a liminal space located between the home as a private space in which domestic activities such as cooking are permitted, and the world of the workplace, where only publicly-sanctioned activities may be pursued and the commodification of food preparation is located (cf. Hurley 1997; Spang 2000; Yasmeen 2006: 25-34). In short, new foods, methods of preparation and eating customs can all be encountered for the first time outside the home in a restaurant setting, offering the stimulus for approaching more mindful eating.

In terms of the second criterion, that of enduring change, it is perhaps harder to envisage how restaurant dining might itself promote sustained patterns of “mindless better eating”—especially if that change is seen as one that must primarily occur in the domestic foodscape where the bulk of meals in North America are still prepared and eaten. However, if the “ordering out” of restaurant meals to be consumed at home provides one way in which the frisson of the restaurant can be transferred into a domestic milieu, delivery on a regular basis can also be seen as another way in which people with limited time or cooking skills at their disposal are able to
augment their cuisine on a sustained basis, and to do so in a way that promotes continued thoughtful choice—one hallmark of the mindful foodscape. Thus, Wansink argues that even mediocre cooks can easily add variety to the domestic foodscape by “buying different foods” and by “visiting authentic ethnic restaurants”—strategies that can be justified in terms of mindful eating, since “[w]hen a child develops a taste for a wide range of foods, healthy foods can be more easily substituted for less healthy ones” (Wansink 2007: 168).

Moving the restaurant world into the domestic setting via the delivery of meals signals another sign of effective and enduring change in eating scripts. To domesticate the consumption of restaurant meals ensures that takeout and delivery of food prepared away from the home are eaten in an environment where eating scripts are more structured and where individuals are likely to eat less (Wansink: 239). It is in such a context that the growth and extent of ordering out or the delivery of restaurant meals assumes its place as a relevant topic of inquiry here.

Given what has already been said about its perceived merits, it is perhaps not surprising that on a number of occasions in the past century or so, the value of having meals prepared elsewhere and delivered to the home has been promoted. In the 1870s, for example, a number of British social activists suggested this reform—arguing that because the kitchen remained a site of gender inequality, one remedy was to take meal preparation out of the domestic sphere altogether, and into more public, communal kitchens, from which meals could be distributed as required (Pearson 1988: 57, 85). A somewhat different goal was associated with the “New England Kitchen” established by nutrition reformers Mary Abel and Ellen Richards in Boston in 1890. Aimed at improving the diet of the working class poor while reducing its cost, this public kitchen was designed to teach better eating habits and not the people to the food.” The first New England Kitchen, therefore, was to be “takeout.” (Levenstein 1980: 375)

By the time of the Progressive Era in the United States, “material feminists” were waging a concerted campaign for centralized, cooperative kitchen arrangements across a broad front that included magazine articles, architectural designs and world fair exhibits. Among this list, as Warren Belasco has recently observed, were some remarkable works of utopian fiction, such as Bradford Peck’s 1900 novel The World A Department Store, in which he foresaw “all food prepared by skilled artisans, on a very large scale, which saves the great waste of each private home running its own special culinary department.” Commenting on this vision, Belasco notes that “you phone a restaurant for a home-delivered meal and get a better dinner,” to use Peck’s words, “at about one half of the expense” (Belasco 2006: 110-11).

While it is true that part of the concern with meal delivery during this period was a middle-class fear of the growing shortage of servants (Levenstein 1980), much of this literature had altruistic causes, an altruism that has enabled the communal kitchen itself to survive as an institution to the present day, albeit in slightly different guise. In a number of countries, and since 1954 in the United States, formal welfare schemes generally known as Meals on Wheels have delivered meals to many elderly or infirm people whose incapacity in the kitchen would otherwise prevent them from continuing to live in their homes (Anon. 1965; Carlin 2004, 2: 67-68). Interestingly, this tradition can be found in Montreal, where Santropol Roulant (a meals on wheels program that has operated out of the Santropol restaurant) has not only provided over 350,000 meals to seniors and individuals coping with a loss of autonomy since 1995, but has also created over 275 jobs and internships for young people in the community as it has met those needs (Santropol Roulant 2006).

More recently, scholars of food retailing have also drawn attention to the significance of people purchasing meals outside the home by using the concept of “food prepared away from home” (FAFH). This phenomenon, while it includes meals purchased in restaurants, also incorporates the amount of fast foods ordered from a franchise, or hot, prepared convenience meals ready to be taken away from the supermarket’s deli counter. Such innovations are, according to more detailed FAFH
statistics, increasingly eroding the market niche once dominated solely by restaurants (Brown 1990: 984, 993-94; Park and Capps 1997: 821-23). In one respect, however, these measures show restaurants have always offered additional alternatives to the preparation of meals at home—the “takeout” beloved of the busy person “on the go” (Song 1997)—or (more interestingly, given this research note’s focus on relocating where we eat) the world of restaurant delivery known as ordering out.

Finally, to conclude these introductory comments, it is necessary to situate research on restaurant delivery within the general study of the material culture of food and eating. This is because unlike the built form of restaurants, kitchens or food stores, the manufacture of food containers or the evolution of kitchen appliances, restaurant delivery leaves scant permanent physical trace of its presence (Russell 1984; Parr 1995). This is not to say, however, that restaurant delivery has no impact whatsoever—rather, that its influences upon material culture are, for at least three reasons, less immediately obvious. We have already commented on the influence that its availability has had on the design of apartment kitchens and their reduction in size over time (Levenstein 2003: 163). Second, it should be noted that because the act of delivery is essentially an activity rather than an artifact, to the extent that “studies that deal with artifacts abstractly” address issues of “means of distribution, and so on” that reflect or articulate important aspects of our daily lives, they too can be seen as part of material culture (Prown 1982: 1n).

Third, it is necessary to observe that because delivery is primarily documented through the printed ephemera of restaurant flyers, menus and in advertisements in print and electronic media, the records of its existence are, by design, impermanent. Many of us, perhaps, have restaurant delivery menus at home—taped onto refrigerator doors, stacked by the telephone, jammed into kitchen cabinets, kept for reference or forgotten until those locations are purged of outdated ephemera. Nevertheless, the fleeting nature of the majority of the artifacts associated with restaurant delivery does not deny their materiality (however short-lived), their role in material culture, or the potential that lies in their examination. Certainly, those studies that have considered the more limited topic of restaurant menus themselves have indicated their value in examining a variety of research topics. In her cultural history of the restaurant in France, for example, Rebecca Spang (2000) devotes an entire chapter to the manner in which the development of early 19th-century menus allowed the names and descriptions of dishes from all over France to be pinned down together in one place for the first time, and how the early menu, in this way, placed what was almost an atlas of French cuisine into the hands of the Parisian gourmet.

Other scholars have used menus to track regional variations in the words used for particular meals across North America and, in particular, how “foreign” cuisines have been described (Teller 1969; Zwicky and Zwicky 1980); how “item positioning” of the images of meals placed on the large, backlit photographic menu board of one large American fast-food chain affects a meal’s popularity (Sobol and Barry 1980); and as a teaching tool to illustrate the nuances of social or cultural difference (Hydak 1978; Wright and Ransom 2005), noting that the use of “everyday taken-for-granted institutions and their artifacts, such as restaurant menus, is an excellent way to introduce students to the role of social class in shaping their lives” (Wright and Ransom 2005: 316).

Indeed, as one of the unconsidered aspects of our everyday existence, it could be argued that restaurant delivery itself has been able to make a contribution to our material culture that is no less intriguing than some of those activities that leave more durable evidence.

**Research Strategy and Methodology**

As readers of this journal will appreciate, the study of material culture often requires unorthodox research strategies regarding methodologies for data collection and interpretation. This analysis of changing patterns of restaurant delivery using, as a case study, the city of Montreal over the period 1951-2009 is no exception. For the early part of the period, as with many other phenomenon that were once part of everyday life, ordering out was an activity whose apparent insignificance did not prompt sufficient critical attention to merit a focused reporting of its occurrence—either on the part of customers or restaurant owners themselves. It is therefore difficult to gauge the extent of the activity of ordering out of meals at any particular point in time. This problem is further compounded when we endeavour to consider the present and, thereby, those changes that have occurred through time because, ideally, such a study would require sources that are both consistent through time and space if they are to be at all indicative of trends in
meal delivery that have occurred over fifty years in a large urban area.

Therefore, to ensure as thorough a coverage as possible, this research has relied upon an analysis of the descriptions occurring in restaurant entries in the classified telephone directories (popularly known as the Yellow Pages) for Montreal over the period 1951-2004, supplemented, wherever possible, by the use of advertisements in trade directories (Fig. 1), newspapers such as The Gazette and the worldwide web.

For those unfamiliar with the general use of telephone directories in such types of research, it is important to note here that they are considered a well-tried and reliable source in restaurant studies (Zelinsky 1980); even by the turn of the millennium, alternatives such as the web had made little impact on their dominance as an advertising media (Filler 2002: 170-71; Hoggart, Lees and Davies 2002: 185). Of course, this is not to say that the use of the Yellow Pages is ideal since not every restaurant will have had a phone (especially in the 1950s) and not all that did will have paid to appear in the phone directories. Other problems, including inaccuracies ranging from 10 to 20 per cent of restaurant listings in one case study, have led some scholars to suggest that phone directories should only be used in conjunction with field work (Pillsbury 1987: 327).

However, direct observation of this sort is obviously not always possible in historical case studies. A recent study of the growth of Mexican restaurants in Omaha over the ninety-year period from 1910 to 2000 concludes that Yellow Pages data “provide a fairly accurate portrait of the restaurant scene” (Dillon, Burger and Shortridge 2006: 39-40), echoing the endorsement Wilbur Zelinsky made in his classic study of the distribution of “ethnic restaurants” in North America: that, by their very nature, the Yellow Pages “cannot help but be an excellent source” (Zelinsky 1985: 55).

Taking heart from conclusions such as these, what can we learn from an analysis of the Yellow Pages about the development of restaurant delivery in Montreal? For the purposes of this research note, let us consider the endpoints of our period: the years 1951 and 2004.

Data and Analysis

The data recorded in the 1951 Yellow Pages first show that with only a total of twenty-four restaurants involved in delivery, this was a relatively minor activity (recognizing, of course, the limitations of the data). Second, the types of cuisine (in as much as they can be inferred from the establishments’ names and brief descriptions in the directories) are restricted to only a few main types. Thus, the leading category of those seventeen that could be classified was of the “light lunch” variety (eleven cases, or 46 per cent of the total), of which four served hot dogs, hamburgers or sandwiches, and three were essentially food stores that also provided delivery—a service to customers that typified many small grocery outlets in Montreal during the interwar years (Taschereau 2005: 237).

Some of these restaurants also provided a brief description of the type of cuisine they delivered, and from this limited information it can be seen that two delivered chicken or chicken barbecue, one provided “an exclusive Italian cuisine,” and another three restaurants specialized in Chinese dishes—producing a total of only 16.7 per cent of order out restaurants in 1951 that delivered what might be described as “international cuisines.”

These data can be compared with equivalent information from fifty years later (summarized in Table 1). Surprisingly, perhaps, the total number of restaurants that offered delivery in 2004 according to the phone directory, a figure of forty-two, was not that much higher in absolute terms than the total number for 1951. In relative terms, however, the increase is an impressive one of 75 per cent over the fifty-year period, but the small numbers involved obviously caution too much value being placed in such a finding.

More important perhaps than any evidence of increase in restaurant numbers is the fundamental change in the type of cuisines available by 2004. In that year, only eight restaurants (or 19 per cent of the total) delivered cuisines that could be defined as “non-international” (of which seven served

![Fig. 1](https://example.com/fig1.png)

An advertisement that appears on the inside front cover of the 1965 edition of Lovell’s Montreal Street Guide. Courtesy of Jamie Lovell, President.
chicken barbecue), while 81 per cent (thirty-four restaurants) provided international choices. Of the latter, the overwhelming majority (fourteen) were made up of pizza delivery businesses, with the remainder comprising a potpourri of world regions: from Italian (with four restaurants), to East Indian (four), Japanese Sushi (four), Thai (two) and (with one each) Nepalese, Lebanese, Greek, Antillean, Chinese and “world cuisine” restaurants. Even if we are reluctant to consider pizza as authentic Italian fare, there is still far more variety in international cuisines available to those who chose restaurant delivery in 2004 than 1951.

Such conclusions are not wholly unexpected, given what we know of Montreal’s overall restaurant scene in the 1950s and its subsequent changes. Thus, the city’s many jazz clubs of the 1940s and 1950s may have fuelled a large demand for outside dining, but according to menus that survive, the majority of restaurants in such clubs provided a selection of steak, chicken and chops; The Club Lido, with its Chinese and Italian specialties, was a notable exception to this picture (Weintraub 1996; Marrelli 2004: 76, 110, 113).

Contemporary guidebooks to Montreal reinforce this view. For example, according to the American Tourist Association’s 1955 guide, the city offered diners seeking something other than a chophouse a very limited number of Italian and Chinese restaurants. Establishments such as Rieno’s Curbside Restaurant, which specialized in “chicken Bar-B-Q, turkey dinners, spaghetti, steaks and chops,” can be taken as representative of menus that were available at the time (American Tourist Association 1955: 1-7).

Information from the 1951 Yellow Pages suggests that there were a total of 162 restaurants serving international cuisines in Montreal. Of these, 101 (62 per cent) of the restaurants can be classified on the basis of their name (or according to other diagnostics appearing in their telephone description) as European (of which 48, or 29 per cent of the total, were Italian and 39 (24 per cent) were Eastern European). If the twenty-one restaurants classified as Jewish are also added to this figure, the European total approximates 75 per cent of all ethnic restaurants found in Montreal in 1951. With 17 per cent of the remainder, the next major category of ethnic restaurant was Asian, the majority of which were Chinese restaurants (with twenty-two establishments). From today’s perspective, this appears to be a very limited roster, with at best only three or four ethnic cuisines (Italian, Eastern European, Chinese and Jewish) obtainable in any numbers across the city.

Newspapers provide another glimpse into the city’s past and, although relatively few restaurants appear to have advertised their services in the pages of The Gazette during the 1950s, the pattern that emerges corroborates the picture provided by our other sources. Thus, the year’s largest listing by far—the 1951 “Christmas Greetings” advertisement placed in The Gazette on December 25, 1951 by the city’s Café and Cabaret Association—recorded a total of twenty-eight restaurants, of which 79 per cent evidently served some type of local or Canadian cuisines, and only six (three Italian, three Chinese) identified their menus as internationally inspired.

By 2001, the total number of restaurants in Montreal had increased to more than 5,000 and—perhaps more to the point—was now almost entirely made up of establishments serving a much wider variety of international cuisines. Thus, out of a total of 787 ethnic restaurants recorded in the Yellow Pages in that year, the data show that the European component had declined since 1951 to 50 per cent of the total number. In contrast, the Asian component rose to 32 per cent (252) in 2001. It is also worth noting that a number of smaller restaurant categories also grew over this period and began, as it were, to become noticeable additions to the city’s restaurant scene. For example, fifty-seven Arabic restaurants and twenty-eight East Indian restaurants are recorded and increases in the number from regions such as the Caribbean

Table 1
Total number of restaurants in Montreal 1951-2004

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Total number of restaurants (all types)</th>
<th>Total number serving international cuisines</th>
<th>% of total that is “international”</th>
<th>Total providing delivery of meals</th>
<th>% of delivery that is “international”</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1951</td>
<td>2,460</td>
<td>162</td>
<td>6.6</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>16.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2001</td>
<td>5,000</td>
<td>787</td>
<td>15.7</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>80.9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Sources: Montreal Yellow Pages, 1951, 2001 and 2004. Note: Delivery data is based on 2004 directory data.
South America are also evident. Interestingly, in view of the possible impact of electronic advertising upon traditional print media, these general findings are supported by an analysis conducted in 2007 of RestoMontreal.ca, the leading online guide to restaurants.

Additional windows into the world of the eating habits of Montrealers in 1951 and in the present day can also be provided by qualitative ethnographic research. While it is obviously easier to examine the population’s current dining behaviour—through direct observation or questionnaire survey, for example—it is also possible to uncover past patterns through interviews conducted with individuals old enough to remember their eating habits fifty years ago. With these aims in mind, an attempt to survey the eating habits of Montrealers in 2009 and the 1950s has been initiated as a university-based class exercise as another part of my ongoing research into restaurant delivery in Montreal, and it is instructive to examine some of the initial findings of the survey here.

To consider present habits first, according to their responses to the questionnaire, the great majority of seventy-eight undergraduates participating in the course GEOG 321 (“A World of Food”) taught at Concordia University (2009-2010) reported in September 2009 that they ate in restaurants once or twice a week. With respect to the delivery of meals from restaurants however, only twelve of those seventy-eight people noted they had ordered delivery at least once during the week of observation, and an additional two individuals noted they only ordered delivery “once or twice a month.” Most often, the delivered meal took the form of a pizza, and the stated reason was either one of habit (“we always get delivery on a Thursday evening,” to quote the student), or of necessity. Thus, one student who noted that their family ordered delivery three times during the observation week commented that delivery “occurred when Mom came late from work; no time to cook.”

How does this experience compare to that of fifty years ago? In order to begin to answer this question, the seventy-eight students participating in the survey each interviewed one person who recalled their own eating behaviour in the 1950s. Those interviewed were often the student’s parent or grandparent, but in cases where the student was newly-arrived in Montreal, a variety of landlords, neighbours and relatives of friends were interviewed instead. The results are interesting for at least three reasons and, because the eating habits of fifty years ago are less easily uncovered than those of the present day, are presented in greater detail in Table 2.

The clearest conclusion to emerge from a comparison of these data with today’s experience is that, during the course of a week, more people in the 1950s ate all their meals at home (some even making a habit of dining with friends or relatives once or twice a week—to spread the cost and labour of cooking, according to one of those interviewed). The second feature is the corollary: that relatively fewer people were choosing to eat in restaurants in Montreal fifty years ago. Third, even though restaurant dining was reported by a smaller proportion of the survey population as part of their eating habits in the 1950s (our data suggests a figure of approximately 44 per cent), it is intriguing to note that the proportion of those who elected to have restaurant delivery represented 14 per cent of the total interviewed—a percentage that has not substantially changed for fifty years, since it is almost identical to that of 15 per cent found in the 2009 sample population and reported above.

**Conclusions**

It is evident from our data that between 1951 and 2009, the city of Montreal experienced—as did other cities in North America and around the world—a rise in what researchers have called the “ethnic restaurant” that offered a wide range of dining possibilities. It is also evident that the expansion of restaurant delivery and the wider “internationalization” of options for ordering out were part of those same changes. It was now, for example, far more likely that any meals that were delivered to the home would be sushi rather than hot dogs, curries rather than sandwiches.

The primary reasons for such developments have occupied considerable attention in the scholarly literature on this topic and require mention here inasmuch as they also affect the changes described here in terms of restaurant delivery. Regarding restaurants themselves, for example, one view is that the rise of ethnic restaurants is due to a growing postmodern fashion for international cuisine. An alternative explanation attributes the rise to the increasing and more varied immigration patterns into Canadian cities (Turgeon and Pastinelli 2002; Nash 2009). Whatever the significance of these factors, one of the great world fairs, Expo 67, had its own impact on the rise of ethnic restaurants in Montreal. In a lecture she delivered in 2004 on...
the food culture of Montreal in the 1960s, Rhona Richman Kenneally noted that

[...] those interested in cuisine were able to experience the whole array of international foods at Expo. You could have breakfast in Paris, go to England for a beer and then to Scandinavia for dinner.... Because the environment of Expo was a reflection of architecture and ideals of modernism and was so focused on the progress of humanity in many fields, the idea of eating international foods was conceptualized as a modern practice ... food became a ... vehicle for individuals to feel like they were being modern. (Qtd. in McNally 2004)

In such a context, therefore, it is apparent that restaurant delivery—with its obvious associations with transport and thereby the latest approach to food preparation—allows a more modern, and perhaps more fashionable, style of eating to become incorporated into the domestic foodscape. (This observation also suggests that one of the attractions of being able to order meals from the web is less the anonymity of the transaction than the fact that the process itself is part of a trend-setting technology.) There is clearly much more research needed before the exact nature of these relationships can be teased out.

Leaving general speculations aside, what our data clearly show is that the delivery business had completely changed the relative categories of meals being delivered over the fifty-year period of observation, from the 17 per cent or so of restaurants which offered delivery of “international” cuisine in 1951, to the more than 80 per cent of recorded establishments in 2004 that offered such choices. In other words, by the beginning of the 21st century, it would appear that ordering out and wishing to eat internationally inspired meals have become almost synonymous activities. As Tara Ann Lynn writes in her poem “Free Delivery,” “[t]he cuisine of the world is just a phone call and about twelve dollars away” (Lynn 2003). In a way that it never could fifty years before, the restaurant delivery business is now able, almost literally, to deliver the world into people’s homes.

Of course, the world that delivery offers is far more limited in reality than poetry might suggest, providing but a few leading international cuisines as ordering out options. However, the fact that it is ordered for home consumption is crucial to our concerns here and forms the basis for our second, more speculative set of conclusions. In short, while restaurant delivery appears to suffer from many shortcomings, and is often seen as a stop-gap solution by those with insufficient time to prepare a meal, it is nevertheless a solution that can promote more mindful eating because it is an activity that brings meals into the home where they are eaten. By bringing meals from the public sphere into the domestic realm, food can be consumed—often accompanied by small healthy additions such as salad and fruits provided from the family kitchen—at a leisurely pace, in an atmosphere that promotes conversation and interaction with family and perhaps friends and where, as Wansink suggests, cues to overeat are generally fewer (239).

That guilty frisson we often experience when ordering out may be part of the friction caused as private and public spheres meet in the same place, but it is in such hybrid spaces that new worlds are crafted, and perhaps new forms of mindful eating are fashioned.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 2</th>
<th>Where people ate in Montreal in the 1950s</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Home (sub-total)</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Restaurants (sub-total)</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Restaurant (once a week)</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Restaurants (two or three times a week)</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Restaurants (once or twice a year)</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Take-out (sub-total)</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Restaurant (once a week) and take-out</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Restaurants (two or three times a week) and take-out</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Restaurants (once or twice a year) and take-out</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Delivery (sub-total)</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Restaurant (once a week) and delivery</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Restaurants (two or three times a week) and delivery</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Delivery only (once a week)</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Delivery only (once or twice a year)</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>78</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: This data is based on a questionnaire survey of 78 people who lived in Montreal in the 1950s. The survey was conducted in September 2009 as part of an assignment by the students in GEOG 321 (A World of Food) at Concordia University in Montreal, and their help is most gratefully acknowledged.
Note

I am extremely grateful to James Lovell (President, Lovell Litho and Publications Inc.) for his kind permission to reproduce here the advertisement for Chez Corneli that originally appeared on the inside cover of the 1965 edition of Lovell’s Montreal Street Guide. I am also grateful to Rhona Richman Kenneally for her encouragement to undertake this work and to an anonymous referee for their constructive comments. This paper has greatly benefited from the considerable skills of Marie MacSween in its copy editing stages: I particularly wish to acknowledge her keen eye for detail and her care in the felicity of expression. Finally, I would like to thank my father-in-law, Gregory Skalkogiannis, whose delivery of wonderful home cooking has encouraged me to move to a more mindful eating.

References


Families grow and evolve as “communities of practice” (Wenger 2002), relying on their members, rituals and artifacts to build, maintain and transfer the community identity through generations. Domestic foodscapes are shaped by such rituals, artifacts and social interactions. The kitchen has traditionally been populated by a diverse range of artifacts supporting families in the preparation of food—cooking tools, appliances and cookbooks, all of which contribute to the representation of the material culture of a generation and of a society. This article considers the implications and potentials of integrating computing technology into the kitchen, and investigates how such integration can affect social behaviours around cooking in such a way as to enhance mindful food-related experiences.

The transmission of knowledge regarding family practices within the home occurs in large part through storytelling, performance, observation and regular routines. As David Sutton convincingly demonstrates in his essay elsewhere in this issue, adult family members are role models for younger generations in the enculturation of domestic activities that include among other things, house cleaning, laundry and cooking. When family members live apart from one another—making learning through observation by being part of the daily rituals impossible—other forms of media are often used to communicate instructions. One might telephone home for a recipe or for guidance on a particular aspect of the cooking process. A food expert from outside the family could be contacted for a specific recipe or to confirm the consistency of a soup or a sauce. But while some of the communication around cooking—including the exchange of recipes, especially within households or close social networks—is one-to-one in real time, a diversity of media ranging from paper sources to websites to smart-phone applications such as Epicurious are continuously expanding ways of acquiring cooking know-how and food connoisseurship. At the same time, these new communication and recipe sharing vehicles establish and reinforce social bonds and the sense of belonging to a larger community.
of practice. Significantly, above and beyond the informative function and value of these media, the specific properties of each medium have a profound influence on our affective relationship to a recipe and, to a larger extent, food and eating itself. In turn, these new media have implications for the way we pass on cooking and eating behaviours. A hand-written recipe, for example, might carry nuances of nostalgia and heritage by virtue of the personal touch of its lettering and the personalized communication between the writer and the reader. Hence recipes warrant consideration as conduits of information and transmitters of family values. Sharon L. Jansen, for example, analyzes samples written by her mother as “exercises in narration, description, analysis, even argument … they raise questions about texts and context, about text and subtext, about textual authority and textual subversion” (2005: 55-56).

When, where and what we eat in a community is largely a reflection of the values we were exposed to in our families, and by the way food was prepared and consumed at home (Avakian 2005; Bell and Valentine 1997; Short 2006; see also Richman Kenneally and LeBel in this volume). The preparation of food for family has a dimension that often goes beyond the basic function of nutrition: to cook for another is to symbolically perform an act of care. Consciously or not, families and communities have been known to anchor key elements of their collective identity on the archiving and perpetuation of their recipes as a form of tradition. Responding to such notions, Janet Theophano interprets cookbooks written by homemakers as expressions of themselves, as autobiography in that they provide an accounting of days and tasks, the accumulated wisdom and knowledge that a woman garnered over the years of her life as wife, mother, daughter, kin, friend, healer, reader, writer, and as an individual. On the pages of these texts she celebrated her successes, documented her own and her children’s development, and dreamed about and longed for new and different experiences.” (2003: 154)

Anne Bower (1997) sees community cookbooks as repositories of shared memory not only because they contain the recipes of members of the social group that generated the collection, but also because they document the history of that community, including the history of how the recipe collection itself was assembled.

Despite the fact that home cooking is a time-honoured practice, without question the home preparation and consumption of the family meal has in recent years been subjected to a variety of interventions—contributing to an overall reduction in family engagement in the domestic cooking process. Convenience food producers playing on the overworked consumer’s need for efficiency have generated much of this change. As Ritzer (among others) has argued, such incentives have generated an “I don’t have time to cook” (2004: 47) attitude that has had a profound effect on family rituals and behaviours with regard to food and eating. Saving time has been the rationale, as well, for an influx of domestic kitchen technology, such as food processors and microwaves, inevitably reducing the process of cooking to a functional task with an attendant loss of the symbolic, social and cultural meanings associated with food preparation. From this perspective, technology can be argued to serve as a deterrent, at least to some extent, in the transmission of time-honoured practices and rituals associated with food.

On the other hand, as Moisio et al. observe, homemade food continues to be instrumental in the construction of family identity and “provides a metonym for a model of household activities that marks intergenerational care-giving, altruism and love as model characteristics” (2004: 379). This being the case, and given the demonstrated centrality of recipes and cookbooks as markers of cultural affiliation and commemoration, as mentioned above, is it possible to reinforce mindful food experiences by recasting the role of technology and media-based artifacts, specifically as conduits for social engagement? As a means of exploring this question, this essay focuses on the design and evaluation of the Living Cookbook, a computer appliance developed at the Ludwig Maximilian University of Munich in 2006 specifically for sharing recipes in the form of multimedia cooking experiences. This author, along with Otmar Hilliges and Andreas Butz developed the appliance.

**Technology in the Kitchen**

From a design perspective, I argue that the kitchen is a socio-technical environment that is capable of accommodating technologies that can augment existing cooking activities. Without doubt, the nature of the kitchen as a socio-technical environment has long been demonstrated by the use of ever-evolving material culture such as stoves,
refrigerators and microwaves. In the case of the Living Cookbook, however, the innovation is in the employment of digital technology and, more specifically, the conceptualization of the kitchen as a site to be addressed through the field of Human-Computer Interaction (HCI). HCI is defined as “a field of research and development, methodology, theory, and practice, with the objective of designing, constructing, and evaluating computer-based interactive systems … so that people can use them efficiently, effectively, safely, and with satisfaction” (Hartson 1998: 103).

Arising from the association between computer and behavioural sciences, HCI was progressively embraced by other disciplines—sociology, anthropology and design, among them. This evolution was motivated, in particular, by (the late) Mark Weiser’s vision of “ubiquitous computing” or Ubicomp as it is generally called. A visionary in the field of information technology, Weiser led the team of researchers at the Xerox Palo Alto Research Centre in California for much of his ten-year tenure with Xerox. Weiser foresaw the day when computers would be integrated seamlessly into our world. He wrote: “We are … trying to conceive a new way of thinking about computers, one that takes into account the human world and allows the computers themselves to vanish into the background” (94). While ubiquitous computing is not yet part of our lives as imagined by the PARC researchers (Rogers 2006), it is slowly becoming part of our 21st-century world. Indeed, the integration of computing capabilities into physical artifacts (walls and furniture, for example) was key in the design field’s interest in HCI. Automation was considered one of the most promising features of ubiquitous computing, leading to the design of “smart objects” and “smart environments,” which—because of networked sensors detecting movement, temperature, sound, and the like—could adapt to the users’ desire to get the most efficiency from the expenditure of effort and the use of time. As digital technologies moved beyond the office to other environments, newer technologies pointed to potentially fruitful ways to engage users in novel and interactive experiences whose value, albeit, does not necessarily lie in time-saving or automation of activities (Gaver et al. 2003; Rogers 2006; Shneiderman 2003; Terrenghi 2006).

In keeping with the view that not all projects and processes are focused on automating activities or saving time, the aim of the Living Cookbook project was to tease out aspects of information technologies that seek and encourage self-expression and creativity on the part of users and, in turn, to design technology to support and motivate the spending of time for the sake and enjoyment of creating and communicating. In this sense, the Living Cookbook differs to a significant extent from related projects, products and approaches that strive for task efficiency. In Western kitchens, most electric appliances have consistently been developed and marketed around a promise of decreasing user effort, maximizing the efficiency of certain tasks, or even achieving their complete automation.¹

More recently, however, some manufacturers of domestic appliances have addressed the potential of digital displays and internet technology to augment the kitchen environment, bringing information and entertainment into that space. The GR-D267DTU Internet Refrigerator² by LG, for example, contains a server that controls communication with other connected appliances. On the display, different functions are embedded, making it possible to watch TV, listen to music or surf the internet; a built-in microphone and a camera enable multimedia communication. In order to investigate future scenarios of technology-enhanced housing, several research institutes, companies and universities have set up so-called smart houses or smart homes in which potential users can experience such interactive environments. These prototypical houses are also known as “living labs.”³ Participants (either the researchers or recruited test users) are invited to live in these living labs for periods ranging from one to ten days while their behaviours and interactions are recorded and analyzed. While certain advantages are to be gained in observing what happens in these spaces, limitations to the methodology must also be recognized, including the reliance on artificial, ad-hoc designed places as opposed to actual, more natural environments, and the possible modification of participant behaviour given the fact of being observed.

Other attempts at augmenting the kitchen environment as a whole have also been undertaken. At MIT, for example, a smart (digitally-equipped) kitchen called La Cantina features displays embedded within the kitchen space that make possible a variety of augmentations, mostly dealing with artificial intelligence (Bonanni et al. 2005). Another example is the CounterActive project (Ju et al. 2001), an interactive cookbook incorporating still and video images as well as audio, to be projected onto the kitchen counter so that the cook touches the
countertop to navigate through or focus on specific details of a recipe.

With the Living Cookbook, the idea is to stimulate the explicit and conscious engagement of users with technology. This provides a means to capture the user’s own experience, and to play back the experiences of others, facilitating exchange and communication. In this project, technology is not concealed within the infrastructure of the home (as Weiser envisioned), but is instead in the foreground, providing an opportunity for entertainment and opportunities to generate deliberate acts of family communication. Similar to the CounterActive project mentioned above, the Living Cookbook moves beyond the traditional cookbook by delivering and displaying multimedia content. At the same time, the focus of the Living Cookbook is on the augmentation of social and family relationships and real life experiences; the intent is not to create a multimedia environment for its own sake. In other words, the Living Cookbook recognizes the social value of cooking as well as the many rituals and symbolic aspects involved therein. Moreover, it anticipates and accommodates the variety of motivations underlying the practice of cooking—meal preparation as a means of social contact with others involved in the cooking process; cooking for friends or loved ones as a gesture of care; an opportunity to impress friends and relatives or the mere desire to exchange recipes. In this sense, the Living Cookbook moves away from the basic automation of domestic tasks and computing’s primary focus on productivity. Instead, it highlights and supports the potential inherent in the act of cooking to communicate and strengthen the social ties that bind a community of practice. From this perspective, the Living Cookbook supports a mindful approach to eating in the domestic foodscape, by enabling an enriching array of interactions in the preparation, consumption and reflection of food. Finally, the Living Cookbook provides a lens through which to explore other possibilities wherein technology can encourage fulfilling social engagement in the home as well as a greater sense of accomplishment, self-expression and family exchange.

The Design and Function of the Living Cookbook

The main motivation in the design of the Living Cookbook appliance was to make people’s cooking experiences recordable and shareable across time and space, in a format that could foster a sense of collaborative or community participation, and at the same time to serve as the repository of a family’s culinary heritage.

Ease of use was a priority. The appliance consists of an application running on a tablet PC with a touch-sensitive screen; users can interact with either a pen or a finger. It also includes a camera and a projector. A digital cookbook is displayed on the tablet (Fig. 1), and users have the option to either create a new recipe and add it to their personal virtual book, or consult the book and learn about someone else’s recipes. Cooking sessions can be captured on video and played back for later use by the same author or another user. When recording, the cook can indicate phases of activity and inactivity in the user interface. When playing back, the device projects the recorded video of activities and pauses during times of inactivity; the cook can also speed up or slow down the playback by advancing to the next section or pausing to catch up. The Living Cookbook thus provides a user interface that can be customized to the user’s cooking needs, abilities and speed. It also gives users the possibility of revisiting one’s personal digital recipes and recorded sessions as well as recipes authored by others, enhancing a sense of ownership and of shared memory. Annotation of existing recipes is also possible through the interface.

Simple icons were designed to be familiar to an extended audience who do not necessarily use desktop PCs on a regular basis. The dial (Fig. 1a) displays the cookbook selection. Portions can be specified by dragging plates onto a table (Fig. 1b); and video control is operated through an egg-shaped graphic element resembling a cooking timer (Fig. 1c). On the dial, users can choose from among a set of cooks/“buddies,” and from among the various courses of a meal. This combined selection triggers the appearance of the cover of the book, displaying the picture of the selected cook/home inhabitant and the desired course (Fig. 1a). Users tap on the cover to open the book, resulting in a list of recipes being displayed. By virtue of these controls, the Living Cookbook device fulfills the intention to minimize text input. Wherever possible, the interface affords direct manipulation, such as tapping and dragging. Instead of entering the text for ingredients’ names and quantities, for example, cooks select them from categories represented by images (Fig. 1d).
Testing the Living Cookbook prototype

The testing phase of the Living Cookbook revealed the strengths of the project and also highlighted strategies for its improvement. Three distinct testing stages were undertaken, each a refinement of the previous trial.

The first test of the Living Cookbook prototype shed light on the usability and desirable features of the appliance, but underscored the challenges in trying to assess the project (specifically its efficacy in motivating and supporting family learning and communication) within a laboratory setting rather than in the home environment. This first interaction took place in a test kitchen of the Media Informatics Lab of Ludwig-Maximilian University (Munich) (Fig. 2a), where the apparatus was mounted on a cupboard above the stove. A projector connected to the server, was used for displaying the video on a wall beside the cupboard, as illustrated in the schema of Fig. 2b. Two cameras were connected to the server to record the cooking session; it provided two views, one focusing on the counter and one on the cook. A speech recognition component was also implemented to recognize certain verbal commands, such as “record,” “play,” “pause” and “stop.” Each participant was introduced to the appliance and instructed either to create and document a recipe task, or to learn one already contained in the cookbook. While interacting with the interface, they were invited to use kitchen utensils and reproduce actual cooking tasks, so as to simulate as much as possible a complete cooking session in a real domestic kitchen.

During the test, participants were asked to speak aloud; after the experiment they completed a questionnaire inquiring about their general satisfaction with the Living Cookbook and with their personal experience of using the appliance.

During this first trial, participants noted that the appliance could provide better feedback than traditional cookbooks. In particular, male participants mentioned the usefulness of having visual feedback or instructions on specific and more elaborate tasks that were unfamiliar to them. In contrast, female participants noted the advantage of the application more as emotional support than as cooking instructional support because they could see their relatives and friends. Younger participants,
especially those having recently moved out of the family home, reported that they often called their mothers to ask for recipes and exact instructions for food preparation. Those participants saw a benefit in both the visual feedback and personalized content of the Living Cookbook. On the other hand, participants were generally at a loss to imagine whether and how they would use the appliance in their own kitchens and with their own family members.

The next phase of prototype testing took place in the domestic kitchens of two families, where the set-up consisted of two tablet PCs side by side such that their physical appearance suggested the shape of an open book (Fig. 3a). The right tablet PC displayed the user interface, while the left one displayed the video components (record and playback). The device was installed in each kitchen for a week and the families were asked to report on their experience. One household consisted of a couple with a young baby (husband 30 years old, wife 31, child 15 months); the other, a couple with three children (husband 54 years old, wife 39, daughters 15 and 5 and 8-year old son).

Interviews with both families revealed the appeal of the Living Cookbook as a family archive. The first family’s favourite feature was the opportunity to create and watch videos of family members while they were cooking; the resulting videos were pronounced fun and intimate, as opposed to the activities of professional cooks on television. The second family reported that they did not enjoy using the appliance but, instead, perceived it as necessitating additional domestic effort (“one more task to take care of”). The 15-year old daughter, on the other hand, enjoyed the experience and even invited a girlfriend to help her cook with the aid of her parents’ video. She said that she had fun and stated that she would be more motivated to cook because of the entertainment value. This response signalled the potential of the Living Cookbook as a cross-generational cooking tool. This fact motivated a third study of the prototype, this time with teenagers in a focus group format.

The teen focus group involved eight participants between the ages of 14 and 16 years, who attended a “Household and Nutrition” course in a German secondary school. During the focus
group, participants were introduced to the Living Cookbook and asked to cook a simple recipe created for them, thus offering them hands-on experience (Fig. 4). The discussion then focused on their impressions, ideas and criticism of the appliance.  

These participants found the appliance playful and entertaining. They could envision an increase in their motivation to cook at home because of the fun factor of watching the videos of parents, siblings and grandparents managing mundane activities, in what they perceived as a kind of “real television” experience. Participants also said they would trust the recipes of the Living Cookbook (more so than those of televised cooking shows) because they were likely to be preparing dishes they had already tasted at home, and because the recipes seemed more doable than those shown by professional chefs on television. In addition, some of the participants said that they would feel more relaxed and less constrained cooking with the Living Cookbook than with their parents. It was also noted that by visually documenting one’s own recipes for others, learning-by-doing was indirectly supported because the act of teaching a recipe inherently implies putting it into practice. Finally, despite the fact that the value of video support was appreciated in general, participants also provided useful criticism: the need to provide “rewind” functionality for the audio and video instructions, for instance, so that important steps could be re-accessed as necessary.

Implications of the Living Cookbook

The results of this preliminary investigation of the Living Cookbook in laboratory as well as field settings offer a chance to reflect on the role of technology-based material culture as a means to support the transmission of family culinary traditions and mindful eating practices in a domestic environment.

First, the fun, social engagement and entertainment value of the Living Cookbook points to support domestic practices. That is, technology could conceivably support mindful eating and cooking practices, especially when designed with a comprehensive understanding of the context of application and the target users. In the results reported here, for instance, the Living Cookbook was perceived as an engaging device that could make cooking more fun and inviting only when the appliance was tested in a real domestic context and when specific target users (i.e., the participants of the focus group) were involved. This points to the need to design new computing technologies for domestic foodscape with an appreciation for the users’ subjective experience as well as for the physical and social contexts in which this appliance is to be used—and not to push technology for its own sake. The possibility for the users to move around within the architecture and among the material culture of the domestic foodscape—and directly manipulate both the objects and the information therein—needs to be supported by interfaces that are properly scaled to users’ metrics and their specific location within that built environment. Other issues that centre on the relationship between the body of the user and the interface are particularly important when thinking of younger or disabled users: the height of the user and their visual angle, for example, and environmental factors such as sound, smoke, heat and dirt. In developing these new applications, there is an obvious need for collaboration among experts who study material culture in the built environment across various disciplines including design, architecture and anthropology.

Second, from a design research perspective, the current results also point to the eventual benefits of using tools such as the Living Cookbook to support and build on existing cooking activities. It is exciting to imagine the repository of family recipes and cooking practices that could be collected and analyzed via the Living Cookbook, and to consider how such records could inspire even more novel approaches to support mindful eating. Like the
Living Cookbook, other such devises and mechanisms could engender technologically-supported experiences that encourage users to move beyond the primary criteria of usability and functionality of the interface per se, and devote sustained attention to human values and practices—specifically in the kitchen where computing technologies have known only limited use to date.

Finally, the findings of the Living Cookbook experiment suggest that concerns about the potentially disruptive nature of new technologies on an established social ecosystem (concerns that have arisen from research on the environment of the office, for example) deserve reconsideration. The feedback given by different target users suggests that attention must be paid to the roles played by different members of a family. There are exciting implications derived from the reports of the younger users who identified a fun factor derived from watching their parents; such a consequence might well encourage them to use the appliance and perhaps, ultimately, to cook more frequently. Similarly, one can speculate that elderly individuals or people living alone might enjoy watching their relatives in their domestic environments, thus providing a vitalizing sense of presence and of memory. Some parents, on the other hand, expressed their concern that the use of such an appliance would be too time-consuming, despite the fact that they recognized the value of the family archive. This diversity of opinion is consistent with generational differences about embracing new technologies.

For adults, then, the motivation for using such a tool is their commitment to other family members, and to the next generation in particular. A lesson to be learned by designers is the need to account for the diversity of roles played by the home’s inhabitants.

Conclusion

The research undertaken in the development and implementation of the Living Cookbook underscores its potential to capture the emotional quality of content created by family members or intimate friends. Instead of simply exchanging written instructions, users can capture the whole cooking experience with annotated audio and video and make it available to family and friends (or researchers!). Other benefits of the Living Cookbook include the fact that its contents can be consulted on demand and, unlike television shows, can be accessed whenever cooking takes place, and wherever an apparatus is available to run the application. The Living Cookbook is in many ways comparable to a family photo album, composed of recorded and shareable family “kitchen stories” (Terrenghi, Hilliges and Butz 2006). In that capacity, it can preserve cultural and social roots and stimulate cross-cultural and cross-generational fertilization. The Living Cookbook thus augments the traditional cookbook by providing an opportunity to pass on family practices and values. It also promotes hands-on, contextualized learning, in addition to teaching family cooking traditions.

The outcomes of the project also encourage designers to further investigate the potential of computing technologies to provide novel forms of entertainment as well as to capture, archive and retrieve favoured domestic experiences—activities that can strengthen social ties and promote the transmission of important life-building knowledge in the home.

If we think there is a value in promoting hands-on activities such as cooking, and the communication related to cooking, designers and analysts of domestic technology and material culture need to learn about those instances wherein technology is considered supportive rather than disruptive of the social dynamic of the home. We need to recognize those cases in which technology can be staged in the foreground to stimulate engagement and facilitate quality time spent as a household or family unit. If technology is designed to support users’ desire to share and communicate, novel forms of collaboration can also emerge beyond the borders of the household. Remote kitchens and families, for example, could be connected; emerging scenarios of mobile blogging could expand users’ authoring capabilities in time and space, allowing, perhaps for a travelling family member to help the children at home cook and enjoy a proper meal. Cooking is an act of love, sharing and communication that can be supported by new forms of technology. Such technologies can, in turn, support and enhance the diversity of our cultures and richness of our daily lives.
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1. For example, the host of American Public Media’s radio program The Splendid Table, Lynn Rossetto Kasper, answers phone-in questions each week. See http://splendidtable.publicradio.org (accessed April 14, 2010).


3. As noted elsewhere in this issue, those cookbooks to which numerous individuals contribute personal recipes generally assembled for fundraising purposes.

4. For an especially convincing review see Bell and Kaye (2002).


7. Technological inroads in the areas of domestic food preparation and consumption have generally been noted, primarily, for their negative impact on eating behaviours. See Buijzen, Schuurman and Bomhof (2008) and Fiates, Amboni and Teixeira (2008).

8. Kirk et al. (2007), for example, found older research participants had little desire to post family video clips to the internet, whereas younger family members participating in the study were keen to do so.

References


DAVID SUTTON

The Mindful Kitchen, The Embodied Cook: Tools, Technology and Knowledge Transmission on a Greek Island

Fieldwork and Cooking Lessons

“Little” Katerina was thirteen and a half when I filmed her in the kitchen. The previous summer I had asked her what she knew how to cook, and she said “coffee.” Now, she was preparing grilled cheese regularly, and occasionally coffee. She noted that she likes to cook, but her mother and grandmother don’t let her because they want to get it done quickly. I had asked if she wanted to cook something for the camera; she became excited and planned in consultation with her mother Katina to make a zucchini omelet. Katerina displayed considerable self-consciousness about being filmed. Katerina insisted that I shut off my camera while her mother showed her how the zucchini was to be cut. I sensed a knowledge on her part of what occurs on television cooking shows and an awareness of her mimicking those shows, just as her mother and grandmother at certain times would say that they were “playing Vefa,” the Greek Martha Stewart, when they explained a recipe to me. Little Katerina and her mother discussed and argued about how to arrange ingredients on the table as Vefa would. Katina also wanted her to explain the recipe clearly at the beginning, and got upset when her daughter broke into laughter the first time through. She remained off camera whispering corrections and instructions to her, with particular concern for her to speak in a way that would introduce the dishes clearly. But Little Katerina was not simply passive in relation to her mother’s instructions. When she disagreed with the way that her mother wanted her to arrange the ingredients to be prepared she said insistently: “It’s my show!” once again referring to the model of the television personality, Vefa.

Mindful Eating: Mindful Cooking

What might “mindful eating” and “mindful cooking” entail on a barren Greek island such as Kalymnos? Until recently, fast-food was almost non-existent here; even grocery store owners kept organic gardens and railed against the multinational food industries, referring to the products that they sold as “five pieces of bullshit in a can” (Sutton 2001: 66). Residents of Kalymnos have always cared deeply about their food, and been able to discuss its provenance, its proper preparation and its sensory properties. More than that, cooking is embodied in the many gestures and judgments, explicit and implicit, which make up the “proper” way to cook. More recently, however, many have been concerned about the fate of cooking on Kalymnos, commenting on whether the “younger generation” would retain their elders’ knowledge of cooking, or fall victim to fast and ready-made food. These discussions are not merely descriptive, but are moral discourses, laced with gendered assumptions. What is implied in the statement “the younger generation doesn’t cook” is the interruption of a natural, or traditional, flow of knowledge from mother to daughter. Indeed, “from mother to daughter” is a set phrase in Kalymnian discourse, reflecting how people see knowledge as typically transmitted and reproduced, at least in “the old days.” But is this, in fact, the case?

In this essay I document how Kalymnians do (or don’t) learn to cook and to eat in socially valued ways. My sense that much of this involves traditional mannerisms has led me to approach cooking using video as a key methodological tool. It is only by starting here, I would argue, that we can begin to understand the potential sources of change in food practices, and their significances.
While video has its specific methodological challenges, and it is important to be reflexive about the particular expectations that a video encounter may bring with it (cf. Relieu et al. 2008), I have found that video research can allow for an attention to bodily techniques that is much more difficult to actualize using traditional methodologies.

Within food studies, a growing body of work has been interested in the space of the kitchen as a key ideological site for cultural reproduction and resistance, both for women’s potential agency and oppression (Adapon 2008; Allison 1991; Counihan 1999; Short 2006; Williams 1984). While this research identifies women’s “voices,” as they negotiate the tensions of cooking as private and public, as creative and burdensome, these scholars have for the most part not addressed the relationship of values to skilled practices, or questions of how cooking knowledge travels within communities and across generations.

Here, I present a research report of some of the routes and approaches I have taken, and the tentative conclusions that I have drawn in this ongoing project.

Apprenticeship and Learning

How has cooking knowledge been learned in the past, and how is it being learned now? Anthropologist Marcel Mauss was one of the first authors to point to the importance of studying “techniques of the body.” He defines technique as an act “that is traditional and efficacious.” It has to be traditional and effective. There is no technique and no transmission if there is no tradition” (qtd. in Narvaez 2006: 60). Efficacious is defined not by some absolute standard, but as experienced within a particular social order.

How might such techniques be reproduced, and how might they change over time? Anthropological approaches to learning and the transmission of skills and knowledge, processes that have typically been studied under the label of “apprenticeship,” help us address these questions. A growing literature in anthropology and related fields has examined the interrelationship of social and technical skills transmitted through legitimate peripheral participation in “communities of practice” (Chaiklin and Lave 1993; Haase 2006; Hutchins 1995; Lave and Wenger 1991; Terrio 2000). Researchers have been attentive to the complex and power-laden dynamics that exist between “masters” and “apprentices” in different cultural contexts (Argenti 2002; Graeber 1997; Herzfeld 2003; Hill and Plath 2006) and the way that learning specific technical skills is intimately tied to learning to be the type of person who can master such skills (Bryant 2005; Kondo 1990). But this literature also stresses the different implications for learning that takes place through sensory engagement, play-frames, observation (often surreptitious) and through embodied habits as opposed to traditional Western models of explicit instruction (Henze 1992; Keller and Keller 1999; Ingold 2000; Scott 1998; Suchman 2006). One of the few studies of female transmission of knowledge in a largely domestic context is the work of Patricia Greenfield and her collaborators on Maya weavers, one of the first works to employ videotape in the study of apprenticeship. They use Mauss’s ideas to show how Maya girls’ bodies are prepared from birth to have the capacities to weave using the backstrap loom, which requires that “a woman’s body becomes an essential part of the loom. Weaving is not possible if there is not a body serving a part of the loom frame. The warp or frame threads are stretched between a post and the weaver’s body” (Maynard, Greenfield and Childs 1999: 381). They argue that Maya girls’ bodies are shaped “culturally and biologically” in such capacities as “low motor activity,” maintaining a kneeling position for extended periods, developing balance through tasks such as carrying wood on their heads, and acute visual perceptive abilities which fit with the local model of “learning through observation” rather than learning by doing (384-85). But others have suggested that skill may not pass from an older generation to a younger generation, or from masters to apprentices, by any simple route (cf. Herzfeld 2003). For example, Hill and Plath have studied knowledge and skill among the female pearl and abalone divers—or ama—in Japan. The authors note that while mothers and daughters may dive together, a mother does not feel obligated to lead her daughter to the abalone. Viewed by the elder as a potential competitor—tagging along “stealing her moneyed knowledge” (211)—the daughter is very much encouraged to find her own abalone (212).

In most instances Maynard, Greenfield and Childs reach opposite conclusions from those of Hill and Plath about the intentions of the older generation in relation to the younger. They are in accord, however, in their attention to issues concerning the relationship of bodily techniques and perceptual/sensory skills with more explicit, verbal knowledge. It is this focus that I find useful for my own exploration of these issues. I also draw on the
recent rethinking of the relations of the material and the social represented by the anthropology of the senses (Howes 2003), actor-network theory (Latour 2006) and the “new materiality studies” (Miller 2005). I approach the kitchen as a mix of practices that blur the distinctions between the social and the technical, and in which cultural assumptions and power relations become embedded in material forms. A careful empirical examination of the role of the senses in making everyday judgments and supporting larger values, as well as an interest in the kitchen as an environment which affords certain possibilities for action (Ingold 2001), opens up possibilities for making sense of the significance of decisions like what kind of can opener to use, or how to satisfy the different demands of a three-generational family on a two-burner stove. In this exploratory paper, I examine one such bodily technique on Kalymnos, the practice of “cutting in the hand.”

The Kalymnian Kitchen(s): Workspace as Cultural Artifact

Kalymnos shares with a number of Aegean islands matrifocal patterns not found in the rest of Greece. Post-marital residence is preferentially matrilocal, at least for the first daughter, who typically resides in the same house or in a house adjacent to her parents. This means that the husband enters the family as an outsider, and women’s “domestic” work is much more central to the structures of power in Kalymnian society than in more patrilineral areas. This is not mitigated by the fact that women increasingly work in jobs outside the home; indeed, the matrilocal situation means that Kalymnian children continue to be raised in large numbers by maternal grandparents as well as by parents.

The organization of the kitchen as workspace has interesting implications both as a kind of cultural artifact of different cooking values and styles, and in terms of mother/daughter relations. Since daughters often have houses that are extensions, built onto or adjacent to their mothers’ homes, this means that there are often two working kitchens shared by the co-resident family. The mother’s kitchen may be quite small: a space large enough for a sink, a refrigerator, a small table, a wall cabinet for plates and a two-burner stove run off a gas bottle. It is usually a small room separated from the main living area. Alternatively, a shack outside the house may be used as a primary area for processing and cooking; or simply a covered area that opens up into a courtyard can be used.

The daughter’s kitchen, by contrast, can be quite large, on the first floor of the daughter’s living area, and typically is not a room separated by a divider, but opens onto a larger living space. The daughter’s kitchen will include a full stove and oven, a large amount of counter space with cabinets above and below. The mother’s kitchen uses wall space for storage of pots, pans, implements and often plates. By contrast, the daughter’s kitchen will have those items placed in cabinets, and will instead use wall and counter space for decorative items. On occasion, the wall and counter space in the daughter’s kitchen becomes a display area for the tools of past generations. This arrangement allows in some instances for the mother’s kitchen to function as the primary everyday kitchen where foods are processed and cooked, while the daughter’s kitchen is used for lighter, occasional cooking, for making sweets or casseroles that call for an oven, and for the preparation of snacks and coffee. Because the mother’s kitchen tends to be outside the house itself, the odours associated with cooking, cleaning fish, along with the general messiness associated with processing food does not enter the living space, meaning that little effort is required when preparing for visitors. This set-up also facilitates the fact, discussed below, that the mother retains primary control over the everyday cooking for the extended family as a whole.

Techniques of the Body: Cutting in the Hand

One of the more striking features of observing cooking on Kalymnos relates to the manner in which certain food items are cut—that is in the hand rather than placing the item on a surface, which tends to be used for storage rather than for processing of food. It is striking to watch Kalymnians “chop” onions, tomatoes, potatoes, bread and other items in their hands. And it was only when I had video to refer back to that I could provide the kind of detailed description of technique that follows. A potato, for example, is cradled in one hand, scored all the way across in two or three passes, and then with a wrist motion the knife is drawn toward the thumbs which guide and balance and effectively serve as a cutting board (only the thumb of the hand cupping the potato is used when the potato is large, while both thumbs are employed for smaller potatoes, or once a larger potato has been partially cut). In the
case of an onion, one hand again serves as a cradle, while the loose wrist of the other hand is brought up and down in a repetitive motion scoring a grid-type pattern of shallow cuts on the surface of the onion. Then the thumb is once again used as a guide to draw the knife across the onion while the cradling hand rotates the onion. Finally in the case of a loaf of bread, the bread is held against the chest and the knife is used in a sawing motion to score cuts in the bread, which can later be fully separated by hand.

While from a purely technical standpoint one might wonder at the “inefficiency” of such an approach, which tends to, but does not necessarily, mitigate against small, even slices. This is not necessarily a problem, however, since most vegetables are used in soups and stews where they undergo considerable cooking and eventually dissolve, or in salads, where uneven shapes are the norm. While many of my colleagues in food studies wince when I show them the video of Kalymnian women processing food, from a social standpoint, this procedure makes sense; it is both “traditional and efficacious,” to return to Mauss’s phrase. Much of the processing of ingredients does not necessarily take place within the confines of the mother’s small kitchen, but instead in the courtyard directly outside the kitchen area. Women often prepare ingredients while seated, which allows them to socialize with family or neighbors while the ingredients are processed directly into a bowl on their lap. Richard Sennett has recently argued for the importance of understanding the ways in which we become skilled as a holistic process of negotiating a particular task, rather than something that can be analytically divided. Of hand coordination, he writes: “[r]ather than the combined result of discrete, separate, individualized activities, coordination works much better if the two hands work together from the start” (Sennett 2008: 164-65). One of his key examples of such hand coordination is the use of a cleaver in Chinese cooking to develop the skill to “cleave a grain of rice” (168). I would add to this that a holistic view of bodily techniques would draw on Mauss’s notion of the “traditional and efficacious” to understand how what from a technical point of view may seem inefficient, may make considerable sense in a larger social context.

Cooking Lessons, Redux

Let’s return to Little Katerina. Her “cooking lesson” clearly illustrated the kind of power relations and power struggles that may be acted out in the kitchen for many Kalymnian women. No doubt, the fact that her mother’s kitchen would eventually become hers (the house was built for her, as part of her dowry) added to her confidence in relation to negotiating the kitchen space with her mother. But what of the embodied aspects of learning to cook? When it came to cutting in the hand, this was a challenge for Little Katerina. First, she used a butter knife (Fig. 1) and was unable to cut the zucchini into pieces she felt were small enough. A dialogue between her and her mother concerning the size of the pieces:

Katerina: It’s not coming out [small enough].
Katina: Don’t say stupid things. After you’ve cut half of the zucchini, score it again to the bottom.
Katerina: Is this good? Should I put this piece in?
Katina: Cut it thinner. If it’s not thin enough, cut it again.

Later, as she turned the zucchini with a teaspoon in the pan (Fig. 2), Katerina commented to me that it takes a long time to fry if the zucchini is not cut small, and it doesn’t get that nice brown colour all over (indeed, during the frying she tries cutting some of the pieces using a knife against the pan (Fig. 3), telling me to edit it out from the video). Thus, she has a certain knowledge of what is to be aimed for, even if she doesn’t yet have the skill to execute it. For example, Katina gave Katerina a low-lipped bowl in which to beat the eggs, with
the result that she could not beat them with much force without spilling them. Katerina also didn’t know what to do when things went wrong: while she was beating the eggs, the oil began to burn. “What happened? Is it okay? Should I add more oil?” Using a butter knife seemed less a safety issue, and more about employing whatever happened to be “to hand” to accomplish the job. There was no concern about Katerina using a teaspoon to turn the zucchini so close to the hot oil, as spatulas are virtually non existent in Kalymnian frying. Some told me that this was because the spoon allows for more control than the spatula, but it certainly creates the potential for a burn from the hot oil.

My overall impression here is that for Katina, teaching cooking skills to her daughter is about teaching all the “tricks” and adjustments one must make to ensure the desired result (Fig. 4). Indeed, as Sennett argues, “Getting better at using tools comes to us, in part, when the tools challenge us, and this challenge often occurs just because the tools are not fit-for purpose” (194). In filming this “cooking lesson,” I was able to address such technical questions in the context of the social relations and power negotiations between mothers and daughters, on the ways that cutting in the hand is learned and embodied, and on some of the ways that Kalymnians incorporate the camera and the idea of being filmed into their experience of the contemporary visual culture of cooking.

In many ways, embodied habits such as cutting in the hand are significant in that they generate certain cross-generational continuities. In Bourdieu’s phrase, they “go without saying because they come without saying” (1977: 167) and thus are a strong link between the generations, just as Maynard, Greenfield and Childs (1999) describe for Maya weavers. It is therefore interesting to see contemporary sources of change in such embodied habits on Kalymnos. On my most recent field trip in the spring of 2008, I worked with several women in their thirties who, I was surprised to see, were using a cutting board for onions, parsley and certain other items. When I asked one woman about this, she admitted that she was never able to master cutting in the hand for particularly small items. She struggled along for a number of years feeling inadequate in relation to her mother’s skills, until she saw someone using a board for cutting, and incorporated the idea into her own practice. This did not mitigate the social nature of her cooking, but allowed her to process most ingredients in the customary manner, while making an adjustment for the area in which she perceived her lack of skill. When I asked where she had seen this new technique, she told me that it was on one of Greece’s most popular television cooking shows. While such shows represent a basic change in the scale of knowledge transmission, it is important to note that they do not represent a change in form, as they call for observational skills and the ability to pick up “tricks” and adjustments, just as Little Katerina’s mother expected her to do.

I hope this research note has provided an indication of the promise of a video ethnography of everyday cooking. I conclude with the observation that in order to understand the fate of mindful cooking, it is necessary to pay attention to “techniques of the body” even if this means a return to the cutting board.

Notes

1. The name “Little Katerina” reflects naming practices on the Greek island of Kalymnos, where granddaughters are named after their maternal grandmother, but given a diminutive form until adulthood.
3. Short’s work is groundbreaking in attempting to redefine what we mean by kitchen skill, but she relies on interviews for her study and does not focus on observation. Adapon’s theoretically sophisticated account looks at both values and practices, but her application of Alfred Gell’s theory of art and agency (1998) to cooking is quite different in focus than my own stress on learning and apprenticeship.
4. Indeed, they suggest that “kneeling” is a recognized stage in a child’s development akin to crawling or walking in Western societies.

References


This essay derives from two essential sets of questions. Ostensibly, it interrogates the built environment of the home—its architecture and material culture—as contributing factors in the construction of individuals’ attitudes towards food, and in the formation of habits known to influence food behaviour. In order to approach these questions, the concept of the “foodscape” is employed, following Gisèle Yasmeen who uses the term to “emphasize the spatialization of foodways and the interconnections between people, food, and places” (Yasmeen 2007: 525). An analysis of the domestic foodscape takes as its point of departure the assumption that the physical space of the home and the objects it contains—the layout of rooms and furniture; intermingling of work- and leisure-spaces; or the selection and arrangement of the contents of the home, for example—play a dynamic...
role in the food-related experiences of members of the household. The term domestic foodscape receives abiding attention in the introduction to this volume, by virtue of it having been the generating force behind a workshop of the same name, held at Concordia University in 2008, and co-organized by the authors of this essay. The first set of questions with which this essay is preoccupied, then, is aimed at supporting the claim that the domestic foodscape is indeed an interactive space embedding cultural practice related to food and eating. Can—and, if so, how—a study of eating memories and experiences in the domestic foodscape offer nuanced readings in support of this hypothesis? More specifically, can the experience of children within the domestic foodscape be seen to have a bearing on their adult eating habits? And, finally, is it possible to consider how the domestic foodscape serves as a site of what might be called “mindful” eating?

The consideration of mindful eating behaviours is of particular interest in this study. The term, taken as the antithesis to that in Brian Wansink’s influential study entitled Mindless Eating: Why We Eat More Than We Think, is also substantially developed in the Introduction to this special issue of Material Culture Review/Revue de la culture matérielle (Wansink 2007). Mindful eating practices are those conducive to maintaining good health, for example by calling attention to the size of a serving portion to avoid overeating during a meal. Consistent with key tenets of the Slow Food Movement, they are also related to the creation of pleasure, by serving as the focus of richly sensorial food-borne experiences and encouraging communality and commensality by situating food as a means of rich contact with family and/or friends. We are claiming that “mindfulness” as an outcome of interaction with the domestic foodscape can be investigated by examining certain routine activities that took place at mealtime for one group of individuals who were the subject of this study, for whom exposure to particular rituals within the domestic built environment seems to have stimulated ongoing mindful attitudes to eating during early adulthood.

The second set of questions addressed in this study has to do with developing a method through which to explore mindfulness in the domestic foodscape. To achieve this aim, it was important, on the one hand, to find a way to study the particular interactions, within the domestic foodscape, of some cohort of individuals: in this way, the subjects themselves could be given a means of articulating childhood memories and practices, and their adult eating habits could be tabulated against these earlier experiences anchored in recollections of childhood households. On the other hand, it seemed imperative to become especially attuned to how architecture and material culture absorb and display resonances of the experiences gained through interacting with these physical entities, and thereby comprise the food-related components of what Daniel Miller calls “a social cosmology…the order of things, values and relationships of a society” (2008: 294). What was required, therefore, was to interweave two fairly distinct domains of scholarly research.

The collaborators for this project are academics in the fields of marketing, and architecture and design history and theory. Their challenge was to consider points of intersection across these domains, despite the fact that each is based on rather different analytical strategies. The former gathers data by creating questionnaires to be distributed to a particular cohort; such polls are comprised of a series of statements on the themes in question, the response options pre-calibrated and given a numerical range to enable the participant to articulate the degree to which s/he agrees or disagrees with each of those statements. The latter method is primarily qualitative, built on data gleaned from historic or contemporary primary sources as they exist at the time of the analysis, or by making vicarious contact with such sources by encouraging the memories of participants through interviews or oral histories. Prompts given to these participants tend to precipitate more diffuse, and more abstract, responses than the agree/disagree spectrum of marketing analysts. In the project to be presented below, a hand-out with elements from both methodological models was assigned to young adults having just left the family household; it consisted both of a poll asking students to indicate the degree to which they self-associated with a series of statements concerning their current eating styles, involvement with food, and various lifestyle activities, as well as a section in which they were asked to describe verbally, and actually draw, the domestic foodscape of their childhood based on their most accurate recollection.

The decision to collaborate across disciplines was made on the basis of the recognition that the whole could potentially be greater than the sum of the parts. As will be demonstrated below, a growing body of critical work has been undertaken on the home, and, specifically, on the kitchen, as a site of enculturation and modernization or as gendered and technologically-determined space, for example.
However, having actual access to the inhabitants of the particular environment, in order to explore the way they themselves perceive(d) and engage(d) the space, is not always possible. Marketing analysis has to a significant extent documented the socialization process by which individuals and, specifically children, acquire dispositions toward food and eating habits, but has devoted only minimal attention to the domestic foodscape, in terms of its architecture and material culture, in the formulation of such habits (Moisio, Arnould and Price 2004; Thompson 1997; Mick and Buhl 1992).

In this project, overlapping such strategies affords an opportunity both to carry out nuanced readings of the built environment of the home as accessed through annotated free-hand plans of domestic foodscape, and to juxtapose these readings with interpretations of the food-related preferences of their makers. In this way, it is possible to begin to reconstruct the narrative of their childhood engagement with food, and to extrapolate which aspects of the domestic foodscape might be relevant in a positive projection of mindful eating. As will be shown, such correlations highlight the significance of particular elements of the physical environment of the home, that seem consistently to be identified—either tacitly or blatantly—as attractors contributing to the formulation of potentially mindful eating habits.

The Marketing Approach: Food and the Childhood Socialization Process

Considerable documentation exists in marketing-related discourse, of the influence of childhood food habits on adult food behaviour. In her study of consumer socialization of children, Deborah R. John (1999) notes that these habits are believed to evolve in stages roughly defined by age, and that they are susceptible to a variety of influences. Not surprisingly, parents’ influence can be considerable, including their own food repertoire, nutrition and dietary behaviours and mealtime communications, as well as their interaction with children during eating occasions. Children also often imitate the behaviours of peers and siblings, and this can have a profound impact both on everyday eating behaviour and also on the acceptance of novel foods (Salvy 2008; Addessi 2005). However, the impact either of the physical environment in which food is prepared and eaten, or of its material culture contents, has rarely been examined except for the distracting and often negative influence of television viewing (Davison, Marshall and Birch 2006; Buijzen, Schuurman and Bomhof 2008; Fiates, Amboni and Teixeira 2008). Even examinations of family meals, for instance, have generally overlooked the role of physical surroundings and objects in the socialization process.

What is noteworthy with regard to marketing analysis is the degree to which it tracks the transitions that have occurred in food distribution and retailing and that have infiltrated the household. Such research proves thought-provoking for studies of the built environment inasmuch as it exposes the forces that inevitably alter the physical as well as cultural dynamic of the home—with tangible repercussions to mindful eating. Especially significant is the impact of new foods and food delivery and distribution practices. By 2008, roughly 49 per cent of a household’s food dollar in the United States was spent on “food-away-from-home,” i.e., ready-to-eat food prepared outside the home (National Restaurant Association 2008). Moreover by that year the majority of restaurant meals were no longer consumed in restaurants; instead, the home was recognized as the most popular location where take out restaurant meals are consumed (followed by the car and the workplace). In recognition of this fact, restaurants and other ready-made food providers on the one hand, and supermarkets, farmers’ markets, and the like on the other, have been competing to attract consumers by developing new foods, cooking techniques and delivery modes. These products comprise innovations within the physical landscape of the household; for instance, pre-cooked frozen vegetables packaged in microwaveable bags, two-step cake mixes and ingredients like chopped garlic, are now staples in many North American kitchens. All have been designed, and are vigorously promoted, to save precious food preparation time, and require—or no longer require, as the case may be—particular technologies and methods (Sloan 2008). Kitchen architecture (and that of other food-related zones), appliance and storage design, along with the design of cooking and serving implements, have been fuelled by (and also necessitated) these modifications. In addition, meals brought home from restaurants and eaten from their branded packaging have done their part in turning the material and visual space of the kitchen table into mini-landscapes of KFC or McDonalds, with a number of consequences to mindful eating, including (overly large) serving sizes often determined by that packaging, rather than by the eater. Underscoring this competition for
the consumer’s food dollar (which occupies a key zone on the radar screen of marketing strategists) is a fundamental displacement whereby convenience and ease of cooking, rather than health and taste, are now the primary factors in deciding what to cook and eat in the home. Given the myriad enticements to spend food dollars in these ways, the wider food environment—both at home and outside of it—all too often results in mindless eating behaviour.

What can be gleaned from studying the domestic foodscape from a marketing viewpoint? Such a perspective endorses the need to look to wider cultural signals that literally drive home trends and patterns of behaviour derived from the social network of everyday life. Marketing analysts are centrally concerned with degrees of appropriation and negotiation of messages gathered by individuals through a variety of stimuli and filters. Such data offers significant contextualization to a nuanced reading of the home as a built environment of architecture and material culture. The incursion of convenience foods into the home at the rate cited above, for example, suggests the likelihood that in many homes food preparation is approached, not so much as the creation of meals from scratch, but rather as the assembly of at least partially pre-treated and often branded ingredients. With this in mind, it would be inaccurate to conceptualize the kitchen as a site, in the privacy of the home that exists in haven-like opposition to the advertisement-ridden arena of, say, restaurants in a city. Remarkably, this conclusion reinforces the perspective of at least one architectural researcher, Sigrun Bülow-Hübe who, from 1967-1970—a pivotal time in the introduction of new food to the Canadian domestic repertoire—surveyed thirty-seven kitchens in and around Montreal as part of a project for the Central Mortgage and Housing Corporation. Concerned with charting the efficiency of the homemaker in fulfilling kitchen-related tasks, and in standardizing kitchen cabinetry units and equipment, Bülow-Hübe asked her participants to list all their grocery purchases including their brand names, and then designed their optimal placement in kitchen cupboards and pantries as part of her fieldwork. It seems Bülow-Hübe was ahead of her time in acknowledging the role of such products in the daily life of modern families.

The Domestic Foodscape From an Architecture and Design Perspective

Theories on optimal kitchen size and behaviour by architects and other design experts have generated their share of prescriptives to modulate activities undertaken within the domestic foodscape. For example, research originally conducted in Europe at the turn of the 20th century led to a prototype known as the Frankfurt Kitchen (Freeman 2004: 39-40). With an optimum size of 1.9 m x 3.44 m (roughly 6 feet x 11 feet), further diminished by appliances, cabinets, and so on, this galley-style kitchen was conceived as a laboratory-like, rationalized, intricately delineated environment, sometimes depicted with a stool at the centre, set up so that the occupant of that seat would have everything within reach to fulfill her task of nourishing the household. Originally, the Frankfurt model was promoted as an isolated space, which made sense given its status as a specialized work environment; later, its proximity to a window through which the user could watch children playing outside, was recommended. Small kitchens of this type, a precursor to the galley kitchen found even in model domestic architecture such as Moshe Safdie’s Habitat 67 project, separated cooking and eating functions. A second thread of influence, derived from the philosophy of Taylorism, contributed a further imposition to the household. Time-motion studies and other evaluations of various tasks (such as making beds) were undertaken, including careful monitoring by so-called experts, of the steps women took as they prepared a meal—i.e., from stove, to sink, to refrigerator, to storage areas and so on. Recommendations were then made to interfere with existing patterns of navigation through that space by the homemaker, if those patterns conflicted with scientific management practices (Bullock 1988; Lupton and Miller 1992; Sparke 1995). Indeed, Bülow-Hübe’s mid-century research extends this analytical bent. Such outside stimuli, however, were not always accepted as is. For example, Mark Llewellyn’s study of families living in experimental working-class housing in 1930s England exposes antagonism to the small kitchens in these residences: families who were determined to eat within the kitchen proper subverted existing conditions by defiantly squeezing in facilities to do so, even if that meant “perching children on top of work surfaces and the cooker [stove]” (Llwellyn 2004: 48).

To the inhabitants of the domestic foodscape, then, as Sandra Buckley articulates so well, “the
kitchen is far more than architecture, it is a concept which defies material limits to become a space of domestic fantasies, both homely and unhomely, of the family and the nation-state” (Buckley 1996: 441). As both domestic fantasy and reality, the findings of researchers desiring to understand as-found conditions (rather than prescriptive), demonstrate the kitchen to be a physical landscape of interaction, enculturation and socialization. Researchers have isolated particular characteristics or elements of this space—Helen Watkins (2006) takes a microscopic view of the refrigerator door in British kitchens as a site of self-expression for women—or have applied a more holistic perspective, including a fairly extended history of the kitchen edited by Klaus Spechtenhauser (2005). Thematically, it has been explored as a backdrop for examining individuals’ preferences as they design their own kitchens (Freeman 2004); as a gendered landscape (Llewellyn 2004; Domosh 1998); or as a domain central in the integration of modernity and especially new technology within the home (Cowan 1985; Hand and Shove 2004; Parr 1999). Studies of the kitchen as an emotional and/or sensorially-perceived space also exist; the metaphor of “kitchen as home,” for example, is captured by Sean Supski (2006) in her analysis of the kitchens of immigrant Australian women after the Second World War.14 Judith Attfield (1999) and Janet Floyd (2004) are among those who have exposed it as a domain reflecting and activating self-expression or the projection of lifestyle. Much more than simply a room in which to prepare and serve food, the kitchen is the interactive stage on which “chemistry and passion intersect, where conflicting sensibilities coexist. … [It is] all about the possibility of transformation….egg whites…beaten into soufflé praline….the kitchen is the place in the house where the ordinary become extraordinary” (Busch 1999: 50).

If the kitchen is often seen as the hub of the home, one might argue that the kitchen table serves as the hub of the kitchen. The kitchen table is routinely acknowledged as a significant piece of domestic real estate, both spiritually and metaphorically—a “kitchen table approach,” for example, describing a strategy that is both sound and logical, but unimimidating and not over-burdened with complexity. Kitchen tables figure in the creation myths of a variety of undertakings. Record has it that Martha Stewart began to develop her business while seated there (USA Today 2002), as did other entrepreneurs including the ones who started Burt’s Bees, a well-known company that sells personal care products (Tanner 2003). John Adams wrote the Constitution of Massachusetts at his kitchen table (Homans 1981) and mathematician George R. Stibitz used relays to build a binary adder constituting an early step in the development of the computer, while at his kitchen table.15 Christopher Alexander, an influential architectural theorist during the 1970s, writes that the kitchen table “will be the first and most important centre. … The table is the source of pleasure and of practical work together” (qtd. in Kähler 2006: 77). The table is also a means of giving some relative order to the context of the space in which it is located: David Leatherbarrow’s reading of the table in a restaurant pertains to that of the kitchen or dining room as well, as concentrating the surrounding visual field so that the individual elements of the vista around, above, or below the table “constitute something like an atmosphere, a disposition, or mood that is not easy to describe but is never unclear.” The collective visual and, indeed, sensorial experience, is, he observes, “often what is memorable about settings” (Leatherbarrow 2004: 219). Bringing the spotlight back to the home and specifically to children, David Bell and Gill Valentine, in their spatially-oriented study Consuming Geographies, identify the dinner table (whether in the kitchen or elsewhere) as particularly important for the socialization of children (Bell and Valentine 1997: 63-64). The kitchen table, it can thus be suggested, is a critical element of what makes the domestic foodscape memorable and conducive to mindful eating.

The Project: Reminiscences of Childhood Domestic Foodscape and Mindful Eating

The cohort studied in this project was roughly half men and half women (numbering twenty-four and twenty-nine, respectively), and their mean age was 18.9 years.17 Keeping in mind that this collaboration was even more of an experiment than such surveys normally prove to be (i.e., when they are not subjected to the challenge of overlaying two essentially different paradigms for collecting and interpreting data), the goal of this investigation was to see if it could generate productive correlations between retrospective perceptions of the domestic foodscape, and adult habits related to food.

The questionnaire was comprised of two separate sections, namely the marketing portion, and the portion that directly addressed the built
environment of the childhood home. The first subsection of the marketing part of the questionnaire asked each participant to indicate the amount of pleasure s/he derived from twenty-three lifestyle activities or objects (e.g., shopping, reading, movies, sports, going out to bars, etc.). In the second subsection, participants completed what is known as a Food Involvement Scale (FIS) that consists of twelve items (scored on a 1= disagree totally to 7= agree totally scale) covering five food domains: acquisition, preparation, cooking, eating and disposal. Participants then completed a thirty-three-item subsection assessing general levels of restraint in eating (e.g., “Do you try to eat less at mealtimes than you would like to eat?”); the degree of emotionally-triggered eating (“Do you have the desire to eat when you are irritated?”); and the extent of externally-motivated eating behavior (“If food smells and looks good, do you eat more than usual?”).

In the section addressing the home as an environment for food-related activities, participants were asked to describe the kitchen and dining areas in the home where they grew up. Certain prompts helped guide them through the process (e.g., was the meal generally a formal occasion, or a casual one and how so? Did you eat in the same room in which the food was prepared? Who prepared your meals? How were cooking/serving/food acquisition functions allocated?). Participants were then instructed to “sketch or briefly describe the layout of the kitchen/dining spaces” where they grew up. It was implied that they would use the blank space remaining below the wording of this last request, on standard letter-sized paper, to draw the space. The idea was to avoid making them feel intimidated by insufficient drawing skills such as might happen, had they, for example, been issued with special paper or drawing implements, but, rather, to encourage them to see this part of the questionnaire as simply another element of their overall evaluation.

Naturally, these findings had to be interpreted within the limitations of this chosen sampling frame. The participants were not extraordinarily versed in making architectural drawings, and so their drawings had to be treated more as a product of the imagination than an accurate portrayal. This circumstance had a certain advantage, in that the participants would likely have been unaware of the need to adhere to drawing conventions (for example working to scale or assigning a hierarchy of line thicknesses) that architects depend on to communicate precisely. Hence, what was on the page was, essentially, what the participant wanted on the page, in response to the questions being asked. The decision of what to include, then, and the prominence it received in the drawing consequently became, in and of themselves, factors through which to evaluate the emphasis given by the participant to a particular part of the drawing’s content—and hence became a variable for understanding the significance of the domestic foodscape for that participant.

Analysis of this material occurred in two stages. First, each submission was closely scrutinized in order to identify any patterns, consistencies and differences that arose across the cohort. Careful readings were given to the floor plans, noting all discernible communicative signals—textual notations (for example of who normally sat at which chair around a table); inclusions of minutiae such as particular foods or ornaments; indications of the circulation between rooms within the household; or level of detail (drawings were sometimes sparse and at other times particularly fulsome). Analyzing the written recollections that accompanied the drawings (in ways that would be familiar to literary critics and historians), a nuanced analysis of written answers was undertaken regarding such matters as the location of meals in the household during the participant’s childhood, the degree of formality associated with this activity, and the presence or absence of distractions such as the television, during meals. Then, in order to gain a more finely-grained perspective on the patterns that emerged, the ten most detailed and descriptive drawings were extracted and studied as a subset, primarily because these seemed to signal a higher level of concentration or interest or remembrance, on the part of the participant, of particular aspects of his or her childhood domestic foodscape.

In and of themselves, the findings from each section are revealing. Taken together, however, they prove remarkable inasmuch as they seem to confirm the significance of the childhood domestic foodscape as built environment, as playing an important role in the development of mindful eating habits.

In the marketing-related section, participants were demonstrated as having eating styles in line with previous investigations with similar age-groups (Dubé, LeBel and Lu 2005). As with previous studies, participants “sometimes” restrained themselves from eating foods they believed not healthy or not in their best interest; “sometimes”
ate in direct response to a perceived emotionally-taxing situation (this is referred to as “eating one’s emotions”); but were a bit more sensitive than the norm to external cues such as appetizing smells or other visual food-related cues.

With regard to the sections targeting the architecture and objects of the remembered domestic foodscape, the level of detail captured in the text and drawings proved remarkable. One participant went so far as to draw the food on the table in his/her dining room, noting the chair for the “head of family,”—the only one of nine chairs with arms. Many participants identified specific elements of the space, for example a spice rack (Fig. 1); one noted “chotchkys [kitschy ornaments] on window sill.” “Inedible fish” sitting on a plate on the kitchen counter were pointed out by another participant, along with a pair of candlesticks (with a caption nearby signaling their use “one night per year”) and a television was drawn with waves radiating from it (Fig. 2). Another participant added an additional page to his questionnaire so he could illustrate the kitchen and dining room separately, and drew the “tooth pick [sic] container (shape of rabbit)” on the table. The same participant explained that if his grandparents come to visit, his parents and sisters “move one seat each to [background?]” 21 Normally, however, he “sat on the center seat [at the head of the table] because I am the eldest son of the family → family tradition” 22 (Fig. 3). Two participants drew flowers on the kitchen table and one of these added drawings of little animal ornaments on the shelf above the kitchen sink.

What soon became evident, in the second section of the study, was that roughly three-quarters of the participants reported that they had habitually shared the principal meal of the day with their family. While some specified that the television had been kept on during the meal, a surprising number reported that the focus was on the table (and this seems in most cases at the behest of the parents). A few indicated that prayers were part of the ritual; that proper table manners were expected; that the participant wear a shirt to the table; and that, once seated, no one could leave the table until everyone was finished. In short, the participants in this questionnaire either over-reported the domestic foodscape as more focused and family-oriented than the norm, or seem anomalous vis-à-vis the anecdotal assumption that turn-of-the-21st century homes are characterized by a less structured domestic foodscape, with individuals routinely eating in bedrooms, in living rooms in front of the television, and so on.

The ten submissions culled as having particularly expressive drawings revealed an even higher incidence of family meals without distractions. Remarkable is the number of these families who reportedly ate their main meal without outside intrusion: five specified that the television was turned off; two additional participants did not specify whether there were distractions, but

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Fig. 1
Detail of drawing submitted by Respondent #6, identifying "spice rack" (note text at centre-top of image) situated on kitchen counter.
reported that their family (in one case) discussed the day’s activities and (in the other case) spent two hours eating dinner, and a third hour eating dessert. One participant did in fact indicate that the television was always on during the meal, however, and another explained that it was normally on but turned off during more formal gatherings; the tenth did not eat with her family.

Equally important was the discovery that over half the participants of the full cohort reported eating their principal daily meal either at the kitchen table, or at the dining room table (in the four instances in which there was no table in the kitchen proper). That is, twenty-four routinely ate at a table in the kitchen, seven in the dining room, and ten in an open-plan configuration. The participant drew a table, and also specified his/her designated seat, in roughly two-thirds of the questionnaires submitted. Only five participants usually ate in rooms designated as other than kitchen or dining areas (in the remaining cases, the location was either unknown, or not consistently in any given room). Hence in only a few cases did participants report a disbursement to spaces beyond the kitchen or dining room after the food was prepared such that “we would serve our food and go where we felt comfortable. I ate in my room on my bed in front of the TV.” With regard to the ten most detailed drawings, only one participant usually ate away from the kitchen or dining table. When she did join her family at the table, she usually brought a book to read and remembered that “sometimes my family would not even talk. Sometimes we fought. … We never had guests. I was embarrassed by our dinner practices.” Of the others in this subset, eight had their meals at the kitchen or dining room table, while the ninth ate at “a” table (there are four in the drawing: in the kitchen, dining room, closed-in porch and outside deck, and “chairs and table” were even drawn in the “hot tub room”).

What happens when the findings of both sections are juxtaposed? The ten focal participants did not exhibit any difference in terms of body weight and their profile was in line with the larger sample. Results for the twelve-item Food Involvement Scale, while based on too few participants to be scientifically meaningful expressed as a statistic, reveal nonetheless that the ten focal participants enjoyed cooking, food shopping and a nicely laid table to a higher extent than the overall sample. In
the subsection that tested for degree of pleasure taken from “lifestyle activities,” the ten focal participants expressed appreciation of the pleasure associated with food more or less to a degree equal to the full cohort, but showed a higher score as deriving pleasure from cooking. Other examinations of the data suggest some differences more challenging to explain but perhaps due to each group’s socialization years. For instance, the ten focal participants got more pleasure from school and reading than the overall sample but less from going out to clubs, shopping and watching television. When the marketing section and the built environment section are superposed, then, there seems to be a consistent family intimacy in operation around the kitchen or dining room table, that in turn suggests the pivotal role of this micro site within the domestic foodscape. Especially for the focal group of participants, extended time and attention given to family food-related rituals undertaken with children at the kitchen table seem to contribute in a positive way, at least to some extent, to how these individuals treat food and eating after they reach adulthood.

Implications on the Domestic Foodscape

This study seems to reinforce the importance of the built environment of the home as a space of enculturation with regard to food practices, in which participants in this cohort seem routinely to have spent structured time with their families during meals. What are some implications that arise from these findings?
For scholars interested in studying the culture of food, they support the efficacy of looking to the domestic foodscape as a telling site of identity formation, in line with the findings of researchers already mentioned above. Microcosmic studies of the food-related spaces of the home seem to deserve abiding attention, especially the kitchen table. Interestingly, over thirty-five participants admitted, on the questionnaire (the last item of the Food Involvement Scale), that table settings mattered to them; this was even more the case for the focal group that submitted the ten more detailed drawings. Is this the residue of childhood eating habits centered on the table, or does it speak to the power of the tabletop design and table objects in triggering mindful eating? Designers such as Russel and Mary Wright, for example, were aware of the centrality of the table and its material culture in the construction of modern eating patterns in the 1950s, but more research in this area is advisable (Wright and Wright 1951).

If this project does indeed have merit in evaluating as-found conditions in past or present domestic foodsapes, an important outcome must be the potential usefulness of such a study to architects and designers whose future products might be brought into or constitute that eating environment. This study encourages consideration of the kitchen as a site—whether as a room by itself, or in a more open-plan configuration—that deserves special consideration as a subset of the domestic foodscape that can facilitate the interaction of the household. While this seems obvious, it needs to be understood, for example, in the context of well-intentioned 20th-century experiments with the kitchen as a segregated food-preparation space, or a galley-style kitchen, neither of which was designed to accommodate a table at which diverse domestic activities, including eating, could take place. The findings of this study might also induce designers to think about the comfort associated with the routine designated eating space—the selection of materials that do not require extreme caution against soiling or breakage; ergonomic or padded seats; or tables without sharp edges are design issues that come to mind. A perusal of design books and magazines that currently proliferate in the market seems to confirm that such concerns are not generally prioritized.

Moreover, the design of kitchens, utensils, appliances and other artifacts used in preparing meals deserves consideration. Although this was not a major finding in itself, many participants noted that they took part, albeit in modest measure, in meal preparation (often in the form of washing or peeling vegetables). To what extent do domestic foodsapes facilitate the acquisition of food preparation skills? The focal group of ten participants who submitted more detailed drawings also expressed more involvement in cooking and derived more pleasure from it than other participants. Was this due to parental coaching, or might it be attributed to some feature of the domestic foodsapes? Do professional-quality stoves and ovens, and other equipment that require more than average skill and are now featured in high-end kitchen design, stimulate cooks to rise to the occasion, or do they intimidate the user and ultimately reduce the possibility that meals be prepared from scratch? And how does gender figure in such analysis? Observations of children at play in a toy kitchen revealed marked differences between boys’ and girls’ behaviours: girls tended to involve the doll (even carrying it while cooking) in their activities and prepared complicated recipes or multi-course meals, while boys were more likely to engage in repairs and use the microwave, would serve snacks (rather than prepare a meal) or served excessive amounts of food (Matheson, Spranger and Saxe 2002). Some design firms have tried to recast the domestic foodscape as a male domain: witness the Poggenpohl Porsche Design Kitchen, described as “engineered, not simply designed…. Its origins in automotive construction open up a whole new dimension: Movement. Opening. Closing. … An experience in technological and functional perfection.” The table and chairs offered as part of the ensemble are rigidly orthogonal and hard-edged and surfaced, so it would be difficult to imagine such an environment as welcoming or relaxing either for cooking or for eating. All-in-all, the potential of the domestic foodscape to invite and promote exploration and development of cooking skills warrants further inquiry.

Investigations into the home as personal territory for the purposes of food studies and otherwise have, in recent decades, attracted much nuanced attention across many fields of knowledge. In an extraordinarily sensitive gesture of understanding Seamus Heaney, the Irish Nobel poet laureate, writes of the childhood home:

The rooms where we come to consciousness, the cupboards we open as toddlers, the shelves we climb up to ... it is in such places and at such moments that ‘the reality of the world’ awakens in us. And it is also at such moments that we have our first inkling of pastness and find our physical
surroundings invested with a wider and deeper dimension that we can, just then, account for. (Heaney 1985: 110)

Such spaces have an abiding influence, it seems, on who we are, on how we live and, as this tentative step into an undeveloped interdisciplinary realm suggests, on the rituals that characterize that most essential activity of human survival, namely our complex relationship with food.

Notes

Research for this project was undertaken with the support of the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada. The authors would like to express their thanks to Sara Spike for her assistance.

1. See also Yasmeen (2006: 2-3).
2. The domestic foodscape includes the general location (e.g., the house as a whole or a room within it) and a specific place (e.g., in front of the television) as well as the condition of the physical environment (e.g., temperature); see Bisogni (2007). To date, micro-level analyses have examined specific areas within the home and focused on issues such as pantry management: see Baranowski (2008). Another approach has addressed food availability and visibility within the kitchen, table, and plate: see Sobal and Wansink (2007).
3. The use of the term “mindful” in this way was inspired by Brian Wansink’s study of “mindless eating.” Wansink centralizes overeating as the principal negative associated with eating mindlessly. Our use of the term recognizes this and other unhealthy attributes as derived at least in part from the distractions while eating or ignorance about food or carelessness of eating habits that Wansink isolates, but also takes into account the behavioural considerations enumerated here.
4. The subjects for this study were 53 undergraduate students in an introductory foodservice management course at Cornell University, who were given credit for their participation. The study was conducted in 2006.
5. Those who do convincingly address the user in their material culture analysis include Kostof (1995), Upton (1998) and Mellin (2003).
6. In addition to John, see Guidetti and Cavazza (2008), Orrell-Valente et. al. (2007) and Hays, Power and Olvera (2001).
7. An example of a study of what constitutes a meal in the minds of participants, in which space is not the focus, is Bugge and Almas (2006).
8. For example, the Mintel International Group Limited reports that fully 54 per cent of all food from fast-food takeout establishments is eaten in the home. Please see http://www.mindbranch.com/Off-premises-Eating-R560-2959/ (accessed June 14, 2010).
9. In the US, such chains as Applebee’s and Outback Steakhouse offer “curbside delivery,” where customers need only to drive into specially marked parking bays (after phoning in their order) and a staff member takes it out to their car.
12. Indeed, as early as 1869, Catharine Beecher had advocated a ship’s “galley” (32) as a desirable model in terms of kitchen efficiency. See also Lupton and Miller (1992). Another innovative way of analyzing the domestic foodscape appears in an earlier issue of this journal: see Cromley (1996).
16. See also Rolshoven (2006).
17. Admittedly, the cohort of individuals who participated in this study was already pre-selected as interested in food, is university-educated, middle class, and can afford an Ivy-League education. Future research could extend this investigation to households of different socio-economic backgrounds, that are equally, if not more, at risk of developing negative health consequences related to mindless eating.
19. This is known as the Dutch Eating Behavior Questionnaire (DEBQ); see van Strien (1986).
20. The format of the submitted drawings was as floorplans, rather than sections or elevations. In a few cases attempts were made to add three-dimensionality by building up vertical planes.
21. Handwriting is illegible.
22. Reproduced as communicated by the participant.
23. Even the participant in the focal group who felt uncomfortable around her family table as a child gave responses to other parts of the questionnaire that suggest that she enjoys cooking and is otherwise positively stimulated by various aspects of food, even caring about a nicely laid table.
24. For an example of such a study by one of the authors of this paper; see Richman-Kennelly (2010).
25. For a detailed analysis of the role the Wrights ascribed to habits of the domestic foodscape, see Wright and Wright (1951).
26. These are available at home improvement centres, on bookstore stands, and also exist in formalized hardcover formats; see, for example, Mielke (2005).
References


During the summer of 2009, Ottawa, Canada’s capital city and adopted home of Yousuf Karsh, was alive with events that marked the one-hundredth anniversary of the renowned photographer’s birth (December 23, 1908). Two years of dialogue between the Canada Science and Technology Museum (CSTM) and Library and Archives Canada’s Portrait Gallery (PGC) resulted in Festival Karsh. The festival included educational programs hosted by museums, art venues and buildings where the artist lived and worked, an online photo sharing group called My Karsh, a website featuring his work and a printed guide of the Karsh trail.

Combining the two collections and two perspectives of the partners to reveal a coherent and fresh image of the Karsh approach to photography, Festival Karsh also included a major exhibition—Karsh: Image Maker/Créateur d’images—held at the Canada Science Technology Museum during the summer of 2009.

Widely recognized as Canada’s leading portrait photographer, Yousuf Karsh was an Armenian immigrant who settled in Ottawa; hence the location for the anniversary series of events. His prolific legacy in portraiture forms a visual encyclopaedia of 20th-century personalities—Winston Churchill, the British royal family, Glenn Gould, Marshall McLuhan, Georgia O’Keefe, Audrey Hepburn, Pablo Cassals, George Bernard Shaw, Ernest Hemingway and Albert Einstein, among them. Over the years, Karsh’s photographs were repeatedly exhibited in shows around the world. Before it closes in 2012, the exhibition will travel throughout Canada and the world.

Yousuf Karsh believed that a photographic portrait captured the essence of an individual in an “elusive moment of truth” (Karsh 1962: 95). He understood this truth as all-encompassing, wrapping “the mind and soul and spirit [in the] eyes, hands and attitude” of a person (ibid.). His photographic sessions were veritable consultations that were elaborately prepared. “Before any session with an important client, Karsh’s first order of business was to research as many facts as possible about the sitter” (Travis 2009: 7). No matter who he was making a portrait of “his primary goal at the beginning of a session was to engage his subject in a cordial and personal way, putting him or her at ease as he determined the number of lights and their exact positions” (ibid.). He was a wonderful conversationalist who would “listen and respond while concentrating on the sitter’s facial expressions...” (ibid.). His approach to a photographic session was applied to celebrities and non-celebrities alike. Karsh took pride in the fact that his portraits were images that encapsulated the historical dimension of individuals.

The objective of the exhibit team was to develop an exhibition that not only displayed the...
legendary portraiture of Yousuf Karsh, but one that provided an analysis of the Karsh techniques, that was interactive and that enabled the visitor to “consider the stories that he told about his subjects and himself.” A thoughtful blend of portraiture from the Portrait Gallery of Canada, archival holdings from Library and Archives Canada and artifacts from CSTM’s Karsh of Ottawa Collection helped the team achieve their objective.

The space dedicated to the exhibition at CSTM resembles a trapezoid (Fig. 1), where the artifacts are organized in six different zones. Two entrances accommodate the flow of visitors from different parts of the museum. The “Becoming Karsh” gallery connects the two entrances. Becoming Karsh opens laterally into a succession of three parallelepiped spaces forming an area called “In the Studio.” Here, a corner area representing a studio invites visitors, children as well as adults, to a hands-on exploration of the working space of a professional photographer. This section also functions as a respite area before entering the impressive pantheon where original portraits of celebrities are displayed. The sharp angle of the floor plan has become a memorabilia zone where round tables serve as display space in what is otherwise a rest-and-play area.

Despite their distinctiveness in function, the six areas appear as one multi-layered structure. The bold colour scheme chosen by the architectural designers Lupien Matteau Inc of Montreal contribute to the sense of one space. Bright red is the predominant colour. Black and white backgrounds are intertwined with coloured panels throughout; light blue discreetly identifies the two exploration zones on each side of “The Theatre of Personality”; and from within the rotunda, visitors are able to catch glimpses of red through a clever placement of the exhibition walls. Glass display cases and the empty vertical spaces that remain enhance the idea of image making in that they offer indirect views to parts of the exhibition that visitors may have already seen, but are being invited back to explore further. This strategy enables the visitor to absorb small amounts of information at a time so as to grasp the message of the exhibition.

Given that Karsh: Image Maker/Créateur d’images is designed to travel, the modular partitions are easily disassembled for installation in other locations. The double-access to the exhibition posed a challenge to curators and designers at the CSTM location, in that the entrance had to be done in duplicate. Two red panels with the K-letter incision indicating the entrances had to be created (Fig. 2). At both entrances, identical bands of slide-like photographs lead the way into the Becoming Karsh gallery. These snap-shots of Karsh at work or at leisure introduce the photographer’s own image to audiences who may or may not know him by sight. Between the two entrances, this gallery acts as a historical esplanade of Karsh’s journey (Fig. 3). Some of his early photographs complement letters exchanged with companies such as the Ottawa Little Theatre where Karsh came to understand the dramatic use of lighting—the defining element in his portraiture. Brushes that once belonged to photographer John Garo, under whom Karsh apprenticed, make the connection to Karsh’s early years spent in his master’s Boston studio, honing the technical and social skills essential to photograph prominent people. A small case holds a replica of Karsh’s first Brownie camera which was a gift from his uncle and teacher, Sherbrooke photographer George Nakash.
All of this would have made for an interesting, albeit, common display were it not for a central panel where Arnaud Maggs’s forty-eight portraits of Karsh present a surprisingly different take on portrait photography. Initially, the panel appears out of place, but as one looks back on the show, this piece paradoxically embodies the very essence of this image-making exhibition. Karsh’s slightly different stances act as a magnetic board that draws the visitor inside, only to funnel them deeper into the various meanings the exhibition subtly unfolds.

Before turning 180 degrees into the In the Studio gallery, a short video—part of an educational series for children produced by CBC in the 1950s—shows Karsh explaining his first professional steps to an audience which was likely similar to that envisaged for this present exhibition. Co-curator Bryan Dewalt clarifies the exhibit team’s decision to show the video in this section. He says it is essential that visitors understand Karsh from the perspective of his having been a refugee from the Middle East, whose dark skin and strong accent were out of keeping with the place he chose to reside; a predominantly white Anglophone Ottawa between two world wars. In his efforts to continually present himself as a true artist, not merely a photographer, one sees an element of self-confidence and self-respect in Karsh; yet, at the same time, this is underlined by an ever-present insecurity that may explain his ambition as a desire for acceptance. Being recognized by the most powerful and the most prestigious was a means to convince Canada, and the world, of his belief that artistic achievement was that part of human nature that transcends boundaries of geography, race, language and class.

At the core of the exhibition lie two distinct, yet complementary, spaces—each showcasing artifacts from the collections of the two partners. Library and Archives Canada’s Portrait Gallery program supplies the artifacts for The Theatre of Personality, the portraiture piece of the exhibition. Artifacts from the Canada Science and Technology Museum contribute to In the Studio, the technology aspect of the exhibition. It is fitting that Karsh’s most famous portrait—that of Winston Churchill (Fig. 4)—guards the entrance to this section.

Artifacts displayed in the In the Studio gallery provide the visitor with a glimpse of what went into the creation of a Karsh portrait. Here items from the CSTM’s Karsh of Ottawa Collection—cameras, lights, darkroom-related equipment and retouching tools are the focus. The two 8 x 10 (20 x 25 cm) Calumet cameras used by Karsh in his Ottawa and New York studios face each other; one of them is disassembled to expose the working parts to visitors (Fig. 5). Clear and concise explanations accompany the technical objects here, some of which include Karsh’s other favourite cameras: the Graphic View and the Rolleiflex. We learn that the Graphic View camera was used for trips outside the studio because it is small and lightweight, while offering the same swing and tilt control as the Calumet. The Graphic View, however, produced negatives of only one-quarter the size of what could be done with the bigger Calumet. The Rolleiflex camera dates from the 1950s and because of its compact size it was used for overseas travel.

Stored conveniently out of the way, but still very much part of the studio, the sitting lights are clustered under a glass corner case allowing a glimpse back into the gallery. Although labelled...
correctly, an additional explanation might have helped the inexperienced visitor better understand how the lights were used in the actual configuration of the studio (Fig. 6). Nonetheless, juxtaposing the lights on the dark room equipment leaves a metaphorical imprint of the practical story of how pictures are created by carefully balancing light and darkness.

In the world of photography, the value of good equipment cannot be underestimated. Equally important, however, is a photographer’s knowledge of how to use that equipment. On parallel walls to the tools and implements, we learn about the various compositional principles Karsh employed (Fig. 7). Visitors are challenged to discover what rules guided the creation of a portrait. Fortunately, the nearby immersive studio brings in a welcome change of pace by allowing a hands-on experience for visitors of all ages. Just in time for restless toddlers, as well as for the serious visitor, this is the place where everybody has an opportunity to apply what has been learned thus far. Secured to a mobile track, a mock Calumet box hiding a digital camera shows an upside-down black-and-white view of a sitter bold enough to have her/his picture taken (Fig. 8). The “photographer” or an “assistant” may adjust the studio lights, while the sitter experiments with costumes and accessories and body positions, working as a team to obtain different results each time. Once a photo is taken, it can be emailed promptly to the sitter’s personal inbox from a touch-screen in the same area. Ironically, this hands-on part of the exhibit proved so successful that the equipment broke down on several occasions—calling into question one’s faith in modern equipment in a technology museum. It will be prudent if the organizers took steps to avoid that complication for future showings of this travelling exhibition.

Then suddenly, as if coming out from a wing, the visitor enters the Theatre of Personality. In this gallery, some of Karsh’s most famous portraits line two curved black walls that face each other (Fig. 9). It is here that the spotlight shines on the artifacts provided by the second partner to this collaborative exhibition—the Portrait Gallery of Canada.
In the Theatre of Personality, the carefully studied poses of the many celebrities perfectly match the architecture of the space. Well-placed stage lights add to the display of portraits in this gallery to the degree that famous actors are indistinguishable from non-actors. Politicians, scientists and artists alike stand as characters at attention in a play that spans most of the 20th century in terms of time, action and fame.

It is important to be reminded that these photographs are veritable artifacts. With current technology, one tends to think of photographs as being easily reproduced. However, a reproduction is only an approximation of the content of an image; an original print is the result of a complete process undertaken by the photographer. Like the tools he used, the images created by Yousuf Karsh have a physical integrity that requires appropriate and on-going maintenance through conservation, proper framing and climate control. The Theatre of Personality actually forges the last link between the two sets of collections. The exhibition presents the story of a professional practice in which some of the displayed objects were used to create other artifacts in the exhibition: they all carry information that can be interpreted. This is the climax of the exhibition. It is here that the awareness unfolds that in touring the exhibition, one witnesses the behind the scenes activity in the creation of an enchanted tale. Like Karsh, the visitor enters backstage into a world inaccessible to the ordinary spectator. Or, is it really inaccessible? After all, visitors observe the process and experiment with the techniques in the fun studio. Is that enough, however, to ignite a passion within individuals whose lives are often too fast-paced to allow for those introspective moments that may lead to something more?

With a fine touch, the exhibition brings the artist into the present by linking the concerns of today’s audiences with those of Karsh and his time through challenging messages found on centrally located panels. The inquisitive are dared to question the present roles of celebrity portraiture by asking, “how can photographic portraits be both documents of specific individuals and mass vehicles supplying an insatiable public with enduring images of idols and the transcendent values for which they stood?”

Equally, the shift in perception of private and public space comes under scrutiny: “has [the] kind polite understanding [which was once established] between photographer and subject disappeared in the age of paparazzi, webcams and Facebook revelations?” Is a photograph showing one more of the many masks of ourselves, or can it still capture the essence of truth like Karsh believed? Can we still identify today’s archetypal figures like the “visionary politicians,” the “chivalrous war leaders” and “the benevolent business moguls” of Karsh’s world?

These are difficult questions to ask, and more difficult to answer. Because he trusted in their healing effects to promote emotional comfort and well-being, Yousuf Karsh donated some of his work to a number of hospitals. Much like the hospital patient, visitors to Karsh: Image Maker/ Créateur d’images are encouraged to reflect on, and perhaps confront, their own anxieties through the hope and catharsis offered by Karsh portraiture. This pantheon and Karsh’s legacy are truly magnificent because they possess a classic touch of truth.

Exiting the first wing, the visitor enters the second wing of this part of the exhibit. Entitled

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Fig. 8
The immersive studio: a mock Calumet case hides a digital camera; studio lights may be adjusted from the panel to the left.

Fig. 9
One of two curved walls in the Theatre of Personality.
My Karsh, the display showcases portraits taken by Karsh of people from the general public who responded to an invitation to upload their personal photographs onto the Festival Karsh website. This section is small, but presents a fair selection of photographs that ultimately re-connects the viewer to a world composed primarily of ordinary people. It makes for a perfect ending to the effort of de-constructing the myth of Yousuf Karsh as a magician who captured the essence of his sitter in an unplanned moment in time.

The last section of the exhibition resembles a theatre foyer, but fails to function as such. Surrounded by comfortable cubic stools, a few round white tables display souvenir objects related to Karsh’s works—magazine cuts, commemorative plates or stamps made of portraits like that of Queen Elizabeth II. A wall panel holds magnetic pieces with reproduced cuts from famous photographs. Children appear to enjoy moving around the cut-out eyes, mouths, noses and hair-styles, but the panel itself is awkwardly small relative to the wall it sits on. Overall, this last space has an unfinished look that might be intentional on the part of the curators to encourage visitors to carry Karsh’s story outside the walls of the exhibition. At the same time, however, turning towards the exit one feels drawn back into the maze of panels and artifacts, ready to begin the adventure all over again (Fig. 10).

Postscript

Karsh: Image Maker/Créateur d’images ran for twelve weeks in Ottawa during the summer of 2009. It met its educational goals and target audience of families, new Canadians and adults interested in culture and communication technology. As expected, the relevancy of the sections varied with the visitors’ level of interest and age. During my three visits, I noticed considerable interaction among such groups. The space thoroughly addressed image making—indeed, besides conveying Karsh’s story, locations within the exhibition walls not carefully choreographed are hard to find and almost any angle makes for a great picture. After Ottawa, the exhibition will run at the new Art Gallery of Alberta in Edmonton from January 31 to May 30, 2010.

What made the Karsh: Image Maker/Créateur d’images exhibition special beyond the anniversary is that it marks a first-time partnership between two Canadian institutions that hold collections that are extensive and different in scope. In skilfully combining technical and artistic artifacts, this exhibition not only opened the door onto Karsh’s sophisticated world, but it also constituted an excellent precedent for similar partnerships between other institutions interested in exploring new dimensions of public history.

For the 2010 national competition for Canadian exhibitions, the Canadian Museums Association bestowed the Award for Outstanding Achievement in Exhibitions on Karsh: Image Maker/Créateur d’images. The jury unanimously deemed the exhibition to be of national significance and one that exceeded current standards of practice. This is a well-deserved achievement for the team whose dedication and professionalism turned objects into wonders.

Notes

1. A self-guided tour around Ottawa buildings where Mr. Karsh worked and where his work was displayed.
2. Quotation is from the Exhibition Fact Sheet of Karsh: Image Maker/Créateur d’images.
3. I would like to thank Bryan Dewalt for all the helpful information provided with regards to the organizing of the Karsh: Image Maker/Créateur d’images exhibition. He also kindly arranged that I could take the photographs presented in this review. I interviewed Mr. Dewalt on September 3, 2009, days before the exhibition ended at CSTM.
4. The quotations in this paragraph are from the exhibition panels in the Theatre of Personality.
5. The website found at http://www.festivalkarsh.ca/ gives a good idea of the events happening around Ottawa in the summer of 2009.

References

DAVID SZANTO

Review of

Pp. 120, illustrations, soft cover, ISBN 9782922892406, 24.95 $.

A French-flapped paperback with a circular hole drilled through its forehead. On the cover, two languages and a dusty, shallow-focus photo of a crumbly, purple-hued substance (Fig. 1). Inside, minimal text and thirty-two images of industrial (artisanal?) material swatches annotated with colours (i.e., Pantone number), pigments (anthocyanins, carotenoids, polyphenols), shaping techniques (heating, casting, drying), ingredients (purées, powders, oils, juices) and textures (flexible, rigid, gelatinous). In the final pages, an intriguing but unappetizing recipe for Scoop: carob cracker and a bibliography of food pigments.

This is a book

The English subtitle of Diane Leclair Bisson’s new bilingual publication, Comestible/Edible, is “Food as material.” On first consideration, the subtitle is strikingly banal, a minor modification to an equally underwhelming title. Isn’t food, somewhat by definition, both edible and material? The rest of the cover’s cues, however, start to reveal the innovative nature of this book, and what it actually represents begins to emerge. The French title, and its use of comestible and matériau, layers in the notions of food as non-eatable, not as mere ingredient, but as substance, as construction matter. The curious thirteen-millimeter bore, piercing the front and back covers and the 120 pages between, raises more questions: marketing angle? editorial metaphor? third eye? The arty cover photo is presumably food, but it hardly appears edible. Even before cracking the book’s spine, a fundamental interrogation of what food is has taken place, and once inside the covers, the exploration continues. This is book as documentation of designed objects. This is book as object. This is book as component of an ongoing process-object project about design, food, materiality and about the interactions with food that produce emotions, ideas and externalities. Like its...
outer surface, Comestible/Edible is the tip of an engaging and profound iceberg of issues.

Published in 2009, Comestible/Edible makes manifest the most recent evolution of Bisson’s almost ten-year-old Edible Project, an exploration of food-based serving containers. Triggered by the sight of a mountain of discarded disposable plates at her son’s daycare, the Université de Montréal professor began to consider the potential environmental impact of producing dishes that can be eaten. Work with the Montreal-based bakery chain La Première Moisson, as well as a 2003 commission for the Toronto Design Exchange laid the foundation; in 2008, support from the Quebec Fund for Research on Society and Culture enabled a period of more intensive design investigation, largely in collaboration with the Center for Expertise and Research at the Institut de tourisme et d’hôtellerie du Québec.

Pigments, Colours

Comestible/Edible was launched in mid-December, 2009, in conjunction with an exhibition of images from the book, at Commissaires, an avant-garde design gallery and shop in Montreal’s urban-hip Mile End neighbourhood. The gallery, like Bisson’s larger project, represents the intersection of several worlds. (The emailed launch announcement arrived in my inbox from no fewer than four colleagues, teachers and students, variously beckoning from overlapping spheres of food, design and communications.)

In the close quarters of the gallery, attendees munched on finger food from large ceramic platters and drank mid-range wine from plain stemmed glasses. No edible scoops of carob and wheat flour were to be found. A large, freestanding point-of-purchase display presented dozens of copies of the book, each hanging by its hole from one of a matrix of upward-canted dowels.

Like the book, the photos on display raised tantalizing questions. A series of four large-scale, wall-mounted light boxes presented eight vertical, rectangular images each. They varied in texture and translucency, and were arranged by colour, beginning with off-white and progressing through the spectrum to earthy gray and near-black. As the crowd ebbed and pulsed, slices of emerald and tangerine and umber shone through gaps between bodies: brilliant, snackable, moody enigmas. Reflecting the book design itself, the rough-edged images had a perfectly circular hole centrally “drilled” (actually Photoshopped) through its upper eighth. Gallery information cards posted below each light box indicated ingredients, colour, technique. As dishes or utensils, the shapes appeared ill designed, with no indication of function. Though some forms presented a kind of nascent three-dimensionality, explicit handles, spouts, lips or flanges were largely absent. In the room, little other didactic material informed the experience, and the majority of attendees engaged less with the art and more in standard vernissage social intercourse (Fig. 2). The illuminated wafers were nonetheless intensely seductive. Food and yet not food; tactile and distant; disquieting and enthralling.

Techniques, Ingredients

A meticulously art-directed print object, Comestible/Edible features the same photos from the Commissaires exhibition and substantially more explanation. The book is in fact a designer’s portfolio, a record of what has clearly been a well-researched and extensive investigation. Bisson explains her process—the origins and evolution of the project, her motivation in developing edible dishware and implements, the production methods employed—and then presents thirty-two finished pieces, lovingly photographed, alongside production notes for each (Fig. 3).

Though scant, the text answers the questions raised by the book’s cover and the ambiguity of the...
exhibition photos. At the same time, new questions surface about the implications of the designer’s work.

Bisson’s central point is that, as changing consumption habits—including overconsumption—increase the number of disposable food containers going into the waste system, more sustainable materials are needed to make packaging, serving and eating implements. She argues that food be used as this substance in that it is renewable and ultimately edible matter in its own right, or at least highly biodegradable. The book, then, is not about showing finished cutlery and bowls and plates and bottles, but about presenting a collection of swatches or chips—a manufacturer’s material chart. It is Bisson’s offering to other designers, and to herself, for the development of future applications.

In the opening pages headlined “Towards Applied Gastronomy,” Bisson states that the project is also intended to promote a new understanding around practice and education in food and industrial design, implying how the field might satisfy emerging needs. She points to developments in molecular gastronomy and culinary design as indicators of change in the food world, and calls for further breaking of boundaries and adoption of transversal knowledge.

Textures

Comestible/Edible extends challenges across a number of disciplines. Sustainability, a rapidly blurring buzzword in environmental discussions, is a central driver of the work that led to the Edible Project. Bisson contends that making dishes out of food is more sustainable than using finite fossil-fuel reserves to generate landfill-bound Styrofoam. While certainly more digestible than plastic (by one ecosystem or another), food as matériau raises the same debate as the issue of diverting corn into bio-fuel production. What dangers lie in building a second commoditization of food as we grow forks and chopsticks in our fields? Whose daily bread will we make cataclysmically unaffordable by turning the grains it is made from into edible cups and saucers?

In the realm of material culture, the impermanence of a consumable dish demands attention to temporality in the objects we create. Does eating a fork result in a loss, or merely a transformation of its materiality? How permanent is our culture, and how important is it that formal traces be left behind? Bisson squarely points out that design is about relationships between humans and objects, and that it is necessary not only to create the opportunities for such interactions to emerge, but also to create
an awareness of how design places us in a thinking and questioning space within the system of our lives. In her words, design “influences how we feel, by affecting the emotional and polysensory dimensions of our material world” (24). Design not only makes the things, it sets users into a dynamic with them.

Within the culinary framework, Bisson has elided several historical examples of edible containers that might have brought useful insight into eventual applications of her work. The trencher of medieval times was a slab of dry bread used as an edible plate, from which a diner would eat his or her meat. Once the meat was finished, the trencher—now soaked with juices—might be eaten or given to the poor. Contemporary versions of the trencher include dip- or soup-filled bread bowls, for both group and individual consumption. While the social implications of food-based dishware may be argued from both the positive and negative, the nutritional concerns about eating a whole loaf of bread after consuming the soup inside are more objective: the calorie-bomb versions at such chains as Au Bon Pain and Panera carry up to 620 calories each, in bread alone. And if the bowl goes uneaten (perhaps wisely), then other questions of waste arise. Intriguingly, history also presents various non-edible food-based containers: the unyielding pastry shell of early meat pies and the confectioner’s-paste architecture of Renaissance-era pièces montées. Such precedents, however, and more importantly the reasons they have both come and gone, are missing here. Ultimately, if we are going to shift to more environmentally friendly edible dishware, parallel shifts will be required to alter culinary models and consumption habits, along with cost-to-value expectations of food thus served and eaten. While the book explicitly presents the samples as proto-material, probing the historical context and future implications might better demonstrate how, and if, they offer substance for innovation.

It is perhaps Bisson’s interpretation of “applied gastronomy,” however, that bears most attention. Originally derived from the Greek gastros (the stomach) and nomos (the word, the law), gastronomy was first construed to mean the rules of the stomach, and in the early 19th century acquired implicit overtones of taste and refinement thanks to such writers as Grimod de la Reynière and Brillat-Savarin. Today, academics, marketers, and activists disagree about one single meaning, although the breadth of the term has expanded to include such elements as “the political economy of food; the treatment of foods, their storage and transport and processing; their preparation and cooking; meals and manners; the chemistry of food, digestion, and the physiological effects of food; food choices and customs and traditions” (Santich 1996: 2). Indeed, if the rules of the stomach are influenced by all that has happened since “gastronomy” first appeared in print, then industrial, agricultural and informational revolutions must be considered. The notion of applied gastronomy therefore calls for greater consideration of the interplay between economic, social, environmental and cultural spheres, as well as the systemic impacts that works like Comestible/Edible may eventually bring about.

Ceci n’est pas un livre

In her acknowledgements, Bisson thanks an impressive list of collaborators, including numerous colleagues, partners and students. Together with this team she produced an initial set of samples that appear clear-cut and categorizable, a book that is anything but, and a challenge to her peers that is even less so. Design and gastronomy, like other transdisciplinary fields, are in the process of redefining and framing themselves, shifting and absorbing practices in ways that will ultimately present solutions to a growing set of issues brought on by humanity’s evolving behaviour. Despite minor gaps, Comestible/Edible is a successful output of both of these fields. It shows us the start of such solutions—a beginning idea for others to build on and adapt, according to the situations in which they find themselves and the requirements that arise therein. Undeniably, it is a winning first taste.

Notes

1. Please see www.edibleproject.com

Reference

ANAÏS DÉTOLLE

Compte rendu de


Aujourd’hui, en France, le terme « terroir » implique non seulement le produit ainsi que le territoire spécifique dont il est issu, mais aussi tout le savoir-faire qui l’entoure et qui se veut historique et authentique, et donc issu d’une culture particulière. L’importance culturelle qu’on lui attribue favorise peu l’adaptation sémantique du terme. Il est assez peu perméable aux frontières géographiques, linguistiques et disciplinaires.

C’est cette problématique qui est au centre de *The Taste of Place*. En tant qu’Américaine, Trubek cherche à comprendre le vécu du terroir en France et aux États-Unis et à trouver les universaux émanant de ce concept, qu’ils soient culturels ou sémantiques. À une époque où l’industrialisation fait partie intégrante de la production alimentaire, le consommateur est de plus en plus étranger à ce qu’il ingère. L’auteur désire communiquer à un lectorat américain de quelle manière la notion de « terroir » et ses implications agricoles, culinaires et culturelles seraient, selon ses termes, « la voie du milieu », celle qui combinerait esprit d’entreprise et authenticité.

L’intérêt de cette anthropologue pour l’idée de terroir s’est développé au contact de professionnels de la restauration. L’introduction nous apprend que lorsqu’elle était professeure au New England Culinary Institute, elle avait réalisé, lors de rencontres avec des collègues et des étudiants, que l’association d’un aliment à son lieu d’origine est, chez ces professionnels, automatique. Néophyte sur le plan gustatif, elle s’était interrogée sur la réalité de cette association. Le goût d’un aliment peut-il réellement être influencé par son environnement de production ? Le lien que font les professionnels entre goût et lieu de production est-il universellement reconnu ?

Trubek a donc entrepris d’effectuer une analyse comparative des différentes bases définitionnelles de l’association entre lieu et aliment en France, aux États-Unis ainsi qu’en Italie. Trubek répondra ainsi à ces questions en affirmant qu’un lieu de production et un savoir-faire produisent effectivement une expérience gustative distincte. Par contre, elle reconnaît que le goût est culturellement dicté et que les savoir-faire mis en œuvre dans la production d’un produit peuvent varier.

Le livre se construit en six chapitres. Dans un style littéraire descriptif où elle utilise l’ethnographie tout autant que le style journalistique et quelque peu autobiographique, Trubek propose au lecteur de s’insérer dans le quotidien de producteurs des deux pays afin d’explorer la genèse contemporaine...
du « goût du terroir », qu’elle traduit par « the taste of place ». Elle amène le lecteur à voyager à travers de longues descriptions paysagères, tentant ainsi de faire apparaître le lien entre le lieu géographique et les produits alimentaires au centre de son analyse.

Dans les deux premiers chapitres, l’auteur explore le développement historique de l’importance que donnent les Français à l’idée de terroir. Elle critique l’aspect essentieliste que lui confère l’organisme de labellisation du gouvernement français, l’Institut du Goût et de la Qualité (INAO). Elle met ainsi en lumière l’aspect construit des valeurs entourant cette notion, des valeurs d’authenticité, de plaisirs simples et bons, de nature généreuse, à travers une image idéalisée de la campagne.

Le second chapitre s’arrête sur la démonstration de l’efficacité de cette construction d’un idéal de terroir qui a été intériorisé par la population, plus particulièrement par les paysans dont le mode de vie a été, par ce processus, idéalisé. L’affaire Mondavi, où un producteur de vin américain avait tenté d’acheter une terre en France et avait été immédiatement conspué par la population locale, démontre, selon Trubek, le profond ancrage de l’aspect identitaire de la notion de terroir.

La partie suivante mène l’auteur aux États-Unis, plus particulièrement en Californie et au Vermont, son objectif étant de vérifier de quelle manière s’y définit le terroir. Dans les trois chapitres suivants, le lecteur partage le quotidien de viticulteurs, de chefs cuisiniers et d’acériculteurs. Cet exercice permet à l’auteur de démontrer la grande différence de réaction identitaire que provoque l’évocation du terme « terroir » aux États-Unis. L’importance du libre choix individuel, la dévalorisation de l’hédonisme alimentaire (que Trubek attribue à l’héritage puritain) ainsi que la démocratie alimentaire et donc la valorisation primordiale de la variable « prix » dans le processus du choix alimentaire sont les valeurs proprement américaines qui dictent une réaction identitaire moins rigide face à l’idée de la nouveauté. L’absence de traditions agricoles, la valorisation de la communauté, la liberté de bricolage sont aussi au centre de la notion américaine de taste of place que mettent de l’avant les acteurs observés.

Son sixième chapitre pose la question délicate de la manipulation du goût du terroir. Elle critique la tendance, par le processus de labellisation, de transformation du terroir en une image de marque statique plutôt qu’en une représentation réelle de la variabilité. Prenant pour exemple la production acéricole au Vermont, l’auteur montre le paradoxe américain d’une production variée que l’on occulte au profit d’une image générique manipulée, l’image de marque. Trubek réagit en renouvelant son affirmation : le goût du terroir existe. Au Vermont, il est particulièrement perceptible dans le goût des différentes productions de sirops d’érable. Mais cette variabilité est oubliée par les officiels qui donnent la priorité à une image léchée et uniforme de la région. Un bref retour en France fait dire à l’auteur que le processus de labellisation a le même effet sur les produits qui portent le nom de leur région d’origine. Un produit qualifié de représentatif de la région n’est en effet qu’une variante parmi d’autres, et cela contribue à une uniformisation qui est à l’opposé de la définition originale du terroir.

Cet ouvrage est utile mais il ne s’agit pour l’instant que d’un travail de pré-terrain. Aussi importants soient les jalons posés par Trubek, l’ouvrage laisse le lecteur sur sa faim, désireux d’une plus large compréhension et d’une définition plus complète de la manière dont se développe la notion de terroir aux États-Unis, qui est probablement similaire à celle qui se développe au Canada. J’aurais aimé que l’analyse des discours soit plus systématique. Trubek s’est limitée à la première étape de la méthodologie anthropologique d’observation participante. Le manque de systématisation des données et d’analyse thématique est une faiblesse qui laisse le lecteur perplexe face à une conclusion qui aurait pu servir d’introduction : « le terroir, c’est le triomphe de la diversité sur l’homogénéité » [250].

**Références**


I am so thoroughly sick of donuts, I could die (ix). So begins Steve Penfold’s history of the snack item in modern Canadian society. The book proceeds much as the opening sentence suggests: it is confident, engagingly-written, often anecdotal and occasionally humourous, but based on the authors’ decade of original research.1

Penfold’s thesis is simple and intriguing: the ordinary donut has virtually become an iconic object in the daily social lives and even the self-identities of Canadians, especially among residents in the suburbs and ex-urbs of Ontario, Quebec and the Maritimes. The argument contains two components: first, this greasy, sugar-laden food has come to enjoy a special status in Canadian popular cuisine; second, and more importantly, the typical donut shop has long ceased to be a simple bakery, but has become a common gathering place and informal community centre for a clientele that spans most of Canadian society.

As a piece of literature, Donuts rides on a crest of food history monographs of the past decade or so, including Booze by Craig Heron (2003), Penfold’s colleague at York University’s History Department. Together Penfold and Heron previously authored The Workers’ Festival: A History of Labour Day in Canada (2005), and this interest in workers’ experiences influences Penfold’s approach as a food historian.2 In The Donut, he is concerned primarily with people and their social interactions around this snack food, but also with the economics and technologies that affect donut production and consumption, as well as such matters as the location, function and marketing of donut shops. Oral histories of donut shop workers, urban histories that touch on automotility and the growth of suburbs, and social histories on the popularity of drive-in and fast-food restaurants in Canada since the end of the Second World War combine to make the book more than a food history per se. It contains almost no discussion of donut ingredients, recipes or a nutritional analysis of the food item. Rather, Penfold’s work derives its narrative thrust from the stories of those who labour to make donuts and who operate donut shops. Combined with studies of modern marketing, franchising and advertising of fast-food restaurants in general, Penfold is well able to illuminate the social and physical role of the donut shop on the Canadian cityscape and in Canadian popular culture.

As Penfold puts it, The Donut is a “business history of a product and the institutions that produced and sold it, a social history of the people who shaped them, and a cultural exploration of their meaning in everyday life” (15). In the process, he takes care to consider the layers of decisions that have led to the ongoing popularity of donuts in Canada. Everything from the interior layouts of donut shops, their placement at prime, traffic locations and the introduction of expanded menus beyond baked treats have all evolved since 1945 to make the donut—and especially the franchised donut shop—a regular part of everyday life for many Canadians.

In the 1950s, according to his research, Canadians either made donuts at home on special occasions, or purchased them at bakery-restaurants. These largely independently-operated, blue-collar venues, were often located in rundown areas, and offered menus with limited food choices. Penfold demonstrates that the clientele of the post-War donut shop tended to be transient and male-dominated, and the shops themselves carried vaguely-disreputable associations. By the 1990s, however, donut shops in Canada had become mainly franchised restaurants, built to standardized designs dictated by corporate head offices. These shops were conveniently situated for a drive-by community on the way to or from strip malls, hockey arenas and other such amenities. Many donut shops—and especially the large chain franchises—now strive to be family-friendly, offering full meals as well as a repertoire of baked goods, all at reasonable prices.

Penfold makes the case that to go to a donut shop today in Canada is to participate in a populist community ritual. The statistics he cites are persua-
There are now an estimated 6,000 donut shops in Canada, with about one-third belonging to the Tim Hortons chain. Indeed, with 2,000 branches, Tim Hortons is more ubiquitous in Canada than McDonald’s; it alone sells about half of all the bagels sold in Canada, and what may have been the first (1983) smoke-free restaurant in Canada was an outlet of Tim Hortons in Hamilton, Ontario.

Yet Penfold is more than a statistician or student of marketing techniques. Tables, charts and maps are enlivened with humour and anecdote provided by front-line service workers in donut shops. As such, The Donut contains valuable labour histories that add to our understanding of the social and political place of the donut in modern Canada. Many donut shop staff members are immigrants, underlining the fact that, for new Canadians, donuts are a common reference point in their new diets, as well as to their economic realities, their vocational opportunities and social lives. A job in a donut shop may provide the first paid employment for newcomers to this country, particularly in the multicultural urban locales that Penfold cites, such as the Scarborough, Hamilton and Vancouver sites that comprise his case studies.

With The Donut, Penfold has achieved a small miracle in translating a doctoral dissertation into a book; and he has made the task seem easy. Food historians, social historians and labour historians, as well as urbanists and cultural theorists, should anticipate his next book.

Notes
2. Other recent food histories include Cooke (2009) and Driver (2008).

References
Heron, Craig. 2003. Booze: A Distilled History. Toronto: Between the Lines.

YVES LABERGE


Les auteurs ont procédé chronologiquement, choisissant habituellement un seul exemple pour illustrer chaque courant ou artiste. C’est probablement la seule limite à s’imposer si l’on veut couvrir tant de courants, de créateurs et de siècles dans un seul ouvrage. La première section fournit quelques outils usuels pour mieux observer et comprendre les œuvres en expliquant différents aspects comme la perspective, l’organisation de la lumière, l’harmonie des couleurs et la texture des...
On découvre ensuite tous les passages obligés de l’étude de l’Art ancien en parcourant la Grèce antique, la Rome antique, l’Égypte ancienne, mais aussi les Étrusques, les Vikings, l’Asie, les Mayas et plusieurs autres (p. 80). L’essentiel de l’ouvrage couvre la période de la Renaissance à nos jours, selon les zones géographiques et les courants esthétiques. La section consacrée au XIXe siècle me semble la meilleure, en raison de la description précise de plusieurs sous-mouvements esthétiques : on situe l’Art académique, mais aussi l’Impressionnisme, les Nabis, le Symbolisme, l’Art nouveau, l’Art fin de siècle. Enfin, le dernier tiers du livre porte exclusivement sur le XXe siècle, ce qui me semble être son principal défaut, compte tenu de l’importance disproportionnée accordée ici aux productions d’après 1945 (près d’une centaine de pages). Cette portion récente me semble néanmoins à bien délimiter les différentes tendances contemporaines.


On devine que ce livre irrésistible a été conçu pour un large lectorat et pour les étudiants du baccalauréat ; mais pour le chercheur déjà familier de l’histoire de l’art ou des études visuelles, ce livre immense fournira une documentation exhaustive sur des aspects généraux ou encore moins connus. En outre, la qualité de la traduction dans notre langue mérite d’être soulignée ; le texte français est très vivant et sans aucune coquille. Il faudrait vraiment être très snob pour dédaigner un livre aussi exhaustif. J’estime pour ma part que si une personne ne devait posséder qu’un seul ouvrage sur l’art mondial, il lui faudrait choisir Art. L’histoire de l’art en images, sous la direction d’Andrew Graham-Dixon.

Références


MARIE-ÈVE BONENFANT

Compte rendu de


Cimetières, patrimoine pour les vivants, ouvrage dirigé par Jean Simard et François Brault, réunit les travaux de onze auteurs. Les thèmes des cimetières, des pratiques funéraires et de la mort sont présentés à travers la lorgnette de l’historien, de l’ethnologue, du sociologue et de l’historien d’art.

L’ouvrage se divise en quatre chapitres qui regroupent des articles et des dossiers thématiques. Des dossiers photographiques présentant plus de 300 photographies couleurs prises par François Brault ponctuent la lecture. Par ailleurs, plusieurs images d’archives, des cartes et des tableaux accompagnent et enrichissent les textes des auteurs. De plus, des poèmes ou des extraits d’œuvres abordant le thème de la mort ont été reproduits à quelques endroits dans l’ouvrage. Ils proviennent d’auteurs célèbres de différentes époques, tels que Philippe Aubert de Gaspé fils, Charles Gill, Émile Nelligan ou Charles-Édouard Lavergne.

Le premier chapitre est intitulé « Aux origines des cimetières du Québec ». Lorraine Guay présente, de façon générale, l’histoire des cimetières


Le dernier chapitre s’intitule « L’objet funéraire et son langage ». Il s’ouvre sur une étude réalisée par Thérèse Labbé et portant sur les objets funéraires du cimetière Notre-Dame de Belmont à Québec, les croix, les mausolées, les tombeaux, les dalles, les caveaux, les stèles et les sculptures historiées. Les dossiers thématiques de Jean-Yves Bronze sur le cimetière de l’Hôpital général de Québec et le cimetière de la guerre de Sept ans ainsi que celui de Jean Simard sur le cimetière comme patrimoine des vivants viennent clore le chapitre et l’ouvrage à la fois.

Avec Cimetières, patrimoine pour les vivants, Simard et Brault livrent un ouvrage d’une grande qualité visuelle. La qualité de l’impression permet d’apprécier la richesse iconographique et de reconnaître le talent et la sensibilité du photographe François Brault. Une seule critique doit être formulée à l’égard de la facture de l’ouvrage : l’utilisation de la couleur pour distinguer les cahiers thématiques. En effet, elle n’obéit pas à une logique évidente et rend souvent la lecture difficile.

Cet ouvrage, dignes de figurer dans la catégorie des beaux livres, présente un contenu intéressant et approfondi. Les articles témoignent de recherches sérieuses et promettent des découvertes inusitées, dont le cimetière ad sanctos de Saint-Roch-des-Aulnaies. Toutefois, l’ensemble souffre d’un manque d’homogénéité qui tient à la variété des auteurs, au ton employé et au traitement accordé. Bien que les auteurs soient tous arrimés à la même thématique, leurs textes proviennent de divers travaux, tantôt universitaires, tantôt de vulgarisation. On y retrouve des extraits de thèses de doctorat ou de mémoires de maîtrise, des articles de revue ou des textes de communications prononcées à l’occasion d’un colloque.

Par ailleurs, on s’étonne de ne trouver dans Cimetières, patrimoine pour les vivants que quelques travaux récents. En effet, la grande majorité des articles témoigne de recherches réalisées au cours des années 1980 et 1990. Le macro-inventaire du patrimoine québécois, réalisé il y a près de trente ans, est présenté comme une connaissance nouvelle, notamment grâce à ses vues aériennes. Son intérêt est incontestable, mais ses données sont bien connues des chercheurs actuels. D’autres inventaires ont été réalisés au cours des dernières années, notamment l’Inventaire des lieux de culte du Québec. Cet inventaire national réalisé au début des années 2000, et dont l’ouvrage ne fait aucune mention, a recensé tous les lieux de culte encore en fonction à travers le Québec et a fait un relevé photographique des composantes institutionnelles dont l’édifice fait partie intégrante. Il aurait été intéressant d’en présenter quelques résultats dans cet ouvrage.
Cimetières, patrimoine pour les vivants constitue un premier ouvrage entièrement dédié aux cimetières du Québec. Les articles qu’il réunit permettent d’appréhender les cimetières et les pratiques funéraires comme reflet de l’identité collective, comme éléments du patrimoine, d’un point de vue socio-historique, ethnologique et symbolique, mais aussi paysager et artistique. Il constitue un premier jalon dans la diffusion de la connaissance sur le patrimoine funéraire, un type de patrimoine en voie d’être plus largement reconnu.

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Auteurs


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ANAÏS DÉTOLLE is a PhD candidate in Humanities at Concordia University (Montreal). Coming from an anthropological background, her interest in food has led her to explore various issues such as food and religion in a Buddhist Vietnamese Temple and even food and geography in the search for regional foodscape in Provence. Her thesis seeks to explore the specificity of terroir values in Quebec and the way they are actualized.

CHARLENE ELLIOTT is an Associate Professor in Communication Studies at the University of Calgary. Elliott’s research agenda pertains to issues of communication and the body (ranging from sensorial communication, taste communication and bodily “regulation” to obesity and public health). She has published in numerous journals, including Law & Social Inquiry, Canadian Public Policy, Obesity Reviews, Canadian Journal of Communication, Journal for Cultural Research, Food, Culture and Society and The Senses & Society, and is co-editor of Communication in Question: Competing Perspectives on Contentious Issues in Communication Studies. Elliott is Principal Investigator of a CIHR funded study on the marketing of foods to children.

S. HOLYCK HUNCHUCK is an art historian and independent scholar in Ottawa. She is a frequent contributor to Material Culture Review/Revue de la culture matérielle. Her essay on Ukrainian Labour Temples can be found in the anthology Re-Imaginaing Ukrainian-Canadians: History, Politics, Identity (Jim Mochoruk and Rhonda Hinther, co-eds, University of Toronto Press, 2010), and her research on giant food sculptures in Alberta and Saskatchewan is forthcoming.


JORDAN L. LEBEL is an Associate Professor in the Department of Marketing at the John Molson School of Business (Concordia University, Montreal) where he teaches The Marketing of Food...
as well as the MBA course, Experience Marketing. While the research for the Material Culture Review/Revue de la culture matérielle article was being conducted, he was an Associate Professor at Cornell University’s School of Hotel Administration. A trained foodservice professional, his research interests focus on understanding the structure and unfolding of hedonic experiences, particularly when they involve food and beverages.

JESSICA MUDRY is an assistant professor in the General Studies Unit at Concordia University. Her scholarship works at the intersection of science communication, food studies and public policy. SUNY Press published her first book, Measured Meals: Nutrition in America, in 2009, and she has published her work in journals such as Social Epistemology and Food, Culture and Society. Her current research projects, funded by FQRSC and SSHRC, trace how the calorie became constructed as a measure of human activity and food.

ALAN NASH (MA, PhD Cambridge) is an associate professor in the Department of Geography, Planning and Environment at Concordia University in Montreal where he currently teaches courses in human geography and the geography of food. He is co-author of the textbook Human Geography: Places and Regions in Global Context (Pearson, 2010). His most recent publications includes “From Spaghetti to Sushi: An Investigation of the Growth of Ethnic Restaurants in Montreal, 1951-2001” in Food, Culture and Society (2009).

RHONARICHMAN KENNEALLY is an Associate Professor and Chair of the Department of Design and Computation Arts at Concordia University, Montreal. Her research explores the relationship between food, culture and identity in Canada, with articles in Food, Culture and Society; What’s to Eat: Entrées in Canadian Food History (ed. Nathalie Cooke); and Expo 67: Not Just a Souvenir (co-edited with Johanne Sloan). She has since begun a SSHRC-funded study of the built environment of the home in Ireland during the mid-20th century, as a means to explore women’s agency and the practices of everyday life.

DAVID SUTTON is Associate Professor of Anthropology at Southern Illinois University Carbondale. For the past twenty years he has been conducting research on the island of Kalymnos on issues of memory, historical consciousness, gender and food. He has published two books based on this research: Memories Cast in Stone: The Relevance of the Past in Everyday Life and Remembrance of Repasts: An Anthropology of Food and Memory. Current research focuses on the process of transmitting cooking knowledge on Kalymnos. He is co-editor of The Restaurants Book: Ethnographies of Where We Eat (Berg, 2007), and co-author of Hollywood Blockbusters: An Anthropology of Popular Movies (Berg, 2009).

DAVID SZANTO teaches Gastronomy, Food Studies and Communications at l’Université du Québec à Montréal, Concordia University and the University of Gastronomic Sciences, in Italy. He lives in Montreal, where he will begin an interdisciplinary doctoral program in Gastronomy in 2010 at Concordia.

IOANA TEODORESCU is an architect and architectural historian with degrees from Cambridge University and the Architectural University in Bucharest. She is currently completing her PhD research at McGill University, working on Canadian postwar small house designs and the related material culture, with a focus on the mentoring role of Central Mortgage and Housing Corporation. A recipient of numerous grants from the universities of Cambridge and McGill, the Getty Foundation and the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada, she has taught extensively and published articles dealing with postwar housing trends in Eastern Europe and the Western world, occasionally touching upon regional perspectives and religious architecture of Christian Eastern and Western rites.

LUCIA TERRENZI is a designer and a researcher in the field of Human-Computer Interaction. Her interests address the relationship between humans and technologies and the ways in which technological artifacts can enhance social engagement, self-expression and creativity. She holds a Master of Science in Industrial Design and a PhD in Computer Science. She has been the recipient of numerous prizes for her design and research activities, including the 1998 YOUNG & DESIGN Contest, the Dutch “De Schoollasts” national design contest in 1999 and the Google Europe Anita Borg Memorial Scholarship in 2007. Lucia is currently employed with the Vodafone Group Research and Development Lab in Munich.
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Franchir les frontières scolaires, franchir les frontières identitaires ? De l’école anglaise vers l’université francophone au Québec
Marie-Odile Magnan
The Cheticamp rug hooking tradition is prized the world over, and its most celebrated artist is undoubtedly Élizabeth LeFort (1914-2005). LeFort’s remarkable talent for portraiture in wool resulted in purchases and commissions around the world; her portraits of world figures hang in Rideau Hall, Buckingham Palace, the White House and the Vatican.

La tradition du tapis «hooké» de Chéticamp est prise à la grandeur du monde et son artiste la plus célèbre est sans aucun doute Élizabeth LeFort (1914-2005). Le talent remarquable de Mme LeFort dans l’art du portrait en laine lui a assuré une clientèle partout au monde; ses portraits de grands personnages font partie du décor de Rideau Hall, du palais de Buckingham, de la Maison-Blanche et du Vatican.